

Jean Bodin

On the  
Demon-Mania  
of  
Witches

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For Victor E. Graham

and to our wives  
Kathy Pearl and Karen Scott  
with gratitude for their  
forebearance



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## Introduction

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Jean Bodin's *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* (*De la démonomanie des sorciers*) appeared in 1580 and rapidly became a major publishing success. It underwent at least twenty-three editions and was translated from its original French into German, Italian and Latin. It was surely the most published work of the era on the subject of demons and witches. Because of its wide distribution, it has been considered by generations of historians to have been an extremely influential book, responsible in itself for large-scale prosecutions of witches in the four or five decades following its appearance.<sup>1</sup> For all its notoriety, however, the *Demon-Mania* has never been translated into English. This is surprising, since Bodin is one of the towering figures in the history of French thought.

Jean Bodin (1529/30–1596) was one of the most important French writers of the second half of the sixteenth century. His many works, dealing with history, politics, economics, and religion, impressed his contemporaries and have fascinated historians of thought to the present day. In recent years, several international conferences have been convened at which scholars from all over the world have gathered to discuss Bodin's work.<sup>2</sup> As well known as Bodin's books are, many aspects of his life

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<sup>1</sup> Among recent judgments are Robert Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers* (Paris: Plon, 1969), 133–36; Brian Easlea, *Witch Hunting, Magic and the New Philosophy* (Sussex: Harvester, 1980), 15; and Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The European Witch-Craze and Other Essays* (New York: Harper, 1969), 122.

<sup>2</sup> See Jean Bodin: Proceedings of the International Conference on Bodin in Munich, 1970 (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1973); Jean Bodin: Actes du colloque interdisciplinaire d'Angers 1984 (Angers: Presses de l'Université d'Angers, 1985).

remain shadowy.<sup>3</sup> Jean Bodin hoped for a brilliant public career but it eluded him, and he was far more successful as a writer. He was born to a bourgeois family in Angers in 1529 or 1530. As a boy, Bodin joined the Carmelite order, studying philosophy, Greek and Hebrew. He probably left the order around 1550. He turned to the study of law at Toulouse and Paris and began to practice law in Paris around 1562, the year of the outbreak of the religious civil wars. At that time, he swore to being a Catholic, but his sincerity was always suspect by zealous Catholics. As the violence continued, Bodin became strongly hostile to the Calvinist faction, which he held responsible for the civil strife of his day. Rather than support the Catholic League though, Bodin moved to a centrist position, called *Politique* at the time. The *politiques* held that disunity and violence were destroying France, and the only cure for the troubles was a strong and respected monarchy.

Around 1571, he entered the service of the Duke of Alençon, the king's youngest brother. The publication of his most famous work, *The Six Books of the Commonwealth*, in 1576 enhanced his reputation and he seemed destined for high office. But as a delegate to the Estates General in late 1576, he opposed royal fiscal demands. This seems to have stopped his upward progress. Only three years later, at the height of his literary reputation, Bodin published the *Demon-Mania*, which seems to have been widely read. Bodin accompanied the Duke of Alençon (now known as Anjou) to England in 1581 on his unsuccessful attempt to woo Queen Elizabeth. Anjou's death in 1584 led to the final and most violent phase of the civil war as the Protestant Henry of Navarre became the royal successor. Bodin, having lost his patron, was now far from political power. He moved to Laon, where he experienced great difficulties at the hands of the Catholic League. During this period, Bodin wrote, but never published, the *Heptaplomeres* (*Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime*),<sup>4</sup> a fascinat-

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<sup>3</sup>See Kenneth McRae, ed., "Bodin's Career," in Jean Bodin, *The Six Bookes of a Commonweale* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1962), A3-A13; Julian H. Franklin, ed., "Introduction," in Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), ix-xii.

<sup>4</sup>Jean Bodin, *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime*, trans. Marion Leathers Daniels Kuntz (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1975).



ing and highly unorthodox study of comparative religious philosophies.

In his many works, Bodin, influenced by Renaissance syncretism and shaken by the extreme violence of his time, was very tolerant of varieties of religious belief. While he generally supported a Catholic settlement of the conflicts, he was far from being an orthodox believer. Generations of scholars have admired the *Commonwealth* as the first modern study of the state and have often depicted Bodin as a modern man. Also widely admired is the remarkable tolerance of varieties of religious views that Bodin reveals in the *Colloquium*. But many of these scholars have been shocked and perplexed at the apparent contrast between the "modern," "rational" political Bodin, the "tolerant" religious Bodin, and the "intolerant" and "superstitious" Bodin of the *Demon-Mania*. There is a long tradition among Bodin specialists of either ignoring the *Demon-Mania* or treating it as a bizarre aberration in an otherwise respectable "progressive" intellectual.

