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# Unclean Spirits

Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the  
Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries

D. P. Walker

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D. P. WALKER



University of Pennsylvania Press

Philadelphia

1981

First published in Great Britain in 1981 by Scolar Press,  
90/91 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PY

This edition published in the United States of America  
by University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981

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**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**  
Walker, Daniel Pickering

Unclean spirits

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Demonology – France – Case studies – Addresses, essays, lectures. 2. Demonology – England – Case studies – Addresses, essays, lectures. 3. Demonic possession – Case studies – Addresses, essays, lectures. 4. Exorcism – Case studies – Addresses, essays, lectures. I. Title.

BF1517. F5W34 1981 133.4'2'0942 80-22649

ISBN 0-8122-7797-X

Printed in Great Britain by  
Western Printing Services Ltd  
Bristol

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## FOREWORD

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This little book consists, with minor alterations and additions, of the Northcliffe Lectures which I gave at University College, London, in January 1979.

I want to thank the following scholars for the valuable bibliographical help they have generously given me: Dr Sydney Anglo, Dr Alice Browne, Dr Sarah Hutton, Professor Sears Jayne, Mr David M. Jones, Mr Peter Mack, Professor John L. Murphy, Professor Michael Screech, Dr Malcolm Smith.

The Warburg Institute  
September 1979

D. P. WALKER





## I INTRODUCTION

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This book is based on a small sample of cases of possession, limited geographically to France and England, and chronologically to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Owing to the lack of adequate and reliable secondary literature,<sup>1</sup> we know very little about possession in the rest of Europe at this period, or in other periods anywhere, with the exception of seventeenth-century France, which is studied in Robert Mandrou's excellent *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1968). Possession in Elizabethan England receives a few typically illuminating pages (477–92) in Keith Thomas's *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971), and there are brief summaries of some of the cases in C. L'Estrange Ewen's useful and reliable book, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London, 1933). The notorious affair at Loudun around 1634 is widely known through Aldous Huxley's well-informed, but vulgar and fictionalized, account in his *Devils of Loudun*,<sup>2</sup> and there are a few monographs on other French cases. For the medieval period, Adolf Franz's *Die Kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1909, 2 vols), though it deals primarily with the formulae of exorcism, would be a good starting-point. Mandrou's book is of particular interest in that it shows one way in which public exorcisms were of great historical importance in seventeenth-century France, namely, that, through the close connexion of these exorcisms with accusations of sorcery, they were a major cause of a gradual change of attitude in the legal profession and thus of the eventual obsolescence of trials for witchcraft. This occurred because the enormous publicity surrounding these cases and the manifest injustice of the trials of the supposed sorcerers concentrated the attention of intelligently sceptical people, especially doctors and lawyers, on diabolic phenomena, and thus led to doubts about their supernatural causation.

I am, then, taking a step into a largely unexplored field. It is a small step, but one which will, I hope, show that the field is worth exploring

and encourage other scholars to do so. My two countries are not directly connected until the end of my period, when accounts of two important French cases were quickly translated into English; but the parallels and contrasts between the French and English cases are illuminating. With regard to my chronological limits my starting-points are not arbitrary. I am interested chiefly in cases that receive considerable publicity, both because these may have some effect on public opinion with regard to diabolic activity and because they influence later cases; and such notorious cases begin, as far as I know, in France with the exorcisms at Laon in 1566, and in England with those at Denham in 1585, though there are a few quite well-known earlier Elizabethan cases which are dealt with by Keith Thomas.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter I shall indicate briefly the kind of sources I have used, and then run through the main themes and problems I shall be concerned with in the rest of the book.

My sources consist, for actual cases of possession, of contemporary published accounts, which are mostly by eye-witnesses, or compiled from the evidence of eye-witnesses. These, with a few exceptions, are full, detailed and written in good faith. For the theory of possession and exorcism I have relied mainly on the debates arising out of the cases and on authorities cited in these, which range from the Bible, its commentators, and the Church Fathers, to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century treatises on magic and witchcraft. There are only a few specialized works on possession and exorcism. Two authors that are very frequently cited are the Jesuit Petrus Thyraeus, whose *De Daemoniacis* appeared in 1594 and in a fuller edition in 1598,<sup>4</sup> and the Franciscan Girolamo Menghi, who published several treatises on exorcism in the 1570s and 1580s, two of which were reprinted in a useful collection, the *Thesaurus Exorcismorum* of 1608.<sup>5</sup> Of the writers on magic and witchcraft who deal at length with possession three stand out as influential: Johann Wier, physician, disciple of Cornelius Agrippa, and opponent of witch-burning, whose *De Praestigii Daemonum* went through various expanding editions from 1563 to 1577, and was twice translated into French;<sup>6</sup> Jean Bodin, the great French political theorist, whose *Demonomanie* of 1580 is largely a refutation of Wier;<sup>7</sup> and the English gentleman,

Reginald Scot, whose *Discoverie of Witchcraft* of 1584 carries Wier's scepticism one stage further.<sup>8</sup>

The printed accounts of cases can sometimes be supplemented by manuscript sources and, when the possession involves accusations of witchcraft, there may be legal records of the witch's trial. Such cases do not occur in France during our period; the English cases of this kind have been summarized in Ewen's *Witchcraft and Demonianism*. Since cases of possession without accusations of witchcraft do not leave any traces in legal or other official documents, I doubt whether it will ever be possible to do any statistical work on them, as has been successfully done for witchcraft in limited areas of space and time, for example, by Alan Macfarlane on Tudor and Stuart Essex, by Erik Midelfort on a part of southern Germany and by William Monter on the Jura in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.<sup>9</sup> No doubt further research on possession in my period and area would reveal many more cases than I know of; but it could never be exhaustive. Even if this work were done, and for other times and places, no valid comparisons of a statistical kind could be made because of the widely different character of the records and the impossibility of exhausting them. It would be fatuous to count up the numerous cases of exorcism in medieval saints' lives and compare them with the number of cases in Elizabethan England to be found in eye-witness accounts, treatises on magic, letters, journals, etc. Whereas it is both possible and useful to examine all the surviving legal documents of a limited space and time, and then make general statements about the incidence of witchcraft.

Nevertheless, there is evidence, I think, that enables one to make cautiously vague statements about the frequency of possession in this period. As we shall see, contemporary witnesses in France and England sometimes remark on the novelty of seeing the convulsions of a demoniac, while, on the other hand, there are indications that exorcisms were one of the regular tourist attractions of Rome; for example, one of Joachim du Bellay's satirical sonnets in the sequence, *Les Regrets*, written while he was there in the mid-1550s,<sup>10</sup> or Montaigne's *Journal* of his journey there in 1581.<sup>11</sup> From this kind of evidence my impression is that cases of possession in our area and period were fairly rare, certainly much less

frequent than the other main diabolic activity, witchcraft. This is perhaps one reason why these cases could be used so effectively for religious propaganda: they were common enough for ordinary people to understand them and believe in them – such belief was in any case, for Catholics but not for all Protestants, guaranteed by the exorcisms in the New Testament – and rare enough to be an exciting novelty and thus attract large audiences. (In these generalizations I am, of course, leaving out of account the regular pre-baptismal exorcisms of the Catholic and Lutheran Churches.)

This brings me to the first of my main themes and problems: the use of exorcisms for religious propaganda. That they should be so used is not of course in itself surprising. The exorcisms performed by Christ and the Apostles and disciples were intended, together with other miracles, to establish a new religion; and exorcisms were used in the first few centuries of the Church's life as a weapon against the pagan gods, who regularly appear as possessing devils.<sup>12</sup> But by the Middle Ages the main purpose of exorcisms, apart of course from curing the demoniac, seems to have been to demonstrate the sanctity of the exorcist; there were no more pagans to convert and no heretics who could not be more effectively attacked by fire and the sword.<sup>13</sup> 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. In France the propaganda was only in one direction, that is to say, exorcisms were used by the Catholics in order to convert, or at least to confute, the Huguenots, and to confirm the faith and devotional practices of the Roman Church. This aim was to be achieved mainly by demonstrating the Real Presence in the consecrated host. The exorcisms were accompanied by deliberately encouraged publicity, both at the time by attracting large audiences, and afterwards by publishing printed accounts.

In England the propaganda was more varied and less strong, and the publicity, at least during the exorcisms, less massive. Moreover, in England there were both Catholic and Protestant cures of demoniacs. In the former, the French emphasis on the eucharist is less dominant, and there may have been more immediate politico-religious aims. The

publicity was necessarily limited by the perilous situation of English Catholics, especially priests, from the 1580s onwards. In the Protestant cases there is considerable anti-Papist polemic, sometimes an effort to defend Puritanism against the bishops, and in one at least, that of the terrible Throckmorton children, no propaganda at all, except perhaps in favour of witch-hunting.

The eucharist, so overwhelmingly dominant in the French cases, was also central in the theoretical debate on magic between Protestants and Catholics, as I tried to show over twenty years ago.<sup>14</sup> For Catholics the power of the words *Hoc est corpus meum* produced the supreme miraculous or magical effect, transubstantiation; while for sacramentarian Protestants, such as the Calvinist Huguenots and members of the Church of England, the Papists were performing an idolatrous magical ceremony. In this debate Catholic writers on magic, for example the Jesuit Del Rio,<sup>15</sup> had to defend practices such as the use of holy water, relics, *agnus dei*, etc. against the charge of being identical with magical operations, while the Protestants, for example Thomas Erastus,<sup>16</sup> had the difficult task of dealing with magic in the Bible, such as the serpent competition between Aaron and Pharaoh's magicians, and of explaining why the miracles in the Gospels were genuine, whereas medieval and modern Catholic miracles were fakes. Indeed for some Protestants the doctrine of the cessation of miracles soon after the Apostolic age, a doctrine firmly held, though hard to defend on Biblical or early Patristic evidence, made it very difficult and dangerous, as we shall see, to attempt to cast out unclean spirits at all, by any means. (I am using the term *Protestant* in a narrow sense, which excludes Lutherans, who admitted pre-baptismal exorcism and had their own doctrine of the Real Presence.)

Catholic exorcists were particularly vulnerable to charges of magical superstition because it was so easy to draw exact parallels, as did Wier and others,<sup>17</sup> between the magical conjuration of spirits good or bad and the formulae of exorcism. The term *exorcize* comes from the Greek ἐξορκίζω, a derivative of ὄρκος, meaning an oath, and is translated into Latin as *adjuro* or *conjuro*. The exorcist expelling a devil, the judge putting a witness on oath, the magician conjuring a spirit, are all compelling

someone to do something by invoking a higher authority, usually God, who will enforce the command. That is to say, 'to exorcize' does not primarily mean 'to cast out a devil', but 'to put a devil on oath'.<sup>18</sup> Christ did not exorcize devils, because there was no higher authority than His own by which to constrain them; he commanded them to go out. A typical exorcism begins: '*Adjuro te, spiritus nequissime, per Deum omnipotentem . . .*' 'I adjure thee, most evil spirit, by almighty God . . .' There was at this time a great variety of published exorcisms from which a priest could choose – there was no attempt to standardize the procedure or the formulae until Paul V's *Rituale Romanum* of 1614<sup>19</sup> – but they all follow this pattern. Catholic exorcisms were designed, therefore, not only to demonstrate transubstantiation, but also to vindicate other practices and beliefs under attack from Protestants as magical superstitions: exorcism itself, relics, holy water and other blest objects, the sign of the cross, the power of names.

If a case of possession and dispossession by priest or minister has produced edifying results, if the propaganda has been successful in demonstrating that the Catholics are right about the Mass and the Huguenots wrong, or that God is in favour of further reformation of the Church of England and more severe repression of the Papists, then it is evident that the possession by the devil took place at least with God's permission and perhaps with His encouragement. This is perfectly orthodox. All writers on magic, witchcraft or possession, are acutely aware of the danger of Manichaeism, of allowing the devil to become an Antigod, and they mention God's permission, not once only as a general condition and limitation of diabolic activity, but in each specific instance: seducing a witch, entering a human body, successfully tempting a pious man with impure thoughts – the devil has achieved each of these *Deo permittente*, with God's permission. Why does God give the devil this permission? As in the case of human wickedness, of Adam's sin or Judas's betrayal, in order that a greater good may come of it, the Incarnation, the Redemption. With regard to possession or vexing by a devil, the traditional view is that the two primary aims of God's permission are the punishment of sinners and the testing, the refining of the elect. The classic example of the former is Saul – 'But the Spirit of

the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him',<sup>20</sup> and of the latter Job. Saul was often regarded as having been possessed,<sup>21</sup> but Job was not, in that Satan did not actually enter his body; that is to say he was obsessed but not possessed. This is a useful distinction of terms, which I shall observe; but it was not observed by most sixteenth-century writers, who tend to use the two terms indifferently. Neither of these traditional divine aims plays an important part in sixteenth-century cases of possession, nor do the others listed, for example in Valerio Polidoro's *Practica Exorcistarum* of 1587,<sup>22</sup> namely, to prove the sanctity of the exorcist, to convince those who disbelieve in demons, to manifest God's power, though the last two are sometimes mentioned. These aims are dwarfed by the interconfessional propagandist intentions, pro- or anti-Catholic. Moreover, in some of the French cases, it is less a matter of God permitting possession than of His sending a devil with specific instructions to demonstrate Catholic orthodoxy and confound the heretics. The distinction between God's permission of evil and His causation of it, though essential if we are to avoid blasphemy, is not a convincing one, as Pierre Bayle showed long ago.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, it comes as a shock to find devils acting as the direct agents of God and preaching Catholic truth. It also raises the question of the devil's veracity or mendacity.

This question was of great practical importance, and the answer to it is by no means easy or obvious. In the Gospel of St John,<sup>24</sup> Christ, when rebuking the scribes and Pharisees, says that the devil 'was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it'. On the other hand it was a possessing devil who said to Christ, through the mouth of the demoniac in the synagogue: 'I know thee who thou art; the Holy one of God'.<sup>25</sup> The Gadarene demoniac(s) cried out: 'What have I to do with thee, Jesus, Son of God most high?'<sup>26</sup> And the girl at Philippi, whom St Paul dispossessed of a spirit of divination, said of him and Silas: 'These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.'<sup>27</sup> Thus the devil, though he is the father of lies, knows the most important kind of religious truth ('the devils also believe and tremble'),<sup>28</sup> and he may



bear witness to it. But Christ rebuked the devil in the synagogue, saying: 'Hold thy peace', and Paul did dispossess the girl. On the other hand Christ asked the name of the Gadarene devils, and He complied with their request to go into the swine, perhaps because they adjured Him by God (in Mark): 'I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not' (ὄρχίζω σε τὸν θεόν, μὴ με βασανίσῃς) – a proof of the enormous power of adjuration, that is, exorcism.<sup>29</sup>

That a priest has the power, by adjuration, to constrain the devil to tell the truth is implied by the Catholic manuals of exorcism, in which the priest is told to interrogate the devil, to ask his name, whether he has any companions, when he entered the body, for what cause, when he will depart and what sign he will give of his departure.<sup>30</sup> But in the *Rituale Romanum*, and in other Catholic treatises, the priest is warned not to ask the devil unnecessary, curious questions,<sup>31</sup> and not to allow him to volunteer information. Protestant writers also advise extreme caution when conversing with a devil.<sup>32</sup> But in practice, as we shall see, casters-out of demons, both Catholic and Protestant, in giving credence to the devils' utterances go far beyond what the treatises advise or the examples in the New Testament could justify.

This lack of caution when dealing with the father of lies had important practical consequences when the devil stated that a certain person had sent him into the demoniac's body. If this statement was believed, it resulted in that person being accused of witchcraft. In the seventeenth century in France three undoubtedly innocent priests were burnt as sorcerers: at Aix in 1611, at Loudun in 1634, and at Louviers in 1647, having been convicted almost entirely on diabolic testimony.<sup>33</sup> In Elizabethan and Jacobean England at least sixteen witches died because of testimony given by demoniacs, and several more were arrested. It is a surprising fact, which I cannot explain, that in France such accusations do not occur in the sixteenth century, although they are so prominent in the seventeenth, whereas in England all the well-known cases of possession in Elizabeth's time produced accusations of witchcraft and usually convictions of the witches, and this connexion continued into James I's reign.<sup>34</sup>

• There is no Biblical authority whatever for supposing that possession

can be caused by witchcraft.<sup>35</sup> But for Catholics the connexion would be suggested by treatises on witchcraft or on exorcism, ranging from the *Malleus Maleficarum* in the fifteenth century<sup>36</sup> to the *Rituale Romanum* in the seventeenth,<sup>37</sup> in which the exorcist is directed to ask the devil if he is possessing through bewitchment, to search the house of the demoniac for magic objects and to burn any found; but he is not explicitly advised to find out the name of the witch, or to pursue him or her. Moreover, in one of the most authoritative and frequently cited Patristic sources for exorcism, Jerome's *Life of St Hilarion*, the Saint, when curing a virgin whose amorous possession had been caused by a youth burying charms under the threshold of her house, refused the possessing devil's injunction to remove the charms and to summon the youth, that is, the sorcerer; he refused lest he should 'seem to be trusting the devil's word, for he asserted that demons are deceptive and clever at simulating'.<sup>38</sup> For Protestants the connexion would be suggested by the treatises of Wier and Scot, who cite many contemporary cases of demoniacs successfully accusing witches. But these would certainly not lead them to follow such examples. Scot is extremely sceptical about all such diabolic activity,<sup>39</sup> and Wier thinks that, although sometimes a witch may believe she has caused possession, she is in fact merely deluded by the devil, who is always glad of the opportunity to have innocent blood shed.<sup>40</sup> George Gifford, in his admirable *Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes* of 1593, although, unlike Wier, he is in favour of putting witches to death, if they can be proved to have commerce with the devil, is most emphatically opposed to accepting diabolic testimony. If, he says, we command a possessing demon in the name of God to tell who sent him, 'Mother Joan, Mother Joan, saith he . . . shall we ground it for a certainty that he telleth no lie?'; and he goes on: 'Let all men take heed how upon their oath they give a verdict, especially touching life, upon his [*sc.* the devil's] word howsoever he seems to be forced thereunto.'<sup>41</sup> The English casters-out of devils took no notice of such cautions, as, in the seventeenth century, the French exorcists at Loudun and Louviers ignored firm decisions of the Sorbonne against accepting the devil's witness.<sup>42</sup>

The distinction between a witch and a demoniac is clear and usually

well maintained.<sup>43</sup> The devil is not inside a witch's body, as he is in a demoniac's; in consequence a witch does not suffer from convulsions and a demoniac does. A witch has voluntarily entered into association with a devil, whereas possession is involuntary and a demoniac is not therefore responsible for her wicked actions, as is a witch – though it is remarkable how few sinful acts, apart from suicide attempts and a little blasphemy, devils cause in demoniacs. There are, however, a few aberrant cases in France of a possessed woman also being a witch: in 1584 at Mons,<sup>44</sup> in 1591 at Louviers,<sup>45</sup> and, more important, Madeleine Demandolx at Aix in 1611, who provided the model for Jeanne des Anges, the leading demoniac at Loudun.<sup>46</sup>

It was usual in cases of both witchcraft and possession to consult physicians, but for very different purposes. In a case of witchcraft their expert opinion was sought merely to confirm or disprove one item among many in the evidence against the witch, namely, whether or not she had insensitive spots on her body made by the devil, or, less usually, supernumerary teats, by which she nourished her familiar demon, in the form of some small animal. They were not asked whether she was crazy or sane;<sup>47</sup> they could not therefore give an opinion such as Montaigne expressed on the old witch he examined: that she had more need of hellebore than of hemlock.<sup>48</sup> In a case of possession, on the other hand, doctors were expected to take into account the total state, physical and mental, of the patient, in order to decide whether her symptoms could come from a natural disease or not, though in practice they often failed to do this, as we shall see. The diseases considered were epilepsy, hysteria and melancholy, which in extreme forms could produce persistent hallucinations, and various combinations of these three. This limitation of medical opinion in cases of witchcraft is extremely important because a standard argument used by those who were opposed to killing witches, such as Wier, was that, being mostly female and old, they were particularly subject to delusions caused by melancholy or hysteria, and that their confessions were therefore likely to be worthless – an argument which Bodin took great pains to refute. This is one reason why the combination of possession with witchcraft had such far-reaching consequences. In such cases the doctors were examining the supposed

demoniac in search of the same natural diseases as some physicians, or sceptical laymen, supposed could account for witchcraft.

But, as Sydney Anglo has pointed out,<sup>49</sup> the whole argument from disease in favour of leniency to witches can be undermined, and Wier does himself do so, by the theory that the devil usually chooses as his victims those suffering from melancholic or hysteric delusions, who are thus easier to deceive; the melancholic witch, therefore, is probably in real communication with the devil and should be punished. This theory can also be applied to possession: a patient may display typical symptoms of epilepsy or hysteria and also be possessed by a devil, who may even be cleverly using such symptoms to conceal his presence. This way of inextricably confusing such diseases with diabolic possession has a long history. The seventeenth-century Jesuit exegete Cornelius à Lapide, commenting on the lunatics cured by Christ in Matthew 4 and 17, is able to cite Origen, Chrysostom and Jerome, in support of his view that the devil habitually uses the morbid effects of the moon on the humours, especially black bile, in order to torment demoniacs, and even that ordinary epilepsy (*epilepsia communis*) is caused by the devil.<sup>50</sup>

If one were a sixteenth-century physician looking for a natural disease as the cause of a case of apparent possession, epilepsy was perhaps the most obvious choice, since its most striking symptoms were the same as those of possession: intermittent fits of extremely violent convulsions, usually ending in a state of more or less complete insensibility. Moreover, a well-educated doctor would be aware of the long tradition of medical speculation connecting or disconnecting epilepsy and supernaturally caused states of ecstasy, a tradition of which we can read a detailed account in Owsei Temkin's book, *The Falling Sickness*.<sup>51</sup> At the beginning of this tradition stands the Hippocratic treatise, *De Morbo Sacro (On the Sacred Disease)*, which is devoted to proving that epilepsy is *not* supernaturally caused. This naturalistic line was continued in our period by such physicians as Levinus Lemnius in his *Occulta naturae miracula* of 1559,<sup>52</sup> often cited in connexion with cases of possession. As representative of the opposing line we may take the famous French medical theorist, Jean Fernel, who, in his *De abditis rerum causis* of 1548,<sup>53</sup> recounts a case of apparent epilepsy which turned out to be a

case of possession, a case constantly quoted by later writers wishing to assert the reality of demonic possession and oppose its reduction to disease. This was a noble youth who suffered from convulsive fits, occurring at least ten times a day, which were judged to be typical of epilepsy, except that during the fit he remained conscious and could talk. For three months he was treated with various purgatives to counteract the malignant vapours causing the epilepsy, but without success. Then some devil (*daemon quidam*), speaking in Latin and Greek, a language unknown to the patient, announced that he was the cause of all the trouble. He revealed many secrets of the bystanders, especially of the doctors, laughing at them for having damaged their patient's health by useless remedies. When the patient's father visited him during a fit, he cried out in horror and revulsion because his father was wearing an image of St Michael; he was also revolted by hearing words of Scripture. The devil said that a certain man, unnamed, had sent him.

We can see in this case the main marks of possession that were evolved to differentiate it from disease and which appear, with few variations, in all the literature on the subject:<sup>54</sup>

1 the ability to speak and understand languages not known to the patient;

2 knowledge of other people's secrets, of things hidden or in any way unknowable by natural means – for short, we can call this mark *clairvoyance*;

3 bodily strength exceeding the patient's normal capacity (this mark is absent in Fernel's case, but is nearly always present in others);

4 horror and revulsion at sacred things, at hearing Scripture, especially the beginning of St John's Gospel, being touched by relics, the host, holy water, *agnus dei* or other blest objects.

As we shall see, there were in most cases of possession attempts to prove or disprove these marks, which differ one from another in their susceptibility to convincing tests. The third, bodily strength, is too vague to give a decisive result. The other three should, at least in theory, be susceptible to empirical tests. There are no convincing instances of the first, linguistic ability, in the cases we are considering; indeed the devils quite often give feeble excuses for not understanding or speaking

Latin or Greek.<sup>56</sup> Lemnius argued, basing himself on a Platonic epistemology of reminiscence, that even this ability might be natural.<sup>56</sup> The second, clairvoyance, which is obviously very important when accusations of witchcraft are involved, is easy to simulate by means of carefully imprecise guesses; the reader will be able to judge examples of this for himself. The fourth, horror at sacred things, is much the most important mark of true possession, since it is easy to test it experimentally, by seeing, for example, whether the patient reacts differently to holy water than to ordinary water.<sup>57</sup> We shall come across several instances of such experiments—an aspect of early modern science that has not yet, I think, been investigated. For Protestants, of course, such experiments were restricted, since these objects, except for Scripture, were not for them holy, though there is one instance of clairvoyance with regard to witches being experimentally disproved. The theological theory behind these marks is the doctrine that devils, being fallen angels, retain their angelic intelligence; their minds are immeasurably quicker and more experienced than those of men, and their knowledge therefore enormously greater.

Apart from epilepsy, the diseases that produced symptoms similar to those of possession were hysteria and melancholy. The latter, which I have already mentioned in connexion with witches, is even less like a modern disease than the other two. It is an imbalance of the humours, in which black bile is in excess or in some bad state, and which may produce a variety of morbid conditions, including some kinds of insanity, and may be one cause of epilepsy and hysteria. Hysteria had maintained its identity as a disease from early times more by its cause, some abnormal state of the womb, ὀστέρα, than by its symptoms, which were like those of epilepsy – often the two diseases were lumped together.<sup>58</sup> Although, since it is caused by the womb, hysteria is primarily a female disease, a male form had been suggested by Galen, both forms being caused by retention of semen due to excessive sexual abstinence.<sup>59</sup>

An English physician, Edward Jorden, who was consulted in two cases of supposed possession, <sup>60</sup> published in 1603 a treatise on hysteria,<sup>61</sup> of which the full title is: *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother. Written uppon occasion which hath beene of late taken*

*thereby, to suspect possession of an evill spirit, or some such like supernatural power. Wherein is declared that divers strange actions and passions of the body of man, which in the common opinion are imputed to the Divell, have their true naturall causes, and do accompanie this disease.* In this work, which is a learned, medically traditional treatise, Jordan lists symptoms commonly supposed to indicate possession that are typical of hysteria, and of some other diseases, especially epilepsy. They are: insensibility, convulsions, regular recurrence of fits, difficulty in eating and drinking, and fits being brought on by the presence of a certain person (he is certainly here thinking of witches). He suggests that the cure of these symptoms by fasting and prayer may also be natural, since a spare diet will reduce the exuberance of the humours and the prayer will increase the patient's confidence.<sup>62</sup> This means of casting-out devils, based on the cure in Matthew 17 and Mark 9 ('This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting'), was that used by Puritans, who were of course unable to use popish exorcisms; but the fasting and prayer was usually done, not by the patient, but by the ministers and bystanders.<sup>63</sup>

In the dedication of his treatise to the President and Fellows of the College of Physicians, Jordan emphasizes the importance of enlightening laymen, so that they may not mistakenly use prayer in cases of hysteria, as the Papists use 'conjuring and exorcizing', and may not induce healthy people to counterfeit. He does not deny that there may be genuine cases of possession (and witchcraft), but they are very rare and we should be very circumspect, for 'the impostures be many'. Later in the book he returns to the subject of fraudulent possessions.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately, for fear of giving offence, he does not mention recent English cases, though he does cite the French case of Marthe Brossier of 1599;<sup>65</sup> but contents himself with a few examples from Reginald Scot: the 'Maid of Kent', Elizabeth Barton, who, with her clerical accomplices, was executed in 1534;<sup>66</sup> Rachel Pinder and Agnes Briggs of London, who, having deceived the martyrologist Foxe, and accused a witch, confessed to fraud in 1574;<sup>67</sup> and Mildred Norrington, of Kent, who in the same year, having accused her mother of witchcraft, was convicted of counterfeiting.<sup>68</sup>

We have now arrived at the difficult problem of fraud. Faced with a

case of supposed possession a sixteenth-century observer had the choice of three possible kinds of explanation: first, a supernatural cause, a devil; second, disease; third, fraud.<sup>69</sup> As we have seen, the first and second could be combined, producing the theory of the devil using disease; but it was generally, though not quite always, assumed that the third, fraud, was incompatible with either or both of the other two, that is, that the same demoniac would not be sometimes genuinely sick or possessed and sometimes simulating. Now, as an historian (which is what I am trying to be), the first possibility, a devil, must be excluded. Whatever their personal beliefs, historians should not ask their readers to accept supernatural phenomena. I think this is a sound principle and a widely accepted one; but I cannot demonstrate its validity; I can only announce that I shall try to conform to it. We are left then with the second and third kinds of explanation: disease and fraud, and I think that some combination of the two is necessary to account for the phenomena we are faced with. I agree therefore with the report of the sceptical doctors on Marthe Brossier: '*nihil à Spiritu, multa ficta, pauca à morbo*' ('nothing from the Spirit: many things simulated, a few things from disease').<sup>70</sup>

Disease alone would not account for the long-drawn-out, consistent anti-Huguenot propaganda in the French cases; there must be some element of fraud on the part of the demoniac, or the exorcists, or both. Moreover, although epilepsy is a disease that sometimes suddenly ceases, it does not disappear at an hour and day predicted by the patient several weeks before, as often happens in cases of successful exorcism. We shall come across several other kinds of demonic behaviour that strongly indicate deception. Fraud alone, in the sense of a deliberate, pre-arranged plan to deceive, seems to me highly improbable. In the cases cited by Scot, which I have just mentioned, and there are others in Wier, there is no information about exactly how the fraud was carried out, and no convincing suggestion of the motive. The same is true of cases of supposed fraud that I shall examine in later chapters.

