

University of Newcastle Upon Tyne  
Department of History

# The Influence of the Reformation and Counter Reformation upon Key Texts in the Literature of Witchcraft

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

This study has examined the way in which the Reformation and Counter Reformation influenced key texts in the literature of witchcraft in Early Modern Europe. Certain authors' work has been examined in detail: Pedro Ciruelo, Martin of Arles, Symphorien Champier, Gianfrancesco Ponzinibio, Nicolas Remi, Henri Boguet, Francesco Maria Guazzo, Niels Hemmingsen, Lambert Daneau, George Gifford, James VI and Reginald Scot. These writers include both those who were extremely sceptical, and also those who were very credulous about the abilities of witches. These are not the only demonologists referred to, however, as each work is put into context. The beliefs of the Church Fathers and the Scholastics are also examined; this means that the beliefs of the later writers can be put into perspective, and examined to see where, if at all, they are diverging from accepted Church doctrine.

The study examines the individual elements of witch belief, including the sabbat, flight, magic, superstition, maleficium, and incubi and succubi. The demonologies changed dramatically from 1450 to 1610, and this was partly due to the influence of the reformations. In particular, the Roman Catholic position changed, as the Counter Reformation Catholic writers were forced to deny earlier beliefs in order to differentiate their position from that of the Protestants. The pre-Reformation and Protestant writers tended to focus upon the more common manifestations of the devil's power, such as superstition; while the Counter Reformation Catholics were interested in the more sensational elements, such as flight and the sabbat. This means that although they are of different confessions, the pre-Reformation writers and the Protestants have more in common than the two groups of Catholics.

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## Abbreviations

Boguet	Boguet, Henri, <i>Discours des sorciers</i> , 2nd Edition, (Chez Pierre Rigaud, Lyon, 1608). The translations are loosely based upon Boguet, Henri, <i>Discours des Sorciers (An Examine of Witches)</i> , edited, M. Summers, translated E. A. Ashwin, (John Rodker, London, 1929)
Boguet, 1602	Boguet, Henri, <i>Discours des sorciers</i> , (Par Jean Pillehette, Lyon, 1602)
Champier	Champier, Symphorien, <i>Dyalogus...in magicarum artium destructionem</i> , (originally published, Lyon, 1500). Translation loosely based upon Copenhaver, Brian, <i>Symphorien Champier and the Reception of the Occultist Tradition in Renaissance France</i> , (Moulton Publishers, The Hague, 1978)
Ciruelo	Ciruelo, Pedro, <i>A Treatise Reproving All Superstitions and Forms of Witchcraft</i> , (originally published, 1539), translated Eugene A. Maio, and D'Orsay W. Pearson, (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1977)
Daneau	Daneau, Lambert, <i>De veneficiis</i> , (Apud Eustathium Vignon, Genevae, 1574)
Gifford, <i>Dialogue</i>	Giffard, George, <i>A Dialogue concerning Witches and Witchcraftes</i> , (John Windet, London, 1593)
Gifford, <i>Discourse</i>	Gyfford, G., <i>A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers</i> , (Toby Cooke, London, 1587)
Guazzo	Guazzo, Francesco Maria, <i>Compendium maleficarum</i> , (Apud Haeredes August Tradati, Mediolani, 1608). Translation loosely based upon Guazzo, Francesco Maria, <i>Compendium Maleficarum</i> , edited, M. Summers, translated E. A. Ashwin, (Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1988)

Guazzo, 1626	Guazzo, Francesco Maria, <i>Compendium maleficarum</i> , (Ex Collegii Ambrosiani typographia, Mediolani, 1626). Translation loosely based upon Guazzo, Francesco Maria, <i>Compendium Maleficarum</i> , edited, M. Summers, translated E. A. Ashwin, (Dover Publications Inc, New York, 1988)
Hansen	Hansen, Joseph, <i>Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns</i> , (Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, Bonn, 1901)
Hemmingsen	Hemmingsen, Niels, <i>Admonitio de superstitionibus magicis vitandis</i> , (Hafnia, 1575)
James	<i>Daemonologie in Workes</i> , (Robert Barker & Iohn Bill, London, 1616)
Lea	Lea, H.C., <i>Materials Toward A History of Witchcraft</i> , edited, Arthur C. Howland, (Thomas Yoseloff, New York and London, 1939,1957)
Martin	Martin of Arles, <i>Tractatus de Superstitionibus</i> , (originally published, 1517), translated Euan Cameron (unpublished translation)
Ponzinibio	Ponzinibius, Joannes Franciscus, <i>De Lamiis</i> , (Francofurti am Moenum, 1592)
Remi	Remi, Nicolas, <i>Daemonolatreiae</i> , (In Officina Vincentii, Lugduni, 1595). Translation loosely based upon Remy, Nicolas, <i>Demonolatry</i> , edited, M. Summers, translated E. Ashwin, (John Rodker, London, 1930)
Scot	Scot, Reginald, <i>The Discoverie of Witchcraft including A Discourse upon divels &amp; spirits</i> , (London, 1584)

# I Introduction

## 1.1. “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live”

The witch persecutions across Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries are justifiably notorious. When the sensationalism and misleading information is separated, the hunts give an important insight into the society and thought of the period, but they should not be seen as the strange tales of an alien culture. At a time when membership of established religion is declining, superstition is on the increase and witch hunts still occur in parts of the world, there is much of importance for the modern reader.<sup>1</sup> They also give an important insight into the substance of the confessional divide after the reformations of the 16th century.

The debate over whether this divide had any influence upon the witch persecution has not yet reached any conclusion. Both Catholic and Protestant controlled areas had severe persecutions, although the figures involved are constantly being revised. Some historians, such as John Teall, believed that attitudes towards witchcraft reflected general problems of the time, rather than specific confessional peculiarities, while others such as Ioan Couliano declared, “one can assert without any doubt that there is an immediate connection between the witch craze and the European Reformation.”<sup>2</sup> However, between these two extremes, lies the general consensus of opinion, that there was not necessarily any correlation between the confessional divisions and the witch persecutions, as Robin Briggs succinctly described it,

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<sup>1</sup> For examples of ‘witches’ being killed or lynched, see reports in Radio 4 news, 27th February 1995; *The Guardian*, 25th March 1995; *The Independent*, 14th December 1996, and *The Independent on Sunday*, 19th January 1997

<sup>2</sup> Teall, John L., ‘Witchcraft and Calvinism in Elizabethan England: Divine Power and Human Agency’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1962, pp.21-36, p.22

“The more we know about the local patterns of persecution, the harder it becomes to see confessional divisions as playing anything more than a marginal role.”<sup>3</sup>

The differences between Catholic and Protestant would not be expected to influence the way they viewed witches: they used the same holy books, cited many of the same authorities, and had a common history. As Thorndike wrote, “There was no more reason for a Catholic and Protestant to disagree about herbs and gems, astrology and witchcraft, than there was for them to come to blows over Greek grammar and prosody. These were neutral or rather universal territories open to men of every creed and country.”<sup>4</sup> However, as this study will show, the schism of the Western Christian Church was reflected in their demonological beliefs.

The verse from Exodus which prescribes death to those who deal in witchcraft, was one of the main scriptural justifications for the witch persecutions. However, this was not the only biblical prohibition against dealings with demons and sorcerers, there were many examples of such condemnations in the Old Testament. Leviticus prohibited the use of enchantments, and forbade association with those who had familiar spirits, warning that God would turn his face from them. The prescribed punishment was again death, “A man or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death.”<sup>5</sup> Malachi warned that

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Couliano, Ioan P., *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, translated Margaret Cook, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987), p.191

<sup>3</sup> Briggs, Robin, *Witches and Neighbours*, (Harper Collins, London, 1996), p.100

<sup>4</sup> Thorndike, Lynn, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol. V, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1934), p.378

<sup>5</sup> Leviticus xix:xxvi, xxxi and xx:vi, xxvii, King James Bible, 1611, the verse in the heading is Exodus xxii:xviii, op cit

God would be a swift witness against sorcerers, reinforcing the earlier condemnations.<sup>6</sup> The main reason for the prohibition of dealings with spirits or demons, was that it was deemed to be worship of other gods. This was viewed as breaking the first, and most important commandment, “Thou shalt have no other Gods before me,” and ensured that any who were charged with witchcraft, could be seen as guilty of apostasy. This in turn led to the belief that there was a diabolic conspiracy against the Christian faith. Muchembled described this belief well, “The Church and the state saw in the witch a prototype of total rebellion, a member of a well-organized and diabolical church and a subject of a well-organized demoniacal kingdom.”<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2. The study

The influence of the Reformation and Counter Reformation upon key texts in the literature of witchcraft is important because it is an area that has not yet been fully examined. Many studies have been done which have concentrated upon the social aspects of the witch hunts, the impact of the hunts upon a particular area or group of people, and even the question of whether the literature had any influence upon the persecutions. There are also many works on the literature of witchcraft, the ‘demonologies’, some even commenting briefly upon the way in which the Reformation or Counter Reformation influenced the writings of demonologists. Stuart Clark’s recent text, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* covers a vast range of demonological literature, but was published too

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<sup>6</sup> Malachi iii:v, op cit

<sup>7</sup> Muchembled, Robert, *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France, 1400-1750*, translated Lydia Cochrane, (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge and London, 1985), p.242



late for me to be able to include. However, there has not yet been a specific study of the way in which the reformations influenced demonological thought. By examining specific authors and topics connected with witchcraft and demonology, it is possible to see whether the reformations had as little impact upon the literature as it seems they did upon the hunts.

Instead of focusing upon each individual author in turn, as has been done more than adequately in the past, I have concentrated upon individual aspects of witchcraft and demonology, and examined these in detail. As theology was the main source for the beliefs or otherwise in witchcraft, I have not simply started with the authors of the pre-Reformation period, but have examined the changing beliefs over a much longer period of time. For each issue under discussion, I have discussed the biblical evidence, then examined the way in which the Church Fathers and Early Church dealt with the issue, followed by the scholastics and their approaches to each topic. Only then, when the history of the subject is known, have I discussed the way in which it is treated by my chosen authors. In this way, it should be possible to discover whether any of these authors were actually breaking with the tradition as it had been established in the earlier periods, or returning to an earlier system of beliefs.

I have sorted my topics into two main sections, with an additional introductory section on Divine and Demonic power. The first section is a necessary prelude to the later ones, as it explains the theology behind beliefs in demonic power, and thereby the powers that witches were believed, by some, to have over nature and the elements. This chapter is mainly theological, as background knowledge of this is essential for a full understanding of the arguments used by the various writers. The Use of Magic incorporates three chapters,

dealing with the various manifestations and types of magic. Manifestations of Divine and Demonic Power discusses the way God or the devil were able to demonstrate their power to people, including miracles, illusions, shape changing and maleficium.<sup>8</sup> It was felt necessary to discuss Superstition and Cunning Folk as they overlapped with conventional witches in the works studied. Although it has been shown by previous studies, such as those by Alan Macfarlane, that it was rare for these 'cunning folk' to be persecuted as witches, in demonologies they are treated little differently from witches, and were of vital importance for some of the writers. Magic at first appears to be an incongruity in a study of witchcraft, as the former is deemed to be learned and the latter ignorant. However, as was the case with superstition, this was an issue for these writers. More importantly, however, until the period just before the Reformation, most writings against 'witchcraft' could be more truthfully described as being against magic. The arguments that were brought against those accused of witchcraft were identical to those used earlier against learned magicians.

The second subdivision focuses upon the sensationalist, and better known, aspects of witchcraft. The first chapter in this section, The Flight of Witches, examines the development of the theology behind such a belief, and the implications it had for other areas of the witchcraft stereotype. The final chapter, The Witches' Sabbath, concentrates upon the issue which particularly led to many deaths. The sabbat was an essential part of demonology for those who believed in a conspiracy of the devil and his followers, and was a useful tool for creating multiple incriminations.

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<sup>8</sup> Maleficium is a generic term used to describe the evil deeds that witches were believed to be capable of performing.

Witchcraft does not appear to have been an issue of great importance until the period just before Luther's protest. There were many texts detailing the evils performed by the adherents of the devil, and discussing the ways in which they were sinning against God. However, these tended to focus more upon the evil magus and his sins than the mass gathering of witches, who were only later believed to be involved in a massive conspiracy against Christianity. The way in which these texts developed the concept of the classic, malevolent witch will be examined, as will the external influences that may have caused some of these aspects to develop in the way they did.

The way in which the Reformation and the subsequent bitter conflicts influenced the literature of witchcraft are seen through certain authors and texts which I have chosen to examine. The two confessions felt obliged to constantly respond to the opposition, and in this way one group, the Counter Reformation Catholics, were forced into denying many of their previously held beliefs. As the Protestants ridiculed some of the more extreme measures and totally denied other aspects of Catholic witch doctrine, the Catholic writers were forced into promoting these beliefs more vigorously. As Midelfort described it, "[Catholic] witchcraft theory changed, but not by the addition of some new element, ... in large measure the process seems to have been a response to Protestant pressure. ... as confessional differences became clear, each denomination worked at developing a position that excluded all the errors of its opponents."<sup>9</sup> This led to the Catholics being forced to deny doctrines which had previously been tolerated, while the Protestants faced charges that the Reformation itself was the cause of witchcraft.

### 1.3. The Pre-Reformation Authors: Champier, Martin of Arles, Ponzinibio and Ciruelo

It was necessary to include some writers of the pre-Reformation, as without any discussion of their works, it would be very difficult to establish whether those writing later, either Protestant or Catholic, were actually breaking with what had gone before. The four writers of the pre-Reformation period I have chosen are less well known than many others available; and this was one of the main factors in deciding who to focus upon, as I did not wish to discuss authors who have already been thoroughly examined. These authors are more unusual than many others who could be firmly placed in the parallel tradition of wonder-working and strange story telling that also existed. They are not the only writers of the period that I refer to, as I put them into the context of other writings and Church opinions of the time. They are described as being writers of the pre-Reformation, although two certainly wrote later than the start of the Reformation in Germany. This is because the Reformation impacted upon Italy and Spain much later than in, for example, France, Germany and England. The influence of the Reformation upon the writings of Catholics also did not occur in these areas until far later than in central and Northern Europe, and for these reasons I felt able to include writings from after 1517.

Symphorien Champier's *Dyalogus ... in magicarum artium destructionem* was first published in about 1500, at Lyon.<sup>10</sup> Champier (c.1471-1537) was a distinguished physician who practised in Lyon, and the importance he attached to the ministrations of physicians can easily be seen in his work, such as his suggestion that incubi are merely a physical

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<sup>10</sup> Midelfort, H.C. Erik, 'Witchcraft and Religion in 16th century Germany: the Formation and Consequences of Orthodoxy', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, Vol. 62, 1971, pp.266-278, p.275

malfunction rather than the visitations of a sexual demon. Champier has been described as “a keen Platonist, but a carefully orthodox Catholic,” a view which is fully supported by an examination of his *Dyalogus*.<sup>11</sup> His strong Catholicism is evident throughout the text, as is his belief in looking dispassionately at the available evidence. His modern translator, Brian Copenhaver, believed that Champier was heavily influenced by Petrus Mamoris’ *Flagellum Maleficorum* (c.1462). However, Mamoris who was regent of the University of Poitiers, believed more in the evidence of confessions than past doctrines and canons.<sup>12</sup>

Martin of Arles was a theological professor and Archdeacon, as well as being a canon at Pamplona. His *Tractatus de Superstitionibus*, was first published in about 1517, although H.C. Lea believed it to have been written a great deal earlier, on the grounds that Martin had not cited the *Malleus maleficarum* in his tract. However, Euan Cameron, who has translated the work, believes that Martin may simply have missed the *Malleus*, as his references to other works are hardly widespread, comprising merely Aquinas, the *Decretum*, Nider’s *Preceptorium*, and some tracts of Gerson.<sup>13</sup> Martin’s work had some popularity, being republished in Rome, 1559, and Venice, 1584 with the *Tractatus Universi Juris*. Martin’s duties as Archdeacon meant that he conducted visitations around the countryside, and had ample opportunity to experience the superstitious practices of the common people. This makes him a rather unusual pre-Reformation demonologist, as they mostly relied upon the earlier literature for their sources; while Martin, as has been shown, did not have such

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<sup>10</sup> However, Thorndike suggested that it was actually first published in 1498, Thorndike, Lynn, op cit, p.116

<sup>11</sup> Walker, D.P., *Spiritual and Demonic magic from Ficino to Campanella*, (The Warburg Institute, London, 1958), p.145

<sup>12</sup> Copenhaver, Brian, *Symphorien Champier and the Reception of the Occultist Tradition in Renaissance France*, (Moulton Publishers, The Hague, 1978), p.159

wideranging sources, but did have the evidence of his visitations. In the preface to his work, which appears only with the edition appended to Jacquier's 1581 *Flagellum haereticorum*, he states that it was due to an experience undergone by one of his fellow canons that he was asked to write this treatise. The issue which had caused the distress was the threatened submersion of a saint's image in a river in order to guarantee rain, and for this reason Martin agreed to write a short work against the sorceries and superstitions of the people.

Gianfrancesco Ponzinibio is unknown apart from his *Tractatus de Lamiis*, which appears to have been first published in about 1520. In the title he is described as a jurisconsultant, and his legal knowledge is apparent throughout the text. He objected strenuously to the injustices he believed to occur in trials for sorcery, and asserted the equality of legal knowledge with theological. Therefore, it is unsurprising that an attack upon his work was issued by the Dominican Fra Bartolommeo Spina in 1525, who demonstrated contempt for the idea that law was equal to theology.<sup>14</sup> However, he was also attacked by the suffragan Bishop of Trier, Peter Binsfeld in his text against the evils of both witchcraft and those who denied their abilities.<sup>15</sup>

Pedro Ciruelo (c.1475-1560) was a professor of mathematics at the Sorbonne in Paris for ten years before becoming the Thomist professor of Philosophy at Alcalà in 1510. After 25 years he moved to Salamanca, where the greatest of the traditional Spanish Universities was based,

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<sup>13</sup> Lea, p.297

<sup>14</sup> For more information upon this issue, see Lea, pp.381-382

<sup>15</sup> Binsfeld, Peter, *Tractatus de confessionibus maleficorum et sagarum*. For examples of the way in which Binsfeld cited Ponzinibio as what one should not believe, see Hodder, M.E., 'Peter Binsfeld and Cornelius Loos, An Episode in the History of Witchcraft', PhD Dissertation, (Cornell, 1911), pp.8-9, 16-17

and also became a canon of the cathedral there. The first edition of his *Reprovacion de las supersticiones y hechizarias* was probably published in 1530, although the exact date is unknown. There were many subsequent publishings, with at least twelve new editions in less than one hundred years, although there were then only two subsequent editions published between 1628 and 1952.<sup>16</sup>

All these authors wrote works which dealt with the issue of witchcraft and the surrounding theological controversies. They tended, more than some other writers of the time and later Catholics, to follow Church doctrine without discussion. They were possibly more sceptical than some of their contemporaries, but considering that this would include the *Malleus maleficarum* such scepticism may not be that difficult to demonstrate. Their works do show the prevailing opinions concerning these issues in some of the more peripheral areas of witch hunts.

#### 1.4. The Counter Reformation Authors: Remi, Boguet and Guazzo

The term Counter Reformation is no longer acceptable if it refers to the attempts of the Catholic Church to improve standards and practices; however, neither the terms Catholic Reformation nor post-Tridentine, which are both frequently used are applicable in this case. These writers all composed their works after the end of the Council of Trent, but were not simply aiming to reform the beliefs of Catholic readers. All three men were actively

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<sup>16</sup> Pearson, D'Orsay W., 'Introduction' in *A Treatise Reproving All Superstitions and Forms of Witchcraft*, (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press and Associated University Press, Rutherford and London, 1977), pp.10-11

countering the theories of the Protestants, which they not only believed to be heretical in themselves, but also to be part of the demonic conspiracy to overthrow Christendom. Upon reading these texts it is impossible to ignore the constant gibes directed at the reformers and their faith. For this reason, I have used the term Counter Reformation, as they were both countering the reformation, and were not part of the internal reform movement of the Catholic Church.

These writers are all fairly well known, although little detailed work has been carried out on any of them in recent years. They held positions of authority, either in secular or ecclesiastical roles. Remi and Boguet were at the centre of the witch persecutions, both personally and geographically. Guazzo, coming from Northern Italy, was on the periphery, but is useful to include, not only as a comparison to Ponzinibio in the previous section, but also as a demonologist in his own right.

Nicolas Remi (sometimes written as Remy) published his *Daemonolatriae* in 1595. This huge work was the result of fifteen years' experience in witch trials, where he boasted that he had condemned nine hundred accused witches to their deaths, although he mentions none before 1581 or after 1591. Remi himself was a lawyer, who was Privy Councillor to the Duke of Lorraine, and from 1591, Attorney General of Lorraine.<sup>17</sup> The prestige of the author, and the fact that he cited evidence from specific trials, ensured the book had a wide circulation. His publisher, Vincent of Lyon, appears to have been a specialist legal publisher,

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<sup>17</sup> For more information on Remi, see Robbins, Rossell Hope, *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology*, (Paul Hamlyn Ltd, London, 1964, 1959)



and is distinguishable by his mark on the title page.<sup>18</sup> The success of *Daemonolatriae* cannot be overestimated, there was a second edition in 1596, then others in 1597 and 1598, as well as two German translations. It appears to have superseded the *Malleus* as the work to which most reference was made, however, it in turn was superseded, by Martin Del Rio's *Disquisitionum magicarum libri sex*.<sup>19</sup> The work itself is a mixture of classical examples, theology and modern trial evidence, as Dintzer described it, "a work of the 16th century, a very messy, disorganised work."<sup>20</sup> It is always concerned with the practicalities of witch beliefs, as Robin Briggs wrote, "the interest of his *Demonolatry* lies exclusively in the discussion of practical details."<sup>21</sup> This echoes the view held by Dintzer, who noted that Remi, unlike many other demonologists, did not discuss the origins of the devil, as it was, or so Dintzer believed, "too theoretical a problem, not positive enough for the practitioner that he was."<sup>22</sup>

Henri Boguet, (c.1550-1619), who became Grand-Juge of the lands of the Abbey of St Claude in 1596, published his *Discours des Sorciers* in 1602. Boguet was a very severe judge in the cases of witchcraft brought before him: of thirty five tried, twenty eight were condemned to death between 1598 and 1609.<sup>23</sup> His *Discours*, like that of Remi, focused upon the practical elements of witchcraft, and had a long appendix detailing the manner of procedure for a judge involved in trying witchcraft cases. The work was republished many

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<sup>18</sup> Dintzer, Lucien, *Nicolas Remy et son oeuvre démonologique*, (L'Imprimerie de Lyon, Lyon, 1936), p.52

<sup>19</sup> Lea, pp.604-605

<sup>20</sup> Dintzer, Lucien, op cit, p.60, "une oeuvre du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, partant un livre désordonné"

<sup>21</sup> Briggs, Robin, 'Witchcraft and popular mentality in Lorraine, 1580 - 1630' in Vickers (ed), *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984), p.339

<sup>22</sup> Dintzer, Lucien, op cit, p.75, "ce problème est trop théorique, trop peu positif pour le praticien qu'il était."

times, with twelve editions in twenty years.<sup>24</sup> It appears that Boguet had quite an extensive library of demonologies to refer to; according to Caroline Oates, his library included copies of the *Malleus maleficarum*, Binsfeld's *De Confessionibus*, Bodin's *Démonomanie* and Del Rio's *Disquisitiones*, all of which he put to full use.<sup>25</sup>

Francesco Maria Guazzo (also known by Guaccio, or Guazzi), was a friar of the Brethren of St Ambrose ad Nemus and St Barnabus of Milan. His *Compendium maleficarum* was first published in 1608, and received the Imprimatur, the Church's official declaration that it was free from doctrinal error.<sup>26</sup> Not a great deal is known about Guazzo himself; it seems that he was an assessor in witch trials, and wrote his treatise while promoting a charge of witchcraft at the court of Duke John William of Cleves and Julich. Ironically, the very court where Wier had been court physician. Guazzo appears not to have had the same popularity as either Remi or Boguet, his work was never translated and was reprinted only once, in 1626, again in Milan.<sup>27</sup> However, his work was written at the request of the Bishop of Milan, and is a useful compendium of the beliefs of other writers. It has been said that Guazzo cites three hundred and twenty two authorities in the text, and he certainly appears to give more examples from others, than actual theory of his own.<sup>28</sup> One of the main reasons the *Compendium maleficarum* remains important is its use of illustrations, as art historian Jane Davidson wrote of this work, "its unusual quality lies in its many illustrations and in the fact

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<sup>23</sup> Monter, E. William, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland, The Borderlands during the Reformation*, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1976), p.71

<sup>24</sup> Robbins, Russell Hope, op cit

<sup>25</sup> Oates, Caroline Frances, 'Trials of Werewolves in the Franche-Comté in the Early Modern Period', PhD, (University of London, London, 1993), p.112

<sup>26</sup> Davidson, Jane P., *The Witch in Northern European Art, 1470-1750*, (Luca Verlag Freren, 1987), p.79

<sup>27</sup> Davidson, Jane P., op cit, p.79

<sup>28</sup> This figure is cited by both Lea, p.489, and Robbins, Russell Hope, op cit

that these are interspersed throughout the text.”<sup>29</sup>

The three authors, Remi, Boguet and Guazzo, all dealt extensively with the issues pertaining to witchcraft. They also commented on the influence of Protestantism upon this phenomena, and this makes them good subjects of study. They were willing to disagree with their predecessors, citing as evidence the trials they, or those whom they trusted, had seen. They all make full use of other demonologists, which can be helpful for placing them in context.

### **1.5. The Protestant Authors: Daneau, Hemmingsen, Scot, Gifford and James**

The Protestant authors were chosen for their distinctive styles, as well as covering Calvinist, Lutheran and Anglican distinctions within Protestantism itself. These works, as a general rule, are much shorter than those in any other section, which is why there are more of them than the others. Two of the men were eminent theologians, one a pastor, one a country gentleman and the last, a king. While the career of Daneau is relatively well known, as are those of Gifford and, unsurprisingly, James, there is little written about Hemmingsen. Reginald Scot, often cited as a sceptic, was not a public figure in the way the other authors were, and is therefore, slightly more difficult to categorise.

Lambert Daneau had legal training at Orléans, before travelling to Geneva in 1560. While there he was influenced by Calvin, and became Professor of Theology at Geneva in 1572.

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<sup>29</sup> Davidson, Jane P., *op cit*, p.80

He later held the Theology Chair at Leiden's new university. While in France, Daneau gained such a reputation for helping consolidate the Reformation, that the Synod of La Rochelle designated him as one of the ministers charged to draw up a response to the adversaries; and in this way his name was associated with the best known pastors of the kingdom.<sup>3</sup> In 1574, while still in Geneva, he wrote *Dialogus de veneficis*, which was issued both in Latin and French, and appears to have been in great demand. It was reprinted in 1575, 1577, 1579, 1581, 1586 and 1597, with an English translation in 1575. Both Lea and Trevor Davies refer to a French edition of 1564, however, this appears to be no more than a ghost edition, as there are no references to this early version of the text, and the 1574 copy makes no mention of being a second edition.<sup>31</sup> Daneau was a prolific author, and encouraged by Beza, produced twenty seven works in less than eight years, "nearly all of which are important volumes" according to Olivier Fatio.<sup>32</sup> However, he was not held in high esteem by all Protestants, Reginald Scot poured scorn on Daneau's witchcraft beliefs, declaring him to be "a special maintainer of ... follies."<sup>33</sup>

Niels Hemmingsen (1513-1600) is often described as the most important Danish theologian of the Reformation period, but there is very little information about his work on witchcraft, even Lea and Robbins ignore his contribution. He was a Lutheran, who studied at Wittenberg, and became a correspondent of Melanchthon. Later in his life he became a crypto Calvinist, and eventually embraced outright Calvinism, a move which did little to

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<sup>3</sup> Fatio, Olivier, 'Lambert Daneau' in Raitt (ed), *Shapers of Religious Traditions in Germany, Switzerland and Poland, 1560-1600*, (Yale University Press, London, 1981), pp.105-107

<sup>31</sup> For details of the editions of this work, see Lea, p.545, and Davies, R. Trevor, *Four Centuries of Witch-Beliefs*, (Methuen & Co. Ltd, London, 1947), p.28

<sup>32</sup> Fatio, Olivier, op cit, p.108

damage his reputation, even when attempts were made to rid Denmark of all Calvinists.<sup>34</sup>

While Vice Chancellor of the University of Copenhagen, he published *Admonitio de superstitionibus magicis vitandis*, which appears to never have been reprinted after its original 1575 edition. His work is very obviously that of a scholar, with meticulous attention to detail.

Reginald Scot is possibly the second most famous sceptic of witchcraft, the first being Johann Wier. Unlike most demonologists, he was unconnected with the trials or authority in any way, as Sydney Anglo wrote, “Scot was neither theologian, philosopher, lawyer, medical man, nor magus. He was a learned, independent country gentleman.”<sup>35</sup> Scot attended Oxford University, but left without gaining a degree, and lived the life of a country gentleman who had enough leisure time to write the first English book on hops, *The Hop Garden*, in 1574, which has been credited with helping Kent become the major hop growing county of England. His work, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, with its appendix, which is in reality another complete book, *A Discourse concerning Devils and Spirits*, was first published in 1584. There were only two reprints of this book in English, one in 1651 and another four years later, it was however, translated into Dutch in 1638. The English 1665 edition is interesting as it was not issued as originally intended, in order to dispute the reality of witchcraft, but was badly distorted to foster completely the opposite view.<sup>36</sup> It was believed

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<sup>34</sup> Scot, Book V, Chapter iv, p.98

<sup>35</sup> See Hillerbrand, Hans Joachim (ed), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1996)

<sup>36</sup> Anglo, Sydney, ‘Melancholia and Witchcraft: the debate between Wier, Bodin and Scot’ in , *Folie et Déràison à la Renaissance*, p.222

<sup>36</sup> Tourney, Garfield, ‘The Physician and Witchcraft in Restoration England’, *Medical History*, Vol. 16, 1972, pp.143-155, p.148

in the past that King James ordered all copies of this book to be burned because of the ideas it contained, however, this charge appears to be false and simply inferred from the relatively few copies remaining.<sup>37</sup> It is an incredibly sceptical work, with Scot appearing to try and remove belief in witchcraft by banishing Satan from the physical world. As Anglo has described it, the way Scot wrote, “renders witchcraft impossible.” Scot’s method was to define everything so rigorously that, as Anglo wrote, “he virtually defines extra-terrestrial beings out of existence.”<sup>38</sup> By doing this he came very close to the atheistic position of denying the reality of the devil. Partly because of this, and partly because of his clever use of language, Scot is a pleasure to read; for example, “He that can be persuaded that these things are true, ... may soon be brought to beleieve that the moone is made of greene cheese.”<sup>39</sup>

George Gifford, (also Giffard, Gyfford) was a Puritan minister at All Saints, in Maldon, Essex. He appears to have had a reputation as a great preacher, but was suspended and later deprived of his ministry because he refused to subscribe to the articles of the Established Church. However, he was not an extreme Puritan, and attacked those who were further to the left.<sup>4</sup> Gifford produced two short works, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practices of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers* and *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes*. The *Discourse* was only published once, in 1587, while the *Dialogue*, which was first issued in 1593, was republished in 1603. Neither of these works are great theological tracts; one of the main

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<sup>37</sup> This belief is accepted by Robbins, Rossell Hope, op cit

<sup>38</sup> Anglo, S., ‘Reginald Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft*: Scepticism and Sadduceeism’ in Anglo (ed), *The Damned Art, Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1977), p.112, Anglo, Sydney, ‘Melancholia and Witchcraft’, p.220

<sup>39</sup> Scot, Book XV, Chapter v, p.396

<sup>40</sup> MacFarlane, A., ‘A Tudor Anthropologist: George Gifford’s *Discourse* and *Dialogue*’ in Anglo (ed), *The Damned Art, Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1977), p.141

reasons for Gifford's works being of such interest is, as Macfarlane described it, that Gifford demonstrates "the way in which suspicions of witchcraft built up and finally exploded in country villages. He lays bare the interweaving of gossip, fear and tension which lay behind the formal court presentments for witchcraft."<sup>41</sup>

King James, (1566-1625), the first of England and sixth of Scotland, holds the dubious honour of being the only monarch to have written a demonology. Although James appears to have been influenced by what he believed to be an attempt upon his life, Stuart Clark has argued not entirely convincingly that this work was "a statement about ideal monarchy."<sup>42</sup> However, Christina Larner, who wrote most about the king and his witchcraft beliefs, did not expound this idea, but believed it to be simply one phase in his life, describing him as a man who "tended to pick up and play around with fashionable ideas."<sup>43</sup> Whether it was a statement of kingship, or simply the fashionable subject, it is not known for certain what led James to write *Daemonologie* in 1597. This work was originally published in Edinburgh, then reissued in London in 1603, and was later translated into both Dutch and Latin, as well as being included in a collection of the king's works in 1616. As the work is hardly a masterpiece, even within the standard of demonologies, it can only be due to his social status that it was republished so often. It is not a scholarly work, with the conclusions sometimes unclear, and little by way of reference to theologians or current demonologies.

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<sup>41</sup> Macfarlane, Alan, op cit, p.145

<sup>42</sup> Clark, S, 'King James's *Daemonologie* : Witchcraft and Kingship' in Anglo (ed), *The Damned Art, Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1977), p.156

<sup>43</sup> Larner, Christina, *Witchcraft and Religion*, (Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, 1984), p.5, this was first published as an article more than ten years earlier, Larner, Christina, 'James VI and Witchcraft' in Smith (ed), *The Reign of James VI and I*, (The MacMillan Press Ltd, London, 1973)

The Protestant authors represent a spectrum of opinion from within the Reformed faith.

The works are not all scholarly demonologies with large numbers of references to earlier or current authorities, however, they do demonstrate the ways in which Protestants approached the issue of witchcraft, and their solutions to it.

### 1.6. The Influence of the Literature upon Witch Beliefs and Persecution

The aims of the literature are difficult to ascertain, unless the author specifically states whom he intended to influence, it can only be conjectured from the type of treatise, and the language used. Ciruelo, Boguet, and the Englishmen all wrote in the vernacular, although Daneau also issued his work in French. Normally this would signify an attempt to reach the people who had no knowledge of the educated language of Latin. Ciruelo supports this view by explicitly declaring his intention to alert priests to the dangers of superstition in their own language, "I owe it to all my fellow Spaniards to write this book in our language."<sup>44</sup> It is slightly surprising that Boguet wrote in French: he was an educated man, and his work is hardly simple or short enough to be intended for the general public. The reason Scot wrote in English is also unknown; he seems to have read at least Latin and possibly some Hebrew, as his discussions of mistranslations demonstrate, however, his book, like Boguet's work, could hardly have been aimed at a general readership.

The use of the dialogue form by Champier, Daneau, Gifford and James is quite interesting. Champier did not use this form for the same reasons as the others; the dialogue was part of

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<sup>44</sup> Ciruelo, The Second Preface, p.58



the popular Renaissance humanist tradition, and this would have been his reason for using this form. For the Protestants who chose this method of demonstrating their beliefs, it is more likely that it was to ensure a wider audience, and to make them more accessible to the commons. Gifford declared that his reason for writing in a dialogue was simply, “to make the fitter for the capacity of the simpler sort.”<sup>45</sup> Although his other work was not in dialogue form, it also seems to have been intended for people such as his parishioners, those who could read only simple English, as he declared his intention to “instruct the simple sort to discern the better and to judge of all the rest.”<sup>46</sup>

The works of the three later Catholics follow the traditional form of Inquisitors’ manuals, although they were not intended for Inquisitors themselves. Of these three, possibly the most interesting is Guazzo’s *Compendium maleficarum* as its illustrations suggest that it was not only intended for use by the educated. The images accompanying this text are so simple as to need no explanation, as Davidson wrote, “It takes no scholarship to understand a print which shows a witch basting a baby over a slow fire.”<sup>47</sup>

Hemmingsen, Martin and Ponzinibio appear to have been writing with specific educated audiences in mind. Hemmingsen was writing for the clergy, and his continual reference to biblical sources adds weight to this claim. Martin had been asked to write about his experiences by a fellow canon, suggesting that this was the intended audience for his work. Ponzinibio wrote in strong terms about the legal ramifications of witchcraft beliefs, and his

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<sup>45</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, A3’

<sup>46</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, B1’

<sup>47</sup> Davidson, Jane P., *op cit*, p.81

legal focus at times demonstrates that his work was most likely to be intended for fellow legists.

Whoever these men intended to read their works, it is highly unlikely that the texts themselves had any influence over proceedings against witches. This is a mistake often made, to attribute a causal role to the demonologies, which it is unlikely they ever had. It seems that overall, demonologies may have had some influence upon the common beliefs; this has been aptly demonstrated by Carlo Ginzburg's work on the *benandanti*, but individual works had little impact, except upon other demonologies.<sup>48</sup> Hemmingsen and Scot appear to have had the most influence over other writers. Hemmingsen is supposed to have greatly influenced King James when he travelled to Denmark in 1590, while Scot has been attributed with influencing a generation of sceptical writers, including Gifford, as well as the Dutchman Balthasar Bekker.

It is more likely that hunts inspired these writers to produce their tracts; certainly it seems that Scot decided to write his sceptical tract after witnessing the trials at Chelmsford. Gifford was inspired to write after the St Osyth trials, held near to his own parish, while James was closely involved in what he believed to be a demonic attempt upon his own life. Daneau wrote of witches and sorcery because of the speculation which the Paris trials had caused. The works of the two Counter Reformation Frenchmen, Remi and Boguet, could almost be described as the memoirs of influential men. However, it was their experiences as judges in witchcraft trials that led them to write, although they obviously hoped that their

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<sup>48</sup> For more information upon the *benandanti* and the influence of learned belief, see 7.1.3

works would inspire the next generation of the judiciary.

Actual influence is hard to prove: Caroline Oates believed that Boguet was exceptional in being an influence upon judicial procedure, but apart from his work being included in various libraries, this is difficult to demonstrate.<sup>49</sup> James had the best opportunity to influence the way in which trials proceeded, but it appears that he did little in this way. After the massive trials of 1590-1591, which were more truthfully trials for treason than sorcery, his interest appears to have waned. In the same year that *Daemonologie* was published, James revoked the standing commissions against witchcraft. Although the 1604 English Witchcraft Act was more severe than its Elizabethan predecessor, there seems to have been no increase in executions while he was king, and possibly fewer than under Elizabeth.<sup>5</sup> Surprisingly the one work where influence is easier to show than others, is that of Reginald Scot. The Dutch translation and edition of 1609 was undertaken at the request of, "various people ... who were also of the opinion that this book had been beneficial in many places, having opened the eyes of some of the judges and set them thinking that they should not so lightly get rid of the poor and often foolish old doting women, even though it were on their own confession."<sup>51</sup> This is not conclusive by any means, but demonstrates the influence it was possible for a text to have, even outside its own country.

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<sup>49</sup> Oates, Caroline Frances, op cit, p.112

<sup>50</sup> Larner, Christina, op cit, pp.17, 19

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Beliën, Herman, 'Judicial Views on the Crime of Witchcraft' in Frijhoff (ed), *Witchcraft in the Netherlands from the 14th to the 20th Century*, (Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, Rotterdam, 1991), p.60

# **Divine and Demonic Power**

## 2 Divine and Demonic Power

### 2.1. Divine Power: The Origin of Demons

The concept of spirits which were able to act in the human world was Greek. ‘*Daimones*’ originally had no moral connotation, the word was even used synonymously with the word for a god. The word ‘*daimon*’ was, as Langton described, “originally as colourless as the word ‘spirit’, which means simply ‘breathing’, ‘breath’, or ‘wind.’”<sup>1</sup> The distinction between good and evil demons was first examined by Xenocrates, the disciple of Plato.<sup>2</sup>

#### 2.1.1 Divine Power and Evil

The idea that God was the force behind all evil events and tribulations, developed over time. Theodicy, the examination of the problems inherent in a good God allowing evil to exist, has existed since Biblical times.<sup>3</sup> It is of vital importance for any study of witchcraft, to include a study of divine and demonic power. Without allowing the devil any power, witches in turn would be unable to commit any crimes. However, at first this appears to contradict the doctrine of divine omnipotence.

In the Old Testament, God was seen to create the world, and everything he created was described as good, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”<sup>4</sup> In the book of Isaiah, however, God was also seen as the source of evil, “I form

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<sup>1</sup> Langton, Edward, *Good and Evil Spirits*, (SPCK, London, 1942), p.49

<sup>2</sup> Langton, Edward, *Essentials of Demonology*, (The Epworth Press, London, 1949), pp.85, 87

<sup>3</sup> Hick, John, *Evil and the God of Love*, 2nd Edition, (The MacMillan Press Ltd, London, 1966, 1977), p.6 He quotes a nice Latin tag to demonstrate the problem of theodicy, “Si deus est, unde malum? Si non est, unde bonum?” p.11

<sup>4</sup> Genesis i:xxxi, King James Bible, 1611

the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.”<sup>5</sup> Yet God maintained the control over the evil, it was his creation, and as yet, the concept of a personified evil, which developed into the character of Satan was unknown. Even in the New Testament, when the evil Satan is a fully fledged character, God retained power over him, “if I with the finger of God cast out devils,” demonstrating the power inherent in even the tiniest part of God.’

The devil was believed to be able to operate almost freely in this world until the day of Judgement, but God remained in control. Even in the tribulations of Job, permission had to be granted before Satan could harm him, and conditions were laid upon Satan that had to be followed, “Behold, [said God] he is in thine hand; but save his life.”<sup>7</sup>

### *2.1.2 The Development of Satan and Personified Evil*

Although God had created everything good, this did not stop evil from entering the world. This was due to free will, which God had given to both the angels and man. Leeming described this well when he wrote, “Christianity denies that evil is as ultimate as good, that an evil principle is as necessary and eternal as God. Evil rose not from the nature of things, but from the free choice of a creature of God.”<sup>8</sup>

Scholars appear to agree that the concept of personified evil was partly due to influence upon the Jews during the exile and Babylonian captivity. Donald Taylor summarised the influences that led the Jews, who were being held in terrible conditions, to believe in

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<sup>5</sup> Isaiah xlv:vii, op cit

<sup>6</sup> Luke xi:xx, op cit

<sup>7</sup> Job ii:vi, op cit

the power of evil in the world, “thus, the world was believed to be irredeemably evil, and under the control of evil forces.”<sup>9</sup> These ideas influenced the Israelites in post exilic times (after 500 BC), and the belief began that demons could tempt human beings, “they now begin to entice human beings to do morally wrong things. ... Demons are becoming devils.”<sup>10</sup>

The Jewish word *śtn*, vocalised as ‘satan, means something similar to ‘opponent’ or ‘obstruction.’<sup>11</sup> There is a great deal of debate over the development of satan, from his being a non-specific member of God’s court, to being the arch-enemy of Christ, as portrayed in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, although not named, he is a spirit who volunteers to do harm for God, and appears to be not a mere member of God’s court, but quite a trusted councillor.<sup>12</sup> However, the ultimate control still remained with God, and satan was simply his servant, “in its submission to the supreme will, the theology of the Old Testament allows for only one pole in the universe, and the Devil never does anything that is out of harmony with the Creator. Satan is not the Devil: he is the suffering desired by the will of God.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Leeming, Bruno (S.J.), ‘The Adversary’ in Jesus-Marie (ed), *Satan*, (Sheed & Ward Inc., New York, 1952), p.20

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, Donald, ‘Theological thoughts about Evil’ in Parkin (ed), *The Anthropology of Evil*, (Blackwell, Oxford, 1985), p.34

<sup>10</sup> Gaybba, B., ‘The Development in Biblical Times of Belief in Demons and Devils and the Theological Issue Raised by such a Development’ in de Villiers (ed), *Like a Roaring Lion ... Essays on the Bible, the church and demonic powers*, (C.B. Powell Bible Centre, Pretoria, 1987), p.93

<sup>11</sup> Forsyth, Neil, *The Old Enemy*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987), p.113, for other discussions of the influence of the exile, see Toy, C.H., ‘Evil Spirits in the Bible’, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. IX, 1890, pp.17-30, pp.24 ff, and Lee, Jung Young, ‘Interpreting the Demonic Powers in Pauline thought’, *New Testament*, Vol. 12, 1970, pp.54-69, p.57

<sup>12</sup> see for example, I Kings xxii:xix-xxii, op cit, for a brief discussion of this topic, see the article ‘Satan’ in Metzger, Bruce M. and Michael D. Coogan (eds), *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993)

<sup>13</sup> Messadié, Gerald, *The History of the Devil*, translated Marc Romano, (Newleaf, London, 1996), pp.236-237

### 2.1.3 *The Power of the Devil and Demons*

The devil was viewed as having very little power in Biblical times; misfortune and trial came from God, with demons working as his executioners. God allowed the devil power over men for various reasons, mainly to test their faith or to punish them for sin. In the Old Testament, the devil was allowed less sway than in the New; Judaic tradition ascribed all things to God, good or bad. It was only with the development of Christianity that satan was deemed to have such great power in the material world.

In the Old Testament, all tribulation was believed to come directly from God, and was not necessarily viewed as being helpful or constructive. God was viewed as being quite vindictive, and unlike later developments, was the origin of all tribulation and evil, without the intermediary of the devil. He would send evil upon individual groups or families if they had displeased him, and it was accepted that this was the way of the Lord. In Micah, the Lord says, "Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily."<sup>14</sup> If God was angry, he was seen to work great damage, as shown in Jeremiah, where God orders the people to obey him, "lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. ... I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction."<sup>15</sup>

New Testament belief was that if trials and tribulations came into one's life, then it was either a test of faith or a punishment for sin. Many New Testament epistles deal at length with the topic; for example, in Colossians, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of

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<sup>14</sup> Micah ii:iii, op cit



God cometh on the children of disobedience.”<sup>16</sup> When these tests or punishments arrived, the authors believed that they should be gloried in, as they were sent by the Lord to help, “we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience: and experience, hope.”<sup>17</sup>

Satan gradually developed into the main evil spirit sent by God to try man. There are many examples in the Bible of God sending evil spirits, but they are not specifically named, for example in a Psalm, “He [God] cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them,” and also in Samuel, “an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.”<sup>18</sup> In the Book of Job, the most famous example of God testing his subjects, Satan, now named as such, asked if he could try the faith of Job. God had great confidence in Job and allowed this test, demonstrating both his power, and the comparative lack of Satan’s, but interestingly, Job did not ascribe his troubles to the devil: “shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”<sup>19</sup> As Kluger wrote, “In the consciousness of the pious Job ... there is as yet no room for the concept of Satan. Job himself ascribed to Yahweh the misfortunes that assail him.”<sup>20</sup>

In the New Testament this concept was fully developed; in the Gospel of Luke, shortly before his arrest, Christ declared that Satan had asked for Simon, “Simon, behold, Satan

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<sup>15</sup> Jeremiah iv:iv, vi, op cit, see also Ecclesiastes i:xiii, op cit

<sup>16</sup> Colossians iii:v-vi, op cit

<sup>17</sup> Romans v:iii-iv, op cit

<sup>18</sup> Psalm lxxviii:xlx and I Samuel xvi:xiv, op cit

<sup>19</sup> Job ii:x, op cit

<sup>20</sup> Kluger, Rivkah Schärf, *Satan in the Old Testament*, translated Hildegard Nagel, (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1967), p.83

hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.”<sup>21</sup> This is an apt example of the change in status that had occurred, Messadié wrote of this, “the statement implies that Satan has been entrusted with a mission - and this could be at no one’s instigation but God’s. The devil is therefore no longer merely the chief of a legion of impure and unpredictable demons; he is, rather, the acolyte of God, who in His supreme wisdom has decided to put humanity to the test.”<sup>22</sup>

The development of the Devil took a long time, but by the time the gospels were written, he was an accepted part of the divine scheme. As time passed he was no longer considered simply part of God’s entourage, but a power in his own right. The change is interesting, and Caird appears to have discovered a possible reason for its occurrence, “to God’s servant Satan may be ascribed activities which are unworthy of God himself, and that Satan’s work, though it is done in the name of God, is in some way contrary to the real divine purpose.”<sup>23</sup>

However, this was not to deny the power of the devil in the material, rather than spiritual, world. The devil was said to have the power of death over mankind, “through death he [Christ] might destroy him, that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”<sup>24</sup> During his temptations, Christ was offered the kingdoms of the world, implying that they were the devil’s to give, without any words of contradiction.<sup>25</sup> Satan was viewed as the ruler of this world, with God as the ruler in the next. The writer of the letters to the Ephesians encouraged people to fight the devil, telling them, “we wrestle not against

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<sup>21</sup> Luke xxii:xxxix, op cit

<sup>22</sup> Messadié, Gerald, op cit, pp.255-256

<sup>23</sup> Caird, G.B., *Principalities and Powers*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1956), p.33

<sup>24</sup> Hebrews ii:xiv, op cit

<sup>25</sup> See Matthew iv:ix and Luke iv:vi, op cit

flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.”<sup>26</sup>

## 2.2. The Early Church

### 2.2.1 *Patristic Beliefs in Divine Power*

The Church Fathers placed a great deal of emphasis upon God’s omnipotence, partly in response to the dualist beliefs that were prevalent at the time they were writing.

Augustine wrote specifically against the Manichaeans, but included in his criticisms were the Gnostics. Dualist beliefs, specifically Manichaean, as Hick described it, “dealt directly and explicitly with the problem of evil by affirming an ultimate dualism of good and evil, light and darkness.”<sup>27</sup> An example of the way in which the Patristics wrote of divine power is from Augustine, “we must believe with complete conviction that omnipotent God can do anything he pleases,” and comparing this to the complete lack of power that demons held.<sup>28</sup> Tertullian believed that God was omnipotent because he was, “able both to help and to hurt,” obviously a comparison with demons, who were only able to harm.<sup>29</sup>

The Fathers put emphasis upon the concept of free will, as Augustine wrote, “free will is the cause of our doing evil and that the just judgement is the cause of our having to

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<sup>26</sup> Ephesians vi:xii, op cit, see also Ephesians ii:ii, and John xii:xxx, xiv:xxx and xvi:xi, op cit

<sup>27</sup> Hick, John, op cit, p.39, see also Forsyth, Neil, op cit, and the article on Gnosticism in Metzger, Bruce M., op cit, and for more discussion on this issue see, Schwerhoff, Gerd, ‘Rationalität im Wahn’, *Saeculum*, Vol. 37, 1986, pp.45-82

<sup>28</sup> Augustine, Saint, *City of God*, (Penguin Books Ltd, London, 1972), XVIII:xviii

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *Against Marcion*, II:xiii in Roberts, Rev. Alexander and James Donaldson (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 1957)

suffer from its consequences.”<sup>30</sup> God had not created anything that was evil, as Abbot Serenus declared, “God forbid we should admit that God has created anything which is substantially evil.”<sup>31</sup> St Basil debated this point at length, concluding, “it is equally impious to say that evil has its origin from God; because the contrary cannot proceed from its contrary.”<sup>32</sup>

### 2.2.2 Patristic Beliefs in Personified Evil

As far as the Fathers were concerned, evil did not originate from God, and was not a physical reality, “Evil is not a living animated essence; it is the condition of the soul opposed to virtue developed in the careless on account of their falling away from good.”<sup>33</sup> Even Augustine, who wrote a great deal about the physical manifestations of evil, believed that it had no physical substance, “evil ... has no substance at all; for if it were a substance, it would be good,” and also, “I asked what wickedness was, and I found that it was no substance, but a perversion of the will bent aside from thee, O God.”<sup>34</sup> This demonstrates how the belief in a physical devil was not yet omnipresent, and that the concept of a personified Satan had not fully developed.

They would not allow that God had even created a thing as inherently evil as the devil; they argued that the devil had been pure, but then became evil, however, even in this

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<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* IV:iii:5 in Outler, Albert C. (ed), *The Library of Christian Classics: Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*, Vol. VII, (SCM Press Ltd, London, 1955)

<sup>31</sup> John Cassian, *Second Conference of Abbot Serenus*, chapter VI, in Schaff, Philip (ed), *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd Series, Vol. XI, (Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 1955)

<sup>32</sup> Saint Basil, *The Hexameron*, Homily II: iv in Schaff, Philip (ed), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd Series, Vol. VIII, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, no date)

<sup>33</sup> Saint Basil, *The Hexameron*, Homily II:iv, in Schaff, Philip, no date, op cit

<sup>34</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VII:xii:18 and VII:xvi:22 in Outler, Albert C., op cit

state he was not substantially evil.<sup>35</sup> Chrysostom argued that the devil had not been made evil by God, “Let the devil be allowed to be exceeding wicked, not by nature, but by choice and conviction.”<sup>36</sup> Cassian discussed the origin and nature of the devil, and declared that he had been made a good spirit or angel, but had become filled with pride, which led to his new, evil nature.<sup>37</sup> The belief that the devil was the leader of the power of darkness and evil was confirmed by the Council of Nicea in 325.<sup>38</sup>

However, there was still overall belief in the omnipotence of God. Although evil existed, it remained part of God’s plan, and would not exist had God not wished it. As Augustine wrote, “For God judged it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist.”<sup>39</sup>

### 2.2.3 *Patristic Beliefs on the Nature and Power of the Devil and Demons*

The nature of demons was something examined by Augustine, he even wrote an entire treatise (albeit short) on this issue. He placed demons in the accepted position of the heavenly sphere: between men and God. This reflected their power as well, “they are inferior to the gods and dwell below them, but superior to men, having their abode above them.”<sup>40</sup> Demons were able to deceive men due to their amazing physical abilities; as they possessed no earthly body, they were able to move very fast and had great

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<sup>35</sup> Origen insisted that the devil was a corrupted good angel, who nevertheless, retained the capacity to repent; this was regarded as heterodox by the later Fathers and theologians, who believed the devil to be irretrievably damned.

<sup>36</sup> St John Chrysostom, *Three Homilies Concerning the Power of Demons*, Homily I, s.2, in Schaff, Philip, 1956, op cit

<sup>37</sup> John Cassian, *Second Conference of Abbot Serenus*, chapter XXV, in Schaff, Philip, 1955, op cit

<sup>38</sup> Messadié, Gerald, op cit, p.257

<sup>39</sup> Augustine, *Enchiridion*, VIII:xxvii in Outler, Albert C., op cit

<sup>40</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, VIII:xiv

perception. They also had great experience, due to being immortal.<sup>41</sup> However, there was no doubt that they boded no good for mankind, as Tertullian wrote, "Their great business is the ruin of mankind. ... Their great subtleness and tenuity give them access to both parts of our nature."<sup>42</sup>

The devil had power in this world, but as Peter pointed out this was acceptable, "God appointed two kingdoms and established two ages, determining that the present world should be given to the evil one, because it is small, and passes quickly away; but He promised to preserve for the good one the age to come, as it will be great and eternal."<sup>43</sup> The devil was only permitted to tempt man, not force him into sin, and this was due to the fact that if God had to destroy everything which led to evil, then there would be nothing left, so the devil remained.<sup>44</sup>

All the Fathers believed that the devil was simply a servant of God, carrying out his master's wishes, even though they appeared to coincide with the devil's own. Lactantius had an interesting angle on this idea, he declared that God had to permit evil, as without it man would lose the source of his wisdom, "if there is no evil, no danger - nothing, in short, which can injure man - all the material of wisdom is taken away, and will be unnecessary for man."<sup>45</sup> Peter, as reported by Clement, believed that the devil performed

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<sup>41</sup> Augustine, *The Divination of Demons*, chapter III in Augustine, Saint, *Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects*, edited, Deferrari, translated Charles Wilcox et al, (The Catholic University of America, Washington DC, 1955)

<sup>42</sup> Tertullian, *The Apology*, chapter XXII in Roberts, Alexander, 1957, op cit

<sup>43</sup> Clement of Rome, *Homilies*, Homily II:ii, in Roberts, Rev. Alexander and James Donaldson (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VIII, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, no date)

<sup>44</sup> Letter from St John Chrysostom to Stagirus in Leeming, Bruno, op cit, p.36

<sup>45</sup> Lactantius, *A Treatise on the Anger of God*, chapter XIII, in Roberts, Rev. Alexander and James Donaldson (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VII, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, no date)

a necessary and divine function, “it might perchance be found that the service he [the devil] performs was an absolute necessity.”<sup>46</sup>

Augustine summarised the reasons why the devil was allowed to tempt and harass mankind, “every tribulation is either a punishment of the impious or a testing of the just.”<sup>47</sup> That this direction came from God was also examined by Augustine, “Temptations, ... take place by means of Satan not by his power, but by the Lord’s permission, either for the purpose of punishing men for their sins, or of proving and exercising them in accordance with the Lord’s compassion.”<sup>48</sup>

The idea that all tribulations were sent from God, as either a test or punishment was examined by many of the Fathers. Chrysostom added to these standard two: that one would become stronger as a result of tribulation, to remain modest, to convince the demon that one would not turn to him, to demonstrate to oneself that one had become stronger, and finally, to ensure the realisation of how great are the treasures God has given.<sup>4</sup>

Job was the example they most often used when discussing the tribulations sent by God to test the faithful. Chrysostom discussed this issue at length, declaring that the trials Job was subjected to were in order that “his crown might be so much the more

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<sup>46</sup> Clement of Rome *Homilies*, Homily XIX:v in Roberts, Alexander, no date, vol.VIII, op cit

<sup>47</sup> Augustine, Saint, *Eighty Three Different Questions*, translated David L. Mosher, (The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C., 1982), ‘On Providence’, Q.27

<sup>48</sup> Augustine, *Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount*, II:ix:34, in Schaff, Philip (ed), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. VI, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1956)

<sup>49</sup> St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St Matthew*, Homily XIII, s.1, in Schaff, Philip (ed), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. X, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 1956)

glorious!”<sup>50</sup> This reason held true for contemporaries, he declared, it had not ended with Job, “then, as well as now, God, permitted it; ... that he might make the just man more illustrious by the greatness of his trials.”<sup>51</sup>

The idea that God would use the devil to punish man for sins committed was also discussed by the Fathers. Augustine declared that God was certainly the originator of tribulations, “God is not the author of the evil a man does though he is the author of the evil a man suffers.”<sup>52</sup> Tertullian discussed both sinful and penal evils, and believed God was the author of the latter, “which are compatible with justice ... They are, no doubt, evil to those by whom they are endured, but still on their own account good, as being just and defensive of good and hostile to sin.”<sup>53</sup>

As has been shown, the Church Fathers were certain only that God was omnipotent, beyond that their beliefs wavered and became less clear. They tried to assert certain aspects as being beyond doubt, but as they did not seem certain themselves, this was a difficult task. Their inconsistency was nicely described by Frances Young, “God is love;

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<sup>5</sup> St John Chrysostom, *Concerning the Statutes*, Homily I, s.18 in Schaff, Philip (ed), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. IX, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 1956)

<sup>51</sup> St John Chrysostom, *Concerning the Statutes*, Homily II, s.1, in Schaff, Philip, 1956, op cit, for other examples of this belief see Chrysostom’s letter to Stagirus in Leeming, Bruno, op cit, pp.36-37; St John Chrysostom, *Three Homilies Concerning the Power of Demons*, Homily I, s.8 in Schaff, Philip, 1956, op cit, and Lactantius, *A Treatise on the Anger of God*, chapter XV in Roberts, Alexander, no date, vol. VII, op cit

<sup>52</sup> Augustine, *On Free Will*, I.i.1, in Burleigh, John H.S. (ed), *The Library of Christian Classics: Augustine: Earlier Writings*, Vol. VI, (SCM Press Ltd, London, 1953)

<sup>53</sup> Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, chapter XIV, in Roberts, Alexander, 1957, op cit



God is angry. God is ultimately responsible for everything; the devil is responsible for evil.”<sup>54</sup>

## 2.3. The Scholastics

### 2.3.1 Scholastic Beliefs in Divine Power

The Scholastics were left with this situation, and the additional confusion that allowed the devil more power in the physical world. As the Fathers before them, they also were faced with heretical dualist groups, and again believed they had to reaffirm the absolute power of God. The only way for them to reconcile these two seemingly opposite poles, was to divide God's power. To this end, they devised the theories of *potentia ordinata* and *potentia absoluta*. They are very complex theories, which allowed God to wish one thing, yet allow the opposite to actually occur. This theory of splitting God's power rose to prominence in the fourteenth century, but appears to have been used a century earlier, as Albertus Magnus implied that its use was already customary.<sup>55</sup> As Heiko Oberman defined them:

God can - and, in fact, has chosen to - do certain things according to the laws which he freely established, that is, *de potentia ordinata*. On the other hand, God can do everything that does not imply contradiction, whether God has decided to do these things [*de potentia ordinata*] or not, as there are many things God can do which he does not want to do. The latter is called God's power *de potentia absoluta*.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Young, Frances M., 'Insight or Incoherence: The Greek Fathers on Good and Evil', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 24, No. 2, April 1973, pp.113-126, p.124

<sup>55</sup> Oakley, Francis, *The Western Church in the Later Middle Ages*, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1979), p.143

<sup>56</sup> Oberman, Heiko Augustinus, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1963), p.37

This distinction split God's power, but retained his omnipotence. The debate of the scholastics focused upon whether God's ability, *de potentia absoluta*, continued to exist, or whether it was limited to before his creation of established order. However, as Oberman again pointed out, "the established reality *de potentia ordinata* is never divorced from the possibilities *de potentia absoluta*."<sup>57</sup> *Potentia ordinata* could be suspended by God, whenever he wished, a good example of this, was the Biblical story of the conversion of Paul. This story demonstrated that God was able to work outside the ordained power, which he had imposed upon himself, and return to his absolute power.<sup>58</sup>

The scholastics debated these points, often becoming very confused in the process, even Ockham warned that anyone who had not been "excellently instructed in logic and theology" could make errors on this issue.<sup>59</sup> Hugh of St Victor believed that God had made everything that was good, but allowed evil, and in giving permission for evil, "He permitted well and it was good that He permitted, even if that was not good which he permitted." Hick believed that Hugh's distinction carried "some of the Augustinian ideas further, or at least makes them more starkly explicit than did Augustine himself."<sup>60</sup> Aquinas was similarly clear, "God therefore neither wills evil to be done, nor wills it not to be done, but wills to permit evil to be done; and this is a good."