But a group of recent writers have pointed out that, in fact, the *Demon-Mania* shares essential points of view and concerns with the *Commonwealth* and the *Colloquium*. Bodin's "inconsistency" is the result of applying nineteenth- and twentieth-century mental categories to a thinker of a very different age.<sup>5</sup>

Through all his major works, Bodin was concerned with honouring and defending the glory of God. In the *Commonwealth*, he described princes as mirror images of God, to whom the obedience of their subjects was owed. In the *Colloquium*, Bodin showed little concern for distinctions among the world's religions, as long as they honoured God and followed His law. He had a deep personal religious commitment rather than loyalty to a particular church.

Bodin believed in the existence of angels and demons who served as intermediaries between God and humankind. He be-

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<sup>5</sup>See E.W. Monter, "Inflation and Witchcraft: The Case of Jean Bodin," in T. Rabb and J. Siegel, *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969); Maxime Préaud, "'La Démonomanie', fille de la 'République'," in *Jean Bodin: Actes du colloque interdisciplinaire*, 2:419-28; Marion Leathers Daniels Kuntz, "Introduction," in *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime*; François Berriot, "Introduction," in Jean Bodin, *Colloque entre sept scavans* (Geneva: Droz, 1984).

lieved that people possessed free will to choose between good and evil. He saw atheism and demonism not as respectable religious options, but as abominable crimes of treason against the majesty of God. Just as he recommended harsh treatment of traitors and criminals in the *Commonwealth*, he advocated severe punishment in the *Demon-Mania* for those who betrayed and blasphemed against God.

In a well-ordered state, the ruler enforced obedience to himself and to the laws of the state but also had the responsibility of enforcing God's commands. Laxity in enforcement of secular and sacred laws led inexorably to disorder and chaos. This is why we see such strong emphasis in the *Demon-Mania* on the need for princes to suppress magic and demon-worship and to punish those who participated in these forbidden practices.

Bodin was deeply concerned with the question of harmony and order in a very disordered time. For Bodin, the common good depended on order, and order in society could only exist through a well-established and properly functioning monarchy. The monarch was to be regarded as the absolute ruler of the state. Defiance of the monarch was treason—a heinous crime deserving of death. And defiance of God was an infinitely greater crime.

For Bodin, justice was an essential aspect of the establishment and maintenance of order in a state (or in a family). Laws were imposed on a society by the monarch and had to be obeyed by all his subjects. Implied in this is the right, indeed the duty of the state to punish disobedience forcefully. The royal justice system was thus a primary institution in holding the state together. Bodin continually appealed to monarchs and especially to judges to carry out their duties in the proper way. It is clear that he blamed the terrible crisis in the France of his day on the failure of France's kings and magistrates to enforce the laws revealed by God. The result was a brutal and interminable civil war.

## The French Religious Wars

It should not be too surprising that Bodin was concerned with order and discipline, as he lived in a time marked by the most extreme and protracted forms of disorder. From 1562 to 1595, France was torn by a bitter civil war that developed from religious issues, but in which regional, social, and personal politics were

intertwined. A brief summary of these events will help to place the *Demon-Mania* in its context.

Protestantism first took root in France in intellectual circles in the early 1530's, a period of grave social and political tension. As time went on, French Protestantism was increasingly inspired by Jean Calvin, the brilliant French theologian who, after 1541, lived in Geneva. Calvinism attracted many members of the nobility and middle classes in France, and while only a small minority of the French converted, their influence was far greater than their numbers. After 1535, the royal government was very harsh in its repression of the movement, which it considered a heresy, and Protestantism remained an underground movement.

As long as strong kings ruled, serious trouble was avoided. But in 1559, Henry II died, leaving a political void. Henry's widow, Catherine de Medici, a subtle and astute politician, was very unpopular among the fractious French aristocracy. To protect her young sons and to maintain them on the throne, she shifted her influence from one political/religious faction to the other in order to prevent either from becoming too powerful. This policy succeeded in maintaining the Valois dynasty for a time, but probably helped to prolong the crisis. The atmosphere became increasingly tense as, taking advantage of Catherine's insecure position and noble rivalries, the Protestants became more open in their religious observances, exciting the most extreme elements in the Catholic population to intense hatred and the use of violence. Factional violence escalated until, in 1562, troops of the ultra-Catholic Duke Francis of Guise attacked and massacred a congregation of Protestants at Vassy during their Sunday prayers, beginning a long generation of warfare. Guise himself was murdered in a Protestant ambush the following year. Over the next fifteen years, neither side was able to impose its will on the other. While the military phases of the civil war period were sporadic, religious propaganda and political infighting went on ceaselessly. Each group accused its enemies of being in league with the Devil, and of committing the worst crimes imaginable against the state, God and the true church.