Just how disease and fraud were combined we shall probably never know; though I hope that the cases we shall look at may suggest solutions to this problem, which will of course vary for each demoniac and



the group surrounding him or her. As a general scheme to bear in mind, I suggest the following. A teenager, more often a girl than a boy, starts to have fits, often of an epileptic character, or to have hallucinations, or both, that is, she is genuinely sick. The surrounding group – family, friends, and soon doctors and priests or ministers – respond favourably, that is, treat the patient kindly and pay attention to her symptoms and her wishes. The suggestion of possession may come either from the patient or from some of the group; both will have heard of previous cases, if only from the New Testament, and their knowledge of these will to a considerable extent condition their behaviour. The patient becomes convinced that she really is possessed, that is to say, she is genuinely deluded. Once possession is established, the attention paid to the patient and the compliance with her wishes increase. The first sliding step into fraud probably comes when some utterance of the patient is taken to be that of a possessing devil. The patient soon realizes she has a powerful instrument, and tries out various diabolic speeches or answers to questions. She begins, consciously or unconsciously, to make these conform to the expectations of the surrounding group. She begins to simulate fits, or has perhaps learnt to induce them, when an audience has assembled to witness them. And so the business will go on, day after day, for weeks, months and even years. The patient begins by being sick, and becomes both sick and fraudulent. The surrounding group are usually, but not always, innocent of deliberate fraud; but they do deliberately, though with a clear conscience, exploit the situation in the interests of the true religion.

In discussing the factor of disease in possession I have kept to Renaissance terminology and made no attempt to describe possession in modern psycho-pathological terms. This is because I am not competent to do so, and not because I think such a description would be impossible or useless. On the contrary, I feel sure that an examination of those cases of which we have detailed accounts, made by a present-day medical expert with the relevant knowledge and experience, would yield valuable results.

The last theme I want to mention in this chapter arises from the question: why for orthodox Christians is the possessing spirit nearly always

an evil one, a fallen angel?<sup>71</sup> In other cultures, in ancient Greece,<sup>72</sup> for example, or some present-day Moslem societies,<sup>73</sup> the spirit is often divine and beneficent; with spiritualist mediums it is usually the soul of a dead person. Moreover, at the beginning of the Christian Church, the Apostles were possessed by the Holy Ghost, at Whitsun, when they spoke with tongues,<sup>74</sup> one of the chief marks of diabolic possession. One answer to my question is that good possession is likely to be dangerous to a Church that wishes to be stable and enduring. If the spirit of God, or a good angel, the messenger of God, dwells in a man and speaks through his mouth, the utterances claim supreme authority and may well add to, or alter, the original revelation. This happened in the second century A.D. in the case of Montanus and his prophetesses, who were successfully suppressed. Their opponents claimed they were diabolically possessed and tried to exorcize them.<sup>75</sup> And once the revelation has been petrified in canonical scriptures, such activities become still more obviously heretical. Nearer to our period, the example of such heresiarchs as David Joris, Guillaume Postel, or Hendrik Niklaes<sup>76</sup> would not encourage anyone to pretend to possession by a good, divine spirit. Nevertheless, in our sixteenth-century cases of possession there is evidence of a strong, though usually disguised, tendency to make such a claim, for example in the Catholic cases where the devil speaks as God's direct instrument, or in Protestant cases where the pious discourses of possessed children lead the ministers to wonder whether they are listening to a divine message or to the devil disguised as an angel of light. And perhaps we should remember that demoniacs are supposed to be melancholic, and that melancholy has its good side – it is the temperament of profound thinkers, of those who are inspired by Plato's good madresses, of poets, lovers and prophets.<sup>77</sup>



## II CASES IN FRANCE

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LAON, 1566

In the first two groups of French cases of possession that I deal with in this chapter, that at Laon in 1566, and that at Soissons in 1582, the anti-Huguenot propaganda was, as I have mentioned, dominated by the demonstration of the Real Presence in the consecrated host. Now, in countries such as France, where the reformed Church was sacramentarian and the official religion was Catholic, the eucharist was a central point of conflict, one that entered into daily life in a powerful and unavoidable way. For a Catholic it was the most holy and awe-inspiring of all acts of worship, in which the mysteries of the Incarnation and the sacrifice of the Cross were re-enacted and he took part in them. For a Huguenot the Mass was blasphemous idolatry, founded on a grossly literal interpretation of Christ's words at the Last Supper, the supreme example of all the Catholic ceremonies that he regarded as superstitious and magical. And the body and blood of Christ, or the idol of bread, did not remain within churches; it was carried around the streets in processions, and to the sick and dying. The *Placards* of 1534, which set off the first big wave of persecution in France, were against the Mass.<sup>1</sup> The Colloquy of Poissy in 1561, the first and last attempt of the Queen Regent, Catherine de' Medici, and her Chancellor, Michel de l'Hospital, to put their conciliatory policy into practice by means of a meeting between the leaders of the two religions, came to grief on the question of transubstantiation.<sup>2</sup> In countries such as England, where the official Church was reformed, the eucharist was less obvious as a point of conflict because the Catholics, being a persecuted minority, could celebrate the Mass only in secret.

I think it likely that the Miracle of Laon, as it came to be called, is the earliest of the deliberately publicized, anti-Huguenot exorcisms, for two reasons. First, because such propaganda is unlikely before the first civil war, which ended with the uneasy peace of Amboise in March 1563, had

shown what a serious menace the Huguenots were.<sup>3</sup> Second, because later exorcisms regularly refer back to, and often copy, earlier ones, and in the accounts of this one no such references are made.

These accounts were by the Dean of the Cathedral at Laon, Christofle Hericourt, written at the command of Charles IX, by Nicolas Despinoy, a Canon, and there was a *procès-verbal* of the séances taken by Guillaume Gorret, Royal Notary at Laon;<sup>4</sup> all three were eye-witnesses of the exorcisms. These were collected together and published in 1578 by Jean Boulaese, a Professor of Hebrew at the Collège de Montaigu in Paris.<sup>5</sup> He had already published shorter versions in 1573 and 1575,<sup>6</sup> and in 1566, immediately after the event, a short pamphlet in Latin and four modern languages, French, Spanish, Italian and German.<sup>7</sup> In 1571 Barthélemy Faye, a distinguished magistrate, published a fairly full account, which agrees with those of Boulaese, dedicated to Pierre de Gondy, Bishop of Paris, and Jacques Amyot, accompanied by a treatise on the eucharist;<sup>8</sup> it is written in that perversely obscure Latin which only French humanists seemed to have attempted or achieved. For reasons which I cannot explain, Faye and Boulaese do not mention each other.

Boulaese was extraordinarily active in publicizing the Miracle of Laon. Soon after Charles IX's and Catherine's visit to Laon in August 1566, at which they gave a royal approval to the exorcisms and at which Boulaese was present,<sup>9</sup> he went to Spain to tell Philip II about the miracle and give him a copy of the pamphlet.<sup>10</sup> He later claimed to have persuaded him to offer financial support to Christopher Plantin's polyglot Bible, which was then being prepared at Antwerp. This claim may be justified, because Philip did give this support,<sup>11</sup> and that Boulaese had some connexion with the polyglot is indicated by the appearance, in his big book on the miracle, of a poem, a French translation of a hymn on the eucharist by Thomas Aquinas, contributed by Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie, a neoplatonic and cabalistic poet, who worked with Plantin on the Bible in Antwerp as an expert on Syriac.<sup>12</sup> In 1570 Boulaese went to Rome and obtained the approval of Pius V, which was confirmed by Gregory XIII in 1573. So in 1578 his book, *Le Thresor et entiere Histoire de la triomphante victoire du corps de Dieu sur l'esprit maling Beelzebub*,

appeared with the approval of two Popes and two French kings, Charles IX and Henri III, and an *imprimatur* from the Sorbonne.<sup>13</sup>

The driving force behind Boulaese's activity was millenarianism. In the 1560s we are already, he says, past midday in the sixth day of this world's life.<sup>14</sup> This miracle, by converting or silencing the Huguenots, is the first step in God's plan to unite all men for the seventh and last age. Boulaese, with his knowledge of Hebrew, will help to convert the Jews, and there will be 'one fold and one shepherd', the classic millenarian text from John 10.16.<sup>15</sup> As Beelzebub, the chief possessing devil, himself admitted, also quoting from St John's Gospel (17.20), he had possessed the demoniac on God's order, *jussu Dei*, 'that all men may be one'.<sup>16</sup> This unification was not to be conciliatory, and was to include no concessions to the reformers. In the last age the Church will be truly reformed; this present, heretical reformation is the work of the devil, the ape of God, *simia Dei*.<sup>17</sup>

The demoniac in question was Nicole Obry, a girl of fifteen or sixteen, living at Vervins near Laon in Picardy, who was exorcized almost daily for over two months, ending with the final expulsion of Beelzebub at 3 p.m. on Friday, 8 February 1566.<sup>18</sup> She was at one time possessed by as many as thirty devils; but Beelzebub was the first, the last, and the most important occupant. She had recently been married to Louis Pierret, a merchant, and her father was a butcher. For the previous eight years she had been brought up at a convent at Montreuil-les-Dames, a few miles away, where she had learned to read, but not very well, being rather dull-witted (*lourde d'esprit*). But she was good at repartee with other girls and laughed a lot.<sup>19</sup> Her medical history indicates that her fits and delusions probably had physical origins, though nothing in her background can account for her really brilliant performances as a demoniac. She had had two bad head injuries some years earlier, of which the scars still showed, one from a dog-bite and one from a falling tile; these had resulted in a permanent headache, which had lasted until her possession. She had only recently begun to menstruate.<sup>20</sup>

In the beginnings of her story we can see, I think, a frustrated attempt to have a good possession, which was later in some measure achieved by Beelzebub's orthodox propaganda, acting as the direct agent of God.

One day when Nicole was alone in church, a spirit appeared who claimed to be the soul of her maternal grandfather, Joachim Willot. The spirit entered her and spoke to her. He is in purgatory, in consequence of having died suddenly after supper, unconfessed and with certain vows unaccomplished, and he asks Nicole to have masses said, alms given, and pilgrimages made, including one to St James (I presume, of Compostella). The family accomplished these good works, except the last. But Nicole, who ever since her possession had been having convulsive fits, followed by rigidity and insensibility, got no better, and stated that this was because the pilgrimage to St James had not been made. The parents, who naturally jibbed at the enormous expense of such a journey, arranged a fake departure on pilgrimage; but Nicole, with the clairvoyance of a demoniac, was not deceived.<sup>21</sup> Then they got the local priest and the schoolmaster, and a little later a Dominican from a nearby monastery, to conjure the spirit, who, after having said he was, not the soul, but the good angel of the grandfather, was induced to admit he was a devil. The priests were quite certain that good angels do not enter people's bodies, and they must also have known that the souls of the dead do not do so, a heresy against which there are warnings in the manuals.<sup>22</sup> From this point onwards, Beelzebub takes over the management of the whole affair.

The publicity at the time of the exorcisms was certainly successful. It was claimed that more than 150,000 people had witnessed them.<sup>23</sup> This publicity seems not to have been planned ahead, but to have grown up piece-meal, largely owing to the suggestions and demands of Beelzebub. There was already a stage put up in the church at Vervins, so that the crowds could have a good view.<sup>24</sup> But it was Beelzebub who insisted that a prince of his rank could be expelled only by a bishop, and thus, having first brought the bishop to Vervins, he eventually engineered the move to the city of Laon. In the cathedral there a stage was quickly erected; but after two days they took it down again, intending to continue the exorcisms in a private chapel, 'to avoid sedition'. Beelzebub protested 'that it was not right to hide what God wanted to be manifested and known to all the world', and that he would not go out of Nicole except in 'that great brothel', as he irreverently called the cathedral, and on a

stage. So they built a larger and higher stage, with the sides boarded in, because under the previous ones ill-willed persons had secreted themselves and injured the feet of those standing above by pushing up spikes between the planks.<sup>25</sup> There were also twice-daily processions, in which Nicole, in a state of possession, usually gave a comic performance. At first these went through the town; but the Huguenots succeeded in stopping this, and they were then confined to the precincts of the cathedral.<sup>26</sup>

The use of the eucharist as the chief, indeed the only efficacious means of expelling devils was, I think, exceptional and peculiar to this case and the ones at Soissons. The authors of the accounts can cite St Bernard as a precedent,<sup>27</sup> and Barthélemy Faye mentions an interesting case of mass possession: eighty Jewish girls, recently baptized, who in 1553 at Rome were dispossessed by a French Benedictine, mainly by using the eucharist.<sup>28</sup> But one has only to look through the *Thesaurus Exorcismorum* of 1608 to see that the eucharist did not traditionally occupy a privileged place in exorcisms; indeed it had a less important one than holy water, the sign of the cross, relics and other holy objects.<sup>29</sup> The repeated exorcisms of Nicole always began by using these other, more normal means, which succeeded only in hurting and angering the devil, and thus the greatest dramatic emphasis was laid on the power of the host, by which he was temporarily reduced to impotence.<sup>30</sup> Faye, in a Latin poem on exorcism, compares it to a battle, in which holy water and the sign of the cross are light arms, while the eucharist is like big siege engines (*tormenta*).<sup>31</sup> Beelzebub himself admitted this power in a way which cleverly confirmed transubstantiation. When Jean de Bours, Bishop of Laon, was exorcizing Nicole in the cathedral, he threatened the devil with the consecrated host. 'Who?' asked Beelzebub, 'Your Jack the White (*Ton Jean le Blanc*)?' The Bishop then asked him who had taught him to call it thus, to which the reply was: 'But it was I who taught my Huguenots to call it that.' To the question: Why has the host such power over you? Beelzebub answered: 'Aha, you haven't told the whole story; there is HOC' (*'Ha, ha, tu ne dis pas tout, il y a HOC, il y a HOC'*), referring of course to the words of consecration, *hoc est corpus meum*, the moment when the wafer becomes the body and blood of Christ.<sup>32</sup>



Except for the final one, these exorcisms by the eucharist were only temporarily successful, and Nicole would later be repossessed. After the exorcisms had become public this usually occurred only the next morning, just as she was setting off for church.<sup>33</sup> But while they were still being performed in private, the repossessions sometimes occurred as frequently as fifty times in an hour, leading to an enormous consumption of consecrated wafers. Indeed these pious Catholics, bent on demonstrating the Real Presence, came near to using the host as a medicine.<sup>34</sup> In the public exorcisms the devil was temporarily expelled by merely showing him the host – strictly speaking, he was not expelled, but retired into her left arm. The patient's convulsions would cease, and she would collapse, rigid and insensible; the public were often invited to come on the stage and test this, by handling her and sticking pins into her. The host would then be placed on her lips, she would revive, and swallow it.<sup>35</sup> After the final expulsion, not surprisingly, Nicole was in a very weak state, often apparently on the point of death; here again the only effective medicine was the eucharist, which immediately revived her.

An experiment to test empirically the genuineness of Nicole's reaction to the eucharist was suggested, but not carried out. After the routine had been established of reviving her from her trance by placing the host on her lips, a Huguenot proposed they should try an unconsecrated wafer. He was told to do it himself; but he replied that he would not dare – he would be polluted by it. A priest then gave her a consecrated wafer, she revived, and he cried '*Videte, videte miraculum*'.<sup>36</sup>

The chief other Catholic practice that was successfully vindicated by these exorcisms was auricular confession. Beelzebub was constantly accusing onlookers of secret sins, correctly, and these sins were always *unconfessed*. When the sinner went away, confessed, and came back, the devil was unable to remember the sin.<sup>37</sup> This clairvoyance was also, of course, a proof of the genuineness of the possession. In the cathedral at Laon they stationed priests at every pillar, and thousands confessed for fear that their sins would be revealed during the exorcisms.<sup>38</sup>

Unlike the use of the eucharist, the importance attached to names, the magical power of names, was very much in the tradition of exorcism.<sup>39</sup>

While they were still at Vervins, the priests procured a book of exorcisms (they had previously used baptismal exorcism),<sup>40</sup> and were thus able to use 'the high names of God, written in the book, such as Tetragrammaton, Emmanuel, Sabaoth, Adonai, Alpha & O, etc.'<sup>41</sup> In manuals of exorcism the first question put to the devil is always: what is your name?<sup>42</sup> When this is discovered, usually after a lot of prevarication, the name is written on a piece of paper, which is then burnt in the flame of a blest candle.<sup>43</sup> To start with Beelzebub then cried out as if his feet were in a fire, but did not retire.<sup>44</sup> Eventually he became hardened to this treatment, even remarking that it seemed to him a waste of time to burn ink and paper.<sup>45</sup>

Beelzebub's direct propaganda against the Huguenots was powerful and insulting, making it quite clear that they were inspired by the devil.<sup>46</sup> When a reformed minister attempted to cure Nicole, Beelzebub, quoting Christ's rebuttal of the Pharisees' accusation, asked whether a devil could expel a devil. The minister replied: 'I'm not a devil, but the servant of Christ'. 'Huh . . .' answered Beelzebub, 'servant of Christ! You're worse than I am. For I believe what you won't believe. And I love you all the better for it.'<sup>47</sup> To another Huguenot, who was reading Clément Marot's translation of the psalms, he said: 'Do you hope to expel me by your jolly songs that I helped to write?'<sup>48</sup> It was a question, seriously discussed by the Jesuit Thyraeus, whether all heretics were possessed, or only obsessed, by the devil;<sup>49</sup> and Ronsard begins one of his polemical poems against the Calvinists, the *Réponse aux injures*, published in 1563, by very realistically exorcizing his opponent.<sup>50</sup>

With regard to diabolic veracity, Beelzebub was, as we have seen, a spokesman of Catholic, anti-Huguenot truth, and this was, of course, accepted by the Catholics. He admitted himself that he was the father of lies, quoting verbatim Christ's words from John that I quoted in my first chapter (see p. 7); but he went on to say: 'Constrained by God or His priest, I speak the truth'.<sup>51</sup> This was, as we have seen, the usual Catholic line: properly adjured and interrogated by an experienced priest, the devil's word may be trusted. But in Nicole's case, the devil's accusations against individuals of various sins and crimes, made spontaneously and not in reply to questions put by the exorcist, seem also to

have been accepted as true. But they resulted in nothing more harmful than a wave of auricular confession.

There was one occasion, however, while they were still at Vervins, when the devil accused some persons, correctly, of theft; 'Then he accused some women of witchcraft, of whom one went away (*s'absenta*)'.<sup>52</sup> This may be one of the little seeds of the connexion between possession and witchcraft, which bore such strange fruit in the next century. Moreover, according to Faye, at some point early in her possession, Nicole asserted that a gypsy-woman had bewitched her (or, according to Boulaese, had named a man who had done so).<sup>53</sup> This suggestion was not followed up. In the mass possession of Jewesses at Rome in 1553, whose French exorcist Faye himself had interrogated, the connexion was already established: their devils claimed they had been sent by Jews, who were angry at the girls' conversion to Christianity. But here also no witch-hunt resulted. The question was discussed in the Vatican; Láinez, the future Jesuit General, denied that devils could be sent by men into bodies, and the Cardinal Theatine, Gian-Pietro Caraffa, later Paul IV, agreed with him. But Faye, whose book may well have been read by later exorcists interested in the Laon case,<sup>54</sup> goes on to give a long defence of the causation of possession by witchcraft, arguing against Wier and citing the Fernel case and that of St Hilarion.<sup>55</sup>

The only other signs of this connexion are the persistent accusations of sorcery and magic made by the Huguenots against Nicole's mother, Pierre de la Motte, O.P., one of the exorcists, and the young priest Despinoy, who accompanied her on her peregrinations after the expulsion, and wrote one of the accounts used by Boulaese.<sup>56</sup> There were serious attempts to substantiate these accusations while Nicole and her entourage were visiting the Huguenot leader Louis de Bourbon, Prince de Condé, who was Governor of Picardy. Condé, having unsuccessfully bullied and tried to bribe the mother and Despinoy, sent them away and kept Nicole prisoner until, two months later, she was released by a royal injunction. A Huguenot gentleman tried, quite subtly, to trick Despinoy into admitting that he had studied magic while at the University of Paris and was thus able to enchant the devils into Nicole.<sup>57</sup>

This episode occurred in April 1566. After the expulsion in February,

Nicole and her husband had remained in Laon, and the publicity continued, Nicole apparently very ill, unable to eat and kept going only by the eucharist.<sup>58</sup> The Huguenots, understandably annoyed by this living personification of the doctrine of transubstantiation, obtained a decree excluding her from the city, a measure which even Héricourt, the Dean, thought equitable, considering the danger of violent conflict.<sup>59</sup> This danger was already apparent during the exorcisms. On one occasion, when Beelzebub reproved Huguenots for remaining covered during the elevation of the host, the Catholics and Calvinists looked at each other, both fearing a massacre, and then they all rushed out of the cathedral.<sup>60</sup> It was not only the local Huguenots who were alarmed at the explosive situation, which might well have sparked off another civil war, though this did not in fact break out until the next year. There were interventions, to try to damp down the publicity, by François de Montmorency, Governor of the Ile-de-France,<sup>61</sup> and by an emissary from the Paris Parliament.<sup>62</sup>

The Huguenots, in addition to their accusations of sorcery, also accused their adversaries of ordinary fraud: the convulsions had been caused by drugs; Nicole had been coached by a priest in what to say under exorcism; some iron instrument had been used, presumably to aid the convulsions.<sup>63</sup> These accusations, which we know only through Catholic sources, are too vague to throw any light on the two problems: exactly how the fraud was carried out, and who was mainly responsible – Nicole, or some or all of the surrounding group, her family and the several priests who at different times exorcized her. These problems centre on Beelzebub's utterances; the physical symptoms could have been faked, or have been due, at least sometimes, to sickness of an epileptic character. Apart from Beelzebub's remarkably consistent character, witty and teasing, and his thoroughly expert propaganda, there is the fact, mentioned several times in the accounts, that he often spoke while Nicole's tongue, swollen and blackened, was hanging far out of her mouth.<sup>64</sup> Faye mentions a book against the miracle by a doctor, entitled *Spongia*, published in 1567, which I have not been able to find.<sup>65</sup> This doctor, convinced, as I am, that you cannot talk intelligibly with your tongue hanging out, suggested either that she was prompted

as an actress is, that is, one of the priests *on* the stage was speaking, or that it was someone *under* the stage – which might account for their boarding in its sides. These are possible explanations; but I think it more likely that on these occasions she produced inarticulate gurgling, which a priest then interpreted, perhaps genuinely thinking he understood it, as mothers do when babies are learning to talk. It also seems to me likely that Beelzebub's character was mainly or entirely Nicole's creation, rather than a composite, collective production of the group. Nicole evidently had a great appetite for fame. She made another bid for notoriety in 1577, when she went temporarily blind and was cured, not oddly enough by the eucharist, but by the head of John the Baptist. An account of this miracle was published the following year.<sup>66</sup>

How far the propaganda was successful in converting heretics is difficult to estimate. The accounts often mention that some unspecified number of Huguenots were converted by an exorcism, but also that many remained obstinate, refusing to believe the evidence of their own ears and eyes.<sup>67</sup> One certain case is that of Florimond de Raemond, the historian of sixteenth-century heresy, who, on his own saying, was converted to Catholicism by witnessing the final expulsion of Beelzebub.<sup>68</sup> The influence of the Miracle of Laon on later exorcisms was considerable, as we shall see, and its memory was kept alive by annual commemorative celebrations in the cathedral on 8 February, which continued until the Revolution.<sup>69</sup>

#### SOISSONS, 1582

I come now to a group of four possessed persons, who were all successfully exorcized at Soissons in 1582. I know of no other public exorcisms in France between these and those of 1566. The Soissons ones have overt connexions with the miracle of Laon, and are to some degree modelled on it, though none of the demoniacs attain Nicole's virtuosity. I shall therefore concentrate on points of difference between the two.

There are two accounts, one in Latin by Gervais de Tournay, a Canon of Soissons,<sup>70</sup> and one in French by Charles Blendec,<sup>71</sup> a monk who lived at Soissons and who performed some of the exorcisms. Both were published in Paris by the same printer, the former in 1583 and the latter

in 1582, and there is one privilege for both. Though they are not translations one of the other, they give, page by page, the same information.

These exorcisms too demonstrated the Real Presence: the title of Blendec's account is: *Cinq Histoires admirables* [five, because one boy was possessed twice], *esquelles est monstré comme miraculeusement par la vertu & puissance du S. Sacrement de l'Autel a esté chassé Beelzebub Prince des diables, avec plusieurs autres Demons, qui se disoient estre de ses subjects, hors des corps de quatre diverses personnes . . .* The Latin version contains a letter to Pope Gregory XIII from Charles de Roucy, Bishop of Soissons, which accompanied the dispatch of both accounts. In it the Bishop emphasizes the happy effect of these exorcisms in confirming the Catholic faith and the power of the eucharist in these calamitous times, when so many are leaving the true Church.<sup>72</sup>

The publicity surrounding the exorcisms was considerable, but not on the same scale as at Laon. Audiences of several thousand are mentioned, and there were public processions.<sup>73</sup> In one case a stage was erected for the final expulsion of a demon, 7 or 8 feet high and 24 feet long.<sup>74</sup> There are no mentions of Huguenot opposition or of the danger of violent conflict.

Although the main target is still the Huguenots, Blendec also has hopes of converting or refuting Aristotelians and atheists, quite numerous nowadays, who do not believe in devils, those 'executioners' ('*bourreaux*') of God.<sup>75</sup> The anti-Huguenot propaganda takes a slightly different turn: we see a devil, called Bonnoir, who possessed a boy of thirteen, Laurent Boissonet, in the very act of trying to shake the faith of the boy's mother. While she was praying he told her: 'that she was damning herself, and that all the huguenots were saved, and all the priests and friars damned, that he had a fine paradise for the huguenots, and fine beds well prepared for them'.<sup>76</sup> Blendec himself is rather cruder than Boulaese. When the relics of some blessed virgins were put on the boy's stomach, which they caused to swell and writhe, he remarks that 'they were taking vengeance on this libidinous devil who had had several of them deflowered by his huguenots and ministers'.<sup>77</sup>

As at Laon, the devils are constrained to tell the truth about the reasons for the possessions, and they all say that it is for the glory of God

and the conversion or confusion of the Huguenots.<sup>78</sup> But Blendec has the merit of warning against the dangers of believing in accusations made by the devil. For although, he says, the evil spirit in accusing people of certain vices and sins may speak truly, nevertheless he should not be listened to; first because he is the father of lies and a slanderer, and secondly because he tries to seduce people from the true faith, as we have just seen.<sup>79</sup> And in fact these devils were not encouraged to volunteer information, partly perhaps also because most of them were rather inferior devils, whose utterances were confused and trivial.