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<sup>5</sup> Oberman, Heiko Augustinus, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, (T. & T. Clark Ltd, Edinburgh, 1986), p.27, see also Oakley, Francis, op cit, pp.143-145 and 'potentia absoluta' and 'potentia ordinata' in Muller, Richard A., *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, (Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1985)

<sup>58</sup> As described in Funkstein, Amos, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the 17th Century*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986), p.122: *potentia absoluta* "recognizes no limits to it, no confining law or order, except for the principle of noncontradiction," and *potentia ordinata* "God's power inasmuch as it is actualized or realizable in an order of things."

<sup>59</sup> Oakley, Francis, op cit, p.144

<sup>60</sup> Hugh of St Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, I:iv:4 in Hick, John, op cit, p.91,

<sup>61</sup> Aquinas, St Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, translated Liam G. Walsh, (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1974), 'The Will of God', Book I, Part I, Q.xix, art. 9

### 2.3.2 Scholastic Beliefs on the Nature and Power of the Devil and Demons

Accepted belief was that the devil was the leader of the demons, all of whom aimed only to bring destruction upon mankind. This theory was more organised in the Medieval period than it had been in the Early Church, as Bever commented, the twelfth century saw, “the theologians’ systemization of evil into a coherent, coordinated whole, subordinated to the Devil and organized hierarchically.”<sup>62</sup> However, the actual idea of a hierarchy of demons came from the translations into Latin of the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (9th century). The belief that the devil had been created good by God, remained, and was authorised by the Fourth Lateran Council, “The devil and other demons were created by God naturally good, but they became evil by their own doing. Man, however, sinned at the prompting of the devil.”<sup>63</sup>

The aim of demons was summarised by Jean Gerson, who wrote that they, “exert themselves to make man sin and prevent him from mounting to the heaven from which they fell.”<sup>64</sup> This was the strictest interpretation of the power of demons, and Gerson did not stray from within its boundaries. Aquinas also agreed that the evil powers aimed at preventing man from reaching heaven, and agreed that there were limits on the ways in which they could do this, “the devil is a cause of sin, neither directly nor sufficiently, but only by persuasion, or by proposing the object of appetite.”<sup>65</sup> However, he also wrote, “the devil, by his own power, unless he be restrained by God, can compel anyone to do

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<sup>62</sup> Bever, E.W.M., ‘Witchcraft in Early Modern Wurttemberg’, PhD Dissertation, (Princeton, 1983), p.40

<sup>63</sup> Fourth Lateran Council, 1215, Consistution I, in Alberigo, G. and Norman P. Tanner (eds), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. I and II, (Sheed & Ward, Georgetown University Press, London and Washington, 1990)

<sup>64</sup> Jean Gerson, *Factum est*, quoted in Brown, D. Catherine, *Pastor and Laity in the theology of Jean Gerson*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987), p.92

<sup>65</sup> Aquinas, op cit, Book II, Part I, Q.lxxx, art.1

an act which, in its genus, is a sin; but he cannot bring about the necessity of sinning.”<sup>66</sup>

This seems to weaken his previous statement that the devil was limited in his actions, by ascribing so much power to the devil, although he allowed for the restraining influence of God.

Belief that God used the devil and his demons in order to punish mankind for sin, or to place them back on the road to righteousness was common among the scholastics. Peter Abelard asked, “who, ... may not be unaware that the devil himself does nothing except what he is allowed by God to do, when either he punishes a wicked man for his faults or is allowed to strike a just man in order to purge him or to provide an example of patience?” Hugh of St Victor declared that this world contained sinners awaiting a better one, and therefore evil was necessary, “the world is the place of those who err and must be restored, and therefore both good and evil are disposed in it simultaneously, in order that men on the one hand might receive consolation through the good, and on the other hand might receive correction through the evil.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Aquinas, op cit, Book II, Part I, Q.lxxx, art.3

<sup>67</sup> Abelard, Peter, *Ethics*, edited, Luscombe, translated D.E. Luscombe, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971), ‘What is mental vice and what is properly said to be sin’, s.29, for other examples of this belief see Brown, op cit pp.119-121

<sup>68</sup> Hugh of St Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, I:viii:II in Fairweather, Eugene R. (ed), *The Library of Christian Classics: A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, Vol. X, (SCM Press, London, 1956)

## 2.4. Pre-Reformation Views

### 2.4.1 *Pre-Reformation Beliefs in Divine Power*

For the pre-Reformation writers, divine omnipotence was not an issue for question, for this reason it was neither discussed at great length, nor was it clarified in any more depth. This was a murky area for these writers: their Medieval predecessors, and the Church Fathers, had dealt with the questions raised by belief in the omnipotence of God and the power of the devil, leaving little to debate. Whereas their followers in the Counter Reformation felt that these were essential areas of debate, due to the power they granted the devil; the pre-Reformation writers felt no such compulsion, but then they did not believe that they faced a conspiracy of diabolic witches.

For pre-Reformation writers, God was omnipotent, and this was a fact of life, not open to question. That they felt this way is obvious from the fact they virtually ignored this issue; Champier could not be said to have discussed it at all, and Martin and Ciruelo mentioned it only in passing. Martin mentioned the omnipotence of God in reference to the submerging of images, believing this to be a test of God's mercy. He wrote that by submerging an image, one was limiting divine omnipotence, "For in that action there are limits set to the workings of the divine omnipotence itself; there is set forth a manner by which, as it were, the divine wisdom is to be obliged to work; there is set out a specific purpose for the divine goodness and mercy."<sup>69</sup> His tone suggested that this was a great sin, to try and set limits upon God, and to question how he used his omnipotence. Pedro Ciruelo dealt with the issue of omnipotence in greater depth, but this was due

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<sup>69</sup>Martin, Section 80, 406, "Nam praefigitur ibi terminus operandi ipsi divinae omnipotentiae: praestituitur modus quo quasi compellatur operari ipsi divinae Sapientiae: statuitur etiam finis ipsi

more to his discussion of diviners and foreknowledge, than specifically dealing with *potentia absoluta*. For Ciruelo, only God was able to predict the future, “God is the only one in whose knowledge nothing ever happens by the contingency of chance. God knows all things before they happen because He has foreseen everything.”<sup>70</sup>

However, running parallel to this rational strand of thought, was the irrational and very muddled theory contained within the *Malleus maleficarum*. The theory in the *Malleus* exaggerated both the extent of divine permission, and the power of the devil. The *Malleus* stated that specific permission was needed for each individual act of a demon, “it must be said that everything is subject to divine providence, not only in the general, but also in the particular sense.”<sup>71</sup> This belief was reiterated throughout the treatise, especially in relation to the evil of witches, “it will be easier to admit particular permissions in the case of the works of witches.”<sup>72</sup> Jaquier’s *Flagellum Haereticorum Fascinariorum* written in 1458, proposed a similar line of thought, when he wrote that special permission was given to the demons on a daily basis.<sup>73</sup> However, the confusion of the *Malleus* ensured that the theory of divine permission was not consistent throughout the text. At one point the monks even declared that divine permission was not always necessary, “not all evils are subject to Divine permission.”<sup>74</sup>

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divinae bonitati et clementiae.” This is a verbatim quote from Jean Gerson, *On Errors concerning the Magic art*, response to objection 3

<sup>70</sup> Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 8, p.177

<sup>71</sup> Kramer, Heinrich and James Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, edited, M. Summers, (Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1971), Part I, Q.12, p.68

<sup>72</sup> Kramer, Heinrich, op cit, Part I, Q.13, p.72

<sup>73</sup> See Lea, p.282

<sup>74</sup> Kramer, Heinrich, op cit, Part I, Q. 12, p.67

#### 2.4.2 *Pre-Reformation Beliefs on the Nature and Power of the Devil and Demons*

Pre-Reformation writers had no doubts about the existence of demons, and little variation existed within their beliefs as to the demonic nature. The discussion of the natural attributes of the devil basically followed Augustine's definitive text, Martin even cited Augustine, and simply paraphrased his words.<sup>75</sup> Ciruelo did not admit that he was following Augustine, but did maintain the same points. He did, however, discuss the attributes that demons had retained from their time in heaven, which was not an issue of importance for either Martin or Champier. Demons, Ciruelo wrote, had not lost their "power of intellection, nor the knowledge acquired through it."<sup>76</sup> In this way, they were able to know all about the corporeal world, nature, the stars and the properties of natural things, which they were able to use in their dealings with men. Interestingly, Martin commented that demons were allowed to copy good angels, in a similar way that their master copied God whenever he was able: "the evil angels are able, as far as God's providence allows them, to do many things similar to what is done by good angels." Martin's reasons for their being able to do this was because of their similar natures, powers, experience and intelligence.<sup>77</sup>

The aims of the demons were discussed, and Champier declared that "they are always eager to do harm, strangers to justice, swollen with pride, hot with deceit, livid with

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<sup>75</sup>Martin, Sections 59,60, 405\*

<sup>76</sup>Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 8, pp.172-173

<sup>77</sup>Martin, Section 95, 407\*, "possunt enim Angeli mali, quantum Dei providentia permiserit, agere multa similia ad Angelos bonos"

jealousy.”<sup>78</sup> Ciruelo pointed out that the devil obviously wanted worship in the way it was given to God, “what he wants, most of all, is to be recognized as God by men.”<sup>79</sup>

The devil appeared, to the common people, to have great power in this world. Ciruelo wrote that before Christ, “the devil ruled as a powerful sovereign over all the men throughout the world.”<sup>80</sup> Again, this was nothing surprising, he was simply following Biblical texts. It was also believed that the devil was the supreme lord in the kingdom of the demons, Martin cited Peter Lombard with regard to this issue.<sup>81</sup> However, they retained their strong belief in the omnipotence of God, which apart from the messy tradition of the *Malleus*, was a feature of pre-Reformation writing. An example of the type of confused writing that came from the *Malleus* tradition is in Castañega’s treatise. He asked, “Are we ... supposed to doubt it [the issue in question is flight], since the devil has the power and man the obedience to him if God permits it and gives permission for it to happen?”<sup>82</sup> This question demonstrates how confused the situation could be, Castañega appears to add the statement about divine permission as an afterthought, upon realising how much power he has attributed to the devil. On the opposite side, Martin Plantsch declared that the devil only had as much power as God was willing to give him, and witches, as the devil’s servants, had none at all.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Champier, Chapter 1 of the Third Tractate, 14’, “nocedi semper cupidi a iusticia alieni: superbia tumidi: fallacia cassidi: invidentia lividi”

<sup>79</sup> Ciruelo, part 1, Chapter 3, p.106

<sup>80</sup> Ciruelo, Part 1, Chapter 2, p.91

<sup>81</sup> Martin, Section 49, 405’

<sup>82</sup> Castañega, Martín de, *Tratado muy sutil y bien fundado de las supersticiones y hechiceras*, (originally published, Logroño, 1529), translated David H. Darst, (1979), chapter v

<sup>83</sup> Oberman, Heiko Augustinus, *Masters of the Reformation*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981), pp.170-171



That the devil and demons were the servants of God was not a point discussed by the pre-Reformation writers; for them, this was obvious: if God was omnipotent then the devil could only be working for him. However, the devil was not expected to enjoy this relationship, as Ciruelo wrote, the devil had no good thoughts at all when working for God, “His malicious and nefarious desire is to attempt to create as much evil as he can and as God allows.”<sup>84</sup> Although the devil was granted a lot of power by the authors of the *Malleus*, they admitted that he worked for God, “God is using the devil, unwilling though he be, as a servant and slave.”<sup>85</sup>

Unsurprisingly, these writers did not find any new reasons for God to be using the devil in this way, these had already been thoroughly debated by both the Church Fathers and the scholastics. Martin Plantsch wrote that man should faithfully swallow the distasteful medicine which God sent, and that God alone was able to send such medicine. Men were to accept that all things came from God, and therefore, were not to fear witches, spirits or the stars.<sup>8</sup> The belief that God sent misfortune was not new, it had been believed since Biblical times, but the debate about it was now growing. It was believed by Champier that the devil only had power on earth because of man’s sinful nature, “if many men are plagued by demons both because of lack of faith as because of the enormity of sin, as pride for example.”<sup>87</sup> He declared that it was only when a man lacked faith that the devil was able to have any power over him, “a demon can have no power over a man from the art of magic unless the man has little faith in God.”<sup>88</sup> This devil

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<sup>84</sup> Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 1, p.121

<sup>85</sup> Kramer, Heinrich, Part I, Q.1, p.11

<sup>86</sup> Oberman, Heiko Augustinus, op cit, pp.175, 166

<sup>87</sup> Champier, Chapter 2 of the Third Tractate, 16’, “ergo si homines quam plurimi a demone vexentur tam propter defectum fidei quam propter peccati enormitatem ut propter superbiam”

<sup>88</sup> Champier, Chapter 3 of the Second Tractate, 13’, “demon non potest habere efficaciam artis magice nisi supra hominem minus de deo confidentem.”

was hardly the semi-omnipotent being he was later believed to be, and in this case, Champier was actually contradicting the Biblical example of Job.

Ciruelo believed that God sent misfortune for various reasons. In discussing this, he declared that “Wise theologians” had concluded that it was “because of man’s present sins, or as a punishment for his past sins, or to prevent or forestall future sins; to humble his devoted servants, or to test their dedication to the demands of faith and the Christian religion.”<sup>8</sup> These reasons were basically the same as those suggested by Martin, who both elaborated upon them, and summarised them better than Ciruelo, “for the testing of the faithful, ... as a fitting scourge of unjust men, or because those who abuse or trust in these things [magic etc.] because of their bad faith.”<sup>9</sup> Neither writer allowed for sufferers to turn to any other than God in times of affliction, this, according to Ciruelo, was another part of their test, “those who depart from this rule signify that they are not of firm faith, nor do they fear God inasmuch as they despise the Christian rule of the Church.”<sup>1</sup>

The most common belief, however, was that misfortune was sent as retribution for sin; this had a firm Biblical basis and was an area that both Martin and Ciruelo felt able to emphasise. Sin was generally believed to lead to punishment from God, and Martin especially dealt with specific Bible references regarding this topic. According to Martin, the causes of misfortune were the people who, lacking faith in God, used cunning folk and superstition, thereby causing, “all these illnesses, pestilences, and unfruitfulness of soil, ripening fruit, corn, and vines, are inflicted upon us; why so many thousands of

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<sup>8</sup> Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 1, p.120

<sup>9</sup> Martin, Section 88, 407’, “ad probationem fidelium, ... iniquorum hominum dignam flagellationem, vel quia abutentes seu consulentes propter malam fidem”, see also Sections 85-86, 406’- 407’

sheep and other animals die all the time, why there are so many hailstorms, tempests, disturbances in the air and lightning.”<sup>92</sup> Ciruelo believed that God only allowed men to be fooled by the devil because of their sins, “it happens that God allows many men to be blinded and deceived by the devil’s false teachings since they deserve this because of their sins.”<sup>93</sup> Not only was misfortune a punishment for sin it was, according to Ciruelo, a spur into improving, “a crisis sent into man’s life because of his sins, as a whip in the hand of God.”<sup>94</sup> Ponzinibio only wrote about tribulations from the devil being a divine test upon the faith of his followers, “God allows many other things to happen by the devil’s art, in order that the people’s devotion and faith toward him be tested.”<sup>95</sup>

If men suffered misfortune and failed to react in the correct manner, that is, by turning to God, then the devil was permitted to punish them again by way of a second test. Martin wrote of those who submerged images for rain or used diviners to find lost goods, “the effect comes from the demon, with God’s permission, as a punishment for evil-doers and for their false credulity.” Not only was general sin punishable by misfortune, but also lack of faith in God, as Martin discussed in relation to the Epistle to the Hebrews.

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<sup>91</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 9, p.298

<sup>92</sup> Martin, Section 89, 407’, “hac nostra tempestate tot infirmitates, pestilentiae, sterilitates terrae, nascentium fructuum, frugum, et vinorum accidunt, totque millia pecudum aliorumque pecorum continuo pereant, totque grandines, tempestates et intemperies aerum et fulgurum” see also Sections 103, 407’ and 108, 408’

<sup>93</sup> Ciruelo, Part 1, Chapter 3, p.106, see also Part 3, Chapter 9, p.293

<sup>94</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 3, p.200

<sup>95</sup> Ponzinibio, p.262, Section 41, “Deus etiam multa alia permittit contingere per Artem Daemonis, ut probentur audientes quali devotione, et fide sint erga eum”

<sup>96</sup> Martin, Section 94, 407’, “effectum, quia a daemone, Deo permittente, ad vindictam malefactorum et perversae credulitatis illorum”

<sup>97</sup> Martin, Section 25, 404’

The situation concerning belief in divine power and the subsequent power of the devil before the Reformation was confused: on the one side was the rational, providentialist belief of people such as Martin, Champier and Ciruelo, while on the other was the confusion of the *Malleus*.

## 2.5. Counter Reformation Views

### 2.5.1 Counter Reformation Beliefs in Divine Power

These writers moved away from the beliefs established by their predecessors. They do not appear to have been overly concerned with stressing the omnipotence of God in comparison to the devil, but rather in discussing specific instances of divine mercy and so on. As they were facing what they believed to be a major onslaught from the devil and his followers, they had to explain how the devil appeared to have so much power. This in turn led them to debate the omnipotence of God: retaining God's infinite power was essential to Christian beliefs, but it was possible, they argued, that God now allowed the devil more freedom than ever before, and this would explain the new power of his followers, the witches.

The Council of Trent had not really considered the omnipotence of God, as it followed the tradition which had been established by the Church Fathers; that God's omnipotence was not an issue for debate, and therefore, neither was the power of the devil. The only time they appear to have touched upon the issue was in discussing whether evil could originate from God; "If anyone says that it is not in human power to adopt evil ways, but that God is the agent for evil acts just as for good, not only by

permitting them but also in a full sense and by personal act, so that the betrayal of Judas no less than the call of Paul is an act fully his: let him be anathema.”<sup>98</sup> Their debate and conclusions came no further than this; it was obviously not an issue that the Council felt was of concern.

However, God’s power was briefly discussed by others in relation to other issues, such as the way in which he protected certain types of people from the devil’s ire. “God, who will not permit the wicked, ... to have power over the persons of Judges,” was how Boguet described God’s mercy, whereas Remi wrote “See how God bestows a patched and covered authority on those to whom He has given the mandate of his power upon earth.” However, God’s mercy was not only extended to those of the judiciary, he also forbade the devil to tempt man beyond his powers of resistance. Remi wrote, “nor is it always in the hands of Satan to do as he wishes with men by his violence. He is permitted to tempt men, but not to drive them.”<sup>1</sup> He then declared that Satan tempted men to commit suicide, and urged them to do such mad things, “But often all these acts of desperation are prevented by God in His pity for the weakness of man, who in His wisdom protects them now in one way and now in another.”<sup>1</sup> Guazzo, simply paraphrased the comments of Remi without any further explanation.<sup>102</sup> Only Boguet emphasised that God alone had real power over mankind, “therefore it is God alone ...

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<sup>98</sup> Alberigo, G., op cit, p.679, Session 6, 13 January 1547

<sup>99</sup> Boguet, Chapter XLII, p.284, “Dieu, qui ne veut point permettre que les meschans, ... ayent puissance sur la personne des Iuges”

Remi, Book I, Chapter II, p.40, “Ecce ut Deus sartam, tectamque praestat auctoritatem iis, quibus in terris suum demandavit imperium”

<sup>100</sup> Remi, Book III, Chapter VII, p.347, “Nec semper est in manu Satanae, ut homines violentia sua quo vult impellat: Ut tenet, hoc permittitur; ut praecipitet, non ita.”

<sup>101</sup> Remi, Book III, Chapter VII, pp.347-348, “Iis autem omnibus saepe intercedit, qui imbecillitatem hominum miseretur Deus: modo hoc modo illud praesidium pro sua sapientia opponens”

<sup>102</sup> Guazzo, Book II, Chapter XIII, p.157

who sends life and death, health and sickness, and there is no salvation except in Him.”<sup>103</sup>

### 2.5.2 Counter Reformation Beliefs on the Nature and Power of the Devil and Demons

The natural powers of the devil were debated by Boguet and Remi; Boguet appeared to follow Augustine in attributing many of the devil’s supposed miracles to his speed.<sup>104</sup>

Remi wrote that the devil had the advantage of memory, and remembered everything that had ever happened.<sup>105</sup> The devil was believed to wish to copy God, as Remi described it, “Satan is the greatest follower of God’s works, and it is his chief care to appear to his subjects as nearly as possible God’s equal in power and might.”<sup>106</sup>

The Counter Reformation writers trod a very fine line between allowing the devil power, as permitted by God, and an almost dualist position, where the devil was virtually the equal of God. Boguet in his preface declared, “God even says that there is no power upon earth which may be compared with that of Behemoth,” appearing to agree that the devil was the supreme power on earth, rather than God, as Christianity declared.<sup>107</sup>

Although it was accepted that the devil had virtually unrivalled power on earth, this emphasis of Boguet’s upon the power of the devil, rather than that of God, is an element which distinguishes him from the Protestants. The might of the devil was the element which concerned them most; it was possible that the devil’s power was slightly limited.

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<sup>103</sup> Boguet, Chapter XLI, pp.280-281, “Aussi est ce Dieu seul, ... qui envoie la vie et la mort, la santé et la maladie, et n’y a point de salut si non en luy.”

<sup>104</sup> Boguet, Chapter XXIII, p.152

<sup>105</sup> Remi, Book III, Chapter X, pp.362-363

<sup>106</sup> Remi, Book II, Chapter I, p.188, “Satanas operum Dei sectator maximus hoc apud suos agit sedulo, ut se cum illo potestate, ac viribus conferat, et quam maximem exaequet.”

<sup>107</sup> Boguet, 1602, Preface de l’Auteur, A4’, “Mesmes que Dieu dict, qu’il n’y a puissance en Terre qui soit à parangonner à celle de Behemot.”

Binsfeld believed that it was only due to God that the devil was constrained, but that he still retained the power to devour souls.<sup>108</sup> Remi commented that the evils which demons commonly performed were merely for their own amusement, “what, I ask, must we think the Demons themselves will do when they devote their whole energy and attention to the satisfaction of the lust for harm that is the very essence of their nature?”<sup>109</sup>

According to Guazzo, God was able to command the devil to do things that were against his nature. The example he used was whether the devil could enrich his subjects, Guazzo believed he could, but that God rarely allowed this. However, he finished, “if God commanded him to do so, he would be compelled to obey, however unwilling he were,” one of the only instances in all three texts where the concept of the devil being commanded by God occurs.<sup>11</sup>

Belief that misfortune was sent by God, possibly using the agency of the devil, was by now, a long held tenet of Christianity. Peter Binsfeld, Suffragan Bishop of Trier, wrote that God could send misfortune to tempt man, punish sins or to demonstrate his own wisdom and knowledge.<sup>111</sup> Guazzo concluded that there were actually seven reasons that God allowed misfortune: that glory would be increased, the free will of man, to demonstrate his mercy, to demonstrate his constraints upon the devil, to show his wisdom, his power and his justice. Moreover, in addition to this list, he had previously declared that God might permit apparitions, not only for these reasons, but also, “on account of sin, either as a trial for the righteous, or to announce plague, wars, changes in

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<sup>108</sup> Hodder, M.E., ‘Peter Binsfeld and Cornelius Loos, An Episode in the History of Witchcraft’, PhD Dissertation, (Cornell, 1911), p.17

<sup>109</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XXI, p.148, “quid quaeso facturos Daemones putamus, ubi ad explendam, quae illis innata atque insita est nocendi libidinem, se totos parant, ac devovent?”

<sup>110</sup> Guazzo, Book I, Chapter IX, p.29, “si Deus iuberet, et ipse nollet quia inuitus Deo cogeretur obedire”

kingdoms, and such things.”<sup>112</sup> For the Inquisition this was a more contentious point: the Spanish Inquisitor Salazar had been ignored when attempting to show that God sent misfortune, until in 1614 the Instructions of the Council declared, “The inquisitors are to instruct the commissioners and the priests to explain to the people that damage to crops is sometimes the way God punishes us for our sins, and sometimes is a consequence of bad weather.”<sup>113</sup>

However, as would be expected, it was as a punishment for sin that God was most often believed to send misfortune. Boguet felt that this was a just way to cleanse the world of sinners, “it is very likely that God in His justice permits this, that such persons may be removed from the world, and punished according to their offences and the gravity of their unworthiness.”<sup>114</sup> Remi cited Biblical examples in support of this belief, and confirmed that God still followed this pattern, “even now He often draws the sword of His wrath against us, for an example to us, and to recall us from our vices and bring us back into the right way.”<sup>115</sup> Children, even if free from sin themselves, were not necessarily safe; Scripture had decreed that God would visit the sins of the fathers on the children. This was the explanation Boguet used to explain the suffering of innocents, the only other explanation was that “His [God’s] justice and His works may thereby shine the more gloriously.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Hodder, M.E., op cit, pp.7-8

<sup>112</sup> Guazzo, Book I, Chapter XVIII, p.92, “[God permits] propter peccata, vel ad exercitium bonorum, vel ad denunciandam Pestilentiam, bella, mutationes Regnorum, et similia” and also Book II, Chapter IX, p.135

<sup>113</sup> Henningsen, Gustav, *The Witches’ Advocate*, (University of Nevada Press, Reno, 1980), p.371

<sup>114</sup> Boguet, Chapter V, p.20, “estant vray-semblable que cela se fait par une iuste permission de Dieu, afin que ces gens la soient ostez du monde, et chastiez selon leurs demerites, et gravité de leurs offenses.”

<sup>115</sup> Remi, Book III, Chapter I, p.286, “nunc etiam irae suae in nos gladium saepe dstringit; ut exempla statuatur, a vitiis revocet in viam reducat.”

<sup>116</sup> Boguet, Chapter V, p.24, “il face reluire sa iustice, et ses oeuvres.”



It was through man's sins that the devil gained power to commit more evil. Guazzo declared that there was no-one so pure as to feel safe, "For no one is so upright of life and free from sin but that he is goaded and terrified by the conscience of some misdeed; no one is so attentive and diligent in his religious observances but that sometimes the stress of business will cause him to neglect prayers and vows."<sup>117</sup> This was obviously plagiarised from Remi as he had declared that no-one was so perfect, "that his conscience does not prick him for some sin."<sup>118</sup>

As has been shown, the theology of these writers was not as sound as their predecessors, and this is reflected in their writings on divine power. They mixed the *Malleus* tradition with the scholastic, theological tradition, and confused the issue even further, leaving little possibility of there being a consistent Counter Reformation theory with regard to divine and demonic power.

## 2.6. Protestant Views

### 2.6.1 Protestant Beliefs in Divine Power

The main focus for these writers was pastoral, and with respect to divine power, that meant looking to oneself as a cause of divine retribution and never attributing God's power to any other being. Beyond this, their concerns were minor, whether witches could actually perform evil was not particularly important, when God held all the power. Even the less sceptical Daneau focused strongly upon the fact that all power rested in the

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<sup>117</sup> Guazzo, Book II, Chapter VII, p.118, "nemo est adeo integer vitae, scelerisque purus, quem admissi alicuius conscientia non stimulet ac terreat: nemo in colenda religione tam attentus et diligens est, cui praecipitantibus forte negotiis non accadat, eas preces, votaquo omittere"

hands of God, and that the power of neither the devil nor his followers could hope to match that of God.

The omnipotence of God was not an issue for discussion; it was fact, and therefore, debate was not required. However, the Protestants rarely failed to let pass an opportunity to emphasise the power and glory of God. Daneau, in discussing the story of Nebuchadnezzar, concluded that “we must grant that all this came to him by the power of almighty God our creator.”<sup>119</sup> His obvious faith in the omnipotence of God is best demonstrated in his statement that, “it is him [God] only in whose hands lies the beginning and end of our life.”<sup>12</sup>

In essence, Protestant writers were trying to remove the devil from perceptions of evil and misfortune. Calvin wrote, “if every success is God’s blessing, and calamity and adversity his curse, no place now remains in human affairs for fortune or chance.”<sup>121</sup>

Although he did not mention the removal of demonic power, this is the logical final step of such a statement, allowing the devil only enough power to carry out the orders of God. As the pre-Reformation writers had concluded, God was not the source of diabolic evil; Calvin wrote, “since the devil was created by God, let us remember that this malice, which we attribute to his nature, came not from his creation but from his perversion.”<sup>122</sup>

William Perkins, in debating the need for evil, concluded that “This permission of the evill of fault is by Gods foreknowledge and will, but yet only for the greater good of all:

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<sup>118</sup> Remi, Book II, Chapter IV, p.217, “alicuius conscientia non stimulet”

<sup>119</sup> Daneau, Chapter III, p.61, “ut id in eo evenisse concedamus, Dei ipsius omnipotentis et creatoris potestate”

<sup>120</sup> Daneau, Chapter VII, p.122, “eum esse unum qui in manu sua mortis et vitae nostrae exitus ingressum”

<sup>121</sup> Calvin, Jean, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1 and 2, (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1960), I.xvi.8

which would bee hindred if God did not suffer evill.”<sup>123</sup> Although they allowed that God permitted evil, it was not acceptable to blame God for this, “they fall into horrible blasphemie when they make God the creator of the cause of evil.”<sup>124</sup>

One of the reasons the Protestants were so concerned with the attribution of God’s power to the devil, or anyone else, was that it was the ultimate dishonour to God. There was also the fear that in believing the devil to have such great power, the common people were maintaining an almost dualist outlook, with the devil performing the role of an evil god. Calvin asked, with regard to the Manichæans, but it could also apply to Christians who attributed great power to the devil, “now where is God’s omnipotence, if such sovereignty is conceded to the devil that he carries out whatever he wishes, against God’s will and resistance?”<sup>125</sup> Scot disliked even the thought of God’s power in the hands of another, “we dishonour God greatlie, when we attribute either the power or propertie of God unto a creature.”<sup>126</sup>

### 2.6.2 Protestant Beliefs on the Nature and Power of the Devil and Demons

The natural attributes of the devil were, as happened with the pre-Reformation writers and their predecessors, an issue for discussion. The natural powers of the devil, as listed by Daneau, were virtually identical to those decided upon by Augustine: the devil had a spiritual nature, leading to other abilities unavailable to man, he had great speed, and

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<sup>122</sup>Calvin, Jean, op cit, I.xiv.16

<sup>123</sup> Perkins, William, *A Christian and Plaine Treatise of the manner and order of Predestination, and of the largenes of Gods grace*, (London, 1606), G2’

<sup>124</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, B4’

<sup>125</sup>Calvin, Jean, op cit, I.xiv.3

<sup>126</sup> Scot, Book V, Chapter viii, p.106

finally, a long memory and incredible experience.<sup>127</sup> Gifford added no new abilities, but did write that the devil and his followers retained some of their heavenly powers, “When they became divels ... their understanding was not taken awai, but turned into malicious craft and subtiltie.”<sup>128</sup> He also believed that they were untiring in their efforts to lead man into sin. According to Calvin, the devil most wanted to be worshipped as God was, and in order to obtain this end, “he opposes the truth of God with falsehoods, he obscures the light with darkness, ... everything to the end that he may overturn God’s kingdom.”<sup>129</sup>

The devil was still believed to have great power in the world, and at times, even the Protestants appear to have forgotten the limits they had placed upon it. He was described as “the prince of this world,” and “the God of this world,” by Gifford.<sup>130</sup> Unsurprisingly, Gifford did not forget the restrictions as much as some others, James for example, who declared that he could not include everything of the devil’s power, “for that were infinite.”<sup>131</sup> Luther, in some writings, placed virtually no constraints upon the devil’s power, “it cannot be denied but that the devil liveth, yea, and reigneth throughout the whole world. ... Furthermore, we are all subject to the devil, both in body and goods; and we be strangers in this world, whereof he is the prince and god.”<sup>132</sup>

However, they also managed to stress the fact that the devil was powerless without the permission of God. God was viewed as being the only restraint upon the ambitions of

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<sup>127</sup> Daneau, Chapter III, p.102

<sup>128</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, D1’

<sup>129</sup> Calvin, I.viii.2, I.xiv.15

<sup>130</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, D1’ and C4’

<sup>131</sup> James, The Preface to the Reader, p.92, see also Gifford, *Dialogue*, C3’ and I4’

the devil, and without his help man would not be able to withstand his onslaught.

Interestingly, an example from Denmark demonstrates how little power the devil could be popularly perceived as having: Johansen found details of a trial where women confessed to physically beating the devil in order to make him bewitch a man.<sup>133</sup>

For all the power the devil actually had in the world, he was not able to force man into sin, but only able to tempt. Bullinger wrote that although the devil would like to force man, he was restrained by God, "it is in his power to egg and persuade, but not to enforce a man to do evil."<sup>134</sup> Daneau reiterated the belief that the devil was not able to tempt man beyond his strength, "for we shall not be tempted above the strength of a man."<sup>135</sup>

For the Protestants, Satan was reduced to being a mere instrument of God's power and retribution. According to them, this was the status he really deserved, as Calvin wrote, "Satan himself, since he is the instrument of God's wrath, bends himself hither and thither at His beck and command to execute His just judgements."<sup>136</sup> According to Gifford, demons were simply "instrumentes of Gods vengeance, and executioners of his wrath."<sup>137</sup> James wrote that God was the first cause of tribulation, with the devil "as his instrument and second cause."<sup>138</sup> Scot emphasised the point that the devil had to work

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<sup>132</sup> Luther, Martin, *A Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, in Kors, Alan C. and Edward Peters (eds), *Witchcraft in Europe, 1100-1700*, 10th Edition, (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1972, 1992), p.197

<sup>133</sup> Johansen, Jens Christian V., 'Denmark: The Sociology of Accusations' in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), p.343

<sup>134</sup> The Third Decade, Sermon X, Bullinger, Henry, *The Decades*, The Parker Society Edition, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1850)

<sup>135</sup> Daneau, Chapter VII, p.123, "Nec enim tentatio plusquam humana nos correptura est"

<sup>136</sup> Calvin, Jean, op cit., II:iv:2, also I:xiv:17

<sup>137</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, D2', see also D4', G1' and Gifford, *Dialogue*, D2'

<sup>138</sup> James, Preface to the Reader, p.92

for God, and was not working towards his own ends, “the divell ... is an instrument to worke Gods will, and not his owne.”<sup>139</sup>

That misfortune came from God was a point the reformers were attempting to reinforce, and to encourage the common people to look to themselves as sources of sin and thereby, misfortune. Gifford was the writer most concerned with this issue, possibly due to his role as a minister. Alan Macfarlane examined Gifford’s attempt to make men look to themselves as the cause of tribulation, and succinctly explained his aims, “[Gifford] was arguing that a man’s sins would bounce back onto him from the Great Reflector above. This was an argument for responsibility: a man himself is to blame for his misfortunes, he stands alone with God and cannot, childlike, plead that it was someone else’s fault.”<sup>140</sup> Gifford’s task was a difficult one; he was trying to make people realise that external factors, such as witches and the devil, were not the cause of their misfortune, only the instruments. In order to prevent misfortune, one had to look inwards, hunting for sin and turning to God in times of adversity. He realised that very few people would comprehend such an argument, and would continue to blame external forces, “Alas poore creatures, how they be deluded: how litle do they understand the high providence of almighty God which is over all.”<sup>141</sup>

Johann Brenz fulfilled a similar role in Württemberg, and also focused on this issue, “such persons [who look for witches to blame] would do better to remember their own sins and many misdeeds, which they do very rarely because they never muddy their own

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<sup>139</sup> Scot, Book V, Chapter viii, p.107

<sup>140</sup> MacFarlane, A., ‘A Tudor Anthropologist: George Gifford’s *Discourse* and *Dialogue*’ in Anglo (ed), *The Damned Art, Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1977), p.150

<sup>141</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, D1’. He expands upon this belief further in the *Discourse*, H2<sup>o</sup>

waters and think that in the sight of God they are innocent.”<sup>142</sup> Hemmingsen advised men look to their soul for the cause of tribulation, “[the second step is that] the afflicted seek a remedy in that part of himself which was the cause of the committed sin, that is, the soul.”<sup>143</sup> Gifford’s opinion in this matter was that man was so sinful that he deserved the devil’s domination over him, “the wicked world full of all contempt of God, doth deserve that the devill should have power to worke many feates.”<sup>144</sup>

The reasons that God sent misfortune in its various forms were discussed by many writers. Calvin wrote that God sent troubles to exercise the patience of the faithful, or to mark out those who were worthy of his kingdom.<sup>145</sup> Brenz believed misfortune was sent in order to “test thereby the faith of the faithful and to punish the godless as they deserve, bring them to recognition of their sins, and encourage true repentance,” as well as reinforce belief that God was the father who governed.<sup>146</sup> These reasons were reiterated by Robert Burton in his 1621 work, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, demonstrating that the pastoral concerns of ministers were still the same in the 17th century.<sup>147</sup> James wrote that there were only three kinds of people whom God allowed to be troubled, “the wicked for their horrible sinnes, ... the godlie that are sleeping in anie

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<sup>142</sup> Midelfort, H.C. Erik, ‘Were There Really Witches?’ in Kingdon (ed), *Transition and Revolution*, (Burgess Publishing Co., Minnesota, 1974), p.214

<sup>143</sup> Hemmingsen, D7’, “secundus gradus est, ut afflicti quaerat remedium eius partis sui, quae peccati commissi causa erat, hoc est animae”

<sup>144</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, H3’

<sup>145</sup> Calvin, Jean, op cit, II:iv:2. and III:xviii:7

<sup>146</sup> Midelfort, H.C. Erik, op cit, pp.217, 214-215

<sup>147</sup> Burton, Robert, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, edited, Jackson, (J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, London, 1932), (originally published 1621), Part I, section 2, subsection 2.

great sinnes or infirmities and weaknesse in faith, ... and even some of the best, that their patience may bee tryed before the world.”<sup>148</sup>

These beliefs led Calvin to declare that man should not fight against the trials sent by the Lord, since, “the Lord willed it; therefore it must be borne, not only because one may not contend against it, but also because he wills nothing but what is just and expedient.”<sup>149</sup> Gifford followed this idea, believing that if trials came from God, then they could only be just and beneficial, “it be no further than may tend unto our good.”<sup>150</sup>

Sin was believed to be the most common reason that God sent trial and tribulation; Mary Glover, a demoniac eventually healed by much prayer, cried out during a fit, “let not my sinnes o lord, nor the sinnes of my parents come to remembrance which have been the cause of this heavie chastisement layd upon us.”<sup>151</sup> Daneau cited a specific sin as being a cause for retribution, “the most just cause God takes to forsake them, and give them over to Satan, to avenge the contempt of his name.”<sup>152</sup> Hemmingsen wrote that a specific sin for which God sent tribulation was the disbelieving of his evangelical truth, “[the third reason for this permission,] by which God allows Satan to drag man by his arts into his fortification, is the judicial punishment, by which, God not as Father, but as the just judge punishes those who do not want to believe the truth of the gospel.”<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter V, p.118, he reiterated this point, limiting the groups to two (the godly and the wicked) later in his work, Third Book, Chapter II, p.126

<sup>149</sup> Calvin, Jean, op cit, I.xvii.8

<sup>150</sup> Gifford, *Dicourse*, 14'

<sup>151</sup> Swan, John, *A True and Briefe Report of Mary Glovers Vexation*, edited, M. MacDonald, (n.p., 1603), p.33. For more information about this case see Briggs, Robin, *Witches and Neighbours*, (Harper Collins, London, 1996), pp.212-213

<sup>152</sup> Daneau, Chapter II, p.39, “tantum Deo iustior est eorum deferendum caussa, tradendum que; Satanae ad nominis sui contemptum vindicandum.”

<sup>153</sup> Hemmingsen, F5', “Tertia causa huius permissionis qua Deus permittit Satanam suis artibus multos pertrahere in sua castra, est iudiciaria poena, qua Deus non ut Pater, sed ut iustus Iudex punit eos qui nolunt credere Evangelii veritati”



Interestingly, Daneau also wrote that even those who appeared to be good were really sinners whom God would punish, although they were possibly unaware of their sin, “For those whom we call pious and true Christians, are often not without their infirmities and imperfections, but also often subject to grievous sins and offences.”<sup>154</sup>

Gifford believed that due to man’s sin, the devil was able to gain yet more freedom from God to perform evil, “God is provoked by their sinnes to give the devill such instruments to work withall.” The original cause of demonic power was also sin, “it is not the anger of the witch that bringeth it [misfortune], but their owne wickednes, whereby they have provoked God to displeasure, and so give this enemy power over them.”<sup>1</sup> Daneau believed that God sent punishments to “rebellious men,” who “most unthankfully and wickedly have forsaken him.”<sup>156</sup> Brenz, clearly, had tried to convince his flock that sins were the cause of misfortune, and in perceiving that they still blamed witches, became angry, “others think that hail and storms, which God sends us because of our sins, actually are the business of the devil and his followers. Such persons really have not one spark of Christian faith in their hearts and neither know nor understand what the true faith is.”<sup>157</sup>

With this evidence, it seems unsurprising that ministers feared that their flocks had almost dualist beliefs. John Gaule wrote that the opinions of the commons made “the power of the Devill to be more like the power of a God, then of a Devil. And [they] are

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<sup>154</sup> Daneau, Chapter III, p.62, “Quos enim pios et vere Christianos dicimus, ii non carent suis, non tantum saepe infirmitatibus et naevis, sed etiam saepe gravissimis criminibus et peccati”

<sup>155</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, D3’ and H3’, see also K1’

<sup>156</sup> Daneau, Chapter II, p.43, “homines istos rebelles”, p.45, “qui se ingratissime et impiissime deferunt”

<sup>157</sup> Midelfort, H.C. Erik, op cit, p.214

eftsoons affrayed of the power of the Devill, more then of God.”<sup>158</sup> These fears were not entirely without foundation, Agnes Wilson, accused of witchcraft in Northampton in 1612, said she acknowledged two gods, “God the Father, and the Devil.”<sup>159</sup> While Scot simply wrote, “I cannot see what difference or distinction the witchmongers doo put betweene the knowledge and power of God and the divell,” Gifford cited numerous examples of the common people believing in the power of the devil, rather than the power of God.<sup>160</sup>

## 2.7. Conclusion

Certainty about the issue of divine and demonic power was essential for any writer of witchcraft. For those who believed in a world conspiracy led by the devil, there had to be a limit upon God’s power in the world, for the devil to be able to operate so freely. For those who were less sure about the powers of witches, the opposite was true, and they were able to emphasise more strongly the omnipotence of God.

The impact of heretical groups upon this debate must not be underestimated: it was in order to combat dualist beliefs that such emphasis was first placed upon God’s power. This, in turn, led to the splitting of his ability into *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata*. This left the pre-Reformation writers with a rather complex situation, which was not helped by the confusion of the *Malleus maleficarum*.

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<sup>158</sup> MacDonald, Michael, ‘Religion, Social Change and Psychological Healing in England, 1600-1800’ in Sheils (ed), *The Church and Healing*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1982), p.110

<sup>159</sup> Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, (Penguin Books Ltd, London, 1991), p.568

<sup>160</sup> Scot, Book XV, Chapter xxvi, p.443

For the writers of the Counter Reformation, divine power appeared to be being usurped by the devil. For them the main focus was the terrible danger that mankind faced from witchcraft, and if they were to convince people that this danger was real, the abilities of witches had not only to be admitted, but emphasised. In this way, intentionally or otherwise, divine power was curtailed.

The Protestants had completely the opposite view: if the devil and witches had any power in the world, it was not due to a lack on God's part, but was part of his plan. Man was far too sinful, and blaming external forces for suffering was yet another example of this. The only way to limit the devil's power was to obey God's commandments, which would then lead to God restraining Satan.

# **The Use of Magic:**

**Manifestations of Divine and Demonic Power**

### 3 Manifestations of Divine and Demonic Power

#### 3.1. Introduction

As has been shown, Christian tradition allowed for the devil to have a certain amount of power in the world. The debate with regard to demonologies was dependent upon exactly how this power manifested itself. There were four main groupings of divine and demonic power: metamorphosis, maleficium, miracles and exorcism.

Metamorphosis was the ability of the devil to change the shape, either of himself or his human followers. This has a long tradition in Europe, as Éva Pócs has examined, there are werewolf traditions in Greece, Slovenia, Albania, Croatia and Bulgaria.<sup>1</sup> Also included in this category were sexual demons: incubi (male) and succubi (female). These sexual demons have an even longer tradition: they are common in Greek stories and myths, the Akkads believed in them, and even the Egyptians had incubi beliefs.<sup>2</sup>

Maleficium, the ability of witches to cause harm to their neighbours was a belief that developed over time. This included casting spells on both people and animals, causing bad weather, the evil eye and stealing milk or crops by magical means.

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<sup>1</sup> Pócs, Éva, *Fairies and Witches at the Boundary of South Eastern and Central Europe*, no.243, (FFC Communications, Helsinki, 1989), pp.22-23, lycanthropy is the term used for werewolves in many texts

<sup>2</sup> Lea, Henry Charles, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, Vol. III, (The Harbour Press, New York, 1955), p.383

Langton refers to the Arab tradition of demons assuming the forms of animals, as well as the Babylonian and Assyrian traditions; Langton, Edward, *Essentials of Demonology*, (The Epworth Press, London, 1949), p.39

The difference between *miracula*, miracles, and *mira*, wonders, was the difference between the abilities of God and the devil. The wonders that the devil performed could appear to be miraculous to those who were ignorant. In performing miracles, God was working outside the limits he had set, *potentia ordinata*, a true miracle could only be performed by God working through *potentia absoluta*.<sup>3</sup>

Demonic possession and exorcism are the final ways in which divine and demonic power are manifested. The devil had enough power to possess a human, making them a demoniac, however, only God or a true servant of God was believed to have enough power to be able to cast the demon out of the man. This area developed into one of the main points of contention between the Protestants and Catholics.

## 3.2. Early Beliefs in Manifestations of Demonic Power

### 3.2.1 Biblical Beliefs in Manifestations of Demonic Power

The origin of belief in incubi and succubi comes from the Book of Genesis: “the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.”<sup>4</sup> The giants that are referred to later in the chapter, were believed to be the issue from the union of women with angels. This union is referred to in the Book of Enoch, “here shall stand the angels who have connected themselves with women, and their spirits,

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<sup>3</sup> For a fuller definition of these terms, see section 2.3.1

<sup>4</sup> Genesis vi:ii, op cit, King James Bible, 1611

assuming many different forms, are defiling mankind, and shall lead them astray.”<sup>5</sup> The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas tell of a woman who had relations with an incubus every night for five years. The woman in the story is disgusted by the union, “joined unto me in his foul intercourse,” and referred to the devil’s “abuse” of her.<sup>6</sup>

That the devil was able to perform illusions was never really doubted. There was Biblical evidence for the devil’s ability to change his form, “for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” The Biblical evidence was debated with regard to the story of the Witch of Endor. In Samuel the story is told of Saul going to a witch to call up the spirit of Samuel. This led to a great deal of debate over the abilities of the devil, as it appeared unlikely that the devil would have power over such an important and holy figure as Samuel.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2.2 Patristic Beliefs in Manifestations of Demonic Power

The Church Fathers were uncertain about the possibility of incubi and succubi as there was no solid Biblical foundation for these, with only the one passage in Genesis, and apocryphal Old Testament references. Jerome did not deny belief in them, but did accuse pagans of mistaking natural creatures for incubi.<sup>9</sup> Augustine openly declared his uncertainty, having reported that people, “whose reliability there is no occasion to doubt,” believed in incubi.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Book of Enoch*, XIX:1, Charles, R.H. (ed), *The Book of Enoch*, (SPCK, London, 1989), see also *Testament of Reuben* chapter 5 and *Testament of Naphtali*, chapter 3, Roberts, Rev. Alexander and James Donaldson (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VIII, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, no date)

<sup>6</sup> *Acts of Thomas* Act V, in James, M.R. (ed), *The Apocryphal New Testament*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1926)

II Corinthians xi:xiv, op cit

<sup>8</sup> I Samuel xxviii, op cit

He continued, "I would not venture a conclusive statement on the question whether some spirits with bodies of air ... can also experience this lust and so can mate, in whatever way they can, with women, who feel their embraces."<sup>10</sup> Abbot Serenus, as reported by Cassian, declared, "We cannot possibly believe that spiritual existences can have carnal intercourse with women," but then asked why this event no longer occurred, if it had done in the past, making his actual belief on this matter unclear.<sup>11</sup>

The ability of the devil to transform himself was never doubted. The various forms of the devil were well established; according to Serenus the forms that demons chose to take were so terrifying that "men would ... be driven out of their wits."<sup>12</sup> In his recounting of the life of St Martin, Sulpitius Severus wrote that the saint had seen the devil in many forms, including, "the person of Jupiter, often ... that of Mercury and Minerva."<sup>13</sup>

The question of whether the devil could actually change the form of a creation of God, such as man, was difficult. The biggest concern was the whereabouts of the soul, as the soul of a man was not suitable for that of a beast. Augustine believed that such stories, although well reported, were either so unusual or untrue that he could safely withhold belief.<sup>14</sup> St Ambrose ridiculed such beliefs as the "ridiculous fancies of poets," on the grounds that the human

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<sup>9</sup> Dukes, Eugene D., 'Magic and Witchcraft in the Writings of the Western Church Fathers', PhD Dissertation, (Kent State, 1972), p.124

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, Saint, *City of God*, (Penguin Books Ltd, London, 1972), XV:xxiii, p.638

<sup>11</sup> Cassian, *The Second Conference of Abbot Serenus*, chapter XXI, Schaff, Philip (ed), *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. XI, 2nd Series, (Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 1955)

<sup>12</sup> Cassian, *The Second Conference of Abbot Serenus*, chapter XII, in Schaff, Philip, op cit

<sup>13</sup> Sulpitius Severus, *Life of St Martin*, chapter XXII, see also chapters VI and XXI, in Schaff, Philip, op cit

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, XVIII:xviii, p.782



soul could not be moved, and that rational man could not become an irrational beast.<sup>15</sup>

Tertullian believed that such an “extravagant fiction” would have to be part of a heretical belief to gain acceptance.<sup>16</sup> Chrysostom was the most explicit about this problem, “one could not make a man’s body become that of an ass; much more were this impossible in the invisible soul; neither could one transform it into the substance of an evil spirit. So that these are the sayings of besotted old wives, and spectres to frighten children.”<sup>17</sup>

The question of the apparition of Samuel was an issue that had no absolute conclusion. Smelik summarised the positions of the various fathers into three main categories of belief: Samuel was resuscitated by the witch, Samuel or a demon appeared at God’s express command, and finally, that a demon appeared and deceived Saul. The Fathers were fairly evenly split between these three groups, with Justin Martyr, Origen and Augustine believing the first, Chrysostom and Pseudo-Justin the second, and Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa and Jerome believing the last.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.2.3 Scholastic Beliefs in Manifestations of Demonic Power

Those who believed sexual demons to be illusions were in the minority in the Medieval period, as most fully believed that demons could form bodies and have sexual encounters with their human counterparts. However, Burchard of Worms in his *Corrector* treated the

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<sup>15</sup> Dukes, Eugene D., op cit, pp.129-130

<sup>16</sup> Tertullian, *A treatise on the Soul*, chapter XXXIV, in Roberts, Rev. Alexander and James Donaldson (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 1957)

<sup>17</sup> John Chrysostom, ‘*Homilies on the Gospel of St Matthew*’, Homily XXVIII in Schaff, Philip (ed), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. X, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 1956)

idea of incubi as illusion, and neither the *Decretum* nor the other collections of canon law refer to them.

St Bernard of Clairvaux told of a story he knew from a visit to Brittany in 1135, which appears to be a simple retelling of the story in the apocryphal Acts of Thomas. Caesarius of Heisterbach told of a woman vowed to chastity who was solicited by an incubus, and went on to discuss the issue of carnal relations between humans and demons, giving examples of its occurrence. He also related tales of succubi, which were, according to later writers, a rather rarer demonic form than that of the incubus.<sup>1</sup> St Thomas Aquinas believed in sexual union between demons and humans, and explained any child from this union as due to the semen gained as a succubus and passed on as an incubus.<sup>2</sup> Nicolaus of Jauer believed that demons could form bodies and act as both incubi and succubi as occasion demanded. In this way, any child which came from a union with a demon, was not actually the offspring of any demon, but the man whose semen was taken. The author of the anonymous *Tractatus de Daemonibus*, of about 1415, fully believed in the reality of sexual demons, and that they were somehow able to generate children.<sup>21</sup>

Belief that the devil could change his form was commonplace, however, belief in human transformation was strongly denied. The *Canon Episcopi*, which was incorporated into Gratian's *Decretum*, forbade belief that man could be transformed into an animal, on the

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<sup>18</sup> Smelik, K.A.D., 'The Witch of Endor', *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 1979, pp.160-179, pp.164-165

<sup>19</sup> Lea, p.151

<sup>20</sup> Lea, pp.155-156

<sup>21</sup> Nicolas of Jauer, *Tractatus de superstitionibus*, in Hansen, pp.67-70, Anonymous, *Tractatus de daemonibus*, in Hansen, pp.82-86

grounds that this was within God's special province, "Whoever therefore believes that anything can be made, or that any creature can be changed to better or worse or to be transformed into another species or similitude, except by the Creator himself who made everything and through whom all things were made, is beyond doubt an infidel."<sup>22</sup>

The power of the devil and his followers to perform evil deeds was not an issue that became particularly important until the pre-Reformation period. Belief in the devil's ability was mixed: the *Lex Romana Visigothorum* (early 6th century), listed the punishments due to any who called down tempests upon others. Yet the First Council of Braga, 561, declared as anathema anyone who believed in the devil's ability to cause bad weather.<sup>23</sup> The Spanish *Penitential of Silos* (c.800), declared, "If anyone believes that by his own power the devil makes thunder or lighting or storms or drout [sic], let him be anathema."<sup>24</sup> Agobard of Lyon felt that these beliefs were prevalent and despaired of the things Christians would believe.<sup>2</sup> It seems obvious, that even with all the reiteration of the theory of divine omnipotence, the common people were having difficulties reconciling a loving God with the trials and tribulations sent as tests or punishment.

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<sup>22</sup> Gratian, 'Canon Episcopi', in Kors, Alan C. and Edward Peters (eds), *Witchcraft in Europe, 1100-1700*, 10th Edition, (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1972, 1992). For more detail on the history of the canon, see 6.2.1

<sup>23</sup> Flint, Valerie I.J., *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991), p.111

<sup>24</sup> McNeill, John T. and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1938), *The Penitential of Silos*, XI (107), p.289

<sup>25</sup> Kieckhefer, Richard, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990), p.46

### 3.3. Early Belief in Manifestations of Divine Power

#### 3.3.1 *Biblical Beliefs in the Manifestations of Divine Power*

The lack of power the devil had was highlighted by the miracles performed through the might of God. The Biblical examples were often used to demonstrate the greatness of God's power in comparison to either a trickster or a fraudulent magician, such as the case with the pharaoh's magicians in the Book of Exodus.<sup>26</sup> It is obvious that the writers of the Early Church had no doubts about the omnipotence of God, and the consequent lack of power held by the devil. This makes their views on miracles appear fairly simplistic, although they later developed into more complex ideas. Isidore of Seville, in what is believed to be one of the earliest Medieval definitions of a miracle discussed their link with nature. He declared that they were "not contrary to nature, because they are created by the divine will, and the will of the Creator is the nature of each created thing. ... A miracle, therefore, does not happen contrary to nature, but contrary to nature as known."<sup>2</sup>

Possession was one way in which the devil showed his abilities; he was able to send demons into people who were then unable to behave normally. There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that it was through witches that people were possessed, however, demonologies made this connection. Until the time of Christ these people were believed to be helpless as no-one had the power to cast the demons out, again demonstrating that the devil was the prince of the world.

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<sup>26</sup> Exodus vii:ix xii, op cit

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Eamon, William, 'Technology as magic in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance', *Janus*, Vol. 70, 1983, pp.171-212, p.179

The ability of Christ and later, his disciples, to cast out demons was a way of showing the power of God in comparison to that of the devil. From the very start of Christ's ministry, the demons were shown combating his power, but were never able to compete.<sup>28</sup> However, one incident in Matthew suggests that even those who worked iniquity had previously been able to cast out demons.<sup>29</sup> The first miracle of Christ was to restore a man to sanity by removing demons; demons knew the power of Christ as shown in their words to him, "what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?"<sup>30</sup> Demons were often shown in fear of Christ: "unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God."<sup>31</sup> Many of Christ's miracles involved expelling demons and demonstrating his power over them, as Howard Kee wrote, "To the extent that the powers of evil are already being overcome, God's rule is already manifesting itself in the present."<sup>32</sup>

Christ was even able to deliver this power to others, as his disciples were given this ability; "In my name shall they cast out devils."<sup>33</sup> When others tried to mimic this, the devils were able to see through the deceit and maintain their power; when vagabond Jews tried, the spirit replied, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them."<sup>34</sup> Roy Yates described the series of exorcisms performed by Christ and his disciples as "no longer ...