The low point in the religious wars, and one of the genuinely shameful chapters in French history, was the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, 24 August 1572. Following a royally-sponsored attempt to assassinate Admiral Coligny, leader of the French Protestants, a bloody massacre took place in which the Catholics

of Paris murdered their Protestant neighbours in their homes and in the streets. The bloodshed raged for several days in Paris and then spread to several provincial cities. Modern authorities estimate that 3,000 died in Paris and an additional 8,000 were killed in the provinces.<sup>6</sup> The Estates General of 1576, which Bodin attended, was an unsuccessful attempt to create a new national consensus to end the violence. The troubles went on, however, becoming worse with time. It took the murder of the Catholic leader, Henry of Guise, in 1588 (by the King), the assassination of King Henry III (an act of revenge for the murder of Guise), and the conversion to Catholicism of the Protestant claimant to the throne, Henry IV, in 1594 finally to settle the crisis.

## Witchcraft in France

Between 1450 and 1700, witchcraft was a major concern of many Europeans. The height of the problem varied from place to place, but generally speaking, the witchcraft crisis reached its peak in Western Europe between 1550 and 1650. During this century, witches were actively prosecuted in the law courts and could be punished with death.

The witchcraft crisis was made up of at least two distinct elements. The first is popular folkloric culture. The vast majority of Europeans were peasant farmers, largely non-literate, whose culture was orally transmitted and who were very slow to change. Their Christianity was often a thin veneer over more primitive beliefs. The world of the common people was inhabited by magical forces and beings. Almost any feature of the landscape such as open fields, forests, springs, bridges and especially any unusual natural formation could be the subject of tales of magical occurrences. People seem to have been genuinely afraid of a wide variety of supernatural beings like giants, monsters, dwarves, werewolves and others who were thought to be able to do mischief to ordinary people. Frequently, materials from religious observances, like communion wafers or holy water, were regarded as magical and were used by the peasants as amulets to protect themselves from the dark powers that surrounded them. The dead

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<sup>6</sup>Janine Garrison, *La Saint-Barthélemy* (Brussels: Complexe, 1980).

were thought to surround the communities of the living, and a ghost of someone who had been murdered or died unhappily could cause serious problems. People thought that spells could be cast on humans, livestock and crops through the recitation of forbidden secret words or concocting of evil recipes, or mixtures of the two. The fear of spells was very widespread. It cannot be doubted that, in this environment, some people cast spells in order to harm their neighbours, or at least took advantage of such fears in order to get charity or favours that they might not otherwise receive. Generally speaking, spells seem to have been a weapon of the weak against stronger people who, through economic prosperity and access to political and judicial power, had no need to resort to these manipulations.

It is important to note that this folkloric peasant outlook existed long before 1550, and continued to exist long after 1650. Peasant culture, rooted in the material conditions of agrarian life, has been very slow to change and still exists in some form in many European villages.

Far different from the static world of primitive peasant mentalities was the dynamic realm of literate upper-class culture. The Italian Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had developed a new basis for elite secular learning, based upon the ancient Latin and Greek classics. The adoption of this new culture by most European elites in the sixteenth century opened a tremendous cultural gap between the educated classes and the great mass of ordinary people.

The intellectuals of the sixteenth century were shaped by a range of ancient philosophies, history and science. Bodin's religious tolerance, his emphasis on harmony and, especially, his view of the universe as hierarchical and connected by angelic and demonic forces mark him as a Renaissance thinker. He was strongly influenced by the Neoplatonic tradition that was such a formative aspect of Renaissance thought.<sup>7</sup>

Most people today are familiar with the notion of the glories of the Renaissance, especially in art and architecture. Less well-known is that magical and occult philosophies, developed by the

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<sup>7</sup>See Kuntz, "Introduction," in *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime*.

Ancients, were an important component of Renaissance culture. Learned occult conjuring and magical literature flourished in the early sixteenth century, along with such pseudo-sciences as alchemy and astrology. In their own way, the educated elites were as concerned with occult magic as were the common people. While the peasants cast spells that they had acquired through the oral tradition, the elite spell-casters tried to control the occult forces of the universe according to the wisdom of the ancients that they read in learned books.