The connexions between Soissons and Laon are of several kinds. One of them is that the same devil, Beelzebub, who had possessed Nicole Obry also later possessed Marguerite Obry (the identity of surname is not remarked on), native of a village near Beauvais. This he admitted himself.<sup>80</sup> He was much more efficient than the other devils, and the story of this possession is called the '*principale histoire*'. While Marguerite and her family were on their way from Beauvais to Soissons, in search of effective exorcisms, they passed through Laon, and, as soon as the cathedral was visible, Beelzebub cried out: 'Why are you taking me there, where I have been so much tormented?'<sup>81</sup>

When the boy Laurent was going to be given the sacrament for the first time, the theological or Canon Theologian of the Cathedral, Jean Canart, preached a sermon on the text *Descendens Jesus de monte* (Matthew 8), the cleansing of the leper. Such miracles were later not so necessary, when faith was already planted and flourishing; but God in His goodness 'sometimes waters a dry branch in order to make it sprout and bear fruit, as He has done in our times for our pitiable France by the admirable miracle of Laon', and as it was hoped He would do with the possessed boy, 'to extirpate the heresies that are now so rife'.<sup>82</sup> He also hoped, rather oddly, that this exorcism would lead the French to accept the Council of Trent, the contempt of which, during the last twenty years, had caused such terrible divine punishments. A little before this, Laurent had been handed over to two Franciscans, one of whom, Anthoine Flobert, had been present at the exorcisms of Nicole<sup>83</sup> (the Latin version here cites Boulaese's book, a '*celeberrima et amplissima historia*').<sup>84</sup>

These two Franciscans carried out some empirical tests. They sprinkled the boy, when in a state of possession, with ordinary water, which produced no reaction, and then with holy water, which he tried to wipe off, with increased convulsions.<sup>85</sup> The same kind of tests were later carried out on Marguerite Obry, including the use of consecrated and unconsecrated wafers, though the writer seems a little uncertain which wafer the devil rejected. They also secretly put holy water into her wine and soup, which she would then refuse to drink.<sup>86</sup> How often and how carefully they did these tests we do not know. There is no other record of any suspicion of fraud, except in one case, where there was a persistent attempt to have a good possession, and the devil's voice was not sufficiently different from the demoniac's ordinary voice.<sup>87</sup>

This case was exceptional in several respects. The demoniac, Nicolas Facquier, an artisan, was a married man of fifty.<sup>88</sup> He was twice possessed. The chief devil of the first possession, called Cramoisy, claimed to belong to an order of spirits who lived in the limbo of unbaptized infants and visited Paradise three times a year.<sup>89</sup> He was possessing Facquier in order that three of his cousins who were Huguenots should return to the true Church. These cousins were named, and two of them were so touched that Facquier should be tormented on their behalf that they were quickly converted.<sup>90</sup> The third, who had serious doubts about the Mass, purgatory and the invocation of saints, yielded only after a long session with Cramoisy, Blendec and the bishop. The next day Facquier was successfully dispossessed.<sup>91</sup>

The name of the devil of Facquier's second possession was never properly established. Laurent Boissonet's second devil, who was consulted, said he was called Bolo; but Facquier had given various other names. In any case, this demon persistently claimed to be obeying the instructions of St James, and to be on friendly terms with other saints. He was most insistent that a minister at Varennes, whom he called a Lutheran, should be summoned and converted; which seems not to have been done.<sup>92</sup> The demon sometimes called his director Ergon, and then explained that Ergon and St James were more or less the same thing (*'quasi tout un'*).<sup>93</sup> *Ergon* is of course the Greek for work, and St James's epistle is the great authority for the necessity of good works as well as faith for



salvation; which is why Luther disliked it.<sup>94</sup> Like Cramoisy, this demon pretended not really to be a devil at all, but to belong to a different order of spirits. He said to the exorcists: 'You can expel devils all right, but not us'.<sup>95</sup> The exorcists were plainly very worried by this apparently good, and therefore unorthodox possession, and this is why they suspected fraud. But they persisted in their belief that the spirit was an evil one, they eventually succeeded in making him admit this, and, after causing terrible convulsions, he departed.<sup>96</sup>

Before we leave Soissons, I want to describe an exorcism which shows dramatically what a very literal, physical conception people had of the Real Presence and of diabolic possession. This exorcism achieved the final expulsion of the devil Bonnoir from the boy Laurent. The exorcists were the theologal, Jean Canart, whose sermon we have heard, and the Bishop of Soissons. The devil said: 'Give him the white (*Baille luy le blanc* [i.e. the host]); if he takes it, I'll go; if he doesn't, I won't'. The hosts were then brought; but the boy was so convulsed that the Bishop was unable to insert one into his mouth. Canart, with considerable courage, put the two sacred fingers (index and middle) into his mouth, which opened, quickly popped in a wafer, and, knowing that the devil would try to spit it out, clamped the boy's jaws together, also closing his nostrils, for about the time of three *Paters* and *Ave Marias*.<sup>97</sup> 'During which time this evil spirit was marvellously tormented and agitated, and one heard plainly the fight that was going on inside, as behind closed doors, between our Saviour Jesus Christ and our sworn enemy, who was shrieking like a pig being stifled or a little dog being flayed'.<sup>98</sup> The Bishop and the theologal were moved to tears by the sounds of this hidden conflict, and the latter spontaneously cried out to the devil, in Latin: 'Give glory to the living and true God, give honour to Jesus Christ, and His most sacred body, which is in the sacrament of the altar.' He repeated this thrice, at the third time adding: 'Yield to God, yield to Christ, yield to His most sacred body, yield to His Catholic and Roman Church, that all men may be one (*ut omnes unum sint*), and all the earth may adore Him, and sing to Him'.<sup>99</sup> The devil then said, 'in a rather muffled and very angry voice (*d'une voix sourde et pleine de cholere*)', 'You're stifling me – how on earth do you think I can get out (*tu*

*m'estouffes, par où veux-tu que je sorte)?*' Since some of the onlookers said the boy was in fact being stifled, the theologal lifted his finger from one nostril, from which came out a puff of wind and a little smoke. The boy dropped to his knees, and cried: 'Praise be to God; now I am healed (*Loué soit Dieu, me voila bien guarý*)'.<sup>100</sup>

The exorcisms at Soissons were not a great success. Apart from the two printed accounts, they received no publicity, and they were not recalled in later cases of possession. Their relative failure as propaganda, and the poor quality of the demoniacs, may have been one reason why the national synod at Reims of 1583 issued a warning against undertaking exorcism before making quite sure that the patient was not more in need of a doctor than a priest.<sup>101</sup>

#### MARTHE BROSSIER, 1599

At the beginning of March 1599 the demoniac Marthe Brossier and her father arrived in Paris, a few days after the Paris Parliament had reluctantly registered and promulgated the Edict of Nantes, that extraordinary attempt to achieve the official tolerance of two religions within one nation.<sup>102</sup>

The main sources I shall use for this case are: the account in Jacques Auguste de Thou's *Historiae sui temporis*, a French translation of which appeared in 1652 in Congnard's *Histoire de Marthe Brossier pretendue possedee*,<sup>103</sup> the *Discours veritable sur le fait de Marthe Brossier de Romorantin pretendue demoniaque*, published by the physician Michel Marescot and his medical colleagues, on royal command, in 1599,<sup>104</sup> which was translated into English and printed in the same year,<sup>105</sup> and the account in Mandrou's *Magistrats et Sorciers*, which uses manuscripts I have not seen – these confirm the accuracy of De Thou's narrative.<sup>106</sup>

Marthe Brossier was the youngest of four daughters, all unmarried, of Jacques Brossier, a failing draper of Romorantin. Early in 1598, at the age of twenty-five, she claimed to be possessed, and to have been bewitched by one of her neighbours, Anne Chevreau. But we hear no more of this accusation, which is known only from a manuscript petition by the accused, discovered by Mandrou. According to this petition, there had recently been several other cases of possession at Romorantin

coupled with successful accusations of witchcraft. These may have suggested to Marthe taking up the career of demoniac.<sup>107</sup> According to other contemporary sources, the suggestion came from reading some account of the Miracle of Laon. It is at any rate certain that she did read such an account and was still studying it while she was in Paris.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, her chief devil was our old friend Beelzebub, that expert in anti-Huguenot propaganda.

The family wandered through the Loire valley, from one town to another, Marthe being exorcized, sometimes with very large audiences. As Marescot later unkindly put it: 'There were fifteen months spent in carrying of her too and fro, like an Ape or a Beare, to Angers, Saulmur, Clery, Orleans and Paris.'<sup>109</sup> At Orléans she had obtained from the theologal a kind of certificate of possession.<sup>110</sup> On the other hand De Thou and Marescot cite documents, issued by the Chapters of Orléans and Cléry, of April and September 1598, forbidding any priest in the diocese to exorcize 'that fictitious spirit (*commentitium illum Spiritum*)'. At Angers, the Bishop, Charles Miron, carried out tests, which, unlike those at Soissons, gave negative results. At his table he gave Marthe holy water with no effect; when given ordinary water said to have been blest, she fell into convulsions. The Bishop then called for his book of exorcisms and read out the first line of the *Aeneid*, which produced still more violent convulsions. He told the family to go home and stop playing tricks.<sup>111</sup> But instead Marthe and her father went to Paris.

De Thou, who was very well qualified to know about the Edict of Nantes and the situation in Paris at this time, begins his account thus:

When the Edict of Nantes had been published an event occurred which brought the king no little trouble, and extreme disturbance to affairs that had just been settled. For many factious people were in secret greatly angered by the recent promulgation of the edict, and sought an opportunity of upsetting things, which they avidly seized when by a trivial cause it was offered them.<sup>112</sup>

The opportunity was, of course, provided by the Brossiers, who on their arrival in Paris had gone to the monastery of Ste Geneviève, where the Capucins, without making any preliminary enquiries, started to exorcize Marthe, attracting large crowds.<sup>113</sup> The diarist Pierre de l'Estoile notes:

'She said marvellous things against the Huguenots, and her devil went every day to find a new soul at La Rochelle [a Huguenot stronghold] to put in his cauldron, saying that all the Huguenots belonged to him.'<sup>114</sup>

By the end of March the disturbances were such that the Bishop of Paris, Henri de Gondy, intervened and arranged for some theologians and five distinguished physicians, including Marescot and Jean Riolan, the father of William Harvey's adversary, to examine Marthe. On 30 March, having witnessed her convulsions, examined her, and established that she could not understand Latin or Greek, the doctors reported unanimously, giving the verdict I quoted in my first chapter: nothing from the devil, much counterfeited, a little from disease. The only morbid symptoms were an inflamed tongue and a slight murmur in the left hypochondrium, a symptom which might indicate a melancholic temperament.

The next day two of the doctors re-examined Marthe and found an insensitive spot between her thumb and index finger. They were presumably used to examining witches for devil's marks; they should have been looking for general insensibility during or after fits. They asked for a deferment of the report,<sup>115</sup> and another session was held on 1 April. At this, when Father Serafin had begun his exorcism and Marthe was writhing on the floor, he cried out: 'If anyone still disbelieves, let him arrest the movements of this spirit at the peril of his life.' Marescot accepted the challenge, put his hand on her neck and stopped her moving; Marthe and the exorcist then claimed that the devil had left her, and Marescot said sarcastically: 'Then I have expelled the spirit'.<sup>116</sup> This test was repeated a second time, and it was again established that she could not understand Latin. One doctor, however, Jean Autin, still had doubts and asked for a postponement, because of the case reported by Fernel, which had taken three months to diagnose.

The following day another lot of doctors and theologians, summoned by the Capucins, examined Marthe, and the sceptical doctors were not admitted. This new commission reported on 3 April that Marthe was genuinely possessed.<sup>117</sup>

But the report was too late. For by this time Henri IV, who was at

Fontainebleau, began to fear that the crowds drawn by the anti-Huguenot exorcisms might lead to seditious attempts to undo the pacification achieved by the Edict, and that these might spread to other towns. He ordered Parliament to take measures to stop the public exorcisms. On 2 April Parliament ordered that Marthe be handed over to the Lieutenant Criminal, Pierre Lugoly. She was kept in prison for forty days, and her book about the Miracle of Laon was taken away from her. She was again examined by many doctors, including the sceptical ones, who all attested in writing that there was no evidence of anything supernatural. Marthe's convulsions had gradually ceased.<sup>118</sup> Meanwhile, the Capucins, and a theologian of the Sorbonne, André du Val, were preaching passionately against this action by Parliament, claiming that it was inspired by the heretics, who feared that 'this struggle between the true Catholic Church and the enemy of God and the human race' would publicly demonstrate the falsity of their own religion. These preachers were severely admonished and silenced.<sup>119</sup> On 24 May Parliament ordered that Marthe and her father should be escorted back to Romorantin, where the resident Judge was to prevent her wandering about and report on her every fortnight.<sup>120</sup>

This was a wise precaution, because in December 1599 she was abducted by Alexandre de la Rochefoucauld, Prior of St Martin-de-Randan in Auvergne, who had helped her before she went to Paris. In spite of strenuous efforts by the Paris Parliament to prevent it, this noble Prior eventually took her to Tarascon and Avignon, where she gave another anti-Huguenot performance,<sup>121</sup> and thence to Rome to see the Pope, where they arrived in April 1600, in time for the Jubilee.<sup>122</sup> Palma Cayet, in his *Chronologie Septenaire*, published in 1605, describes the enormous number of visitors in Rome and the edifying ceremonies, especially the public devotions of Pope Clement VIII, adding: 'As well as all this there were the wonderful and truly divine effects of the obsessed and possessed, who were being delivered by the grace of God, and by the ministry of the Exorcists appointed thereto. Among these possessed was Marthe Brossier . . .'<sup>123</sup>

Well before this, Henri IV, seriously alarmed, had written to the French Cardinal d'Ossat, instructing him to prevent the Prior staging

any public exhibitions, and to inform the Pope of the whole affair. The Cardinal, by very clever use of Jesuits, succeeded in bringing La Rochefoucauld to heel and in convincing the Pope that Henri and Parliament had acted in the best interests of the Church in suppressing the exorcisms.<sup>124</sup> The Cardinal took no steps to prevent the exorcisms of Marthe I have just mentioned – to do so would only attract attention to the affair, and anyway, as he wrote to the King: ‘it’s nothing but a silly game, which is laughed at even by the most simple and credulous (*ce n’est rien qu’un pur badinage, qui fait rire jusques aux plus simples & aux plus credules*)’.<sup>125</sup>

According to Cayet, Marthe was in 1604 still having fits in Milan, and Beelzebub was protesting that he would not be expelled until she returned to France, and that God wished this to happen ‘for His glory’.<sup>126</sup> That is the last we hear of her.

De Thou and Marescot both briefly discuss the question of the motives of the Brossier possession, assuming it to be false, and both conclude that, while the main motive was economic – according to Marescot, they did receive considerable sums from pious sympathizers – there were also seditious intentions of stirring up hatred against the Huguenots.<sup>127</sup> That the Brossiers were in fact used for this purpose is undeniable, and it seems likely, given the heavy influence of the Miracle of Laon, that Marthe herself shared such intentions.

Marescot and his colleagues, as well as giving an account of the case, print in full the favourable report of the second team of doctors,<sup>128</sup> which is then refuted point by point. Both sides accept the explicit presupposition that there are only three possible, and mutually exclusive, explanations of Marthe’s symptoms: ‘sickness, Counterfeiting, or Diabolically possession’.<sup>129</sup> The report begins by arguing against the first of these, disease; since Marescot agrees with them on this point, he does not discuss their arguments. The two diseases considered are epilepsy and hysteria; they are dismissed because the first is always accompanied by lack of consciousness (‘losse of sense and judgment’), and the second by shortness of breath, neither of which symptoms appeared in Marthe’s fits. Against the explanation by fraud the report

brings two medical arguments: her anaesthesia during fits, and her lack of normal reactions after them. 'Deepe prickings of long pinnes' in hands and neck produced no blood and no signs of pain; even after prolonged fits her pulse and breathing were undisturbed.<sup>130</sup>

Marescot denies the first of these from his own examination. When pricked in the neck Marthe did evidently feel it, but Father Serafin then claimed she was not possessed; with a later jab, which left a red mark, she managed to dissemble the pain. Marescot also notes that a pin pushed vertically into a fleshy part of the body produces no blood and little or no pain (which we all now know to be true, from injections), and remarks that on this kind of evidence many 'poor people have been condemned to be burnt as sorcerers.'<sup>131</sup> With regard to the lack of reactions after fits, Marescot argues: first, that her convulsions were not very violent – he had stopped them easily enough; and secondly, that melancholics, owing to their thick, earthy blood, often have a very slow pulse – he has often seen 'sundrie Melancholicke persons, not onely many daies and moneths, but also many yeeres, to have runne up and downe crying very strangely, and howling like dogs, without any change, either in pulse, or in breathing, or in colour.'<sup>132</sup>

Marescot evidently considered Marthe to be a melancholic. He later suggests that she may have begun by sincerely believing herself to be possessed, perhaps from reading about the Miracle of Laon, and then exaggerated some symptoms and simulated others in order to convince other people of her possession. He does believe it possible for the same person to be both deluded and cunning: 'Melancholicke persons are craftie and malicious'.<sup>133</sup> This is one of the rare examples of fraud being combined with the other two categories, disease and possession or delusion – we shall have one other example with Jesse Bee and Thomas Darling<sup>134</sup> – and it is, as I have already suggested, only such a combination that can possibly provide a valid explanation of these cases.

The other marks of possession asserted by the credulous doctors are traditional ones: understanding foreign languages and clairvoyance. As usual, the evidence for the former is very feeble, and Marescot has no difficulty in demolishing it. For example, when asked in Greek, 'How did you enter the body?' (πῶς ἤλθες ἐς τὸ σῶμα;), she answered, 'For

the glory of God'; but she had already been asked this at Cléry, and in any case she answered the question, 'Why?', not 'How?'. When 'the good old *Father*' Benet, an English Capucin, asked her in English what his name was, she replied, 'I was not at your Christening'; but it was established that she had heard the Bishop suggesting this question to Benet.<sup>135</sup> As for clairvoyance, when asked by Father Serafin, 'What did I do last night?', she replied, 'You prayed to God' – a true, but not supernaturally clairvoyant answer.<sup>136</sup>

Finally, these doctors claimed that the signs of Marthe's possession were as evident as those given by St Luke, the physician. Here again, Marescot was on strong ground. The symptoms described in the Gospels are of course compatible with possession, but they are not distinguishing marks of it. The demoniacs were already known to be such, and Christ had supernatural knowledge of their state. If, says Marescot, 'wee want none other signes of the *Divels* possession, but those set downe by the *Evangelists*, then every person that is Epileptike . . . every *Melancholike*, and every *Frantike* person shall have the *Deville* in their bodies, and there will be moe *Demoniakes* in the world, then there are *Fooles*'.<sup>137</sup> This is perfectly orthodox. Thyraeus dismisses the evangelical symptoms in favour of the traditional, but not scriptural, marks of knowledge of languages and horror of sacred things.<sup>138</sup>

Marescot also argues on a more general plane against attributing surprising phenomena to the devil, phenomena such as the dog-like barking of those suffering from hydrophobia, or the howling and cannibalism of those whose diseased imagination leads them to believe they are wolves. For other examples of extraordinary but natural occurrences he refers the reader to Lemnius's *Occulta Naturae Miracula*, to Fracastoro's and Mizaldus's works on sympathy and antipathy, and to Della Porta's *Natural Magic*. If all such wonders were supposed to be diabolically caused, natural philosophy and medicine would be impossible.<sup>139</sup>

Pierre de Bérulle, the future Cardinal and the founder of the French Oratorians, published a reply to Marescot and his colleagues in the same year, at Troyes, under the pseudonym of Leon d'Alexis. It is a treatise on demoniacs, *Traité des Energumenes*, preceded by an address to the reader, and followed by a *Discours* on Marthe Brossier. Subsequent



editions contain only the treatise, which is not polemical and makes no reference to any modern cases; copies of the first edition containing both the *Au Lecteur* and the *Discours* are extremely rare.<sup>140</sup>

Given the firm action taken by the King and the Paris Parliament, it was courageous to publish an attack on Marescot and a defence of Marthe Brossier. But it was a foolhardy and pointless thing to do, if one had no convincing arguments to present; and this was the case with Bérulle. It is an astonishingly feeble piece of work to come from such an intelligent man and such an accomplished writer, which he already shows himself to be in the *Traité*. He pretends just to disbelieve that the King has taken any interest in the affair, that he has ordered Marescot to publish his book, or that Parliament's action in banishing Marthe indicates any concern for public safety. His only reference to the Edict of Nantes is oblique; he is publishing his attack because now in France everyone is free to write about religion and God Himself is not 'exempt from the unrestrained license of this freedom'.<sup>141</sup> With regard to the facts of the case, the best he can do is to claim that Marthe's possession was accepted as genuine by many theologians and doctors, which is, of course, true of the second team assembled by the Capucins, and to deny that admittance was refused to the sceptical doctors – the doors of the church were indeed closed, but only to keep out the crowd.<sup>142</sup> The most striking sign of the lack of any solid arguments in favour of Marthe is the space taken up in a short pamphlet by long digressions on trivial points that have no relevance whatever to the genuineness or not of her possession. For example, Marescot and his doctors had asserted that their orthodox belief in the evangelical possessions was 'as firm and stable as the Pole'; and Bérulle demonstrates at length the inadequacy of this simile, on the grounds that the Pole is only an imaginary point.<sup>143</sup> Nearly a quarter of his pamphlet is devoted to a defence of the use of stinking fumigations in exorcisms, which, as far as we know, were not used to exorcize Marthe, and which Marescot had only mentioned as one of the means used at Orléans to expose her fraudulence.<sup>144</sup>

Bérulle's treatise on demoniacs, on the other hand, is beautifully clear and concise, and puts forward what I think are new and bold speculations on the crucial problem of God's permission of diabolic possession.

God's providence flows through two channels: the permission of evil, so that a greater good may result, and the positive operation of good. Bérulle's God, as later Malebranche's, has a strong preference for tidy, regular modes of action. In consequence, He likes to keep the flow in the two channels roughly equal. Since the Incarnation was a colossal operation of good, it had therefore to be compensated by a huge permission of evil, and this is why, contrary to the opinion of the Protestants, and indeed many Catholics, possession and exorcism did not cease or diminish with the establishment of Christianity, but have increased enormously.<sup>145</sup> God's main purpose in this permission, apart from the traditional ones of punishing sin and testing the elect, which Bérulle does also mention, is to provide a third school, after the school of nature and that of Christ have failed, for teaching atheists, who do not believe in God, and libertines, who do not fear His judgments. This 'School of the Devil' (*escole du diable*) teaches through the senses. The unbeliever sees with his eyes the possessing devil tamed by the name of Christ. 'His senses are enabled more easily to find less strange the union of the Word with humanity, when he sees, if one may say so, a DEMON incarnated before him'.<sup>146</sup> This extraordinary parallel is repeated later: Satan, the ape of God (*le singe de Dieu*) possesses demoniacs in imitation of the hypostatic union of God and man in Christ.<sup>147</sup> The libertine sees enacted before him an exact and manifest image of the torments of hell (this is an idea that one does find elsewhere).<sup>148</sup> Finally, even the saintly may learn from demoniacs: 'he whom the spirit of God possesses profits by this spectacle',<sup>149</sup> since, from this diabolic model, he learns to let himself be utterly possessed by God. This calm acceptance of an exact parallel between good and bad possession is most unusual.<sup>150</sup>

Bérulle accepts that possession may be caused by sorcery, citing our familiar cases from Jerome's *Life of St Hilarion* and Fernel's *De abditis rerum causis*.<sup>151</sup> Here again he draws a parallel between good and bad possession: just as, in the ordinary process of conversion, the Holy Ghost may be given by man to man, so, by witchcraft, may the evil spirit. Bérulle is exceptional in not giving the usual, supernatural marks of possession – languages, clairvoyance, horror of sacred things – and indeed in implicitly denying them. He emphasizes the mild symptoms

of nearly all the Gospel demoniacs, the most violent of which, he says, do not surpass those of an ordinary epileptic fit, and asserts that the devil does not usually produce any extraordinary phenomena. Being very intelligent, as a high-ranking angel, and again imitating God, he acts with the greatest economy of means – ‘nothing useless or superfluous’ (*rien d’inutile ou de superflu*); he just wants to satisfy his rage by tormenting, and this is what he does. Any apparently miraculous effects are accidental, due to a caprice of the devil aroused by the spectators’ expectations. Moreover, he delights in using natural diseases to dissimulate his possession, and again the Fernel case is cited.<sup>152</sup> We are left then with no conceivable means of detecting a fraudulent demoniac or of distinguishing between disease and possession, except the authority of the Church.

This, I think, is the reason why Bérulle’s pamphlet in defence of Marthe’s possession is so weak. All he can do is to assert that it is for the Church alone to decide, presumably by direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, whether a given demoniac is genuine or fraudulent or just sick, and that lay experts, medical or legal, have no right to interfere. And even here he is inconsistent, since, as he boasts, the Capucins, for their favourable examination of Marthe, did bring in lawyers and doctors.

The affair of Marthe Brossier seems to me of great interest in two ways. First, it is a striking example of the serious consequences that exorcism used as propaganda might have. Secondly, it is the first case I know of where accusations of fraud are backed up by detailed evidence. Moreover, the case had considerable repercussions. Marthe, who was probably no more or less bogus than any other demoniac, soon became a standard example of a possession that had been proved to be fraudulent. She was so used in England, as we shall see, and on several occasions in France – the translation of De Thou’s account by Congnard in 1652, for example, was directed against a defence of the demoniacs of Louviers.<sup>153</sup> Finally, Marthe has the honour and vicarious immortality of an article in Pierre Bayle’s *Dictionary*.

### III CASES IN ENGLAND

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DENHAM, 1585-6

Between the spring of 1585 and the summer of 1586 six demoniacs were exorcized by twelve Catholic priests in the houses of various recusants, but mostly in the home of Sir George Peckham of Denham, Buckinghamshire. The chief exorcist was William Weston, alias Edmunds, of the Society of Jesus. Our knowledge of these cases comes almost entirely from a book published in 1603 by Samuel Harsnett, then chaplain to the Bishop of London, Richard Bancroft; its title is: *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures, to with-draw the harts of her Majesties Subjects from their allegiance, and from the truth of Christian Religion professed in England, under the pretence of casting out devils. Practised by Edmunds, alias Weston a Jesuit, and divers Romish Priests his wicked associates. Where-unto are annexed the Copies of the Confessions and Examinations of the parties themselves, which were pretended to be possessed, and dispossessed, taken upon oath before her Majesties Commissioners for Causes Ecclesiasticall.*<sup>1</sup>

There are five of these sworn statements, of which four are by the demoniacs and one by a priest, Anthony Tyrell, who was one of the exorcists. They were made between April and June 1602, except for one, by Annie Smith, made in March 1599.<sup>2</sup> The originals of these statements are now lost. Another document used by Harsnett, also now lost, was a description of the exorcisms written by some of the priests, discovered in about 1598<sup>3</sup> when the house of a Mr Barnes of Mapledurham was raided; it also contained a discourse on exorcism by Weston. Harsnett gives extracts from this *Book of Miracles*, as he calls it, and states that it is available for public inspection.<sup>4</sup> Although the statements were made so long after the events they refer to, by witnesses who had by then renounced their Catholic faith, and to examiners who would certainly encourage anti-Papist evidence, they read on the whole like genuine attempts to recall puzzling and distressing experiences.

At first sight it seems most surprising that for over a year in the mid 1580s Catholic priests, headed by a Jesuit, could in the south of England successfully conduct exorcisms attended by large numbers of people, not all of them Papists – for the lowest estimate of the conversions achieved by the exorcisms is five hundred.<sup>5</sup> The Act of 1585 made Jesuits and seminary priests guilty of high treason merely by being in England, and those who harboured them guilty of felony, punishable by death.<sup>6</sup> In 1581 the Jesuit Edmund Campion had been martyred and Robert Parsons had had to flee the country, and there were several more martyrs in the early 1580s.<sup>7</sup> When Weston arrived in England in September 1584, it would not seem an auspicious moment to launch a campaign of conversion by exorcism, especially since the Witchcraft Act of 1563 made the conjuring of spirits punishable by death on the first offence, whereas simple witchcraft, not involving murder, was punished only by a year's imprisonment and the pillory.<sup>8</sup> There is evidence that the older Catholics strongly disapproved of these perilous exorcisms.<sup>9</sup>

The reason why the exorcisms were allowed to go on so long is, I think, that they were regarded by the government as part of the Babington plot, which proposed the assassination of Elizabeth, the invasion of England by the Spanish, and the installation of Mary as Queen of Britain. Walsingham knew all about this plot from the beginning, and held his hand as long as possible, so that his net might catch bigger and better fish; and, in fact, it caught Mary Queen of Scots.<sup>10</sup> Now the first demoniac exorcized by Weston was William Marwood, a servant of Anthony Babington, and Babington later visited Denham to see the exorcisms.<sup>11</sup> Among the exorcizing priests was John Ballard, who was the leading conspirator in the plot, and who had come to England from Rome in 1584 with Anthony Tyrell,<sup>12</sup> the exorcist whose confession we have. It seems highly probable that Weston knew of the plot, and he may, as Harsnett suggests,<sup>13</sup> have regarded his converting exorcisms as preparing the way for its successful outcome. If so, he was prudent enough not to implicate himself in it. When Walsingham finally struck and Ballard was arrested on 4 August 1586, Weston was arrested on the same day; but no evidence against him of connexion with the plot was found and he was put in Wisbech Castle, where there were already a lot

of other priests.<sup>14</sup> There he remained for over ten years. The house at Denham had already been raided in June 1586 and most of its occupants arrested.<sup>15</sup> Tyrell was also arrested in July and was soon busy informing against other priests, including Richard Dibdale, the Peckhams' chaplain, whom he accused of conjuring spirits, correctly, since that is what exorcism is, for which he was executed.<sup>16</sup> Tyrell had already, before this, become an informer and then been reconciled,<sup>17</sup> and he continued afterwards to oscillate ignominiously between the two Churches.<sup>18</sup>

Why was there an enquiry into these exorcisms as late as 1602, a good sixteen years after they took place? One answer is that it was suggested by the discovery of the *Book of Miracles* in 1598, but I think there was another reason as well. While he was in Wisbech Father Weston had not been idle. By trying to impose a Counter-Reformation asceticism on the priests there he succeeded in arousing what were known as the Wisbech stirs, that is, the creation of two warring factions, which spread to other English Catholics both at home and abroad. The anti-Jesuit, loyalist faction, who were trying to get the pro-Jesuit Arch-priest Blackwell removed from his position as head of the English hierarchy, eventually in 1601 began negotiations with the government by means of secret meetings with Bishop Bancroft. These Catholics were given financial help to make an appeal to Rome against Blackwell and to publish anti-Jesuit books, which appeared in that year. In November 1602 a Royal Proclamation distinguished between the Jesuit group and their opponents, and offered the latter milder treatment, if they would publicly swear loyalty to the Queen.<sup>19</sup> In 1604 there was an attempt by Puritans to have Bancroft charged by the Commons with high treason because of his dealings with the Catholics.<sup>20</sup> My suggestion is that, by the examinations of 1602 and their publication in Harsnett's book in 1603, Bancroft and his party hoped to kill two birds with one stone: first, to drive in further the wedge between the two Catholic factions by blackening the Jesuit Weston, who had in fact begun the troubles; and secondly, to clear themselves of the by no means groundless charge of being more eager to suppress Puritans than Papists.<sup>21</sup> For the latter purpose the choice of Papist exorcisms was particularly appropriate, because, as we shall see, Bancroft and Harsnett had, only three years earlier,

been conducting vigorous proceedings against Puritan casters-out of devils.