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<sup>2</sup> See Yates, Roy, 'Jesus and the Demonic in the Synoptic Gospels', *Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 44, 1977, pp.39-57, p.46

<sup>2</sup> Matthew vii:xxii-xxiii, op cit

<sup>30</sup> Mark i:xxiv, op cit

<sup>31</sup> Mark iii:xi, op cit

<sup>32</sup> Kee, Howard Clark, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986), p.73

<sup>33</sup> Mark xvi:xvii, see also Mark iii:xv, op cit

isolated victories over a series of autonomous demons, but part of Jesus' messianic assault on the power of evil."<sup>35</sup>

However, exorcism was one of the most problematic demonstrations of power, leading to confusion in the eyes of many. It led to accusations that Christ was actually the devil, and it was difficult for people to believe that he could have that much power, "when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." Christ replied that it was impossible for Satan to cast out Satan, but that he cast them out by the power of God, demonstrating the immense power that people had to believe in.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.3.2 Patristic Beliefs in Manifestations of Divine Power

For the early Church exorcism was simply a potent demonstration of divine omnipotence. According to Clement, demons enjoyed possessing men because they enjoyed the pleasures of the flesh, but being spirits could not normally enjoy them.<sup>37</sup> Augustine wrote that it was through piety that men were able to exorcise demons, that the power of God would work through those who asked for his help, "It is by true piety that the men of God cast out this power of the air, ... it is by exorcising, not by appeasing them, and they triumph over all temptations of that hostile power not by praying to the enemy but by praying to their God

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<sup>34</sup> Acts xix:xv-xvi, op cit

<sup>35</sup> Yates, Roy, 'The Powers of Evil in the New Testament', *The Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. 52, 1980, pp.97-111, p.99

<sup>36</sup> Matthew xii:xxiv-xxviii, op cit; see also Mark iii:xxii-xxvi, op cit

<sup>37</sup> Clement of Rome, *Homilies*, Homily IX, chapter x, in Roberts, Alexander, no date, op cit

against the enemy.”<sup>38</sup> Tertullian reinforced this idea when writing about exorcism, “Fearing Christ in God, and God in Christ, they become subject to the servants of God and Christ. So at our touch and breathing, overwhelmed by the thought and realising of those judgement fires, they leave at our command.”<sup>39</sup> The words of both these men reflect the criticisms, also shown in the Bible, that exorcism was a sham performed with the connivance of the devil, suggesting that such beliefs still remained.

Clement wrote that demons left people through fear of God, but still had to have his permission to do so. Writing about the Gerasene demoniac, he wrote, “they [the demons] first entreated Him before going, plainly because they had no power to enter even into swine without His permission.”<sup>40</sup> This opinion was also held by Serenus, “we must hold that they [demons] cannot of their own free will enter into any one of men who are created in the image of God, if they have not power to enter into dumb and unclean animals without the permission of God.”<sup>41</sup>

### 3.3.3 *Scholastic Beliefs in Manifestations of Divine Power*

The strength of feeling regarding the omnipotence of God meant that there was little scholastic debate over exorcism; with this belief it became a question of who was permitted to use God’s power in this way. As D. P. Walker wrote, “by the Middle Ages the main purpose of exorcisms, apart of course from curing the demoniac, seems to have been to

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<sup>38</sup> Augustine, *op cit*, X:xxii

<sup>39</sup> Tertullian, *The Apology*, Chapter XXIII, in Roberts, 1957, *op cit*

<sup>40</sup> Clement, *Homilies*, XIX:xiv, in Roberts, Alexander, no date, *op cit*, the Bible references are Mark v:i-xx, Matthew viii:xxviii-xxxiv and Luke viii: xxvi-xxxix, *op cit*

demonstrate the sanctity of the exorcist.”<sup>42</sup> However, there were questions being asked by the commons, and this is shown in the way Aquinas dealt with exorcism, “some say that the things done in exorcism have no effect, but are mere signs. - But this is clearly false; since in exorcising, the Church uses words of command to cast out the devil’s power.”<sup>43</sup> As before, it seems that emphasis had to be placed upon the reality of God’s power, possibly demonstrating yet again the problems that this belief caused for Christians.

### 3.4. Pre-Reformation Beliefs in Manifestations of Demonic Power

The pre-Reformation writers had a difficult task, they had two almost conflicting traditions regarding the way in which divine and demonic power operated, and inevitably, this led to confusion over beliefs in the physical abilities of the devil.

Belief in incubi and succubi was not an issue that was too confused, this was one area in which there was agreement.<sup>44</sup> Champier explained that a demon taking a male form was an incubus, whereas one taking that of a female was a succubus. This was standard incubus lore, and not original to either Champier or Martin. Champier claimed the origin of the word as being from the Latin *incubandus* meaning lying on top of, as this was the sensation they caused. These demons tricked the humans they had intercourse with, by taking the

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<sup>41</sup> Cassian, *Fir t Conference of Abbot Serenus*, chapter XXII, in Schaff, Philip, 1955, op cit

<sup>42</sup> Walker, D.P., *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the late 16th and Early 17th Centuries*, (Scolar Press, London, 1981), p.4

<sup>43</sup> Aquinas, Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, translated Liam G. Walsh, (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1974), Book II, Part II, Q.lxxi, article 3, see also Book II, Part II, Q.lxxi, article 2

<sup>44</sup> Ciruelo did not discuss the issue of incubi and succubi, and Ponzinibio referred to it only in passing, p.280, Section 64, “since these most wretched women, claim that they are known by their lovers who they say to be



form of another person, implying that the human possibly did not realise that they were copulating with a demon. If this did actually happen, then the demon could collect semen in the form of a succubus, and transmit it while in the form of an incubus. In this way, it was seen that any offspring was not really the child of a demon, but simply that of the man whose semen was taken.<sup>45</sup> Champier continued by citing the opinion of physicians, not actually stating whether he would include himself or not, and wrote that they believed an incubus to be a physical affliction, “a stoppage or as damage to certain functions.” He wrote that this was a sickness as it inhibited one’s activities, and that due to “the vulgar opinion that demons walk by night,” people always blamed demons, rather than subscribing to the natural cause.<sup>46</sup> This was the other cause of incubi that he wanted to be taken into consideration, but if it was found that the cause was natural, then the treatment he recommended should be the same as for epilepsy.<sup>4</sup>

Martin of Arles wrote of “that particularly intense vision which the lady had of a man having intercourse with her with such intense lust” (referring to a story in Nider), and accorded that this could only be due to the demon known as an incubus. He cited both Augustine and Aquinas to support this as a reality, and referred to the fact that common people called incubi, fauns or forest spirits. He did not appear to believe that women sought incubi out for their own pleasure, declaring that incubi, “in their wickedness have appeared to women and have sought and contrived to have intercourse with them.” He explained that demons

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demons, even though they are in the shape of men,” “quoniam istae miserrimae, asserunt se ab amasibus eorum, quos Daemones esse dicunt, licet in forma virorum, ... cognosci”

<sup>45</sup> Champier, Chapter 1 of the Third Tractate, 14

<sup>46</sup> Champier, Chapter 1 of the Third Tractate, 15, “accipitur pro opilatione vel pro actionibus levis” “propter opinionem vulgarem quod demones nocte ambulant”

would appear as both succubi and incubi in order to obtain the semen necessary to produce a child. However, any child born of such a union would be that of the human male.<sup>48</sup>

The Bull *Summis Desiderantes* of Innocent VIII (1484) referred to the people of certain areas of Germany who “give themselves over to devils male and female.”<sup>49</sup> The book which used this Bull as a preface, the *Malleus maleficarum*, referred to incubi and their human accomplices. Unlike many of the earlier stories, however, the writers of the *Malleus* and those who followed it, believed modern witches to be addicted to the union with demons, they “willingly embrace this foul and miserable servitude,” although it was supposed to be very painful. Castañega agreed with this belief, and added that “the diabolical followers and disciples, ... receive immense pleasure by communicating and participating with devils.”<sup>50</sup> This view was to change dramatically in the following century.

### 3.4.1 Pre-Reformation Beliefs in Metamorphosis

Belief in the ability of the devil to change his own appearance was, as has already been shown, common. Incubi and succubi were demons who had changed their forms, and possibly the most common type in popular belief. However, there were other examples of metamorphosis by the devil. Bernardino of Siena worried about the way in which

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<sup>4</sup> Champier, Chapter 1 of the Third Tractate, 15”

<sup>48</sup> Martin, Section 13, 403”, “Quod autem tam ardentem sibi visum fuerit, hominem coire cum ea in tanta concupiscentia”

“improbos saepe extitisse mulieribus, et earum expetisse concubitum atque peregrisse”

<sup>49</sup> Document in Hansen, pp.24-27,

<sup>50</sup> Kramer, Heinrich and James Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, edited, M. Summers, (Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1971), Part II, Q I, Chapter 4, p.111

apparitions of the devil were viewed: he was concerned that people would believe them to be true Christian visions, and warned, "Therefore do I say unto you: Consider well that which thou dost do, and when one vision or another cometh to thee, believe not with over-great readiness that which these visions reveal to thee; prove them before you believe!"<sup>52</sup>

The devil could change his appearance into whatever he wanted, he was believed to either steal a corpse in order to have a physical body, or to be able to fashion one out of air.<sup>53</sup> He was also able to assume the form of many different animals, as Ciruelo wrote, "he appears as a dog, a cat, a wolf, a lion, a rooster, or some other gross animal."<sup>54</sup> Ponzinibio only wrote about the form the devil was most often assumed to take, that of a he-goat, and then only in passing. There was no doubt about this issue, as Castañega wrote, "No one should doubt that the devil can feign various shapes as often as he likes to deceive or frighten people."<sup>55</sup>

There was more debate about metamorphosis when discussing the devil's ability, or otherwise, to actually transform humans. Although belief in this had been discussed in detail by the scholastics, there was still some doubt remaining. In the *Malleus*, both points of view were cited by the authors, "creatures can be made by witches, although they necessarily must be very imperfect creatures," but also, that the devil was able to make changes, "so that

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<sup>52</sup> Castañega, Martín de, *Tratado muy sutil y bien fundado de las supersticiones y hechicerías*, (originally published, Logrono, 1529), translated David H. Darst, (1979), chapter xi, p.307

<sup>53</sup> Sermon XXII, delivered August 1427, Siena, Bernardino of Siena, *Sermons*, edited, Orlandi, translated Helen Josephine Robins, (Tipografia Sociale, Siena, 1920)

<sup>54</sup> Martín, Section 98, 407

<sup>55</sup> Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 1, p.116, see also Guibert of Nogent, *Self and Society in Medieval France*, edited, J.F. Benton, translated J. F. Benton, (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1970), Book I, chapter 26, p.116.

<sup>56</sup> Ponzinibio, pp.246, 269, Sections 43 and 50, Castañega, Martín de, op cit, chapter vii, p.306

things *appear* to be otherwise than they are.”<sup>56</sup> However, the *Malleus* told the story of a man who fought off an attack by three cats, and was later accused of harming three respected women. These women had been in the form of large cats, but they are not described as being human sized, ignoring the normal limits applied to demonic deception, where the appearance can be changed, but not the actual proportions of the subject.<sup>57</sup>

Champier discussed whether a man could change his own body or those of others, and decided against such beliefs: “the imagination cannot act on another body; and whoever holds the contrary seems, in the faith of Christ, to suffer madness.”<sup>58</sup> As this was his opinion regarding the power of man over man, it seems obvious that his views about the devil’s power were going to follow a similar pattern. When he wrote about flight he described the way in which the devil was able to delude the external senses, so that all believed a change to have occurred, and this belief could be applied to the concept of metamorphosis as well.<sup>59</sup>

### 3.4.2 Pre-Reformation Beliefs in Maleficium

It appears obvious that, if these men believed the devil himself to be subject to God, they were hardly going to attribute a great deal of power to witches. Martin wrote that witches were able to effect real damage, but, as the theologians had declared, it was really demons who committed the deeds, “in these actions the demon alone can harm and deceive as the

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<sup>56</sup> Kramer, Heinrich, op cit, Part I, Q. I, pp.7-8, Part II, Q. I, Chapter 7, p.120, my italics

<sup>57</sup> Kramer, Heinrich, op cit, Part II, Q.I, Chapter 9, pp.126-127

<sup>58</sup> Champier, Chapter 2 of the Second Tractate, 11’, “ymaginationem non agere posse in corpus alienum et qui tenet contrarium videtur insaniam pati in fide christi.”

<sup>59</sup> Champier, Chapter 3 of the Second Tractate, 12’

principal cause, but the witches do so as his instruments or servants.”<sup>60</sup> Martin also allowed for witches to request demons to do harm, the example he used was of impediments to matrimony, but he again stressed the point that it was the demon who actually committed the act and had the power, such as it was.<sup>61</sup>

All the acts of the witch were really symbols of her relationship with the devil, who would act when he saw her doing specific things, such as casting a wand into water to bring rain.<sup>62</sup> Ciruelo also stressed the fact that although witches believed they caused the misfortune, in reality it was the devil, “the spells that men concoct have no natural power to bring about those injuries in men, ... It must be, then, the devil who causes the injuries to reward his friends and servants, the necromancers and witches.”<sup>3</sup>

Ciruelo declared that although the devil was commonly believed to be able to create storms, this was generally false as he had no power over natural things. However, with specific permission from God for the punishment of a particular area, the devil was actually given the ability to create a storm, “at other times, the devils create storms at the command of God, who is angry at some town or village.”<sup>64</sup> The belief that the devil himself created

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<sup>60</sup> Martin, Section 65, 405’, “in quibus potest demon solum ledere et decipere principaliter, et malefici instrumentaliter vel ministraliter”

<sup>1</sup> Martin, Section 67, 405’

<sup>62</sup> Martin, Section 87, 407’

<sup>3</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 5, p.236

<sup>64</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 9, p.294

storms started, according to Ciruelo, because the devil was able to use his power and move the storms to particular places.<sup>65</sup>

However, for all that there were writers declaring the inability of the devil to commit real damage, there was the parallel group fully believing that the devil had freedom to harm. This groups' beliefs were best shown in the *Malleus maleficarum*, which declared that the most powerful group of witches practised "innumerable harms," including "hailstorms and hurtful tempests and lightnings; cause sterility in men and animals; offer to the devil, or otherwise kill, the children whom they do not devour."<sup>66</sup>

### 3.5. Pre-Reformation Beliefs in Manifestations of Divine Power

None of the pre-Reformation writers dealt with the differences between *mira* and *miracula*, again, it seems that this was not an issue of importance for them. It appears that the concept of divine power and miracles being the work of God alone, were so ingrained for them that they did not believe there was anything to discuss, a great contrast to those who followed them. Trithemius, in a discussion of the supposed miracles of the pagans, wrote what was obviously accepted belief:

If Jews, Saracens, Pagans and Gentiles, who do not believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, perform marvels here on earth, we believe that these are

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<sup>65</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 9, p.291

<sup>66</sup> Kramer, Heinrich, op cit, Part II, Q. I, Chapter 2, p.99. This belief is repeated elsewhere, for example, Part II, Q.I, Chapter 15, p.147

accomplished, not by the power of God, nor by the ministry of the angels, nor by the merit of holiness but by the counterfeit of demons.<sup>67</sup>

According to Ciruelo, there were only three causes of new occurrences in the world: natural causes, God working through the power of miracles, or demonic influence upon natural causation.<sup>68</sup> For Ciruelo, there were no more miracles, “now that almost the whole world has been converted, the age of miracles is over,” interestingly, this was exactly the same point made by Protestant writers in the following century.<sup>69</sup> In his writing on miracles, he emphasised the fact that God did not perform miracles on demand, and that to ask for them without necessity was to tempt God, “For a man to ask God to work a miracle without necessity is to tempt Him, ... The law of God, under pain of serious sin, forbids man to tempt God,” and that “God is not accustomed to work miracles at any day or hour or for any cause that may suddenly confront men. Miraculous intervention is limited to special times and places, and to matters of great import; and they occur very infrequently.”<sup>70</sup> Miracles, as far as Ciruelo was concerned, were very special occasions, which were neither to be presumed upon nor expected. Only certain people were used by God to perform miracles, and common people should not believe that this privilege was available to all, “the privileges and special grace accorded to some saints, which we read enabled them to perform their miracles, we should not presume to imitate.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Trithemius, ‘De miraculis infidelium’, quoted in Brann, Noel L., ‘The Shift from Mystical to Magical Theology in the Abbot Trithemius (1462-1516)’, *Studies in Medieval Culture*, Vol. XI, 1977, pp.147-159, p.153

<sup>68</sup> Ciruelo, Part 1, Chapter 2, p.97

<sup>69</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 3, p.209

<sup>70</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 3, p.206, see also Chapter 4

<sup>71</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 12, pp.332-333

### 3.5.1 *Pre-Reformation Beliefs in Possession and Exorcism*

There was no doubt that God had permitted the devil to possess men, as Ciruelo wrote, “God does, ... allow the devil to inhabit men’s bodies.”<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, Champier had obviously met some who disbelieved the devil’s power in this respect, as he wrote, “All the same, I do not deny that demoniacs can exist.”<sup>73</sup> Demoniacs, however, were not common, judging by his later words, “People do not incur demoniac possession except perhaps miraculously,” and that this incident could only occur if one was lacking in faith.<sup>74</sup>

Although it was commonly accepted that the devil was able to possess people, there was a problem with some being diagnosed as possessed when it was a natural illness. Castañega summarised this problem, “There are others that are sick with natural diseases unknown to the doctors of our land, ... Often, because the doctors don’t recognize the cause of the illness nor know how to remedy it naturally, they say that the women have spirits or demons.”

Following the correct procedure, and using only Christian words, power had been given to man to expel demons, according to Martin, “we may adjure demons in irrational creatures through the power of the divine name.”<sup>75</sup> It was only through the Church that this was possible, however, as Champier declared, “the sorcery of a demon can also be undone by the exorcisms of the church from the power of the thing signified, the passion of Christ, that

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<sup>72</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 1, p.187

<sup>73</sup> Champier, Chapter 2 of the Third Tractate, 17, “non tamen nego quia possint esse demoniaci”

<sup>74</sup> Champier, Chapter 2 of the Third Tractate, 18, “nec veniunt demoniaci nisi forte miraculose”

<sup>75</sup> Castañega, Martín de, op cit, chapter xxiii, p.320

<sup>76</sup> Martin, Section 43, 404, “possumus ergo demones adiurare in irrationalibus creaturis per virtutem divini nominis”



is.”<sup>77</sup> Ciruelo related the correct steps for exorcism in great detail, obviously feeling that there was a need for the correct procedures to be more widely known.<sup>78</sup>

The writers of the pre-Reformation period had few doubts about the power of God compared to that of the devil, however, some became less certain when actually discussing physical manifestations of that power. The tradition of the scholastics did not make the Church’s position regarding physical manifestations of demonic power particularly clear, and this led to a great deal of confusion, especially for any who used the *Malleus* as their guide. Champier, Ciruelo, Martin and Ponzinibio had no real doubts that demonic power was subservient to divine power, and therefore any physical manifestations remained part of God’s plan.

### 3.6. Counter Reformation Beliefs in Manifestations of Demonic Power

The Counter Reformation writers were far less sure of the theological certainties of their beliefs, unlike their predecessors. Their opinions on the manifestations of demonic power are confused, and there is not a consistent theory throughout any one of the texts, let alone all of them.

It was no longer a matter of debate that demons could copulate with humans, but unlike their predecessors, barring of course, the highly sexist *Malleus maleficarum*, the Counter

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<sup>7</sup> Champier, Chapter 1 of the Third Tractate, 13<sup>v</sup>-14<sup>r</sup>, “potest etiam dissolvi maleficium demonis per exorcismos ecclesie ex virtute rei significare passionis Christi.”

<sup>8</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 8, pp.270-276, 283

Reformation writers did not consider that this could be unwelcome for witches. Earlier writers believed that the women had either been tricked, or were unwilling participants, this was no longer the accepted opinion. Of the three writers, Boguet was most similar to the authors of the *Malleus*, in that he devoted quite a lot of space to the issue of copulation with demons, however, this is not to say that the others ignored the subject.

Remi wrote that the demon lovers could become jealous if their human partners considered any suitors, citing the case of Nicole Morèle who confessed that she had been beaten because she had allowed men to woo her. Remi followed accepted authority in denying that any issue could come of such a union, and examined the various reasons for this.<sup>79</sup> Guazzo wrote that “Almost all the Theologians and learned Philosophers are agreed, and it has been the experience of all times and all nations, that witches practise coition with demons, the men with succubus devils and the women with incubus devils.”<sup>80</sup>

Boguet examined the details of demonic intercourse, and concluded that all witches had carnal knowledge of Satan, “He [the devil] uses them so, because he knows that women are addicted to carnal pleasures and so by such titillation he retains their obedience.”<sup>81</sup>

Interestingly, unlike their predecessors these writers agreed with the view expressed in the *Malleus*, that such copulation was painful for the witches. Guazzo, repeating and elaborating upon Remi, wrote that witches “say that such copulations are entirely devoid of pleasure,

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<sup>79</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter VI, especially pp.61-62

<sup>80</sup> Guazzo, Book I, Chapter XI, p.34, “Solent Malefici, et Lamiae cum Daemonibus, illi quidem succubus, hae vero incubis actum venereum exercere, communis est haec sententia patrum Theologorum et Philosophorum doctiorum, et omnium fere saeculorum, atque nationum experientia comprobata.”

and that they rather feel the most acute pain in them.”<sup>82</sup> All of the confessions which Boguet cited included some element of intercourse with demons; the devil was even able to visit witches in prison in order to perform.<sup>83</sup> Succubi were acknowledged as existing and Boguet declared that men were as susceptible as women to carnal knowledge of demons, “since men are no less lecherous than women, he [the devil] also appears as a woman to satisfy them.” However, in his examples he only cited two men by name, and simply wrote that demons appeared as women at the sabbat, not discussing succubi in the detail with which he had dealt with incubi.<sup>84</sup> Remi also wrote only briefly about succubi, commenting that it was more rare for demons to act as Succubi, believing this to be because women were more often witches.<sup>85</sup> This aspect of witchcraft was one of three which made a witch worthy of death; Boguet reasoned that if God had put Israelites to death for intercourse with infidels, then how much worse was intercourse with the devil.<sup>86</sup>

The discussion over whether it was possible for any child to come of such unions was elaborate and quite complicated. At first Boguet seemed to believe that a child was a possibility, due to assorted testimonies he had read, “it seems then that it is possible for issue to come of this coupling.”<sup>87</sup> However, the debate ranged over a wide area, before failing to come to any final conclusion. Although they all agreed that demons could not produce

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<sup>81</sup> Boguet, Chapter XII, p.65, “Ilen use ainsi par ce qu’il scait que les femmes sont addonnées aux plaisirs de la chair, afin que par un tel chatouillement il les retienne en son obeissance”

<sup>82</sup> Guazzo, Book I, Chapter XI, p.35, “dicentium, omnem voluptatem abesse a tali copula, immo summum dolorem se percipere,” and Remi, Book I, Chapter VI, pp.55-56

<sup>83</sup> Boguet, Chapter LII, p.327

<sup>84</sup> Boguet, Chapter XII, p.65, “Et pource que les hommes ne cedent guieres aus femmes en lubricité, c’est pourquoy le Demon se met aussi en femme ou Succube, pour complaire au Sorcier”

<sup>85</sup> Remi, Book II, Chapter I, p.191

<sup>86</sup> Boguet, Chapter LXXIII, pp.547-548

offspring, they readily cited examples of demonic children. Boguet cited the example of Merlin, (a standard Medieval legend), and reported that rumour commonly ascribed Luther's origin to such a union: Pázmány, the Jesuit cardinal and Archbishop, wrote repeatedly that Luther had been born of an incubus.<sup>88</sup> Boguet also examined the opinion of Aquinas on this matter, then proclaimed that there were many strange monsters in the world, and that fish of differing species were able to procreate, concluding that scholars had written of women who had remained virgins although having children.<sup>89</sup> He admitted that if the devil was in animal form then nothing could come of their union, "by reason of the great disproportion between them." He finally concluded that "because of the disproportion between man and a brute beast, no issue can come of any copulation between them, much less can there be any issue from the coupling of Satan with a witch." Remi tried to be more scientific than this, explaining that there were too many differences between demons and humans for such an issue to be possible, "there must be a complementary correlation between the species; and this cannot exist between a Demon and a man."<sup>91</sup> Guazzo, following a similar line of thought, added that it was not possible as the devil was not concerned with life, "the devil has no part in life, but is the source of death."<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Boguet, Chapter XIII, p.79, "Cela fait croire, qu'il y a apparence, qu'il peut venir quelque chose de tel accouplement"

<sup>89</sup> Boguet, Chapter XIII, p.79, and Evans, R.J.W., *The Making of the Hapsburg Monarchy*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979), p.385

<sup>90</sup> Boguet, Chapter XIII, p.81

<sup>91</sup> Boguet, Chapter XIII, pp.83, 84, "pour la trop grande disproportion, qu'il y a entre eux", "que si pour la disproportion, qui est entre l'homme et la beste brute, il ne peut rien succeder de l'accouplement, qui se fait entre eux, qu'à plus forte raison ne doit-il rien naistre de ceux de Satan avec la Sorciere"

<sup>92</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter VI, p.52, "enim esse convenit specierum ... quae nulla esse potest Daemoni cum homine"

<sup>93</sup> Guazzo, Book I, Chapter XI, p.35, "Daemon est expers vitae, et origo mortis"

All three writers discussed whether issue was truly possible; the argument propounded by Martin of Arles, that the devil simply used the semen collected when a succubus, appears to have had support. Without explicitly stating this, they all declared that in demonic copulation, man's semen was wasted, and that any child born was of man, not demon. As Guazzo described it, "a child can be born from the copulation of an incubus with a woman, but that the father of such a child is not the demon but that man whose semen the demon has misused."<sup>93</sup>

### 3.6.1 Counter Reformation Beliefs in Metamorphosis

There was not a great deal of theological or sensible debate about this aspect of the devil's power: they all seemed content to simply list the shapes in which the devil had been seen. Remi discussed the way in which demons made bodies for themselves, either from air or other matter, while Boguet did not discuss this, but simply stated that this was common.<sup>94</sup> However, the possibility was also admitted that the devil could steal bodies when he required them, "he takes the body of some man who has been hanged."<sup>95</sup>

The form which the devil took was listed by the authors at every possible opportunity, and included cats, dogs, horses, and assorted wild and mythical beasts, such as bears and dragons. It was acknowledged that he was able to take human form, including that of a beautiful girl,

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<sup>93</sup> Guazzo, Book I, Chapter XI, p.35, "ex concubitu incubi cum muliere aliquando prolem nasci posse, et tum prolis vere patrem non esse Daemonem, sed illum hominem, cuius semine Daemon abusus fuerit", see also Remi, Book I, Chapter VI, p.74, Boguet, Chapter XII, p.66

<sup>94</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter VII, p.75 and Book I, Chapter XXVII, p.167, also Boguet, Chapter VII, p.40

<sup>95</sup> Boguet, Chapter XIII, p.73, "il prent alors le corps de quelque pendu", see also Chapter VII, p.40

but that the most popular human form was that of a large black man.<sup>96</sup> The preferred form for the sabbat was a goat according to all three writers, and one of the reasons given was that the “obscene lasciviousness of goats is proverbial,” as Remi wrote.<sup>97</sup> Boguet focused especially on a confession where the accused declared that the devil had lain with her in the shape of a fowl, “it seems to me that she meant to say a gander instead of a hen, as the Devil often transforms himself into the form of a gander.”<sup>98</sup>

Although they all agreed that the devil could assume assorted forms, “Satan may take what shape he pleases,” it seems that he was not able to form these bodies perfectly.<sup>99</sup> According to Del Rio, demons either assumed human form, or were so disgusting that they would be easily distinguished, “finally the stature and proportion of their bodies always either too big or too little, and ill-made.”<sup>1</sup> Remi believed that God forbade the devil from assuming perfect shapes so that men would have some warning, “for they [demons] can never so completely copy the human shape but that the deception is apparent to even the most stupid.” This was a development of the Counter Reformation, as Nider had given many examples of demons who passed as men for long periods of time. It is possible that these authors were influenced by the trial evidence they had seen, or their imaginations, and were led away from the standard Medieval position.

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<sup>96</sup> see Remi, Book I, Chapter IX, and XXIII, pp.87, 150, Boguet, Chapter VII, pp.35,36

<sup>97</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XXIII, p.155, “Hircorum libidinosa obscoenitas etiam proverbio”, see also Boguet, Chapter X, and XIII, pp.56, 70, Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, pp.69-70

<sup>98</sup> Boguet, Chapter XIII, p.75, “ie me doure, qu’au lieu d’une poule, elle n’ait youlu dire un oyson: dautant que le Diable se transforme souvent en oyson”

<sup>99</sup> Boguet, Chapter VII, p.39, “Satan prenne telle forme, qu’il luy plait”

Whatever theologians believed, common belief allowed for men to be physically turned into other creatures, such as wolves. Le Roy Ladurie in his reconstruction of the story of Françouneto, found that common people believed werewolves held their sabbats during the autumn, and so they remained indoors.<sup>102</sup> It was not only traditional witches who believed they were able to become other creatures, the *donas de fuera* of Sicily, believed they were transformed into dogs, cats and other animals.<sup>103</sup>

Although the Church's position on this issue was, by this time, perfectly clear, it was an area that the Counter Reformation writers discussed. They were incredibly confused regarding this, first giving large numbers of examples demonstrating the truth of metamorphosis, without any hints that these were not completely true incidents, and then declaring its impossibility. Boguet especially gave many examples of witches' testimony, declaring, "when they have transformed themselves into wolves," and he gave no denial of this being a physical possibility.<sup>14</sup> Remi believed that the ability to metamorphose was a reward for long service in the army of the devil, "he does this only for those who have served him for many years

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<sup>1</sup> Del Rio, *Disquisitionem libri sex*, II, q.28, s.iii, quoted in Garçon, Maurice and Jean Vinchon, *The Devil, An Historical, Critical and Medical Study*, translated Stephen Haden Guest, (Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1929), p.58

<sup>11</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter VII, p.76, "quod nunquam tam commode illam affingunt, quin fucus etiam crassioribus apareat"

<sup>102</sup> Ladurie, Emmanuel le Roy, *Jasmin's Witch*, translated Brian Pearce, (George Brazillier, New York, 1987), section 2, p.89

<sup>103</sup> Henningsen, Gustav, 'The Ladies from Outside: An Archaic Pattern of the Witches' Sabbath' in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), p.197

<sup>104</sup> Boguet, Chapter IX, p.51, "qui se mettent en loups", see also Chapter XXXIII, p.208, Chapter LIII, pp.336-344

and have by their evil deeds given proof of their loyalty to him; and that this is, as it were, their highest reward and prize for long and faithful service.”<sup>105</sup>

They then contradicted all the examples and evidence they had advanced for the reality of metamorphosis. There was a long and convoluted argument about whether the human soul could inhabit the body of any other creature, as Guazzo wrote, “for a human soul cannot occupy the body of a beast.”<sup>106</sup> They all concluded that it was merely a demonic illusion, deceiving not only onlookers, but also those who thought they were transformed, “But I maintain that for the most part it is the witch himself who runs about slaying: not that he is metamorphosed into a wolf, but that it appears to him that he is so, because the devil confuses the four humours of which he is composed, so that he represents whatever he wants to his fantasy and imagination.”<sup>107</sup> However, even this statement, which should be conclusive, is hedged with uncertainty, “for the most part,” which summarises the confusion of the Counter Reformation writers.

### 3.6.2 *Counter Reformation Beliefs in Maleficium*

The debate over whether the devil was able to control nature in order to do harm was, again, not that complex for these writers. Boguet poured scorn upon the idea, obviously held by

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<sup>1</sup> Remi, Book II, Chapter IV, pp.222, “qui emerito multorum annorum spatio fidem suam quam plurimis maleficiis probaverunt”

<sup>106</sup> Guazzo, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.59, “nequit enim anima humana informare corpus beluinum”, also Remi Book II, Chapter V, pp.230-231, and Boguet, Chapter LIII, p.349

<sup>107</sup> Boguet, Chapter LIII, p.354, “Mais toutefois je tiens, que pour l'ordinaire le Sorcier luy mesme court, et execute, non pas qu'il soit transformé en loup, mais bien luy semble il qu'il soit tel, ce qui luy provient de ce que le Diable luy brouille les quatre humeurs, dont il est composé, se sorte qu'il luy represente en la fantasie et imagination, ce qu'il luy plait”, see also Guazzo, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.62 and Remi, Book II, Chapter V, pp.232-233



others, that the devil was an opportunist with regard to storms and the weather, “yet there are those who maintain that, when the Devil foresees the approach of a storm, he deceives Witches into the belief that it is they who are the cause.”<sup>108</sup> The devil was believed to actually have enough power to control the elements, Boguet wrote, “these matters [storms], like all other natural phenomena, obey Satan.”<sup>109</sup>

In this way, the devil was able to perform many deeds of maleficia, such as stopping the milk of cows, causing waste and bringing pestilence to devour fruit. Boguet wrote of the way in which the devil could bring together animals wherever he pleased, and also that he could make man retain humours, thereby causing disease, “as he pleases.”<sup>111</sup> Remi wrote that although the devil was not able to create creatures which would damage crops, “what is there to prevent the Demon from gathering the widely scattered members of some species of creature and quickly massing them together in one place?”<sup>111</sup> Demons were also able to work outside nature, according to Remi, who wrote, “demons ... can otherwise affect us, and otherwise move causes other than those which are effected by nature.”<sup>112</sup> This was a break from the traditional view that the devil could only work through nature and natural effects, and shows the changes that were necessary for a full belief in witchcraft.

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<sup>108</sup> Boguet, Chapter XXIII, p.150, “Toutefois il y en a, qui tiennent que lors que le Diable prevoit venir la tempeste, il fait croire aux Sorciers que ce sont eux qui en sont cause.”

<sup>109</sup> Boguet, Chapter XXIII, p.150, “ces matieres là, comme encor toutes les autres qui sont naturelles, obeissent à Satan.”

<sup>110</sup> Boguet, Chapter XXXVIII, p.216, “qu’il luy plaist”, see also Chapter XXXVIII, pp.238-239, and Chapter XXXIX, p.243

<sup>111</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XXI, p.147, “Verum quid vetat illa iam sparsim creata in unum celerime locum a Daemone cogi, ac coaceruari, ... ?”

<sup>112</sup> Remi, Book III, Chapter XI, p.374, “Sed aliter nos afficere Demones, ac commovere aliter causas, quae a sola natura sunt comparatae certum est”, see also Book III, Chapter XII, p.379

The importance of the devil for the Counter Reformation was emphasised by the fact that in the Jesuit, Peter Canisius' Great Catechism, the name of Christ was only used 63 times, in comparison to the 67 of the devil.<sup>113</sup> However, the Inquisition in Modena asserted that the devil was unable to constrain a man's free will, with spells such as love magic, and emphasised the limitations of demonic power. This change led to those accused of such offences being charged with superstition, as opposed to implicit diabolism. This attitude is consistent with the position of both the Roman and Spanish Inquisitions with regard to unusual phenomena such as witchcraft.<sup>114</sup>

Witches were believed to have access to the power which was held by their master, the devil, as Boguet wrote, "it is not in the power of witches to do all which Demons do, but they do a good part of them."<sup>115</sup> In this way, they were to be feared as they were able to perform many evil deeds. All the authors agreed that their normal way to cause harm was through poisons, which the devil either gave them, or taught them to make.<sup>11</sup> Guazzo wrote that even in cases of disease the devil was constrained by nature, and the illness was natural, but instigated by the devil.<sup>117</sup> However, Remi was positive that witches were actually able to harm others

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<sup>113</sup> Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, (Penguin Books Ltd, London, 1991), p.568

<sup>114</sup> O'Neil, Mary, 'Discerning Superstition: Popular Errors and Orthodox Response in Late 16th Century Italy', PhD Dissertation, (Stanford University, 1982), p.154

<sup>115</sup> Boguet, 1602, Preface de l'Autheur, A5', "qu'à la verité il n'est pas en la puissance des Sorciers de venir à bout de tout ce que font les Demons, mais ils en font bien une partie"

<sup>116</sup> See Boguet, Chapter XXIII, pp.159-160, Guazzo, Book I, Chapter VIII, pp.25-26, Book II, Chapter I, pp.98-99, Remi, Book I, Chapter II, pp.36-37, Book I, Chapter XIII, pp.105-106, Book I, Chapter XXI, pp.145-146

<sup>117</sup> Guazzo, Book II, Chapter VIII, p.127

in unnatural ways, and gave the example of a woman who made an apple stick to a man's hands, causing him great pain.<sup>118</sup>

Outside natural effects, Boguet believed that witches were even able to produce hail after throwing items into water, "one may conclude that these miserable followers of the Devil do produce hail."<sup>119</sup> Guazzo did not believe witches could actually produce hail, but did believe they were able to control the weather, "It is most clearly proved by experience that Witches can control not only the rain and the hail and the wind, but even the lightning when God permits."<sup>120</sup>

Consent was necessary for the devil to have full power over man, in this way witches were even more worthy of hatred, as they had knowingly given themselves up to the devil. "We ought not to think that men can be rendered thus comatose against their will; for in that case it would be all up with the whole human race," was the way Remi described the situation.<sup>121</sup> A very interesting point was discussed by Remi, who declared that when the devil was cast down from heaven, he was then only able to work through man, "as soon as he was cast forth from heaven, God took from him all power to do ill at his own will, so that he could not harm mankind except through the agency of men." Although he also debated whether Satan normally worked independently, Remi came to no obvious conclusion, but the idea that Satan could only work through man appears to be his alone, even though he declared it

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<sup>118</sup> Remi, Book II, Chapter IV, pp.220-221

<sup>119</sup> Boguet, Chapter XXIII, p.145, "l'on peut conclure que ces miserable supports du Diable font la gresle"

<sup>120</sup> Guazzo, Book I, Chapter VII, p.22, "Experientia comperrissimum est, Sortilegos non pluuiæ tantum, grandini, et ventis imperare, sed et fulminibus quoque; Deo permittente."

<sup>121</sup> Remi, Book II, Chapter IV, p.225, "hanc vero invitos etiam somno sopiendi facultatem non ita accipi debere: Quod si sic pridem actum sit de universo genere mortalium"

to be the belief of many.<sup>122</sup> This idea has no Biblical origin, nor does it appear to have any theological basis. However, it fits nicely with Remi's attempt to ensure that witches were prosecuted to the full extent of the law, and ensured that all demonic activity could be attributed to a human agent, which would in turn, ensure the continuation of the witch hunts.

The way in which these men wrote of the power held by witches, allowing very little for divine omnipotence, highlights some of the beliefs that prevailed. There was little doubt shown about the powers of witches, and what was written was circumspect and always returned to the point that they were still working for the devil.<sup>123</sup> As John Teall wrote (of Remi, although it applies to all three writers), "Although he recognised the distinction between *mira* and *miracula*, Remy [sic] was far less concerned with emphasising it; in his zeal to excoriate Satan and the witch, he bothered little about God's necessary permission."<sup>124</sup> In this way, it appears almost contradictory for both Boguet and Remi to write that Satan had no power over man, and that God alone controlled the earth, while Remi declared that the devil was not even able to harm the hair on a man's head.<sup>125</sup> This apparent contradiction seems to stem from their belief in general permission from God to demons, as opposed to specific permission for individual acts of maleficium.

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<sup>122</sup> Remi, Book II, Chapter IX, p.253, "Ideoque illi a Deo iam a primo, quo e statu suo deiectus est, tempore oclusam fuisse omnem contumeliis libidinem, nec hominibus nisi per homines ullam illi esse nocendi relictam facultatem."

<sup>123</sup> See Boguet, Chapter XXIX, p.193 and Guazzo, Book I, Chapter XIX, pp.95-96

<sup>124</sup> Teall, John L., 'Witchcraft and Calvinism in Elizabethan England: Divine Power and Human Agency', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1962, pp.21-36, p.27

<sup>125</sup> Remi, Book II, Chapter V, p.231, see also Boguet, Chapter XLI, pp.280-281

### 3.7. Counter Reformation Beliefs in Manifestations of Divine Power

The devil, it was believed, normally worked through natural causes, only deluding his followers into believing that he was actually performing miracles. “For the Demons never work except through secondary and natural causes,” was how Boguet explained the workings of the devil, adding that these were believed to be miraculous because of the speed with which they occurred.<sup>126</sup> Only Guazzo dealt specifically with the issue of miracles, an interesting omission by the others, as miracles were a tenet of Catholicism which were under fierce attack from the Reformers. However, Guazzo simply commented that certain people were able to perform miracles, “a gift which may be found, though rarely, even in those whose life is not upright, so long as they have the true faith.”<sup>127</sup>

#### 3.7.1 Counter Reformation Beliefs in Possession and Exorcism

The issue of possession and exorcism was one that interested all three writers, possibly only because of the Counter Reformation propaganda opportunities it offered. Boguet wrote of those who “mock at the exorcisms and conjurations used by our priests towards demoniacs”, and continued, “But the countless examples of those who are daily delivered ... should suffice to shut the mouths of these atheists and heretics.”<sup>128</sup> Although he did not make a big

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<sup>126</sup> Boguet, 1602, Preface de l'Auteur, A4', “Car aussi les Demons ne besongnent iamais que par les causes secondes, et naturelles”

<sup>127</sup> Guazzo, Book III, Chapter IV, p.209, “donum, et si rarius iis etiam potest competere, qui vitae sunt non probate, ... dum tamen fidem rectam habeant”

<sup>128</sup> Boguet, Chapter LXI, pp.422, 426, “se mocquent des Exorcismes, et coniurations, dont usent nos Prestres à l'endroit des Demoniacques”

“Mais les exemples infinis de ceux, qui sont deliverez iournellement ... deuroient fermer la bouche à ces Athées, et heretiques”

issue of this, it demonstrates that exorcism was coming under increasing attack, mostly from the Reforming community, but possibly also from within the Church itself.

Exorcism became a spectacle whereby Catholics and Reformers could test each other, and prove that they were the chosen ones. As Walker wrote, "it was not until the Reformation had got well under way that the possibility arose of exorcisms being used by one group of Christians as propaganda against another."<sup>129</sup> Exorcisms became public spectacles, as a letter to the Fuggers, from Vienna in 1583 demonstrated, "the Jesuits here, two weeks ago, in the company of the Bishop drove out a devil from a poor maid."<sup>13</sup> Walker wrote that in France, where "the propaganda was only in one direction," that exorcisms "were deliberately publicized, both at the time by attracting large audiences, and afterwards by publishing printed accounts."<sup>131</sup> In the story of Françoneto, it was more readily believed that they were possessed, because the family had been Huguenots, "They are possessed by the Devil. They are both Huguenots!"<sup>132</sup>

As exorcism was an accepted part of Catholicism, and a debatable one for Protestants, it is unsurprising that the Catholics appear to have won the propaganda war over this issue. Nicole Aubry from Vervins was supposed to be possessed, and in the travesty that followed, a reformed minister tried to cast out the demon. According to the Catholics, the demon, named Beelzebub, retorted, "huh, servant of Christ! You are worse than me. Because I

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<sup>129</sup> Walker, D.P., op cit, p.4

<sup>130</sup> Letter from Vienna, 3/9/1583, in Klarwill, Viktor von (ed), *The Fugger News-Letters*, (John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd, London, 1924), pp.74-75

<sup>131</sup> Walker, D.P.: 'Demonic Possession Used as Propaganda in the Later 16th Century', *Scienze, credenze occulte, livelli di cultura: convegno internazionale di studi*, (Florence, 1982), p.237

<sup>132</sup> Ladurie, Emmanuel le Roy, op cit, Section 4, p.105

believe that which you do not want to believe. And I love you all the more for it.”<sup>133</sup> Boguet repeated the story of a Huguenot’s son who was possessed and, finding a minister of his own confession unable to cure the boy, sent for a Catholic priest, “who used the customary and ordinary exorcisms of the Roman Church with such sincerity that the possessed was soon delivered from these demons.”<sup>134</sup>

As Boguet had hinted, there was obviously some concern regarding exorcism and both the way it was being used and its practitioners. The rules concerning a proper exorcism and practitioner were gradually tightened. The National Synod of Rheims in 1583, declared that before an exorcism was to take place, the priest was to check into the background of the possessed, “since the too credulous are often deceived, and melancholics, lunatics, and persons bewitched often declare themselves to be possessed ... and these people ... are more in need of a doctor than of an exorcist.”<sup>135</sup> The Roman Ritual, issued under Paul V in 1614, followed this pattern, declaring firstly that the exorcist was not to believe too readily that one was possessed, and to learn the ways to distinguish a demoniac from those suffering from

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<sup>133</sup> Walker, D.P., ‘Demonic Possession’, pp.241-242, “Huy, serviteur de Christ! Tu es pis que moy. Car je CROY ce que tu ne veux pas CROIRE. Aussi t’en aymes-je mieux.” See also Nicholls, David, ‘The Devil in Renaissance France’, *History Today*, Vol. 30, November 1980, pp.25-30, p.30. For a fuller account of the spectacle that exorcism became, see Febvre, Lucien, *A New Kind of History, from the Writings of Febvre*, edited, P. Burke, translated K. Folca, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1973), pp.187-189

<sup>134</sup> Boguet, Chapter LXI, p.426, “qui s’aida des Exorcismes accoustumez et ordinaires en l’Eglise Romaine, avec telle syncerité, que le possédé fut bien tost deliveré de ses Demons”

<sup>135</sup> Quoted in Maquart, F.X., ‘Exorcism and Diabolical Manifestation’ in Jesus-Marie (ed), *Satan*, (Sheed & Ward Inc., New York, 1952), p.180

melancholy or disease.<sup>136</sup> Guazzo detailed these ways to distinguish the demoniac demonstrating that this was necessary.<sup>137</sup>

The Counter Reformation writers were very confused regarding manifestations of both demonic and divine power. Theologically they mixed authorised Church doctrine, with examples of marvels that the Church did not allow to be real. Guazzo remained closer to the pre-Reformation writers over the aspect of the power of the devil, than did either Boguet or Remi. He stood in the middle, neither believing all the effects of the devil, nor following the extreme Protestants in believing all was illusion, “Any man who asserted all the effects of magic to be true, or who believed that they were all illusions, is rather a radish than a man.”<sup>8</sup>

### 3.8. Protestant Beliefs in Manifestations of Demonic Power

The Protestant writers, unlike the Counter Reformation authors, were not so interested in the sensational stories connected with the power of the devil. Due to this, they never listed examples of maleficium, or the forms the devil was believed to take. Instead they focused upon the way the devil was attracting followers simply by getting them to believe in his power, for these writers this was by far the most worrying issue.

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<sup>136</sup> Kelly, Henry A., *The Devil, Demonology and Witchcraft*, (Doubleday & Co. Inc., New York, 1968, 1974), p.84

<sup>137</sup> Guazzo, Book III, Chapter II, pp.196-198

<sup>138</sup> Guazzo, Book I, Chapter III, p.6, “Qui asserverit omnes effectus Magiae esse veros, vel credat omnes esse praestigiatorios, raphanus sit, non homo”



Incubi and succubi were not as interesting for the Protestants as they had been for the Catholics. Daneau was an unusual demonologist in that he completely ignored all of the sexual issues that could be said to have interested most of the others. Scot and James both discussed incubi and succubi; James believing, and Scot totally incredulous that anyone could possibly consider such things to be real, “the follie of mens credulitie is ... much to be woondered at and derided.”<sup>139</sup> Scot declared early on that any accusation of adultery with spirits was a “stale ridiculous lie.”<sup>140</sup> He continued by citing stories of incubi, and the cures that had been prescribed by certain Catholic priests, concluding that incubi were fables “speciellie to excuse and mainteine the knaveries and lecheries of idle priests and bawdie monks; and to cover the shame of their lovers and concubines.”<sup>141</sup> Scot felt that incubi were a natural disease that could be cured by a physician, “But in truth, this Incubus is a bodilie disease ... although it extends unto the trouble of the mind.”<sup>142</sup>

James wrote that there were two ways in which abuse by an incubi or succubi could occur, and then discussed incubi alone. One way in which the devil could have intercourse, was to steal the sperm from a dead body, the other was when he actually borrowed a dead body. James did write that modern witches had confessed to willingly having intercourse with incubi, “some of the Witches have confessed, that he hath perswaded them to give their willing consent thereunto.”<sup>143</sup> He also discussed whether any issue could come of such intercourse, having Philomathes comment that “sundrie monsters have bene gotten by that

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<sup>139</sup> Scot, Book III, Chapter xix, p.71

<sup>140</sup> Scot, Book II, Chapter ix, p.33

<sup>141</sup> Scot, Book IV, Chapter ii, p.74, also Book IV, Chapter x, p.85

<sup>142</sup> Scot, Book IV, Chapter xi, p.86

<sup>143</sup> James, Third Book, Chapter III, p.129

way.” Epistemon’s reply was that such tales were nothing but “Aniles fabulae,” and that demons had no nature of their own, and could not, therefore, generate anything. If such a thing were possible, he continued, then the issue would be natural and the child of the man whose body was abused.<sup>144</sup>

### 3.8.1 Protestant Beliefs in Metamorphosis

There was discussion over the various forms the devil could assume, but no simple listing in the way of the Counter Reformation writers. The fact that the devil was a spiritual creature, and therefore had no physical body, was reflected in popular belief. Jonson’s *The Divell is an Asse*, showed this aspect of belief very well, as Satan told a minor demon, “you must take a body ready made, Pug, / I can create you none,” and suggested that he steal the body of a man recently hanged.<sup>145</sup>

Although these writers did not simply list the forms the devil could take, or even discuss how these forms were made, they did comment upon the more common forms in which he was believed to appear. Gifford, using scripture as his base, concluded, “Devils can take a bodily shape, and use speeche.”<sup>146</sup> It was commonly believed that the devil’s natural physical form was horrific to see, as Daneau described it, “most horrible and dreadful.”<sup>147</sup> The opinion that he could only form disfigured bodies was ridiculed by Jonson; who had Fitz-dottrell

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<sup>144</sup> James, Third Book, Chapter III, pp.128-129

<sup>145</sup> Jonson, Ben, *The Divell is an Asse*, (University Tutorial Press Ltd, London, 1967), Act I, scene 1, ll.135-139, 140-141

<sup>146</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, E2

<sup>147</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.85, “tetrerrima et formidibilissima”

comment that Pug could not be a devil as he had normal feet, to which Pug replied, "Sir that's a popular error deceives many."<sup>148</sup>

The Protestants agreed that the devil was able to assume the form of a man, but unlike the Catholics, did not detail the type of man, or recount instances of its occurrence.<sup>149</sup> They also agreed that he was able to take on the form of various animals.<sup>15</sup> Gifford touched on a uniquely English issue, when he wrote that the witches' familiar was merely the devil in disguise.<sup>1 1</sup>

The Protestants were more concerned with the popular belief that the devil could transform men into other creatures. For them this was terrible blasphemy, as it attributed far too much power to the devil, which rightly belonged to God. Unlike the Catholics, they did not devote a lot of effort to explaining why metamorphosis was impossible. Peucer commented on the fact that the common people believed metamorphosis was possible, because the soul was able to leave the body.<sup>1 2</sup> A great deal of belief in transformation was blamed upon natural illness; James wrote that it possibly had a natural cause, "a naturall super-abundance of Melancholie, ... hath made some thinke themselves Pitchers, and some horses, and some

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<sup>14</sup> Jonson, Ben, op cit, Act I, scene iii, l.30

<sup>149</sup> For examples of the devil appearing as a man, see James, First Book, Chapter I, p.96, Second Book, Chapter II, p.111 and Daneau, Chapter II, p.40, Chapter III, pp.68-69

<sup>1</sup> Examples of the devil as various animals, see James, Second Book, Chapter III, p.113, Gifford, *Discourse* D3', G3'

<sup>151</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, G3'

<sup>152</sup> Oates, Caroline Frances, 'Trials of Werewolves in the Franche-Comté in the Early Modern Period', PhD Dissertation, (University of London, London, 1993), p.49

one kinde of beast or other.”<sup>153</sup> Peucer wrote in a similar vein, stating that melancholy was a primary cause, but that the devil also added his illusions to cause more cases.<sup>154</sup>



Cranach the Elder, *The Werewolf* <sup>155</sup>

Diabolic illusion was confirmed as being the most common cause for belief in transformation. Cranach the Elder produced a very interesting woodcut of a werewolf, showing a man on all fours carrying off a child, with a mother screaming in the background, although it is obvious that there is no real physical change in the man. In this way, Cranach was able to demonstrate that although it appeared that werewolves stole children, it was simply an illusion of the devil, and that they remained men all the time. Daneau concluded that tales of werewolves were false, as the devil “blinds their outward senses, then he brings images of things into their imaginations.”<sup>156</sup> Hemmingsen linked disbelief in transformation,

<sup>153</sup> James, Third Book, Chapter I, p.125

<sup>154</sup> Céard, Jean, ‘Folie et démonologie au XVI siècle’ in Various (ed), *Folie et Dérison à la Renaissance*, (Editions de l’universite de Bruxelles, 1976), p.139

<sup>155</sup> Hollstein, F.W.H., *German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts ca. 1400 - 1700*, Vol. VI, (Menno Hertzberger, Amsterdam, 1954), p.83

<sup>156</sup> Daneau, Chapter III, p.60, “ea animi deliria et falsae phantasiae sive imaginationes ... sopit eorum externos sensus et occaecat, tum deinde varias rerum formas obiicit”

with the theological reasoning behind it, “for the devil is not able to change anything created by God, but only to illude human senses.”<sup>157</sup> Scot ridiculed beliefs in werewolves and transformations, “I have put twentie of these witchmongers to silence with this one question; to wit, Whether a witch that can turne a woman into a cat, & c: can also turne a cat into a woman?”<sup>158</sup>

The main reason for the Protestant disbelief in human metamorphosis was their intense belief in the omnipotence of God. For them, to allow that the devil could physically change a creation of the Lord was impossible, Gifford simply said that to believe such things would be against truth.<sup>1</sup> Scot elaborated upon this idea, and concluded, “if a witch or a divell can so alter the shape of a man, ... Gods works should not onelie be defaced and disgraced, but his ordinance should be woonderfullie altered, and thereby confounded.”<sup>160</sup>

### 3.8.2 *Protestant Beliefs in Maleficium*

The ability of the devil to cause actual physical harm was a point thoroughly discussed by these writers. This links very strongly to their core belief in divine omnipotence, and their difficulties over seemingly obvious manifestations of maleficia are clear. The weather and storms were the most common area in which they discussed the power of the devil. Brenz, in denying the power of the devil, wrote, “the devil is not so powerful that ... he can change

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<sup>15</sup> Hemmingsen, K3, “Non enim potest Diabolus creaturas Dei re ipsa transmutare, sed tantum humanis sensibus illudere”

<sup>158</sup> Scot, Book V, Chapter i, p.92

<sup>159</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, E1<sup>r</sup>

<sup>160</sup> Scot, Book V, Chapter v, p.101

and transform the air. Even less can the witches and sorcerers do such things.”<sup>161</sup> Scot followed the belief in demonic and witches’ power to its logical end, “we see they are so malicious and spitefull, that if they by themselves, or by their devils, could trouble the elements, we should never have faire weather. If they could kill men, children, or cattell, they would spare none; but would destroy and kill whole countries and housholds.”<sup>162</sup> He had no qualms about simply stating his beliefs, “I denie altogether, that he [Christ] left that power with these knaves,” and, “it is also written, that Gods word, and not the words of conjurors, or the charmes of witches, healeth all things, maketh tempests, and stilleth them.”<sup>163</sup> Gifford emphasised the power of God in his attempts to convince the common people that the devil had no power, “Scripture ascribeth the Windes, the Tempests, the Haile and the mighty Thunders and Lightnings unto God even as works peculier to his Maiestie.”<sup>164</sup> He also explained that although it appeared that the devil created bad weather, he was not able to create such things, but merely using his abilities as a spirit to manipulate it, “the Devils did not make nor create that fire [lightning], but being already scattered in the ayre a company of them doe gather it together.”<sup>165</sup>

Witches were accorded some real power, especially in common belief. Although this appears to contradict their stance upon divine omnipotence, it remained a question of emphasis and quantity, with the Protestants still retaining the overall belief in God as the ruler and controller of the universe. Daneau wrote that, “there are certain sorcerers, who by demonic

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<sup>161</sup>Midelfort, H.C. Erik, ‘Were There Really Witches?’ in Kingdon (ed), *Transition and Revolution*, (Burgess Publishing Co., Minnesota, 1974), p.216

<sup>162</sup> Scot, Book XII, Chapter iii, p.219

<sup>163</sup> Scot, Book XV, Chapter xxi, p.432

<sup>164</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, D3<sup>r</sup>

means and practices, harm the minds, bodies and lives of men.”<sup>166</sup> Gifford did not focus upon the reality of the power of witches, but did declare that they had to exist as Scripture had examples of them, “It is so evident by the Scriptures, and in all experience, that there be witches which worke by the devill, or rather I may say, the devill worketh by them, that such as go about to proove the contrarie, doe shew themselves but cavillers.”<sup>167</sup> However, it was James who was the most certain that witches had real power, “They can rayse stormes and tempestes in the aire, ... They can make folkes to becom phrenticque or Maniacque.”<sup>168</sup> True Protestant belief was shown in the story of Mary Glover, when she was suffering from a fit, supposedly caused by witchcraft, “O Lord be mercifull unto her by whose meanes this trouble was brought uppon me,” demonstrating belief that the witch was merely the instrument.

For all the powers the devil was believed to have, he was still constrained by nature; only God who had created it, could work outside nature, the devil had to remain within its laws. Zwinglian Peter Martyr declared that the devil was bridled by both God and the boundary of nature. Daneau did not diverge from this path, writing that, “Satan can do nothing except though natural means and causes.”<sup>171</sup> It was believed that the devil used his natural abilities to see whether a man was beginning to suffer an illness (before the symptoms were

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<sup>166</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, D4'

<sup>167</sup> Daneau, Chapter II, p.31, “esse quosdam Sortiarios colligunt qui Satanica arte et via hominum animos, corpus, vitam denique ipsam laedant”

<sup>168</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, B4'

<sup>169</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter V, pp.117, 118

<sup>170</sup> Swan, Iohn, *A True and Briefe Report of Mary Glovers Vexation*, edited, M. MacDonald, (n.p., 1603), p.27

<sup>171</sup> Clark, Stuart, ‘The rational witchfinder: conscience, demonological naturalism and popular superstitions’ in Pumfrey, Rossi, and Slawinski (eds), *Science, Culture and popular belief in Renaissance Europe*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991), p.223

noticeable), and then tricked a witch into thinking she caused the sickness. As Gifford described it, “There bee naturall causes of tortures and grieffe, of lamenes, and of death in the bodies of men and beastes, which lie so hid and secrete, that the learneddest Physitians can not espie them, but the devill seeth them, and can coniecture very neere the time, when they will take effect.”<sup>172</sup>

With even some knowledgeable men allowing for witches to have power, it is unsurprising that common belief attributed so much to them. That this was a problem is demonstrated by Brenz’s words, “all those who grant or ascribe to witches, the devil’s followers, and to magicians what pertains and belongs only to God’s majesty, are guilty of idolatry too.”<sup>173</sup> As would be expected, it was Gifford, the pastor, who was most concerned with this issue, despairing that “the most part have bene besotted, even such as did take themselves to be very wise: for they have verely beleved that witches could do great wonders, ascribing such power unto devils as belongeth onely to God,” and “it is the common opinion among the blind ignorant people, that the cause and the procuring of harme by witchcraft, proceedeth from the Witch, & that either the Devill could or would doe nothing unlesse he were sent by her.”<sup>174</sup> Scot also highlighted this problem, in the opening paragraph of his book, he wrote, “if any adversitie, greefe, sicknesse, losse of children, corne, cattell, or libertie happen unto them; by and by they exclaime uppon witches.”<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.99, “Satanam non nisi et per caussas et per modum naturalem efficere quicquam posse.”