Of the four demoniacs whose confessions we have two were Protestants, but were rapidly converted by Father Dibdale, and two were Catholics. The Protestants were: Sara Williams, a servant girl at Denham, aged about fifteen,<sup>22</sup> and her sister, Frideswid or Fid,<sup>23</sup> two years older, who came to do her work when Sara started to have fits. Sara continued to have fainting fits long after the exorcisms, and was presumably prone to them.<sup>24</sup> There was nothing wrong with Fid until she had a bad fall in the laundry and was then persuaded she was possessed.<sup>25</sup> The two Catholics were: Annie Smith, a girl of eighteen, whose family were friendly with the Peckhams and sent her to Denham because she was subject to hysterical attacks;<sup>26</sup> and Richard Mainey, of about the same age, who had recently come back from France, where he had been educated at the English seminary at Reims and had become a Friar Minim – but he left the order because, as he said, ‘their rule seemed too strict for me, and their diet being nothing but fish, I began to dislike it’. He too suffered, at long intervals, from attacks of ‘the mother’ (i.e. hysteria).<sup>27</sup> He is the only one of the four who, as a demoniac, shows any real talent and imagination.

The method of exorcism used, according to all five witnesses, had some most unusual features. The patient was seated in a chair and bound fast to it; she was made to drink a hallowed potion of which the chief ingredients were oil, sack and rue; she had held close under her nose a chafing-dish of burning brimstone.<sup>28</sup> Now, it was usual to have people supporting and restraining demoniacs during convulsions, but not to bind them; recipes for stinking suffumigations are given in manuals of exorcism (Harsnett quotes one from Menghi),<sup>29</sup> but I know of no other cases in which they were used; the potion, both nauseating and intoxicating, is quite without precedent.<sup>30</sup> We may, I think, believe Sara Williams when she states that, bound in a chair, her head ‘giddy’ with the drink, her senses ‘troubled with the smoake’, she spoke ‘many idle and foolish words’, or her sister Fid’s testimony that the effects of the potion induced her to believe she really was possessed.<sup>31</sup>

It was not only Fid Williams who was at the time convinced she was

possessed; the other three also make the same admission.<sup>32</sup> The demoniacs, then, were at least not entirely fraudulent; but what of the priests? Since it was invented for this occasion, it is difficult to believe that the potion was quite innocently used. But apart from this, there is little or no evidence, even from these unfavourable witnesses, that they consciously or deliberately instructed the demoniacs in what to say or do. But the priests certainly did tell them about other edifying exorcisms on the continent (not specified, but surely, since the English seminary was now at Reims, Laon and Soissons must have been among them), and about each other's demoniac performances.<sup>33</sup> All the witnesses emphasize that they were anxious to please the priests, and some suggest that the horrible exorcisms were used as a threat or punishment. Richard Mainey, for example, having had a vision of Christ's body while at Mass, and his devil having done some anti-Protestant propaganda, states that, by this conformity to the Fathers' wishes, 'I escaped sometimes (as I think) theyr loathsome drinks, and intolerable fumigations'.<sup>34</sup>

The Williams girls, in imitation of Mainey, also had visions confirming the Real Presence.<sup>35</sup> The anti-Protestant propaganda consisted in the devils praising Protestants, Queen Elizabeth and her courtiers, and claiming them as obedient disciples.<sup>36</sup> The pro-Catholic propaganda was concentrated on the power of relics, especially those of recent English martyrs, whose sanctity was thus demonstrated. As Harsnett, with typical bad taste, said: 'They were fresh greene new reliques, that were not antiquated and out of date'.<sup>37</sup> Sara's devil, Maho, for example, when asked whose a certain bone was, replied: 'It is Brian's bone: hee is a saint indeede, hee never came into Purgatorie.'<sup>38</sup> On one occasion they put a bone of Campion into Sara's mouth, which she very much disliked, 'it being as she thinketh against nature to have a bone of a man put into ones mouth'.<sup>39</sup> They did the same to her sister Fid, and her revulsion was naturally attributed to the devil's horror of sacred objects. She had already learnt to distinguish one relic from another, and could say: 'This is such a peece of Father *Campion*; this of Ma. *Sherwin*,' Brian, Cottam, etc.<sup>40</sup> Sara's devil also did some doctrinal propaganda; to Father Dibdale's question, 'What sayest thou to the Virgin Mary?'



he replied: 'Oh, shee had no originall sinne, I had not a bit of her, neither within or without.'<sup>41</sup>

Witchcraft, so characteristic of English cases of possession, makes one appearance at Denham; but it would, of course, have been too dangerous for the priests to bring the witch before a magistrate. Richard Mainey's devil, Modu, stated that Sara and Fid had been bewitched by 'good-wife *White of Bushie*', who was commonly supposed to be a witch. Her cat was somehow procured and whipped until it 'vanished away'. A messenger was sent to Bushy, where the witch was found in child-bed, her baby dead. According to Fid, who tells this story, the priests were triumphant; but she said to them: 'Yea . . . is that true? Why then you are murderers.'<sup>42</sup>

Richard Mainey, in addition to his devil, made determined efforts to have a good possession. Father Weston, according to Tyrell, was for a time impressed by his visions and revelations, and wrote them down, 'thinking to have wrought some great matter by him, but was disappointed very ridiculously'.<sup>43</sup> Mainey, in his deposition, says of course that they were all feigned, partly to please Weston, 'and it may be to gaine to myself a little foolish commendation, or admiration, because I saw how the Catholiques that heard of them, and were present at many of my fond speeches, did seeme to wonder at me'.<sup>44</sup> Sometime before Easter 1586, he announced that every Sunday he would have a vision of purgatory, until Good Friday, when he would go straight to heaven. A great crowd naturally assembled on the Friday, and Mainey, lying on his bed, solemnly exhorted his audience to be steadfast under persecution and to endure unto the end, prayed with them, and then fell into a trance for two hours, from which many thought he would never awake.

Then [I quote from Harsnett's extract from the *Book of Miracles*] of himelfe hee did awake, fetching a great sigh, and a groane, and then used these words: 'My time is not yet come: our blessed Lady hath appeared unto me, and told mee that I must live longer yet: for that God hath reserved me for a further purpose to doe more good, and to tell of strange wonders.' With that there began to be a great muttering among the company, many greatly mervailing what this should meane.

Weston already strongly suspected that the devil was here playing his old angel of light trick, and this suspicion was confirmed by the final exorcism, on 23 April. Mainey's devil, Modu, announced that he was accompanied by seven others, 'all of them Captaines and of great fame', and then proceeded to act out, very graphically, the seven deadly sins. At the end of this performance he said:

A pox on you all for popish priests. My fellowes the protestants can make very much of my said Brethren and give them good entertainment, bidding them welcome whensoever they come; but you scurvy priests can neither abide them yourselves, nor suffer them to be quiet whensoever you are conversant.

After this parting shot, Modu was constrained by Weston to tell the truth about Mainey's visions: they were all false, contrived, with diabolical cunning, to induce the Catholics to worship devils, thinking them to be Christ and 'Saffronbag', as he called the Virgin Mary. Then Modu and his seven captains departed.<sup>45</sup>

Apart from the publicity provided by Harsnett's book, which had two more editions (1604, 1605), these exorcisms were, much later, brought to public notice, in a collection of anti-Jesuit pieces printed in 1645, by a long poem in the metre of a medieval hymn, entitled: *Modus Jesuitarum Daemones exorcizandi*, which faithfully describes the peculiar methods of exorcizing used by these priests.<sup>46</sup>

#### THE THROCKMORTON CHILDREN, 1589-93

In 1593 there was published in London a little black-letter book entitled: *The Most Strange and Admirable Discoverie of the Three Witches of Warboys, arraigned, convicted, and executed at the last Assises at Huntington, for the bewitching of the five daughters of Robert Throckmorton, Esquire, and divers other persons, with sundrie Divellish and grievous torments: And also for the bewitching to death of the Lady Crumwell, the like hath not been heard of in this age.*<sup>47</sup> This is the sole source of our knowledge of this case. It is a very detailed account, evidently written by someone intimately acquainted with the family, probably, I think, by an uncle, Gilbert Pickering of Tichmersh Grove,

Northants.<sup>48</sup> The main facts of this case and the following one have been competently summarized by Ewen;<sup>49</sup> I can therefore deal with them quite briefly. But this is certainly a case of considerable importance, in that it was known to later demoniacs and their healers, and is the first notorious instance of possessed children and adolescents successfully hunting witches to death.

In November 1589 the youngest daughter, Jane Throckmorton, aged ten, had a long sneezing fit, followed by convulsions and a trance. Dr Barrow, a Cambridge physician, was consulted, and later a Dr Butler; they both, diagnosing solely from the girl's urine, gave the opinion that she was bewitched. When a neighbour, Alice Samuel, an old woman of seventy-six, visited the house, the child cried out: 'Did you ever see one more like a witch than she is? take off her black thymb'd cap for I cannot abide to look on her.'<sup>50</sup> Within two months all the other sisters were having violent fits several times a day, of which they later claimed to have no memory, and they all accused Mother Samuel of witchcraft. The spirit of the eldest daughter, Joan, prophesied that there would be twelve demoniacs in the house. And indeed seven maid-servants were soon similarly afflicted; when sent away they recovered, but those who replaced them immediately became possessed.<sup>51</sup> Thus for over three years this respectable household contained twelve girls constantly shrieking, sneezing and writhing on the floor. One can only wonder at the grown-ups' patience, kindness and gullibility.

When Dr Dorrington, the local parson, came to dinner, he began after the meal to pray; but the children had fits 'with such terrible scriches and strange neesings' that he had to stop.<sup>52</sup> The same thing happened if the Bible was read; they tried the beginning of St John's Gospel, of which the devil has a particular horror.<sup>53</sup> This is, of course, a traditional mark of possession, but it is also, I think, for a child brought up in a pious family an effective means of avoiding endless prayers and sermons. When Elizabeth went to stay with uncle Gilbert, who gives us a day-by-day account of her visit, she used this means to put a stop to any religious exercises or lessons. When in a fit, she could see and hear only one adult, who then had to play cards with her, and she would be very merry and full of laughter. Sometimes her teeth were clenched

together and she could only eat if taken to a spot near a pond; so there were picnics every day.<sup>54</sup>

All this is very jolly, but the accusations against Alice Samuel went on, they eventually included her husband John and her daughter Agnes, and finally all three were accused of causing the death of Lady Cromwell.<sup>55</sup> This lady had visited the family in 1590 and had charged Alice with being a witch, which she 'stifly' denied. Lady Cromwell then had strange dreams, fell sick and died a little over a year later.<sup>56</sup> The suggestion that the Samuels' witchcraft was murderous was particularly important, since, by the Act of 1563,<sup>57</sup> it put them in danger of capital punishment. Apart from Lady Cromwell herself and a young uncle, Henry Pickering, still a student at Cambridge, who joined in the witch-hunt late in 1590,<sup>58</sup> these accusations were the children's own unaided efforts. To start with, the parents thought it most unlikely that anyone could have any motive for bewitching them, since they had only recently moved into the district; and as late as the autumn of 1592 Mr Throckmorton thought the devils might be lying.<sup>59</sup> But it had been discovered that the children's fits ceased when they were taken to Mrs Samuel's house, or when she, unwillingly, was brought to theirs; and she was therefore forced for several weeks to live in the Throckmortons' house.<sup>60</sup> Some time before this, Alice, Agnes, and another suspected witch had been forced to visit the children to be scratched. The parents had not intended to allow this quaint old English custom, because certain 'good divines' had said it was unlawful;<sup>61</sup> but they did, and later Agnes was frequently scratched by all the children, who at the same time often addressed to her the most beautiful exhortations to repentance.<sup>62</sup> This infant piety, in sharp contrast to their dislike of prayers or the Bible, adds a crowning touch to the picture of these abominable little girls. They also exhorted Alice to confess to witchcraft; their 'heavenly and divine speeches' moved everyone to tears, except Alice.<sup>63</sup>

But she eventually did confess, just before Christmas 1592. Soon after Christmas, supposedly under the influence of her husband and daughter, she withdrew the confession; but she made it again on 29 December before the Bishop of Lincoln and a Justice of the Peace.<sup>64</sup> The whole Samuel family were put in jail. Mr Throckmorton got Agnes

released on bail in order to take her home and give the girls the opportunity to extort incriminating evidence from her.<sup>65</sup> This was when most of the scratching occurred. The possessing devils were of an inferior, infantile kind, with names like Pluck, Catch and the Smackes (three cousins), who, apart from denouncing the Samuels, told rambling stories about fights among themselves and often appeared as chickens. They also figure in Alice's confession.<sup>66</sup>

In April 1593, after being tried at the Huntingdon Assizes before Judge Edward Fenner, to whom the account is dedicated, the three Samuels were hanged.<sup>67</sup> Thereafter the Throckmorton girls were perfectly healthy. The long game was over; the dolls had been thrown away.

The memory of this case was kept alive, not only by the printed account, but also by the widower of Lady Cromwell, Sir Henry. As Lord of the Manor, the goods and chattels of the executed Samuels were forfeited to him, and with the money he established an annual sermon at Huntingdon to be given by a fellow of his own College, Queens', Cambridge, 'to preache and invaye against the detestable practice, synne, and offence of witchcraft, enchantment, charm, and sorcerye'. The sermons went on until 1812.<sup>68</sup>

#### THOMAS DARLING, THE BOY OF BURTON,

1596

I now come to the cases in which the Puritan minister John Darrel was involved. For the first of these, that of Katherine Wright, whom Darrel failed to dispossess in 1586, we have no detailed account. A witch was accused of causing the possession; but the Justice before whom the suspect was brought refused to commit her and reproved Darrel, threatening him with imprisonment, a lesson from which he failed to profit.<sup>69</sup> The second case concerns Thomas Darling, aged thirteen, of Burton on Trent, who began having fits in February 1596. There is a full account, edited by John Denison in 1597, but written by Jesse Bee, 'a man of trade', who was with the boy during most of his fits,<sup>70</sup> and there is some more evidence, given at Lambeth in 1598-9, when Darling and Bee were summoned as witnesses against Darrel.<sup>71</sup>

The editor's foreword sets forth clearly the lessons to be learnt from this case:

I thinke there can scarcely be any instance shewed (the holy Scriptures excepted) whereby both the peevisch opinion, that there are no wiches, and the Popish assertion that only their priests can dispossesse, may be better controlled than by this. The first kind of people I rather thinke are to be pitied than confuted, daily experience crying out against their follie.<sup>72</sup>

The Papists will be confuted because the dispossession was by a 'faith preacher of the Gospel', that is, Darrel.

The Boy of Burton's fits consisted of the usual convulsions, accompanied by vomiting and visions of green angels and a green cat. He lost the use of his legs, except during fits. A physician, again judging solely by the boy's urine, diagnosed bewitchment; but those who saw his fits thought it was the falling sickness.<sup>73</sup> Jesse Bee also suspected witchcraft because hearing Scripture brought on the fits, evidently assuming that possession necessarily entailed bewitchment. The boy overheard his aunt and Jesse discussing these suspicions, and came out with the following story.

Earlier on the day of his first fit he had met in a wood a little old woman, with three warts on her face; he happened to break wind, whereupon she uttered the mysterious rhyme:

Gyp with a mischief, and fart with a bell:  
I will goe to heaven, and thou shalt goe to hell.

and then she stooped to the ground. The woman was identified as Alice Gooderidge, aged about sixty, already suspected of being a witch, as was her mother.<sup>74</sup> When after the usual scratching, again disapproved of as unscriptural but nevertheless ordered by the investigating Justices,<sup>75</sup> Alice was induced to confess, she admitted, with endearing candour, that she had indeed met Thomas on that day, but she mistook him for another boy, 'Sherrat's boy', who had once broken a basketful of her eggs – she was sorry if her words had done any harm – she didn't think she had used the word 'bell'.<sup>76</sup> She later added that when she stooped the devil had appeared in the form of 'a little partie-coloured dog, red

and white', whom she called Minny and sent off to torment the boy.<sup>77</sup> Thomas's possessing devil of course confirmed that she had sent him.<sup>78</sup>

As a demoniac Thomas gets high marks; he was both imaginative and original. The wish to have a good possession took the form of being simultaneously both divinely inspired and diabolically possessed, so that the dialogues were, not as usual between the exorcist and the devil speaking through the demoniac's mouth, but between the godly Thomas and the devil, whose speech he reported. In these dialogues, plainly modelled on Christ's temptation by Satan,<sup>79</sup> the devil offered worldly rewards and also threatened further torments;<sup>80</sup> they were all in the following form of question and answer: 'Dost thou saie thou wilt torment me far more grievously than ever thou hast done? I care not for al that thou canst do unto me: In the Lord is my trust, who will deliver mee when his good pleasure is.'<sup>81</sup>

Although so young, he had serious ambitions of becoming a Puritan saint. When first stricken with his fits, he accepted the prospect of imminent death with Christian resignation, but said, pathetically, that he would have liked to live to be a preacher 'to thunder out the threatenings of Gods word against sinne and all abominations, where-with these dayes doo abound'.<sup>82</sup> He was very impressed with a famous Puritan minister, Arthur Hildersham of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, who had visited and failed to dispossess him by prayer;<sup>83</sup> thereafter Hildersham is constantly addressed by the boy during his ecstasies. One such fit began: 'I hear a voice from heaven, the Lorde speaketh to me . . . Look where my brother Job is.' Then, after a vision of Christ, 'looke where Judas is frying in torments', and other details about hell - "'O great judgments, O great judgments'", which wordes he uttered so wofully, as if he had been in the jawes of hell; and on the contrary, so comfortably, as if he had beene in heaven.' The witch, of course, is not forgotten:

Yonder comes Mother Redde Cap, looke how they beate her braines out, see what it is to be a witch: see how the toades gnaw the flesh from her bones. O pray, pray, looke what wailing and weeping, and gnashing of teeth yonder is: Lord shew us thy mercie; take me by the hand Maister Hildersham, and let us goe to Heaven.<sup>84</sup>

This good possession produced, as usual, great worries and doubts. At the time the minister at Burton tried to stop the dialogues.<sup>85</sup> Two years later, at Lambeth, Darrel stated that, although when he first read the account, which had been sent him before it was published, he had thought it was God or a good angel speaking through Thomas, he now considered it was Satan disguised as an angel of light.<sup>86</sup> Thomas, although he was bullied into a confession of counterfeiting, which he withdrew immediately he was at liberty,<sup>87</sup> still asserted that his ecstatic speeches were from God, adding: 'I know at the present for a certainty that I have the spirit of God within mee'; but Darrel later persuaded him to the contrary.<sup>88</sup> Jesse Bee continued to believe in the divine inspiration of Thomas's godly speeches; but he made the interesting admission that the boy 'did of himselfe willingly caste himselfe into some fits, when the devil did not inforce him thereunto', and that he did this so that, 'when the word of God was read, those who were present might thereby the better bee brought to thinke that the devil could not abide it, & so have a more due and godly regard afterwarde for it'.<sup>89</sup> This refers to the practice which Jesse called offering 'Sathan the combate'. He would read the beginning of St John's Gospel, and soon, usually at verse 4 ('in it was life, and the life was the light of the world'), Thomas would fall into a fit. Later on they persisted and the boy had further fits at verses 9, 13, 14, and 17; but the fits grew weaker, and eventually they succeeded in finishing the chapter.<sup>90</sup>

Into these edifying scenes there was one disturbing intrusion. A stranger, unnamed, talked with the boy, who began to weep 'pitifully'. His mother asked why, and the stranger said: 'I spake no hurt to him.' 'No (quod the child) you bade me I should not dissemble, saying that there was no wiches: also you asked of me if I thought there were a god.'<sup>91</sup> ('Dissemble' at this period is regularly used to mean 'simulate'). This accusation rankled; Thomas's last recorded vision was of a dove: 'hearke, hearke what the Dove saith, thou hast an enemie heere upon earth, that saith thou art a dissembler, he shall frie in hell torments, thine eies shall see his judgements, for his sinnes doe smoake up into the elements, and do pierce the heavens . . .'<sup>92</sup>

John Darrel appeared on the scene at the end of May, and decided



that Thomas was possessed of an unclean spirit; there was still some doubt about this, owing to the boy's attempts at a good possession. He advised fasting and prayer, but refused himself to be present, so as to avoid any appearance of vainglory.<sup>93</sup> The dispossession was successfully carried out the next day by the family and a few friends. Thomas's performance is a little dramatic masterpiece. After he had fallen into a trance, a small voice came from him, saying: 'Brother Glassap, we cannot prevaile, his faith is so strong, and they fast and pray, and a Preacher prayeth as fast as they.' Then a 'big & hollow' voice replied: 'Brother Radulphus, I will goe unto my master Belzebub, and he shall dubble their tungs.' The boy then pointed to the chimney, saying: 'Loe where Belzebub standeth & the witch by him.' He charged the devil to say whether this witch had caused his possession. 'Doost thou say it was she? Now the Lord (I beseech him) forgive her, & I forgive her.' The boy then ordered Beelzebub to depart, and the big voice said: 'Radulphus, Belzebub can doo no good, his head is stroken off with a word.'

After a vision of an angel, sent by the Lord 'to bee with mee to comfort and assist us', there was some more conversation between the devils, who finally decided to go off and torment their mistress, the witch. It was later learnt that Alice, now in jail, did have a bad night, being afflicted with an ague. At last, after supper, while Thomas was in another trance, a voice was heard: 'My son, arise and walke, the evil spirit is gone from thee.' The boy, his lameness cured, walked into the town, 'that it might appeare, what Jesus had done for him'.<sup>94</sup> He had a brief relapse, with some more satanic temptations, and the vision of the dove; after that he was all right for good.<sup>95</sup>

The last words of the published account are: 'Now the witch is dead, had she lived she should have bin executed'.<sup>96</sup> She would in fact not have been hanged, because, as a first offender, she had been condemned to a year's imprisonment by Lord Chief Justice Anderson.<sup>97</sup>

Thomas Darling continued to be a passionate Puritan. In 1602, when at Merton, Oxford, he was sentenced to be whipped and have his ears cut off for libelling the Vice-Chancellor, John Howson, who was conducting a fierce campaign against the Puritans.<sup>98</sup>

## THE SEVEN IN LANCASHIRE, 1595-7

John Darrel's next case, usually known as the Seven in Lancashire, is in many respects like a repeat performance of the Throckmorton children, though there is no evidence of any direct connexion. It is again a case of the mass-possession of children, ending in the conviction and execution of a witch, who had been introduced into the house in order to quieten the demoniacs. But in this case the witch was a man, Edmund Hartley, who had been engaged, apparently as a cunning man, well after the first two children had begun to have fits, and there is no suggestion that he had ever seen them before. He succeeded for eighteen months in calming them by means of 'certayne popish charmes and hearbes' and was paid an annual salary of £2. He was himself subject to fits.<sup>99</sup> Another difference between the two cases is that the witch-hunt was not begun by the children, although at the end they joined in with zest.

Darrel was called in late in the proceedings, after Hartley had been hanged, and, together with another minister, George More, from Derbyshire, dispossessed the seven demoniacs. Both ministers published accounts in 1600, which are our main source of information.<sup>100</sup> In these accounts they both emphasize the great value of such cases for refuting the Papists' claim that theirs is the true Church because they alone can cast out devils.<sup>101</sup>

The story begins early in 1595 with the usual convulsions of the two children, Ann and John, aged about ten and twelve, of Nicholas Starkie of Cleworth, Lancashire. After having spent the enormous sum of £200 in trying to cure them, Mr Starkie had recourse to a seminary priest, perhaps because his wife had been a Catholic; but the priest had no book of exorcisms by him and could do nothing. He then engaged Hartley.<sup>102</sup> There were three other girls, of the same age, being brought up in the Starkies' house. Sometime after Hartley's arrival, these too became possessed. It was later claimed that Hartley had bewitched them by kissing them, and had kissed a maid, Jane Ashton, and a poor relation of the family, Margret Byrom, aged thirty-three, with the same result.<sup>103</sup>

In the autumn of 1596 Mr Starkie, having had reason to suspect Hartley of conjuring, consulted the celebrated Dr John Dee, then at

Manchester,<sup>104</sup> who certainly should have known all about conjuring.<sup>105</sup> Dee had also himself had an unfortunate experience with a demoniac. In 1590 Ann Frank, a nurse in his household, became possessed and was tempted to suicide. Dee anointed her breast with holy oil, not a usual procedure even for a Catholic; but after a month she cut her throat, in spite of being carefully guarded – a very rare example of a demoniac succeeding in committing suicide.<sup>106</sup> Dee advised Mr Starkie to procure godly preachers who should treat the children with fasting and prayer. This was the reason that Darrel and More were summoned. Dee also had an interview with Hartley, whom he sharply reproved, with the result, we are told, that the children were quiet for three weeks.<sup>107</sup> It was Dee's curate, Matthew Palmer, who finally detected Hartley as a witch by his failure to say the Lord's prayer, a usual test.<sup>108</sup>

The young demoniacs showed a combination, with which we are already familiar, of revulsion from Scripture and prayers, together with the occasional utterance of pious discourses. John Starkie on one occasion went on for two hours denouncing 'straunge sinnes', warning of the 'fearful judgments' of God, and praying for the Queen and her Church.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, whereas they were usually in good health while playing, they at once had fits if there were any Scripture reading or praying. And their delight 'in filthy and unsavourie speeches', especially during sermons, enabled them to avoid going to church for nearly two years.<sup>110</sup> Apart from these advantages, and a natural childish pleasure in screaming, howling, holding their breath until blue in the face, romping and dancing around, the children's motives had a more interesting aspect, of which we get one glimpse. Mrs Starkie asked them 'how they were handled', and they all replied 'that an angell like a dove was come from God, and that they must follow him to heaven, which way soever he would lead them, though it were through never so litle a hole'. And one little girl was found under her bed making a hole in the wall through which her 'lad', as she called her demon, might enter.<sup>111</sup>

When Edmund Hartley was tried at the assizes in March 1597, he was found guilty of bewitching the Starkie children – which is most odd, since he had been called in to cure them – but the court could 'finde no lawe to hange him'. Then Mr Starkie recalled the incident that had led

him to consult Dr Dee.<sup>112</sup> When he was with Hartley in a wood, the latter had made a circle on the ground with many 'crosses and partitions', had asked Starkie to 'tread it out', and then said: 'Now I shall trouble him that troubled me, and be meete with him that sought my death.'<sup>113</sup> Hartley denied having done this, but was nevertheless condemned to death for conjuring. At the execution the rope broke, and Hartley 'penitentlie confessed'; he was then successfully hanged a second time.<sup>114</sup>

The demoniacs were much better after this. But, when Darrel and More arrived, they conveniently had fits again, and spoke 'merrilie' about Hartley's death, one little girl saying wittily: 'no marvel the rope brake: for they were two Ed: and the devil'.<sup>115</sup> After an all-day struggle, with terrible bellowing, blasphemy and convulsions, all seven were dispossessed, and continued in good health.<sup>116</sup> except for Jane Ashton, who went to live with a Papist uncle and went on having fits, being exorcized by priests.<sup>117</sup>



## IV DARREL'S LAST CASE

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WILLIAM SOMMERS, 1597-8,  
AND THE TRIAL, 1598-9

John Darrel's last case, that of William Sommers of Nottingham, led to his downfall. Darrel was a graduate of Cambridge, a preaching minister in his mid-thirties; but he had never held a living or a salaried post. He lived with his wife and five children on a small inherited fortune at Mansfield, then Ashby-de-la-Zouche, and Bulwell. His personal character was morally exemplary, as even his enemies admitted. He was undoubtedly a Puritan. When he received the letters from Dr Dee and Mr Starkie summoning him to the Seven in Lancashire, he was at the 'exercise' in Ashby and consulted with the brethren there; it was on their advice that he took George More with him to Cleworth. At Ashby he knew Mr Hildersham, Thomas Darling's hero.<sup>1</sup>

The term 'Puritan' has been greatly abused by some modern historians (especially historians of science), and I had better explain what I mean by it. This I can best do by quoting the definition of a pamphleteer of 1581, cited in Patrick Collinson's *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*: 'The hotter sort of protestants are called puritans'.<sup>2</sup> Their opinions covered a wide spectrum, from Genevan presbyterianism to mild episcopalian reformism; but they were all learned, earnest, and keen on preaching. To denote their opponents, for want of a better term, I shall use the anachronistic 'Anglican'. Now, in the 1590s the Puritans were in a weak position. Their most powerful protector, Leicester, was dead; after the Armada the Papist threat seemed less serious; and the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, was determined to enforce conformity. Whitgift's chief lieutenant was Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London, who knew a great deal about Puritans and their organization, and Bancroft's right-hand man was his chaplain, Samuel Harsnett.<sup>3</sup>

It is against this background that we must set the case of William

Sommers and the trial of Darrel which resulted from it. The original documents of the trial have been lost; but there is an abundance of contemporary printed literature. Indeed it is this resounding publicity that gives the affair its importance. In about two years, from late in 1598 to 1601, no less than thirteen items were published on this subject.<sup>4</sup> On the anti-Darrel, Anglican side by far the most important work is Harsnett's long book, *A Discovery of the Fraudulent Practices of John Darrel*, published a few months after the trial had ended in 1599.<sup>5</sup> The Puritans, Darrel, More (who was also tried), and various unknown friends, began publishing even before the trial was over, and rapidly produced at least ten books and pamphlets, all of course clandestinely printed. With the clashes of ideas and attitudes in this literature I will deal in the next section; I want now just to present a very brief, simplified account of the facts of the case and the trial. I think that a careful, detailed history of the affair would be well worth undertaking, but it would come out as quite a large volume.

In November 1597, a few months after he had finished with the Lancashire possessions, Darrel went to Nottingham to see Sommers, aged about twenty, who was unhappily apprenticed to a musician.<sup>6</sup> Sommers, who had had fits about six years before, was suffering from convulsions with one unusual symptom: a lump, about the size of an egg, that ran about his body,<sup>7</sup> and his behaviour was much more obscene than that of most demoniacs, going as far as bestiality with a dog, in front of many onlookers.<sup>8</sup> Soon after the fits began he had been given the account of the Throckmorton children to read, which Darrel also had read.<sup>9</sup> Darrel soon dispossessed him, before an audience of about 150 people; but Sommers went on being repossessed at intervals. The dispossession was a great success, and Darrel was invited by some of the audience to be their preacher at St Mary's, Nottingham, his first regular appointment.<sup>10</sup> His sermons there were all on the subject of diabolic possession and the likelihood of Sommers' being repossessed; according to the Vicar of the church, Mr Aldridge, the congregation began to complain, saying 'they could hear of nothing in his sermons, but of the Devil'.<sup>11</sup>

Towards the end of November, Sommers, already repossessed, began to name witches.<sup>12</sup> When Darrel had them brought to the house, the

patient would be quiet while they were in his presence, but have convulsions while they were coming and going. On one occasion, a witch, the widow Boote, was brought back secretly two or three times, and Sommers failed to react. Later the Vicar repeated the experiment with another supposed witch, with the same negative result.<sup>13</sup> In spite of this, Darrel, according to Harsnett, had all the witches arrested, about thirteen of them, and got the Mayor of Nottingham to search for people willing to charge them. This he did, with little success, and all but two were released.<sup>14</sup> Darrel had great confidence in Sommers' clairvoyance, and is reported to have said that he had no doubt that he could 'discover all the witches in England'<sup>15</sup> – which opens up alarming prospects. One of the witches not released was Alice Freeman, whom Sommers' sister, Mary Cooper, who had also become possessed, accused of having bewitched her baby to death. She was tried at the Assizes in April 1598, convicted by two juries, but acquitted by a third; presumably the evidence against her so weak that the Judge would not accept a verdict of guilty.<sup>16</sup> Since the Judge was Sir Edmund Anderson, a great witch-hunter,<sup>17</sup> it must have been very weak indeed.

Now Alice Freeman, although, according to Darrel, she was 'a very ugly, old, lame woman',<sup>18</sup> happened to be a relative of a Mr Freeman, who was an Alderman and Justice of the Peace.<sup>19</sup> The Freemans counter-attacked, and in January 1598 Sommers was arrested on the charge of having bewitched a certain Sterland to death.<sup>20</sup> He was soon released on bail, but was placed in an institution, St John's, where, in February, he was examined by the Mayor and three Aldermen and confessed to fraud, giving an exhibition of simulated convulsions, frothing at the mouth, etc. This confession may have been made under duress, and Darrel certainly tried very hard to induce him to withdraw it.<sup>21</sup> In March a Commission was set up by the Archbishop of York to enquire into the case. Before the Commissioners, on 20 March, Sommers withdrew his confession and fell into fits which convinced them that he was genuinely possessed.<sup>22</sup> But on 31 March, before the Mayor and two Justices, he reaffirmed his confession of fraud, and a few days later did so again before the Assize Judge, again giving an exhibition of obviously simulated fits.<sup>23</sup>



According to Harsnett, Sommers' oscillations created violent factions in Nottingham, 'the pulpets (also) rang of nothing but Divels and witches', and people were afraid to go out at night. The Archbishop of Canterbury, therefore, on the advice of the Lord Chief Justice, Sir John Popham, summoned Darrel to Lambeth to be examined by the Commissioners for Ecclesiastical Causes, and there kept him in prison.<sup>24</sup> More was also imprisoned. Many other witnesses were summoned, including the three demoniacs, Katherine Wright, Thomas Darling and Sommers, who all confessed to being frauds. Wright and Sommers also accused Darrel, not only of connivance, but of having suggested the fraud and taught them how to simulate the symptoms of possession. Darling, as we have seen, withdrew his confession, and had not anyway accused Darrel of teaching him.<sup>25</sup> The accusation of teaching in Wright's confession is incompatible both with her own account of the beginning of her fits, and with the fact that they had continued ever since, a space of fourteen years.<sup>26</sup> But Sommers' accusation of teaching was detailed and circumstantial: Darrel had begun to coach him as early as 1592, at Ashby, had sent him to Burton to learn from Darling's performances, and had gone on instructing him at Nottingham.<sup>27</sup>

It was certainly mainly on Sommers' evidence that the court reached its decision. In May 1599, before the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, the two Lord Chief Justices, Popham and Anderson, and various other legal and ecclesiastical dignitaries, Darrel (I quote from Harsnett) 'was, by the full agreement of the whole court, condemned for a counterfeyte'. He and More ('his companion, who tooke upon him to justifie the said *Darrell*, and had otherwise greatlie misbehaved himself'), were 'deposed from the Ministry, and committed to close prison', to await further punishment.<sup>28</sup> That is to say, they were convicted, but not sentenced, and never were. Darrel seems to have been out of prison, but in hiding, about two years later.<sup>29</sup>

Now, the injustice of this trial and verdict is manifest. Sommers' assertion that he had been taught by Darrel to simulate is inconsistent with his confession at Nottingham, which contains nothing of this kind,<sup>30</sup> and it was entirely without any corroborative evidence. The court preferred the unsupported statement of a youth who was probably a men-

tally unbalanced epileptic, and certainly a self-confessed fraud, to the word of a clergyman of unblemished character. This is quite clear, even from Harsnett's very biased account. Apart from this central injustice, Darrel and his party made many complaints of other irregularities – the coercion of witnesses, falsification of confessions, refusal to allow the defendants to speak, etc.<sup>31</sup> Some or all of these may well be true, since at this period there was no set code of ecclesiastical law; the authority of Catholic Canon Law had of course been shaken, and nothing took its place until the Canons of 1604. One especially important unfairness was the refusal to allow Sommers to show his simulated fits in court;<sup>32</sup> such an experiment would have decided whether or not he really could simulate the violent convulsions, and particularly the running lump, attested by so many respectable eye-witnesses.<sup>33</sup>

This injustice can, I think, only be explained by seeing the trial as part of Whitgift's and Bancroft's anti-Puritan campaign,<sup>34</sup> and this was certainly how Darrel and his friends saw it. In the *Triall of Maist. Dorrell* (1599), for example, we read that the Bishop of London and the Archbishop of Canterbury hate those who 'desire reform of the church (among whom they accompt M. Dor. and M. Moore) whom they persecute more eagerly than the Papists, as if they were more jealous of their own miter than of the Queens crown.'<sup>35</sup> One object of this campaign was to show that the Puritans were as dangerous, seditious and rebellious against authority as the Papists. Harsnett constantly draws parallels between Catholic and Puritan practices, especially, of course, with regard to demoniacs, for which purpose he is already using the exorcisms at Denham.<sup>36</sup>

With respect to witch-hunting this whole affair was, I suggest, very important indeed, a suggestion I will try to substantiate below. For now, I want just to emphasize this point: rightly or wrongly, three demoniacs and two casters-out of devils, all of whom had made or supported accusations of witchcraft, were condemned, publicly and in a court of law, as frauds. The impact of this condemnation was reinforced by the publication in 1599 of an English translation of Marescot's *Discours* on Marthe Brossier. The translator, Abraham Hartwell, in his dedication to Bancroft, explains the purpose of the publication. Many

people, knowing Hartwell to have read out the evidence at the trial of Darrel, have asked him whether he thought Sommers was truly possessed, to whom he replied that it was all 'a meere *Imposture* and *Cousenage*'. But they were still doubtful, partly because of Sommers' extraordinary convulsions, and partly because of the '*Stoicall* conversation and *Holy life*' of Darrel. This *Discourse* will show that in the opinion of the best physicians in France nothing done by such demoniacs as Marthe Brossier and Sommers is beyond nature.<sup>37</sup>

CONTROVERSIES ARISING  
FROM THE TRIAL

Of the literature arising out of Darrel's trial I have already mentioned the works published by Darrel, More, and their anonymous supporters. On the Anglican side we have the two books by Harsnett, the *Discovery* of 1599 against Darrel and the *Declaration* of 1603 against the Papists, and in addition two very long books by John Deacon and John Walker, in the form of dialogues, published in 1601 and 1602, to which Darrel published replies.<sup>38</sup> Deacon's and Walker's main work, *Dialogicall Discourses of Spirits and Divels*, is prolix and logically weak; but it is very erudite and deserves more space than I can give it. Their views are in agreement with Harsnett's and they are writing in support of Darrel's condemnation; but they call themselves 'preachers', and are perhaps Puritans of an extremely conformist kind. This may account for their most glaring inconsistency: they explicitly exonerate Darrel from collusion with Sommers, yet accept the justice of his condemnation,<sup>39</sup> which was, as we know, for 'counterfeiting'. Of the many topics discussed in this literature I shall concentrate on two: the cessation of miracles, and witchcraft.

If one defines a miracle as Darrel does: 'an hard and un-usuall worke, surpassing all faculty of created nature, done by the devine power to that ende, it may move the behoulders with admiration, and confirme their faith in the word of God',<sup>40</sup> then both Puritans and Anglicans agree that miracles ceased soon after the Apostolic age. The Apostles, and perhaps a few subsequent generations, had been given the power to perform miracles in order to establish the Christian religion; once this

had been achieved, miracles were purposeless. The miraculous faith mentioned in Matthew 17.20 ('if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you') was therefore no longer granted, and true miracles ceased. Medieval and modern apparently miraculous occurrences are not merely false, either frauds or delusions; they are a mark of the church of Antichrist as predicted by Christ in Matthew 24.24: 'There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.'<sup>41</sup>

The aim of this doctrine of the cessation of miracles is plainly to demolish at one blow all modern Catholic miracles, presented as divinely given marks of the true Church, instead of having to show that each single one is fraudulent or produced by superstitious magic, and at the same time to prove that the Roman Church is Antichrist. This is why it is held so tenaciously; for scripturally it is extremely weak. There is nothing whatever in the New Testament to indicate that the miraculous powers conferred by Christ on the Apostles, and those whom they should convert, were limited in time. The only Patristic support consists of remarks by Latin Fathers, such as Chrysostom and Augustine, on the diminishing frequency of miracles as the faith becomes established.<sup>42</sup> A crucial text is the end of St Mark's Gospel (16.15-20), where the resurrected Christ sends forth the Apostles to 'preach the gospel to every creature', saying:

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

The best that Harsnett and Deacon and Walker can do with this is to challenge their opponents to give '*an experimentall demonstration*' of these powers by drinking poison.<sup>43</sup>

This text was also an awkward one for Darrel and his party; for they were obliged to exclude possession and dispossession from the class of miracles, since they were claiming to cast out devils, but as staunch

anti-Papists had to maintain that the age of miracle was past. This is the point of divergence between the Puritans and the Anglicans; the latter included in the class of miracles all supernatural occurrences, diabolic as well as divine. Darrel's argument is that, just as ordinary sickness has continued, though miraculous cures of it have ceased, so possession goes on, but the cure of it is no longer miraculous. The evangelical cures were miraculous in that the devils departed at a simple command given by Christ or the Apostles. Present-day cures as practised by Protestants are achieved by means of fasting and prayer to God to expel the devil, which is exactly parallel to praying for rain or for recovery from ordinary disease.<sup>44</sup> The scriptural basis for this method of dispossession is the case of the lunatic boy whom the disciples could not cure (Matthew 17.21): 'this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting'. Darrel has to admit that this remark evidently referred to an especially recalcitrant kind of devil; but he argues that *a fortiori* ordinary devils can be expelled by this means, and that by His remark 'Christ Jesus secretly giveth us to understand that' this is the proper natural mode of dispossession.<sup>45</sup> In support of his contention that possession still occurs and can be cured by prayer Darrel can cite some eminent Protestant divines: Melancthon, Peter Martyr, Theodore de Bèze, and King James. But these only make casual mentions of cases, because the continuance of possession had not yet become a matter of dispute – as Darrel remarks, 'this controversie is new sprung up'.<sup>46</sup>

An unfortunate consequence of this doctrine for Puritan casters-out of devils was that it severely crippled the propaganda that could be made out of their dispossessions. They could not, like the Catholics, claim that God had granted them a miracle to show that theirs was the true Church and all other Christians were heretics. The word 'miracle' was taboo, and so was the concept of a miracle as a specific sign of God's approval. They could only speak of this 'marvelous work of God . . . this glorious work, a greater then which hath scarcelie bene heard of . . . eyther in our dayes or in the dayes of our fore fathers for manie yeares',<sup>47</sup> and insist on the negative value of the glorious work in disproving the Papists' claim that their exclusive ability to cast out devils was a sign of their being the only successors of the Apostles.<sup>48</sup> They could not, and

did not, make the positive claim that their dispossessions showed God's approval of Puritanism, though Deacon and Walker believed they might have this effect: if Darrel's activities had not been stopped, 'the *vulgar Sort*' would all have cried: 'M. Darel, M. Darel, he is *τερατοσκόπος*, the only *Diviner* of *signes* and of *wonders*: his *ministerie* shall have my onely *applause*.'<sup>49</sup> And Harsnett, having noted, correctly, that the Protestant devil's dislike of scripture is borrowed from the Catholic horror of holy things as a mark of possession, supposes that Darrel's demoniacs, had they not been suppressed, would soon have begun to make Puritan propaganda: 'we should have had many other pretended signes of possession: one Devill would have beene mad at the name of the *Presbyter*: another at the sight of a minister that will not subscribe: another to have seene men sit or stand at the Communion'.<sup>50</sup>

Deacon and Walker explicitly include possession and dispossession in the category of miracles, and therefore deny that they can now occur. They are outraged at Darrel's '*printed opinion*, concerning the *perpetuity* of such supernaturall and *miraculous operations* in these daies of the Gospel'; for 'this pestilent opinion' undermines our whole religion by implying that it is still so shaky as to need miraculous support.<sup>51</sup> Indeed their only criticism of the Lambeth trial is that it was unnecessary to examine all the evidence, since we know *a priori* that nowadays there are no cases of genuine possession.<sup>52</sup> They account for the symptoms of supposed possession as being due either to disease or simulation, and even suggest that in Sommers' case both may have been present; which, as I have said, is rare. The diseases are the usual ones: epilepsy, hysteria and melancholy, as are their main authorities: Lemnius and Wier. There is great emphasis on melancholy: the '*noysome fumes, blacke and grosse*, vapouring up to the braine like the *soote* of a chimney' can easily produce delusions of possession.<sup>53</sup> In connexion with melancholy occurs one of the few sparks of literary invention in these dialogues. The speakers all have names appropriate to their opinions, Deacon and Walker's spokesman, for example, being called Orthodoxus, and one of them, a representative of credulity, is called Lycanthropus. In the middle of the book they are discussing the question: can devils transform themselves into any true natural body? Since, like Wier,<sup>54</sup> Orthodoxus denies

that the devil can break any natural law, the answer is no. Lycanthropus is impressed by Orthodoxus' arguments, but says that he is 'drawn into a marvellous perplexitie'. When asked why, he replies: 'Surely sir, because I my selfe am *essentially transformed* into a *woolfe*: I make no *question*, but that divels can also *substantially* change themselves into any true *naturall bodie*.' The others soon convince him that this is merely a delusion arising from melancholy, citing Avicenna, Leonard Fuchs and Wier. He is then sorry to have been so silly, 'being also ashamed of my *odious name*'.<sup>55</sup>

Harsnett too in his book of 1603 uses melancholy to account for belief in diabolic activity. There is, he says, an old adage: '*cerebrum Melancholicum est sedes daemonum*' ('a melancholic brain is the seat of demons'), because it is full of black, sooty spirits; and there is another saying (this is the good side of melancholy): '*nullum magnum ingenium sine dementia*' ('no great mind without madness'). He then goes on: '*John Bodin* the Frenchman is a perfect *Idaea* of both these, who being in his younger yeeres of a most piercing, quicke, speculative wit, which grew of a light, stirring, and discursive melancholia in him, fell . . . in the middle of his age to be a pure sot.' This was due to the cooling and thickening by age of his melancholic blood. His brain became a *vera sedes daemonum*, and he believed in the miraculous powers of witches, lycanthropy, and so forth.<sup>56</sup> This applies of course not only to Bodin; all those who believe in 'Witches, Conjurors, and Fayries, and all that Lymphaticall *Chimaera*' are 'children, fooles, women, cowards, sick, or blacke, melancholic, discomposed wits'.<sup>57</sup>

Harsnett, under the clouds of his exuberant style, has quite a clear conception of how the stereotype of a witch is built up, and how an old woman who fits this, when brought into contact with a discontented, hysterical girl, can produce a case of possession and be accused of causing it. Having quoted Reginald Scot on various popular superstitions, he writes:

out of these is shaped us the true *Idaea* of a Witch, an olde weather-beaten Croane, having her chin & her knees meeting for age . . . going mumbling in the streetes, one that hath forgotten her *pater noster* [a regular test] and hath yet a shrewd tongue in her head, to call a drab, a drab.

If she has learnt to say a few nonsensical rhyming spells,

Why then ho, beware, looke about you my neighbours; if any of you have a sheep sicke of the giddies, or a hogge of the mumps . . . or an idle girle of the wheele, or a young drab of the sullens, and hath not fat enough for her porredge; nor her father, and mother, butter enough for their bread; and she have a little helpe of the *Mother, Epilepsie, or Cramp*, to teach her role her eyes, wrie her mouth, gnash her teeth, startle with her body, hold her armes and hands stiffe, make anticke faces, grine, mow and mop like an Ape, tumble like a Hedgehogge, and can mutter out two or three words of gibbrid, as *obus, bobus*: and then with-all old mother *Nobs* hath called her by chaunce, idle young huswife, or bid the devil scratch her, then no doubt but mother *Nobs* is the Witch: the young girle is Owle-blasted, and possessed.<sup>58</sup>

Deacon and Walker, and Harsnett in his earlier book of 1599, do not expressly deny the reality of witchcraft, but they very strongly imply the denial. With regard to the former, Darrel is certainly correct in supposing that they believe neither in witches nor bewitchment; which supposition, he says, is confirmed by their frequent quotations from Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. He goes on: 'They doe not indeede deliver this in plaine tearmes, least happely they should thereby irritate the reverend Judges of the land, by making them guilty of shedding much innocent blood.'<sup>59</sup> Darrel constantly hammers at this argument: his opponents dare not openly declare their disbelief in witchcraft because they would be implicitly accusing judges and juries of convicting innocent persons for imaginary crimes.<sup>60</sup> And for Darrel and More, of course, these convictions of witches for causing possession were legal proof of the genuineness of their demoniacs.<sup>61</sup> The other reason why the Anglicans are afraid to publish their disbelief is that it would expose them to suspicions of atheism. In the dedication to Sir John Popham of the *Triall of Mr. Dorrell*, the Lord Chief Justice is warned to take great care in reporting on Darrel's case,

because Atheists abound in these dayes and witchcraft is called into question. Which error is confirmed by denying dispossession, & both these errors confirm Atheists mightily . . . If neither possession nor witchcraft, (contrary to



that hath bene so longe generally and confidently affirmed) why should we thinke that there are Divells? If no Divells, no God.<sup>62</sup>

Harsnett in his 1599 book had gone as far as to say that the 'learneder and sounder sort' of experts denied that possession could be caused by witchcraft, and warned against accepting witches' confessions.<sup>63</sup> Darrel and his friends rightly suppose that Harsnett's learned experts are Wier and Scot,<sup>64</sup>

who impute[th] such confessions to a strange imagination arising from Melancholy the predominant humour of old women and such like. O superstitious Catholique Melancholy, that no lesse strangelie then strongly deludeth so many young, as well as old, men, as well as women, and that at their executions!<sup>65</sup>

Like Scot, Harsnett really disbelieves in witchcraft altogether: 'but consider (good Reader) whether such a conclusion tend not to the confirmation of Atheists'.<sup>66</sup> That witches and atheists are being favoured by the Anglicans is shown by two actions of Harsnett's 'L. & master', Bancroft, at the London Sessions of November 1599. First, when a witch, Anne Kerke, was being tried, Bancroft was unwilling to find her guilty, although there were many witnesses to 'grievous things' she had done, such as bewitching children to death, and he had seen a girl fall 'into a most terrible fit' – 'yet he smiled (at no laughing matter, as som of the Bench told his L.) saying, *That hee saw nothing that might not be counterfeited*', and told how many frauds he 'had lately discovered'. Judge Anderson, therefore, and others on the bench, 'thought it necessarie for the satisfying of the Jurie to urge the Scriptures for prooffe that there is Witchcraft', and to recount their own experiences of demoniacs and children bewitched to death. Thus properly instructed, the jury found Anne Kerke guilty, and she was hanged at Tyburn a few days after. The second case was that of an atheist arraigned for blasphemy; Bancroft seemed anxious to release him, and the atheist, thus encouraged, said: 'My Lord, if any heere can proove there is a God, I will beleve it.'<sup>67</sup>

I think that perhaps the doctrine of the cessation of miracles, held as a

firm principle, was a fairly recent English invention. Calvin, on the end of Mark, comments cautiously: 'Although Christ does not express whether he wishes this 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 still obscure gospel, were promised only for a certain time.'<sup>68</sup> In contrast Melanchthon, on Matthew 17.20, writes:

What do these words mean? They mean great miracles, which undoubtedly are done in every age of the Church, sometimes more, sometimes less. God, because of the faith and prayer of Isaiah, drove out Sennacherib. There Sennacherib was the great mountain. God gave peace in Luther's lifetime. There, by his faith and prayer, were the mountains held down, that is, the attacks of princes.<sup>69</sup>

In any case, this doctrine, especially in its Anglican form, which includes diabolic phenomena in the class of miracles, may be quite important, and it certainly deserves further investigation. It makes it possible for a pious Christian to live in a world entirely devoid of any supernatural occurrences: the miracles in the Bible truly happened, but they happen no more; divine providence still rules this world, but only through, normal, natural means. Such a world, I suggest, is favourable to the development of early modern science, which is searching for invariable laws of nature; the search can be pursued without upsetting any Anglican's religious convictions. And it is certainly a world that is unfavourable to witch-hunting and demoniacs.



## V A GLANCE INTO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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### FRANCE

In this book I have concentrated mainly on three aspects of my subject: exorcisms used as propaganda, attempts to have a good possession, connexions with witchcraft. I want to end by briefly looking at these aspects in early seventeenth-century France and England.

In France the first big case after that of Marthe Brossier was at Aix en Provence, where in 1611 the priest Louis Gaufridy was burnt as a sorcerer, mainly on the evidence of the demoniac-witch Madeleine Demandolx and other nuns of her order, the Ursulines.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, this connexion between possession and witchcraft was not present in the famous French sixteenth-century cases,<sup>2</sup> and at the time it seemed an innovation. A slightly later witch, Marie de Sains, a nun in a recently-founded convent of Brigittines at Lille, claimed that it was the sorcerer-priest Gaufridy who had invented this new kind of *maleficium* which caused possession. The Dominican Domptius, one of the exorcists who had conducted and publicized the Aix affair, was in charge of the demoniac nuns whose devils succeeded in extracting Marie's confession of witchcraft.<sup>3</sup> The long possession of Elisabeth de Ranfaing of Nancy, 1618-25, resulted in the execution of three sorcerers, male and female.<sup>4</sup> Then there was Loudun in 1634, modelled on Aix, and its later imitations.<sup>5</sup> The innovation had caught on in a big way.