<sup>172</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, E2’, see also E3’

<sup>173</sup> Midelfort, H.C. Erik, op cit, p.214

<sup>174</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, B1’, H3’’, see also F4’

<sup>175</sup> Scot, Book I, Chapter i, p.1



However, for all their examples of supposedly demonic power in the world, these writers always returned to the starting point that demons and witches had no real power, and that only God ruled the world. Gifford declared that God's power was such that the devil, "hath no right nor power over Gods creatures, no not so much as to kill one flye, or to take on eare of corne out of anie mans barne," and that "the devill can not touch any thing to kill or to hurt it, but upon speciall leave from God."<sup>176</sup> Gifford's fear that the common people would forget this, was shown in the fact that he repeated the idea of God's omnipotence at regular intervals throughout both his works. The power of a witch was also compared to that of the devil, and found wanting, "the witch can doo nothing, for the devill which is farre greater then she can doo nothing."<sup>177</sup> Some writers were almost scornful of the devil himself, Ludwig Lavater for example, declared, "know thou well, that he cannot thus much hurt, neither thy goods, nor body, nor soule without the permission and sufferance of Almightye God."<sup>178</sup> Scot compared the power of the devil to that of God, "he that cannot make one haire white or blacke, whereof (on the other side) not one falleth from the head without Gods speciall providence."<sup>179</sup> Abraham Sawr, the editor of the *Theatrum de veneficis*, wrote, "Nor can the devil himself, nor through anyone else, harm anyone," and without divine permission, the devil was not even able, "to bend a single hair on the human head."<sup>180</sup> Gifford took the common belief in demonic power to its conclusion, asking, "The devill can

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<sup>176</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, D1', M1'

<sup>177</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, H3'

<sup>178</sup> Lavater, Lewes, *Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Nyght*, edited, Wilson and Yardley, (University Press, Oxford, 1929), Aaiv'

<sup>179</sup> Scot, Book XV, Chapter xxi, p.432

<sup>180</sup> Quoted in Schwerhoff, Gerd, 'Rationalität im Wahn', *Saeculum*, Vol. 37, 1986, pp.45-82, p.66, "Der Teufel kan weder durch sich selbst noch durch andere Personen niemandt Schaden zufügen" "ein einiges haar auff dess Menschenhaupt krümme"

not kill nor hurt any thing no not so much as a poore henne. If he had power who can escape him?"<sup>181</sup>

A major point which they seemed to want to reinforce was that if all witches were removed, there would still be misfortune. Normally Scot was the most outspoken Protestant writer, however, on this issue, he was joined by Brenz and Gifford, neither of whom were restrained in their choice of words. Brenz declared, "Even if all witches were burned to ashes, still hail, thunder, and storms would not on that account cease, for all of them are sent by God," while Gifford argued that, "if there were no witches at all, yet men should be plagued by the devils in their bodies and goods."<sup>182</sup> Although using similar language, Scot did go one stage further than the others, in actually removing devils from the equation as well, "if all the divels in hell were dead, and all the witches in *England* burnt or hanged; I warrant you we should not faile to have raine, haile and tempests, as now we have: according to the appointment and will of God."<sup>183</sup>

Popular belief led to anger and indignation among some writers; Teall described the situation nicely, "If to assign vast powers to Satan is a mockery of God's justice, to attribute them to the witch is worse: it is idolatry and blasphemy."<sup>184</sup> Scot was the most vehement in his denunciation of those who believed in demonic power, and was even worse about those who believed in witches' power, complaining about the popular belief, "that the glorie and power of God be not so abridged and abased as to be thrust into the hand or lip of a lewd

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<sup>181</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, M4'

<sup>182</sup> Midelfort, H.C. Erik, op cit, p.218, Gifford, *Dialogue* D2'

<sup>183</sup> Scot, Book I, Chapter i, p.3

old woman: whereby the worke of the Creator should be attributed to the power of a creature.”<sup>185</sup>

The main fear for the Protestant writers was that with the belief in demonic power would come other dualist style beliefs, leading their flock even further from God. It was due to their strong belief in the omnipotence of God, that they were able to argue that neither the devil nor witches had any power, and thereby almost deny the reality of witchcraft's effects. Gifford's belief that the common people were not acknowledging divine power is shown in his words, “men do so little consider the high sovereignty and providence of God over all things: they ascribe so much to the power of the devill and to the anger of witches, and are in such feare of them, that the least shew that can be made by the sleights of Satan deceiveth them.”<sup>186</sup> This was what he feared most, that people would forget that power lay in the hands of God, and that if the devil was able to act, it was only through the will and permission of God. He even believed that true bewitchment was when the devil succeeded in convincing people that he had such great power, “herein he hath greatly bewitched the blinde worlde.”<sup>187</sup> This was also Scot's major concern, he was angry at the insult paid to God when people believed in demonic power, “we dishonour God greatlie, when we attribute either the power or proprietie of God the creator unto a creature.”<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Teall, John L., op cit, p.32

<sup>185</sup> Scot, Epistle to the Readers, Biii<sup>r</sup>, see also Book XVI, Chapter ii, p.472

<sup>186</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, M2<sup>r</sup>

<sup>187</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, D3<sup>r</sup>, also, “this is a worke farre above the power of Devils, ... the Divel hath bewitched those which beleeve that hee can doe such thinges.”, D4<sup>r</sup>

<sup>188</sup> Scot, Book V, Chapter viii, p.106

### 3.9. Protestant Beliefs in Manifestations of Divine Power

The standard definitions of *mira* and *miracula* were used by these writers. Daneau defined a miracle as “a certain work which is done against the power implanted in these natural things by God,” continuing to add that one “surpasses the power of created things, nor can it be done by them. A miracle can only be the work of God’s power.”<sup>189</sup> For Daneau, the reason that these were unique to God had to be explained, demonstrating that even he had some pastoral concerns, “in the working of true miracles, the nature of things which was given by God is destroyed and removed, which Satan is not able to do as it is only possible for God.”<sup>1</sup> His definition of *mira* was succinct, “a work that is not vulgar or common, but is efficacious and done by natural causes.”<sup>191</sup> Gifford explained the difference between *mira* and *miracula* to demonstrate this for parishioners, “the devill is able to doo no miracle, but to make a shew, by illusion.”<sup>1 2</sup> King James also felt obliged to explain the difference between the true miracles of God, and the false of the devil, “God is a creator, what he makes appeare in miracle, it is so in effect. ... where as the Devill ... counterfetting that ... [it appears] onelie to mennes outward senses.”<sup>193</sup> For Scot, the thought that any other than God or his servants could perform miracles, was horrifying, “And when Christ himselfe

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<sup>1 89</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, pp.99 100, “opus aliquod, quod contra vim ipsis rebus naturalibus a Deo insitam efficitur”,

“quod omnes omnium rerum creaturarum vires superat, nec ab iis effici potest. Itaque miraculum solius Dei potentie opus est”

<sup>190</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.103, “in miraculo vero edendo, oporteat destruere et abolere a Deo datam iam rebus ipsis naturam. Id quod Satan nequit. Solius enim est Dei”

<sup>191</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.101, “opus non vulgare illud quidem et commune, sed tamen quod per causas naturales efficitur et producitur”

<sup>192</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, H4<sup>r</sup>

<sup>193</sup> James, First Book, Chapter VI, p.105

saith; the works that I doo, no man else can accomplish; whie would we thinke that a foolish old woman can doo them all, and manie more?"<sup>194</sup>

The ability to perform miracles as opposed to mere marvels was, according to Christian belief, God's alone. However, the Protestants were certain that the age of miracles was over; they had been allowed for a certain period in order that Christianity be established, and to demand their continuance was, in effect, declaring that Christ had not done enough. Calvin wrote, "Although Christ does not express whether he wishes this [the power of miracles] to be a temporary gift, or to reside perpetually in his Church, it is however more probable that miracles, which were to make famous the new and obscure gospel, were promised only for a certain time."<sup>1</sup> Scot virtually repeated these words, but was also more blunt, simply declaring, "the working of miracles is ceased."<sup>19</sup> The alternative reason proposed for the end of miracles was that if miracles were common there was little need for Christ, "For, if ye may make at your pleasure such things to drive devils away and to heal both body and soul, what need have ye of Christ?"<sup>1 7</sup> James did not discuss this in detail in *Daemonologie*, but did state his beliefs in a letter to Prince Henry, "Ye have oft heard me say that most miracles nowadays proves but illusions,"<sup>198</sup>

Due to this belief, miracles were an area where inter-confessional rivalry was intense.

Gifford, who unlike Scot, is not noted for his overt attacks upon Catholicism, declared,

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<sup>194</sup> Scot, Book XVI, Chapter v, p.479, see also Book XIII, Chapter xx, p.317

<sup>195</sup> Walker, D.P., 'Unclean Spirits', p.73. From Calvin's commentary on Mark, in *Novem Testamentum Commentarii*

<sup>196</sup> Scot, Book III, Chapter vii, p.50, see also Book VIII, Chapter i, p.156

<sup>197</sup> N. Dorcaster, *The Doctrine of the Masse Booke*, 1554, quoted in Thomas, Keith, op cit, p.59

“There hath bene meere cosinage in most of the popish miracles.”<sup>199</sup> As Philip Soergel has examined, throughout the sixteenth century the attitude of the Protestants towards Catholic shrines and miracles became more offensive, “[they] attacked the clergy who promoted shrines and their miracles as magicians, witches, and sorcerers.”<sup>200</sup> The Catholic miracles were, according to Protestant beliefs, simply examples of the *mira* of the devil, used by the Catholic Church to perpetuate its rule.

### 3.9.1 Protestant Beliefs in Possession and Exorcism

As far as most Protestants were concerned, exorcism was another fraud perpetrated by Catholic priests and other tricksters. Possession itself was believed to be a rare occurrence, as the physician Edward Jorden wrote, “I do not deny ... there may be both possessions by the Devill and obsessions and witchcraft, & c. ... But such examples being verie rare now adayes, I would in the feare of God advise men to be very circumspect in pronouncing of a possession.”<sup>1</sup> Gifford wrote that although the Apostles had the power to cast out demons, this was not a good example, “We may not draw a patterne from that.”<sup>2</sup> He also commented upon the way in which exorcists were deemed to command the demons,

I see no warrant at all by Gods word, much lesse to commaund and adjure him to depart. He is the Lords executioner, he hath sent him, wee may

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<sup>1</sup> To Prince Henry, ?1603, in Akrigg, G.V.P. (ed), *Letters of King James VI and I*, (University of California Press, London, 1984)

<sup>199</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, H4'

<sup>200</sup> Soergel, P.M., 'From Legends to Lies: Protestant Attacks on Catholic Miracles in Late Reformation Germany', *Fides et historia*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1989, pp.21-29, p.22

<sup>201</sup> Jorden, Edward, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother*, edited, M. MacDonald, (John Windet, Powles Wharfe, 1603), A3', see also B2', for more details of this physician and his links with cases of possession, see Briggs, Robin, *Witches and Neighbours*, (Harper Collins, London, 1996), pp.212-213

<sup>202</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, I2'

intreat the Lord to remove him, but what authority have we to command him to depart, where God hath sent him?<sup>203</sup>

Due to the confessional divide over this issue, it became, like miracles and shrines, an issue for propaganda on both sides. An exorcism carried out by Peter Canisius at the Marian shrine of Altötting, became the focus of a book by Johannes Marbach, which refuted the exorcism in minute detail. Marbach compared Catholics to the witch of Endor, and the image of the virgin Mary, who had supposedly appeared to promote the Altötting pilgrimage, to the false Samuel. According to Soergel, this tract started a pamphlet war that lasted several years, with popular writers and poets such as Johannes Fischart joining the fight.<sup>204</sup> According to Protestants, Catholic exorcism used demonic means to pretend to drive out the devil, simply to maintain the propaganda regarding these cures. Protestant writers, already sceptical about possession and exorcism, certainly did not feel that a Catholic would be able to cure people; as James wrote, “it is first to be doubted if the Papistes or anie not professing the onelie true Religion, can relieve anie of that trouble.”<sup>205</sup> Scot went straight to the heart of the matter, disputing that the power to cast out devils was still available to man, and concluding from this, that Catholic exorcisms were fraudulent, “They take upon them to call up and cast out divels; and to undoo with one divell, that which another divell hath done.”<sup>206</sup>

Scot’s reason for Catholics persecuting witches was simply due to rivalry, “The papists ... have officers in this behalfe, which are called exorcists or conjurors, and they looke narrowlie

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<sup>203</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue* 12’

<sup>204</sup> Soergel, P.M., op cit, pp.26-27

<sup>205</sup> James, Third Book, Chapter IIII, p.130

<sup>206</sup> Scot, Book XV, Chapter xxix, p.448

to other cousenors, as having gotten the upper hand over them.”<sup>207</sup> He completely dismissed all uses of holy water and other sacred Catholic items, “it is marvell that papists doo affirme, that their holie water, crosses, or bugges words have such vertue and violence, as to drive awaie divels ... when as it appeareth in the gossell, that the divell presumed to assault and tempt Christ himselfe.”<sup>208</sup> James wrote in *Counterblast to Tobacco*, (1604) that if tobacco “could by the smoke thereof chase out devils, ... it would serve for a precious Relicke, ... for the superstitious Priests.”<sup>209</sup>

Disbelief in exorcism’s efficacy was expected, and laws were passed against its use in Protestant lands; for example, Augsburg council banned public exorcisms in 1568, although this may have been more to do with the growing spectacle of public ‘healings.’<sup>21</sup> In England, although they did not exorcise by rite, the Puritans dispossessed people by prayer and fasting rituals, which were eventually viewed by the hierarchy as being as fraudulent as exorcism. In England the ritual exorcism that had been part of the baptism rite was abandoned in the second Edwardian Prayer Book, and the office of exorcist was removed at the same time.<sup>211</sup> However, there remained some anomalies to this pattern; the Lutheran baptismal rite retained its ritual exorcism, and it was not until 1604, that ministers in England were forbidden to cast out devils by prayer without the bishop’s permission.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Scot, Book XV, Chapter xxii, p.433

<sup>21</sup> Scot, Book XV, Chapter xxx, p.262

<sup>209</sup> Walker, D.P., ‘Unclean Spirits’, p.80

<sup>210</sup> Roper, Lyndal, *Oedipus and the Devil*, (Routledge, London, 1994), p.174

<sup>211</sup> Thomas, Keith, op cit, p.571

<sup>212</sup> Hsia, R. Po-Chia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1550-1750*, (Routledge, London, 1989), p.152



### 3.10. Conclusion

The issue of the manifestations of both demonic and divine power did not necessarily have to split along confessional lines. Both Catholics and Protestants basically agreed about divine omnipotence, and as this was the case, then it would be expected that there should be no divide over manifestations of power. However, with the situation as confused as it was post-*Malleus maleficarum*, it is hardly surprising that Counter Reformation beliefs in demonic manifestations were exaggerated.

The beliefs of the writers until the Reformation had almost all concurred, and it was only with the Reformation and its extreme providentialism that the split in the Catholic side occurred. For the Protestants, manifestations of demonic power were all either illusion, or natural powers through which God was ordering the world. They insisted that all trials and tribulations were sent by God, and because of this, the Counter Reformation Catholics were forced into taking a more credulous stance with regard to demonic manifestations. In order to combat their confessional rivals, they had to be seen to oppose virtually everything the Reformers believed, and this meant they allowed the devil more liberty than previously. Due to this new belief in manifestations of demonic power, they were then able to pursue the witch hunts with a total lack of scepticism.

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# **The Use of Magic:**

**Cunning Folk and Superstition**

## 4 Cunning Folk and Superstition

### 4.1. Introduction

Cunning folk, the village wise men or women, were a popular target for pastors and priests, and the attempts at vilification were part of an education programme for the populace to rely upon God and the Church alone in adversity. The way in which the churches most commonly attempted this massive task was through sermons and stories, these according to Gurevich, were “the most important channels of communication between clergy and masses,” and were an essential part in the teaching of Christianity to the people.<sup>1</sup>

According to theologians and pastors, cunning folk could not be using God and the official remedies of the churches. Cunning folk, as a type of diviner and sorcerer, were universally condemned in the Bible; apart from the commonly cited Deuteronomy passages, the Prophecies of Jeremiah included a declaration that the people of God were not to listen to them, “hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers.”<sup>2</sup> This left only the remedies of the devil; although cunning folk, and popular belief argued that this could not be the case, and supported this with Biblical evidence, “And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?”<sup>3</sup> Churchmen argued that the devil merely made a show of leaving, but was simply going deeper into the soul. The only sure remedy for problems was strong faith and regular prayer, a doctrine that was derived from the Epistle to the Ephesians,

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<sup>1</sup> Gurevich, Aron, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, translated János M. Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988), p.2

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah xxvii:ix, King James Bible, 1611

which recommended standing strong in the Lord, and putting “on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”<sup>4</sup>

The term ‘superstition’ was used in different ways throughout the Reformation period. Peter Burke explained that before 1650 it was used to describe “false religion,” including efficacious, but wicked magical rituals. However, after 1650, it became more commonly used when describing foolish, but essentially harmless practices. As he described it, “Protestants accused Catholics of practising a magical religion, and Catholic reformers were concerned to purge popular culture of charms and spells.”<sup>5</sup>

The theory that Europe was basically pagan, with only pockets of Christianity, and that the reforms of the Churches, both Catholic and Reformed, were more to Christianise the populace, than simply reform popular beliefs, is one best expounded by Robert Muchembled. As he described it, France (and most probably all Europe) was, “superficially Christianized but fundamentally magical.”<sup>6</sup> This theory is supported by evidence such as the reports from Jesuit missionaries to Huelva, west of Seville, which complained that the people there were more like Indians than Spaniards.<sup>7</sup> The reforms of superstition were, unsurprisingly, different across the confessional divide. The example of the story of St

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew xii:xxvi, see also Luke xi:xviii-xx and Mark iii:xxiii-xxiv, op cit

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians vi:xii, op cit

<sup>5</sup> Burke, Peter, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, (Scolar Press, Hants, 1978), p.210

<sup>6</sup> Muchembled, Robert, *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France, 1400-1750*, translated Lydia Cochrane, (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge and London, 1985), p.92, see also Muchembled, Robert, ‘The Witches of the Cambrésis. The Acculturation of the Rural World in the 16th and 17th Centuries’ in Obelkevich (ed), *Religion and the People, 800-1700*, (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1979) and Muchembled, Robert, ‘Witchcraft, Popular Culture and Christianity in the 16th Century, with Emphasis upon Flanders and Artois’ in Forster and Ranum (eds), *Ritual, Religion and the Sacred: Selections from the Annales*, Vol. 7, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1982)

George and the dragon was given as an example by Burke: in Catholic Augsburg, the dragon was omitted from the feast day parade as it was an apocryphal addition, while in Protestant Norwich, the saint was removed, “thus the reform of popular culture in Catholic Augsburg meant showing St George without the dragon; in Protestant Norwich it meant showing the dragon without St George.”<sup>8</sup>

The common people were supposed to rely on God alone, and turn their backs upon the local folk healers whose art had existed for centuries. This appears to have been a virtually impossible task, or so many theologians and pastors believed. Françoise Bonney, who, although writing about the pre-Reformation period, could just as easily have been referring to the later periods, wrote of the laudable desire of the reformers, which never succeeded because the superstitious practices spread so quickly.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4.1.1 *Legal Views*

Secular authorities had varying opinions about the practices of these unofficial healers. The Theodosian Code, covering the period 313-438, proscribed the work of “the chaldeans and wizards and all the rest whom the common people call magicians,” and declared death to be the punishment for disobedience.<sup>10</sup> Charlemagne’s Capitulary of 789 forbade the actual baptising of church bells against the threat of hailstones, giving a good idea of how common

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Burke, Peter, op cit, p.208

<sup>8</sup> Burke, Peter, op cit, p.216

<sup>9</sup> Bonney, Françoise, ‘Autour de Jean Gerson. Opinions de théologiens sur les superstition et la sorcellerie au début du XVe siècle’, *Le Moyen Age*, Vol. 77, 1971, pp. 85-98, p.97

<sup>10</sup> Flint, Valerie I.J., *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991), p.17

such a practise was.<sup>11</sup> In the Early Modern period, statutes generally became harsher against those practising folk medicine. In the Netherlands the legal status of cunning folk varied from province to province: in Holland they were liable to be burnt at the stake, but were more often banished after being pilloried, while in the North East they were normally banished, as the statute declared their punishment to be at the “discretion” of the court.<sup>12</sup> A royal decree of 1592 for the Spanish Netherlands (Flanders and Artois), simply “enjoined priests to warn their flocks against the use of magical healing practices.”<sup>13</sup> The Scandinavian countries had similarly lenient views; in Sweden only fatal maleficium was a capital offence, harmful, but non fatal crimes were punished with fines. In Denmark, an ordinance of October 1617 was the first to define the nature of the crime, and specified that “cunning men” and “wise women” were to be fined and exiled.<sup>14</sup>

The situation in England varied from monarch to monarch, but was generally harsher than its mainland European Protestant counterparts. Under Henry VIII, any person who used sorcery to find treasure or provoke love, among other crimes, was to be charged with a felony. If they were found guilty, they were to suffer death and the forfeiture of all their goods. This law was not repealed until Edward VI in 1547. The same crimes were declared by Elizabeth to be worthy of a year’s imprisonment, with periods in the pillory; for a second offence the criminal was to be imprisoned for life. However, it was only with the accession

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<sup>11</sup> Flint, Valerie I.J., op cit, p.190

<sup>12</sup> Blécourt, Willem de, ‘Witch Doctors, soothsayers and priests. On cunning folk in European historiography and tradition’, *Social History*, Vol. 19, No. 3, October 1994, pp.285-303, p.293

<sup>13</sup> Muchembled, Robert, 1985, op cit, p.250

<sup>14</sup> Ankarloo, Bengt, ‘Sweden: The Mass Burnings 1668-1676’ in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), pp. 286-287

Johansen, Jens Christian V., ‘Denmark: The Sociology of Accusations’ in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), p.341

of James to the throne of England, that consulting cunning folk became a secular crime, “if any person or persons ... shall use practise or exercise any invocation or conjuration ... shall suffer pains of death as a felon or felons.”<sup>15</sup> Although it seems highly unlikely that any of these statutes were rigorously enforced, their existence demonstrates the fact that authorities in various countries believed that common people using superstitious remedies were a serious problem.

In comparison to secular authorities, Church councils had few doubts about the evil involved in any kind of magic. The 306 Council of Elvira (Spain) decreed that communion was to be denied, even to those on their deathbed, if they had caused the death of another through magical means. Canon 23 of the 314 Council of Ancyra, condemned foretelling and the use of magic for healing. Interestingly, as it demonstrates the involvement of churchmen in superstitious rites, the 375 Council of Laodicea declared the practise of magic by a Christian priest to be unlawful, and forbade their making of amulets. The wearer of the amulet, as well as its manufacturer, risked excommunication.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4.1.2 *The Popularity of Cunning Folk*

However, the laws did not seem to diminish the popularity of cunning folk, and this has led to speculation about why people should have placed their trust in such unlearned healers.

The most probable explanation is the expense of official medical practitioners; as Bishop

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<sup>15</sup> Rosen, Barbara (ed), *Witchcraft*, (Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd, London, 1969), pp.53-58. The statutes in question are 33 Hen VIII, c.8; 5 Eliz c.16 and 1 Jac I, c.12

Latimer declared in 1552, "Physic is a remedy prepared only for rich folks and not for poor; for the poor man is not able to wage the physician." Even if the common man had been able to afford the physician, there were not enough of them to deal with the growing population.<sup>17</sup> Cunning folk were simply more readily available, and a great deal cheaper, many taking either little or no payment, or simply some food and clothing, rather than actual money. They were also able to avoid the difficult question of unknown illness by diagnosing witchcraft, a technique not so readily available to the licensed physician, and thereby tapping into the everyday beliefs of their customers.

One of the claims made by many historians, most famously Keith Thomas, is that the popularity of cunning folk grew because of the impact of the Reformation.<sup>18</sup> The Medieval Church had appeared to be a place of magic and miracle to many, however, with the removal of much of the mystery and ceremony, the post Reformation Church was less able to offer immediate cures for all ills. As Clark and Morgan described it, "compared with the Catholic priest and the village sorcerer, they [Protestant pastors] had little to offer in the way of practical remedies."<sup>19</sup> This situation was not to improve, as Collinson explained, the Puritans removed another layer of magic from the Established Church in England, leaving it lacking "both the quasi-magical aura of the Catholic priesthood and the prophetic charisma

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<sup>16</sup> Dukes, Eugene D., 'Magic and Witchcraft in the Writings of the Western Church Fathers', PhD Dissertation, (Kent State, 1972), p.99; see also Kieckhefer, Richard, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990), p.41

<sup>17</sup> Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, (Penguin Books Ltd, London, 1991), p.13; in 1518 and after there were only 12 physicians licensed by the Royal College of Physicians, while London had a population of about 60,000. These and other interesting statistics are on pp.10-14

<sup>18</sup> Thomas, Keith, *op cit*, various pages, for example see p.763

<sup>19</sup> Clark, Stuart and P.T.J. Morgan, 'Religion and Magic in Elizabethan Wales: Robert Holland's *Dialogue on Witchcraft*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 27, No. 1, January 1976, pp.31-46, p.39



of the preacher,” until it remained as only the reconciler between man and God.”<sup>20</sup> Gerald Strauss believed that magical beliefs held sway for the majority of the populace in Germany, because official religion, “became increasingly abstract, dogmatic and detached from the concerns of ordinary life.”<sup>21</sup>

The popularity of cunning folk was one of the reasons that organised religion had to fight belief in superstition and magical healing. In believing that uneducated cunning folk could heal, the common people were in fact establishing a rival to the churches’ authority and power: “essential services like healing, divination and counter-witchcraft were professionalised in the hands of ‘cunning’ or ‘wise’ men and women, the Church was even challenged by a rival institution. ... the priest and the ‘magician’ confronted each other as rival therapists for the community’s affections.”<sup>22</sup> The belief that the ultimate power of God rested in the hands of the clergy, and only the clergy, was an essential part of their authority, and cunning folk were a very popular threat to this. They were believed to have access to power which was denied the ordinary man or woman, and it was only through priests or cunning folk that it was available to the common man. It could be argued that the clergy were worrying unnecessarily about their ‘rivals’, as Thomas has stated, magic was no substitute for religion; it “never offered a comprehensive view of the world ... whereas the faith of the Christian was a guiding principle, relevant to every aspect of life, magic was

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<sup>20</sup> Collinson, Patrick, *The Religion of Protestants*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1982), p.105

<sup>21</sup> Strauss, Gerald, ‘Success and Failure in the German Reformation’, *Past and Present*, Vol. 67, 1975, pp.30-63, p.62

<sup>22</sup> Clark, Stuart, ‘The rational witchfinder: conscience, demonological naturalism and popular superstitions’ in Pumfrey, Rossi, and Slawinski (eds), *Science, Culture and popular belief in Renaissance Europe*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991), p.230

simply a means of overcoming various specific difficulties.”<sup>23</sup> However, this may in turn, help explain the popularity of cunning folk; as they did not offer a world view, but simply solutions to specific problems, they may have seemed more useful to the common people than the comprehensive organisation that was the Church.

#### 4.2. The Early Church and Scholastics

St Thomas Aquinas defined superstition in a way that was to be used not only by the Catholic Church, but also the Reformed faiths, “superstition is a vice contrary to religion by excess, not that it offers more to the divine worship than true religion, but because it offers divine worship either to whom it ought not, or in a manner it ought not.” He continued, declaring that although God should be given a great deal of worship, it should be proportionate.<sup>24</sup>

The belief that there were two types of magic was ancient: the ancients believed *theurgia* to be good magic, what would nowadays be described as ‘white magic’; whereas *goeteia* was ‘black magic’, and unlike its beneficent counterpart, unable to be openly practised or advertised. This distinction was upheld in the Theodosian Code, in which Constantine declared that those who practised *theurgia* for good purposes “shall not be involved in criminal accusations.”<sup>25</sup> Unusually, this distinction remained in force in some areas of

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas, Keith, op cit, pp.761-762

<sup>24</sup> Aquinas, St Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, translated Liam G. Walsh, (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1974), Book II, Part II, Q.xcii, articles 1 and 2

<sup>25</sup> Dukes, Eugene, op cit, pp.87-88, Title 9, subtitle 16

Europe; in Iceland, *galdur* (magic) was divided into *svartagaldur* meaning black magic, and *hvíttagaldur* as its good counterpart, a distinction which remained in place into the 17th century.<sup>26</sup>

For St Augustine, however, this concept was totally false; according to him all types of magic were evil, and involved demons trying to capture more souls for their master, the devil. “For people attempt to make some sort of distinction between practitioners of illicit arts, who are to be condemned, classing these as ‘sorcerers’ ... and others who they are prepared to regard as praiseworthy, attributing to them the practice of ‘theurgy’. In fact, both types are engaged in the fraudulent rites of demons.”<sup>27</sup> He also explained the idea that the devil did not leave the body, when ordered to by superstitious people, “although Satan does spare the body or the senses of the body, he does so for the purpose of dominating the will of the man in question, in a triumph of greater import, through the error of impiety.”<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, the Canonical Epistle of St Gregory of Nyssa to St Letoius, distinguished between those who used diviners through disbelief in God, and those who used them as a relief from tribulation and allotted different punishments for each, “if through want of sense, and through a vain hope of being relieved under their necessities, they shall be treated as those who lapse

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<sup>26</sup> Hastrup, Kirsten, ‘Iceland: Sorcerers and Paganism’ in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), p.387

<sup>27</sup> Augustine, St, *City of God*, (Penguin Books Ltd, London, 1972), Book X, chapter 9

<sup>28</sup> Augustine, Saint, *Eighty Three Different Questions*, translated David L. Mosher, (The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C., 1982), Q79, s.2

through the violence of torment,” this was no less condemnation of sorcery, simply allowing that to sin through desperation was less of a sin than from unbelief.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4.2.1 *Early Church and Scholastic Views on the Natural Efficacy of Cures*

The concept that any cure would have efficacy outside its natural realm was denied by all theologians. This was a very confused area of debate, with problems in distinguishing between natural and non-natural causation, as well as disagreement over where the distinction was to be drawn. Augustine was the first to explain the difference between inherent power, that is, power given by God, and that which was demonic:

It is one thing to say, ‘If you drink the juice crushed from this herb, your stomach will not pain you,’ and quite another to say ‘If you hang this herb around your neck, your stomach will not pain you.’ In the first instance, a suitable and solitary mixture is recommended, in the second, a superstitious token deserves censure.<sup>30</sup>

Augustine ridiculed some of the practices which were believed by the common people. He believed that they followed superstition to extremes, and cited an incident from Cato, “when approached by someone who said that mice had been nibbling his slippers he replied that this was not an omen, but would be if the slippers had been nibbling the mice.”<sup>31</sup> St Thomas Aquinas reiterated the point without the use of examples:

There is nothing superstitious or unlawful in employing natural things simply for the purpose of causing certain effects such as they are thought to have the natural power of producing. But if in addition there be

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<sup>29</sup> The canonical Epistle of St Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa to St Letoius, Bishop of Melitene, in Schaff, Philip (ed), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd Series, Vol. XIV, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, no date)

<sup>30</sup> Dukes, Eugene, op cit, p.169 from *De Doctrina Christiana*

<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, Book II:77

employed certain characters, words, or any other vain observances which clearly have no efficacy by nature, it will be superstitious and unlawful.<sup>32</sup>

John of Frankfurt was cautious, arguing that if an item did not have inherent power (such as herbs or gems), and was not established by God, like the sacraments, nor found in the Bible, nor having the sanction of the Church or saints, then it could only be of demonic origin.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4.2.2 *Early Church and Scholastic Views on the Popularity of Cunning Folk*

Cunning folk remained popular, however, both as a source of home remedies for the common people, and as a subject of sermons for theologians. The cause of the Church was not helped by some physicians, such as Guainerius of Pavia, who relied heavily upon the remedies of an old cunning woman, even recommending her services in some cases.<sup>34</sup> St John Chrysostom felt the need to preach against women who turned to cunning folk rather than the Church when their children were ill. He emphasised his point with the example that these mothers would never take the child to a heathen temple to attempt a cure, but would trust in the devil through the magic they used.<sup>35</sup> Caesarius of Arles summed up the prevailing opinion of theologians, “if some people have recovered their health by these charms, it was the Devil’s cunning that did it. Sometimes he has taken away bodily infirmity because he has already killed the soul.”<sup>36</sup> Even with the consistent efforts of the

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<sup>32</sup> Aquinas, op cit, Book II, Part II, Q.xcvi, art. 2

<sup>33</sup> Kieckhefer, Richard, op cit, p.185

<sup>34</sup> Barstow, Anne, ‘Women as Healers, Women as Witches’, *Old Westbury Review*, Vol. VI, No. 2, Summer 1986, pp.121-133, p.124

<sup>35</sup> Kieckhefer, Richard, op cit, p.39

<sup>36</sup> Dukes, Eugene, op cit, pp.334-335; the sermon was *On Seeking Health of Soul rather than of Body, and of avoiding Soothsayers*

Church, admonitions against superstition and cunning folk appear to have fallen mainly upon deaf ears; Caesarius in his 52nd sermon, commented that when one was ill:

They do not ask for the church's medicine, or that of the author of salvation and the Eucharist of Christ. Nor ... do they ask the priests to anoint them with blessed oil, or place all their hopes in God. ... They say to themselves: Let us consult that soothsayer, seer, oracle or witch. ... Let us offer some magic letters, let us hang some charms on his neck. In all this the Devil has one aim: either cruelly to kill the children by abortion, or to heal them still more cruelly with charms.<sup>37</sup>

St Thomas simply declared the use of cunning folk to destroy maleficia as wrong, "it is never proper that that which is accomplished by witchcraft should be destroyed by yet another witchcraft."<sup>38</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Early Church and Scholastic Views on Amulets, Charms and Talismans

By the third and fourth centuries, gospel texts were being used in amulets and spells.<sup>39</sup>

Amulets were allowable only if no extra, unknown, or unauthorised characters were written on them, and if no efficacy was believed to be held by the words or writing themselves, and all faith was placed in God. As Aquinas wrote:

In every incantation or wearing of written words, two points seem to demand caution. The first is the thing said or written, because if it is connected with invocation of the demons it is clearly superstitious and unlawful. ... one should beware lest it contain strange words, for fear that they conceal something unlawful. ...one should beware lest besides the sacred words it contain something vain, for instance certain written characters in addition to the sign of the Cross; or if hope be placed in the

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<sup>37</sup> Flint, Valerie, op cit, p.149

<sup>38</sup> Kors, Alan C. and Edward Peters (eds), *Witchcraft in Europe, 1100-1700*, 10th Edition, (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1972, 1992), p.74, from Aquinas' *Commentary on the Four Books of Sentences*

<sup>39</sup> Hull, John M., *Hellenistic magic and the Synoptic Tradition*, (SCM Press Ltd, London, 1974), pp.20, 149

manner of writing or fastening, or in any like vanity, having no connexion with reverence for God, because this would be pronounced superstitious.<sup>40</sup>

Caesarius of Arles, declaring that those who used charms were to be harshly rebuked, was not alone in declaring that they were unlawful when used in attempts to cure illness.<sup>41</sup>

However, possibly the most popular amulet was one of the official Church, the *agnus dei*, a wax medallion bearing the image of a lamb (the symbol of Christ) with a banner, made originally from paschal candles, and blessed by the Pope. This simple disk was supposed to protect the wearer from many of the devil's wiles, including lightning, storms, fire and other dangers.

#### 4.2.4 Early Church and Scholastic Views on Authorised Rites and Rituals

Some types of rituals, however, appear to have been either ignored, or at times encouraged by the Church; the repetition of certain formulas, such as the *Ave Maria*, for example, was believed to be of efficacy, and this type of behaviour narrowed the distinction between incantation and prayer. The distinction between a ritual which works because of the way it is performed, and one which works because it calls upon divine mercy was examined in the late Medieval period. Many rites and rituals were authorised by the Church in the belief that God had invested these things with such holiness that they would continue to work when performed with good and holy intention. Although this was not magic, as far as the Church was concerned, to many people there was little or no difference. John of Salisbury believed that saying the Lord's Prayer whilst picking medicinal herbs, or repeating the names of the Evangelists, was not only allowable, but most useful. Many priests followed the belief

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<sup>40</sup> Aquinas, op cit, Book II, Part II, Q.xcvi, art. 4

<sup>41</sup> Flint, Valerie, op cit, pp.245, 21, 53

of William of Auvergne in believing that the ringing of church bells could prevent storms, and that the administering of blessed bread and water could expel demons.<sup>42</sup>

The use of holy relics and items connected with a saint were allowed, and actively encouraged: the niece of Gregory of Tours, for example, applied oil from the light and wax from the candles at the tomb of St Martin, and used them to cure a toothache; other examples included the girdle of St Cuthbert which restored an abbess to health, and his shoes which cured a paralysed boy.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, a priest at Bury St Edmunds in 1095, told the congregation that the saints were intercessors for them and that they “call forth abundant rainfall when we have long awaited it,” seeming to make the point that they were not only able to effect miraculous cures, but also influence the weather.<sup>44</sup>

Some of the stranger remedies which were suggested by theologians and religious, seem to be extremely close to those which were outlawed by the church as being superstitious. St Monegunde (d.570), cured a youth suffering from the effects of maleficia by licking a vine leaf, lying it upon his stomach, and making the sign of the Cross over it. Hildegard of Bingen recommended a stranger cure for anyone bewitched into madness: you were to take a loaf, cutting a Cross out from the centre, draw a hyacinth through one line of the cross whilst saying, ‘May God who cast away all the preciousness of gems from the devil when he transgressed His precept, remove from you *N* all phantasms and magic words and free you

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<sup>42</sup> Thorndike, Lynn, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol. II, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1943), pp.160, 352-353, see also Burchard of Worms’ *Corrector*, in McNeill, John T. and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1938), especially, p.330

<sup>43</sup> Flint, Valerie, *op cit*, pp.181, 308

<sup>44</sup> Gurevich, Aron, *op cit*, p.4



from the ill of this madness.' Then the hyacinth was to be drawn through the other part of the Cross with another formula repeated, once completed, the bewitched person was to eat the bread all around the cross.<sup>45</sup> Not only does this demonstrate how fine the line between official and unofficial curing was, it also shows how confused the situation was in the period leading up to the Reformation. Even Petrus Hispanus, who later became John XXI, recommended a quasi-superstitious remedy for witchcraft, involving smearing the house walls with the blood of a black dog, or alternately, burying a reed filled with quicksilver under the threshold.<sup>46</sup>

With such large areas of church practise and illicit magic overlapping, the Church was an easy target for criticism. The Lollards, in their Twelve Conclusions, declared many church rites to be no more than magic, "The fifte conclusiun is this, that exorcismis and halwinge, made in the chirche, of wyn, bred, and wax, water, salt and oyle and encens, the ston of the auter, upon vestiment, mitre, crose, and pilgrimes staves be the verray practys of nigromancie rather thanne of the holi theologie."<sup>47</sup> The Hussites later reiterated these conclusions, declaring that no matter how holy or blessed man may be, "neither can they confer anything upon us or accomplish anything for us, nor can they avert anything of evil."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Flint, Valerie, op cit, pp.302-303; Thorndike, Lynn, op cit, p.140

<sup>46</sup> Thorndike, Lynn, op cit, p.497

<sup>47</sup> Cronin, H. S., 'The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. XXII, 1907, 292-304, p.298

<sup>48</sup> Brann, Noel L., 'The Proto-Protestant Assault upon Church Magic: the 'Errores Bohemianorum' according to the Abbot Trithemius', *Journal of Religious History [Austria]*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1982, pp.9-22, pp.12-13

### 4.3. The Pre-Reformation Writers

In the pre-Reformation period, the sensational aspects of witchcraft, such as the sabbat and flight, were of less importance to writers than the common use of superstition that they saw everyday. For these writers, cunning folk and their superstitious remedies were a greater danger to Christianity than reports of a few women gathering and having an orgy. Cunning folk were everywhere and openly practised their trade; the people who used their services were seen as being ignorant of the dangers they faced and the peril in which they were placing their souls. Jean Gerson, the chancellor of the University of Paris, believed that superstition was gaining ground amongst the commons for various reasons, such as ignorance, poor education, and family teaching.<sup>49</sup> Ciruelo wrote that all superstitions were taught to man by the devil, as he had to work secretly in order to get Christians to worship him since the victory of Christ, "This new idolatry is superstition and witchcraft, for they are both species of idolatry, however superficially they resemble holiness and honesty so as not to reveal their deceit and malice."

#### 4.3.1 *Pre-Reformation Views on the Natural Efficacy of Cures*

Natural efficacy was a concept which, although a difficult area, was one which these writers believed should be basically understood by this period; for example, words were believed to have no effect upon matter, as only matter could influence matter. However, there were physical influences which were not yet understood, such as magnets, but were accepted as being natural phenomena. If a cure came from natural items, such as herbs, then there was

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<sup>49</sup> Bonney, Françoise, op cit, p.93

<sup>50</sup> Ciruelo, Part 1, Chapter 2, p.97

not necessarily any evil connected to it; however, if there were strange, unknown words said while picking or using the herbs, then this was viewed as giving the devil an opening into one's soul. Ciruelo explained the idea of natural efficacy, "Events proceed from natural causes which have the power to bring about the result; from God, who works miraculously above natural causality; or from good or bad angels who work with natural causes." He emphasised this with examples of what could be considered superstitious under this definition, and explained the reasons that the devil chose such methods, "He does it in order that the faithful will place their hope in that vain practice, contrary to God's law, which says that cursed is the man who places his hope in lies and vain, deceitful ceremonies."<sup>51</sup> He wrote that it was lawful to use holy words when applying natural remedies, in order to strengthen their efficacy through petition to God; however, it must be noted that this was a petition to God with holy intent, in addition to naturally efficacious remedies, and not an invocation being used without the natural items.<sup>52</sup> Castañega recommended that mothers who believed their child to be bewitched by the evil eye, (believed to be a natural process by the Spaniards) should use natural remedies such as the odours of herbs and other aromatic things as, "this is the best natural remedy for it."<sup>3</sup> He even detailed the remedies sometimes used by physicians, which appeared to be superstitious, but were effective because the patient believed in them, "many times the patient's imagination is fortified with them and they therefore aid in achieving a rapid cure."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ciruelo, Part 1, Chapter 2, p.95

<sup>52</sup> Ciruelo, Pedro, op cit, Part 3, Chapter 3, p.207

<sup>53</sup> Castañega, Martín de, *Tratado muy sutil y bien fundado de las supersticiones y hechicertas*, (originally published, Logroño, 1529), translated David H. Darst, (1979), chapter xiv

<sup>54</sup> Castañega, Martín de, op cit, chapter xv

#### 4.3.2 *Pre-Reformation Views on Healing by Superstition and Cunning Folk*

The clergy also felt they had to vilify the cunning folk due to their belief in the demonic origins of their power; this is demonstrated by the number of times the authors declared that those who used such remedies were calling upon the devil. Although it could be argued, and was, that the power to heal had come from God or natural remedies, theologians and pastors denied that this was the case with cunning folk. The power, therefore, had to come from the devil, and this led churchmen to denounce all cunning folk as acolytes of the devil. Natural cures were allowable, but any deviation from these led to accusations of diabolism. Not surprisingly, the churches varied in what was considered natural, and also what was acceptable, and therefore, legitimate for use by the common people. For example, as long as theologians allowed the ringing of church bells to protect against a storm it was not a superstition, however, when the Reformers denounced this practise, it became for Protestants, a Popish superstition

Healing by superstition was the area that most concerned these writers, they devoted a lot of space to denouncing such practises, giving large numbers of examples so that their audience could be left in no doubt as to exactly what was included. Ciruelo described healing by superstitious means as truly being called enchantment or conjuration, although remaining under the general heading of superstition.<sup>55</sup> Both Ciruelo and Martin of Arles recommended the services of a doctor as one of the first methods of curing in cases of sickness, and both strenuously denied that it was allowable to use the services of witches. Ciruelo declared any such actions to be serious mortal sins against God, and Martin simply stated that no-one

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<sup>55</sup> Ciruelo, Part 1, Chapter 3

should use necromancers, sacrilegious people and diviners because in doing so they sinned mortally.<sup>57</sup> Champier described a situation whereby a possessed woman was made worse by recourse to a sorcerer, enabling the devil to send a legion of demons into her.<sup>58</sup> Castañega declared that, “it is wrong to remove one curse with another,” and that, if people would not use a physician, then the only remedies that should be used were those that one would be happy for a learned man to hear, “Simple women shouldn’t cure children or other people, especially with words and things that they wouldn’t want learned men to see and hear.”<sup>59</sup> The only time Champier dealt with superstitious cures was to comment on popular belief in them, “what some say is false - that a black dog’s bile destroys the devil’s evil doing ... and many other such sayings are false and erroneous, for an incorporeal substance is not subject to a corporeal substance.”<sup>60</sup>

The concept of curing by words alone, without the use of any natural remedies was condemned by Ciruelo, “if the spell-caster says that the words have a power from God to effect a cure, beyond the natural power of words, this is a case of blasphemy because it implies that God connives with falsehoods and uses them to work miracles. The opposite, rather, is true.”<sup>61</sup> However, much worse than this, was the mingling of true Christian methods with superstition, in order to give the cure a covering of respectability. Castañega wrote that such invocations were “much more evil and superstitious and worthy of

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<sup>56</sup> see Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 5, and also Martin, Section 104, 407”

<sup>57</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 5, p.239 and Martin, Section 72, 406’

<sup>58</sup> Champier, Chapter 2 of the Third Tractate, 17’ - 18’

<sup>59</sup> Castañega, Martín de, op cit, Chapters xxi, and xxiv

<sup>60</sup> Champier, Chapter 1 of the Third Tractate, 14’, “*falsum est illud quod aliqui dicunt quod fel canis nigri destruit maleficium dyaboli ... et multa alia dicta que videntur falsa et erronea nam substantia incorporea non subicitur substantie corporee.*”

<sup>61</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 3, p.204

punishment” when holy items were profaned in this way.<sup>62</sup> Martin was shocked by the mixing of the Eucharist with enchantments, but explained that the devil did this “so that by such things men may not only become perfidious, but also sacrilegious, because as far as they are able they contaminate holy things, so as the more to offend their creator.” He also commented that this was another method of making such superstitious and wicked cures appear more acceptable to common folk, who obviously did not realise how much greater was the sin when this was done.<sup>63</sup>

#### 4.3.3 *Pre-Reformation Views on Amulets, Charms and Talismans*

The use of charms, amulets and written talismans were common sins, and again occupied the minds of these writers. Martin was able to demonstrate the popularity of such items with numerous examples, and even copied some of the scripts in order to show the superstition inherent in such objects, “On, Coriscion, Matatron Caladafon, Coroban, Ozcozo, Uriel, Uriel, Yosiel, Yosiel, Michael, Azariel, Raphael, Daniel, Yaia, Uba, Adonay, Sabaoth, Heloim.”<sup>64</sup> Mostly these writers commented upon the popular belief in these items, and their common usage; St Bernardino of Siena believed that pride led people to believe in charms and amulets. Gerson complained of physicians who used talismans and amulets when they were unable to cure illnesses naturally, and directed two tracts against a physician

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<sup>62</sup> Castanega, Martín de, op cit, chapter iii

<sup>63</sup> Martin, Section 58, 405’, “ut non solum homines per talia perfidi fiant, sed etiam sacrilegi, divina, quantum in eis est, contaminando, ut magis creatorem suum offendant”

<sup>64</sup> Martin, Section 51, 405’, for other examples see Sections 24, 35 and 38-9, 403’-404’, 404’-404’; Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 2

<sup>65</sup> Sermon XXVI, ‘Of the Scourges of God’, delivered in Siena, August 1427, Bernardino of Siena, *Sermons*, edited, Orlandi, translated Helen Josephine Robins, (Tipografia Sociale, Siena, 1920)

of Montpellier who used, what Gerson believed, were superstitious remedies to cure kidney diseases.<sup>66</sup>

Ciruelo extended the prohibitions on amulets first laid down by Aquinas, as he believed that amulets were rarely used properly, and faith was placed in them rather than God. He was exceptionally severe in this respect, even in comparison to Martin, or Aquinas himself. His belief that amulets were abused is shown by his words, when he wrote, “it appears clear that all good Christians who fear God and desire the salvation of their souls ought to avoid or abandon the superstitions of enchantments and amulets as though they were the plague.”<sup>67</sup> He explained ten rules which he felt should govern the use of amulets, including that they should contain no errors, either in form or intention, there should not be excessive confidence placed in the amulet as opposed to God, that they should not hamper the efficacy of natural cures by the belief that natural medicine would only work in conjunction with them, and belief that certain words were more or less efficacious than others.<sup>68</sup> He believed that the best use for the words that were written on amulets, was for them to be read and understood:

it would certainly be much better to write these holy words on a few pages of an open notebook and to carry it in one's bosom. It can easily be taken out and read at any hour and in any place, ... in this way these sacred words may be more profitable for one's body and soul than if they remain sewn and concealed and therefore unread.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Brown, D. Catherine, *Pastor and Laity in the theology of Jean Gerson*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987), p.162 and Bonney, op cit, p.94

<sup>67</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 4, pp.219-220

<sup>68</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 4, pp.220-228

<sup>69</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 4, p.224. He repeated this idea again on p.228

These writers, as did the Protestants who followed them, emphasised that reliance should always be placed upon God, and that it was only to Him that one should turn when facing adversity. They seemed surprised that anyone could conceive of turning to another source, and although they did not often say so directly, the idea of God as the only true source of help and salvation was always present. Ciruelo cited the Psalms as his source that God was the only help, "Scripture ... says that blessed is the man who puts his hope in God and not in vain and senseless practices."<sup>70</sup>

#### 4.3.4 *Pre-Reformation Views on Authorised Rites and Rituals*

As they were all theologians of the Church, they also followed the practise of actively encouraging some rituals that the Reformers later criticised as being superstitious. Martin declared that to recite holy words while picking medicinal herbs, in order to honour God, was allowable and pleasing to God, an example of a practise that remained allowable, but was strongly criticised by the Reformers.<sup>71</sup> Henry of Gorkum wrote a short tract dealing with rituals which were within the Church, but were easy to make superstitious; he detailed an authorised rite, and then explained how it could be superstitious. It is obvious from this piece that there were many people falling into the common errors he described, and as he wrote, "many sin through ignorance."<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, in a precursor to Trent, Ciruelo condemned the belief in trentals, declaring, "there is neither necessity nor much validity in

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<sup>70</sup> Ciruelo, Part 1, Chapter 2, the psalms referred to are i and xl: iv-vi

<sup>71</sup> Martin, Section 106, 408'

<sup>72</sup> Henricum de Gorchem, *Tractatus de superstitiosis*, in Hansen, pp.87-88. 'multi ex ignorantia peccant.'



thirty Masses rather than twenty-five or forty or some other number either larger or smaller.”<sup>73</sup>

The idea that saints were able to perform miraculous cures was idolatry to the Protestants, but obviously was acceptable to pre-Reformation Catholics. In 1529, the pastor and chaplain of Urach in Germany, told his congregation that, “against sorcery, diabolical spirits and witchcraft, ... one should use ... blessed salt, water, herbs, palms and candles. These things were ordained by the Christian Church for the expulsion of diabolic spirits and witchcraft.”<sup>4</sup> Martin wrote that one of the lawful remedies to avoid evils was to call upon the saints of the land; however, more common was the idea that remedies would be forthcoming if alms were given and masses said, a concept that was strongly criticised by many Reformers. Ciruelo repeated that a man beset by affliction should “commend himself to God, give alms, fast, and perform other works of charity, placing his hope in the boundless mercy of God,” and later that all care should be taken to “offer prayers, Masses and alms.” Ciruelo placed a great deal of faith in the power of prayer, and wrote that if a man prayed as he dressed and undressed each day, then he “can have confidence that he will be cured of every illness and freed from every danger and disaster, as well as from all other sins and evils.”

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<sup>3</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 11, p.321

<sup>4</sup> Scribner, R.W., *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany*, (The Hambledon Press, London, 1987), p.266

<sup>73</sup> Martin, Section 104, 407'-408', Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 3, p.201 and Part 3, Chapter 5, p.239; see also Champier, Chapter 3 of the Second Tractate, 13'

<sup>76</sup> Ciruelo, Pedro, Part 3, Chapter 4, p.229

Ciruelo discussed the course of action to be followed if a house was inhabited by demons; the owner should confess his sins, remove any source of sin from the house, and a priest should enter at sunrise and sunset traversing each room whilst reciting Psalm 91 and John's Gospel, then he should repeat the exorcisms of the devil. Not only this, but crosses, blessed palms and candles should be placed in every room along with holy water, and devout masses should be said in order that God would remove the devil.<sup>77</sup> The general idea is worthy, however, the necessity of the priest going into the house at specific times of the day, hints strongly of superstition, along similar lines to the auspicious and inauspicious times condemned by Augustine.<sup>78</sup>

Remedies that appear to have superstitious overtones were also recommended. The ringing of bells to drive away thunderstorms was recommended by Ciruelo, with almost scientific reasoning. However, with the populace not knowing his scientific theory, and their belief that the demons were afraid of the noise of holy bells, this could almost be seen as encouraging rather than combating superstition. His spiritual remedy to avoid storms was for all the priests and people to gather in the church, and to open the tabernacle; then church candles should be lit, and any saintly relics should be placed upon the altar, after this was done, everyone should pray to God, "that He might, in His infinite power, make the evil cloud dissipate and free those His children and the boundaries of that place from the damage which the tempest might be able to bring about."<sup>79</sup> Castañega recommended

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<sup>7</sup> Ciruelo, Pedro, Part 2, Chapter 1

<sup>78</sup> See Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, Book V, ch. 7

<sup>79</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 9

drinking the water used to wash the Mass utensils, which certainly hints more of superstition than anything Martin or Ciruelo advocated.<sup>80</sup>

#### 4.3.5 *Pre-Reformation Scepticism*

For all their belief in the rituals that have been shown, these men were not without some measure of scepticism. Martin condemned the ringing of bells to chase away evil spirits, and also the burning of herbs which were collected on St John's Day in the belief that it would prevent lightning, thunder and tempests. It appears he had to repeat this injunction on a regular basis, as he commented that he had frequently made a point of condemning the practise, demonstrating the extent of such a belief.<sup>81</sup> Ciruelo believed that privately owned relics would be of greater use placed in a public church, so that many people could use them, rather than being hidden. Many relics were fakes, he believed, and even if they were genuine, the owners placed too much hope in these "dead objects," thereby being disrespectful to God, and this led to a situation where "the saints become indignant and are deaf to their petitions."<sup>82</sup>

As has been shown the situation regarding superstition of all kinds was very confused before the Reformation. Even within the Church itself there were disagreements, some rituals were openly practised and allowed, whilst being condemned by other members of the Church; others were very close to being superstitious, but were so common that they were ignored. Even Ciruelo criticised the Church for its attitude in this respect, "although the Church ...

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<sup>80</sup> Castanega, Martín de, op cit, chapter xxi, p.318

<sup>81</sup> Martin, Sections 8-9, 403'

connives at the other faults already mentioned in the use of spells, talismans, and other superstitious prayers, these practices do not cease to be sins. Although the ecclesiastical and secular judges of the Church allow these practices to continue, confessors should not follow suit.”<sup>83</sup>

#### 4.4. Counter-Reformation Catholics

For these writers who focused upon the sensational aspects of witchcraft, unlike their predecessors, superstition and cunning folk were peripheral consequences of their dealings with witches. It is obvious from their writings that the issue of superstition was not uppermost in their minds, however, they realised that this aspect of magic was one which had popular support, and therefore, needed to be examined.