Anti-Huguenot propaganda as a main motive gradually fades out; but it is still quite strong at Aix, though the demoniacs and exorcists are already somewhat distracted from this aim by the excitement of the witch-hunt. Sebastien Michaëlis's long account of the affair, *Histoire admirable de possession et conversion d'une penitente*,<sup>6</sup> was quickly translated into English and published in 1613. In the introduction the translator or publisher states that in this work

the Invocation of Saints, the superstitious use of Images, the propitiatory sacrifice of the Masse, the adoration of the Host, transubstantiation in the

Eucharist with Christs very flesh and bones, the immaculate conception of the Virgin *Mary* without sin, and a great deale more of such trumpery, are with earnest asseveration of the Devil himselfe, defended and maintained. And as the Huguenots who will not beleeve these things are trownced for Heretikes, and so declared by the uncleane spirit; so the religious orders

are extolled.<sup>7</sup> This is a fair, if rather impolite, summary of the propaganda done at Aix, and is confirmed by Michaëlis's dedication to the Queen Regent, which also shows that the tradition of the Miracle of Laon was still active:

We are further to hope that this History will be no lesse profitable and usefull unto France, then that of *Laon* printed in French in the yeere 1566, which greatly confirmed the Catholic faith, and converted many hereticks, that heard the Divell which possessed a Virgin to say divers times in a high voice, that these Hereticks were his friends and confederates; and that the reality of Christs body was in the Sacrament, because in it there was *Hoc*.<sup>8</sup>

The main vehicle of this propaganda was the possessing devil, called Verrine, of one of the nuns, Louise Capeau, who day after day preached long sermons in the superbly dramatic setting of the grotto at the Sainte-Baume. They soon began to write these down; they sometimes had difficulties, since the sermons were rapidly delivered in Provençal, but the devil would then obligingly repeat slowly the previous day's discourse.<sup>9</sup> Verrine admitted every now and then that he was constrained to speak the truth; but his edifying discourses were uttered spontaneously and not in response to questions from the exorcist. Sometimes the devil emphasized the paradoxical nature of what he was doing. After a long sermon on the Virgin Mary, he exclaimed: 'A miracle, an un-heard of miracle, and which will never happen againe that the Divell should convert Soules.' And in another sermon, on the imminence of the Day of Judgment, now that human wickedness has reached its peak, he explained: 'Behold the last remedy is, that God would convert soules unto him by the Divell. Be ye therefore penitent.'<sup>10</sup>

When a visiting Friar Minim protested against listening to the father of lies, Verrine was absolutely furious, and shouted out: 'who dares deny that Divels may speak the truth? I say they may as well denie that

God is omnipotent, and [say] that there is no authority in the Church, and that all the bookes of Exorcismes are idle and of none effect'.<sup>11</sup> Michaëlis feels it necessary to apologize for these sermons because some people, remembering I Corinthians 14.34-5, had expressed doubts whether it was lawful for a woman to preach publicly in church. His main justification is again the universally approved Miracle of Laon, when Nicole Obry performed on the stage in the cathedral. Many preachers, he says, cite it in the pulpit as 'a great miracle, sent from God, to confirm the Catholic faith, which began then to fluctuate and waver in many, and also to convert Heretickes unto the truth. This book hath been seen and received in all quarters of Christendome'.<sup>12</sup>

It is, I think, clear that Louise Capeau's sermons are an only slightly disguised attempt at a good possession. If a woman wanted to preach, this was perhaps the only way open to her, and to Louise must go the credit of having first fully exploited it. The Christian refusal to admit women to the priesthood may account for the prevalence of female claims to good possession from the time of Montanists onwards. Since in France, by the seventeenth century, such claims, if made openly, were immediately suspect, a good way for a woman of achieving public, influential, vocal sanctity was by means of a good possession disguised as, or sometimes combined with, a diabolic one. Subsequent female demoniacs in France nearly all show vigorous pretensions to sanctity of an active, public kind. This is true of those I have already mentioned in connexion with sorcery: Marie de Sains, Elisabeth de Ranfaing, Jeanne des Anges, and there are examples up to the end of the century.<sup>13</sup>

#### ENGLAND

In England, with regard to propaganda, there is little or nothing to report. If there is no publicity, there can be no propaganda, and after the condemnation of Darrel and More it was dangerous for ministers to hold public dispossessions.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, by an article, plainly directed against the Puritans, of the Canons enacted by Convocation in 1604, a clergyman had to obtain permission from his bishop before casting out a devil.<sup>15</sup> Nor, I think, were most Puritans as keen as Darrel on dispossessing demoniacs. When Hildersham, accompanied by 'other godly

ministers', visited Thomas Darling, his attitude was extremely cautious and hesitant. He said that

howsoever the Papists boasted much of the power of their priests to cast out divells, and the simple noted it everywhere as a great discredit to Ministers of the Gospel, that they do want this power, yet did he professe there was no such gift in them, that though the Lord oft in these daies by the praier of the faithful casts out divels, yet could he not assure to cure him. To holde this faith of myracles to remaine still in the church is an opinion dangerous. That seeing to be possessed is but a temporall correction, & such as whereby both the glorie of God and the salvation of the partie may be furthered, it cannot without sinne be absolutely prayed against: al which notwithstanding, that there is a good use of praier in such a case, and of fasting also to procure that the judgement may be sanctified to the beholders, and the possessed himselfe; yea to obtain that he may be delivered also from it, if the Lord see it be best for his owne glorie.<sup>16</sup>

We see here again what an impediment to propaganda the doctrine of the cessation of miracles was. As for the Catholics, the Denham exorcisms were extraordinary and exceptional, and there was no attempt to repeat them. In the few later cases of possession in which Catholic priests were involved the exorcisms were surreptitious.<sup>17</sup>

I know of no examples in early seventeenth-century England of disguised attempts at good possession. This is disappointing after the promising start made by Richard Mainey and Thomas Darling, and may well be due to my ignorance; but I think it more likely that diabolic possession, owing to Anglican opposition, had ceased to be an easy short-cut to sanctity. Later in the century, during the Interregnum, claims to good possession did not need to be disguised; they could be made openly.<sup>18</sup> And after the Restoration you could still join the Quakers, and, even if you were only a woman, the spirit might speak through your mouth.

The connexion between possession and witchcraft continued into the seventeenth century with, I suggest, very important results. In my first chapter I mentioned Mandrou's thesis that in France this connexion was a major cause of the obsolescence of trials and convictions for

witchcraft. My suggestion is that *mutatis mutandis* the same thing happened in England, where the connexion was older, but it happened considerably earlier. The facts I shall present are not new – most of them can be found conveniently assembled in the chapter on James I in Kittredge's *Witchcraft in Old and New England*<sup>19</sup> – but I want to put them in a different perspective.

It is obvious, if you think about it, that a trial for witchcraft in which the witch is accused by a demoniac of causing possession is likely to lead to investigations that may invalidate the charge. The demoniac, still having fits, is there to be observed and examined, whereas a jury cannot be shown a witch actually doing her evil magic. In such cases the demoniacs were brought into court, as exhibits, as we saw in the trial at which the bishop tactlessly smiled; and they were exhibited in the earlier cases of the Throckmorton children and the Seven in Lancashire. In all these cases the witches were convicted. But sooner or later some expert, medical, legal, ecclesiastical, or just an amateur detective of fraud, will examine the demoniac and conclude either that he or she is suffering from a natural disease, or is counterfeiting. In either event the charge against the witch must be dropped and the witch exonerated, whereas in ordinary witch-trials, though the case might be dismissed, there was no conceivable way in which the witch's innocence could be proved. I do not mean to suggest that witch-trials involving possession were frequent – of the hundreds in Essex examined by Macfarlane there is only one<sup>20</sup> – but that the effect even of very few might be very great if they ended in proving the witch's innocence, a result that could not be obtained in any other way.

The use of medical experts to examine demoniacs in such trials did not occur until the case of Mary Glover in 1602. In Darrel's trial no medical opinions had been sought on the three demoniacs brought to Lambeth; their fraudulence had been established, rather shakily, by persuading, or bullying them into confessions. Mary Glover, aged fourteen, of London, suffered from fits and her devil accused a charwoman, Elizabeth Jackson, of causing the possession. Before the trial of the latter, several members of the College of Physicians were summoned to examine the demoniac, and they gave evidence at the trial. This new



procedure was perhaps introduced under the influence of the translation of Marescot's book about Marthe Brossier. Two of the doctors diagnosed hysteria (the mother), and two possession. Since the Judge, Lord Anderson, whom we have already met, was a firm believer in witchcraft, he peremptorily rejected the diagnosis of hysteria, and Jackson was convicted and sentenced to a year's imprisonment.<sup>21</sup> But one of the doctors whose opinion Anderson had contemptuously dismissed, Edward Jorden, felt so strongly on the matter that in the next year he published the treatise on hysteria that I described in my first chapter. Mary Glover was eventually cured by fasting and prayer. An account of this cure was published in 1603 by John Swan, a 'student in Divinitie'. The dis-possession had to be carried out in great secrecy because of the danger of the preachers involved losing their licences,<sup>22</sup> owing to the savage persecution of such activities by Bancroft and Harsnett. The pamphlet is full of bitter protests against these two impious disbelievers in witchcraft, these favourers of Papists and atheists – it has even become dangerous to believe in possession, and there has been a recent dispute at Cambridge on the proposition: '*Nulla est his diebus possessio ac dis-posessio daemoniorum*' ('in these days there is no possession or dis-possession of demons'), but King James, in his *Demonology*, maintains that there are still cases of possession and that they can be cured by prayer.<sup>23</sup>

This is true of the *Demonology*, which was first published in 1597; but James's attitude to these matters had changed by the beginning of his reign in England. In *Counterblast to Tobacco* of 1604, he wrote that if tobacco

could by the smoke thereof chase out devils, as the smoke of *Tobias* fish did (which I am sure could smel no stronger) it would serve for a precious Relicke, both for the superstitious Priests, and the insolent Puritans, to cast out devils withal.<sup>24</sup>

And in an undated, but certainly early letter to Prince Henry, his father wrote:

I ame (also) glad of the discoverie of yone litle counterfite Wenche. I praye God ye maye be my aire in such discoveries. Ye have ofte hearde me saye that most miracles nou a dayes proves but illusions, and ye maye see by this hou

waire judgis should be in trusting accusations withoute an exacte tryall; and lykewyes hou easielie people are inducid to trust wonders. Lett her be kepte fast till my cumming.<sup>25</sup>

The little counterfeit wench must certainly have been a demoniac, and throughout his reign James took a great interest in investigating, often personally, cases of supposed possession, and a keen delight in detecting fraud. In one case, for example, that of a demoniac, Anne Gunter, who in 1604 had accused three women of bewitching her, two of whom were tried and acquitted, James himself examined her in 1605 at Oxford. She was then brought to Windsor and handed over to Bancroft, now Archbishop of Canterbury, Samuel Harsnett, and Dr Edward Jorden. This formidable trio, together with James, succeeded in extracting from her a confession of fraud, in which she accused her father of bullying her into continuing what had begun as natural fits, and into making the allegations of witchcraft. The Gunters had early on been given a book by Darrel and the account of the Throckmorton children.<sup>26</sup>

I mentioned in my last chapter that Darrel persistently insinuated that his Anglican opponents dared not openly proclaim their disbelief in witchcraft because they were afraid of thereby accusing judges and juries of having shed innocent blood, although this accusation was already implicit in their condemning as fraudulent the demoniacs who had named the witches. I think this insinuation was justified. It would have needed enormous courage, indeed it would have been foolhardy, to make this accusation against such a man as Lord Chief Justice Anderson, who after all had the law of the land on his side – Bancroft did the best he could with his incredulous smile. But there was one person who could easily have this courage: a monarch who believed in the divine right of Kings, and James displayed it at Leicester in 1616.

In that year a boy of twelve or thirteen, called Smith or Smythe, nephew of a famous preacher, Henry Smith, accused six women of causing his convulsive fits by sending their familiar spirits to torment him. When possessed the boy hit himself with great violence and made the noise appropriate to the six familiar animals, barking if it was the dog, meowing for the cat, and so on. There is one feature that suggests

that Smith, or someone around him, had read about the Throckmorton girls: the witches were made to repeat a formula that had been imposed on the Samuels: 'As (or if) I am a witch, I charge the spirit to come forth from the child', whereupon the child's convulsions would cease. In July the six women, and three others, were tried for witchcraft at the Assizes at Leicester. The boy's fits were exhibited to the judges and other observers. All nine women were hanged on 18 July 1616. In August, the King, on a royal progress, happened to come to Leicester, and, as Francis Osborne writes, 'being gratified by nothing more, then an Opportunity to shew his Dexterity in Discovering an Imposture',<sup>27</sup> he examined the boy. James decided he was counterfeiting, and sent him to Lambeth to be further investigated by George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury, who soon confirmed the King's opinion. There were still six suspected witches at Leicester waiting to be tried; they were all released, except for one, who had died in jail. The two Judges concerned were said to be 'somewhat discountenanced' by this royal demonstration that they had just hanged nine innocent women.<sup>28</sup>

One immediate reflection of this affair is the last act of Ben Jonson's comedy, *The Divell is an Asse*, performed in the same year by the King's players.<sup>29</sup> The main character, Fitz-Dottrel, is persuaded, for various reasons, to simulate possession and accuse his wife of having bewitched him. There are some unmistakable allusions to the boy at Leicester: an inefficient little devil, Pug, offers to teach Fitz-Dottrel how

to foame, to stare, to gnash  
Your teeth together, and to beate your selfe  
Laugh loud, and faine six voices –

His offer is refused, Fitz-Dottrel crying: 'Out you Rogue! You most infernall counterfeit wretch!' He and his friends have no need of such help –

'Tis no hard thing t'out doe the Devill in:  
A Boy o' thirteene yeere old made him an Asse  
But t'other day.

But a friend has already told Fitz-Dottrel the easiest way to learn this art:

Did you ne're read, Sir, little *Darrels* tricks,  
 With the boy o' Burton, and the 7. in *Lancashire*,  
*Sommers* at *Nottingham*? All these do teach it,  
 And wee'll give out, Sir, that your wife has bewitched you.

In a later scene Fitz-Dottrel acts out the symptoms of a demoniac before a Justice of the Peace, who is completely taken in, until finally the fraud is confessed. It is significant that for Ben Jonson the Darrel affair still provides the standard examples of false possessions and false accusations of witchcraft, such as King James had exposed only a few months before.

The effects of the scandal at Leicester were reinforced by three other cases of possession and accusations of witchcraft, in which the Judges, not wishing to be 'discountenanced' by hanging innocent women, carefully investigated the demoniacs, found them fraudulent, and acquitted the supposed witches. The first is that of William Perry, the 'Boy of Bilston', in 1620;<sup>30</sup> the second that of the daughters of Edward Fairfax and of John Jeffray, at Fewstone, in 1622;<sup>31</sup> the third, in the same year, that of Katherine Malpas, who was examined by James.<sup>32</sup> Thomas Fuller, in his *Church History*, after recounting the first of these, and giving several examples of James's detection of false demoniacs, concludes: 'The frequency of such forged Possessions wrought such an alteration on the judgement of king JAMES that he, receding from what he had written in his *Demonology*, grew first diffident of, and then flatly to deny the workings of *Witches* and *Devils*, as but Falsehoods and Delusions.'<sup>33</sup>

It is impossible, I think, to make precise statements about the frequency of the trials and convictions of witches in the whole of England during the earlier seventeenth century. But from what evidence can be gathered from reputable modern scholars, such as Kittredge, Ewen, and Macfarlane,<sup>34</sup> there was a considerable decline, beginning early in the century, and accelerating in the last decade of James's reign and the whole of Charles's. To estimate to what extent this decline was due to fraudulent possessions, and to James's zeal in detecting them, needs of course a great deal of further research, especially research of the kind

done by Mandrou, into changes of legal opinion and procedure, and also into the role played by the Anglican wing of the Church, in particular, by bishops. But I hope that I have made out a reasonable case for such further research, and that this book may lead to other scholars undertaking it. The same applies to every other subject I have touched on; I have only scratched the surface.

## APPENDIX

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MODUS JESUITARUM DAEMONES EXORCIZANDI  
(from *Elixir Jesuiticum*, 1645; cf. above, p. 49)

Quisquis ritu Lollitarum  
Spiritus vis tenebrarum  
Exorcismis flagellare,  
Et potenter ejurare:

Primum elige personam  
Ad credulitatem<sup>1</sup> pronam,  
Vel virum at magis puellam,  
Non robustam sed tenellam.

Fidos quaere circumstantes,  
Cave ne sint protestantes,  
Ne detur sanctum canibus,  
Aut Margaritae suibus.

Ipsa in scenam producatur,  
Et in sella constringatur,  
Inde habeto praeparatam  
Potionem hanc delicatam.

Cum pinta vini Marani,  
Jungas olei Romani  
Quantum satis, inde misce  
Ruthae drachman cum semisse.

Fiat haustus & sumatur,  
Et à Daemone bibatur:  
Audies expostulantem  
Et in Missa debacchantem.

## UNCLEAN SPIRITS

Post illa fiat Suffitus  
 Large sulphure conditus,  
 Cum galbano, cumque olentis  
 Assae & rutae condimentis.

Simul prunis imponantur,  
 Naribusque supponantur;  
 Donec vultus denigretur  
 Et mens tota perturbetur.

Prodit daemon si quis latet  
 Et possessam hanc esse patet.  
 Effert nomen, & sodales  
 Profitetur infernales.

Si quis haec tam certa negat  
 Ille Jesuitam legat:  
 Vel si quaeris documentum  
 Fac<sup>2</sup> in Equa experimentum.

Vis possessam liberare,  
 Possessoremque ejurare,  
 Ecce Weston normam dabit,  
 Quae potenter id praestabit.

Primo daemon est captandus  
 Certo membro destinandus,  
 Sive cruri, sive libet,  
 Ubi minus aura friget.

Exorcismis ne parcat  
 Sed lustralis aspergatur  
 Aqua, multo crucis signo  
 Flagellatur ex condigno.

Vel, si vis, in casu tali,  
 Digito Presbyterali  
 Ure daemonem latentem,  
 Donec facias loquentem!

Sacris manibus palpando,  
Et per partes subreptando,  
Ut ad locum destinatum  
Ducas sic excruciatum.

Si fit daemon obstinatus,  
Et in arte sic versatus:  
Ut consuetis minis cedat,  
Atque jussus enim excedat:

Durius tunc est tractandus,  
Multis probris agitandus;  
Adhibenda tunc Sanctarum  
Capsula relliquarum.

Crus aut Lora Campiani,<sup>3</sup>  
Aut alterius Romani  
Martyris, nunc applicetur,  
Et ad partes alligetur.

Statim daemon sic turbatur,  
Poenas supplex deprecatur,  
Sanctum martyrem testando,  
Et dimitti postulando.

Sed non statim dimittatur,  
Nisi ante proloquatur,  
Quid de Sanctis sentiendum,  
Et in Missa confitendum.

Denique sic emittatur,  
Ut cum placet revertatur,  
Quando fides infirmorum,  
Visum vult miraculorum.

Summa; quisquis ista legis,  
Nisi caute scenam regis,  
Et ministris cuncta bene,  
Nunquam conjurabis plene.



## UNCLEAN SPIRITS

Agite Westono grates,  
Qui vos docet ista gratis:  
Fundite pro Jesuitis  
Preces quando ad vestras itis.

Qui si vos non docuisset,  
Et hunc potum miscuisset,  
Sacerdotes ignorarent,  
Qua vi daemones fugarent.

1 - Original: *crudelitatem*.

2 - Original: *fas*.

3 - Original: *Lona*. Campion's belt  
was used as a relic.

# NOTES

## ABBREVIATED REFERENCES

References most frequently cited in the notes have been abbreviated, after their first citation in full, as follows:

- Bodin, *Demonomanie* Jean Bodin, *De la Demonomanie des Sorciers* (Paris, 1580)
- Darrel, *Briefe Narration* John Darrel, *A Briefe Narration of the Possession . . . of William Sommers* (n.p., 1598)
- Darrel, *Detection* John Darrel, *A Detection of that sinful, shameful, lying, and ridiculous discours, of Samuel Harshnet* (n.p., 1600)
- Darrel, *Doctrine* John Darrel, *The Doctrine of Possession in True Narration* (sep. pag.)
- Darrel, *True Narration* John Darrel, *A True Narration of the Strange and grevous vexation by the devil, of 7. persons in Lancashire, and William Somers of Nottingham. Wherein the doctrine of possession, and dispossession of demonikes out of the word of God is particularly applyed unto Somers, and the rest of the persons controverted: together with the use we are to make of these workes of God* (n.p., 1600)
- De Thou, *Historiarum* Jacques Auguste de Thou, *Historiarum Sui Temporis*, Tomus V (Genevae, 1620)
- Discours Veritable* Anon., *Discours Veritable sur le faict de Marthe Brossier de Romorantin Prétendue Demonique* (Paris, 1599)
- Ewen, *Witchcraft* C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London, 1933)
- Franz, *Benediktionen* Adolf Franz, *Die Kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1909)
- Harsnett, *Declaration* Samuel Harsnett, *A Declaration* (London, 1603)
- Harsnett, *Discovery* Samuel Harsnett, *A Discovery of the Fraudulent Practices of John Darrel* (London, 1599)
- Kittredge, *Witchcraft* G. L. Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1929)
- Macfarlane, *Witchcraft* Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1970)
- Mandrou, *Magistrats* Robert Mandrou, *Magistrats et Sorciers en France au XVIIe Siècle* (Paris, 1968)
- Menghi, *Compendio* Girolamo Menghi, *Compendio dell'arte Essorcistica* (Bologna, 1586)
- Menghi, *Flagellum* Girolamo Menghi, *Flagellum Daemonum* (Bologna, 1577)
- Miracles*, ed. Moule *Miracles*, edited by C. F. D. Moule (London, 1965)
- More, *Lancashire* George More, *A True Discourse concerning the certaine*

*possession and dispossession of 7 persons in one familie in Lancashire, which also may serve as part of an Answer to a fayned and false Discoverie which speaketh very much evill, as well of this, as of the rest of those great and mightie workes of God which be of the like excellent nature. By George More, Minister and Preacher of the Worde of God, and now (for bearing Witnesse unto this, and for justifying the rest) a prisoner in the Clink, where he hath continued almost for the space of two yeares* (n.p., 1600)

Perkins, *A Discourse* William Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, 1608)

Polidoro, *Practica* Valerio Polidoro, *Practica Exorcistarum* (1st ed., Patavii, 1587)

*Rituale Romanum* *Rituale Romanum, Pauli V Pontificis Maximi Jussu Editum* (Paris, 1665)

Scot, *Discoverie* Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584; edited by Brinsley Nicholson and reprinted, London, 1886)

*Thesaurus* *Thesaurus Exorcismorum* (Coloniae Agrippinae, 1608)

Thomas, *Religion* Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971)

Thyraeus, *Demoniaci* Petrus Thyraeus, *Demoniaci, Hoc Est: De Obsessis a Spiritibus Daemoniorum Hominibus, Liber unus . . . Editio Secunda* (Coloniae Agrippinae, 1598)

*True Discourse* *A True Discourse . . . Translated out of French into English by Abraham Hartwell* (London, 1599)

Wier, *Histoires* Johann Wier (or Weyer), *Histoires, Disputes et Discours des Illusions et Imposture des Diables* (Geneva, 1579; reprinted in Paris, 1885)

#### I INTRODUCTION

1 - The following are of some but not much use: T. K. Oesterreich, *Possession, Demoniacal and Other, among Primitive Races, in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times* (London, 1930); Bruno de Jesus-Marie (ed.), *Satan, Etudes Carmélitaines* (Paris, 1948); P. A. Rodewyk, S.J., *Die Dämonische Besessenheit in der Sicht des Rituale Romanum* (Aschaffenburg, 1963).

2 - Cf. Henri Brémond, *Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment Religieux en France*, V (Paris, 1926), 186-8.

3 - Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 481-3; cf. below, p. 14.

4 - Thyraeus, *Demoniaci, Hoc Est: De Obsessis a Spiritibus Daemoniorum Hominibus, Liber Unus . . . Editio Secunda* (Coloniae Agrippinae, 1598); *De Daemoniacis Liber Unus* (ibid., 1594)

5 - Menghi, *Flagellum Daemonum* (Bologna, 1577); *Futis Daemonum* (ibid., 1586); *Compendio dell'arte Essorcistica* (ibid., 1586); *Compendium* (ibid., 1580). The first two of these are in the *Thesaurus Exorcismorum* (Coloniae Agrippinae, 1608), which also contains: Valerio Polidoro, *Practica Exorcistarum* (1st ed., Patavii, 1587); Zaccaria Visconti, *Complementum Artis Exorcisticae* (Venetiis, 1600); Petrus Antonius Stampa, *Fuga Satanae*. Most of these were condemned by the Church in the early eighteenth century (see Massimo Petrocchi, *Esorcismi e Magia nell'Italia del Cinquecento e del Seicento* (Napoli, 1957)).

- 6 – Wier (or Weyer), *De Praestigiis Daemonum* (Basel, 1563). I shall cite the French translation, *Histoires, Disputes et Discours des illusions et impostures des diables* (Geneva, 1579, reprinted Paris, 1885). Cf. C. Baxter on this in *The Damned Art*, ed. Sydney Anglo (London, 1977), pp. 53 ff.
- 7 – Bodin, *De la Demonomanie des Sorciers* (Paris, 1580).
- 8 – Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (reprint of the 1st ed. of 1584, edited by Brinsley Nicholson, London, 1886).
- 9 – Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1970); H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch-hunting in Southwestern Germany 1562-1684* (Stanford, Calif., 1972); E. William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands during the Reformation* (Cornell U.P., 1976).
- 10 – Du Bellay, *Les Regrets*, ed. J. Joliffe and M. A. Screech (Geneva, 1966), p. 170 (sonnet 97); cf. G. Dickinson, *Du Bellay in Rome* (Leiden, 1960), pp. 69-70.
- 11 – Montaigne, *Journal de voyage en Italie*, ed. M. Rat (Paris, 1942), pp. 111-12. On the frequency of exorcisms at Rome, cf. S. Harsnett, *A Discovery of the Fraudulent practices of John Darrel* (London, 1599), pp. 76-7, and below, p. 36.
- 12 – See G. W. H. Lampe, 'Miracles and Early Christian Apologetic', in *Miracles*, ed. C. F. D. Moule (London, 1965), pp. 215-17; Rodewyk, *Die Dämonische Besessenheit*, pp. 48-9; Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums* (4th ed., Leipzig, 1924), I, 155-70; Franz, *Benediktionen*, II, 532.
- 13 – The devil of one of Hildegard of Bingen's demoniacs preached, amongst other things, *de perditione Catharorum* (Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, T. 197, col. 126); cf. Franz, *Benediktionen*, II, 553-5.
- 14 – D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* (London, 1958), pp. 36, 151, 181-2.
- 15 – *Ibid.*, pp. 178 ff.
- 16 – *Ibid.*, pp. 156 ff.
- 17 – Wier, *Histoires*, II, 19-23 (V, iii), 125-31 (V, xxiii); Scot, *Discoverie*, pp. 327-63 (XV, iv-xx), 365-6 (XV, xxii), 370-9 (XV, xxiv-xxix). Cf. Del Rio's defence of exorcisms against the charges made by Godelman, Aretius, Chemnitz, Lavater, Peucer, Wier, Bodin, in his *Disquisitionum Magicarum Libri Sex*, VI, Ch. iii (ed., Coloniae Agrippinae, 1679, pp. 1076 ff.).
- 18 – Cf. David M. Jones, 'Exorcism before the Reformation', pp. 27-8 (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Virginia, History Dept., 1978, kindly sent me by the author).
- 19 – Edition used: *Rituale Romanum, Pauli V Pontificis Maximi jussu editum* (Paris, 1665), pp. 408-45 (*De exorcizandis obsessis a daemonio*); cf. Rodewyk, *Die Dämonische Besessenheit*, p. 58; Ludwig Eisenhofer, *Handbuch der Katholischen Liturgik* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1932, 2 vols), I, 48-9, 102, II, 475-7; Franz, *Benediktionen*, II, 559-85.
- 20 – I Samuel, 16.14; 18.10; 19.9; cf. Judges, 9.23; I Kings, 22.23.
- 21 – Thyraeus, *Demoniaci*, pp. 174-5.
- 22 – In *Thesaurus*, p. 8.
- 23 – See D. P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell* (London, 1964), pp. 196 ff.
- 24 – John, 8.44.

- 25 - Mark, 1.24-5; Luke, 4.34-5.
- 26 - Matthew, 8.29; Mark, 5.7; Luke, 8.28.
- 27 - Acts, 16.16-18.
- 28 - James, 2.19.
- 29 - Mark, 5.7. This point is made by the Dominican Sebastien Michaëlis in the preface to his account of the Aix affair (see below, p. 75), sig. A4, of English translation.
- 30 - Thyraeus, *Demoniaci*, pp. 161-2, 166; Polidoro, *Practica*, Ch. 10, fol. 9 (*Thesaurus*, pp. 11-12).
- 31 - Polidoro, *ibid.*; *Rituale Romanum*, pp. 411-12: 'Exorcista ne vegetur in multiloquio, aut supervacaneis vel curiosis interrogationibus, praesertim de rebus futuris & occultis, ad suum munus non pertinentibus; sed jubeat immundum spiritum tacere, & ad interrogata tantum respondere.'
- 32 - E.g. George Gifford (see below, n. 41).
- 33 - See Mandrou, *Magistrats*, pp. 197 ff. (Ch. IV).
- 34 - See Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 169, 176, 180, 187, 190, 228.
- 35 - Wier, *Histoires*, I, 486-92 (IV, i), makes this point emphatically.
- 36 - *Malleus Maleficarum*, pt. 2, qu. 2, ch. 6, (ed., Francofurti, 1600), p. 449; Polidoro, *Practica*, pt II, ch. 5 (*Thesaurus*, p. 203); Menghi, *Fustis Daemonum*, ch. 12 (*Thesaurus*, p. 565); *Sacerdotale ad consuetudinem S. Romanae Ecclesiae* (Venetijs, 1579), fol. 329.
- 37 - *Rituale Romanum*, p. 413: 'Jubeatque daemonem dicere, an detineatur in illo corpore ob aliquam operam magicam, aut malefica signa, vel instrumenta, quae si obsessus ore sumpserit, evomat, vel si alibi extra corpus fuerint, ea revelet, & inventa comburantur.'
- 38 - Jerome, *Vita S. Hilarionis Eremitae*, in Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, T. 23, cols. 39-40: '... sermoni ejus [sc. daemoneis] accomodare fidem: asserens fallaces esse daemones, et ad simulandum esse calidos'; cited by Thyraeus, *Demoniaci*, p. 41, and frequently by Bodin (*Demonomanie*, fols 148, 156<sup>v</sup>, 163), who disapproves of believing the devil's word.
- 39 - Scot, *Discoverie*, pp. 101-7 (VII, i-iii).
- 40 - Wier, *Histoires*, I, 506-9 (IV, iv); I, 521-3 (IV, viii); I, 573-5 (IV, xviii).
- 41 - George Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes*, 1593 (facsimile ed. Beatrice White, London, 1931), sig. I2<sup>v</sup>-I3<sup>r</sup>. 'Mother Joan' is probably a reference to the case of Agnes Briggs and Rachel Pinder, whose devil said he was sent by 'Jone' (see Barbara Rosen, *Witchcraft* (London, 1969), pp. 231-9, and below, p. 14).
- 42 - Mandrou, *Magistrats*, pp. 269, 272, 318-20.
- 43 - See, e.g., Thyraeus, *Demoniaci*, p. 52; Bodin, *Demonomanie*, fol. 75<sup>v</sup>.
- 44 - *La Possession de Jeanne Fery religieuse professe du couvent des Soeurs Noires de la ville de Mons (1584)* (Paris, 1886) (an edition, by Bourneville, of the *Histoire Admirable et Veritable*... Paris, 1586).
- 45 - *Proces verbal pour delivrer une fille possédée par le malin esprit à Louviers* (Paris, 1883) (an edition, by Armand Bénét, of MS, Bibl. Nat., fonds fr., 24122).

- 46 - See Mandrou, *Magistrats*, pp. 198-211.
- 47 - There are occasional exceptions to this: see *ibid.*, p. 159.
- 48 - Montaigne, *Essais*, ed. de la Pléiade (Paris, 1950) III, xi, p. 1158.
- 49 - S. Anglo, 'Melancholia and Witchcraft: the debate between Wier, Bodin, and Scot', in *Folie et Déraillement à la Renaissance (1973)* (Bruxelles, 1976), pp. 209-22.
- 50 - Cornelius à Lapede, *Commentarii in Scripturam Sacram*, T. VIII (Paris, 1864), pp. 113-14, 338.
- 51 - Temkin, *The Falling Sickness* (2nd ed., Baltimore, 1971); on possession, see especially pp. 86 f., 138 f.; cf. Franz, *Benediktionen*, II, 503-4, 528, 545.
- 52 - Lemnius, *Occulta Naturae Miracula* (Antverpiae, 1561), fols 83-90 (II, i-iii).
- 53 - Fernel, *De Abditis rerum Causis Libri duo* (2nd ed., Paris, 1551), p. 158 (II, xvi).
- 54 - E.g. Thyraeus, *Demoniaci*, p. 60; Polidoro, *Practica*, fols 7<sup>r</sup>-7<sup>v</sup> (*Thesaurus*, p. 9); Menghi, *Flagellum*, ch. ii (*Thesaurus*, p. 295).
- 55 - E.g. Seb. Michaëlis, *The Admirable Historie* (London, 1613) (cf. below, p. 75), p. 201.
- 56 - Lemnius, *Occulta*, fols 87<sup>r</sup>-88<sup>r</sup> (II, ii).
- 57 - According to Wier (*Histoires*, IV, xvi, I, pp. 557-8), who gives no reference, Melanchthon carried out this test; cf. below, pp. 31, 34.
- 58 - Cf. Temkin, *Falling Sickness*, pp. 194, 196-7.
- 59 - See Rudolph E. Siegel, *Galen's System of Physiology and Medicine* (Basel and New York, 1968), pp. 319-20.
- 60 - See G. L. Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), pp. 321-2.
- 61 - Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse . . .* (London, 1603).
- 62 - *Ibid.*, Dedication (no pag.).
- 63 - See below, p. 68.
- 64 - Jorden, *Briefe Discourse*, fols 12<sup>r</sup>-12<sup>v</sup>.
- 65 - See below, pp. 33-42.
- 66 - Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 101 (VII, i); Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 112-13.
- 67 - Scot, *Discoverie*, pp. 106-7 (VII, iii); cf. above, n. 41.
- 68 - *Ibid.*, pp. 101-5 (VII, i-ii).
- 69 - Cf. below, p. 37, and Mandrou, *Magistrats*, pp. 304-5.
- 70 - See J. A. De Thou, *Historiarum sui temporis*, T. V (Genevae, 1620), p. 869; cf. below, p. 35.
- 71 - Further research might show that some Christian mystics were believed to have the Holy Ghost or a good angel within their bodies. I am indebted to Mr Alastair Hamilton for this suggestion.
- 72 - See E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951), pp. 66 ff. (Ch. III).
- 73 - See I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (London, 1971).
- 74 - Acts, 2.2 ff.
- 75 - See E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 63 ff.; Pierre de Labriolle, *La crise Montaniste* (Paris, 1913), especially pp. 555 ff., and pp. 13-14, 30 (for diabolic possession).

- 76 - For Joris and Niklaes, see H. de la Fontaine Verwey, 'Trois hérésiarques dans les Pays-Bas du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle' in *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, XVI (1954), 312 ff., and 'The Family of Love', in *Quaerendo*, 6 (1976), 222 ff.; for Postel, see W. J. Bowsma, *Concordia Mundi: The Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel (1510-1581)* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), pp. 138 ff. (Ch. v).  
 77 - Cf. E. Panofsky and F. Saxl, *Dürer's 'Melencolia I'* (Berlin, 1923).

## II CASES IN FRANCE

- 1 - See P. Imbart de la Tour, *Les Origines de la Réforme*, T. III (Paris, 1914), pp. 552-9.  
 2 - See J. H. Mariéjol, *La Réforme et la Ligue, L'Edit de Nantes* (T. VI, 11<sup>ère</sup> partie, of Ernest Lavisse, *Histoire de France Illustrée*) (Paris, 1911), pp. 47-51.  
 3 - Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 74-5.  
 4 - Boulaese, *Le Thresor et entiere histoire de la triomphante victoire du corps de Dieu sur l'esprit maling Beelzezebub, obtenue à Laon l'an mil cinq cens soixante six . . .* (Paris, 1578), fol. 23<sup>v</sup>.  
 5 - See preceding note. Boulaese was born in about 1530 and was teaching at Montaigu from 1568 onwards. (See Boulaese, *Remonstrance a Nosseigneurs Messire Christophe de Thou . . . les Conseillers . . .* (n.p., 1575), pp. 27-8, 36, 39; and the introduction to Boulaese, *Le Miracle de Laon en Lannoys, représenté au vif et escript en latin, francoys, italien, espagnol et allemant. A Cambray, chees Pierre Lombard, 1566*, ed. A. H. Chabard (Lyon, 1955, n.p.)).  
 6 - Boulaese, *L'abregee histoire de grand miracle . . .* (Paris, 1573); *Le Manuel . . .* (Paris, 1575). These are reprinted in his *Thresor*, pp. 1 ff., 42 ff.  
 7 - See above, n. 5.  
 8 - Bartholomei Faij, Regij in Senatu Parisiensi Consiliarij, ac Inquisitionum Praesidis, *Energumenicus*. Ejusdem, *Alexicacus* (Lutetiae, 1571).  
 9 - Boulaese, *Thresor*, fol. 18, pp. 22-3, 553, 724.  
 10 - *Ibid.*, fol. 6, p. 724.  
 11 - *Ibid.*, fol. 6; on the polyglot, see B. Rekers, *Benito Arias Montano* (London, 1972), pp. 45 ff. (Ch. III).  
 12 - Boulaese, *Thresor*, fols 39<sup>v</sup>-40<sup>v</sup>; on La Boderie, see Rekers, *Benito Arias Montano*, pp. 45-8, 51-4, and D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology* (London, 1972), pp. 23-4, 32-3, 64 ff., 93 ff.  
 13 - *Thresor*, fols 2<sup>r</sup>-3<sup>v</sup>, pp. 724-43. It also contains a large engraving showing the interior of the cathedral and the exorcisms.  
 14 - *Thresor*, fol. 7<sup>v</sup> (Boulaese to Gregory XIII): 'certissimum est nos esse in sexto annorum mundi millenario (sexto creationis diei respondente) cujus et Meridiem, id est quingentos annos, jam sumus supergressi'.  
 15 - *Ibid.*, fols 8<sup>r</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>; 'Haeretici hac veritate, & propria conscientia victi, & propriae salutis studiosi, deponent arma: unde & pax aderit & pietas'; 'Fiet unum ovile et unus Pastor . . . Et omnes homines unum erunt . . . convenientes in una vera Religione & sanctificatione nominis Dei, ut conveniunt in una natura humana, in quam Deus insufflavit spiraculum vitae . . . quibus & tunc reddet labium electum

- (Hebraicum) ut invocent omnes nomen . . . Dei . . .’ Cf. Boulaese, *Ad Mysticos sacrae scripturae sensus varia dictionum significatio in compendium collecta* . . . (Parisii, 1575), pp. 19, 88–90 (eschatology based on Joachim of Flora).
- 16 – *Thresor*, fol. 7<sup>v</sup>: ‘Iussu DEI . . . ut demonstraret se Diabolum esse . . . pro convertendis aut confirmandis haereticis: ET (quod omnium maximé notandum est) UT OMNES HOMINES SINT UNUM’; cf. *ibid.*, p. 10.
- 17 – *Ibid.*, fol. 8.
- 18 – *Thresor*, fol. 16<sup>v</sup>, p. 432. In addition to the sources already cited, there is: J. Roger, *Histoire de Nicole de Vervins d’après les historiens contemporains* . . . (Paris, 1863); although this is a piously uncritical work, it gives some information not in Boulaese.
- 19 – *Thresor*, pp. 1, 6, 46, 269.
- 20 – *Ibid.*, pp. 266, 268.
- 21 – *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3, 49–60.
- 22 – *Sacerdotale*, fol. 343; Menghi, *Compendio*, pp. 406–8.
- 23 – Title-page of *Thresor*.
- 24 – *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- 25 – *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 138, 154–5, 252–3, 258.
- 26 – *Ibid.*, pp. 160–3.
- 27 – *Ibid.*, p. 406; cf. Thyraeus, *Demoniaci*, p. 161; Faye, *Energumenicus*, p. 87; Franz, *Benediktionen*, II, 551.
- 28 – Faye, *Energumenicus*, pp. 83–5, 88–9, 93. Faye (p. 85) notes that the eucharist was not so used in apostolic times. Wier (*Histoires*, IV, viii, I, pp. 522–3), citing Cardano (*De rerum Varietate* (Basileae, 1557), XIV, ch. 76, p. 959), has a case of mass possession at Rome which is probably the same.
- 29 – E.g. *Thesaurus*, p. 127 (Polidoro: eucharist is one of nine exorcisms derived from the sacraments), 303 (Menghi, *Flagellum*, ch. vii: ‘De Eucharistia praebenda Energumenis, contra communem opinionem vulgi’). Cf. Thyraeus, *Demoniaci*, pp. 162–3; *Rituale Romanum*; p. 411: ‘Sanctissima verò Eucharistia super caput obsessi, aut aliter ejus corpori non admoveatur ob irreverentiae periculum.’
- 30 – Boulaese, *Thresor*, pp. 84–5, 405–6, and *passim*.
- 31 – Faye, *Energumenicus*, p. 14.
- 32 – Boulaese, *Thresor*, fol. 15, pp. 11–12; Faye, *Energumenicus*, pp. 175–6.
- 33 – Boulaese, *Thresor*, pp. 158–9.
- 34 – *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 151, 484, 512–15, 519, 525, 531.
- 35 – *Ibid.*, pp. 188–91.
- 36 – *Ibid.*, pp. 141–3.
- 37 – This has a long history; see Franz, *Benediktionen*, II, 555, 556 n. 4, 557.
- 38 – Boulaese, *Thresor*, pp. 105–6, 139, 166, 200.
- 39 – An early example of the abuse of this power is the incident in Act 19, when certain Jews tried to exorcize in the name of ‘Jesus whom Paul preacheth’. This story was re-enacted by Nicole and one of her uncles (Boulaese, *ibid.*, pp. 114–15).
- 40 – Boulaese, *Thresor*, p. 75.
- 41 – *Ibid.*, pp. 78–9. Cf. Menghi, *Flagellum*, ch. vii (*Thesaurus*, p. 305), where he



gives explanations of these names, which show he knew neither Hebrew nor Greek; Polidoro, *Practica* (*Thesaurus*, pp. 62-7), first exorcism, consisting largely of Hebrew and Greek names of God. Origen was the great authority for the power of Hebrew names in exorcism (see Franz, *Benediktionen*, II, 535-6).

42 - *Rituale Romanum*, p. 412; Polidoro, *Practica*, ch. x, ch. xii (*Thesaurus*, pp. 11, 25-6); Menghi, *Flagellum*, ch. iv (*Thesaurus*, p. 301).

43 - Polidoro, *Practica* (*Thesaurus*, pp. 117-18); Menghi, *Flagellum* (*Thesaurus*, p. 316).

44 - Faye, *Energumenicus*, pp. 97-8 (with a defence of this practice); Boulaese, *Thresor*, pp. 9, 80.

45 - Boulaese, *ibid.*, p. 184.

46 - *Ibid.*, fol. 13<sup>v</sup>, pp. 5, 115-18 (Beelzebub sends twenty-six devils, just expelled from Nicole, to Geneva).

47 - *Ibid.*, p. 102: 'Je ne suis pas Diable, mais le serviteur de Christ'; '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'.

48 - *Ibid.*: 'Il faisoit la mouë avec meuglement à l'autre qui lisoit les Pseaumes de Marot . . . "Me penses-tu chasser par tes plaisantes chansons que j'ay aydé à composer?"'

49 - Thyraeus, *Demoniaci*, pp. 55-7; cf. p. 21 (devils going to Luther's funeral).

50 - Ronsard, *Oeuvres*, ed. de la Pléiade, p. 598 (I owe this reference to Dr Malcolm Smith).

51 - Boulaese, *Thresor*, fol. 6: 'Argutus mendacij, dicebat: Non essem diabolus aliter: sum pater mendacij: mendacium est meum: mihi proprium: de meo: Veritas non est à me, nec mea: eam tamen emendico: coactus à Deo, & ab eius sacerdote veritatem dico: exultabat in pessimis'; cf., *ibid.*, p. 175.

52 - *Ibid.*, p. 82.

53 - Faye, *Energumenicus*, pp. 88-9; Boulaese, *Thresor*, p. 124.

54 - Bodin (*Demonomanie*, sig. e, fol. 167) cites Faye in favour of witch-burning, and also reports this case (*ibid.*, fols 76, 160<sup>v</sup>-161<sup>r</sup>).

55 - Faye, *Energumenicus*, pp. 89-93; cf. above, pp. 9, 11-12. I have been unable to find any mention of this case in *Lainii Monumenta, Tomus Primus 1536-1556*, (Matriti, 1912). Lainez was of Jewish descent (see J. H. Fichter, S. J., *James Laynez Jesuit* (London, 1946), pp. 2-5).

56 - Boulaese, *Thresor*, p. 194: the Huguenots claim 'Que tout cela se faisoit par art Magique. Que c'estoit de Motta qui estoit enchanteur. Que Despinoy esoit son disciple. Ou que la mere estoit sorciere. Que les soubresaults que Nicole faisoit, se faisoient avec des outils & instruments de fer. Que par ce moyen les Prestres vouloient mieux vendre leurs Messes, & faire valoir le mestier'; cf. *ibid.*, p. 254.

57 - *Ibid.*, pp. 530-3, 551-2, 628, 633-4.

58 - *Ibid.*, pp. 223-8, 493-5, 512-15.

59 - *Ibid.*, pp. 230-1, 495-6, 501-7, 519.

60 - *Ibid.*, fol. 16, pp. 14-15, 214-16.

61 - *Ibid.*, pp. 355-8; at the end of January 1566 Montmorency sent letters to the

- bishop and the town authorities forbidding the public processions and exorcisms. Beelzebub (*ibid.*, pp. 359, 365-6) claimed they were forged.
- 62 - *Ibid.*, pp. 499-500, 508, 589.
- 63 - *Ibid.*, pp. 194 (above, n. 56), 258, 497, 500, 509, 537.
- 64 - *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 121.
- 65 - Faye, *Energumenicus*, pp. 148-9.
- 66 - *Histoire veritable de la guerison admirable . . . d'une femme nommee Nicole Obry . . . de longtemps privée de l'usage de la veuë, & abandonnée des Medecins & Chirurgiens, (comme estant incurable) à l'attouchement de la venerable relique du chef de monsieur S. JEAN BAPTISTE en la grande Eglise d'Amiens le Dimanche dixneuviemes jour de May 1577* (Paris, 1578). This begins with a statement by the Bishop of Amiens, Geoffroy de la Martonie.
- 67 - Boulaese, *Thresor*, fol. 16, pp. 16, 192-4, 221.
- 68 - Florimond de Raemon, *L'Histoire de la naissance, progresz et decadence de l'heresie de ce siècle* (Paris, 1605), II, xii, fol. 140: this miracle 'm'a retiré de la gueule de l'Heresie'; he heard Beelzebub say 'C'et cet HOC EST', who, when he departed, made two claps of thunder, 'laissant un broüillart épaiz qui environna les clochers de l'Eglise'.
- 69 - See Boulaese, *Le Miracle de Laon*, ed. Chaubard; Roger, *Histoire de Nicole*, p. 469. There was another case at Laon in 1603, when a woman of twenty-five, Pasquette, claimed to be possessed. A 'theatre' was erected in the cathedral, and several people wrote accounts, 'en esperance de le faire publier partout pour seconder Nicole de Vrevin'. But it was eventually decided that she was a fraud and probably a witch. See Antoine Richard, *Mémoires sur la Ligue dans le Laonnois* (Laon, 1869), pp. 511-13.
- 70 - Gervasius Tornacensis, *Divina quatuor energumenorum liberatio . . . In qua sacrosanctae Eucharistiae vis & veritas planè elucet* (Parisiis, 1583).
- 71 - Blendec, *Cinq Histoires . . . Recueillies des actes d'un Notaire Royal, & du Greiffier . . .* (Paris, 1582).
- 72 - Gervais, *Divina*, fols 2-3.
- 73 - Blendec, *Cinq Histoires*, fols 22<sup>r</sup>-22<sup>v</sup> (procession), 24 (three to four thousand in church), 59 (the great crowd were 'trop cupide & desireux de voir & ouyr parler le diable'), 89<sup>v</sup> (Beelzebub insists on the presence of the bishop for his final exit).
- 74 - *Ibid.*, fols 90<sup>r</sup>-90<sup>v</sup>: the bishop 'pour rendre cette conjuration & victoire plus celebre, & quelle fut faicte à la veuë d'un chacun, fait dresser un Theatre de charpenterie de sept à 8. pieds de hault, & de vingtquatre pieds de longueur' in front of the choir and near the pulpit.
- 75 - *Ibid.*, sig. aij.
- 76 - *Ibid.*, fol. 20<sup>v</sup>: 'qu'elle se damnoit, & que tous les huguenots estoient sauvez, & tous les Prestres & Cordeliers damnez, qu'il avoit un beau Paradis pour les huguenots, & de beaux lits bien preparez pour eux'.
- 77 - *Ibid.*, fol. 25: 'prenans vengeance de ce luxurieux diable, qui en avoit faict deflorer plusieurs par ses huguenots & ministres'.
- 78 - *Ibid.*, fols 26, 43, 61<sup>v</sup>, 84, 101<sup>v</sup>.

- 79 – Ibid., fol. 88: 'Car encores que le malin esprit en reprochant aux personnes quelques vices & pechez die la verité, si ne doit-il estre escouté'.
- 80 – Ibid., fol. 80<sup>r</sup>-80<sup>v</sup>.
- 81 – Ibid., fol. 74<sup>v</sup>: 'Pourquoy me menes tu là, où j'ay tant esté tourmenté?'
- 82 – Ibid., fol. 23<sup>r</sup>-23<sup>v</sup>: 'de sa bonté il arrouse quelque fois une branche seche, pour la faire reverdoyer & porter fruict, comme il a faict de nostre temps à ceste France deplorable, par le miracle admirable de Laon, comme il esperoit qu'il feroit en ce pauvre enfant par sa bonté infinie, & sa divine grace, pour extirper les heresies qui y pullullent de nostre temps'.
- 83 – Ibid., fol. 18.
- 84 – Gervais, *Divina*, fol. 18.
- 85 – Blendec, *Cinq Histoires*, fol. 18<sup>v</sup>.
- 86 – Ibid., fols 70<sup>v</sup>-71<sup>v</sup>.
- 87 – Ibid., fol. 115<sup>v</sup>.
- 88 – Ibid., fol. 95<sup>v</sup>.
- 89 – Ibid., fols 101<sup>v</sup>-102<sup>r</sup>.
- 90 – Ibid., fols 98<sup>v</sup>-99<sup>r</sup>.
- 91 – Ibid., fols 102-6.
- 92 – Ibid., fols 115<sup>v</sup>-116<sup>r</sup>, 117-18.
- 93 – Ibid., fols 120<sup>v</sup>, 121<sup>v</sup>.
- 94 – See R. H. Bainton, 'The Bible in the Reformation', in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. S. L. Greenslade, Vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1963), p. 21.
- 95 – Blendec, *Cinq Histoires*, fol. 122<sup>v</sup>: 'Vous pourrez bien chasser des diables: mais non pas nous'.
- 96 – Ibid., fol. 123<sup>v</sup>.
- 97 – Ibid., fols 26<sup>v</sup>-27<sup>r</sup>. Even this is not unprecedented, see Thyraeus, *Demoniaci*, pp. 78-9.
- 98 – Ibid., fols 27<sup>r</sup>-27<sup>v</sup>: 'Pendant lequel temps ce maling esprit se tourmentoit & agitoit merueilleusement, & oyoit-on apertement le combat qui se donnoit là dedans à porte close, de nostre Sauveur Jesus Christ & de nostre ennemy juré, qui crioit ainsi qu'un cochon qu'on estouffe, ou ainsi qu'un petit chien qu'on escorche'.
- 99 – Ibid., fol. 27<sup>v</sup>: 'Da gloriam Deo vivo & vero, da honorem Jesu Christo, & eius corpori sacratissimo, quod est in sacramento altaris'; 'Cede Deo, Cede Christo, Cede eius corpori sacratissimo, Cede eius ecclesiae Catholicae & Romanae, ut omnes unum sint, & omnis terra adoret eum & psallat ei'. John, 17.20.
- 100 – Ibid., fol. 100.
- 101 – Quoted in Marescot (see below, n. 104), *Discours veritable*, p. 48 (*A True Discourse*, p. 38): 'Antequam ad Exorcismum Sacerdos se accingat, de Obsessi hominis vitâ, conditione, famâ, valetudine, atque aliis circumstantijs diligenter inquirat, & cum prudentibus quibusdam communicet. Falluntur enim aliquando nimium creduli, & fallunt exorcistam non rarò melancholici, lunatici, & magicis artibus impediti, cum dicunt se à daemone possideri atque torqueri, qui tamen medicorum remedio potius, quàm exorcistarum ministerio indigent'.
- 102 – See Mariéjol, *La Réforme et la Ligue*, pp. 418 ff., 422.

- 103 - De Thou, *Historiarum*, pp. 868 ff. Congnard, *Histoire . . . tirée du latin de Messire Jacques August de Thou, Président du Parlement de Paris. Avec quelques Remarques et Considerations generales sur cette Matiere tirées pour la plus part aussi du Latin de Bartholomaeus Perdulcis . . . Le Tout pour servir d'Appendice . . . au sujet d'un Livre intitulé La Piété affligée . . .* (Rouen, 1652); the book referred to, by Esprit de Bosroger, is a defence of the possessions at Louviers in 1643-7 (see Mandrou, *Magistrats*, pp. 43, 292 ff.).
- 104 - Anon., *Discours veritable . . .* (Paris, 1599), dedication to the King, signed 'medecins de Paris'.
- 105 - *A True Discourse . . . Translated out of French into English by Abraham Hartwell* (London, 1599).
- 106 - Mandrou, *Magistrats*, pp. 163-79; cf. Bruno de Jésus-Marie, *La belle Acarie* (n.p., 1942), pp. 433-47.
- 107 - Mandrou, *Magistrats*, pp. 164-5.
- 108 - *Discours veritable*, pp. 33, 39 (*True Discourse*, pp. 24, 30); Congnard, *Histoire*, pp. 15-16; Pierre Matthieu, *Histoire de France . . . Durant sept années de Paix du regne de Henry VIII* (Paris, 1605), T. 1, fol. 161<sup>v</sup>; Mandrou, *Magistrats*, p. 165.
- 109 - *True Discourse*, pp. 21-2 (*Discours veritable*, pp. 28-9).
- 110 - Mandrou, *Magistrats*, p. 169.
- 111 - De Thou, *Historiarum*, p. 868 (Congnard, *Histoire*, p. 2); *Discours veritable*, pp. 40-3 (*True Discourse*, pp. 30-2); cf. Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Réaume and De Caussade (repr. Genève, 1967), T. 2, pp. 272-3 (*Confession du Sieur de Sancy*, I, vi).
- 112 - De Thou, *Historiarum*: 'Publicato Namnetensi edicto res incidit, quae non mediocrem Regi molestiam, rebus compositis summam perturbationem attulit. Nam recenti edicti promulgatione plerique factiosi in occulto maxime offendebantur, occasioneque quaerebant res miscendi, quam ex levi caussa tunc oblatam avidissime arripuerunt'.
- 113 - Ibid.; Mandrou, *Magistrats*, pp. 165-6.
- 114 - *Journal de l'Estoile pour le règne de Henri IV, I, 1589-1600*, ed. L. R. Lefèvre (Paris, 1948), p. 567, 30/3/1599: 'Elle disait merveilles contre les huguenots, et son diable allait quérir tous les jours quelque âme nouvelle à La Rochelle et ailleurs pour mettre en sa chaudière, disant que tous les huguenots étaient à lui.'
- 115 - De Thou, *Historiarum*, pp. 868-9; *Discours veritable*, pp. 4-7 (*True Discourse*, pp. 3-5).
- 116 - De Thou, *Historiarum*: 'Si quis sit adhuc incredulus, hic Spiritum intus agentem sistat, & vitae periculo cum eo luctetur'; (Marescot): 'Ego vero periculum in me recipiam . . . Spiritus ergo à me fugatus est.'
- 117 - De Thou, *Historiarum*; Fernel, see above, p. 11.
- 118 - De Thou, *Historiarum*, p. 871; Mandrou, *Magistrats*, pp. 167-8.
- 119 - De Thou, *Historiarum*, pp. 871-2: 'Sed non propterea plebis jam commotae fremitus aut concionatorum ex ambone licentiosae voces cessarunt, libertatem ecclesiasticam à magistratu regio eripi quiritantium. id suggestu & in gratiam novorum evangelicorum fieri, qui tam praeclaram a Deo gloriae suae manifestandae

occasionem oblatam veriti id unum agunt, ut obstinata miraculorum infitiatione oculos fidelium perstringant, & catholicae ac verae ecclesiae cum Dei ac generis humani hoste tantae expectationis certamen impediunt; quodque ipsi falsae doctrinae addicti praestare se posse desperant, id efficacia verbi divini in vera ecclesia à legitimis ministris dispensati fieri, eoque facto se falsitatis suae palam convinci impatienter ferunt.’

120 – De Thou, *Historiarum*, p. 872; Mandrou, *Magistrats*, p. 168.

121 – P. de Bérulle, *Correspondence*, ed. J. Dagens, T. I (Paris, Louvain, 1937), pp. 3-5: letter to Bérulle from Jacques Leprevost, dated Avignon, 15/4/1600, describing exorcism of Marthe at Tarascon; her devil said to the exorcist: ‘tu seras la cause que je perdrai mes huguenots’.

122 – De Thou, *Historiarum*, *ibid.*; Mandrou, *Magistrats*, *ibid.*

123 – Palma Cayet, *Chronologie Septenaire de l’Histoire de la Paix entre les Roys de France et d’Espagne* (Paris, 1605), fol. 194: ‘Il y a eu outre tout cela des effects admirables & vrayment divins des obsedez & possedez, lesquels estoient delivrez par la grace de Dieu, & par le ministre des Exorcistes à cela ordonnez. Entre iceux possedez estoit Marthe Brossier . . .’.

124 – De Thou, *Historiarum*, pp. 872-4; *Lettres du Cardinal d’Ossat*, ed. Amelot de la Houssaie, T. 2 (Paris, 1698), pp. 140-8, 154, 159, 174.

125 – Letter of d’Ossat apud Congnard, *Histoire*, pp. 15-16.

126 – Cayet, *Chronologie*, fol. 194<sup>v</sup>: ‘Tant y a a que jusques à present Marthe Brossier est à Milan fort grievement tourmentée, & a dit le Malin, qu’il n’en sortira nullement qu’estant de retour en France, & que Dieu le veut ainsi pour sa gloire.’