Superstition was not one of the main items on the agenda for the Council of Trent; the Reformation was viewed as a more urgent problem. The fact that the Reformers had attacked so many official Catholic practices meant that the Council had to focus upon these issues, and hope that unofficial rituals would gradually die, with the authorised ones becoming uniform. However, two decrees were announced, concerning the mixing of Church rites with superstitious rituals. In 1562 it was decreed that “they should banish from the church any idea of a particular number of masses and candles which derives more from the cult of superstition than from true religion,” and in the following year, “All superstition must be removed from convocation of the saints, veneration of relics and use of

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<sup>83</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 4, p. 225

sacred images.”<sup>84</sup> Although this does not seem a great deal, the fact that they devoted any time to superstition within the Church shows that it was acknowledged as a problem. The beliefs they were attempting to redress, however, appear to have continued almost unabated in parts of Europe. This is not particularly surprising as these decrees were entirely dependent upon local authorities, many of whom had more pressing concerns. Fr Michael le Nobletz preached in Lower Brittany from 1610, and found examples of superstition that “brought tears to his eyes,” such as collecting the dust from chapel to ensure good winds, threats made to saints through their images, and people kneeling to the new moon while reciting the Lord’s Prayer in its honour.<sup>85</sup> Henry Kamen found that after Trent, which he believed had led to, “an increased emphasis on the mechanics of salvation,” testators were requiring three thousand masses be said for their souls on three thousand successive days.<sup>86</sup>

Ruth Martin described how the Venetian Inquisition used the terms superstition or superstitious to describe many religious faults, particularly all the different guises of popular healing.<sup>8</sup> Belief that the origin of all superstition was the Devil remained, as Guazzo wrote, “the inventor of all superstitious and vain observances is the devil. ... They, therefore, who

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<sup>83</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 4, p.226

<sup>84</sup> Alberigo, G. and Norman P. Tanner (eds), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. I and II, (Sheed & Ward; Georgetown University Press, London and Washington, 1990), session 22, 17 September 1562, pp.736-7 and session 25, 3rd-4th December 1563, p.775

<sup>85</sup> Delumeau, Jean, *Catholicism Between Luther and Voltaire*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1977), pp.161-162

<sup>86</sup> Kamen, Henry, *The Phoenix and the Flame*, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1993), pp.127-128

<sup>87</sup> Burke, Peter, op cit, p.241; Martin, Ruth, *Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice, 1550-1650*, (Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, 1989), p.69

study and follow superstitious observances show themselves to be disciples not of Christ but of the devil.”<sup>88</sup>

#### 4.4.1 Counter Reformation Views on the Sacred and Profane

The mixing of sacred and profane drew the attention of the Counter Reformation authors, as it appears to have been a common problem. Ruth Martin in her study of the Inquisition in Venice discovered that torture, which was rarely used, was almost exclusively reserved for cases where either holy oil or the host had been abused.<sup>8</sup> Manuel de Valle de Moura wrote that the mingling of holy words with superstition only increased the guilt, and that this was a ploy to try and fool the ignorant into believing the rite was acceptable.<sup>9</sup> Guazzo believed that this was an attempt by Satan “that he may the more easily lead into superstitious error those who are naturally disposed to his cult,” and also to remove suspicion from his followers as the cause of illness.<sup>91</sup> Sometimes it was simply the mixing of prayers with unauthorised rituals, such as that of Diamante de Bisa in Modena, “For the sickness of worms, I say these words without using any objects: ‘On Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, Holy Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Holy Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, the worm dies and decays.’ Then I make the sign of the cross over them.” Having been accused of witchcraft, she was

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<sup>88</sup> Guazzo, Book II, Chapter XX, p.187, “omnium superstitionum, et vanarum observationum inventorem esse Diabolum ... Qui ergo superstitiosas observationes colunt, et amant, docent se, non Christi, sed Diaboli discipulos esse”

<sup>89</sup> Martin, Ruth, op cit, p.178

<sup>90</sup> Lea, p.481, the text is *De Incantationibus, seu Ensalmis*,

<sup>91</sup> Guazzo, Book II, Chapter XI, p.148, “tum ut homines, quorum mentes scit ad eius cultum esse procliuiores in superstitionis errorem facilius inducat”

condemned as a superstitious healer, and her penance was to stand at the front of church during Sunday mass, and fast on bread and water at certain times of the year.<sup>92</sup>

At other times it was the more serious charge of having abused the host itself in superstitious rites; Boguet described one of the more bizarre examples of this, “a certain man of Soissons having baptised a toad, made it eat a consecrated Host,” along with other stories of witches who saved the host in order to use it in their concoctions.<sup>93</sup> Examples show the involvement of priests in some magic rituals, some knowingly, others totally unaware of their participation. One priest in Modena had said 15 masses over the *noce moscato* (magically prepared nutmeg) wanted for a potion; it was also not unknown for priests to baptise magnets in order to use them in love magic.<sup>94</sup> The use of the host should not have been unexpected by the Church, as Martin explained, the Church, “provided the supreme form of popular magic during this period, and the consecrated host was considered the most potent magic of all.”<sup>95</sup>

Strangely, these unauthorised rites were believed to have some efficacy by the writers. The populace in Modena used the services of several healers who were known to ‘sign’ fevers, using the sign of the cross over the sick person, sometimes combined with prayers and

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<sup>92</sup> O’Neil, Mary, ‘Magical Healing, Love Magic and the Inquisition in Late 16th Century Modena’ in Haliczzer (ed), *Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Europe*, (Croom Helm, London, 1987), pp.96-97

<sup>93</sup> Boguet, Chapter LXXI, p.522, “qu’un certain de Soissons, apres avoir fait baptizer un crapaut, luy fit manger une hostie consacrée.”

<sup>94</sup> O’Neil, Mary, op cit, pp.102-103; see also O’Neil, Mary R., ‘Sacerdote ovvero strione. Ecclesiastical and Superstitious Remedies in 16th Century Italy’ in Kaplan (ed), *Understanding Popular Culture*, (Mouton Publishers, New York, 1984), pp.65-66

<sup>95</sup> Martin, Ruth, op cit, p.132

natural remedies.<sup>96</sup> Henri Boguet gave examples of healing by witchcraft, all of which worked; “I have seen a Witch who healed many types of sickness; but I noticed that all her prayers were nothing but her superstition and impiety.” The examples he gave had convinced him that the cures were wholly the work of Satan, “And he does so by making use of secondary and natural causes, and the same methods as used by physicians.”<sup>97</sup> Whether the cure was efficacious or not, these writers regarded such cures as an incitement to demons, almost an invitation for them to burrow deeper into a person’s soul.

#### 4.4.2 Counter Reformation Views on Healing by Superstition and Cunning Folk

They all condemned the use of witchcraft to heal, stating that such remedies came from the devil. Boguet commented that many witches were content to remain unpaid, “the majority of witches who are content have for their payment the soul of him who consults them to offer to their master.” He later emphasised the point by repeating the words of St John Chrysostom, “It is better for a Christian man to die than to redeem his life by means of witchcraft and sorcery.”<sup>98</sup> Remi cited the trial of a witch where it was reported that the devil was incredulous that people would receive help from him, “Are they not fools to purchase their health from you [the witch] and me,” and concluded that those who did so “purchase a

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<sup>96</sup> O’Neil, Mary, ‘Magical Healing’, p.93

<sup>97</sup> Boguet, Chapter XL, pp.248, 264, “J’ay veu une Sorciere, qui guerissoit de plusieurs sortes de maladies. Mais j’ay remarqué que toutes ses oraisons ne resentoient rien que sa superstition, et son impieté”  
“il fait en se servant des causes secondes et naturelles, et des moyens, dont usent mesme les Medecins”

<sup>98</sup> Boguet, Chapters XL, p.264, XLI, p.277, “la plus part des Sorciers, qui se contentent, pour tout payement, d’avoir l’ame de celuy qui s’adresse à eux, pour l’offrir à leur maistre”

“Il est meilleur, ... à l’homme Chrestien de mourir, que rachepter sa vie par enchantemens, et sorceries.”



brief and uncertain bodily health at the price of sure and eternal damnation of our soul.”<sup>99</sup>

The Italian exorcism expert, Fr Girolamo Menghi believed that superstitious cures endangered the soul, and also echoed the words of Chrysostom, “by no means should one do evil even to a good end, and a man should sooner die than consent to procedures which attempt to liberate him by means of vain and superstitious works.”<sup>100</sup>

Cunning folk were not to be trusted because such trust implied faith in the devil, and the only certain salvation was through faith in God, as all the writers believed. Boguet cited Scripture, declaring that “therefore it is God alone ... who sends life and death, health and sickness, and there is no salvation except in Him.”<sup>101</sup> Guazzo, in his discussion of divine and supernatural remedies for illness and adversity, declared that the first remedy was “a true and lively faith, that is fortified by the charity of God and one’s neighbour,” yet earlier in his tract he had recommended for overnight protection, relics, agnus dei, and the repetition of prayers, “For such devotions are the safest protection and rampart against all the wiles of the Prince of Darkness.”<sup>102</sup>

Although condemning the use of cunning folk and superstitious remedies as cures for illness, none of the writers were particularly sure about the legitimacy of forcing a witch to remove a

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<sup>99</sup> Remi, Book III, Chapter II, pp.308, 310, “Annon stulta satis videntur tibi, mihi que eam valetudinem luere ... ?”

“Ut deinceps corporis brevem, incertamque valetudinem animi sempiterno, atque indubitato luamus interitu.”

<sup>100</sup> O’Neil, Mary, ‘Discerning Superstition: Popular Errors and Orthodox Response in Late 16th Century Italy’, PhD, (Stanford University, 1982), p.320

<sup>101</sup> Boguet, Chapter XLI, pp.280-281, “Aussi est ce Dieu seul, ... qui envoie la vie et la mort, la santé et la maladie, et n’y a point de salut si non en luy.”

<sup>102</sup> Guazzo, Book III, Chapter IV, p.208, “Vera et viva fides, hoc est charitate Dei, et proximi vallata” Book II, Chapter I, p.100, “Devotiones enim sunt tutissimum presidium, ac propugnaculum contra omnes tenebrarum Principis insidias.”

spell, and whether this comprised a union with the devil. The concept of beating a witch until she became scared enough to remove the maleficia was not new, however, it was not orthodox and is, therefore, unusual to find in works written after Trent. This idea has very close links with exorcism, where a priest used his greater power from God, to force the demons to leave a person. Boguet wrote that he knew some people did not agree that it was lawful to ask a witch to effect cures, however, “they say that it is allowable if one approaches [the witch] with force and threats; and they even assert that there is no better method than that to compel a witch to remove the spell which she has cast.” He denied that this was a common practice, but asserted that it was possible, and that it did not break the Scriptural prohibition on intercourse with the devil, as it was a threat rather than an abject plea. He obviously knew that this was a weak argument, as he concluded that it was probably no more licit than simply requesting a witch to remove spells, “in each case a man gives the witch the occasion to consult Satan for a remedy.” However, he could not entirely concede this point, and added that it could do no harm for man to have a fierce and proud bearing towards witches so that they feared him.<sup>13</sup> Remi debated this point quite carefully, and much more thoroughly than Boguet; he asked whether there was any harm in compelling a witch to remove a spell, and forcing the demon to repair the wrong that was done, “if a man confidently and boldly, ... by threats or violence compels Satan, represented by a witch, to abstain from injury and magic spells, and to cease and refrain from doing hurt, ... how, I ask, does he act in any way differently from the Exorcists?” He decided that the power of the exorcist came from his faith in God, and not from the fear felt by the devil, and

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<sup>13</sup> Boguet, Chapter XLII, pp.282, 283, “ils disent que l’on le peut faire si l’on y va avec force et menaces, et affeurent mesme qu’il n’y a point de meilleur moyen que celuy là, pour contraindre un Sorcier à oster le mal, qu’il aura baillé une fois.”

therefore, that any cure involving a witch was not truly allowable, “there is an unavoidable smack of sacrilege in such a proceeding,” although the offender was not due any punishment for such behaviour.<sup>104</sup> Guazzo did not discuss the moral issues inherent upon forcing witches to undo their harm, but simply commented that no matter how the cure was effected, the devil was always the winner.<sup>105</sup>

More interestingly, Boguet and Guazzo emphasised the fact that a cure coming from a witch would not last, if it worked at all, rather than the evil, illicit aspects. Boguet wrote that “the cure is only effective for a limited time,” later repeating that, “a witch’s cure is often only temporary,” and finally that, “they who have consulted the Devil and his demons have never prospered.”<sup>1</sup> Guazzo declared that “the benefit (if it may rightly be called so) conferred by demons is never an enduring favour, full or complete,” and that any who received it would suffer similar or greater injury later.<sup>1</sup> He also seemed uncertain as to the doctrine regarding the removal of supposedly bewitching items, he cited Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus and Del Rio in support of his view that this was a sensible and licit action, but was not able to add to their words.<sup>8</sup>

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“en l’un et en l’autre, l’on donne occasion au Sorcier de recourir à Satan pour guerir”

<sup>14</sup> Remi, Book III, Chapter III, pp.329-330, “Ergo si quis fidenter, atque intrepide, ... Satanam in malefica muliere adoriatur, vi, minisque cogat, ut ab iniuria, ac maleficio temperet, ledere cesset ... quid quaeso facit ab Exorcistarum more alienum”

“causam impietatis aliquam continere videtur”

<sup>105</sup> Guazzo, Book II, Chapter XII, p.150

<sup>106</sup> Boguet, Chapter XL, pp.265, 268, “la guerison n’est que pour un temps limité”, “scavoir que la guerison du Sorcier queleufois n’est que pour un temps limité”

Chapter XLI, p.273, “que ceux qui se sont adressez au Diable, et à ses supports, ne s’en sont iamais bien trouvez.”

<sup>10</sup> Guazzo, Book II, Chapter XII, p.150, “nunquam esse solidam gratiam, aut plenum, integrumque beneficium, quod conferunt Daemones, si beneficium recte dici potest”

<sup>108</sup> Guazzo, Book III, Chapter I, pp.190-192

#### 4.4.3 Counter Reformation Views on Amulets, Charms and Talismans

Charms and amulets remained a common item in the popular fight against adversity. The rules governing their use remained those laid down by St Thomas, and were repeated by all the writers.<sup>109</sup> Many priests would help in the distribution of handwritten *brevi*, and the wearing of such items, with of course due respect and obedience to the rules, was advisable.<sup>11</sup> Candles, palms and herbs were all officially blessed, and believed to be, often unofficially, protection against evil spirits.<sup>111</sup> The most popular amulet remained the *agnus dei*, and Guazzo, especially gave many examples of its miraculous powers: in Trapani in 1585, when a household was troubled by a demon, the priest gave each person an *agnus dei*, “the demon became terrified and threatened the daughter that unless she threw away the wax, he would wring her neck and seize her soul,” however, the household ignored this and the devil was unable to trouble them.<sup>112</sup> Guazzo also recommended the use of relics, as long as they were not mixed with anything superstitious. However, it appears that there were insufficient holy amulets and relics for the common people, as pieces of consecrated stone were stolen from church buildings and altars, and even the soil from consecrated ground for use as lucky charms.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> For details of these rules, see 4.2.3

<sup>110</sup> O’Neil, Mary, *Sacerdote ovvero strione*, p.60

<sup>111</sup> Scribner, R.W., ‘Ritual and Popular Religion in Catholic Germany at the time of the Reformation’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 35, No. 1, January 1984, pp.47-77, pp.62-63

<sup>112</sup> Guazzo, Book III, Chapter IV, section 12, p.240, “Hic terrere daemon coepit, filiam minarique ni ceram illam abijceret, fore, ut ei obtorto collo animam eriperet”, see also section 11

<sup>113</sup> Martin, Ruth, op cit, p.131

#### 4.4.4 Counter Reformation Views on Authorised Rites and Rituals

The use of symbols, such as the sign of the cross, was actively encouraged by the Counter Reformation Church. Boguet, again adding to the propaganda against the Protestants, wrote that a man of the “so-called reformed religion” was attacked one night by a lot of cats, and being unable to protect himself with his sword, made the sign of the cross, at which point all the cats vanished; he declared in support of this that “demons can never bear the sign of the Cross without trembling all over.”<sup>114</sup> Remi related many tales of sabbats which disappeared when an onlooker or unwilling participant made the sign of the cross, and Guazzo told similar tales of demons, and even of the devil himself, being chased away in confusion by this sign, “See how the frauds of the twisting serpent were all dissipated like a cloud by one sign of the cross.”<sup>115</sup>

Some quasi-superstitious rituals were recommended by these men, in a similar way that they had been by their pre-Reformation counterparts. The ringing of bells to chase demons away, and especially to prevent storms, was again advocated, “when, therefore, the demon hears the sound of bells he breaks into the greatest indignation, exclaiming that he is balked of his purpose by the barking of those mad bitches,” and, according to Guazzo, the ringing was “so hostile and inimical to demons that they are prevented by it from raising up violent storms, and even if they have already been raised it lulls them or turns them aside.”<sup>116</sup> Binsfeld,

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<sup>114</sup> Boguet, Chapter LXII, pp.436, 438, “de la religion pretendue reformee”

“les Demons ne sentent iamais la Croix, qu’ils ne soient du tout esbranlez”

<sup>115</sup> Guazzo, Book III, Chapter IV, section 10, p.235, “Ecce tortuosi Colubris fraudes, uno crucis signo ad instar nebulae dissipatas”; see also section 3 and Book II, Chapter XVI; Remi, Book I, Chapter XIV and Chapter XXVIII

<sup>116</sup> Remi, Chapter XXVI, p.162, “Earum igitur sonum ut audit Daemon, in maximam indignationem erumpere solet, inclamans prohiberi se incepto rabidarum isto canum latratu”

suffragan Archbishop of Trier, ascribed marvellous effects to blessed bells, although denying that they had been baptised. In Trier, it was the custom to ring the church bells all night during May, as this was believed to be the month for the witches' sabbat.<sup>117</sup> Remi, surprisingly, advocated reciting prayers in the order of children's ages before sleep in order to protect them overnight, a slightly odd, and definitely superstitious tint to an authorised ritual.<sup>118</sup>

#### 4.4.5 Counter Reformation Scepticism

It was possible to be sceptical about the uses of amulets and charms, Remi wrote of "amulets, phylacteries, periapts and waxen tablets, ... and other such trash, which are everywhere used with the greatest confidence in their efficacy." He did not want to discuss the mistaken faith placed in these items, as they had been anathematised by papal edict.<sup>119</sup> He declared that the demon only pretended fear of such things, and that they were not a real impediment to him, but more simply a ruse to "to fix the attention of the more ignorant upon such things, so that he may confirm and establish them in their depraved beliefs and that, neglecting far more salutary remedies, they may place their whole hope of safety in such trifles."<sup>120</sup> Guazzo did not discuss the misplaced faith in amulets, but did repeat a story from Johann Pistorius

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Guazzo, Book III, Chapter IV, p.211, "Daemonibus adeò infestam, et inimicam esse, ut ab iis excitatae tempestates, vel ingruentes impediuntur, vel iam ortae sedentur, et alio avertantur"

<sup>117</sup> Thorndike, Lynn, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol. VI, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1934), pp.540-541 and Hodder, M.E., 'Peter Binsfield and Cornelius Loos, An Episode in the History of Witchcraft', PhD Dissertation, (Cornell, 1911), p.98, n.71

<sup>118</sup> Remi, Book II, Chapter IX, pp.270-271

<sup>119</sup> Remi, Book III, Chapter I, p.288, "pyctacia, phylacteria, cereos characteres, ... et id genus alia deliramenta, quae palam, et confidentissime nugantur"

<sup>120</sup> Remi, Book III, Chapter III, p.315, "ceu in funambulo occupet, inque prava sua opinione confirmet, ac stabiliat: dum neglectis longe salutarioribus remediis in istiusmodi rebus nudis [sc. nugis] salutis suae presidium constituunt"

concerning a swineherd who owned a staff engraved with the name of St Blaise, which he therefore believed would protect his sheep while he neglected his duties. A demon was able to go and pretend to guard the swine, “because of the foolish confidence of the swineherd. For he has put on his staff a writing to which he imputes divine virtue because it has upon it the name of S Blaise.”<sup>121</sup>

The line between orthodox and illicit magic, as has been shown, was very fine, and this is again demonstrated in the Counter Reformation period. This should not be surprising, as Ruth Martin wrote (on Venice, although the words apply to most of Europe), “the manifestation of the supernatural, the benign supernatural at least, to the 16th and 17th century Venetian was the Catholic Church, its rituals and its paraphernalia.”<sup>122</sup> The attempts made by Counter Reformation writers to demonstrate the evils of cunning folk were not immediately successful, in fact for a long time they could even be considered a failure. The difference between what was superstitious and evil, and what was legitimate was a fine one, and many people were unable to make the distinction. As O’Neil discovered, Antonio Coreggi, a healer of hernias, told the Inquisition in 1595, that “I did not think such things were bad, nor that they were sins. If I had thought they were bad, I would have confessed them and stopped doing them.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Guazzo, Book II, Chapter XX, p.188, “stultae pastoris confidentiae, nam schedulam quandam suo bacillo inclusit, cui Divinam ascribit virtutem, vel inde, quod Sancti Blasii nomine est inscripta”

<sup>122</sup> Martin, Ruth, op cit, p.147

<sup>123</sup> O’Neil, Mary, ‘Magical healing’, p.93

#### 4.5. Protestant Views

Unlike their Counter-Reformation counterparts, but similar to the pre-Reformation writers, the Protestants were less concerned with the sensational sabbat and demonic intercourse than they were with the everyday superstitions carried out by common people. Their emphasis was upon this aspect of witchcraft, rather than the classic witch with her potions. Even the great Protestant theologians were more concerned with this, for example, Heinrich Bullinger devoted most of his tract on witchcraft to the household use of charms, and Bernhard Albrecht similarly concentrated upon the blessers and exorcists who drove away illness.<sup>124</sup> For these writers there was no distinction whatsoever between the classic witch, and the wise woman or cunning man who worked in the local village, as Scot wrote, “at this daie it is indifferent to saie in the English toong; She is a witch; or, She is a wise woman.”<sup>125</sup> Both practised that which was forbidden and evil, and were involved with the devil and his works, as Gifford wrote, “These cunning men and women which deale with spirites and charmes seeming to doe good, and draw the people into manifold impieties, with all other which have familiarity with devils.”<sup>126</sup> This was the area with which the Protestants concerned themselves, the everyday beliefs and practices of common folk, and their consequent spiritual harm.

##### 4.5.1 *Protestant Views on the Popularity of Cunning Folk*

The general populace were heavily criticised for running to cunning folk as soon as they were faced with any adversity. Natural cures were allowable, and Scot despaired of those who,

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<sup>124</sup> Clark, Stuart, ‘The rational witchfinder,’ p.230

<sup>125</sup> Scot, Book V, Chapter ix, p.110



believing themselves to be bewitched, used cunning folk when, “wholsome diet and good medicines would have recovered.”<sup>127</sup> Hemmingsen commented that as natural medicine came from God’s earth, then it should be honoured and used, seeming to advocate the use of natural cures.<sup>128</sup> Edward Jorden, a physician, was distressed about the number of superstitious elements that were used in his profession, however, unlike the churchmen he was not certain that there was any supernatural virtue in them. He believed that it was possible that the devil used such methods to draw men into superstition, but his main concern was that they healed, “by reason of the confident perswasion which melancholike and passionate people may have in them,” echoing the placebo idea as used by men such as Castañega.<sup>12</sup>

People were advised to follow scripture, and glory in tribulation rather than to risk one’s soul, as Daneau wrote, “we should lie sick in bed all the days of our lives, rather than run to any methods of Satan.”<sup>13</sup> Richard Burton’s language was rather more harsh, “much better it were for such patients that are so troubled, to endure a little misery in this life, than to hazard their souls’ health for ever.”<sup>131</sup> However, from the evidence of writers, it seems that the common people were not as certain as their ministers; in Württemberg, Conrad Platz declared that “a God-fearing believer should be a thousand times happier sick with God ... than healthy with the Devil,” yet again demonstrating how widespread the problem was in

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<sup>126</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, K3<sup>v</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Scot, Epistle to Maister Doctor Coldwell, B<sup>r</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Hemmingsen, D8<sup>r</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Jorden, Edward, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother*, edited, M. MacDonald, (John Windet, Powles Wharfe, 1603), H1<sup>r</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Daneau, Chapter VI, p.119, “Itaque ne si per totum quidem vitae curriculum nobis aegrotis in lectulo decumbendum esset, ad huiusmodi ope et artes Satanae recurrendum est”

the 16th century.<sup>132</sup> William Perkins observed that “Charming is in as great request as Physike, and Charmers more sought unto than Physicians in time of neede,” while Daneau wrote that people needed to be more careful and trust in God, “we must patiently abide, and look for the help of God.”<sup>133</sup>

Gifford was dismayed that so many people, who would deny any love for the devil and his works, would still run to a cunning man at the first sign of tribulation, “where a man professeth in wordes that he doeth defie the devill and all his workes, and yet when it commeth to the triall of Gods word, hee is found to be seduced, and wrapped in blinde errorrs of the devill.”<sup>134</sup> He also declared that those who used cunning folk to heal, “cannot say that the Lord is their health and salvation, but their Phisicion is the devill,” and for any who remained unsure as to his full meaning, reiterated, “God saith here that such persons as seeke unto Coniurers and Witches, doe goe a whoring after devilles.”<sup>135</sup> Hemmingsen asked simply, who was able to love God, who loved God’s enemy, concluding that the heart that worked through witches, could not be receptive to both God and the devil.<sup>14</sup> As John Veren

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<sup>131</sup> Burton, Robert, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, edited, Jackson, (J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, London, 1932, 1621), Part II, Section i, subsection i

<sup>132</sup> Bever, E.W.M., ‘Witchcraft in Early Modern Wurttemberg’, PhD Dissertation, (Princeton, 1983), p.112

<sup>133</sup> MacFarlane, Alan, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1970), p.130

Daneau, Chapter VII, p.122, “Patienter Dei auxilium expectandum est, ab eius providentia dependendum.”

<sup>134</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, B3<sup>v</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, H1<sup>v</sup>, H2<sup>v</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Hemmingsen, D5<sup>v</sup>, “Quomodo enim potest Deum diligere, qui diligit quod Deus odit?”  
“Unum enim et idem cor, non est capax Dei et Satanae, qui operatur per Sagas”

wrote in 1562, “they thinke nothyng lesse than to calle upon Sathan the dyvell, or to be healed by hym.”<sup>137</sup>

People would have had few problems finding cunning folk, if the studies carried out present a true picture of the situation. The best study for England is that of Alan MacFarlane on Essex, where he found that there were a minimum of 41 cunning folk in the county, and was positive that this was only a fraction of those who existed.<sup>138</sup> This appears to be supported by the writers, who all complained about the prevalence of such people: Gifford was able to cite large numbers of cunning folk near to the setting of his *Dialogue*, and declared there to be thousands of people deceived by them, while Scot believed there to be seventeen or eighteen witches in some parishes.<sup>139</sup> The situation did not improve, however, even with the calls for cunning folk to be treated as true witches; Burton wrote in 1621, “sorcerers are too common; cunning men, wizards, and white witches, as they call them, in every village.”<sup>14</sup>

#### 4.5.2 Protestant Views on the Origins of Superstition

The writers continually declared their belief that to seek help from cunning folk was to demonstrate, knowingly or otherwise, one’s allegiance to the devil. Daneau wrote that cunning folk were a ploy of Satan’s, “For what else is Satan driving at by those means, other

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<sup>137</sup> Veren, John, *A Strong Batterie against invocation of Saintes*, (Henry Sutton for Thomas Hackett, London, 1562), B4<sup>r</sup>

<sup>138</sup> MacFarlane, Alan, op cit, p.120, Midelfort estimated that for England as a whole, there were about equal numbers of cunning folk and parish priests, Midelfort, H.C. Erik, ‘Were There Really Witches?’ in Kingdon (ed), *Transition and Revolution*, (Burgess Publishing Co., Minnesota, 1974), p.196

<sup>139</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, B1<sup>r</sup>-B2<sup>r</sup>, G3<sup>r</sup>, H1<sup>r</sup>; Scot, Book I, Chapter ii, p.4

than to lead us away from the fear of the true God, and towards him? For whatever help we ask of him to cure our bodies, leads to the hurt and destruction of our souls.”<sup>141</sup>

Hemmingsen gave the example of an old woman who recited prayers and incantations to cure disease, not realising the impiety of her actions, “gradually she is drawn further and further from God, until at length, clearly seduced, she makes an express pact with the devil.”<sup>142</sup> In his first reference to witchcraft, in *A Catechisme*, (1583), Gifford discussed cunning folk rather than the archetypal witch, “Some seeke helpe of Witches and Conjurors, when theyr bodyes, their Children, and cattel are hurt: which is to seeke at the devil.”<sup>143</sup>

In the *Dialogue*, Gifford had the clever, knowledgeable Daniel lead the others to understanding that cunning folk used demonic means, “I see they buy their help deer which have it at the handes of these cunning men,” concluded M.B.<sup>144</sup> Henrie Howarde declared all cunning folk to be evil, and that there was not “one among them to be founde that worketh any good, no not one, theyr throate is an open sepulchre, and theyr steppes leade to hell.”<sup>145</sup> James denied that anyone should consult cunning folk, believing this action to be a great coup for the devil, “For the Devill hath neuer better tydings to tell to any, ... neither is it lawfull to use so unlawfull instruments, were it never for so good a purpose: for that

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<sup>14</sup> Burton, Richard, op cit, Part II, Section i, subsection, i

<sup>141</sup> Daneau, Chapter VI, p.117, “Quid enim aliud agit ea via Satan, quam ut nos a veri Dei metu abducat, ad se autem traducat? Namquo quicquid auxilii ab eo accipimus, ut corporibus nostris medeamur, cedit in animarum nostrarum peste et perniciem.”

<sup>142</sup> Hemmingsen, B7<sup>r</sup>, “paulatim abducitur magis magisque a Deo, donec tandem plane seducta, cum Diabolo expressum pactum facit”

<sup>143</sup> quoted in MacFarlane, A., ‘A Tudor Anthropologist: George Gifford’s *Discourse* and *Dialogue*’ in Anglo (ed), *The Damned Art, Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1977), p.144

<sup>144</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, F4<sup>v</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Howarde, Henrie, *A Defensative against the poyson of supposed Prophecies*, (Iohn Charlewood, London, 1583), C2<sup>r</sup>

axiome in Theologie is most certaine and infallible.”<sup>146</sup> The idea that cunning folk were the physical manifestations of the more subtle side of the devil’s plan, was reiterated by William Perkins, who believed that the ‘evil’ witch only existed in order to provide trade for the wise woman, who achieved “a thousandfold more harme than the former.”<sup>147</sup>

This doctrine was not commonly accepted; popular belief was that cunning folk were not the same as evil witches, and did not perform evil deeds, or have any connection with the devil. There was disbelief shown by Gifford, when it was explained that cunning folk worked with the help of the devil, “Do you thinke any seeke help at his hands; we seeke help against him,” but Gifford stated his beliefs quite clearly, declaring that the devil “hath his other sort of witches, the cunning men and women,” who were “in very deed ... as evill as other witches, for they have felowship with devills.”<sup>148</sup> Daneau criticised the opinions, including the law, that declared a difference between good and evil witches, “this damnable distinction.”<sup>149</sup> It appears to have been commonly believed that cunning folk were given their powers by God, and that it was thereby a special gift, and certainly not wrong to seek help from their hands, “such as God hath given wisdom and skill unto.”<sup>150</sup> Again, this distinction was not fully believed, Perkins, writing early in the 17th century, commented

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<sup>146</sup> James, *First Book*, Chapter VII, p.107; see also Gifford, *Dialogue*, C3<sup>R</sup>, “the devill dealeth subtiltie in this, that by dealing in such small matters, he covereth himselfe in the greater.”

<sup>147</sup> Clark and Morgan, *op cit*, p.37

<sup>148</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, B2<sup>R</sup>, D3<sup>R</sup> and Gifford, *Discourse*, I1<sup>R</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Daneau, Chapter VI, p.112, “haec distinctio damnabilis”

<sup>150</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, D4<sup>V</sup>, see also E3<sup>V</sup>, E4<sup>R</sup>, G1<sup>R</sup>

that those who sought the remedies of cunning folk, would declare, “Oh happy is the day that ever I met with such a man or woman to help me!”<sup>151</sup>

None of the writers had any difficulty in dealing with this erroneous objection, it was simply a case of the devil pretending to leave the person willingly, or ending his torment of them, in order that he might gain their soul. This explanation was repeated by many writers, demonstrating the prevalence of such beliefs. Hemmingsen made this point twice very clearly, “for when you strive to dispel disease of the body through witchcraft, you incur spiritual leprosy of the soul,” and later, “when the remedies of the devil are used on human bodies, they are, without any doubt, poisonous to the soul.”<sup>152</sup> Gifford wrote that people, “do imagine that the devill is driven out of them, and he hath entred in deeper.”<sup>153</sup> The pastoral side of Gifford is best demonstrated by this, as he continually reiterated this point, obviously feeling it to be too common a belief for him to ignore. Cunning folk, he wrote, “make shew of doing good unto men, only of a most cruel and murtherous purpose, even to draw men deeper into the pit of hell with them. For if they can help the bodie a litle, it is to win both bodie and soule unto eternall damnation,” and later, “he [the devil] goeth out willingly, I meane he ceaseth from hurting the bodie: for he goeth not out indeede, but rather goeth further in, and seateth himself deeper in the soule.”<sup>154</sup> James declared that “the Devill is content to release the bodelie hurting of them, for a shorte space, thereby to obtaine

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<sup>151</sup> quoted in Thomas, Keith, op cit, p.300

<sup>152</sup> Hemmingsen, D3<sup>r</sup>, “Nam dum morbum corporis per maleficia tolli studes lepram spiritualem animae accersis”

E2<sup>r</sup>, “Diaboli ergo remedia corporibus humanis adhibita procul omni dubio venena sunt animae”

<sup>153</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, H1<sup>v</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, F3<sup>r-v</sup>, H1<sup>r</sup>; see also F4<sup>r</sup>

the perpetual hurt of the soules of so many.”<sup>155</sup> He also cited Christ’s declaration that Satan cannot cast out Satan, and declared that “when such a cure is used, it may wel serve for a shorte time, but at the last, it will doubtleslie tend to the utter perdition of the patient, both in bodie and soule.”<sup>156</sup>

#### 4.5.3 Protestant Views on Catholic Rites and Rituals

All the Protestant writers criticised the Catholic faith for its use of amulets and seemingly magical rituals. According to Burke, many Protestant reformers “described many official rituals of the Catholic Church as pre-Christian survivals, comparing the cult of the Virgin Mary to the cult of Venus.”<sup>157</sup> Scot devoted entire sections of his work to ridiculing Catholic beliefs, with headings such as, “Certeine popish and magicall cures,” and “How to make holie water, and the vertues therof, ... that the sacrament of confession and the eucharist is as of much efficacie as other charmes.”<sup>158</sup> Gifford also ridiculed the old custom of ringing church bells to drive away storms, but in doing so showed that such beliefs remained in place, even after the long battle to destroy them.<sup>159</sup> The thought that beating a witch would force the removal of a spell also remained, as Samuel in Gifford’s *Dialogue* had been encouraged to do this.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> James, Third Book, Chapter IV, p.131

<sup>156</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter V, p.119

<sup>157</sup> Burke, Peter, op cit, p.209

<sup>158</sup> Scot, Book IV, Chapter viii and Book XII Chapter x, see also Book XII, Chapter ix

<sup>159</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, D3<sup>v</sup>, G2<sup>v</sup>; see also Scot, Book XII, Chapter xviii, p.268

<sup>160</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, B1<sup>v</sup>

#### 4.5.4 Protestant Views on the Importance of Faith

For the Protestants, there was no alternative in times of trouble to strong faith in God and regular prayer. Calvin wrote that man should call upon God, “let us especially call upon God’s help, relying upon him alone in whatever we attempt, since it is he alone who can supply us with counsel and strength, courage and armour.”<sup>161</sup> Daneau often repeated that trust should be placed in God, and God alone, “For it is the true God to whom we must always run to in all our afflictions.”<sup>162</sup> This was obviously a doctrine of primary importance to Protestant ministers and apologists, as John Veren had made the same point in 1562, “He onely ought to be called uppon, in whom we doo beleve: but the word of God dothe teache us to beleve in God only: Therefore, he onely ought to bee called upon.”<sup>163</sup> Scot referred his readers to Ephesians telling them to “followe his [the writer’s] counsell,” or if they were unable to read this, then to go to a godly preacher.<sup>164</sup> Gifford declared that instead of running to cunning folk, people should “runne only unto God by a lively faith, [with] true repentance and hartie prayer” for their tribulations to cease.<sup>165</sup> In his *Dialogue*, he declared that “we are no where to seeke, and to learne but of our most blessed Lord God,” and also referred to Ephesians.<sup>166</sup> James recommended the purging of sin from one’s life, as well as “earnest prayer to GOD,” while Burton, possibly a bit optimistically, in comparing the way Catholics relied upon relics and so forth, declared, “But we on the other side seek to God

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<sup>161</sup> Calvin, Jean, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1 and 2, (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1960), I.xiv.13

<sup>162</sup> Daneau, Chapter VI, p.116, “Est enim verus Deus ad quem nobis est semper et in omni afflictione recurendum.”, see also Chapter VI, pp.117, 118 for virtually identical phrases

<sup>163</sup> Veren, John, op cit, B5<sup>R</sup>

<sup>164</sup> Scot, Book XII, Chapter xxii, p.284

<sup>165</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, H3<sup>R</sup>

<sup>166</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, F1<sup>R</sup>, C3<sup>R</sup>



alone.”<sup>167</sup> The power of faith, according to Protestant belief, was aptly demonstrated by Marlowe (whether or not he was a Protestant) in the concluding scenes to *Doctor Faustus*, where Mephostophilis admits that he cannot harm the Old Man because of his faith, “His faith is great; I cannot touch his soul;/ But what I may afflict his body with/ I will attempt, which is but little worth.”<sup>168</sup>

The Protestants tended to concentrate more upon the perceived lack of faith in their flocks, rather than the actual superstitions they indulged in. They did not repeat various tales and charms, apart from Scot’s ridiculing of such items, and simply declared why they were evil and to be avoided. They were concerned that anyone should seek help from one who was not of good faith, and continually urged people to trust in God, and God alone.

#### 4.6. Conclusion

For all the efforts of pastors and theologians to combat and destroy belief in superstition and the remedies of cunning folk, the attempt seems to have failed. Tedeschi found that in mid 17th century Italy, cunning folk were still the first recourse of the poor when facing troubles, “This plague is so widespread here ... that without any consideration or fear, almost everyone ... first goes to visit the maleficia or witch to be signed by her,” wrote Scipione

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<sup>167</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter V, p.118 and Third Book, Chapter I, p.125; Burton, Richard, op cit, part II, Section i

<sup>168</sup> Marlowe, Christopher, *Doctor Faustus*, (Methuen & Co. Ltd, London, 1962), scene xviii, l.87-89

Mercurio.<sup>169</sup> The situation was little better in England, an ordinance of 1648 denied the Lord's Supper to any who used witches or fortune tellers, in other words, common cunning folk.<sup>170</sup>

Superstition and cunning folk were issues of great importance for theologians and pastors, from the earliest beginnings of the Church until long after the influences of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation had ended. The concept of turning to any who had communion with the devil was abhorrent to theologians, and it was the job of parish ministers to ensure that this message, and its reasoning, were unquestioningly accepted by the common people.

In the pre-Reformation period, before the great growth of witch theory, witchcraft was essentially magical and superstitious healing, and so it was upon this element that theologians and pastors focused their attention. The Protestants, like the pre-Reformation Catholics before them, centred their attention upon the everyday activities of common folk, the areas that had prevailed before the Reformation, concentrating upon the elements of superstition which were inherent in belief in witchcraft, rather than the acts of witchcraft themselves. As the beliefs in witchcraft developed, especially under the auspices of countering the Protestants, Catholic writers were pushed into emphasising a different aspect. This led to their emphasis upon the sensational, and the shift away from their predecessors' focus upon superstition.

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<sup>169</sup> Tedeschi, John, 'The Question of Magic and Witchcraft in 2 Unpublished Inquisitorial Manuals of the Seventeenth Century', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 131, No. 1, 1987, pp.92-111, p.100, although Mercurio was a physician, so caution should probably be used with regard to his words.

<sup>170</sup> Thomas, Keith, *op cit*, p.309

# **The Use of Magic:**

**Magic**

## 5 Magic

### 5.1. Introduction

Magic and its practitioners were a more difficult target for pastors and theologians to attack than witches. The status of magicians was higher, and they, unlike their low status contemporaries, tended to be both male and educated. Being a magician was a high status occupation, and an understanding of magic was almost considered to be part of a good education. While witchcraft was not dealt with clearly in the Bible, apart from the disputed translation of Exodus xxii:xviii, the issue of magic was obviously important in Old Testament times. For the earliest writers on witchcraft and magic, intellectual magic rather than the low class female witch was the main focus of their works. Norman Cohn wrote that the Early Church prohibitions which were later used against witchcraft, were originally aimed at combating ritual magic, and it was only over time that they were applied to witchcraft itself.<sup>1</sup> The writers from the period just before the Reformation all discussed ritual or ceremonial magic, and simply took their arguments from earlier writers. These arguments were virtually identical to those used later against common witchcraft and superstition, and it is due to the extent of the overlap within the critiques that magic is an important issue, even in a discussion on witchcraft.

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<sup>1</sup> Cohn, Norman, *Europe's Inner Demons, An Inquiry Inspired by the Great Witch Hunt*, (Chatto- Heinemann, Sussex, 1975), p.111, he wrote that the first step to the witch hunts was taken when the "traditional teaching of the Church was applied ... to the relatively unfamiliar phenomenon of ritual magic; for in the process maleficium acquired a meaning it had not possessed in earlier centuries."

### 5.1.1 *Types of Magic*

Magic has many different forms, and witchcraft is, in fact, a very simple type of magic. Most of these types involve specialised knowledge, and for some authors, the listing of the various types with exact specifications appears to be quite important.<sup>2</sup> Agrippa divided magic into three very broad types, natural, celestial and ceremonial, and devoted one book to each in his *De occulta philosophia*. Magic of the natural world worked in the elemental world and included medicine and natural philosophy; celestial worked in the world of the stars, including in its field astrology and mathematics, and ceremonial magic worked in the realm of the spirits, intelligences and angels, and incorporated the study of theology.<sup>3</sup> However, these definitions are unusual in that Agrippa positively approved of magic, and was attempting to justify it by any means possible, and thereby included what were commonly conceived as natural sciences.

Natural magic and its definition was always a problem; there was a great deal of overlap with perfectly respectable areas of science and experimentation. However, the charge of diabolism was used against even serious investigators, if their conclusions or knowledge appeared to be suspect. So called natural magicians defended their arts from the charge of diabolism by declaring that there was no prospect of success, unless the practitioner believed absolutely in God and his infinite goodness.<sup>4</sup> They believed that one was able to reach God through a strict formula of prayer, fasting and devotion, and as Keith Thomas wrote, “most of the

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<sup>2</sup> see both Gifford texts, Champier and James

<sup>3</sup> see Tomlinson, Gary, *Music in Renaissance Magic*, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1993), pp.45-46 and also Yates, Frances A., *Shakespeare's Last Plays*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1975), p.94

<sup>4</sup> For more information on this aspect of natural magic, see Cohn, Norman, op cit, p.108

leading alchemists accordingly thought of themselves as pursuing an exact spiritual discipline.”<sup>5</sup> Many who defended their experiments from charges of demonic magic also believed that they were scientists, some such as Francis Bacon, emphasised the methodology and systematic enquiry of their work aiming to remove the novelty from results and return magic to its earlier dignified status.<sup>6</sup>

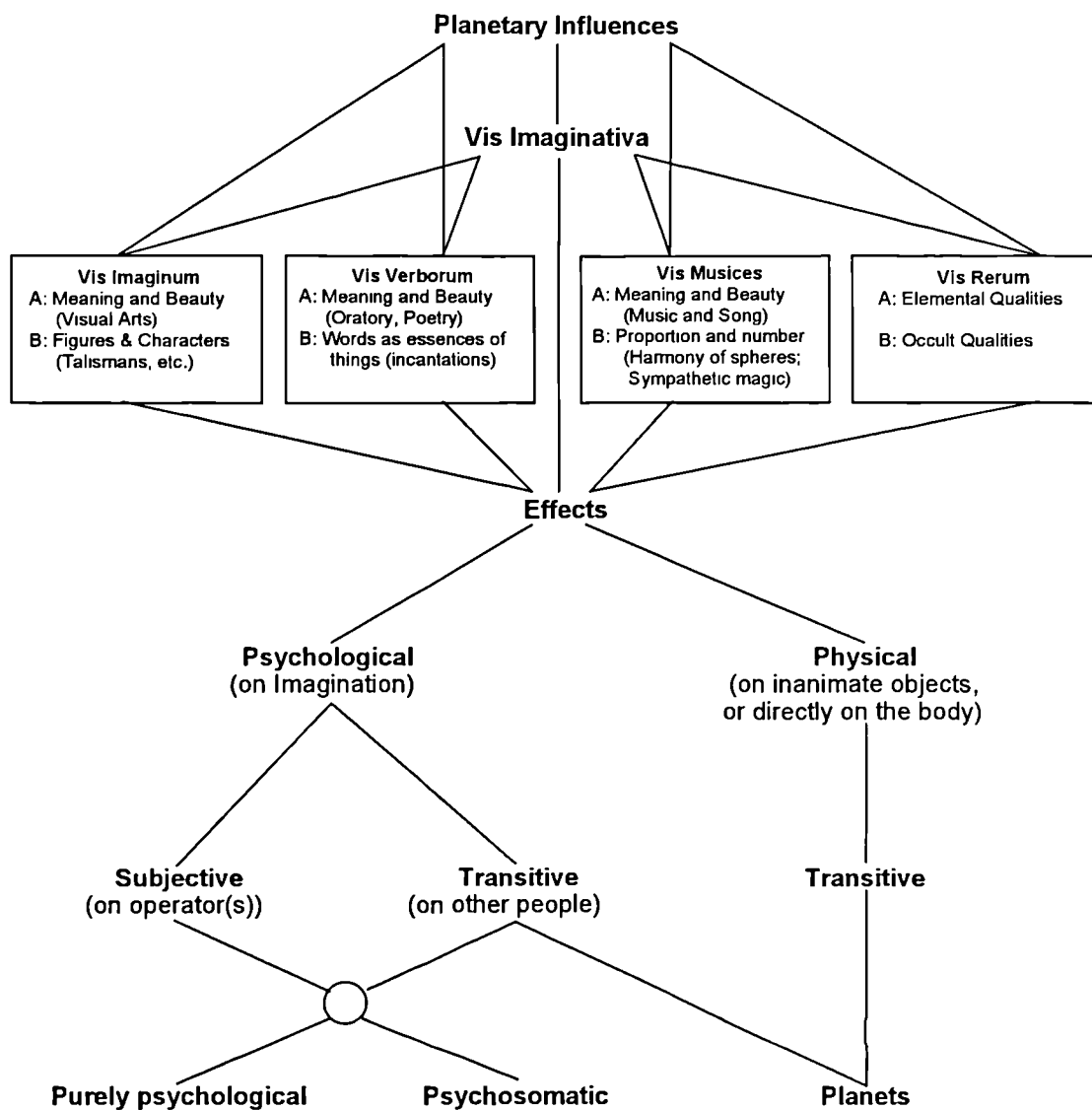
Astrology was believed by many to be a type of magic, mostly due to the writings of the Fathers. Neoplatonic cosmology embraced the idea that the planets were able to control inferior, sublunary matter, including humans. Early theology denied that it was possible for there to be any communication between planets and man, as communication could only occur between intelligences, such as God, angels and demons, and planets were not considered to be intelligences. The way in which the planets were believed to influence man is best shown by the diagram below, which also demonstrates how natural magic overlapped with other areas such as art and science.<sup>7</sup> However, the debate over which was correct meant that there was space for the idea that astral influence was a natural phenomena that involved no evil spirits, and this meant that some later theologians and Popes felt able to use astrology. Astrology was condemned by many who faithfully followed the writings of the Fathers, and declared that, therefore, these astrologers and magicians were communicating with demons.

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, (Penguin Books Ltd, London, 1991), p.321

<sup>6</sup> Webster, Charles, *From Paracelsus to Newton*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982), pp.61-62

<sup>7</sup> Walker, D.P., *Spiritual and Demonic magic from Ficino to Campanella*, (The Warburg Institute, London, 1958), p.77



### 5.1.2 Magic and Witchcraft

Anthropologists working in Africa, or with primitive tribes, make a distinction between magic as a learned activity, and witchcraft as an innate trait. Such a distinction did not hold true for Early Modern Europe, as witchcraft was always believed to be a matter of deliberate choice. The closest to an innate trait in European witchcraft, was the suspicion that there were families of witches, with the parents instructing the children.

The definition of natural magic has shown that this was an area for the highly educated, and this ensured the distinction between the male sorcerer or natural magician, and the female witch. Gustav Henningsen, in his study of Basque witchcraft, found that it was only seldom that a male wizard or sorcerer was accused of taking part in a sabbat.<sup>8</sup> Over time, the distinctions became more blurred; Hugh of St Victor in his dividing of magic had decided upon five groupings, one of which was maleficium, which later became one of the most common accusations in witch trials.<sup>9</sup> However, magicians tended not to be accused of actual maleficium. Men who engaged in the more respectable side of the magical arts, were still far less likely to be persecuted, apart from in literature, than their common male or female counterparts working with the mass of the people. Erik Midelfort made the point that men such as Ficino, John Dee, Paracelsus and Bruno all practised their magical arts with impunity, although Bruno was executed for heresy, it was still not for witchcraft. As Midelfort said, “by and large Europeans made an effective distinction between such occult philosophers, buried in their ancient texts, and the village hag whose ignorant magic had a thoroughly devilish basis.”<sup>10</sup>

Magicians, as learned men, were also unlikely to be commonly viewed as being under the control of the demon, but were more likely to be seen as controlling him. Again, this contrasts strongly with the image of a witch as being the stupid, dupe of the devil.

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<sup>8</sup> Henningsen, Gustav, *The Witches' Advocate*, (University of Nevada Press, Reno, 1980), p.10

<sup>9</sup> Burke, P, 'Witchcraft in Renaissance Italy: Gianfresco Pico and his Strix' in Anglo (ed), *The Damned Art, Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1977), p.34

<sup>10</sup> Midelfort, H.C. Erik, 'Were There Really Witches?' in Kingdon (ed), *Transition and Revolution*, (Burgess Publishing Co., Minnesota, 1974), p.195



Theologians made the point that they were both being tricked by the devil, but this was not common belief, as can be seen from literature such as the Faust legend.

The idea of the learned magus was developing in the Medieval period, and with the Renaissance, magical learning reached its epoch. The revival of magic as a whole depended upon revivals of its component parts: Lullism, Kabbalism and Hermeticism. These are complex philosophies which attempt to explain the position of man in the universe, and, as Midelfort wrote, when they all combine, "they ... suggest not only that the world could be understood ... but that man's place in the universe could be specified with literal and mathematical precision."<sup>11</sup>

## 5.2. Early Church and Scholastic Views

The knowledge of magic traditionally started with Ham, the son of Noah, who became an expert, and engraved the knowledge upon stone tablets, knowing that his father would not allow them on the Ark. This knowledge was passed on to one of his sons, Mesraim, and after the flood it became the special province of Zoroaster. This story, although well known, has no Biblical origin, but was entirely based upon ideas in Genesis.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Midelfort, H.C. Erik, 'Witchcraft, Magic and the Occult' in Ozment (ed), *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, (Center for Reformation Research, St Louis, 1982), pp.183-185. For more information on the components of magic, see Walker, D.P., op cit, and Webster, Charles, op cit

<sup>12</sup> Flint, Valerie I.J., *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991), pp.334-335

The prohibitions in the Old Testament against magic are very strongly worded, and allow for no dispute over their meaning. Leviticus xix:xxvi prohibits the use of magic, “neither shall ye use enchantment.” It continues in the same chapter that one should not deal with any who use magic, “Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them.”<sup>13</sup> The Old Testament is very clear overall that God will not support any who have had dealings with magic, and that he shall turn away from them, “And I will come near you to judgement; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers ... For I am the Lord.”<sup>14</sup>

The best example of magic in the Bible is the story of Pharaoh’s magicians and their failure to compete effectively with Aaron. While they were able to change rods into snakes, they were unable to cope with the rod turned snake that Aaron produced, which then ate their obviously less powerful snakes.<sup>15</sup> This is the image of magic that the Old Testament gives: people who were able to achieve seemingly amazing results, but who were not able to compete with the true God, and who were also opposed to God and his people.

In the Apocryphal New Testament the most famous individual magician’s story, that of Simon Magus, is told in detail. This magician, who had already fled from Peter, was in Rome and appeared to be working all types of wonders. His magic was purely to glorify his own name, and to cast doubt upon that of Paul, “Simon exalted himself yet more by the

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<sup>13</sup> Leviticus xix:xxxi, King James Bible, 1611

<sup>14</sup> Malachi iii:v-vi, op cit

<sup>15</sup> Exodus vii:viii-xii, op cit

works which he did, and many of them daily called Paul a sorcerer.”<sup>16</sup> The power of God, through Peter, was again shown to be far greater than that of the magician; to prove his power Simon flew over the city, but was brought to the ground by Peter’s power and prayer to God, “O Lord, ... let him fall from the height, and be disabled; and let him not die but be brought to nought, and break his leg in three places. And he fell from the height and brake his leg in three places.”<sup>17</sup>

Far fewer examples of sorcery figure in the New Testament. One is the story of Simon Magus, (the same man as in the Apocrypha), attempting to buy his way into discipleship, and another a reference to a sorcerer named Elymas, whom Paul declared to be “full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil.”<sup>18</sup> The other New Testament story of magicians is the most famous, and a complete contrast to those elsewhere in the Bible. The wise men who came to visit the infant Christ so soon after his birth, are almost certainly magicians, as their use of astrology and the term “wise men” demonstrates. However, the use of astrology, as has been shown did not necessarily involve communication with a demonic power, and this may also explain the positive description of the magi. These wise men are seen as being obedient to God, by worshipping the Christ child, and also in disobeying Herod to protect Jesus.<sup>19</sup> This image is in total contrast to the other examples of

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<sup>1</sup> Acts of Peter IV, James, M.R. (ed), *The Apocryphal New Testament*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1926)

<sup>17</sup> Acts of Peter, XXXII, in James, M.R., op cit

<sup>18</sup> Acts xiii: viii-ix; see also Acts viii:ix-xxiv, op cit

<sup>19</sup> Matthew ii:i-xii, op cit

magic and magicians given in the Bible, however, it is possible that their magic is viewed differently, due to their submission to the power of Christ.<sup>20</sup>

The concept of the demonic pact is not a feature of either the New or Old Testament, but the origin for the later diabolic pact is in the Book of Isaiah. Men were scorned because they said, “We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are at agreement,” this being in complete contrast with the Christian covenant with God.<sup>21</sup> This text, although originally a moral point for Isaiah, was later used to justify the concept of a demonic pact.