127 – De Thou, *Historiarum*, p. 871; *Discours Veritable*, pp. 38-40 (*True Discourse*, pp. 29-30).

128 – *Discours veritable*, pp. 17-23 (*True Discourse*, pp. 13-17).

129 – *True Discourse*, p. 14.

130 – *Discours veritable*, pp. 20-1 (*True Discourse*, pp. 15-16).

131 – *Discours veritable*, pp. 23-5: ‘Sous un tel argument que le vostre, nous avons veu de pauvres gens condamnez à estre bruslez comme sorciers: puis absous par messieurs de la Cour’ (i.e. by the Paris Parliament) (*True Discourse*, pp. 18-19).

132 – *True Discourse*, pp. 21-2 (*Discours veritable*, pp. 28-9).

133 – *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30 (*ibid.*, pp. 38-40).

134 – See below, p. 55.

135 – *True Discourse*, pp. 23-4 (*Discours veritable*, pp. 31-3).

136 – *Ibid.*, pp. 27-8 (*ibid.*, p. 37).

137 – *Ibid.*, p. 25 (*ibid.*, pp. 33-4).

138 – Thyraeus, *Demoniaci*, p. 60.

139 – *Discours veritable*, p. 30.

140 – See Jean Dagens, *Bérulle et les origines de la restauration catholique (1575-1611)* (Bruges, 1952), pp. 150-65, 384. The *Discours* breaks off at page 56 in mid-sentence (see De Jésus-Marie, *La belle Acarie*, p. 437 n. 1).

141 – Bérulle, *Discours sur la possession de Marthe Brossier; Contre les calomnies d’un*

- Medecin de Paris*, in Leon d'alexis, *Traicté des Energumenes* (Troyes, 1599); fols 3<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>: 'exempt de la licence effrenée de cette liberté' (*Au Lecteur*).
- 142 - *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7.
- 143 - *Ibid.*, pp. 13 ff.
- 144 - *Ibid.*, pp. 22-34; *Discours veritable*, pp. 42-3.
- 145 - Bérulle, *Traicté des Energumenes*, in Bérulle, *Les Oeuvres*, ed. F. Bourgoing (Paris, 1644), pp. 12-13.
- 146 - *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8: 'Ses sens sont facilitez à ne trouver pas si estrange l'union du verbe avec l'humanité, quand il voit, s'il faut dire ainsi, un DEMON incarné en sa presence!'
- 147 - *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 148 - *Ibid.*, p. 8; cf. e.g. Thyraeus, *Demoniaci*, p. 100.
- 149 - *Ibid.*: 'celuy que l'esprit de Dieu possède profite de ce spectacle'.
- 150 - One does find it in Melanchthon and Servetus, both of whom, very exceptionally, identify medical spirits with the soul, and suppose that the *spiritus sanctus*, or the *spiritus nequam*, may be mixed with these spirits (Melanchthon, *De anima Liber Unus* (Lugduni, 1555), pp. 111-12; Michael Servetus, *Christianismi Restitutio* (n.p., 1553, pp. 174, 181).
- 151 - Bérulle, *Traicté*, pp. 18-19; cf. above, pp. 9-11.
- 152 - *Ibid.*, pp. 30-1, 34.
- 153 - See above, n. 103.

## III CASES IN ENGLAND

- 1 - *A Declaration* (London, 1603). This is anonymous; but the dedication 'To the Seduced *Catholiques* of England' is signed S.H., and there can be no doubt about the attribution. There is an edition of this work in an unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, presented at the University of Birmingham in 1963, by F. W. Brownlow, together with a valuable introduction and commentary. I was told of the existence of this thesis by Professor John L. Murphy, to whom I here express my thanks, only after the text of this book was written. Weston's autobiography (*The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, tr. & ed. Philip Caraman, S.J. (London, 1955), pp. 24-7) does not add much information, nor does an unpublished letter from Weston to Parsons, written while the exorcisms were going on (Stonyhurst MSS, Anglia, i, No. 28).
- 2 - Harsnett, *Declaration*, p. 237. Fid Williams also made a statement in 1599, which she confirmed and augmented in 1602 (*ibid.*, p. 207).
- 3 - This is the date implied by Harsnett (*Declaration*, p. 1). Brownlow, Thesis, (II, 73) points out that Barnes was arrested in 1594; but the authorities may not have discovered the book until later. For details of the contents of the book and Harsnett's quotations from it, see *ibid.*, II, 346-7.
- 4 - John Darrel had seen it: Darrel, *A True Narration of the Strange and grevous vexation by the devil, of 7. persons in Lancashire, and William Somers of Nottingham. Wherein the doctrine of possession, and dispossession of demonikes out of the word of God is particularly applyed unto Somers, and the rest of the persons controverted: together with the use we are to make of these workes of God* (n.p., 1600), p. 71.

- 5 – Harsnett, *Declaration*, pp. 154, 169, 223, 248.
- 6 – See Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans Under Elizabeth I* (London, 1967), pp. 191-3.
- 7 – See E. L. Taunton, *The History of the Jesuits in England 1580-1773* (London, 1901), pp. 82-5; McGrath, *Papists and Puritans*, pp. 173, 177.
- 8 – See Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, p. 15.
- 9 – Harsnett, *Declaration*, pp. 230, 254; cf. J. H. Pollen, 'Supposed Cases of Diabolic Possession in 1585-6', in *The Month*, cxvii (1911), 460-1.
- 10 – See McGrath, *Papists and Puritans*, pp. 195-6.
- 11 – Harsnett, *Declaration*, pp. 203-4, 208, 250; Pollen, 'Supposed Cases', 452.
- 12 – Harsnett, *Declaration*, pp. 246, 258.
- 13 – *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
- 14 – See *Dictionary of National Biography*, articles for Anthony Babington, William Weston; cf. Weston, *Autobiography*, pp. 99-108.
- 15 – Harsnett, *Declaration* p. 240; cf. Pollen, 'Supposed Cases', 461-2.
- 16 – See Tyrell's autobiography, edited by Robert Parsons, in John Morris, *The Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, 2nd Series (London, 1875), pp. 412-18.
- 17 – Harsnett, *Declaration*, p. 255.
- 18 – See Weston, *Autobiography*, pp. 131-8; Pollen, 'Supposed Cases', 462-3.
- 19 – See McGrath, *Papists and Puritans*, pp. 290-7.
- 20 – *Ibid.*, p. 355.
- 21 – Brownlow, *Thesis*, II, 79-81, also makes this suggestion.
- 22 – Harsnett, *Declaration*, pp. 173 ff.
- 23 – *Ibid.*, pp. 207 ff.
- 24 – *Ibid.*, p. 179.
- 25 – *Ibid.*, p. 209.
- 26 – *Ibid.*, pp. 237 ff.
- 27 – *Ibid.*, pp. 260-3.
- 28 – *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40, 183, 211-12.
- 29 – *Ibid.*, p. 41; Menghi, *Flagellum (Thesaurus)*, p. 417; cf. above, p. 40.
- 30 – Menghi, *ibid.*, p. 466, under *Remedia* does give an exorcism for oil to be drunk; but adds this caution: 'Advertere debet Exorcista, ne ullo pacto praebeat hoc oleum, vel aliquod aliud remedium potabile alicui infirmo sine consilio & iudicio Medicorum.'
- 31 – Harsnett, *Declaration*, pp. 184, 212.
- 32 – *Ibid.*, pp. 179, 191-2 (Sara Williams), 239 (Anne Smith), 264-5 (Richard Mainey).
- 33 – *Ibid.*, pp. 185, 213, 217.
- 34 – *Ibid.*, pp. 271-3.
- 35 – *Ibid.*, pp. 130, 217.
- 36 – *Ibid.*, pp. 152-3, 155, 161, 226-7.
- 37 – *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- 38 – *Ibid.*, pp. 118-19.
- 39 – *Ibid.*, p. 186.
- 40 – *Ibid.*, p. 216.

- 41 - *Ibid.*, p. 162.
- 42 - *Ibid.*, pp. 224-5.
- 43 - *Ibid.*, p. 248.
- 44 - *Ibid.*, p. 275.
- 45 - *Ibid.*, pp. 274-81.
- 46 - *Elixir Jesuiticum sive Quinta Essentia Jesuitarum ex variis, imprimis Pontificijs, authoribus Alembico veritatis extracta, mundi theatro exhibetur . . . Collectore Gratiano Leosthene Saliceto. Anno primi Jubelaei Jesuitici* (n.p., 1645), pp. 238-42 (the dedication, signed Ioh. L.W. is to the Pastors of the German Church in Amsterdam). I owe this reference to Dr Alice Browne. The poem is given in the Appendix (p. 85).
- 47 - Anon. (London, 1593) (hereafter: *Adm. Disc.*).
- 48 - The *Adm. Disc.* gives a day-by-day account of the stay of one of the girls at this uncle's house; see below, p. 50.
- 49 - Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 169-73, 176-81. Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, pp. 302-6, gives some background for the Throckmorton family. Rosen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 239-97, reprints the *Adm. Disc.*, with a few omissions.
- 50 - *Adm. Disc.*, sig. A3.
- 51 - *Ibid.*, sig. A4<sup>r-v</sup>.
- 52 - *Ibid.*, sig. B3.
- 53 - *Ibid.*, sig. B3<sup>v</sup>, C2. This is an ancient and persistent tradition (see Franz *Benediktionen*, II, 57); the reasons for it seem to be unknown.
- 54 - *Ibid.*, sig. B4<sup>v</sup>-D3<sup>v</sup>.
- 55 - *Ibid.*, sig. E4<sup>v</sup>, F1<sup>r-v</sup>, H3<sup>v</sup>, I4<sup>v</sup>, L1<sup>v</sup>, L2, N2<sup>v</sup>.
- 56 - *Ibid.*, sig. D3<sup>v</sup>-D4<sup>r</sup>.
- 57 - See above, p. 44.
- 58 - *Ibid.*, sig. D4<sup>v</sup>-E1.
- 59 - *Ibid.*, sig. A4, E4<sup>v</sup>.
- 60 - *Ibid.*, sig. F1<sup>r-v</sup>.
- 61 - *Ibid.*, sig. B; cf. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 106-7 and passim; William Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, 1608), pp. 54-5, 152, 206-7.
- 62 - *Ibid.*, sig. B2<sup>r-v</sup>, L1, N1<sup>v</sup>.
- 63 - *Ibid.*, sig. F4<sup>r-v</sup>.
- 64 - *Ibid.*, sig. G2<sup>v</sup>-H1<sup>v</sup>.
- 65 - *Ibid.*, sig. H2<sup>v</sup>.
- 66 - *Ibid.*, sig. I2<sup>v</sup>-I3.
- 67 - See Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 171-3.
- 68 - See Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, p. 306.
- 69 - See Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 304, 310; Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 181-2.
- 70 - *The most wonderful and true storie, of a certaine Witch named Alse Gooderige of Stapenhill, who was arraigned and convicted at Darbie at the Assises there. As also a true report of the strange torments of Thomas Darling, a boy of thirteene yeres of age, that was possessed by the Devill, with his horrible fittes and terrible Apparitions by him uttered at Burton upon Trent in the Countie of Stafford, and of his marvellous*



*deliverance* (London, 1597) (hereafter: *True storie*). The preface is signed I.D.; according to Darrel (*A Detection of that sinful, shameful, lying, and ridiculous discours, of Samuel Harsnet* (n.p., 1600), p. 172), this stands for John Denison. For Jesse Bee, see preface, and p. 3. By 1598 the book had been called in and the printer imprisoned (see Darrel, *A Briefe Narration of the possession . . . of William Sommers* (n.p., 1598), sig. Aiiij<sup>v</sup>). There is no copy in the British Museum; there is one in the library of Lambeth Palace.

71 – Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 283-96.

72 – *True storie*, preface (no pag.).

73 – *True storie*, pp. 1-2.

74 – *Ibid.*, p. 4.

75 – *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6, 9.

76 – *Ibid.*, p. 7.

77 – *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.

78 – *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 15, and below, p. 56. Helpful local witches offered to cure the boy; but the mother refused, thanking them, but reproving them for suggesting 'a thing so unlawfull' (*ibid.*, pp. 18-19).

79 – *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30; Thomas in a trance says: 'My saviour Christ Jesus was tempted, and why then should not I bee so?'

80 – *Ibid.*, p. 10.

81 – *Ibid.*, p. 16.

82 – *Ibid.*, p. 2.

83 – *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7; cf. Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967), pp. 405, 428, 438, 452; and below, pp. 77-8.

84 – *Ibid.*, pp. 29-31.

85 – *Ibid.*, p. 16: Mr Eccarshall advised Thomas not to answer Satan, a liar; but his mother encouraged him to go on.

86 – Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 289, 292; Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 175-6.

87 – Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 294-6; Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 179-80.

88 – Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 290.

89 – *Ibid.*, pp. 287-8, 291.

90 – *True storie*, p. 17; cf. p. 13.

91 – *Ibid.*, p. 15.

92 – *Ibid.*, p. 45.

93 – *Ibid.*, pp. 33-4.

94 – *Ibid.*, pp. 34-8.

95 – *Ibid.*, pp. 39-42.

96 – *Ibid.*, p. 42.

97 – Darrel, *Detection*, p. 40.

98 – See *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. N. E. McClure (Philadelphia, 1939), I, 186-7; for Howson, see *D.N.B.*, s.v.

99 – George More, *A True Discourse concerning the certaine possession and dispossession of 7 persons in one familie in Lancashire, which also may serve as part of an Answere to a fayned and false Discoverie which speaketh very much evill, as well of*

this, as of the rest of those great and mightie workes of God which be of the like excellent nature. By George More, Minister and Preacher of the Worde of God, and now (for bearing Witness unto this, and for justifying the rest) a prisoner in the Clink, where he hath continued almost for the space of two yeares (n.p., 1600), pp. 13-14, 16; cf. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 186-7, and next note.

100 - For More, see previous note; Darrel, *True Narration*. This account is in agreement with More's, but is more confused and less full.

101 - Darrel, *The Doctrine of Possession* (in *True Narration*, with separate pagination), p. 69; More, *Lancashire*, pp. 4-6.

102 - More, *Lancashire*, pp. 12-13.

103 - *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

104 - *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15; Darrel, *True Narration*, pp. 1-2.

105 - See Peter J. French, *John Dee* (London, 1972), pp. 11-12, 110-12, 114, 121-2.

106 - *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (London, 1842), pp. 35-6.

107 - More, *Lancashire*, pp. 15, 49.

108 - John Dee, *Diary, for the Years 1595-1601*, ed. J. E. Bailey (n.p., 1880), pp. 40-1; More, *Lancashire*, pp. 18-19; Darrel, *True Narration*, p. 6.

109 - More, *Lancashire*, pp. 24-5.

110 - *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40, 44.

111 - Darrel, *True Narration*, pp. 3-5.

112 - More, *Lancashire*, p. 21.

113 - *Ibid.*, p. 14; Darrel, *True Narration*, p. 1.

114 - More, *Lancashire*, p. 21.

115 - *Ibid.*, pp. 51-2; Darrel, *True Narration*, p. 8.

116 - More, *Lancashire*, pp. 59-68.

117 - *Ibid.*, pp. 70-1.

#### IV DARREL'S LAST CASE

1 - See Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 437-8; cf. C. H. Rickert, *The Case of John Darrell* (Gainesville, Florida, 1962), p. 10.

2 - Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 27.

3 - *Ibid.*, especially pp. 385 ff. (Part 8), and McGrath, *Papists and Puritans*, pp. 299 ff. (Ch. 11).

4 - See Rickert, *John Darrell*, pp. 64-5.

5 - See above, p. 3 n. 11.

6 - Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 97-8; Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 14-17.

7 - Darrel, *Doctrine*, p. 16; *idem*, *Detection*, pp. 149-50; cf. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, p. 101.

8 - Darrel, *True Narration*, p. 16; *Doctrine*, pp. 10-11, 99.

9 - Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 93, 97, 138; Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 20-1, 39.

10 - Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 100, 124-7; Darrel, *True Narration*, pp. 19-20.

11 - Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 144-7; Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 112-13.

12 - Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 102, 139-41, 181-2, 262; Darrel, *Detection*, p. 107;

- idem, *An Apologie, or defence of the possession of William Sommers* (n.p., n.d.), p. 37; *The Triall of Maist. Dorrell, A Collection of Defences against Allegations not yet suffered to receive convenient answers* (n.p., 1599), p. 32. Sommers also accused two other witches of having caused his own possession (Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 37, 91-2).
- 13 - Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 143-4, 251-3.
- 14 - Ibid., pp. 141-2. Darrel (*Detection*, pp. 109-10, 202) claimed that he had scruples about putting faith in the Devil's word, and did not want the suspects to be arrested without corroborative evidence. Sommers later admitted (Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 102): 'I onely named them, because I had knowne them before to have been commonly suspected for Witches.'
- 15 - Harsnett, *ibid.*
- 16 - Ibid., pp. 314, 320-2; Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 110, 195-6, 200-2; cf. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 183-4.
- 17 - See Ewen, *ibid.*, pp. 127, 196-7.
- 18 - Darrel, *Detection*, p. 201.
- 19 - Harsnett., *Discovery*, p. 320.
- 20 - Ibid., p. 149; Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 107, 120.
- 21 - Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 177-181, 182-6.
- 22 - Ibid., pp. 7-8, 196-8, 200-8; Darrel, *True Narration*, pp. 21-3.
- 23 - Ibid., pp. 204-6; *ibid.*, p. 23.
- 24 - Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 8-9.
- 25 - See above, p. 55, n. 87
- 26 - Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 297-8, 303, 312.
- 27 - Ibid., pp. 78-86, 106.
- 28 - Ibid., pp. 8-9.
- 29 - See John Deacon and John Walker, *A Summarie Answere to all the material points in any of Master Darel his bookes* (London, 1601), sig. 4<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>, p. 71.
- 30 - Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 179-80, 186 (Sommers' letter to Darrel: 'the more you meddle in it, the more discredite it will bee for you: and I pray God and you, and all the worlde, to forgive me').
- 31 - See especially *The Triall of Maist. Dorrell*, pp. 10-18, 21-2, 39-41, 45, 47, 60-3, 68.
- 32 - Ibid., pp. 55-6.
- 33 - Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 149-52.
- 34 - Cf. Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 483-5.
- 35 - *The Triall*, p. 79; cf. Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 63-4.
- 36 - E.g. Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 18, 35, 67, 127.
- 37 - *True Discourse*, Ded. (before pagination).
- 38 - John Deacon and John Walker, *Dialogicall Discourses of Spirits and Divels* (London, 1601); idem., *Summarie Answer*; Darrel, *A Survey of certain dialogical discourses: written by John Deacon, and John Walker, concerning the doctrine of Possession and Dispossession of Divels* (n.p., 1602); idem., *The Replie of John Darrell, to the Answer of John Deacon, and John Walker* (n.p., 1602).

- 39 – Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall Discourses*, pp. 352–3; *Summarie Answer*, To the Reader; Darrel, *Replie*, sig. B2; *Survey*, p. 77.
- 40 – Darrel, *Survey*, p. 68. Darrel here distinguishes two classes of miracle: (1) performed directly by God; (2) performed by the ministry of man. It is only the second class that has ceased; miracles of the first class, such as the Nova Cassiopeae of 1572, or a landslide in Hereford of 1571, still continue.
- 41 – Harsnett, *Discovery*, sig. A4; Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall Discourses*, pp. 300–35 (a full discussion, citing, among modern Protestants: Musculus, Peter Martyr, Beza, William Fulke); cf. Scot, *Discoverie*, pp. 121–6; King James I, *Demonology*, 1597, in his *Workes* (London, 1616), p. 127; Perkins, *A Discourse*, pp. 37, 229, 232–4, 239.
- 42 – Cf. *Miracles*, ed. Moule pp. 214–15 (G. W. H. Lampe), 222–4 (M. F. Wiles).
- 43 – Harsnett, *Discovery*, sig. A4; Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall Discourses*, p. 169; cf. below, p. 73.
- 44 – Darrel, *Briefe Narration*, sig. Biiij<sup>v</sup>–C<sup>v</sup>; idem., *A Brief Apologie proving the possession of William Sommers* (n.p., 1599), pp. 32 ff.; idem., *An Apologie*, fol. 14; idem., *Doctrine*, p. 29.
- 45 – Darrel, *Doctrine*, pp. 41–3; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 45–66. The use of prayer and fasting for dispossession was in fact widespread in the early Church (see Franz, *Benediktionen*, II, 529, 541).
- 46 – Darrel, *Replie*, pp. 17–18.
- 47 – Darrel, *Briefe Narration*, sig. Aij.
- 48 – Darrel, *Doctrine*, p. 69; *The Triall*, pp. 9, 66–70; More, *Lancashire*, p. 5.
- 49 – Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall Discourses*, To the Reader.
- 50 – Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 35.
- 51 – Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall Discourses*, To the Reader, and pp. 166–71.
- 52 – *Ibid.*, p. 355.
- 53 – *Ibid.*, pp. 206–8.
- 54 – Wier, *Histoires*, I, xxiv–xxv (I, 142–51).
- 55 – Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall Discourses*, pp. 158–62.
- 56 – Harsnett, *Declaration*, pp. 131–3.
- 57 – *Ibid.*, p. 137.
- 58 – *Ibid.*, pp. 136–7.
- 59 – Darrel, *Survey*, p. 28.
- 60 – Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 37–8, 40; *Brief Apologie*, pp. 7, 20; *The Triall*, p. 78.
- 61 – More, *Lancashire*, pp. 22–3.
- 62 – *The Triall*, pp. 7–8.
- 63 – Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 36, 39.
- 64 – Darrel, *Detection*, p. 37.
- 65 – *The Triall*, p. 85.
- 66 – *Ibid.*, p. 87.
- 67 – *Ibid.*, pp. 87–8, 99–103.
- 68 – Calvin, *In Novum Testamentum Commentarii*, I (Brunsvigae, 1891), 1211: ‘Quanquam autem non exprimit Christus, velitne hoc temporale esse donum, an

perpetuo in sua ecclesia residere; magis tamen probabile est, non nisi ad tempus promitti miracula, quae novum et adhuc obscurum evangelium illustrent.'

69 – Melancthon, *Opera* (Corpus Ref.), xiv (Halis Saxonum, 1847), 907: 'Quid haec sibi volunt? Significant magna miracula, quae certo fiunt omni tempore Ecclesiae, alias magis, alias minus. Deus propter fidem et invocationem Esiae depellit Sennaherib. Ibi Sennaherib erat magnus mons. Deus dedit pacem vivente Luthero. Ibi eius fide et invocatione fuerunt repressi montes, id est, principum impetus.'

#### V A GLANCE INTO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

1 – See Jean Lorédan, *Un grand procès de sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle L'Abbé Gaufridy et Madeleine de Demandolx (1600-1670)* (Paris, 1912); Guy Bechtel, *Sorcellerie et possession* (Paris, 1972); cf. Mandrou, *Magistrats*, pp. 198-210.

2 – But cf. Marthe Brossier's accusation (above, p. 33).

3 – Jean le Normant, Sieur de Chiremont, *Histoire véritable et memorable de ce qui c'est passé sous l'exorcisme de trois filles possédées es pais de Flandre, en la découverte & confession de Marie de Sains, soy disant Princesse de la Magie, & Simone Dourlet complice, & autres. ou il est aussi traicté De la Police du Sabbat, & secrets de la Synagogue des Magiciens & Magiciennes. De l'Antechrist: & de la fin du monde. Extraict des memoires de Messire Nicolas de Monmorenci Conte Destarre, & premier chef des finances des Archiducs, &c. & du R. P. F. Sebastien Michaëlis, premier reformateur de l'Ordre des freres Prescheurs en France, & du R.P.F. François Doncieux Docteur en Theologie: . . . Premiere Partie* (Paris, 1623); *De la vocation des magiciens et magiciennes par le ministre des demons: et particulierement des chefs de Magie: à sçavoir de Magdelaine de la Palud. Marie de Sains. Louys Gaufridy. Simone Dourlet, &c. . . . Seconde Partie* (Paris, 1623) (Latin version, *Vera ac memorabilis Historia*, same place and year, two parts in one), pt 1, pp. 14, 185, 188-90. Mandrou (*Magistrats*, Bibl., nos. 237, 261) lists this work twice, once as by Le Normant and once as by Seb. Michaëlis; he also states (*ibid.*, p. 209) that the latter worked as exorcist at Lille with Domptius, misled perhaps by the fact that a Franciscan, Pierre Michaëlis, did collaborate with Domptius (Le Normant, *Histoire véritable*, pt 1, p. 2). On this affair, cf. A. Pasture, *La restauration religieuse aux Pays-Bas Catholiques sous les archiducs Albert et Isabelle (1596-1633)* (Louvain, 1925), p. 324.

4 – See Etienne Delcambre and Jean Lhermitte, *Un cas énigmatique de possession diabolique en Lorraine au XVIIe siècle. Elisabeth de Ranfaing l'énergumène de Nancy fondatrice de l'Ordre du Refuge* (Nancy, 1956); cf. Mandrou, *Magistrats*, pp. 246-51.

5 – See Mandrou, *ibid.*, pp. 210 ff., 219 ff., 251-60.

6 – 2nd. ed., Paris, 1613.

7 – S. Michaëlis and Francis Domptius, *The Admirable Historie of the Possession and Conversion of a Penitent woman . . . Whereunto is annexed a Pneumology, or Discourse of Spirits made by the said Father Michaëlis*, Translated into English by W.B. (London, 1613), To the Reader (before pag.). I am rather suspicious of the motives behind this publication of a massive work of Catholic propaganda, faithfully and fully translated, with only a short introduction as an antidote (cf. Le Normant,

*Histoire Veritable*, pt 2, pp. 396-7). The writer of the introduction recalls the Denham exorcisms.

8 - Ibid., Ded. (no pag.).

9 - Ibid., pp. 23, 35, 42.

10 - Ibid., pp. 7, 26.

11 - Ibid., pp. 90-3.

12 - Ibid., *Apologie* for doubts by some propounded (before pag.).

13 - See Mandrou, *Magistrats*, p. 525.

14 - See below, p. 80.

15 - *Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiasticall, Treated upon by the Bishop of London, President of the Convocation for the Province of Canterbury* (London, 1604), sig.

M4<sup>r</sup>-v, art. 72. This threatens casters-out of devils with Darrel's fate. Under pain of suspension for the first offence, excommunication for the second and, deposition for the third; ministers are forbidden, unless licensed by their Bishop, to hold 'any solemn Fasts', or 'Prophecies or Exercises', 'nor without such License to attempt upon any pretence whatsoever, either of Possession or Obsession, by fasting and prayer to cast out any devill or devils, under paine of the imputation of Imposture, or Couzenage, and Deposition from the Ministerie'.

16 - *True Storie*, pp. 26-7. Cf. a similar attitude in Perkins, *A Discourse*, pp. 229-30.

17 - See Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 226-8, 236-7.

18 - Cf. Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972), pp. 223-30.

19 - Pp. 276-328 (Ch. XVII).

20 - Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp. 183, 301. The demoniac was a fraud (see below, p. 83).

21 - See Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 127, 132-3, 196-9.

22 - John Swan, *A True and Briefe Report of Mary Glovers vexation, and of her deliverance by the meanes of fastinge and prayer* (n.p., 1603), pp. 53, 56.

23 - Ibid., pp. 2-3, 57-8, 61, 65, 67-8; cf. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 485.

24 - King James, *The Workes* (1616), p. 220; quoted in Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, p. 319.

25 - Quoted in Kittredge, *ibid.*

26 - See C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft in the Star Chamber* (London, 1938), pp. 25-7; Preface by Thomas Guidott to Edward Jorden, *A Discourse of Natural Bathes and Mineral Waters* (3rd. ed., London, 1669); Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, pp. 321-2.

27 - Francis Osborne, *A Miscellany of Sundry Essayes* (London, 1659), p. 8.

28 - See Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, pp. 322-3; Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 228-9.

29 - Ben Jonson, *Works*, ed. C. H. Herford, etc., vi (Oxford, 1938), 254-69.

Jonson's *Volpone* (*ibid.*, v, 131), first acted in 1605, has in the last act a short scene of faked possession, in which there is an allusion to Sommers' running lump.

30 - See Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 236-7; Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, pp. 324-5.

31 - Ewen, *ibid.*, pp. 240-4; Edward Fairfax, *Demonologia*, ed. W. Grainge (Harrogate, 1882).

32 - Ewen, *Star Chamber*, pp. 55-6; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp. 183, 301.

33 – Thomas Fuller, *The Church-History of Britain* (London, 1655), Cent. xvii, p. 74.

34 – Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, p. 328; Ewen, *Witchcraft*, cases reported 1510 to 1717, and Appendixes; idem, *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials* (London, 1929), pp. 100–13; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp. 26–7, 200.

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