Astrology is mentioned in the Bible as divination by the stars, and as Lee wrote, “almost all of the Old Testament passages to astrological practices refer merely to Babylonians.”<sup>22</sup> There is a warning not to be drawn into worshipping the stars, as this is idolatry, “lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldst be driven to worship them, and serve them.”<sup>23</sup>

### *5.2.1 Early Church and Scholastic Views on Natural Magic*

Many magicians believed that they were practising ‘natural magic,’ whereby they only used the signs and wonders given by God to perform their amazing feats. Roger Bacon distinguished between the two types of marvels, one using demons which was, therefore,

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<sup>20</sup> see Kieckhefer, Richard, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990), p.34

<sup>21</sup> Isaiah xxviii:xv, op cit

<sup>22</sup> Lee, Jung Young, ‘Interpreting the Demonic Powers in Pauline thought’, *New Testament*, Vol. 12, 1970, pp.54-69, p.59

<sup>23</sup> Deuteronomy iv:xix, op cit

demonic magic, and the other that was to become known as natural magic.<sup>24</sup> Lefèvre took this distinction for granted about two hundred years later in his work, *De magia*. He wrote only on natural magic, and emphasised that this was a branch of natural philosophy, which was not sinful in the least, “how holy and venerable is the name of magic, for magic so puts to flight all evil things and draws the good to itself in a loving embrace.”<sup>25</sup>

Nicolas Oresme wanted to call the two types of magic by different names, the demonic one ‘nigromancy,’ keeping magic for the natural elements.<sup>2</sup> William of Auvergne distinguished between these two types, and believed that there was no harm in natural magic, unless it was being used for evil purposes. In natural magic, there was no place for demons, and they took no part in its workings.<sup>2</sup>

### 5.2.2 Early Church and Scholastic Views on Astrology

It was a more difficult task to improve the name and reputation of astrology, having been condemned in the Bible, the Church Fathers simply continued in this vein. Augustine wrote that astrologers were “deluded and deceived by corrupt angels,” but that many of the events foretold actually occurred due to these deceptions, and thereby led further into this terrible sin, so that they were then, “caught up in them [the observations] and they may

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<sup>24</sup> Eamon, William, ‘Technology as magic in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance’, *Janus*, Vol. 70, 1983, pp.171–212, p.184

<sup>25</sup> Rice, Eugene F., ‘The ‘De magia naturali’ of Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples’ in Mahoney (ed), *Philosophy and Humanism*, (E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1976), pp.21, 28

<sup>26</sup> Thorndike, Lynn, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol. III, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1934), p.428

<sup>27</sup> Thorndike, Lynn, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol. II, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1943), pp.346–347

become ever more inquisitive and entrap themselves more and more in the manifold snares of this most deadly error.”<sup>28</sup> People who used astrologers were deceived by them, he declared, “Although they investigate the true position of the stars at a person’s birth and sometimes actually succeed in working it out, the fact that they use it to try to predict our activities and the consequences of these activities is a grave error and amounts to selling uneducated people into a wretched form of slavery.”<sup>29</sup> Tertullian made the link between magic and astrology, declaring them to be parts of the same, “we know the mutual alliance of magic and astrology,” and condemned them both, “when magic is punished, of which astrology is a species, of course the species is condemned in the genus.”<sup>30</sup>

Astrology was widely condemned with the magical arts, and the association was very clear. The Theodosian Code has many articles on astrology, the most strident declaring that, “the teaching of astrology shall cease,” and later that, “astrologers shall be banished not only from the city of Rome but also from all the municipalities.”<sup>31</sup> Although astrology had been condemned in both Biblical law and in the past, by the Medieval period it stood out as being unusual in that it was not condemned in the 1290 condemnation by the Inquisition, Bishop of Paris, and Archbishop of Sens, nor in the 1398 Articles of the University of Paris.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Augustine, *op cit*, 2:87

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *op cit*, 2:78

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, Rev. Alexander and James Donaldson (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 1957), *On Idolatry*, chapter IX

<sup>31</sup> Pharr, Clyde (ed), *The Theodosian Code*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1952), Valentinian and Valens Augustuses to Modestus, December 370; 373 and Honorius and Theodosius Augustuses to Caecilianus, February 409

<sup>32</sup> Lea, Henry Charles, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, Vol. III, (The Harbour Press, New York, 1955), p.438

In fact, although the Fathers and many scholastics had condemned astrology, it did not prevent many high ranking Church officials from using its practitioners. After Julius II was elected in 1503, his actual coronation was delayed until the astrologers were consulted and had approved the date; and later Giovanni Medici, who became Leo X in 1513, apparently chose both name and number for astrological reasons.<sup>33</sup>

### 5.2.3 *Early Church and Scholastic Views on Demonic Magic*

The idea of the learned magus was prevalent in the medieval period; magicians encouraged this belief as it enhanced their status, and further removed them from any association with the common witches. There appears to have been a relatively large amount of magic being practised, Gene Brucker discovered that in Florence, sorcery was a popular occupation. Niccolò Consigli was tried by the Inquisitorial Curia in 1384, for sorcery and necromancy, with an additional charge that he dedicated himself to certain demons.<sup>34</sup>

The relationship these men were supposed to have with the demons was one of control. They were able to command them to do their will, and even place them inside crystals to force them to perform. However, this was not the theological belief; Thomas Aquinas wrote that magicians were not really able to force demons into obedience, and that it was really

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<sup>33</sup> Rossi, Paoli L., 'Society, culture and the dissemination of learning' in Pumfrey, Rossi, and Slawinski (eds). *Science, Culture and popular belief in Renaissance Europe*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991), p.158

<sup>34</sup> Brucker, Gene, 'Sorcery in Early Renaissance Florence', *Studies in the Renaissance*, Vol. X, 1963, pp.7-24, pp.13, 17; and also Kieckhefer, Richard, *European Witch Trials, Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1976), pp.21-22

pretence in order to entrap their souls.<sup>35</sup> Roger Bacon, approaching the issue from another perspective, came to the same conclusion, because the human will was inferior to that of spirits, and because of this unequal relationship, men were sinning.<sup>36</sup>

As far as theologians were concerned, the magicians, no matter what they said, were practising demonic magic, which was completely forbidden to Christians. The desire to invoke demons came from the curiosity that was natural in all men, but more pronounced in those who attempted magic. It was, declared Aquinas, one thing for a magician to question a demon who had come of his own accord, but a totally different matter to invoke one deliberately in order to obtain knowledge.<sup>3</sup> The mere association with demons was forbidden, and magicians were being deceived if they thought other than that demons were involved, “it is not true then that the magic arts are sciences, but rather they are certain fallacies of the demons.”<sup>38</sup>

John of Freiburg in his *Summa Confessariorum* stressed that all magic needed the help of demons, and was, therefore, illicit.<sup>39</sup> This idea was supported by the bulls of Alexander IV in 1258, and John XXII in 1326, where Inquisitorial jurisdiction was limited to cases that manifestly savoured of heresy, and “explicit learned invocation of demons for magical

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<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Martin, Ruth, *Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice, 1550-1650*, (Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, 1989), p.48, *Commentum in quatuor libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, II, dist.VII, q.3

<sup>36</sup> Eamon, William, op cit, p.184

<sup>3</sup> Aquinas, St Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, translated Liam G. Walsh, (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1974), Book II, Part II, Qxcvi, art 4

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Thorndike, Lynn, vol. II, op cit, p.604, *Quodlibet*, IV:16

<sup>39</sup> Bever, E.W.M., ‘Witchcraft in Early Modern Wurttemberg’, PhD Dissertation, (Princeton, 1983), p.41



purposes.”<sup>40</sup> Possibly the best summary of the religious viewpoint regarding magic, is that of Hugh of St Victor in an appendix to his *Didascalion*,

Magic is not accepted as a part of philosophy, but stands with a false claim outside it: the mistress of every form of iniquity and malice, lying about the truth and truly infecting men’s minds, it seduces them from divine religion, prompts them to the cult of demons, fosters corruption of morals, and impels the minds of its devotees to every wicked and criminal indulgence.<sup>41</sup>

This view was supported by legal statutes against various kinds of magic: from the Roman Empire onwards there were strict laws regarding the magic and conjuration which involved demons. Although these prohibitions may have been largely dead letters, and partly derived from the need to counter rural paganism, their very existence demonstrates the concern that existed over these issues, even if they were not enforced. Religious penalties were less severe than the secular: St Basil writing to Amphilochius about the Canons, declared, “He who confesses magic or sorcery shall do penance for the time of murder, and shall be treated in the same manner as he who conducts himself of this sin.”<sup>42</sup> The Penitential of Silos (c.800) included in its proscription even those who simply consulted with magicians, “If any Christian pays respect to diviners, enchanters, or fortune tellers to observe auguries, omens, or elements, or if they busy themselves with and seek after consultations of writings, dreams, woollen work, or magical practices, he shall do penance for five years.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> O’Neil, Mary, ‘Discerning Superstition: Popular Errors and Orthodox Response in Late 16th Century Italy’, PhD Dissertation, (Stanford University, 1982), p.18

<sup>41</sup> Hugh of St Victor, *The Didascalion*, translated Jerome Taylor, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1961, 1991), Appendix, ‘Concerning Magic and Its Parts’

<sup>42</sup> Schaff, Philip (ed), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd Series, Vol. VIII, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, no date), St Basil, *Letters*

<sup>43</sup> McNeill, John T. and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1938), The Penitential of Silos, VII (104) Of Sacrilegious Rites

Secular laws were more severe: the law of Valentinian, Theodosius and Arcadius Augustuses of 389, declared that any who found a magician should, “drag him out immediately before the public and shall show the enemy of the common safety to the eyes of the courts.”<sup>44</sup>

However, by the 11th century, they were to be banished or executed, unless they desisted from their practices, “And if wizards or sorcerers, ... are caught anywhere in the land, they are zealously to be driven out of this country, or they are to be utterly destroyed in this country, unless they desist and atone very deeply.”<sup>45</sup>

#### *5.2.4 Early Church and Scholastic Views on the Diabolic Pact*

According to theologians, an important reason for not being entangled in magic, was due to the belief that it always involved a pact with the devil. The concept of the pact developed from the simple Biblical origin, mostly because of the belief in the patristic period that pagans were communicating with demons. The idea of the pact was first expounded by St Augustine in *De Doctrina Christiana*, where he wrote of the contracts between men and demons which were inherent in various kinds of superstition and learning, “certain kinds of consultations or contracts about meaning arranged and ratified with demons, such as the enterprises involved in the art of magic.”<sup>46</sup> He later described those who had a pact as part of “an untrustworthy and treacherous partnership established by this disastrous alliance of men

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<sup>44</sup> Pharr, Clyde, op cit, Valentinian, Theodosius and Arcadius Augustuses to Albinus, August 389

<sup>45</sup> Whitelock, D., M. Brett, and C. N. L. Brooke (eds), *Councils and Synods, 871-1066*, Vol. I, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981), Laws of Cnut, 1020-1022, from the Secular Ordinance, II Cnut

<sup>46</sup> Augustine, op cit, 2:74

and devils.”<sup>47</sup> Although this is not quite the pact as it became known in the Medieval period and later, Augustine was the first to examine the idea. During the Medieval period, the accusation of a demonic pact was made in order to curb diabolic sorcerers. It was first used against necromancers and those who conjured demons, rather than the common witch. Aquinas further developed the idea of a pact, declaring that all divination was unlawful, “the principle of divination, which is [by] a compact made expressly with a demon by the very fact of invoking him.”<sup>48</sup> According to Ruth Martin, Aquinas’ contribution was vital, although he was not the first to argue that the pact involved apostasy, what he achieved was, “the systematization of such arguments into a formal theological structure.”<sup>49</sup>

This concept was based not only upon the brief mention in Isaiah of a compact with death, but also the popular story of Theophilus. According to Valerie Flint, the earliest Latin version of this story was a ninth century translation, but the story, although very well known, was much later than that of Simon Magus.<sup>50</sup> Theophilus was a former Bishop’s steward, and at the death of the Bishop was first choice to succeed him. He declined at the last minute, and then regretted his decision, so went to a Jewish sorcerer who arranged a meeting with the devil, where he renounced Christ and Mary and confirmed this in a written pact. He was then declared Bishop, but regretting his sin, called upon Mary who interceded for him, and the pact was burned before the Church. This story demonstrates

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<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *op cit*, 2:89 However, Eugene Dukes, writing on the Church Fathers believed that the idea of the pact first developed after the death of Simon Magus, see Dukes, Eugene D., ‘Magic and Witchcraft in the Writings of the Western Church Fathers’, PhD Dissertation, (Kent State, 1972), p.178

<sup>48</sup> Aquinas, *op cit*, Book II, Part II, Qxcvi, art. 4

<sup>49</sup> Martin, Ruth, *op cit*, p.48

<sup>50</sup> Flint, Valerie, *op cit*, pp.344-345

how belief in a physical pact could develop. Eugenius IV incorporated such beliefs that sorcerers obtained their powers through a pact with the devil, in his decretal of 1437.<sup>51</sup>

### 5.3. Pre-Reformation Views

These writers were not inspired to write a great deal about the magic arts, their focus, as has been discussed, was upon superstition and the idea of the implicit pact. They did not ignore the subject, however, just did not feel it was worthy of a large amount of either their time or their work.

#### 5.3.1 Pre-Reformation Views on Natural Magic

Magicians tried to convince their detractors that they were only harnessing natural powers, and that there was no demonic involvement; as Tomlinson wrote of Pomponazzi, “[he] never set out in *De incantationibus* to discuss magical operations. He held only that they could be explained naturally and required no intervention of demons or angels.”<sup>52</sup>

Pomponazzi always tried to make the case for the natural effects of an object, which thereby rejected the need for demonic or angelic interference, “without demons or angels.”<sup>53</sup>

That there was power in natural objects was never disputed, however, whether these men were actually using this power, or simply being duped by the devil into believing that they

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<sup>51</sup> Bever, E.W.M., op cit, p.41

<sup>52</sup> Tomlinson, Gary, op cit, p.199

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Douglas, A. H., *The Philosophy and Psychology of Pietro Pomponazzi*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1910), p.270, *De Naturalium Effectuum*, “sine daemonibus et angelis”

were, was an area of contention. Touching for the King's Evil was an example of natural power, this time attached to a person rather than an object. This was a direct manifestation of God's power, and enabled the King (or Queen) to demonstrate the divinity of kingship. Martín de Castañega disputed this ability on the grounds that God did not recognise earthly titles, and only honoured those who were holy. However, he was unable to conclude against this ability, declaring that it could be passed down from the holiness of Louis IX (he was only discussing this ability in relation to the French kings). His declared intention was to raise the issue for discussion, as he felt it was worthy of debate.<sup>54</sup> Champier wrote that natural divination did exist, but that it was difficult to differentiate between natural and demonic, "natural divination includes frenzy and dreams. Frenzy is that when those who are struck by it, either priests or others, predict the future and this never deceives because it is from the Holy Spirit."<sup>55</sup>

Trithemius felt the need to defend his practices from the charge that they were not natural magic, and this defence is repeated throughout his works. Even in his letters, he explained why his magic was natural and not demonic: love was involved and was essential, "Evil demons indeed know, but they do not possess love."<sup>56</sup> This defence was obviously needed, even Champier, who was not a fanatic by any means, wrote, "there are some, no less impious than ignorant, so arrogant, so bold, so insolent and senseless that they claim that the powers

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<sup>54</sup> Castañega, Martín de, *Tratado muy sutil y bien fundado de las supersticiones y hechicerías*, (originally published, Logroño, 1529), translated David H. Darst, (1979), chapter xiii

<sup>55</sup> Champier, Chapter 2 of the First Tractate, 5, "Nature autem furorem habet et somnium. furor est quo perciti aut sacerdotes aut alii futura predicunt hic autem nunquam fallit: quia a spiritu sancto est. Aut a demonibus provenit"

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Brann, Noel L., 'The Shift from Mystical to Magical Theology in the Abbot Trithemius (1462-1516)', *Studies in Medieval Culture*, Vol. XI, 1977, pp.147-159, letter to Johannes Capellarius, 1505

and actions of all natures, even the customs and functions of the angels, can be changed by natural magic or astrology.”<sup>57</sup>

### 5.3.2 Pre-Reformation Views on Astrology

Again, this was not an area of great interest for these writers, they were concerned that the glory of God and his wonders was being attributed to things that were simply part of his universe, and that this was a way for the devil to lead men into greater sin. Ciruelo distinguished between true and false astrology, “Both make judgements about events that are to happen, and both base these judgements on the stars of heaven. They differ, however, in regard to the things they judge.”<sup>8</sup>

The readings of astrology were mainly false, according to these writers. “For these astrologers mix much that is false with a certain amount of truth,” and this was in order that people would continue to believe their predictions.<sup>59</sup> Martin agreed that the devil would tell the truth in order to get men to follow him, “the demon which strives for the perdition of men by his responses in this manner, even if he sometimes tells the truth, intends to make men accustomed to believe in him, and by this means he intends to lead them into something which is harmful to the salvation of humanity.”<sup>60</sup> He also declared that the stars had no control over man’s free will, “I should stress especially that in these things which

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<sup>5</sup> *Pronosticon libri tres*, Lyon, 1518, quoted in Copenhaver, Brian, *Symphorien Champier and the Reception of the Occultist Tradition in Renaissance France*, (Moulton Publishers, The Hague, 1978), p.184

<sup>8</sup> Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 3, p.139

<sup>9</sup> Champier, Chapter 2 of the Second Tractate, 11’, “Nam isti astrologi quibusdam veris multa falsa miscuerunt”

concern free will, the stars do not impose any necessity.”<sup>61</sup> This attitude was strongly influenced by the beliefs of Jean Gerson, who denied the entire theory of individual destinies being influenced by the stars, as the causes of events were so complex that it was impractical to attempt to predict them through astrology. Ciruelo explained that although predictions were made, there was no certainty about them, “since the stars have no natural power to bring these predictions about. It is vain to use astrology to understand events over which it has no effect.”<sup>62</sup>

Ciruelo was the one writer to stress the way in which astrology could lead to the devil, making a link with the writings on superstition. He declared that “the astrologer who attempts to employ the stars to penetrate the heart and will of man is vain and superstitious and has an alliance with the devil,” obviously here, meaning an implicit pact, such as was believed to occur whenever magical ritual was used, without natural or theological causation.<sup>3</sup> He believed that astrology could lead to other types of superstition, and the realms of the devil, and for that reason it was to be condemned as apostasy and punished as a type of necromancy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Martin, Section 61, 405”, “demon enim qui intendit perditioni hominum ex huiusmodi suis responsis et si aliquando vera dicat, intendit homines affuefacere ad hoc, quod ei credatur, et sic intendit perducere in aliquid, quod sit saluti humanae nocivum.”

<sup>61</sup> Martin, Section 16, 403”, “Attento maximeo, quod in his, quae concernunt arbitrii libertatem, astra non imponunt necessitatem”

<sup>62</sup> Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 3, p.140. Working against one’s destiny as predicted by the stars was entirely orthodox, deriving from Ptolemy.

<sup>63</sup> Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 3, p.142

<sup>64</sup> Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 4, p.147, and Part 2, Chapter 3, p.142

### 5.3.3 *Pre-Reformation Views on Demonic Magic*

The devil led men into using his arts by tempting their curiosity, as Ponzinibio wrote, “the curiosity of men is illuded when they seek to know things [beyond their reason].”<sup>65</sup> That these arts were demonic was never doubted by Pedro Ciruelo, he defined necromancy as the art “which involves an invocation of the devil,” and an attempt to communicate with the devil to discover things which were hidden.<sup>66</sup> If this was not clear enough, he later commented, “It is clear, then, that this procedure for acquiring knowledge comes not from God or a good angel, but from Satan, the inventor of illusions, lies, and superstitions, who has conspired with foolish men.”<sup>7</sup>

### 5.3.4 *Pre-Reformation Views on the Diabolic Pact*

Martín de Castañega cited Gerson when attempting to define the way in which a pact with the devil was made:

An express pact with the devil is of two kinds. One is so clear and express that with formal words, denying the Faith, they profess anew to the devil in his presence. ... They give him complete obedience and offer him their body and soul. ... Others have an express and explicit pact with the devil, ... because they make the pact with his disciples, who are other enchanters, witches, or sorcerers.<sup>68</sup>

Interestingly, Ponzinibio differentiated between the commanding of a demon, and subservience towards one, “by way of a command, not adoration.”<sup>69</sup> This idea, although

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<sup>65</sup> Ponzinibio, p.267, “his ergo ... illuditur curiositas hominum quando appetunt id scire, ... investigare”

<sup>66</sup> Ciruelo, Part 1, Chapter 3, p.108, see also Part 2, Chapter 1 p.115

<sup>67</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 1, p.189

<sup>68</sup> Castañega, Martín de, op cit, chapter iv

<sup>69</sup> Ponzinibio, p.292, “per modum Imperii, et non adorationis”



never cited as being his, later developed as the belief that if a witch was beaten or threatened to remove a spell, then it was not the sin of removing witchcraft by witchcraft.

Any who were able to perform magic, unless they were acting through the power of God, which would be obvious, were believed to have a pact with the devil. Gianfrancesco Pico wrote that, “divining is always the result of a secret or open pact with the devil,” and was simply summarising popular beliefs.<sup>70</sup> Trithemius felt that he had to deny that he had made a pact, when defending himself against the charge of demonic magic, again demonstrating how accepted this aspect had become, “[I have] never held commerce with the evil arts ... or made a pact with demons.”<sup>71</sup> Martin of Arles, when discussing divination and necromancy declared, “it may be asked, from whence do these pythons and diviners come to show hidden or future things, and this through a pact entered into with the demon.”<sup>72</sup>

The relationship between the magician and the devil was examined by Ciruelo alone amongst these writers. At one point he described how magicians and devils associated, “they summon him and he comes. They converse with him as a friend.”<sup>73</sup> However, later in his treatise he emphasised that this was merely a ruse on the part of the devil; magicians would say that they were trying to do good through their association, but Ciruelo maintained, “it

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<sup>70</sup> Burke, Peter, op cit, p.43

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Brann, Noel, op cit, p.155 *Annales Hirsaugienses*, II

<sup>72</sup> Martin, Section 58, 405, “Sed quaeritur, ex quo isti phitones, et divini manifestant occulta aut futura, et hoc ex pacto inito cum demone.”

<sup>73</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 8, p.270

appears that it will be a licit thing for the Christian to become a vassal of the devil, like a servant or slave.”<sup>74</sup>

That the pact was inherently evil was only explained by Ciruelo and Martin. Martin emphasised the point by twice stating that it was an error, “it is an article in the errors regarding the Magic arts, that to enter into a pact with the demons, ... is not idolatry, nor a form of idolatry and apostasy: this is error.”<sup>75</sup> Ciruelo also felt the need to emphasise the evil of the pact, having pointed this out many times previously, he then summarised the reasons why it was such a sin:

any man who holds a pact or agreement of friendship with the devil sins very seriously, for he breaks the first commandment and sins against God, committing the crime of treason or *læsae majestatis*. His action is also contrary to the vow of religion made in baptism; he becomes a Christian apostate, an idolater who renders service to the devil, God’s enemy.<sup>76</sup>

This was actually the main focus of the pre-Reformation writers’ comments on magic, that any who had dealings with the devil, through magic and thereby a pact, were apostates and outside the Christian religion. The sensationalist pact ideas that came with the concept of the organised and ritual sabbat are completely absent from their writings, they were simply concerned with advising people on how to avoid apostasy and idolatry.

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<sup>74</sup> Ciruelo, Part 3, Chapter 12, p.331

<sup>75</sup> Martin, Section 69, 406’, “est articulus de erroribus circa artem Magicam, quod inire pactum cum daemonibus ... non sit idololatria, vel species idololatrie et apostasie, Error.” Again this comes from Gerson, but was originally included in the articles condemned at Paris in 1398, article 3.

<sup>76</sup> Ciruelo, Part 1, Chapter 2, p.98, see also Part 1, Chapters 1 and 2, pp.74, 90 and also Part 3, Chapter 12, pp.331-332

## 5.4. Counter Reformation Views

Boguet, Remi and Guazzo had absolutely no interest in magic per se, only in magic where it became witchcraft, and had sensational attachments. They mentioned aspects of magical practices in passing, never focusing upon it, devoting even less space to it than their pre-Reformation counterparts. Only Guazzo of the three, even acknowledged that there was more than one type of magic, “magic is of two kinds, namely natural and artificial. God bestowed on Adam natural and legitimate magic with other knowledge.”<sup>77</sup>

### 5.4.1 Counter Reformation Views on Natural Magic

Natural magic had been defined long before these writers produced their treatises, however, the exact definition remained an issue of contention. Benito Pereira in his *Adversus fallaces et superstitiosas artes* (1591), declared that there was a distinction between natural and demonic magic, with natural magic being “the most secret and excellent” element of natural philosophy. Natural magic was worthy of study, but it could be abused, and precautions were, therefore, necessary.<sup>78</sup> Giordano Bruno trod a very fine line in distinguishing between natural and demonic types of magic, and made the issue far more complex with nine separate categories, of which about half were demonic.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Guazzo, Book I, Chapter II, p.3, “Magia duplex est, naturalis scilicet et artificialis. Naturalem, legitimamque Magiam cum caeteris scientiis adamo Deus largitus est”

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Ernst, Germana, ‘Astrology, religion and politics in Counter Reformation Rome’ in Pumfrey, Rossi, and Slawinski (eds), *Science, Culture and popular belief in Renaissance Europe*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991), p.261

<sup>79</sup> For a full discussion of Bruno and his definitions, see Couliano, Ioan P., *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, translated Margaret Cook, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987), pp.156-160

Guazzo defined natural magic as “no more than an exact knowledge of the secrets of nature ...[which] so effects marvels which to the ignorant seem to be miracles or illusions.”<sup>80</sup> Yet even after Guazzo wrote this, there was still controversy surrounding natural magic, Tommaso Campanella wrote, “Everything that scientists do in imitating nature or helping it with unknown art is called magical work, not only by the vulgar crowd but by the community of men. ... For technology is always called magic until it is understood, but after a while it becomes ordinary science.”<sup>81</sup>

#### 5.4.2 Counter Reformation Views on Astrology and Demonic Magic

Astrology is not really mentioned at all by the Counter Reformation writers on witchcraft, it has no sensational aspects to it, and is a theologically complex issue; generally the type of subject they avoided. The closest that any of them came, was when Remi discussed how curses had any efficacy. He declared, “others say that it is the influence of the stars which makes these curses effective; but this view seems to be no nearer to the truth. For it is agreed that the stars are universal and immutable.”<sup>82</sup> For all the discussion and agreement in the past, however, that astrology was sinful, Urban VIII was a firm believer in its abilities; he had the horoscopes of the Cardinals of Rome cast, and openly predicted the dates of their deaths.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Guazzo, Book I, Chapter II, p.3, “nihil aliud est quam exactior quaedam arcanorum naturae cognitio”  
“et mirifica quaedam hoc pacto perficiuntur, quae causarum ignaris, praestigiosa, vel miraculosa videntur”

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Eamon, William, op cit, p.171

<sup>82</sup> Remi, Book II, Chapter IX, p.266, “Ac quod alii ad syderum affectiones hoc etiam referunt: nihilo equidem probabilius loquuntur, quod universas, immutabilesque eas esse constet”

<sup>83</sup> Walker, D.P., op cit, p.205

Pereira did not condemn the study of demonic magic, so long as it was only theoretical knowledge and was to be used to unmask demonic deceptions.<sup>84</sup> Demonic magic was described by Bruno as “the magic of the hopeless, who become recipients of evil demons caught with the help of the Art.”<sup>85</sup> Many magicians defended themselves on the grounds that they were simply studying these arts, in order to learn from them, without actually using them in their experiments. Cornelius Agrippa was possibly the most famous living magician, and his reputation was not altogether good. Boguet repeated the story that Agrippa had a black dog, “which was no other than a devil in disguise,” that cast itself into the Saône upon his death.

Remi pointed out that these magicians, although proscribed by the Catholic Church, were given employment by many rulers. He obviously objected to their use, and explained that the common people would follow such an example by consulting witches, “yet do kings and princes daily consort with such men and summon them to them for no small fee; and the common people, more confident to sin with such authority.”<sup>87</sup> Cardinal Borromeo’s Penitential declared the penance for one who used “diabolical incantations” to be seven years, and for those who consulted them five years.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ernst, *Germana*, op cit, p.262

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Couliano, Ioan P., op cit, p.157

<sup>86</sup> Boguet, Chapter VII, p.38, “qui n’estoit autre qu’un Diable desguisé”

<sup>87</sup> Remi, Book III, Chapter III, p.323, “Et tamen Regum, principumque hic usitatus, et quotidianus lusus est: Eos quoque non parva mercede ad se accersunt. Horum etiam exemplo, nam talibus authoribus iam tutius peccatur, vulgus adit”

<sup>88</sup> McNeill and Gamer, op cit, *Abridgement of Milan Penitential of Cardinal Borromeo*, c.1700, ‘On the First Commandment of the Decalogue’, 2 and 4, as before, these canons were probably never enforced, partly because of the fact that anyone subject to such a long penance would be almost certain to sin again before the

Those who were accused of demonic magic disputed this categorisation. Giordano Bruno wrote,

Recently, the words “magician” and “magic” have been denigrated ... The magician has been called a stupid and evil sorcerer who has obtained, through dealings and a pact with the evil demon, the faculty to do harm or to enjoy certain things. This opinion is not shared by wise men or philologists but it is taken up by the hooded ones such as the author of *Malleus Maleficarum*.<sup>89</sup>

#### 5.4.3 Counter Reformation Views on the Diabolic Pact

The pact was an issue that the Counter Reformation writers were unable to ignore; however, it was only of real interest for them when seen in conjunction with the sensational aspects of the sabbat. Del Rio defined the pact, and explained why its existence was vital to belief in magic, “The compact which the magicians make with the Demon is the mainstay from which all the magic operations depend.”<sup>90</sup> The belief that for magical effects to happen required a pact with the devil was commonplace; Jacobus Simancus in his *Institutiones Catholicae* declared, “Those things that cannot naturally bring about the effects for which they are employed are superstitious, and belong to a pact entered into with devils.”<sup>91</sup>

Remi declared that the devil was actually unable to help a man unless a pact had been entered into, “But not even so can he aid and assist any man unless that man has broken his baptismal pledge and agreed to transfer his allegiance to him and acknowledge him as

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end, and so accumulate further penances. However, their existence again demonstrates the fact that this was an issue for concern.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in Couliano, Ioan P., op cit, p.158

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in Garçon, Maurice and Jean Vinchon, *The Devil, An Historical, Critical and Medical Study*, translated Stephen Haden Guest, (Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1929), p.64

master.”<sup>92</sup> Arguments put forward against the pact were quickly dealt with by Remi: the belief that man and demon could have no true conversation was dismissed, and the fact that the conditions were so difficult and absurd as not to be binding, were also treated quickly. Remi declared his belief that “such contracts can be drawn up in correct legal terms and phraseology has been clearly proved.”<sup>93</sup> Although written halfway through the treatise, Remi’s true conclusion regarding pacts was very clear, “away with them, then, away with all who say that the talk of a pact between witches and demons is mere nonsense; for the facts themselves betray them, and are attested and confirmed by the legitimate complaints of many men.”<sup>94</sup>

Although these writers did not contribute a great deal to the debate on magic, writing by other Counter Reformation figures shows that they were slightly unusual in this respect. These writers were primarily witch writers, and the concept of magic belongs more correctly to a learned and theoretical sphere rather than the sensationalist area which was their prime concern.

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<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Clark, Stuart, ‘The rational witchfinder: conscience, demonological naturalism and popular superstitions’ in Pumfrey, Rossi, and Slawinski (eds), *Science, Culture and popular belief in Renaissance Europe*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991), p.238

<sup>92</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter I, p.34, “Sed neutiquam id se praestare posse nisi is prius rupto, quod in baptismo pepigerit, foedere velit in suam potestatem transire, et se pro hero habere.”

<sup>93</sup> Remi, Book III, Chapter XII, p.393, “ut haec Iurisconsultorum placitis, ac legibus dimetiri oporteat, satis antea est demonstratum”

<sup>94</sup> Remi, Book II, Chapter IX, p.252, “Facessant, igitur iam nunc, qui nugas esse dicunt, quae pacta sagis rumor est cum Daemonibus intercedere: cum res ipsa de se sit indicio, multorumque praeterea mortalium iustissimis querelis testata ac comprobata reperiatur”

## 5.5. Protestant Views

The Protestant writers were mainly concerned with protecting the power of God, and were only really interested in magic where it encroached upon divine omnipotence, or the breaking of the first commandment. They allowed for natural magic to exist, and maintained that many people were fooled by natural marvels, believing them to be the effects of magic. There were other Protestant images of magic, seen through the eyes of playwrights, especially Shakespeare and Marlowe.

It was only the Protestants who emphasised that although magicians and witches appeared different to the commons, they were in fact working for the same master.<sup>95</sup> Common belief was best highlighted by Shakespeare in *The Tempest*, where the magician Prospero, is frequently contrasted with the evil witch Sycorax, as Frances Yates wrote, "Shakespeare makes very clear ... how utterly different is the high intellectual and virtuous magic of the true magus from low and filthy witchcraft and sorcery."

### 5.5.1 Protestant Views on Natural Magic

The concept of natural magic was, by the seventeenth century, more accepted, so much so that its learning was considered part of a good education, "Nowadays among the common people, he is not adjudged any scholar at all, unless he can tell men's horoscopes, cast out devils, or hath some skill in soothsaying."<sup>96</sup> The idea that it was pure knowledge, and had no

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<sup>95</sup> See James, First Book, Chapter VII, pp.107 and 110, and also Gifford, *Dialogue*, G1'

<sup>96</sup> Yates, Frances A., op cit, p.94

<sup>97</sup> W. Vaughan, *The Golden-Grove*, (1600) quoted in Thomas, Keith, op cit, p.269



demonic aspects was the view put forward by Shakespeare, with Prospero declaring, “I thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated/ To closeness, and the bettering of my mind.”<sup>98</sup>

This was not the universal view, however, as many still persisted in believing that all magic was demonic, and its natural aspect to be no different. Shakespeare’s Prospero may have been an attempt to rectify such opinions: he was never seen to use demons, only spirits who appear to be good natured and may, therefore, be considered part of natural as opposed to demonic magic. The constant comparisons to the witch Sycorax, demonstrate the popular as opposed to theological opinion, as Christian theology did not admit the existence of good natured spirits. However, as far as popular beliefs are seen to be portrayed, Frances Yates’ words hold true, “Prospero is far from diabolic; on the contrary, he is the virtuous opponent of evil sorcery, the noble and benevolent ruler who uses his *magico-scientific knowledge* for good ends.” John Harvey criticised those who were unable to distinguish between diabolic and natural magic, “the black arts of the devil, and the fair gifts of God.”<sup>1</sup>

That God had allowed many things to have seemingly magical properties, seemed perfectly obvious and natural to both Gifford and Scot. Due to their heightened sense of the omnipotence of God, these marvels were not wholly unexpected. Gifford wrote, “no doubt there be great secrets in nature, which the skilfull Physicians, and naturall Philosophers do find out.”<sup>1</sup> Scot believed that to observe the secrets and patterns of nature was good, and

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<sup>98</sup>Shakespeare, William, *The Tempest*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982), Act I, scene ii, l.89-90

<sup>99</sup> Yates, Frances A., op cit, p.96, my italics

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Capp, Bernard, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs, 1500-1800*, (Faber & Faber, London and Boston, 1979), p.209

<sup>101</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, G1’

could help man, however, to pay too much attention to such patterns was not attending fully to Christian teaching.<sup>102</sup> To the simple, or unlearned, these marvels could appear miraculous and requiring the assistance of demonic powers, “manie necessarie and sober things ... consist in such experiments and conclusions as are but toies, but neverthelesse lie hid in nature, and being unknowne, doo seeme miraculous, speciallie when they are intermedled and corrupted with cunning illusion.”<sup>103</sup>

### 5.5.2 *Protestant Views on Astrology*

That there were different types of astrology remained in learned belief; Calvin attacked judicial astrology, but nevertheless recognised natural astrology as a legitimate part of education.<sup>104</sup> Gifford distinguished between astrology and “the excellent and noble skill of Astronomie.” He declared that astronomy was a gift from God, which men should use and which would help them realise how great and powerful were his works.<sup>105</sup> James described astronomy as “one of the members of the Mathematicques, and not onelie lawful, but most necessarie and commendable.”<sup>106</sup>

Common belief, however, appeared not to make such a distinction, and astrology and astrological predictions were sought after and followed. Capp wrote that common belief in astrology could be seen from the popularity of the ‘sigil’, “a charm thought to preserve

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<sup>102</sup> Scot, Book IX, Chapter ii, pp.168-169

<sup>103</sup> Scot, Book XIII, Chapter iii, pp.290-291

<sup>104</sup> Chapman, Allan, ‘Astrological Medicine’ in Webster (ed), *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the 16th Century*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979), p.280

<sup>105</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, C1

<sup>106</sup> James, First Book, Chapter III, p.100

favourable planetary influences, and to place such influence permanently at the disposal of the wearer.”<sup>107</sup>

Gifford and James had no doubts about the inherent evil of astrology. The aspect of astrology that concerned Gifford was that astrologers appeared to deny the power of God, as providence was attributed to the stars, “ascribing all good thinges unto them [the stars], which are peculier unto God, likewise the evil thinges which are from the devil, and from the corrupted nature of man by original sinne. Yea, they tye the providence of God unto the Starres.”<sup>108</sup> James did not discuss the reasons why astrology was wrong, but simply concluded, “This parte now is utterlie unlawful to be trusted in, or practized amongst christians, as leaning to no ground of natural reason: and it is this part which I called before the devils schole.”<sup>109</sup>

### 5.5.3 Protestant Views on Demonic Magic

That magic was impossible without the help and connivance of the devil was accepted as fact. Daneau believed that the devil actually taught magicians how to perform magic, “Thus they practice their art, by means of secret signs and private words, which their evil master Satan has taught them.”<sup>110</sup> All learned magic was demonic, according to James, as is shown

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<sup>10</sup> Capp, Bernard, op cit, p.21

<sup>108</sup> Gifford, *Discourse*, B4<sup>v</sup>

<sup>109</sup> James, First Book, Chapter IIII, p.101

<sup>110</sup> Daneau, Chapter I, p.22, “Ita que artem suam exercent quibusdam symbolis, quae docuit praecepitquo malus iste magister Satan.”

by his comment, “none can studie and put in practize ... The cirkles and art of Magie, without committing an horrible defection from God.”<sup>111</sup>

The devil was able to entrap learned men through their innate curiosity to learn yet more, Daneau included these men in his list of those the devil targeted. He wrote, “There are other sorts, who led away by the vanity of a proud mind, and are not able to contain themselves within the bounds of mans’ understanding and capacity.” Interestingly, he referred to these men as being of the “honourable and learned [type],” which is unusual in that he condemned them as being equally sinful with common witches.<sup>112</sup> Describing how educated men were able to fall to the devil, James was unusually eloquent:

The learned have their curiositie wakened uppe; and fedde by that which I call his schoole ... divers men having attained to a great perfection in learning, and yet remaining overbare (alas) of the spirit of regeneration ... finding all naturall thinges common, ... they assaie to vendicate unto them a greater name, ... so mounting from degree to degree, upon the slipperie and uncertaine scale of curiositie: they are at last entised, that where lawfull artes or sciences failes, to satisfie their restles mindes, even to seeke to that black and unlawfull science of Magie.<sup>113</sup>

This was the reason given by playwrights for their characters’ slide into the devil’s clutches. Marlowe wrote that Faustus even found mortality to be too confining, “Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man.”<sup>114</sup> In his epilogue, Marlowe made the point that had Faustus remained content with conventional studies, he would have lived, “Cut is the branch that might have

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<sup>111</sup> James, First Book, Chapter V, p.101

<sup>112</sup> Daneau, Chapter II, p.48, “Sunt vero alii, qui curiosa quadam et superba animi vanitate, dum se intra humani ingenii metas continere non possunt”, “honoratiores et doctiores”

<sup>113</sup> James, First Book, Chapter III, p.99

<sup>114</sup> Marlowe, Christopher, *Doctor Faustus*, (Methuen & Co. Ltd, London, 1962), Scene i, l.23

grown full straight.”<sup>115</sup> The rewards from such curiosity were deemed to be great, although Prospero was not written as a demonic magician, the power he is seen to wield cannot really come from any other source. Caliban, on being ordered to go, complains, “I must obey - his art is of such power, / It would control my dam’s god Setebos, / And make a vassal of him.”<sup>116</sup> That this was common belief, and that magicians felt they were unfairly persecuted is shown by Jonson in *The Alchemist*, where Subtle, the alchemist of the title, complains, “All arts have still had, sir, their adversaries, / But ours the most ignorant.”<sup>117</sup>

#### 5.5.4 Protestant Views on the Diabolic Pact

The reality of the pact was attested to by Daneau, who believed that sorcerers made a true covenant with the devil, “I say that a firm league and pact was made between Satan and those people greedy for divining who wanted to know the future.”<sup>8</sup> Daneau’s belief that this pact was necessary to the power supposedly held by magicians is shown his declaration that, “there is no sorcerer who has not made a league and pact with the devil.”<sup>119</sup>

The relationship between sorcerer and magician was never in doubt for these writers; as far as they were concerned, although the devil might pretend to be commanded, he was the true master in such a relationship, and this relationship was different in common view from that of witches and the devil. Gifford confirmed the relationship between the witch and devil,

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<sup>115</sup> Marlowe, Christopher, op cit, Epilogue, l.1

<sup>116</sup> Shakespeare, William, op cit, Act I, scene ii, l.375-378

<sup>117</sup> Jonson, Ben, *The Alchemist*, (Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1968), Act II, scene iii, l.217-218

<sup>118</sup> Daneau, Chapter I, p.18, “Itaque tandem contractum est inter utroque, Satanam dico, et istos divinandi cupidos homines, arctissimum foedus et vinoulum”

<sup>119</sup> Daneau, Chapter III, p.64, “nullum non Sortiarium cum Satana foedus et commercium iniisse”

with the comment, “the witch is the vassall of the devill, and not he her servant; he is Lord and commaundeth, and she is his drudge and obeyeth.”<sup>120</sup> Burton confirmed the popular view, when he wrote, “The parties by whom the devil deals may be reduced to those two: such as command him in show at least, as conjurors, and magicians ... or such as are commanded, as witches, that deal *ex parte implicate*, or *explicite*.”<sup>121</sup> James wrote, “the Witches ar sevantes onelie, and slaves to the Devil; but the Necromanciers are his maisters and commanders,” again showing what the common opinion was.<sup>122</sup> Marlowe demonstrated both the misconception held by magicians, and the truth of the relationship, as held by theologians, in *Doctor Faustus*. Faustus mistakenly believes in his power to command Mephostophilis, “How pliant is this Mephostophilis,/ Full of obedience and humility!/ Such is the force of magic and my spells.”<sup>123</sup> This illusion is shattered for Faustus, when Mephostophilis explains how he was really called; on being asked whether it was Faustus’ spells which commanded him, “That was the case, but yet *per accidens*: /For when we hear one rack the name of God,/ Abjure the scriptures and his saviour Christ,/ We fly, in hope to get his glorious soul.”<sup>124</sup>

The concept of a written pact was only examined by James, he explained that it could even be “written with the Magicians owne blood.”<sup>125</sup> However, yet again, popular belief was demonstrated by Marlowe, when Faustus wrote a covenant in his blood.<sup>126</sup> Only Scot

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<sup>120</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, C4'

<sup>121</sup> Burton, Robert, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, edited, Jackson, (J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, London, 1932, 1621), Part I, section 2, subsection 3

<sup>122</sup> James, First Book, Chapter III, p.98

<sup>123</sup> Marlowe, Christopher, op cit, Scene iii, l.31-33

<sup>124</sup> Marlowe, Christopher, op cit, Scene iii, l.48-51

<sup>125</sup> James, First Book, Chapter VI, p.105

<sup>126</sup> Marlowe, Christopher, op cit, Scene v, l.45-80

ridiculed the idea of a pact, insisting that any covenant with the devil would be subject to the previous covenant made with God at baptism, "Mee thinketh their covenant made at baptisme with God, before good witnesses, sanctified with the word, confirmed with his promises, and established with his sacraments, should be of more force than that which they make with the divell, which no bodie seeth or knoweth."<sup>127</sup> The attitude of the Protestants was that the pact may exist, however, it was not the most important aspect of magic and witchcraft, as those who made such a pact knew what they were doing, while those who had only an implicit pact, through superstition and ignorance, were still able to be saved.

## 5.6. Conclusion

Magic, although having different origins and concepts from witchcraft, had many things in common, according to its critics. Although these writers did not make magic a particularly large part of their works, it is obvious that they felt it was connected and linked with witchcraft. Possibly the most important link of these two sides of magic, was the introduction into witchcraft beliefs of the concept of an explicit diabolic pact, which had in the past, been limited to those who were believed to be commanding demons, rather than the witches, who were believed to be mere slaves of the devil.

The pre-Reformation Catholics, like the later Protestants, focused more upon the idea of the implicit pact, rather than the magician who willingly signed his soul to the devil. For them, these men were learned and should have known better, while the poor mass of the

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<sup>127</sup> Scot, Book III, Chapter vi, p.48

population may not have realised how close they were to damnation, and this was the prime focus of their concern. In a similar way, the learned magus was worthy of condemnation, but not worth devoting a great deal of space to, as they should have realised that they were sinning.

This attitude contrasts with the Counter Reformation Catholics; their attitude was more complacent, but not for the same reasons. As far as they were concerned, the pact existed, as did learned magicians, however, their focus was upon the sensational aspects of witchcraft. Occasionally a magician, such as Agrippa, would qualify for their attention, but they kept their scrutiny for the more sensational witch stories about pacts and the witches' relationship with the devil.



# **Sensational Aspects of Witchcraft:**

## **Witches' Flight**

## 6 Witches' Flight

### 6.1. Introduction

Flight was an essential element for those who believed that witches were a subversive group intent upon destroying the foundations of Christianity. If witches could not fly, then the sabbat, also an important part of witch theory, would lose much of its credibility; individual witches would have had to travel long distances, at speed, to meet at the sabbat. If witches could fly then this logistical problem was solved; but many believed flight to be impossible, and this led to one of the most contentious debates in the literature of witchcraft.

One of the problems with flight was the belief structure surrounding it: Ptolomaic cosmology had three levels: the earth for humans, the air for spirits - both good (angels) and bad (demons), and the heavens for God. By attributing the power of flight to witches, the believers were suggesting that witches had the ability to traverse the boundaries between the different spheres. The power of flight had been limited to very few beings, such as angels, and when permitted to humans was reserved for those of special holiness or evil. Suggesting that witches had this power was tantamount to declaring them equal to angels or demons, also hinting that witches had the other powers vested in these beings.

There was a lot of debate surrounding the unguents and potions that witches supposedly used in order to fly. Virtually all writers concluded that the actual potions had no efficacy, but this has not prevented this area being studied by modern historians and pharmacologists. Earlier in the 20th century, some scientists made unguents, following

the recipes given in early modern texts, and at times, they appear to have experienced flight sensations.<sup>1</sup>

### 6.1.1 *Prehistory of Human Flight*

There was a very extensive prehistory of flight from the Classical period. The word 'strix' (also 'lamia'), which was used as one of the many words for witch, was originally a non-human night creature, similar to an owl which lived on the flesh and blood of humans, and made a chilling, screeching sound. Writers on the strix included Ovid and Pliny, with Ovid adding a sorcerous element by declaring that they could either be hatched or created by incantations. In *Fasti*, Ovid wrote that striges were not strictly birds, but creatures which certain women transformed themselves into; they were women by day, and striges by night. These creatures were connected with the classical harpies who were birdlike female monsters. Late classical writers described them as either birds with female faces or women endowed with the wings, heads and talons of birds.<sup>2</sup>

### 6.1.2 *Biblical Examples of Human Flight*

Biblical manifestations of flight are actually too numerous to detail. That which is possibly best known, and certainly most cited, was the temptations of Christ. The temptations were well described in both Matthew and Luke, "Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple...the devil taketh him

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<sup>1</sup> See Duerr, Hans Peter, *Dreamtime*, translated Felicitas Goodman, (Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, 1985) for more information, also Couliano, Ioan P., *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, translated Margaret Cook, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987), pp.245-246

<sup>2</sup> Detail on the origin of these words can be found in various places, including Cohn, Norman, *Europe's Inner Demons, An Inquiry Inspired by the Great Witch Hunt*, (Chatto-Heinemann, Sussex, 1975), pp.162-165; Lea, pp.111-113; also in a dictionary of Classical mythology.

up into an exceeding high mountain.”<sup>3</sup> This was used as evidence to demonstrate that the devil, as a spirit, was also able to carry corporeal beings.

There are many instances of flying beasts and spirits within the Bible, some of the more interesting and relevant are those in Ezekiel, where the creatures from the whirlwind are a mixture of man and beast. Later in Ezekiel, there is an interesting story where a spirit of the Lord carries Ezekiel by his hair, almost a forerunner of many confessional descriptions of the devil carrying accused witches.<sup>4</sup> In one of the visions of the prophet Isaiah, he wrote that the screech owl, (whose Latin name of *strix* was often used, normally in the plural, as a term for witches) would find a place to rest, linking witchcraft with the day of revelation. A piece of evidence that was also popular was the story of Habakkuk, which is included in the Apocrypha. While Daniel was in the lion's den, an angel blew Habakkuk through the air to Daniel in order that he might be given food; this was often cited as an instance of human flight.<sup>5</sup>

### 6.1.3 *Belief in Night Flying Spirits*

There were many examples of night flying spirits, and belief in their existence was not a problem in the way that belief in flying witches later became. The ‘donni di fuora’ of Sicily, mainly women, and supposedly possessing ‘sweet blood’, joined the Queen of the fairies on journeys and at meetings, travelling either on a goat, or flying under their own

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew iv: v, viii, also Luke iv:ix, King James Bible, 1611

<sup>4</sup> Boguet related a confession where the accused witch said the devil had carried her like “a cold wind gripping her by the hair,” Chapter XIV, p.42, “l’emportoit comme si c’eust esté un vent froid, l’empoignant par la teste”

<sup>5</sup> Daniel, Bel and the Snake, 33-39, Various, *The Revised English Bible with Apocrypha*, (Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, Oxford and Cambridge, 1989), also Isaiah vi and xxxiv:xiv, Daniel vii, Revelation iv and Ephesians ii:ii, op cit

power. These were benevolent 'spirits' who had special fondness and tenderness towards small children, but there was never any mention of their harming them, unlike their classical counterparts.<sup>6</sup> In a similar way, the Friulian *benandanti*'s souls went out of their bodies on the Ember Days to fight with the witches, the '*stregoni*', to ensure a good harvest for the year.<sup>7</sup> In the earliest body of German law, the 6th century *Lex Salica*, the *striga* and her cannibalism were written of as factual, with laws outlining their punishment. The Germanic tradition also had various instances of Holda, or Diana, who were benevolent flying figures bringing abundance to the earth.<sup>8</sup>

Other instances of the flight of humans before the witch hunts were not unknown, but were less common. Ginzburg believed the first documented instance of flight to be in witch trials at the Valais and Todi in 1428. The accused in one of the Todi trials eventually confessed to being carried by the devil in the shape of a goat. However, Ginzburg believed this instance to be entirely due to suggestions implanted by the sermons on witchcraft of S Bernardino da Siena, who had been in the area two years previously. An instance of flight again appeared at the 1477 Annecy witch-trial, where a woman, after some sessions of torture, confessed to anointing a stick with ointment and flying to a Sabbat.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Henningsen, Gustav, 'The Ladies from Outside: An Archaic Pattern of the Witches' Sabbath' in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), pp.191-215,

The Ember Days are any of four groups of three days, always Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, occurring after Pentecost, the first Sunday of Lent, the feast of St Lucy (13 Dec.), and the feast of the Holy Cross (14 Sept.), see also 7.1.3

<sup>8</sup> Cohn, Norman, *op cit*, p.166

<sup>9</sup> Ginzburg, Carlo, 'Deciphering the Sabbath' in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), pp.124, 132  
Lea, p.238

## 6.2. Patristic and Scholastic Opinions

The issue of flight only became important for the Medieval scholastics, it was a non-existent issue for the Church Fathers. Far more important for the Fathers was the question of whether the soul could leave the body, or whether this was only possible at death. Augustine wrote of the careless thinking which led people to believe that the soul and body were separated, and that the soul could have a corporeal body.<sup>10</sup> St John Chrysostom commented upon the disembodiment of the soul, but it was Duns Scotus who wrote most about this subject.<sup>11</sup> Scotus wrote that the soul, apart from the body, was unable to feel sensations which were appropriate for the corporeal body, and implied from this that the two were inextricably linked.<sup>12</sup> Not surprisingly, these views were later used by witch writers when discussing the issue of witches' flight.

### 6.2.1 The 'Canon Episcopi'

The *Canon Episcopi* was the most important piece of canon law dealing with belief in the flight of humans. It was first used by Regino of Prüm in about 906, and was thereafter attributed to the Council of Ancyra (314), later being included in Gratian's *Decretum* of 1140. It seems that the canon itself was actually much later than the 4th century, but that the mistaken belief occurred due to its being preceded in Regino's work by a canon from the Council of Ancyra.<sup>13</sup> The canon dealt with those women who believed

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<sup>10</sup> Augustine, *De Anima et eius Origine* IV:25, 26 in Schaff, Philip (ed), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. V, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1956)

<sup>11</sup> St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St Matthew*, Homily XXVIII:3, in Schaff, Philip (ed), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. X, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 1956)

<sup>12</sup> Duns Scotus, John, *God and Creatures, The Quodlibetal Questions*, translated Felix Alluntis and Allan B. Wolter, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1975), Q.9:12, 29, 43

<sup>13</sup> For more information on the history of the canon, see Cohn, Norman, *op cit*, p.167 and Russell, Jeffrey Burton, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, (Cornell University Press, London, 1972), pp.76-77

themselves to ride at night with a pagan goddess, and declared such people to be infidels:

Some wicked women, turned back after Satan, seduced by illusions and phantoms of demons, believe and affirm: that with Diana, a goddess of the pagans, and an unnumbered multitude of women, they ride on certain beasts and traverse many areas of the earth in the stillness of the quiet night, obey her commands as if she were their mistress, and are called on special nights to her service? But would that these only should perish in their perfidy and not drag many with them into the ruin of their aberration. For an unnumbered multitude, deceived by this false opinion, believe these things to be true, and in believing this they turn aside from sound faith and are involved in the error of the pagans ... Who then is so foolish and stupid that he supposes that those things which take place in the spirit only, happen also in the body? ... Therefore it is to be openly announced to all that he who believes such things loses the faith.<sup>14</sup>

The canon did not prescribe death as the punishment for such beliefs, simply that priests should preach against such falsehoods. It was confirmed by the 1310 Council of Trèves, as well as the 1410 Council of Amiens, both of which treated night riding as illusions of the devil, and forbade women to profess that they rode with a goddess.<sup>15</sup>

### 6.2.2 *The Debate Over the 'Canon Episcopi'*

More theologians and writers followed the precepts of the canon in the early period than disagreed. The rise of private confessions and beliefs may have prompted the interest in this issue, as these beliefs became more of a problem for confessors and penitents. The

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<sup>14</sup> Translated in McNeill, John T. and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1938), pp.332-333, the Latin from Friedberg, E.A. (ed), *Corpus juris canonici*, (Akademische Druck-U, Graz, 1955): "Illud etiam non est omittendum, quod quedam sceleratae mulieres retro post sathanam conversae, demonum illusionibus et fantasmatis seductae, credunt se et proficiuntur, cum Diana nocturnis horis dea paganorum, uel cum Herodiade, et innumera multitudine mulierum equitare super quasdam bestias, et multa terrarum spacia intempestae noctis silentio pertransire, eiusque iussionibus obedire uelut dominae, et certis noctibus evocari ad eius servitium. Sed utinam he solae in perfidia sua perissent, et non multos secum ad infidelitatis interitum pertraxissent. Nam et innumera multitudo hac falsa opinione decepta hec vera esse credunt, et credendo a recta fide deviant, et errore paganorum involuuntur, cum aliquid divinitatis aut numinis extra unum Deum arbitrantur ... Quis vero tam stultus et hebes sit, qui hec omnia, que in solo spiritu fiunt, etiam in corpore accidere arbitretur, ... omnibus itaque publice annunciandum est, quod qui talia credit et his similia fidem perdit."

growth of interest had already started in the early eleventh century, when Burchard of Worms included in chapter five of his *Corrector*, assorted punishments for those believing that anyone was able to travel out of their body through the air.<sup>16</sup> John of Salisbury in *Policraticus* wrote that certain people believed they experienced events in the flesh when they really only occurred in spirit.<sup>17</sup> Jean de Meung, in his continuation of Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*, declared that those who believed themselves to fly with Diana were suffering from delusions that had no foundation in reality, "But it is too horrible a madness/ and such a thing is not possible."<sup>18</sup>

Nicolaus of Jauer, Professor of Theology at Prague and later Heidelberg, declared that those who believed in such things lost the faith.<sup>19</sup> One of the most important early witchcraft tracts was that of Johannes Nider, whose *Formicarius* of 1435, followed the *Canon Episcopi*, and declared that women who believed themselves to go with Diana were suffering from dreams and illusions. He wrote that this was demonstrated by the story of a woman who, although she said she flew at night, was watched by a Dominican friar, who later confirmed that all she had done overnight was sleep. This woman was not punished for her belief, but simply instructed in the faith, demonstrating that belief in flight had not yet become a punishable crime.<sup>2</sup>

Juan de Torquemada, in his commentary on Gratian's *Decretum*, commented upon the *Canon Episcopi*, and concluded that the things these women asserted were impossible,

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<sup>15</sup> Lea, pp. 141,189

<sup>16</sup> Cohn, Norman, op cit, p.165

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Kors, Alan C. and Edward Peters (eds), *Witchcraft in Europe, 1100-1700*, 10th Edition, (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1972, 1992), pp.36-37

<sup>18</sup> Lea, pp.129,131, "Mes trop a ci folie orrible, /Et chose qui n'est pas possible"

<sup>19</sup> Nicolaus von Jauer, *Tractatus de superstitionibus*, Hansen, p.70, "quod qui talia credit et hiis similia fidem perdit"



being only demonic illusions, and that any who believed them had lost the faith.<sup>21</sup>

Interestingly, Angelo de Clavasio, whose *Summa Angelica* was possibly as influential as Sylvester Prierias' work, questioned whether women who believed they flew were sinning mortally.<sup>22</sup> He followed the *Canon Episcopi* in declaring that they were worse than infidels, but only if they had heard the truth. If they had not heard the truth, then the fault was due to simplicity and ignorance.<sup>23</sup>

### 6.2.3 Denial of the 'Canon Episcopi'

The arguments used to deny the validity of the canon were varied: they ranged from those who declared that the canon had forbidden belief in pagan deities, to the idea that modern witches were a different sect, and therefore, the canon did not apply to them. One of the first to deny the canon's validity was Alfonso Madrigal Tostato in his commentary on Matthew. He declared that demons were able to carry people through the air due to the great power they retained, in spite of the *Canon Episcopi*, "demons can take men to various places by day as well as by night, sometimes in accordance with their will and sometimes against it." He interpreted the canon as not denying belief in flight, but only forbidding belief in the assertion that women flew with pagan deities.<sup>24</sup>

The Carcassonne inquisitor Jean Vineti in *Tractatus contra daemonum invocatores*, wrote

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<sup>20</sup> Hansen, pp.89-90

<sup>21</sup> Hansen, p.113

<sup>22</sup> Confessors' manuals were texts which classified sins and the penance to be imposed. They later developed into more detailed texts which told priests how to conduct confession. Two of the most popular were Angelus de Clavasio, *Angelica*, first published 1486, with at least 24 incunabular editions, and Sylvester Prierias Mazzolini, *Sylvestrina*, 1514, again with multiple editions. For more information upon the topic of confessors' manuals, see Tentler, Thomas N., *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1977)

<sup>23</sup> Lea, p.193

that the *Canon Episcopi* had no relevance to witches, as it dealt with a pagan sect, “the Canon Episcopi does not speak of modern heretics.” He confirmed that flight was a real possibility, due to the Biblical example of Habakkuk.<sup>25</sup> Possibly the first to widely publicise the idea that the canon spoke of a different sect of witches, was the Tournay inquisitor Nicholas Jacquier. His *Flagellum Haereticorum Fascinartorum*, declared his belief that the Council of Ancyra was simply a provincial council of little or no authority, and that modern witches were members of a different sect. He cited the canon, and followed this with numerous examples to prove the reality of flight, even dealing with the possibility that flight was merely a dream or illusion, concluding, “from this it is manifestly clear that these things are real and done in a state of wakefulness.”<sup>26</sup>

Sylvester Prierias, in his *Sylvestrina Summa, quae Summa Summarum merito nuncupatur*, declared that the *Canon Episcopi* had not condemned belief in flight, but simply belief in Diana. He then strengthened his argument by adding the view that the canon dealt with a different sect. Prierias was extremely influential, and the *Sylvestrina* was one of the most important confessional guides of the 16th century, virtually ensuring a wide audience for his witch beliefs.<sup>27</sup> Girolamo Visconti confusingly wrote of the *Canon Episcopi*, that although it had declared many things to be false, many false things were possible, “according to logic, many things are possible which are nevertheless false.”<sup>28</sup> Guibert of Nogent, although not discussing the *Canon Episcopi* at all, or any of the

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<sup>24</sup> Alphons Madrigal Tostatus in Hansen, p.106, “daemones possunt per diversa loca, tam per diem quam per noctem, homines ducere aliquando volentes et aliquando invitos”

<sup>25</sup> Vineti, Iohannem, *Tractatus contra demonum invocatores*, in Hansen, p.125, “capituli Episcopi non loquitur de modernis hereticis”

<sup>26</sup> Jacquierius, Nicolaus, *Flagellum haereticorum fascinartorum*, in Hansen, pp.137, 141, “ex quo manifeste patet, quod haec fiunt corporaliter, vigilando”

<sup>27</sup> Lea, pp.355-356

<sup>28</sup> Visconti, Girolamo, *Lamiarum sive striarum opuscula* in Hansen, p.204, “quia secundum logicos multa sunt possibilia, que tamen sunt falsa”

theological arguments surrounding it, told the story of a man who was carried a great distance by the devil in less than an hour, demonstrating his obvious belief in the reality of flight.<sup>29</sup>

The debate regarding the *Canon Episcopi* remained confused, with the two sides continuing the argument. As they were unable to entirely deny the validity of the canon, they had to deny that it applied to their situation; leading to the belief that these were different witches, or that the canon was not discussing witch beliefs.

### 6.3. Pre-Reformation Opinions

The issue of flight was one of the rare debates connected with witchcraft that was confused for these writers. They had the difficult situation of a Church canon seeming to declare that belief in flight was wrong, yet many Church theologians had denied that this was the case. For these men, who followed Church laws, this was incredibly hard to resolve; even the Church Fathers had not written on this issue, meaning that they had to rely upon recent writings and modern evidence. However difficult the situation was for them, it was still one open to humour: Thomas Murner in *Narrenbeschwörung*, joked openly about flight, declaring that if it were real he would happily join the witches, as a pitchfork cost a great deal less to keep than a horse.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Guibert of Nogent, *Self and Society in Medieval France*, edited, J. F. Benton, translated J. F. Benton, (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1970), chapter 6, p.140

<sup>30</sup> Brauner, Sigrid Maria, 'Frightened Shrews and Fearless Wives: the Concept of the Witch in Early Modern German Texts', PhD Dissertation, (University of California, Berkeley, 1989), p.230

### 6.3.1 *The Debate Over the 'Canon Episcopi'*

Castañega denied that the canon applied to the issue of flight, declaring that, "it doesn't deny the possibility of what I have explained above [flight]."<sup>31</sup> The *Malleus* also followed this line of argument, declaring firstly that it did not deal with the same group of women, "[the canon] does not in so many words speak of witches."<sup>32</sup> Kramer and Sprenger did not ignore the belief that the canon dealt with the issue of flight, however, they simply asked in response to this, "who is so foolish to conclude from this that they cannot also be bodily transported?"<sup>33</sup> Bartolommeo Spina, whose *Quaestio de Strigibus*, seems to have been written with no more intention than to deny the validity of the *Canon Episcopi*, quoted the canon and cited the many arguments of those who supported it, then declared that the Inquisition had found real instances of flight, which if they were not real would mean the Inquisitors were unjust judges, which obviously could not be the case.<sup>34</sup>

Martin of Arles virtually quoted the *Canon Episcopi*, and was uncompromising in his belief that this was canon law and should, therefore, be followed without question. He wrote, "about the false opinion of those who believe that those witches, or female sorcerers ... can be really moved around from place to place."<sup>35</sup> Ponzinibio was indignant that the issue should have arisen at all, as he declared the canon to have been written specifically to refute this error. He discounted the view propounded by earlier writers, that the canon applied to a different group of heretical women, and not 'modern'

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<sup>31</sup> Castañega, Martín de, *Tratado muy sutil y bien fundado de las supersticiones y hechicerías*, (originally published, Logroño, 1529), translated David H. Darst, (1979), chapter vi, p.306

<sup>32</sup> Kramer, Heinrich and James Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, edited, M. Summers, (Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1971), Part I, Q.1, p.7

<sup>33</sup> Kramer, Heinrich, op cit, Part II, Q.1, Chapter 3, p.108

<sup>34</sup> Hansen, pp.330-331

witches. He argued that even if this were the case, then the basic principle remained that both groups of women believed they physically flew, and that it was this belief that the canon had declared to be illusion.<sup>36</sup>

### 6.3.2 *Pre-Reformation Beliefs in the Illusion of Witches' Flight*

Martin of Arles did not consider the possibility that the devil had enough power to perform such a feat as moving humans, and therefore, flight could only be illusion, "such people are not moved bodily from place to place by the demon."<sup>37</sup> According to Martin, the devil was able to implant the images and sensations of flight into a person's mind while they were sleeping, "promptly he transforms himself into the appearance and likeness of various shapes and creatures, and presents himself to the imagination of the sleeping person."<sup>38</sup> Martin reiterated his opinion that these were purely the images of the devil, and cited examples of women who had experienced such illusions, explaining their outcome.

The Observantine Franciscan, Samuele de Cassini in *Question de la Strie*, proclaimed his belief that since flight would involve a miracle, which would therefore mean that God encouraged sin, flight had to be impossible, "since a miracle can be caused only by God, it would seem that God favours sin and wills sin, which is impossible." The devil, he wrote, did not have the power to perform such an act without the help of God, and

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<sup>3</sup> Martin, Section 11, 403<sup>r</sup>, "de falsa opinionem credentium illas maleficas, & sortilegas mulierculas, ... posse transferri de loco in locum per realem mutationem."

<sup>36</sup> Ponzinibio, pp.264-266

<sup>37</sup> Martin, Section 11, 403<sup>r</sup>, "tales personae non transferuntur a daemone localiter in loca, in quibus dicunt se fuisse."

<sup>38</sup> Martin, Section 11, 403<sup>r</sup>, "illico transformat se in diversarum formarum species & similitudines creaturarum, repraesentat fantasiae dormientis."

therefore it could only be illusion. Inquisitors who believed the confessions of those who were deceived by the devil were, therefore, themselves heretics. Those who confessed to flying were to be treated as simple people, who were unable to distinguish between dreams and reality.<sup>39</sup>

Ciruelo declared that witches were not only able to experience flight as a reality, but that they were also able to experience it through the illusions of the devil, which he could implant while they slept. While they were like this, "the devil feeds their fantasies, telling them that they are travelling to other houses and places," and they were totally senseless and even appeared to be dead. This was a real event for these women, and Ciruelo appeared to realise this, although he believed them to be purely demonic illusions.<sup>4</sup>

Martin accepted that these women totally believed in their experiences, and explained that they would confess to riding out at night and doing unspeakable things, but that all these things and their like only happened to them in their imagination.<sup>41</sup> Ponzinibio declared that judges should not be surprised that some people were willing to confess, "since they are women, or if they are men, they are rustics, and people who are easily deceived."<sup>42</sup> Due to his belief that flight was only an illusion, he declared that any confessions involving an admission of flight should be disallowed, as the accused was obviously suffering from delusions. He believed that absolute proof was necessary for a

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<sup>39</sup> de Cassinis, Samuel, *Question de la strie* in Hansen, p.264, "cum miraculum possit a solo deo causari, videretur deus favere peccato et velle peccatum, quod est impossibile", see also Lea, pp.290-291

<sup>40</sup> Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 1, p.118

<sup>41</sup> Martin, Section 12, 403

<sup>42</sup> Ponzinibio, p.267, "cum sint Mulieres, et si qui sunt homines, sunt rustici, et personae faciles ad decipiendum."

conviction, and that admissions of flight were not allowable, and therefore, the more lenient view was to be adopted.<sup>43</sup>

Although Martin wrote that these illusions happened to women who had subjected themselves to the devil, there was no suggestion that they had necessarily chosen to place themselves in his service. The power the devil had over them was due simply to a lack of faith, which enabled the devil to control their minds and implant such images. Even women who were not witches could have such illusions planted by the devil while they slept. Martin appears to have felt pity for these "respectable women," because of their lack of faith, rather than the hatred which was to become the norm.<sup>44</sup>

This was not a stance supported by Ciruelo, who declared that any who were able to fly either in reality, or through dreams had, "obviously made a covenant with the devil," and that these experiences were only available to those who had made an agreement with Satan, breaking away from the tolerant attitude that Martin and Ponzinibio supported. In this way, he was condemning all those who dreamed of flight, as equally guilty with those whom he believed really flew. This was due to his belief that to experience such things, a pact had to have been made, and therefore, the crime of apostasy had been committed.<sup>45</sup> Castañega wrote in a similar fashion, having declared that flight could be either real or illusory, he concluded that all who experienced it, "have an explicit and express pact with the devil."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ponzinibio, pp.271-272

<sup>44</sup> Martin, Section 12, 403<sup>f</sup>, "probas mulieres"

<sup>45</sup> Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 1

<sup>46</sup> Castañega, Martín de, op cit, chapter vi, p.306

### 6.3.3 *Pre-Reformation Beliefs in the Reality of Witches' Flight*

Ciruelo explained that although the devil could send dreams to his followers, it was also possible for them to travel in reality, "there are times when the witches really do leave their houses, and are transported by the devil."<sup>47</sup> Unlike most other writers who maintained this belief, Ciruelo did not produce any evidence to support his thesis. The most popular evidence was the Biblical story of the temptations of Christ, as the writers of the *Malleus* asked, "Did not the devil take up Our Saviour, and carry him up to a high place, as the Gospel testifies?"<sup>48</sup> The other evidence offered was that of confessions and reliable witnesses. Castañega wrote simply that flight was proven by eye-witnesses, "it has been seen several times."<sup>49</sup>

### 6.3.4 *Pre-Reformation Images of Flight*

As the debate and belief in the ability of humans to fly was new, the visual imagery was also new. Very few images seem to exist of witches flying under their own power: they always had to have some implement. This is quite interesting as the ability seems to have been accepted, it was simply not often portrayed.<sup>5</sup> The images that existed demonstrate how far belief in flight still had to go; they are simplistic, and have none of the additional paraphernalia that was later to be added to such witch beliefs.

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<sup>4</sup> Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 1, p.118

<sup>48</sup> Kramer, Heinrich, op cit, Part II, Q.1, Chapter 3, p.106, see also p.105 and Castañega, Martín de, op cit, chapter v, p.305

<sup>49</sup> Castañega, Martín de, op cit, chapter v, p.305

<sup>50</sup> See the Renaissance sceptical imagery, chapter 6.5.4





Witches accompanying Martin le Franc's *Le champion des dames* <sup>51</sup>

The first image in literature, according to Hansen, was that accompanying Martin le Franc's *Le champion des dames* of 1440. The creatures upon which the witches are seated in the image which accompanied Tinctoris' attack upon the Arras Vauderie, have to be assumed to be demons. The images shown here, both from the mid 15th century, are both quite simplistic, a situation that would rapidly change.



Image accompanying Johann Tinctoris' *De la secte qui s'appelle des Vaudois* <sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Hansen, p.101

<sup>52</sup> Hansen, p.185

## 6.4. Counter Reformation Opinions

As there was no consensus before the Reformation, it should not be expected that these writers would all agree. However, this was an issue that they all reached the same conclusion over; although they were typically confused in reaching it. Possibly this was due to the extreme confusion and scepticism propounded by the Protestant writers regarding this issue, although it may also be more simply a case of necessity, with the sabbat, and therefore, transport being essential to a full belief in witchcraft. Remi acknowledged that this was a contentious issue, "There is much controversy and dissension among those who treat of this aspect of witchcraft."<sup>53</sup>

### 6.4.1 *The Debate over the 'Canon Episcopi'*

The complex history of the canon meant that these writers were free to add their opinions to those already expressed by eminent theologians. Remi disregarded the canon, citing as his reason the fact that many believed the council of Ancyra, to have been a "merely Provincial council," whose ruling in this case was contradicted by later theologians.<sup>54</sup> He commented that the council had been convened by Marcellus, the Bishop of Ancyra who was later believed to be, "even suspect of the Sabellian heresy." In writing this, Remi seemed to imply that as this was the case, the council and all its pronouncements were tainted by heresy and, therefore, were not truly authoritative or possibly even Christian. He had to admit that the canon had been confirmed by later, more orthodox councils, but declared that as so many illustrious men had come to the opposite conclusion that "it has always seemed the sounder and safer view to believe in

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<sup>53</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XIV, p.110, "Res est controversa, et plena dissensionis, inter eos, qui haec sagarum tractant portenta"

<sup>54</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XXIX, p.177, "Concilium Provinciale tantum"

the literal truth of this matter,” as that was based on the ‘accepted’ fact of the devil’s power.<sup>56</sup>

Boguet virtually ignored the pronouncement of the *Canon Episcopi*, and certainly avoided the debate and controversy surrounding it, by simply stating that, “Binsfeld and Del Rio, and others, have sufficiently responded, that the sect mentioned by this council is a different one from these witches.”<sup>57</sup> Guazzo did not specifically discuss the canon, but did write, “Only I will add this: that they who assert that all this is not true, but only a dream or mockery, certainly sin in lack of due reverence to our Mother the Church. For the Catholic Church does not punish crime unless evident and manifest.”<sup>58</sup> Guazzo was simply following in the steps of men such as Bartolommeo Spina, who had also commented that the Church did not punish unjustly. The fact that Guazzo declared disbelief to be disrespectful is interesting, however, as this rebuke could be taken to mean that he believed those who denied flight to be uncertain Catholics, although it could also mean simply that he realised the canon had been applied by many theologians, and that it was controversial to show the depth of his disapproval.

#### 6.4.2 Counter Reformation Beliefs in the Illusion of Witches' Flight

The possibility that flight could be illusion appeared to be considered by all the writers.

The title of Remi’s fourteenth chapter (book one), seemed to suggest that he would

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<sup>5</sup> Remi, Nicolas, op cit, Book I, Chapter XXIX, p.177, “quam etiam haeresis Saballianae suspectum”

<sup>56</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XXIX, p.178, “Et certem tutior, potiorque semper visa est ea sententia, quae rei illius veritatem astruit”

<sup>57</sup> Boguet, Chapter XV, p.100, “Binsfeldius, et Del Rio y ont, entre autres, suffisamment répondu, ayans fait voir que la Secte mentionnée au mesme Concile, est bien differente de celle des Sorciers”

consider the alternative opinion: "That Witches do often really and in fact Travel to their Nocturnal Synagogues; and often again such journeyings are but an Empty Imagination begotten of Dreams; and that they are equally right who support either of these Opinions." He confessed that there was a great controversy over this particular matter, and admitted that intelligent people supported each side with good arguments. However, his discussion deteriorated to being a simple list of examples and evidence, all of which was in support of flight as reality, with no real consideration of it being illusory.

Boguet agreed that this was a matter of dispute, and at first agreed that illusion was a possibility, citing instances where this seemed to have been the case. He discussed the way in which some women appeared to be so fast asleep as to be almost dead, and concluded that they could very well be travelling to the sabbat in spirit.<sup>58</sup> Guazzo did not truly examine the possibility that flight could be an illusion, and was convinced of its reality. However, even in his statement about this, he was unable to totally deny the alternate possibility, "I hold it very true that *sometimes* witches are really transported from place to place by the devil...[who] carries them bodily to the Sabbat."<sup>60</sup>

Remi wrote that those who believed flight was merely an illusion came to this conclusion because of the examples of people who were watched while asleep, but still told of their visits to the sabbat. Remi explained that it was for this reason that "many have been led not to believe that the sabbats are no more than dreams and visions sent by the Demon

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<sup>58</sup> Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.81, "Hoc unum subdam, quod, qui asserunt isthaec non esse vera, sed somnia esse, et ludibria, certe peccant contra reverentiam Ecclesiae Matri debitam, quia Ecclesia Catholica non punit crimina nisi certa et manifesta"

<sup>59</sup> Boguet, Chapter XIV

<sup>60</sup> Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, my italics, p.69, "Altera, quam verissimam esse duco, est, nonnunquam vere Sagas transferri a Daemone de loco ad locum"

into the minds of those whom he has entangled in his snare.”<sup>61</sup> Boguet agreed that this reasoning was a possibility, but added his own opinion, that this was an opportunity taken by the devil to become a succubus.<sup>62</sup> He also contended that it was impossible for one who was not a disciple of the devil to have had such dreams.<sup>63</sup> Guazzo was unable to resist a gibe at the followers of Luther and Melancthon, whom he believed all supported the idea of flight as illusion, suggesting that this was because they were allies of the devil.<sup>64</sup>

#### 6.4.3 Counter Reformation Beliefs in the Reality of Witches' Flight

These writers' beliefs as to the actual detail of flight was varied, but only in a few particulars. They all believed that flight was not used every time a sabbat was held, and participants would walk if the meeting was close to their homes. They did not explain why any witch should choose to walk when the option of flight was available, obviously thinking that this was not of any relevance. The detail they included about the actual method of flight was quite incredible. All suggested a staff or rod as the most common implement for carrying a witch, but Remi and Boguet, who were the most comprehensive on this point, suggested many more items. Included in their lists were a wicker net, a reed, a forked stick, mighty bulls, dogs and rams, as well as what was to become the image in the popular stereotype, a besom (classical twig broom). Boguet also stated that at times the devil would carry the witch as if he were “a cold wind, gripping

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<sup>61</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XIV, p.111, “Quae res multos impulit, ut crederent haec mera esse somniorum visa quae Daemon in eorum animos immitteret quos laqueis suis irretivisset”

<sup>62</sup> Boguet, Chapter XVIII, p.116

<sup>63</sup> Boguet, Chapter XVIII, p.118

<sup>64</sup> Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.69

her by the hair.”<sup>65</sup>

Unguent as a means of generating flight were also considered; they all followed orthodox Christian tenets in declaring that unless the ingredients of themselves had power, then flight could only be caused through the work of the devil. As Boguet wrote, “nevertheless it must not be thought that it is the grease or ointment which causes their transport ... neither ointment nor words nor symbols are, of themselves, of any use to Witches.” Guazzo adroitly linked witches with heretics and Jews, who were surrounded by many myths, by declaring their potions and flying ointments to be made from the crushed bones and blood of murdered infants.<sup>7</sup>

The evidence these writers offered in support of their views was unsurprising: they all discussed Biblical instances, and confessions extracted from accused witches. Boguet cited the temptations as a conclusive item of evidence for his personal beliefs, “a fact which even more strongly inclines me to believe in the transport of Witches is that Jesus Christ Himself was carried by Satan to the pinnacle of the temple of Jerusalem...for if this could happen to Jesus Christ, why should it not happen to Witches?” He then continued with the example of Habakkuk and many of the other instances in the Bible, seeming to ignore the fact these examples mainly involved people of great holiness rather than evil.<sup>68</sup>

Remi commented that it would be blasphemous to question the evidence of the temptations, and asked, “why should we be so slow to believe that men, ... can at his

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<sup>65</sup> Boguet, Chapter XV, p.96, “l’emportoit comme si c’eust esté un vent froid, l’empoignant par la teste”

<sup>66</sup> Boguet, Chapter XVI, p.105, “Neantmoins il nefaut pas croire, que ce soit la graisse, ou longuent, qui cause ce transport ... que l’oignement, ny les parolles, non plus que les caracteres encor, ne profitent en rien que ce soit aux Sorciers”

<sup>67</sup> Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, pp.69-70

[the devil] pleasure be lifted up and borne away through the air?"<sup>69</sup> None of these authors produced quite as dramatic evidence as Jean Bodin, who asked why people should disbelieve that the devil carried people so far and so swiftly, when, "the heavens and all the great celestial bodies make their movement in twenty-four hours."<sup>70</sup> In a similarly pseudo-scientific way, Del Rio denied all objections to flight, asking simply, "What is there lacking? Or what prevents it?"<sup>71</sup>

Confessions from accused witches were an important part of the evidence proposed by the Counter Reformation writers. They all relied heavily upon these to support their belief in the reality of flight. Remi openly cited real trials and accusations in his treatise, this not only lent credence to his work generally, but made his specific beliefs more acceptable. His work is full of references to people, with the places and dates of their accusations and alleged crimes. Book I, chapter xiv is quite long, with most of the space devoted to detailing examples of real flight to the sabbat. In a similar way, Boguet cited real names and places, again lending credence to his conclusions. Guazzo simply referred his readers to Remi, from where he took most of his examples.

The reality of the flight of witches was thoroughly inculcated into popular belief; in a Fugger letter, reference is made to a witch who, "oft and much rode on a pitchfork by

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<sup>68</sup> Boguet, Chapter XV, p.97, "ce qui me fait mieux adiouter foy au transport des Sorciers, c'est, que Iesus-Christ luy mesme a esté porté par Satan sur le pinacle du temple de Hierusalem, ... Car si cela s'est fait'en Iesus Christ, pourquoy ne se pourra il pas faire aux Sorciers."

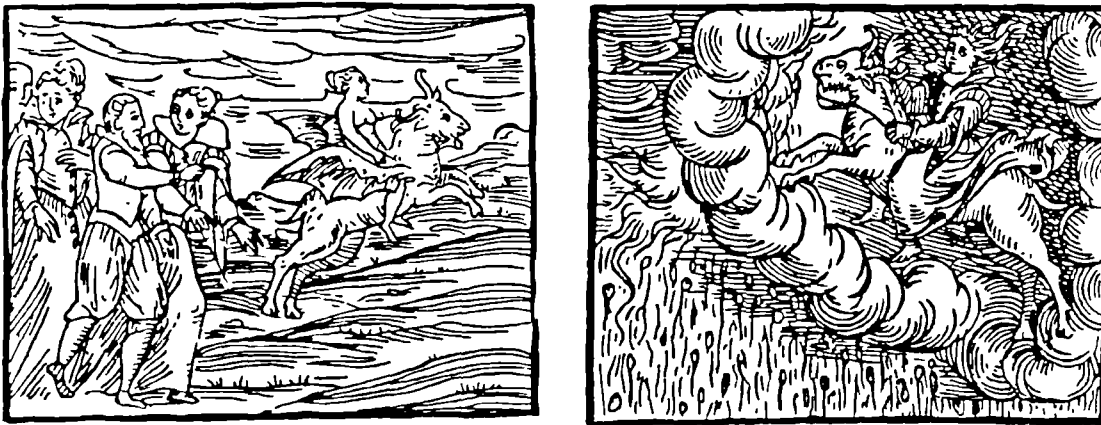
<sup>69</sup> Remi, Book III, Chapter XII, p.382, "quae iam ad credendum tanta erit tarditas, quae homines ... non admittat ab eo pro nutu, ac libidine sursum deorsum volutari, ac transferri posse?"

<sup>70</sup> Jean Bodin, *Démonomanie* in Midelfort, H.C. Erik, 'Were There Really Witches?' in Kingdon (ed), *Transition and Revolution*, (Burgess Publishing Co., Minnesota, 1974), p.229

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Garçon, Maurice and Jean Vinchon, *The Devil, An Historical, Critical and Medical Study*, translated Stephen Haden Guest, (Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1929), pp.105-106

night with her paramour.”<sup>72</sup> Boguet reached his conclusion that flight was real, due to the confessions he had heard, and interestingly, due to the belief that the soul and body could not be separated except by death, “if it is true that when the soul is separated from the body, death must necessarily follow.”<sup>73</sup> Guazzo concluded that flight was real because eminent demonologists had said so, while Remi simply stated, “All these examples together provide a cumulative evidence of the truth.”<sup>74</sup>

#### 6.4.4 Counter Reformation Images of Witches' Flight



Images accompanying Guazzo, *Compendium maleficarum*

The early images were simplistic, almost following the beliefs of the time. However, although the beliefs became more complex, at times the images needed to remain easy to understand. This explains why such simplistic images accompanied Guazzo's text; it ensured that those who could not read, or follow the text could still understand his ideas. One of the most complex images of witchcraft, is that which illustrated Pierre de Lancre's *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons* (1613), where large

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated 20th September 1587, in Klarwill, Viktor von (ed), *The Fugger News-Letters*, (John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd, London, 1924), p.108

<sup>3</sup> Boguet, Chapter XVIII, p.113, “s'il est ainsi que l'ame estant separée du corps, il faut necessairement que la mort s'en ensuive”



numbers of witches were shown flying, both on sticks and goats.



Section from Ziarnko, in Pierre de Lancre<sup>75</sup>

### 6.5. Protestant Opinions

The Protestants did not have any official doctrine with regard to flight that could help them reach a conclusion. They also had no church history to demonstrate the path they should follow, and so were free to believe as they wished. Unlike their Counter Reformation counterparts, there was no real consensus among them regarding this issue. This should not be seen as particularly surprising, using Luther's opinion on this issue as an example. In 1516, Luther preached that many people believed in witches' flight, and cited the *Canon Episcopi* to explain why this was wrong; by 1522 he was declaring that

<sup>4</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XXIX, p.182, "Et haec quidem pauca ad tam multa, quae superiores attigerunt ceu auctarium accedant."

<sup>75</sup> Full image in Robbins, Rossell Hope, *Witchcraft, An Introduction to the Literature of Witchcraft*, (KTO Press, New York, 1978)

witches, "ride on goats or broomsticks."<sup>76</sup>

### 6.5.1 *The Debate Over the 'Canon Episcopi'*

As Protestants, these authors were under no obligation to follow canon law; however, both Daneau and Scot cited the canon during their discussions. Daneau's sceptic about witchcraft, Antonius, virtually quoted the canon, asking if this did not truly show that flight was only imaginary. Theophilus' reply showed that Daneau was using this purely to elaborate his own opinion about flight sometimes being illusory, although he did admit that there was a great controversy about this matter. The examples Daneau cited, such as Abbot Bruno and Theophilus, as well as tales from the classical tradition, demonstrate the input of Renaissance humanist beliefs into the debate. Scot virtually quoted the canon in full, and used it to highlight what he saw as the hypocrisy of those who believed in sensational witchcraft. He reiterated the fact that the Council had declared belief in flight to be "vaine, fantasticall and fabulous."<sup>78</sup> He then emphasised the point that it was necessary for the canon to be discredited, in order for witch persecution to continue, "For surelie (saith this frier [Bartolommeo Spina] ...) if the words of this councell were to be admitted, both I, and all my predecessors had published notorious lies, and committed manie injurious executions."

### 6.5.2 *Protestant Beliefs in the Illusion of Witches' Flight*

The possibility that flight could be an illusion produced by the devil was considered by

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<sup>6</sup> Monter, E. William, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland, The Borderlands during the Reformation*, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1976), pp.30-31

<sup>77</sup> Daneau, Chapter III, pp.77-78

<sup>78</sup> Scot, Book III, Chapter xvi, p.65

all the Protestants. Lambert Daneau was obviously unsure about this point; he asked how witches could know about sabbats unless “truly and bodily they are present at those assemblies called by Satan, which are called sabbats. ... they are carried by Satan to those places.”<sup>80</sup> Yet he then seemed to approve of the concept of flight as illusion. His evidence for this belief was that many witches confessed to things which could be nothing but illusion, “many things are reported by them which they have never done.”<sup>81</sup>

James considered the idea that flight could be purely illusory; at first this appears to have been his true belief, “I esteeme their senses to be deluded in, and though they lye not in confessing of it, because they thinke it to be true, yet not be so in substance or effect.”<sup>82</sup> Philomathes argued against the reality of transportation to the sabbat on the grounds that the devil could “so ravishe their thoughts, and dull their sences, that their bodie lying as dead, hee may object to their spirites as it were in a dream, & represente such formes of persons, of places, and other circumstances, as he pleases to illude them with?”<sup>83</sup> James’ uncertainty in this matter is shown by his failure to reply to this point through the knowledgeable Epistemon. In this, he was reflecting the uncertainty also shown by Daneau, who allowed his questioner, Antonius, a very long speech detailing the *Canon Episcopi*, and various reasons why flight should be disbelieved.<sup>84</sup>

Scot fully believed that any instances of flight were caused purely by the demon projecting illusions onto susceptible, melancholic or senile minds. His belief was shown

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<sup>79</sup> Scot, Book III, Chapter xvi, p.67

<sup>80</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.73, “se verem et reapse, id est, corporaliter istis indictis a Satana coetibus interesse ... eo loci saepe ipsos a Satana etiam deferri”

<sup>81</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.78, “saepe ab iis quaedam dici que non fecerint”

<sup>82</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter IIII, p.113

<sup>83</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter IIII, p.115

<sup>84</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, pp.74-78

in the heading of Book III, chapter xi, "The strange and divers effects of melancholie, and how the same humor abounding in witches, or rather old women, filleth them full of marvelous imaginations." He ridiculed the belief that before they flew, witches saw a great troupe of minstrels who flew over them, "I marvell againe, that no bodie else heareth nor seeth this troope of minstrels, especiallie riding in a moone light night."<sup>84</sup>

The only mention Gifford made of flight in either of his treatises, was to comment that in some places the devils made witches believe that "sometimes they flie or ride in the ayre," which was nothing but a fantasy.<sup>86</sup>

Scot, as would be expected, went into great detail concerning the Biblical evidence which could be used to support the reality of flight. In his Epistle to the Readers, he declared, "Christ himselfe in his gospell...nor Moses ever spake anie one word of ...their riding in the aire." He reiterated this later, writing that there was "no tittle or colour" in Scripture to support believers in flight.<sup>87</sup> The Biblical evidence most often cited by believers, the temptations of Christ, were easily dismissed by him. He declared that this had been a unique occasion, and it did not follow as a consequence that God, having allowed it once, would allow it again, "if he had doone in manner and forme as they suppose, it followeth not therefore that witches could doo the like; nor yet that the divell would doo it for them at their pleasure."<sup>88</sup> He cited Calvin to demonstrate that the temptations had not however, been real, but visions, and concluded, "you shall understand, that this was doone in a vision, and not in veritie of action."<sup>89</sup> Calvin, in his commentary on the Evangelists, declared the issue not to be whether Christ was truly carried, but whether it

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<sup>84</sup> Scot, Book X, Chapter ix, p.186

<sup>86</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, K3'

<sup>87</sup> Scot, Epistle to the Readers, Biii' and Book V, Chapter vii, p.105

<sup>88</sup> Scot, Book V, Chapter vii, p.103

was legitimate to say that he was subject to demonic illusions. He concluded that this was acceptable as it occurred by the permission of God, and that Christ did not believe the visions in his mind and soul.<sup>90</sup>

The belief that flight was the exclusive province of women who had allied themselves with the devil, was dealt with scornfully by Scot, who pointed out the inconsistency of their argument:

For I hope they will not saie, that Christ had made anie ointments, or entred into anie league with the divell, and by vertue thereof was transported from out of the wildernes, unto the top of the temple of Jerusalem...Neither (as I thinke) will they presume to make Christ partaker of the divels purpose and sinne in that behalfe.<sup>91</sup>

This, according to Scot, was a major problem in the argument that witches could fly, for as he pointed out, the evidence they used to support that supposition could be considered blasphemous. This, as far as he was concerned, completely removed this most authoritative piece of 'evidence' in support of flight.

### *6.5.3 Protestant Beliefs in the Reality of Witches' Flight*

Even though Daneau and James seemed uncertain about flight, whenever they referred to the sabbat, they wrote of flight as real. Daneau wrote that Satan would carry people to the sabbat if it was far away, or if his servants were too weak to walk. Interestingly, he also described an unusual situation, whereby the devil would provide the witch with an unguent to use if she was unable to bear his touch. This was a peculiar idea, as a witch was believed to give herself, body and soul, to the devil, and believers usually maintained

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<sup>89</sup> Scot, Book V, Chapter vii, p.104

<sup>90</sup> Calvin, John, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, translated Rev. William Pringle, Vol. I, (Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh, 1846), p.217

a belief in sexual contact between them as well, so to describe a situation where a witch could not bear the touch of her master was an anomaly.<sup>92</sup>

James was very uncertain of his opinion regarding flight beliefs: he put both sides of the argument forward, but did not seem to come to a definite conclusion. He introduced the debate about flight through a question from Philomathes, the ignorant partner in his dialogue, "But by what way say they or think ye it possible that they can com to these unlawful conventions?" Epistemon explained that witches could travel normally to the sabbat, by riding or sailing. The other option available to them was by, "being carryed by the force of the Spirite which is their conductor, either above the earth or above the Sea swiftlie."<sup>93</sup> James then added his only original contribution to the beliefs about witchcraft, "in this violent forme they cannot be carryed, but a shorte boundes, agreeing with the space that they may reteine their breath." He elaborated upon this by explaining that if they were carried for longer, then they would have to breathe out, but did not say why this should cause them a problem.<sup>94</sup>

Biblical evidence could be used to support the reality of flight, as well as its illusory nature. Antonius, the sceptic in Daneau's work, declared his belief that when Christ was carried by the devil, it was the work of God, not the devil himself. Theophilus replied that if this was so, then how much more likely it was that God would allow the carrying of witches, who had openly declared their hatred of Him, "since if God has given Satan power over the souls of Sorcerers ... he is much more likely to give him power over their

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<sup>91</sup> Scot, Book V, Chapter vii, p.103

<sup>92</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.92

<sup>93</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter IIII, p.113

<sup>94</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter IIII, p.114

bodies, to handle them and to carry them.”<sup>95</sup> James did not cite the temptations, although he used the story of Habakkuk, “I am perswaded to be likewaies possible, in respect that as Habakkuk was carried by the Angell.”<sup>96</sup> He supported his theory with the idea that the devil had always wanted to imitate God, so it would be logical that he would want his servants to fly as God’s angels did.

Confessions from accused witches were also used as evidence for the reality of flight. Daneau commented upon the importance of confessions as evidence, asking how witches could describe the area where a Sabbat was supposed to have been held, “unless personally and in reality they had been there, and not only in dreams or imagination.” He added that experience and confessions could only support the concept of flight as real.

Hemmingsen and Gifford wrote virtually nothing on this issue, demonstrating that it was only truly important for the sensational aspects of witchcraft, which held no interest for them. Daneau and James, who were both unsure as to their beliefs over this issue, demonstrated similar insecurity over the sabbat. For a writer such as Scot, who denied anything that could be conceived as taking power from God, flight was an abomination. He was also the only writer to emphasise that without belief in flight, belief in the sabbat would collapse, “if this be credible [the *Canon Episcopi*], then all these their bargines and

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<sup>9</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.85, “Quod si Deus in Sortiariorum animos dedit Satanae potestatem ... multo magis eidem in eorum corpora hoc daturus, ut contrectentur et gestentur.”

<sup>96</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter IIII, p.113

<sup>97</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.80, “nisi personaliter quoque praesentes illic fuissent, et non sola animi somniatione et imaginatione”

assemblies, & c: are incredible.”<sup>98</sup>

#### 6.5.4 Renaissance Images of Flight



Albrecht Dürer, *The Witch*

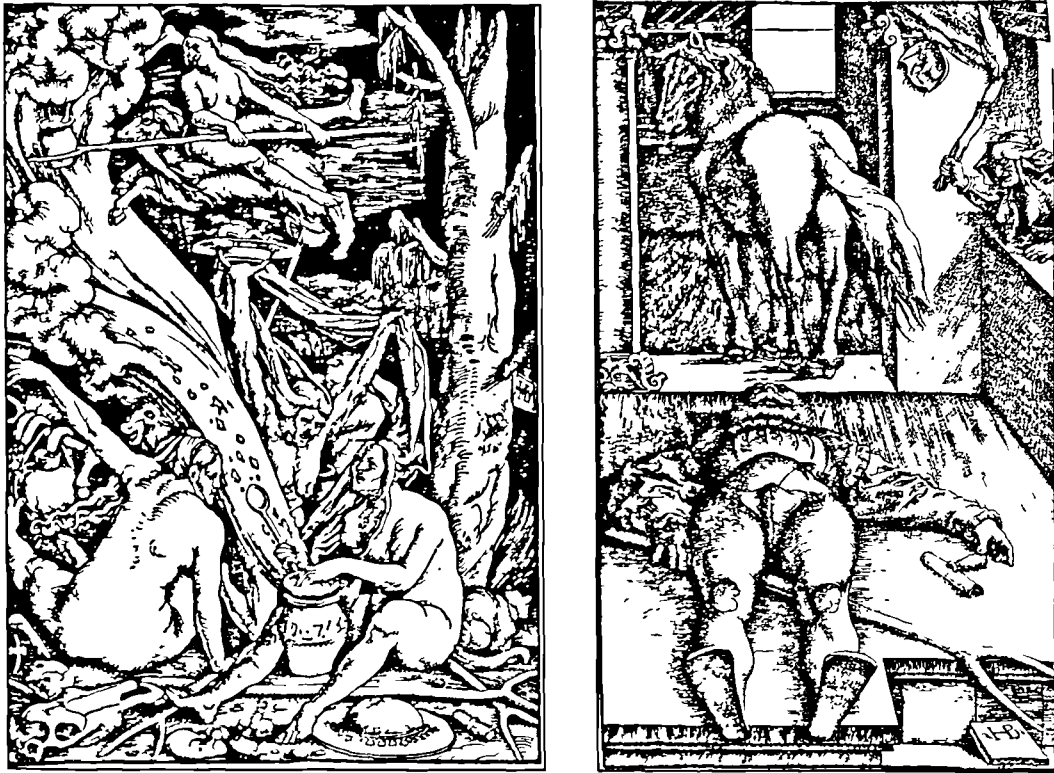
The images presented here were all composed before Luther made his protest. However, they belong in this section not only because these artists later supported the Protestants, but also because they demonstrate the sceptical viewpoint that was used by the Protestant writers on witchcraft. Possibly the most famous image of witches' flight is the woodcut by Albrecht Dürer. This shows a witch riding a goat through the air facing backwards, as witches were deemed to do everything in a perverse manner. Hans Baldung Grien's woodcuts present a far more problematic image: in his *The Witches* he appears to be portraying the reality of witches' flight, and even has a witch flying without the need of any implement (top left hand corner). However, when this is shown with his *The Bewitched Groom*, the reality of flight appears more uncertain. The groom in the picture

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<sup>98</sup> Scot, Book III, Chapter xvi, p.66



is lying upon a pitchfork, a common means of transport when flying, with an old woman watching nearby. The question which then needs to be asked, is whether this is an image of a male witch who is attending a sabbat in spirit, thus denying the reality of flight.<sup>100</sup>



Hans Baldung Grien, *The Witches* and *The Bewitched Groom* <sup>101</sup>

## 6.6. Conclusion

The early debates over flight were not based so much upon confessions, as upon theological premises, such as the devil's power and ability. For the Fathers of the

<sup>99</sup> Hollstein, F.W.H., *German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts, ca. 1400-1700*, Vol. VII, (Menno Hertzberger, Amsterdam, 1954)

<sup>100</sup> For more discussion of this issue, see Hoak, Dale, 'Art, Culture and Mentality in Renaissance Society: The Meaning of Hans Baldung Grien's 'Bewitched Groom' (1544)', *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 1985, pp.488-510

<sup>101</sup> Hollstein, F.W.H., *German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts ca. 1400 - 1700*, Vol. II, (Menno Hertzberger, Amsterdam, 1954)

Church, the flight of humans was not an issue at all. For the scholastics it became more of an issue, as believers in its reality were faced with canon law that appeared to deny this possibility. Many writers declared that the *Canon Episcopi* did not apply to the 'new' sect of witches, or that it dealt with pagan beliefs rather than the issue of flight. The debate over the canon was one of the most difficult of the flight issue, with theologians having to be careful in how they denied its validity.

For the pre-Reformation writers the issue was difficult; the debate over the relevance of the *Canon Episcopi* was at its height, and more confessions were appearing that seemed to confirm flight as being real. There was no consensus among these writers, with Champier not even discussing the issue. For Ciruelo it was a complex problem, he believed that Church laws were correct, but felt obliged to discuss the alternative possibility that flight was a reality. For Martin, and even more so, Ponzinibio, flight could never be real; the only possibility was that the devil implanted images, and ignorant or stupid people believed in them.

For believers in sensational witchcraft, flight was essential; without it the whole concept of the sabbat was flawed. If the sabbat were removed from demonological belief, then the theory that witches were conspiring to overthrow Christianity would fail, and there would be no need for witch persecutions. Because of this, it was vital that they maintained flight to be a reality, no matter what canon law or evidence was used against it. The Counter Reformation Catholics were fairly certain that they had reached the correct conclusion. Although they included some debate over the possibility of illusion, virtually all of the evidence they cited was for flight as reality. Unlike their predecessors, they had no qualms concerning the refutation of the *Canon Episcopi*. The debate over

the relevance of the canon was now old, and the alternative possibilities were well known, so these authors were not saying anything new when denying the canon's relevance.

Unusually for them, the Protestants were divided and uncertain over the issue of flight. Daneau and James were confused over whether flight was real or not, although they declared their belief in its reality. Hemmingsen, and Gifford (barring the one sentence where flight is mentioned), both ignored flight demonstrating how unimportant it was for some Protestants. The argument that Gifford, as an Englishman ignored flight, because it was not part of common English beliefs, can be refuted simply by referring to Scot, who obviously felt it to be an issue worthy of consideration. Scot alone was adamant in his denial; his argument was very certain, and although he investigated the views of his opponents, he never gave them any credence.

Flight remained a contentious issue within the witchcraft debate. It was not something that could be ignored by writers who fully believed in the conspiracy of witches, nor those who wished to refute such beliefs. However, the only people who were at all certain as to the reality of flight, were those who wished to continue the hunts, in this case, that meant the Counter Reformation Catholics.

# **Sensational Aspects of Witchcraft:**

**The Witches' Sabbat**

## 7 The Witches' Sabbat

### 7.1. Introduction

The concept of witches gathering with the devil and demons developed over the early modern period. Its origins are clearly connected to the meetings of various heretical groups. Originally it seems that the secret meetings of witches were known as synagogues; this could be a sign of anti-Semitism, as Cohn believes, or it could simply be a term used to describe a gathering about which the writer was only able to offer conjecture, and actually knew very few facts.<sup>1</sup> The etymology and development of the word sabbat is uncertain, it certainly was not common as a description of heretical or magical gatherings until well into the 15th century.<sup>2</sup> Its first use in a major treatise was by Nicholas Jacquier in 1458, although the events it detailed have been described as “sketchy.”

The elements of a sabbat gradually developed, and came to include what are now viewed as the ‘classic’ elements. Unlike its later versions, earlier sabbat beliefs appear to have included only cannibalism and orgies. As the idea of heretical gatherings developed, however, diabolic worship and homage were added, and from these came the idea of the osculum infame, the ‘obscene kiss.’ The specific witch images, such as the group performance of maleficia and the guarding of toads, developed in parallel with the growth of beliefs about witchcraft. The belief that evil gatherings took place in darkness,

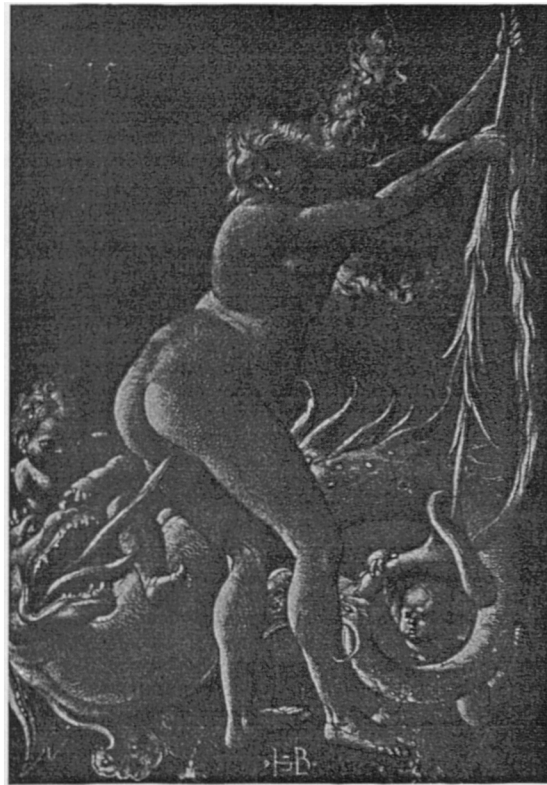
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<sup>1</sup> Cohn, Norman, *Europe's Inner Demons, An Inquiry Inspired by the Great Witch Hunt*, (Chatto-Heinemann, Sussex, 1975), p.197

<sup>2</sup> Collins English Dictionary claims its etymology as “Old English *sabbat*, from Latin *Sabbatum*, from Greek *sabbaton*, from Hebrew *Shabbath*, from *shabath* to rest”

<sup>3</sup> Robbins, Rossell Hope, *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology*, (Paul Hamlyn Ltd, London, 1964, 1959), p.415

appears to have come from the belief that the devil was the ruler of the darkness of the world, and in a simplistic fashion, this was taken literally.<sup>4</sup> A possible explanation for the origin of the osculum infame, as given by James, is a verse from Exodus, where Moses was not able to see the face of God. As the devil was believed to imitate God in as many ways as possible, this seemed a good way to demonstrate the differences between them.<sup>5</sup> The image by Baldung of the witch and dragon is very interesting, as it appears to be almost an inversion of the osculum infame, with the dragon in the customary position of the witch.



Hans Baldung Grien, *Young Witch and Dragon* <sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians vi:xii, King James Bible, 1611, "the rulers of the darkness of this world"

<sup>5</sup> Exodus xxiii:xxiii, op cit, "And I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen" James, Second Book, Chapter III, p.113

<sup>6</sup> Curiel, Hans, *Hans Baldung Grien*, (O. C. Recht Verlag, München, 1923)

### 7.1.1 Possible Origins of Sabbat Beliefs

The charges which were later laid against witches concerning secret gatherings, may have had their origin in the accusations made against the early Christians. Minucius Felix, probably writing at the end of the second century A.D., recorded some of the charges which were made against them; they were said to drink the blood of children, then eat the flesh, and hold great orgies in darkness. As he finished, he commented on the secrecy of this group, "Precisely the secrecy of this evil religion proves that all these things, or practically all, are true." Tertullian's responses to these, and similar accusations was mockery. According to Norman Cohn, these two writers provide the fullest evidence for the accusations levelled against the early Christians; and argued that these beliefs could be one of the causes behind some of the vicious persecutions which Christians suffered, but also believes that by this time the accusations were "already traditional." The Eucharist, with the phrases, "This is my body...this is my blood," could be interpreted as referring to cannibalism. Although some argued for a spiritual interpretation of this, the official understanding was reiterated at the Council of Trent, "If anyone denies that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist there are contained truly, really and substantially, the body and blood of our lord Jesus Christ together with the soul and divinity, and therefore the whole Christ, but says that he is present in it only as in a sign or figure or by his power: let him be anathema."<sup>8</sup>

Heretical groups, which tended to hold secret and night-time meetings, were accused of many practices which were later used against witches. Many heretical groups were

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<sup>7</sup> Cohn, Norman, op cit, pp.1-4

<sup>8</sup> Council of Trent, session 13, 11 October 1551, in Alberigo, G. and Norman P. Tanner (eds), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. I and II, (Sheed & Ward, Georgetown University Press, London and Washington, 1990), p.697

charged with secret meetings which were said to involve feasting, orgies and the summoning of demons. A list of the groups who had been charged with sabbat meetings, include the Patarenes (11th century), Cathars, the Brethren of the Free Spirit (13th century, Rhineland), the Apostolici of Northern Italy, and the Fraticelli, as well as the Waldenses.<sup>9</sup> The idea of denying Christianity, and trampling the Cross, possibly have their origins in a trial recorded by Carlo Ginzburg. In his trial of 1321, Guillaume Agassa, head of a leper asylum, recounted that all the leaders of the lepers had met with the King of Granada and the Sultan of Babylon. In order to gain their help in obtaining power for lepers, they had to "spit on the host and cross and trample the latter underfoot."<sup>1</sup>

Although actual devil worship emerged among some sects, such as the German Luciferans and the Bohemian Adamites, this was not common to all heresies.<sup>11</sup> The Lucerne chronicler, Jüstinger von Königshofen, reported in 1438, that over one hundred people had been executed for belonging to a diabolical sect (*gesellschaft*) where the devil would appear in the form of an animal, whom they would adore, and then learn how to perform assorted maleficia. The sect had supposedly begun in about 1375, and consisted of several hundred adherents. Between 1421 and 1440, poor people in the Dauphiné confessed to regular assemblies where they worshipped the devil.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Eliade, Mircea, 'Some Observations on European Witchcraft', *History of Religions*, Vol. 14, No. 3, February 1975, pp.149-172, p.166, Cohn, Norman, *op cit*, pp.51-53

<sup>10</sup> Ginzburg, Carlo, *Ecstasies, Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, edited, Elliott, translated Raymond Rosenthal, (Hutchinson Radius, London, 1990), pp.42-43

<sup>11</sup> Russell, Jeffrey Burton, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, (Cornell University Press, London, 1972), pp.141-142

<sup>12</sup> Ginzburg, Carlo, *op cit*, p.73, Copenhaver, Brian, *Symphorien Champier and the Reception of the Occultist Tradition in Renaissance France*, (Moulton Publishers, The Hague, 1978), p.156



One of the most famous trials, that of Antoine Rose, near Annecy in 1477, concerned her supposed heretical practises. Under torture she confessed to attending a synagogue (i.e. sabbat) with many other men and women who enjoyed themselves, before renouncing God and the faith, adoring the devil, feasting, and participating in an orgy.<sup>13</sup> The linking of heresy with sabbatical assemblies was becoming accepted; in 1486, Antoni Blasii reported that all of his native valley of Angrogna were believed to be Waldenses, who were believed to hold a synagogue where they kissed the anus of a goat.<sup>14</sup> The coupling of heresy and witchcraft, especially in respect of sabbats, is shown by Henri Boguet's simple phrase, "certain Vaudois or sorcerers."<sup>15</sup>

### 7.1.2 *The Possibility of a Real Sabbat*

Strangely, while no historian has suggested that witches actually did fly, or copulate with the devil himself, some have nevertheless described their nocturnal gatherings as actually taking place. This was first done by Karl Ernst Jarcke, in 1828, who promoted the idea that witchcraft was a nature religion surviving under Christianity. Josef Mone followed Jarcke's lead and, in 1839, declared that witchcraft was a pre-Christian esoteric cult that had joined with assorted Roman elements. However, it was not until the Egyptologist, Margaret Murray, published *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* that this idea really became popular.<sup>16</sup> Murray believed that witchcraft was a pre-Christian fertility religion with an anthropomorphic or theriomorphic god. The sabbat was one of two types of assembly: the sabbat itself, which was a general meeting, and the esbat, a meeting open

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<sup>13</sup> Lea, pp.238-240

<sup>14</sup> Cameron, Euan, *The Reformation of the Heretics*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1984), p.112

<sup>15</sup> Boguet, Chapter V, p.18, "certains Vaudois, et Sorciers"

<sup>16</sup> Murray, Margaret Alice, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1921)

only to the elite who carried out the rituals of the cult. She wrote of the dancing and feasting that took place, and believed that the orgies were given undue prominence by Christian judges who were obsessed with sex. Murray was extremely selective in her use of evidence, and simply ignored anything which appeared to contradict her views. This has led to problems for some later historians who seem to have found evidence of fertility cults persecuted as witchcraft, as Gustav Henningsen wrote, "there is great scepticism of anyone who suggests that any sabbaths took place before the twentieth century."<sup>17</sup>

### 7.1.3 *Early Modern European Fertility Cults*

The issue of whether the sabbat was a popular element of witch beliefs, or whether it was imposed by an educated elite has always been contentious for historians. There is evidence to support both sides of the argument; the sabbat was possibly an extension of the belief that heretical groups had met in secret, and as witches would have had to meet secretly, it seems an obvious connection. The question is really whether the separate elements of the sabbat were commonly believed and accepted, or whether they only became accepted through the publication of trial details, confessions and sermons. Lea believed the sabbat to be "a conglomeration of traditional stories and superstitions," whereas Robert Muchembled wrote that "the sabbath is an alien notion to the peasant

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<sup>17</sup> Henningsen, Gustav, 'The Ladies from Outside: An Archaic Pattern of the Witches' Sabbath' in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), p.192, see also Ginzburg, Carlo, *Ecstasies*, p.8, "[Murray] had the regrettable effect of implicitly discouraging all research into the symbolic elements of the witches' Sabbath which are alien to the scholarly stereotypes."

actors in these dramas.”<sup>18</sup> The concept of the sabbat certainly developed over the years; beginning as a simplistic gathering and ending as an elaborate mass party.

Carlo Ginzburg's work on the *benandanti* of the Friuli has lent some credibility to the idea that fertility cults existed in Early Modern Europe.<sup>19</sup> He discovered that this group, who were identified by being born with a caul, went out on certain nights of the year in a spiritual, trance-like state, to fight the witches.<sup>20</sup> This was a simple battle for the fertility of the fields, if the witches won there was famine, but if the *benandanti* were victorious there would be plenty in the coming season. Apart from holding secret meetings at night, the rites of the *benandanti* had no similarity to the witches' sabbat. As the Inquisition began to investigate the meetings of the *benandanti*, however, they asked about diabolic elements that never existed in previous descriptions. Eventually, people began to confess to being witches, and attending diabolic sabbats. By 1623, after more than 850 trials, a full description of a sabbat was given by a *benandanti*; Giovanni Sion confessed to all the details of a classical sabbat. This was written about in amazement by the Benedictine, Don Pedro Matire da Verona, “it amazes me more and more how the things which he says occurred resemble what is in the books.” Surprisingly, he did not consider the possibility that Ginzburg proposed; that due to more than fifty years of

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<sup>18</sup> Lea, p.202, Muchembled, Robert, ‘Satanic Myths and Cultural Reality’ in Ankarloo and Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), p.140

<sup>19</sup> Ginzburg, Carlo, *The Night Battles*, translated J. Tedeschi and A. Tedeschi, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1983)

<sup>21</sup> The caul appears to have been an item with superstitious associations in popular belief, as Dapper in *The Alchemist* is accused of having been born with a caul, Jonson, Ben, *The Alchemist*, (Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1968), I.ii, l.128

encouragement, the popular belief now existed that benandanti and witches were one and the same.<sup>21</sup>

Although the benandanti remain the best examined cult of this type, others certainly existed, and indeed still do in some parts of Europe. The North Balkan wizards, the kresniks and zduhač, were adversaries of the witches, and fought them in the shapes of dogs, horses or giants. Éva Pócs summarised the common features of the Balkan spirit fighters: there were goddess like beings who appeared periodically, they had harmful abilities and were linked with death. However, they were also associated with the preservation of fertility, and nature spirits.<sup>22</sup> As Eliade wrote, “there can now be no doubt concerning the continuity of some important pagan rituals and beliefs, mainly related to fertility and health.”<sup>23</sup>

#### 7.1.4 *Night Spirits, Fairies and Ladies of the House*

The idea of spirits, fairies or women who visited houses in the dead of night to bring prosperity or bad luck, are numerous and appear to have existed all over Europe. In Le Roy Ladurie's investigation into the story of Françonnetto, he discovered the tradition in the Hautes-Pyrénées, of leaving a meal for the fairies in a deserted room, with the doors and windows left open, and the belief that these fairies could bring either good or bad luck.<sup>24</sup> Gustav Henningsen wrote of the Sicilian *donna di fuora*, who were investigated

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<sup>21</sup> Ginzburg, Carlo, *The Night Battles*, pp.27, 107-112

<sup>22</sup> Pócs, Éva, *Fairies and Witches at the Boundary of South Eastern and Central Europe*, no.243, (FFC Communications, Helsinki, 1989), pp.11-12, see also Klaniczay, Gábor, *The Uses of Supernatural Power*, edited, Margolis, translated Susan Singerman, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1990), pp.134-136

<sup>23</sup> Eliade, Mircea, op cit, p.164

<sup>24</sup> Ladurie, Emmanuel le Roy, *Jasmin's Witch*, translated Brian Pearce, (George Brazillier, New York, 1987), p.55

by the Spanish Inquisition in the 16th and 17th centuries. These women were accompanied by fairies, and led by the Queen of the Fairies, under assorted titles and names, to meetings held at night.<sup>25</sup> In a similar vein, the Milanese Inquisition found a secret society, led by a Signora Oriente, which visited houses at night, and on finding a tidy house gave the inhabitants their blessing.<sup>26</sup> The Romanian equivalent, the călușari, were again led by the Queen of the Fairies (Doamna Zînelor), and would visit households and cure anyone who had been a victim of the malicious fairies.<sup>27</sup>

Night visitors were an acknowledged phenomenon, and belief in them was an ecclesiastical crime. Burchard's *Corrector* prescribed a penance of one year for leaving food and drink out for the Fates, while Bartholemew Iscanus' Penitential decreed two years penance for the same offence.<sup>28</sup> William of Auvergne wrote of common belief in a mysterious divinity, a devil according to William, known as Abundia or Satia, who visited houses at night accompanied by her followers bestowing prosperity and blessings upon houses where she found food left for them. Alphoso de Spina, writing about 1458-60, described the ten different types of demons, including the *duen de casa*, ladies of the house, in a similar vein to the *donna di fuora*.<sup>29</sup> Symphorien Champier wrote of St Germain's amazement at people leaving food out for "the good women who went by

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<sup>25</sup> Henningsen, Gustav, op cit, pp.195-198

<sup>26</sup> Henningsen, Gustav, op cit, pp.203-204

<sup>27</sup> Eliade, Mircea, op cit, p.160

<sup>28</sup> McNeill, John T. and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1938), pp.338-339, 349

<sup>29</sup> Ginzburg, Carlo, *The Night Battles*, pp.40-41  
Lea, p.288

night.” Upon investigation these were found to be demons who had been making fun of men, but again they fitted the category of mysterious night visitors.<sup>30</sup>

## 7.2. Patristic and Scholastic Beliefs

The Church Fathers did not write anything about the concept of a witches' sabbat.

Apart from this demonstrating that the sabbat was a relatively late belief in witchcraft theory, it is also possible that they were avoiding stories of secret gatherings. This could be due to the relatively recent allegations that had been made against the early Christians concerning their own rituals. The closest that any Father came to mentioning a diabolical gathering was Abbot Serenus who described a meeting of demons with their master, who upon confessing their failure to harm their rivals, were driven away.<sup>31</sup>

Although this sabbat had no human involvement, the concepts that it described, such as a demon on a throne, and a trial of evil, became common elements in later sabbat beliefs.

### 7.2.1 *Patristic and Scholastic Beliefs in a Real Sabbat*

A decretal letter of Pope Gregory IX, despairing of the perversions that were being carried out by some Christians, actually described the witches' sabbat in some detail.

The osculum infame was described, although the recipient was not the devil, but firstly a frog of some kind, and then a black cat. These events, according to Gregory, removed from the novice, “every remnant of faith in the Catholic Church.” From his further

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<sup>30</sup> Champier, Chapter 3 of the Second Tractate, 12, “bonis illis mulieribus qui se nocte incedunt.” The tale of St Germain was a standard Medieval tale, and was also related by Johannes Nider and Geiler von Kaisersberg.

description of what these people believed, it seems that this was not really a witches' sect, but adherents of a diabolic system, as he wrote that they believed, "the Lord has done evil in casting out Lucifer into the bottomless pit. ... [they] believe in Lucifer and claim that he was creator of the celestial bodies and will ultimately return to glory when the Lord has fallen from power."<sup>32</sup> Guibert of Nogent described a heretical group, where an important part of their ceremonies was the orgy that was later attributed to witches.<sup>33</sup>

Johannes Nider in his *Formicarius*, written about 1437, (although not published until 1475), described a sect of people who worshipped their "little master," a demon in the form of a man, then abjured Christianity and ate the flesh of small children.<sup>34</sup> The most developed description of a sabbat from this early period comes from the anonymous *Errores Gazariorum*, Gazarii being a local term for witches. This was produced in the French speaking area of the Savoy, almost certainly by an Inquisitor, as it contains many details of confessions and burnings. The author described the sabbat, where the witches would adore the devil in the form of either a cat or a deformed man. The witches had to agree to kill as many children as possible and bring their bodies to the next meeting. They then adored the devil, "as a sign of homage he [the acolyte] kisses the devil ... either on the bottom or the anus."<sup>35</sup> This poor seduced person, as the author interestingly described him, then feasted upon roasted or boiled murdered children,

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<sup>31</sup> Cassian, *The Second Conference of Abbot Serenus*, chapter XVI, in Schaff, Philip (ed), *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd Series, Vol. XI, (Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, 1955)

<sup>32</sup> Pope Gregory XI, *Vox in Rama*, 1232, in Kors, Alan C. and Edward Peters (eds), *Witchcraft in Europe, 1100-1700*, 10th Edition, (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1972, 1992), pp.48-49

<sup>33</sup> Guibert of Nogent, *Self and Society in Medieval France*, edited, J. F. Benton, translated J. F. Benton, (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1970), chapter 17

<sup>34</sup> Nider, Johann, *Formicarius*, in Hansen, pp.89-99

<sup>35</sup> Anonymous, *Errores Gazariorum*, in Hansen, p.119, "in signum homagii osculatur diabolum ... in culo vel ano"

before taking part in an orgy.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, the call which told the participants that it was time for the orgy to commence, was very similar to that described in the trial of Antoine Rose; the Gazarii were called by “mestlet, mestlet”, while Antoine’s groups were called with “mecllet, mecllet.”<sup>37</sup>

Another anonymous writer described the sabbat in his, *La Vauderye de Lyonois en brief*. This manuscript, based on the Lyons persecutions, described the sabbat and especially the feast, in some detail. The author described the meat they ate as “raw, gristly and foul,” and the bread as “gross, black and free from all flavour.”<sup>38</sup> This attention to detail was an aspect of witch literature that was not to gain adherents until the Counter Reformation, when it became standard to detail all the practices and customs of the sabbat.

### 7.2.2 Patristic and Scholastic Beliefs in the Sabbat as Illusion

The concept of the sabbat as purely illusory was suggested by John of Salisbury in *Policraticus*. He wrote that poor old women and the simple-minded believed the dreams that were sent by the devil, “they suffer in the spirit things which they erroneously and wretchedly believe they experience in the flesh.”<sup>39</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio in his *Decameron*, played upon popular ideas of the sabbat, when he described the joke played by Bruno and Buffalmacco on the physician, Master Simone. Simone wanted to see the sabbat,

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Anon, *Errorres Gazariorum*, “pauper seductus”

“pueros interfectus assatos pariter et elixatos”

<sup>37</sup> Lea, p.273, Hansen, p.119

<sup>38</sup> Anonymous, *La Vauderye de Lyonois*, in Hansen, op.191, “crude, viscosae et immunde” and “grossum et nigrum et ab omni bono sapore alienum”

<sup>39</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, in Kors and Peters, op cit, pp.36-37, see also Thorndike, Lynn, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol. II, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1943), pp.155-169



and the two jokers tricked him into believing that they could gain him entrance in return for large numbers of good meals. They told of the merry company, and the women who were there. The 'demon' who was to take Simone to the sabbat (Buffalmacco in disguise) would be in the form of "a black horned beast, not over big." The physician was warned that if he called upon God or the saints then the beast would throw him off. The two jokers, knowing that Simone had called "God aid me", threw him off and pretended to have been severely beaten for their troubles.<sup>41</sup> Mocking these beliefs in this way would probably have led to calls for Boccaccio's investigation for witchcraft two centuries later, however, it was not yet a problem to deny the sabbat.

Those who believed the sabbat to be illusory, declared their belief that the dreams and fantasies people described were demonically inspired. Alphonso de Spina, in his *Fortalicium Fidei*, wrote of the large numbers of women who believed that they went at night, "where there is a certain boar in a cave who is vulgarly called Elboch de Biterne ... and they adore it, kissing him on his behind."<sup>41</sup> The illusion produced by the devil was incredibly realistic, and according to the Dominican, Jordanes de Bergamo, the devil deluded these women while they slept, and the illusions were so strong that they believed them, "up until death."<sup>42</sup>

Nicholas of Cusa, preaching during Lent 1457, commented upon the trial of two women who confessed to belonging to the Society of Diana, and rendering her homage and other ceremonies. Nicholas had interrogated the two women, decided that they

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<sup>40</sup> Boccaccio, Giovanni, *The Decameron*, translated John Payne, (The World Publishing Co., New York, 1947), the ninth story of day eight

<sup>41</sup> Spina, Alphonso de, *Fortalicium fidei* in Hansen, p.148, "ubi est aper quidam in rupe, qui vulgariter dicitur Elboch Debiterne ... et adorant illum aprum, osculantes eum in ano suo"

were half mad, and declared that all of their confessions were fantasies inspired by the devil. Although he tried to convince the women that these were merely fantasies, they refused to listen, and so he sentenced them to public penance and imprisonment.<sup>43</sup>

### 7.3. Pre-Reformation Beliefs

Unsurprisingly, the sabbat was not an area of great interest for many pre-Reformation writers. Martin, Ciruelo, Champier and Ponzinibio's main concern was with popular superstition and ignorance about the ways of the devil, and this outweighed the sensationalist aspects of witchcraft, such as the sabbat. However, in a similar way to their beliefs about flight, they were not certain. They did not write a great deal about the detail of the sabbat, and in this were following the tradition of the *Malleus*. However, even though their references to the sabbat are very brief, and contain virtually no detail, the fact that they refer to it at all demonstrates how widely accepted the concept was, although it was not yet fully developed.

#### 7.3.1 Pre-Reformation Beliefs in a Real Sabbath

Interestingly, the most famous witch book of all, the *Malleus maleficarum*, made very few references to any type of sabbat. Kramer and Sprenger cited Nider, and repeated his story of the group who killed children and used the parts to make potions, however, they did not examine this in detail and certainly did not emphasise this aspect of witchcraft in the way some other writers did. The only time any other sabbat idea is shown, is in the

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<sup>42</sup> Jordanes de Bergamo, *Quaestio de strigis*, in Hansen, p.198, "usque ad mortem"

<sup>43</sup> Ginzburg, Carlo, *Ecstasies*, pp.94-95

discussion of the types of pact a witch could make; they wrote that a pact could be made either in secret, or in "a solemn ceremony."<sup>44</sup> The Papal Bull which preceded their work, also barely mentioned the sabbat, only making a brief reference in passing to the renunciation of God.<sup>45</sup>

The Inquisitor Bernard de Como's *De Strigiis*, of about 1510, declared that the sabbat was real, and that "it is true that really and truly and not a fantasy or illusion," that witches went to the sabbat and performed such terrible things.<sup>46</sup> He cited as his evidence the fact that an Inquisitor named Bartholomeus de Homate, and two other men of authority, who had been curious about the sabbat, spied upon one. They did not realise that the devil knew where they were, and being caught and beaten on the devil's orders, were so badly injured that they all died within a fortnight. Como concluded from this, "who, therefore, can say that this happens in fantasy or in sleep?"<sup>47</sup>

The highly influential Sylvester Prierias expounded his views that the sabbat was real in his 1521 *De Strigimagorum Daemonumque Mirandis*. He related that witches gathered to adore the devil, and plan their wickedness. He believed that they killed as many children as possible, preferably unbaptised, and boiled them in order to use the remains to make unguents, ointments and powders.<sup>48</sup> Bartolommeo Spina's 1523, *Quaestio de Strigibus*, described the people who attended the sabbat, and declared that such information was gathered from confessions. He wrote that those who had been accused by accomplices,

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<sup>44</sup> Kramer, Heinrich and James Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, edited, M. Summers, (Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1971), Part II, Q.I, Chapter 2, p.99

<sup>45</sup> Innocent VIII, *Summis Desiderantes* in Hansen, pp.24-27

<sup>46</sup> Como, Bernard de, *Tractatus de strigiis*, in Hansen, p.281, "verum est, quod realiter et veraciter et non phantastice neque illusorie"

<sup>47</sup> Como in Hansen, p.282, "Quis ergo dicere velit, hoc in phantasia aut in somniis contigisse?"

<sup>48</sup> Lea, p.358

and began by denying their attendance, were eventually persuaded to confess the truth.<sup>49</sup>

Castañega referred briefly to the sabbat, and commented upon the osculum infame, which was an aspect that the authors of the *Malleus* had totally ignored, “for the devil, who is a tyrant that mocks his subjects, it is necessary that they kiss him in the most dishonest part of his body.”<sup>50</sup>

The newly discovered importance of the sabbat is demonstrated by the fact that in 1526, a committee was convened in Granada to decide whether witches really did go to the sabbat. Interestingly, six of the ten decided that they really met, but they also decided that most of the murders they committed were imaginary. As this was the case, they were to be tried by the Inquisition, and instructed in the faith; as the Bishop of Mondonedo declared, “send preachers to those parts, to tell the people of the errors of the witches and how they have been deceived by the devil; the Inquisitors and secular judges should proceed with caution; the monasteries of that region should be reformed.”

Pedro Ciruelo seemed to believe that the sabbat had some basis in reality. However, he did not actually mention the sabbat itself, only a brief reference to the fact that witches really travelled in order to perform malicious actions.<sup>52</sup> If, as he believed, the flight could sometimes be real, then it was logical to assume that sometimes the sabbat could also be real, but he did not examine this point in any depth.

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<sup>4</sup> Spina, Bartholommeo, *Quaestio de strigibus et lamiis*, in Hansen, p.331

<sup>5</sup> Castanega, Martín de, *Tratado muy sutil y bien fundado de las supersticiones y hechicerías*, (originally published, Logrono, 1529), translated David H. Darst, (1979), chapter viii

<sup>51</sup> Kamen, Henry, *Inquisition and Society in Spain*, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1985), p.211

<sup>52</sup> Ciruelo, Part 2, Chapter 1, p.117

### 7.3.2 *Pre-Reformation Beliefs in the Sabbat as Illusion*

Details of the sabbat were recorded by some writers, although they did not believe in their reality. These details demonstrate how some of the beliefs were now popular knowledge. Symphorien Champier briefly summarised the essential components of the sabbat, “they think that they go by night to dance with the devil, to have sex with women, to drink and feast, to injure or to kill certain people, to enter into cellars to gorge on wine, to worship the devil under some form or other by giving him a kiss on the rear, and other things of this sort.”<sup>53</sup> Martin of Arles also briefly related the elements of the sabbat, writing about women who believed they had done “unspeakable things like taking babies from their mothers’ milk, roasting them and eating them.”<sup>54</sup> Ponzinibio added one more detail, that of vampirism, which occasionally appeared in witchcraft trials, “it is not true that they go into the houses of children at night, and scratch them, sucking their blood.”<sup>55</sup> These were now the standard sabbat beliefs, although not described in the detail that their successors were to use.

Bernard de Como and Sylvester Prierias, although both fully believing in the reality of the sabbat, also believed that it could be an illusion. Witches, according to Como, could attend the sabbat in spirit if they wanted to know what had happened there, and were unable to attend otherwise. Prierias believed that if witches were unable to attend in person, then a demon would assume their form at the sabbat, and the devil would send

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<sup>53</sup> Champier, Chapter 3 of the Second Tractate, 12’, “se existimant ire nocte cum demone coreare [sc. choreare] cum mulieribus commisceri, bibere et manducare, aliquos ledere vel occidere, intrare caveas ad hauriendum vinum, dyabolum sub aliqua figura in posteriori dato osculo venerari”

<sup>54</sup> Martin, Section 11, 403’, “alia nephanda agere, puta paruulos a lacte matris avellere, assare, et comedere”

<sup>55</sup> Ponzinibio, p.279, “non sit verum, quod de nocte ingrediantur domos paruulorum, et eos stricent, sanguinem esi sugendo”

the witch into a stupor so she could see the sabbat events.<sup>56</sup> This idea was also propounded in the *Malleus*, as Kramer and Sprenger wrote that witches who did not want to travel bodily, were able to watch their fellow witches if they lay down on their left side in the name of the devil, as the devil would then send them dreams of the events.<sup>57</sup>

That the sabbats were merely illusions sent by the devil, was never doubted by these men. Jean Vincenti, the Prior of Les Moustiers at Lay in the Vendée, wrote that the devil was able to place people in a deep sleep and impose a dream of the sabbat and homage, although these people were seen to be asleep all the time.<sup>58</sup> Champier certainly did not believe that any details of the sabbat were real, commenting simply that, “these people are deceived.”<sup>59</sup> The images that these people had seen, although very real to them, were only illusions, “they believe things to be outside of the mind which are in the imaginative faculty alone.”

Having commented upon the things witches believed they did at the sabbat, Martin did not feel obliged to pursue the matter further. As far as he was concerned, the idea did not need to be expanded upon, as the beliefs were not only “unspeakable”, but also because they were only imaginary, “all of which things and their like only happen to them in their imagination.”<sup>61</sup> Ponzinibio explained that the women believed that they

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<sup>56</sup> Lea, pp.359, 372

<sup>57</sup> Kramer, Heinrich, *op cit*, Part I, Q.XVI, p.81

<sup>58</sup> Vincenti, Jean, *Liber adversus magicas artes* in Hansen, p.229

<sup>59</sup> Champier, Chapter 3 of the Second Tractate, 12<sup>v</sup>, “decepti sunt”

<sup>60</sup> Champier, Chapter 3 of the Second Tractate, 12<sup>v</sup>, “credunt sic esse extra intellectum que sunt in sola virtute ymaginativa.”

<sup>61</sup> Martin, Section 11, 403<sup>v</sup>, “quae omnia et consimilia solum fantastice accidunt eis”

participated in these rituals, but that they happened to them, “fantastically in spirit” and “not however truly, nor bodily.”<sup>62</sup>

Only Champier discussed the possible consequences once these women had confessed to such things. He believed that such illusions were caused by the devil, and that they were real enough to be believed by those accused, but that judges should be extremely wary of any confessions of sabbat attendance, “they confess many more false [things] than true.”<sup>63</sup>

Champier suggested that physicians should examine accused witches, and that they should be given instruction by their priests, so that they would no longer believe in such illusions, “If they are found only to be insane, they are to be given medical treatment. And through their confessors they ought to be given the beneficial admonition not to believe in such apparitions. ... above all they should be instructed in the faith.”<sup>64</sup>

Andreas Alciatus did not believe that the devil was able to perform the logistics of a sabbat. The whole concept of demons counterfeiting people was incredible for him. The idea that a witch could attend the sabbat in spirit while there remained a counterfeit body in her bed was laughable, “why place a true body in a fictitious play [i.e. the sabbat], and a fantastical one in a true bed?”<sup>65</sup>

The writers of the pre-Reformation were divided over the reality of the sabbat, Ciruelo did not make his position particularly clear, and the assumption has to be made that he

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<sup>62</sup> Ponzinibio, p.269, “phantastice in spiritu”  
 “non autem vere, nec in corpore”

<sup>63</sup> Champier, Chapter 3 of the Second Tractate, 13’, “tamen plura falsa confitentur quam vera”

<sup>64</sup> Champier, Chapter 3 of the Second Tractate, 13’, “Si lesi tamen cum cerebro inveniuntur: illis subveniendum est per medicinam. Et debent ammoneri salubriter per suos confessores ut talibus apparitionibus non credant. ... Debent summopere doceri in fide”

believed in the possibility of real sabbats. However, he was not alone in this, other writers were certain that sabbats really occurred and that the confessions were true. However, Martin, Champier and Ponzinibio, among others, were certain that they were merely illusions of the devil.

#### 7.4. Counter Reformation Beliefs

It was during this period that the concept of the sabbat became all pervasive in Catholic demonological literature. The sabbat became possibly the most important element in any discussion of witchcraft, certainly more space was devoted to it than to any other single aspect. It also developed from being the fairly simple, if horrific, gathering of the pre-Reformation, into an elaborate, mass ceremony of homage and orgy.



From Guazzo, *Compendium maleficarum*

The woodcuts used to accompany Guazzo's *Compendium maleficarum* were almost a return to the simplistic images of witchcraft from the previous century. However, unlike the previous images, they do not contain all the elements written about in a single frame,

<sup>65</sup> Alciatus, Andreas, *Parergon Juris*, in Hansen, p.311, "cur verum corpus in ficto lusu, phantasticum in vero lecto comminisceris?"



but use many individual images to illustrate each aspect of the sabbat, from the devil marking his acolyte, to the homage and obscene kiss. This could possibly serve to convey Guazzo's message about witchcraft, even if the person looking at the book could not read the accompanying text.



Images taken from Ziarnko's image of a sabbat<sup>66</sup>

Possibly the most famous depiction of the sabbat is the woodcut which accompanied Pierre de Lancre's *Tableau de l'Inconstance de Mauvais Anges et Demons* (1612). This is the fullest pictorial portrayal of a sabbat, and no other image quite captured the prevalent feelings of what a sabbat really entailed. The engraving shows a great many of the elements believed to be essential to a sabbat: there is the offering of a small child, potion making, dancing, children guarding toads, and a banquet. The elements in this image were all fairly standard by the start of the seventeenth century. The sabbat was sensationalised by the Counter Reformation writers in a way that no other aspect of

<sup>66</sup> For the entire picture, see Robbins, Rossell Hope, *Witchcraft, An Introduction to the Literature of Witchcraft*, (KTO Press, New York, 1978)

witchcraft was, and possibly this is why it is one of the images that remains best known today.

#### 7.4.1 Counter Reformation Beliefs in a Real Sabbath

Belief in the sabbat was more common than scepticism in this period, as McGowan wrote, "at the beginning of the seventeenth century few doubted the reality of the sabbat ... at a time when broadsheets continually published salacious details of such manifestations of the Devil." De Lancre's work, drawing on the writings of others, became the primary source for information on the gatherings of witches.<sup>67</sup> However, an unusual situation developed in Spain under the authority of the Inquisition. An Inquisitor, Alonzo Salazar de Frias, investigated the accusations of witchcraft and concluded that there were no grounds "for believing the ... details about the gatherings, dances, and *aquelarres* (where we pass beyond the limits of credulity)."<sup>68</sup> This judgement led to the investigation being halted and an end to the witch hunt.

As will be shown, Remi, Boguet and Guazzo did not seriously entertain the possibility that the sabbat was illusory. However, there was the problem of nobody appearing to notice that all these women were missing. The alternative to dreams, was that a counterfeit body was created by the devil in order that the witches' absence would not be noticed. Boguet did not deal extensively with this issue, simply stating that Satan could

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<sup>67</sup> McGowan, M.M., 'Pierre de Lancre's *Tableau de l'inconstance de Mauvais Anges et Demons*: The Sabbath Sensationalised' in Anglo (ed), *The Damned Art, Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1977), pp.196-197, 190

<sup>68</sup> Henningsen, Gustav, *The Witches' Advocate*, (University of Nevada Press, Reno, 1980), p.349, *aqualarre* was the local term for a sabbat. The hunt Salazar was investigating was greatly influenced by the persecution led by de Lancre, just over the border in France.

place an image in the bed so that the husband did not realise that his wife was missing.<sup>69</sup>

Remi used the evidence from confessions to prove the use of counterfeit bodies; he declared that some witches had used dummies in their own likeness so that their husbands would not notice their absence. Others confessed to using a child's pillow or twigs, with which they had deceived their husbands. Remi admitted that this appeared unlikely, although he wrote that this was "after they had invoked the name of their demons," presumably meaning that the demons would effect some type of illusion to cover the substitute item.<sup>70</sup> One accused, Catharina Ruffa, declared that the demon himself used to take her place when she attended the sabbat.<sup>71</sup> Guazzo simply repeated the explanations others had used before him, and concluded, "so we say that the Devil can and does place a body in the bed to deceive the husband while a Witch has gone to the Sabbat."<sup>72</sup> Remi's use of confessional evidence meant that he was able to conclude:

Here is an actual fact, not a visionary dream; an occurrence witnessed by the eyes, not merely understood by hearsay; confirmed by the consistent evidence of independent witnesses, not based upon the deliberate and fictitious report of a single person. If this is not proof enough to convince anyone, I will not linger ... I have not imagined or invented any part of the story.<sup>73</sup>

#### 7.4.2 *The Elements of the Sabbat: Feasting, Drinking, Dancing and the Orgy*

These writers felt that it was necessary to include as much detail as they possibly could about the sabbat. They detailed the days and times that it was most common for witches

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<sup>69</sup> Boguet, Chapter XVIII, p.116

<sup>70</sup> Remi, Book I Chapter XII, p.103, "postquam essent nomen sui daemonis praefatae"

<sup>71</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XII, pp.104-105

<sup>72</sup> Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.69, "sic dicimus Daemonem posse, et solere assumpro corpore, et in lecto locato decipere maritum, nam Strix ad Conventum profecta"

<sup>73</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XIV, p.117, "Ecce rem gestam, non somnio visam, oculis ipsis perceptam, non auditu intellectam, diversorum consentientibus verbis affirmatam, non unius excogitata, fictamque oratione evulgatam. Cui si quis parvam fidem habeat, nihil equidem moror ... modo sciat me nihil hic fingere, ac cominisci"

to meet, as this was seen to be important in convicting a witch; if she slept particularly heavily on the night a sabbat was considered to be held, then it could be decisive circumstantial evidence. They were not alone in believing such information to be important; Peter Binsfeld wrote that sabbats were most common on the Thursday of Ember weeks, while Boguet believed that there was no fixed day for the sabbat, "but that Witches who go there, whenever and whatever time it pleases their master."<sup>74</sup> However, Boguet did believe that sabbats were held at each of the great Christian festivals in order that the devil could further seduce people from God. Remi believed, because of the confessions he had heard, that sabbats in Lorraine were held on Wednesday or Saturday nights. He wrote that the women had given no reasons for this, but gave his own reason, "I suspect that it is because the Demons are occupied elsewhere at other times."<sup>75</sup>

Guazzo reiterated what Remi had written, adding only that according to Michaelis, witches in Italy met on Thursday nights, demonstrating the prevalence of the belief in witchcraft as a large well organised group.<sup>76</sup>

Having examined this, they then discussed whether there was a set time for the sabbat: Boguet believed that it was more commonly a night time gathering, due to confession evidence. His explanation for the meetings being nocturnal was that according to the Bible, Satan was the ruler of darkness. He also believed that witches gathered at night in order to avoid being recognised.<sup>77</sup> Remi had found only two women who would give him any information regarding the timing of the sabbat, and they both declared that it

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<sup>74</sup> Hodder, M.E., 'Peter Binsfield and Cornelius Loos, An Episode in the History of Witchcraft', PhD Dissertation, (Cornell, 1911), p.52, Boguet, Chapter XX, p.124, "que les Sorciers y vont toutes et quantes fois qu'il plait à leur maistre"

<sup>75</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XIV, p.122, "Hoc tamen inde esse suspicor, quod aliae alibi tempestates occupatos Daemones habent"

<sup>76</sup> Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.81

was the hours just preceding midnight that were most suitable. No reason was given by the women for this, and Remi did not feel obliged to examine it further, but demonstrated the traditional notoriety of such times with examples from classical literature.<sup>78</sup> Guazzo concurred with Boguet and Remi that the sabbat was held at night, “when the powers of darkness thrive.” However, he alone believed that they were also able to meet in the middle of the day.<sup>79</sup>

Remi and Boguet both commented on the importance of the cock-crow for witches. Boguet wrote that some witches believed the crowing to be deadly to Satan, however, he denied this to be the case, and wrote that it was an example of God’s mercy, by which he meant to draw people to repentance.<sup>80</sup> Remi gave examples of sabbats that had been prematurely disrupted due to the crowing of the cock, and cited evidence from Pliny and Aelian that the cock was feared by wild beasts. However, he concluded that the actual crowing was not the reason that sabbats ended, but that it heralded the end of the most suitable time for their work, “such crowings are as a rule only heard at that time of the night which is unsuited to their work.”<sup>81</sup>

These writers all discussed the feasting that was supposed to occur at the sabbat, and agreed that the food was completely tasteless and foul. Both Remi and Guazzo commented that human flesh was sometimes laid out for witches to eat. This belief was confirmed in a Fugger newsletter, where a report of a confession declared, “she often had

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<sup>77</sup> Boguet, Chapter XVIII

<sup>78</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XIV, p.122-123

<sup>79</sup> Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.81, “cum viget potestas tenebrarum”

<sup>80</sup> Boguet, Chapter XIX, p.120

<sup>81</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XIV, p.125, “quam noctis iis inimicam tempestatem, qua illi vocem frequentius exercent”

good roast or an innocent child, which was also roasted.”<sup>82</sup> The feasts were so disgusting that, as Guazzo explained, “they would easily nauseate the most ravenously hungry stomach.”<sup>83</sup> The witches would leave the table as hungry as when they arrived, partly due to the food offered, “the dishes are made from the flesh of animals which have died, and some other things which men consider as refuse ... and other things not as a rule used for human food, and scarcely fit for consumption.”<sup>84</sup>

It was believed that salt was not available at the sabbat feast, and Boguet and Remi discussed this, concluding that it was due to its use in Holy rites. Boguet wrote that salt was “a symbol of immortality, and is held in bitter hatred by the Devil,” and that it was used in baptism, as well as being ordered by God to be mingled with every sacrifice. Remi also wrote that salt was essential in every sacrifice to God, and that it was used extensively in modern ceremonies, particularly baptism and exorcism.<sup>85</sup> They disagreed over whether bread was eaten at sabbats or not; Boguet said that some accused witches had declared bread to be unavailable, “but Christofle [and others] have testified to the contrary.” Remi’s reason for believing that bread was excluded, was that it was used in the Eucharist, and had also been used as an offering in the Bible. His conclusion about

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<sup>82</sup> Lettter dated 20th September 1587, Klarwill, Viktor von (ed), *The Fugger News-Letters*, (John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd, London, 1924)

<sup>83</sup> Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.76, “ac latranti stomacho facile nauseam parere possint”

<sup>84</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XVI, pp.131-132, “ex morticinorum pecudum carnibus, aliisque rebus, quas homines habent pro derelictis: ... aut si quae sunt insueta hominum mensis cibaria, et minime esculentae escae.”

<sup>85</sup> Boguet, Chapter XXII, p.136, “un symbole de l’immortalité, que le Diable a extremement en haine”, Remi, Book I, Chapter XVI, pp.128-129

these matters was for them to be left undecided, on the grounds that they were, “at best open to conjecture.”<sup>86</sup>

It was accepted that witches would dance at the sabbat, and these writers all referred to the way in which they did so. They all agreed that they danced back to back, possibly to avoid recognition, although Boguet and Remi remarked that they were also masked for this reason. Guazzo and Remi commented upon the fact that witches danced to the left, or back to back, and Remi commented that this was contrary to the norm.<sup>87</sup> However, none of the writers discussed dancing as being a specific example of ritual inversion, although combined with the other sabbat elements (bad food, and meeting at night, for example) it seems to be an obvious inference to draw. It is interesting that none of these writers make much of this issue, simply commenting on occasion, that this aspect was contrary to the norm, and not appearing to be conscious of these seemingly obvious inversions. Guazzo also mentioned that the witches were excessively tired after the dancing, “Just as our dances are for pleasure, so their dances and measures bring them labour and fatigue and the greatest toil.”<sup>88</sup>

After the dance, witches would commonly take part in a huge orgy, with no respect for either family or sex. Remi fully believed vices such as orgies to be the natural consequence of activities like dancing, “we know well enough from experience that this

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<sup>86</sup> Boguet, Chapter XXII, p.137, “mais Christolfe ... ont attesté le contraire.”, Remi, Book I, Chapter XVI, p.130, “quae tantum ad coniectaram interpretatione”

<sup>87</sup> Boguet, Chapter XXII, p.131, Remi, Book I, Chapter XIV, p.115, Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.77

<sup>88</sup> Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.77, “et sicut choreae nostrae solent esse voluptati, ita istae choreae, ac tripudia, labores, taedia, atque aerumnas gravissimas nusquam non pariunt”

passion for dancing is nearly always the begetter of sin among men.”<sup>89</sup> Their writing about the orgy was relatively delicate, without the excessive recourse to detail that appeared in all other aspects of their sabbat writing. Boguet wrote that witches did not care whether they had intercourse with their parents or siblings, “I may safely leave to the imagination the question whether or not all types of lechery and abominations are not exercised there, bearing in mind that the activities that caused Sodom and Gomorrah to be destroyed are very common there.”<sup>90</sup> Remi only briefly referred to the fact that orgies were believed to be common at the sabbat. This was a total contrast to the writings of Pierre de Lancre, the obvious successor to Boguet and Remi, who did not refrain from describing in great detail the events that were believed to take place, “At times there are monstrous excesses and forms of pollution, as one woman changes place with another and one man with another. There are acts of unnatural abuse between women and similarly between men; or a woman has intercourse with a man outside the proper channel in some other part.”<sup>91</sup>

#### 7.4.3 *The Osculum Infame, Homage to the Devil and Demonic Cruelty*

The osculum infame appears to have become universally accepted as the method of homage offered to the devil. However, it is possible that this remained an intellectual concept, rather than a populist one, as the Fugger letter detailing a sabbat confession only commented, “Him [the devil] she worshipped and before him she knelt, and unto

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<sup>89</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XVII, p.135, “ipsa nos experientia satis commonefacit, id saltandi studiui inter homines fere semper malo exemplo in valuisse”

<sup>90</sup> Boguet, Chapter XXII, p.133, “Je laisse à penser si l’on n’exerce pas là toutes les autres especes de lubricitez, veu encor que les abominations, qui firent fondre et abismer Sodome, et Gomorrhe, y sont fort communes.”

<sup>91</sup> Translation in Andreski, Stanislav, *Syphilis, Puritanism and Witch Hunts*, (The MacMillan Press Ltd, London, 1989), p.128



him she rendered other such-like honours," without any mention of the obscene kiss.<sup>1</sup>

All the intellectual witch writers wrote of the osculum infame, Boguet wrote that they would "kiss him on the shameful parts behind." Almost seeming to fear that he would not be believed, he then repeated this point when detailing confessions; citing that of Rollande du Vernois who declared that "all those who were at the Sabbat went and kissed this big black cat [the form the devil took at this particular assembly] on the rump," and that "together with the rest [she] had kissed him [the devil] on the behind."<sup>3</sup>

Remi believed that witches paid homage in a way very similar to those swearing fealty to their lords; the witches would approach the devil who sat on a high throne and fall at his feet. The usual manner of adoration was that, "they fall upon their knees; then they stretch out their hands as supplicants, but behind their backs and with the palms downward, and continue to hold them out to him until he tells them that it is enough." He did not ignore the kiss, although he declared that it shamed him to describe it, "they are forced against their wish to kiss the Demon's posteriors after he has changed himself into a hideous goat."<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, he believed that this was against the will of the witch, a belief contradictory to his feelings that these women gave themselves willingly to the devil. As usual, Guazzo was unable to elaborate upon these writers, he said simply

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<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 20th September 1587, Klarwill, Viktor von, op cit

<sup>3</sup> Boguet, Chapters XXII, p.131, "le baisent aux parties honteuses de derriere"

LX, p.411, "Que tous ceux, qui estoient au Sabbat, alloient baiser ce groz chat noir au derriere"

LXVIII, p.500, "et l'avoit baisé au derriere avec le autres"

<sup>4</sup> Again, this is an inversion of the normal form of paying homage. Remi, Book I, Chapter XX, pp.145, 144, "in genua procumbere: aversas deinde manus in morem obtestantium componere: sed post terga, atque inversas tum illum versus porrectas sustinere tantisper, dum satis, superque esse voce significaverit" "praeterea (dictu indignum) ab invitis ingerenda esse oscula Daemonis podici, postquam is sese immutavit in hircum horridum"

that in these things, like others, "they do all things in a manner altogether foreign to the use of other men."<sup>95</sup>

The devil was believed to mark his followers in some way, occasionally visibly, but more often hidden. It was argued that this was the devil's way of removing the mark of baptism, and his own parody of the same. However, Remi was uncertain that this was the case, as he claimed the devil marked other places that had not been touched by a priest.<sup>96</sup> There was some debate over whom the devil chose to mark, and whether all his followers were marked in some way. Guazzo declared that the devil only marked those whom, "he thinks will prove inconstant."<sup>97</sup> Boguet also wrote that this was the case, on the grounds that some of the witches he had interrogated said they had never been marked, "Therefore, I believe that there are Witches who are not marked; and I think that Satan marks only those of whom he is the most doubtful."<sup>98</sup> There was also the belief, explained by Boguet, that the devil was able to remove the mark as soon as a witch was taken prisoner. The mark itself became an important item in proving the guilt of an accused witch, and the belief that not all witches were marked meant that even those with no unusual markings, had no escape. As Boguet wrote, "I conclude that they are wrong who are so scrupulous as to be unwilling to condemn a Witch to death unless a mark can be found."<sup>99</sup> The mark was believed to be insensible to pain, as Boguet wrote, "the place where they bear these marks is so insensitive that they do not shrink even if

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<sup>95</sup> Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.78, "id genus alia ob omni consuetudine reliquorum hominum alienoissima"

Remi, Book I, Chapter V, pp.46-47. Peter Binsfeld also believed that when marking his followers, the devil removed the chrism of baptism from them.

Guazzo, Book I, Chapter VI, p.17, "quos inconstantes putat fore"

<sup>98</sup> Boguet, Chapter L, p.318, "et pour ceste occasion je tiens qu'il y a des Sorciers, qui ne sont point marquez, et pense que Satan marque ceux là seulement, desquels il se doute le plus"

<sup>99</sup> Boguet, Chapter L, p.318, "je veux conclure, que ceux la se sont tort, lesquels sont si scrupuleux, que de ne vouloir condamner un Sorcier à mort, si ce n'est que sa marque soit au preallable recogneue"

they are probed to the bone in that place,” giving some idea as to the type of trial accused witches faced.<sup>100</sup> Remi was amazed at this, commenting that it was, “a strange and marvellous thing.”<sup>101</sup>

The cruelty of the devil to his followers was a minor issue for both Boguet and Guazzo, who made brief references to his physical cruelty; Boguet declared that any witches who had not committed enough wickedness were “generally beaten and ill treated by their Master.” Guazzo reiterated the point that the devil was a harsh master, by stating that any who tried to avoid the dance was “beaten and bruised in a manner not unlike salted fish is beaten with hammers.”<sup>102</sup> Remi believed this to be an important part of his discussion and made regular references to it. One entire chapter was devoted to examining the many faults which could lead to a beating; lateness led to one (male) witch being “beaten almost to death by the Demon.” The same witch was punished when he wanted to restore a child to health. Worse punishment was to follow when he did not wish to poison a man; the demon took him to the rapids of a river and “did not cease from threatening to cast him down and drown him.” Remi emphasised this point with examples from other confessed witches.<sup>103</sup> Any witch who had not performed enough evil since the last sabbat was subject to the demon’s wrath, and the devil was irrational enough to insist upon each witch thanking him for the sabbat, even if it had not been enjoyed, or the witch would be “beaten so savagely and cruelly that ... he often has to

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<sup>1</sup> Boguet, Chapter L, pp.316-317, “l’endroit, où sont ces marques, est tellement insensible, que ceux qui les portent ne remuent point, quoy que l’on leur fourre l’esprouvette iusques aux os”

<sup>11</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter VI, p.47, “rei novitate prodigiosa”

<sup>102</sup> Boguet, Chapter XXII, p.139, “le plus souvent battus et mal traittez de leur Maistre”

Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.77, “pugnis, et calcibus, non aliter contunditur quam que exossantur malleis falsamenta.”

<sup>103</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.104, “non semel illi vapulasse pene ad interitum recensuit”, “Nam de deiiciendo, ac mergendo non destitisse minas interponere”

keep to his bed for two days after it.”<sup>104</sup> Remi wrote that the devil, “never fails to fabricate reasons for imputing some fault or obstinacy to them, and for blaming and severely punishing them.”<sup>105</sup> He compared the way the devil treated people with the teaching of Christ, in an obvious effort to dissuade anyone from submitting to the devil’s promises,

See how very harsh and dreadful the Devil always is, even to those in slavery, who have surrendered themselves entirely under his control: whereas Christ ever teaches that his yoke is agreeable and his burden light, ... It is, indeed, but meet that two such opposite systems of service should be absolutely contrary in their teachings and aims.”<sup>106</sup>

#### 7.4.4 Counter Reformation Beliefs in the Sabbat as Illusion

The ability of witches to visit the sabbat without being discovered, was a difficult point for the witch hunters to explain, but there were plenty of earlier writers who had declared the ability of witches to travel, not only in reality to the sabbat, but also to experience it in dreams. This was not a purely intellectual belief as the trial of Barbe la Grosse Gorge demonstrated; she declared that she had seen no one at the sabbat, because, “all that one can say about it is no more than dreams and illusions.”<sup>107</sup> As was later demonstrated by Salazar, the belief that witches attended the sabbat in dreams could lead to an entire investigation being stopped, “it is demonstrable that the witches go to the sabbaths many times in dreams, even though perhaps at other times they participate bodily. ... In spite of the great divergence in the methods of participating in the assemblies, to date none of

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<sup>104</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XIX, p.142, “ab illis agi oportet ... ac lepidis cantionibus: ... illi sunt verbera: ac adeo tam saeva, crudeliaque, ut saepe integrum biduum ex eorum dolore ei, qui sentit, sit decumbendum”

<sup>105</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.104, “illum nusquam non fingere causa, dum habeat quod culpa, aut contumaciae imputet, plectat, ac severissime animadvertat.”

<sup>106</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.108, “Ecce ut inclementissima, iniustissimaque semper est apud Diabolum servitus, iis etiam, qui se totos as eius arbitrium comparaverunt: cum contra Christus iugum suum suave, onusque leve ubique praedicet, ... Et certe contrariorum institutorum, ac disciplinarum fines, atque eventus decet esse contrarios.”

<sup>107</sup> Briggs, Robin, *Witches and Neighbours*, (Harper Collins, London, 1996), p.35

the accused have been able to distinguish between these two methods.”<sup>108</sup> The concept that witches only visited sabbats in dreams, and possibly therefore only in their imagination, led to more sceptical writers totally disallowing the physical reality of the sabbat.

Boguet, Remi and Guazzo did admit that there were situations whereby a disbeliever could dispute the reality of the sabbat; and this led Boguet and Remi to cite large numbers of examples in order to prove that sabbats occurred in reality, and not only in dreams. The common explanation for a witch visiting the sabbat in dreams or in spirit, was that she fell into a very heavy sleep, and the images of the gathering were somehow transmitted to her. Boguet commented upon the deep sleep of witches in some detail, writing that when this occurred, the people were virtually impossible to wake, sometimes even appearing to be dead, “one Holy Thursday night George Gandillon lay in his bed for three hours as if he were dead, and then suddenly came to himself,” and the case of a husband who noticed that, “his wife was absolutely still not even breathing; whereupon he began to shake her, but could not wake her.”<sup>109</sup> This type of incident led him to conclude, “it is probable that Satan sends them to sleep ... and reveals to them in their sleep what happens at the Sabbat so vividly that they think they have been there.”

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<sup>108</sup> Henningsen, Gustav, *The Witches' Advocate*, pp.178-179, Salazar's verdict dated June 1610.

<sup>109</sup> Boguet, Chapter XVIII, p.109, “George Gandillon, la nuict d'un Jeudi Saint, demeura dans son lict, comme mort, par l'espace de trois heures, et puis revint à soy en sursaut”, “sa femme ne bougeoit, ny souffloit en aucune façon: sur quoy il commença à l'esponçonner, sans neantmoins qu'il la peust jamais faire esveiller”

However, he believed that this could only happen to a witch who had previously attended the sabbat in person and become a follower of the devil.<sup>110</sup>

Remi and Guazzo both debated whether sabbats could occur in dreams, and appear to have failed to reach a definite conclusion, as Remi wrote, "on the other hand, I am quite willing to agree with those who think that such sabbat meetings at times exist only in dreams."<sup>111</sup> He agreed with the view that witches could be sent images of the sabbat by the devil, and this was supported by confession evidence, specifically from Catharine Prevotte, "often they are merely visited in their sleep by an empty and vain imagination."<sup>112</sup> Guazzo also entertained the possibility that witches could visit the sabbat in spirit, "thus Witches sometimes are actually present at the sabbat; and often again they are fast asleep at home, and yet think that they are at the sabbat; for the Devil deceives their senses and through his illusions many imaginings enter the minds of sleepers." Guazzo repeated the belief propounded in the *Malleus maleficarum*, that witches who wished to see the sabbat in a dream lay on their left side, and "they send a dense vapour from their mouths, and they see the images of things done displayed as if in a mirror."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Boguet, Chapter XVIII, p.117, "il est à croire, que Satan les endort ... et qu'il leur represente en dormant, ce qui se fait au Sabbat, avec telle impression, qu'ils estiment y avoir esté"

<sup>111</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XIV, p.117, "Vicissim etiam eorum sententiae non accedam invitus, qui haec quandoque per insomnia videri putant."

<sup>112</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter XIV, pp.117-118, "saepe etiam dormientes inani, vanaque imaginatione tantum eos agitare"

<sup>113</sup> Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.77, "Sic vere aliquando ibi Sagae praesentes existunt: saepe etiam; cum ab iis absint, ac arctiore somno domi detineantur, videntur tantum sibi adesse, ludificante nimirum sensus Daemone, cuius fascinationibus multae imagines in dormientium animos solent irripere"

<sup>114</sup> Guazzo, 1626, Book I, Chapter XIII, p.81, "ex ore vaporem quedam crassum evomunt, in quo gestorum imagines, ut in speculo intuentur."

However much they were willing to admit that illusion and dreams were a possibility, their belief was in the reality of the physical sabbat. Most of the evidence they produced was simply to support this opinion. Remi made his beliefs clear very early on, “we may first conclude that it is no mere fable that Witches meet and converse with Demons in every person.”<sup>115</sup>

The Counter Reformation writers, as has been shown, elaborated upon the concept of the sabbat that had been prevalent at the time of the Reformation. All the acknowledged aspects were enlarged and reinforced, many through the use of confession evidence to support the writers' beliefs. The sabbat generally was made more sensational by writers of the Counter Reformation, who tended to highlight the lurid aspects of witchcraft, as well as providing a great deal of detailed information.

### 7.5. Protestant Beliefs

The Protestants did not feel obliged to write in great depth about the details of the sabbat, unlike their Catholic counterparts. While the sabbat had developed into a major element of witchcraft, and possibly the most important one for believers, for Protestant demonologists, it remained one aspect, admittedly an important one, but still only one of many. For this reason, there are very few details about the sabbat available in the Protestant writings, and certainly not of the depth of the Catholic writing.

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<sup>115</sup> Remi, Book I, Chapter I, p.36, “hoc primum colligere est, non esse fabulosum, quod vulgus Sagarum loquitur sibi praesentibus praesentes adesse Daemones, ac coram congregari.”

### 7.5.1 Protestant Beliefs in a Real Sabbath

The Protestants were generally ambivalent about the reality of the sabbat, but Daneau and James both believed it could be real. Indeed, King James was involved in the North Berwick trials of 1590, where a large number of local witches were supposed to have sailed into the town and held a sabbat. The devil was present to be adored in the manner customary across Europe.<sup>116</sup> James wrote that the devil “makes he them [witches] in great numbers to conveene (though publickly they dare not) for his service.” If this did not make his opinion in the matter sufficiently clear, he continued, “I not onelie take it to be true in their opiniones, but even so to be indeede.”<sup>117</sup> Daneau was the only other Protestant writer to believe fully in the possibility of a real sabbat. He declared, through the voice of Theophilus, that, “they meet together in certain appointed places, not all of them together at once, but those of them whom he choses to call.”<sup>118</sup> He replied to Antonius that experience and testimonies proved that sabbats were true, “the constant confessions of Sorcerers themselves, with other endles testimonies are against you and your opinion.”<sup>119</sup>

The notion that witches covered their absence through the use of counterfeit bodies was discussed by Daneau; this was his explanation for some men believing that flight was an illusion, “Whereby it comes to pass, that many men believe that Sorcerers are not bodily present at their assemblies.”<sup>120</sup> However, the notion that witches could delude their

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<sup>116</sup> Clark, S, ‘King James’s *Daemonologie* : Witchcraft and Kingship’ in Anglo (ed), *The Damned Art, Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1977), p.158

<sup>117</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter III, p.112

<sup>118</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.67, “certis locis conveniunt, non omnes autem semel et simul, sed quos illi libitum fuit convocare”

<sup>119</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.80, “Ergo constantes ipsorum Sortiariorum confessiones infinitaque testimonia tibi, Antoni, adversantur, tuaeque sententiae”

<sup>120</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.84, “Ex quo fit, ut plerique existiment Sortiarios iis coetibus non interesse ... quos se adiisse tamen contendunt”



husbands with spurious bodies was amusing to Scot. In what was almost a direct quote from Alciatus, he sarcastically commented, "Wherin their incredulitie is incredible, who will have a verie bodie in the feined plaie, and a phantasticall bodie in the true bed."<sup>121</sup>

#### 7.5.2 *The Elements of the Sabbat: Feasting, Drinking, Dancing and the Orgy*

Of all the Protestants, only Daneau, the most firm believer in diabolic witchcraft, felt the need to write about the practicalities of the sabbat. The others ignored the subject entirely, not considering it worthy of discussion. However, even Daneau did not examine this aspect of sabbats in as much detail as his Catholic counterparts. He simply declared that, "these meetings are not weekly, monthly, or yearly, but when and how often their master chooses."<sup>122</sup>

James referred to the belief that while at the sabbat, witches had to recount their evil deeds and their future plans. He wrote that the devil was curious about their plans for future evil, and would help them in their preparations, "their master enquiring at them what they would be at: everie one of them propones unto him, what wicked turne they would have done, either for obtaining of riches, or for revenging them upon anie whome they have malice at ... he teacheth them the means, whereby they may do the same."<sup>123</sup>

Interestingly, unlike the Counter Reformation writers, he made no comment about any beatings that the devil gave, or the cruelty of the devil to his followers. Daneau also

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<sup>121</sup> Scot, Book III, Chapter ii, p.43

<sup>122</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.68, "nec enim fiunt isti conventus hebdomadatim, menstruatim vel etiam annuatim, sed quando quotiensque isti magistro visum est."

<sup>123</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter V, p.116

commented that while at the sabbat, witches recounted their evil and asked the devil to perform evil deeds.<sup>124</sup>

Scot was the only author to write about the feast that was an accepted part of the witches' gathering. This is possibly due to the differing lengths of the Protestant works, as none of the other tracts are quite as long as that written by Scot, however, it is also possible that he believed this aspect to be more amenable to ridicule. In his discussion of the fifteen crimes that were commonly directed at witches, he included the charges that they "boile infants ... untill their flesh be made potable," and that, "they eate the flesh and drinke the bloud of men and children openlie." To these he replied that the charges of boiling children were "untrue, incredible, and impossible," and concluded that if they truly ate human flesh, "then are they kin to the Anthropophagi and Canibals. But I beleeeve never an honest man in England nor in France, will affirme that he hath seene any of these persons, that are said to be witches, do so; if they shuld, I beleeeve it would poison them."<sup>125</sup> He later returned to this subject, mocking the idea that witches could feast on animals that were later found to be alive and well, "after they have delicatlie banketted with the divell ... and have eaten up a fat oxe, and emptied a butt of malmsie, ... nothing is missed of all this in the morning. For the ladie ... with a golden rod striketh the vessell & the binne, and they are fullie replenished againe."<sup>126</sup>

Surprisingly, although Daneau and Scot discussed the dancing at the sabbat, neither showed any interest in the orgy that was believed to be the consequence and finale.

Daneau discussed the dance and declared that it was led by the devil, "he leads the dance,

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<sup>124</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.66

<sup>125</sup> Scot, Book II, Chapter ix, p.33

or else they merrily hop and dance around him, singing the most filthy songs in his praise.<sup>127</sup> Scot simply reiterated the beliefs held by the believers, that the witches never failed to dance.<sup>128</sup>

### 7.5.3 *The Osculum Infame and Homage to the Devil*

While the Catholics believed the homage rendered to the devil, and the obscene kiss to be essential elements to examine, this was not the case with the Protestant writers. The physical homage to the devil, as far as they were concerned, was of minor importance when compared to the spiritual desertion of God. Daneau followed Catholic conventions, and wrote that adoration of the devil was through the kissing of his behind, "For when Satan shows himself in the form of a man, it is shameful to say, they kiss his buttocks." His proof was that witches would later confess to having done this.<sup>129</sup> He declared that this was not the only way in which homage was paid to the devil, "some of them fall down at his knees, some offer to him black burning candles, others kiss him on some part of the body in which he appears visibly."<sup>130</sup>

James agreed with Daneau that the kiss was real, "Yea, their forme of adoration, to be the kissing of his hinder parts." He admitted that this could seem ridiculous, but believed that the devil wished to be adored in this form, as it was another imitation of an action

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<sup>126</sup> Scot, Book III, Chapter ii, p.43

<sup>127</sup> Daneau, Chapter III, p.69, "choreas etiam turpissimas cantilenas in ipsius tamen laudem et nomen confictas laetissimi saltitant."

<sup>128</sup> Scot, Book III, Chapter ii, p.43

<sup>129</sup> Daneau, Chapter II, p.40, "nam cum se illis Satan humana specie offert, eius nates (quod est etiam dictu foetidissimum) deosculantur"

<sup>130</sup> Daneau, Chapter II, p.46, "eorum alii genibus ipsius advoluntur, alii candelas incensas et nigras offerunt, alii aliqua parte corporis, quo tunc visibilis apparet eum osculantur"

of God.<sup>131</sup> Reginald Scot found this aspect of the sabbat, as he did most of them, quite ridiculous. His reasoning for this, was that as a spirit the devil could have no flesh, and therefore, could not be physically touched. He declared simply that “the kissing of his bare buttocks, ... are absurd lies.”<sup>132</sup>

The mark was only discussed by James and Daneau, possibly as belief in this would entail belief in the reality of the sabbat. Both believed that all witches were marked in such a way, although Daneau admitted that there were those who believed only some were marked, he concluded, “there is none of them upon whom he has not left some note or token of his power and prerogative over them.” That the mark might be impossible to see was partly due to the devil being able conceal it in places that were not able to be seen.<sup>13</sup> James agreed with this, but added that the mark remained sore and unhealed until the next sabbat, when it became insensitive to all pain.<sup>134</sup> James admitted that the mark was a useful aid when trying witches, (along with the water ordeal), “there are two other good helps that may be used for their trial: the one is the finding of their marke, and the trying the insensibleness thereof.”<sup>135</sup>

#### 7.5.4 Protestant Beliefs in the Sabbat as Illusion

As with the Catholic writers, there was some discussion over the possibility of the sabbat being either illusion or dreams. Daneau presented some of the debate over this issue, having Antonius unsure as to the reality of the sabbat. Theophilus asked him, “You do

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<sup>131</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter III, p.113

<sup>132</sup> Scot, Book III, Chapter vi, p.48

<sup>133</sup> Daneau, Chapter IIII, p.65, “cui non impresserit sui in eum iuris et potestatis aliquod indicium et vestigium”

<sup>134</sup> James, Second Book, Chapter II, p.111

not believe, Anthony, that sorcerers do meet together, and are present ... at their diabolic synagogues, although they boast that they do?" Antonius replied that he believed it to be fantasy, "Only in imagination of mind, and demonic illusions."<sup>136</sup>

Daneau, through the character of Antonius, gave all the arguments which were used by sceptics against the reality of the sabbat, and although continuing to argue against the possibility of illusion, did not really come to any certain conclusion.

The fact that witches believed these possibly imaginary sabbats to be real, was discussed by Daneau and Scot. Daneau gave many examples of the power of imagination, mostly caused by melancholy and vapours, or the illusions of the devil. Antonius asked Theophilus why, if all these examples could appear real to the sufferer, then illusions caused by Satan, "who is of greater force than any of the above named causes," could not have the same effect.<sup>137</sup> Scot was amazed that if these actions were only dreams, then the witches could not remember that this was so, "It were marvell ... that when those witches awake, they neither consider nor remember that they were in a dreame."<sup>138</sup> James, who had examined the possibility of a witch attending the sabbat in spirit when discussing flight, and had not come to a certain conclusion due to the problem of the soul's inability to leave the body, did not believe in a more lenient punishment for those who maintained a purely spiritual attendance at the sabbat.<sup>13</sup> Philomathes asked what should be done if witches had only visited in spirit, to which Epistemon replied, "I think they are not a haire the lesse guiltie: For the Devill durst never have borrowed their shaddow

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<sup>135</sup> James, Third Book, Chapter VI, p.135

<sup>136</sup> Daneau, Chapter III, p.73, "Non credis, Antoni, Sortiarios praesentes suis istis coetibus et Synagogis diabolicis interesse, quanquam de eo gloriantur ipsi"  
"Sola animi cogitatione et illusionem diabolicam"

<sup>137</sup> Daneau, Chapter III, p.74, "qui longe iis superioribus causis potentior est"

<sup>138</sup> Scot, Book X, Chapter ix, p.186

or similitude to that turne, if their consent had not bene at it.” He defended this stance by declaring that God would not allow the images of innocent people to be abused by the devil, and therefore, any who were seen at a sabbat could only be guilty.<sup>140</sup>

Reginald Scot discussed whether the tales of the sabbats were just dreams, and concluded that if this were true then, “they lie that mainteine those actions to be doone in deed and veritie, which in truth are doone no waie.”<sup>141</sup> This was the same conclusion that Gifford was to reach, in his single, very brief mention of the sabbat; that they were not true, and merely demonic delusions.<sup>142</sup>

Although the Protestants did examine the sabbat, they were basically uninterested in the lurid and sensational aspects that so excited their Catholic contemporaries. The sabbat was a single issue in the whole witchcraft debate, and even for quasi-believers such as Daneau and James, it was no more important an aspect than any other.

## 7.6. Conclusion

The sabbat had its origins in the heretical gatherings of the Medieval period, and possibly the meetings of early Christians. The details were developed over time, and gradually it became more and more lurid and sensational, as Robin Briggs wrote, “the stereotype is obvious; it consisted of inverting all the positive values of society, adding a

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<sup>139</sup> James, Book II, Chapter IIII, pp.114-115

<sup>140</sup> James, Third Book, Chapter VI, p.135

<sup>141</sup> Scot, Book X, Chapter ix, p.186

<sup>142</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, K3'

lot of lurid detail (often borrowed from earlier allegations), then throwing the resulting bucket of filth over the selected victims.”<sup>143</sup>

The sabbat was an essential part of witchcraft for any who wished to see the witch hunting continue, as Scot wrote, “if the league be untrue, as are the residue of their confessions, the witchmongers arguments fall to the ground.”<sup>144</sup> Without a sabbat, there could be no widespread conspiracy which was planning the downfall of Christianity, as witches could only be isolated, individual evil doers. However, with the advent of the sabbat, there was the possibility that huge numbers of witches were meeting to plan their evil, and commit unspeakable atrocities. The sabbat was essential for the largest panics, as a witch could be interrogated until she confessed to seeing large numbers of acquaintances at the sabbat, thereby fulfilling the hunters' beliefs. Salazar wrote in 1612, that the accusations generated by belief in the sabbat led to chaos in a village, “thus immediately and without any effort the Devil leaves the village in an uproar [and] those unjustly incriminated exposed to condemnation.”<sup>145</sup>

By the end of the sixteenth century, possibly earlier, the sabbat was accepted as an essential element of witchcraft. The dissemination of this idea is quite easy to trace; many sermons were given on the subject of this evil, and pamphlets detailing trials were readily available, “Listen Oh men and women! Three hundred plainly came together in the Black Forest, ... Nearly five hundred persons came from many lands and from far

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<sup>143</sup> Briggs, Robin, op cit, p.32

<sup>144</sup> Scot, Book III, Chapter iv, p.44

<sup>145</sup> Henningsen, Gustav, *The Witches' Advocate*, p.316

away.”<sup>146</sup> Carlo Ginzburg wrote of a sixteenth century burlesque which shows common perceptions of witchcraft, “Night and Day/ he robs you and goes off to the sabbat.”<sup>147</sup> This sort of evidence, combined with the pictorial images and the demonological tracts themselves, demonstrate the importance and prevalence of the sabbat idea, and the way in which the idea of a witches’ meeting developed.

For the Early Church the concept of the sabbat was ignored, possibly due to the stigma attached to accusations made against the early Christians themselves. The scholastic writers readily wrote of the sabbat accusations made against heretical groups. With the linking of heresy and witchcraft, it seemed inevitable that the sabbat would also be joined to witchcraft. However, the scholastic writers were not especially interested in the sensational aspects of the sabbat, and were quite prepared to consider the possibility of its being demonic illusion.

This tradition was continued by the pre-Reformation writers, Champier, Martin of Arles, Ciruelo and Ponzinibio, none of whom were particularly keen to examine the sabbat idea that was to become so prevalent less than a century later. Although they were not as certain about the sabbat as they were other aspects of witchcraft, they asserted that it was most likely to be a demonic illusion. The Protestants could be classed with the pre-Reformation writers, in that they too ignored the lurid and sensational, and dealt as briefly as possible with the sabbat, in order to concentrate on what they felt to be the more important issues. James and Daneau admitted the possibility that the sabbat was real, but having said this, they also showed the opposite opinion, demonstrating their

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<sup>146</sup> Midelfort, H.C. Erik, ‘Were There Really Witches?’ in Kingdon (ed), *Transition and Revolution*, (Burgess Publishing Co., Minnesota, 1974), p.212



uncertainty in this matter. Hemmingsen wrote nothing about the sabbat, and Gifford less than one sentence, a situation that would be impossible for a Counter Reformation witch writer, but this only serves to demonstrate how unimportant the sensational was to writers concerned with the pastoral.

Only the Counter Reformation writers detailed the aspects of the sabbat that are famous: dancing, feasting and orgies. They took the concept of witches gathering to worship the devil, and elaborated upon it until it became a perverse celebration. They admitted the possibility that it was an illusion, but then declared that this was just as certain a proof of guilt as reality. Unlike the earlier writers and the Protestants, these sensational aspects were of more importance to them than any other of the witchcraft issue, and it is this, more than anything else that separates them from those groups.

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<sup>147</sup> Ginzburg, Carlo, *The Night Battles*, p.90

# Conclusion

## 8 Conclusion

The influence of the Reformation and Counter Reformation upon the literature of witchcraft is an issue of importance that has not previously been examined in any depth. Historians have examined the way in which the reformations influenced the actual persecution, without coming to any conclusion. The literature of witchcraft, the demonologies, are important, although they did not necessarily change the course of the trials and hunts, as they give a unique insight into the theories behind such persecutions.

As the Western Christian response to witchcraft was, in practise, virtually the same for both confessional groups, it would be expected that the literature of witchcraft would follow the same pattern. However, as this study has shown, there were dramatic differences between Catholic and Protestant, and also between pre-Reformation and Counter Reformation Catholic. These differences are unexpected, simply because of the shared scriptural beliefs and traditions. As has been discussed, the confessional divide made little difference to the way in which accused witches were treated, or whether there were large scale persecutions. The split is not as would be expected, that is, between the two Catholic groups and the Protestants, but with the grouping of the pre-Reformation Catholics with the Protestants on one side, and the Counter Reformation Catholics on the other.

The reason behind this split occurring in such a way is simple: the Counter Reformation writers were forced into the position of having to deny virtually all the demonological theory produced by the Protestants. This process meant that they had to accept the more extreme, sensationalist aspects which had previously been the province of the *Malleus maleficarum*

tradition, and deny the parallel Catholic group, which had remained both rational and close to the earlier traditions of the Church.

I chose to examine the important themes within witchcraft, rather than simply particular authors, in order to demonstrate the way in which these issues developed. This enabled me to compare the different ways in which the authors approached the issues, and see the influence of the reformations upon each individual issue, as well as the debate as a whole. This also meant that it was possible to examine, for individual issues within the witchcraft debate, whether new theories were being added, or whether older ones were merely being incorporated into the new structure.

The aspects of divine power, and its consequences for belief in the power of witches, were issues that caused little difficulty for either the pre-Reformation or Protestant writers. Their belief that God was omnipotent, and that, therefore, the powers of witches could only be illusory, is very clear. Any trials and tribulations were sent by God and not through the power of witches, as signs of his displeasure, or as tests of faith. This was not an aspect that particularly concerned the Counter Reformation writers, although they did discuss the superstition that appeared to be inherent in everyday life, it was not the main focus of their works. They did not deny the omnipotence of God, but neither did they place a great deal of emphasis upon it.

The sensational, now traditional, elements of witchcraft were of little concern for the pre-Reformation authors. Although they discussed the possibility that flight and sabbats were

real, they believed these were more likely to be demonic illusions. They were joined in this conclusion by those Protestant writers who discussed the issue. Gifford and Hemmingsen ignored the sensational aspects of witchcraft entirely, highlighting a major difference with the Counter Reformation writers. The other Protestants were either entirely sceptical, or rather uncertain. James and Daneau examined both the possibilities of reality and illusion, without reaching any certain conclusions, demonstrating the difficulties they faced in joining an extremely providentialist outlook with demonstrations of demonic power. For the Counter Reformation authors, the sensational elements were the most important aspect of witchcraft beliefs, as these were the most obvious manifestations of apostasy.

In any examination of the literature of witchcraft, it is vitally important to recognise that each group of writers focused upon, and emphasised, different aspects of the subject. The links between the pre-Reformation and Protestant writers are very strong, with the same focus upon providentialist beliefs, albeit a slightly different emphasis, and a concern for the pastoral. The Counter Reformation writers have very little in common with their predecessors, making the sensational virtually the only focus of their works. The reason for this great difference was simply the need to deny Protestant teachings, and develop a theory that excluded all of their supposed errors. The discovery of this difference in concern, adds a new dimension to the studies of witchcraft and witch hunting in the 16th and 17th centuries, and opens up new areas for research on other pieces of literature and other areas of Europe which have not been included in this study. These conclusions have important consequences for the wider question of confessional differences in the 16th and 17th centuries. The way in which the Counter Reformation authors denied earlier doctrines

because of the situation they faced, demonstrates how theories were not fixed and rigid, but had to be fluid. In this way, they were forced into denying Protestant witch beliefs, even though many of these beliefs coincided with earlier Catholic doctrine.

This study has important consequences for acculturation theory, which has often been applied to the persecution of witches. The post-Tridentine Church certainly made great efforts to eradicate superstitious and even pagan beliefs, however, this effort is not reflected in the demonologies. Those writing before the Reformation, as well as the Protestants, wrote heavily proscriptive works, denying the validity of many rites and rituals which the common people believed to be acceptable. However, it is not normally these groups who have been accused of forcing Christian beliefs onto the populace, but writers of the Counter Reformation. The Counter Reformation demonologists I have studied, did not show any particular signs of concern regarding the supposed lack of Christian belief among the populace, or any attempts to educate people beyond a simple condemnation of witchcraft. They focused upon the sensational aspects of witchcraft, with little effort directed at the quasi-Christian beliefs and actions of the common people.

The confessional divide between Catholic and Protestant was far more important in literature than has previously been acknowledged. This is partly due to the lack of influence the reformations had upon the persecutions themselves, but also to the lack of comparative study of the authors involved. The literature itself did not directly affect the persecution or otherwise of witches, but is vitally important for assessing the influence that the reformations of the 16th century had upon theological beliefs, and the way in which these were

developed. This study has shown the ways in which the Reformation and Counter Reformation influenced the development of witchcraft literature, and importantly, how the need for both sides to reinforce their differences, led to such a dramatic divergence within demonological theory.

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