The best known author of magical works in Bodin's time was Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim. Agrippa's most famous, or notorious, work was *On the Occult Philosophy*, published in 1531. While claiming to abhor witchcraft and heresy, Agrippa's work was a full account of many varieties of Renaissance magic, complete with "secrets" to help the reader invoke the higher orders of the universe.<sup>8</sup> Bodin often refers to Agrippa as the "Master Sorcerer."

Another very important development in the consciousness of the upper classes at this time was an explosion in the idea of evil, and especially of the Devil. In the art and literature of the late fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, there is what seems to be an almost obsessive concern with grotesque images of Hell and the demons who inhabited there. Perhaps this heightening of dark fears is attributable to a series of grave crises that troubled Europe from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The Black Death of 1347-49 killed over one-third of the entire population of Europe. For the two hundred and fifty years following this epidemic, less severe plagues occurred with alarming regularity, killing many and disrupting normal life. The entire period was one of constant violence as well, with warfare between the large and small states of Europe being waged without any significant breaks. The sense of the presence of the Devil and the power of evil in the world was heightened by the coming of the Reformation in the early sixteenth century. The splintering of Christendom into many rival camps could only increase the feelings

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<sup>8</sup>Wayne Shumaker, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1972), 134-57; Charles Nauert, *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought* (Urbana: Illinois UP, 1965).

of chaos that were already present. Ideas of the imminence of the Apocalypse—the end of the world—with evil rampant and the Antichrist stalking the earth became very prevalent as the century went on. In the intense propaganda war of the Reformation, both Protestants and Catholics hastened to identify their foes as agents of the Devil. Luther identified the Pope as Antichrist, and Protestants in general considered much of Catholic tradition as diabolical superstition. For their part, the Catholics called Protestants heretics who deserved extermination on earth and damnation in Hell.

It was in this atmosphere that demonology—the science of demons—was developed and proliferated among the educated elites of Europe. One of the earliest major demonological works was the famous *Malleus maleficarum* (1486) by two German inquisitors, Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Institoris (or Kramer).<sup>9</sup> This book and many others that followed in the sixteenth century argued strongly that the Devil existed and that humans who were inclined to evil could actively ally with him. These people were witches who deserved death. These beliefs were considered by the demonologists to be absolutely true, and any disbelief in this area was both heretical in itself and dangerous in practice, since it could permit witches to escape the punishments they deserved.

According to the standard works of demonology, the Devil used tricks or promises of gain to enrol in his forces those who were evilly inclined or unwary. These promises were never kept, since Satan was a great liar, the father of lies. Some stated that witches signed contracts with the Devil in their own blood. They would be marked in some hidden part of their body with the demon's talon, and receive the power to do evil. They were believed to have the ability to kill babies, to cause strange or lingering illnesses, to destroy livestock and to ruin crops with insect infestations or hailstorms. As Bodin discussed at some length, they were also believed to cause sexual dysfunction. All of this took place through the permission of God.

At regular intervals, witches were believed to gather to pay homage to their satanic master. The sabbaths, as these occasions were called, were described as ghastly ceremonies which were

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<sup>9</sup>James Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer, *Malleus maleficarum*, trans. Montague Summers (London: Rodker, 1928); Henry Institoris and Jacques Sprenger, *Le marteau des sorciers*, ed. A. Danet (Paris: Plon, 1973).

inverted parodies of orthodox Christian observances. At their sabbaths, graphically described by Bodin, the witches had to tell the evil they had done and promise to do more. They adored the Devil, and invariably had intercourse with the demons.

It was widely believed that the Devil could take possession of a person. Demonic possession was an especially important aspect of witchcraft beliefs in France, where several highly publicized cases occurred. A very important case, which Bodin refers to, took place in 1566 in Laon. A young girl, Nicole Aubery, was thought to be possessed, and was publicly exorcized in front of big crowds. She denounced the Protestants as the Devil's flock, and when she was freed of her demons, some of Laon's Protestants actually converted back to Catholicism. This incident was called "The miracle of Laon" by Catholic propagandists, and was widely cited to prove the exclusive rightness of Catholicism.<sup>10</sup>

Demonologists also discussed the ancient theme of the transformation of men into animals, especially wolves. The belief in this transformation was widespread among the common people. Most orthodox writers, though, did not accept this as true, as Bodin did, but regarded it as an illusion created by the Devil.<sup>11</sup>

For most people of Bodin's time, women were held to be especially susceptible to the temptations offered by the Devil. Through long tradition women were held to be both lustful in their sexuality and weak in their religious faith. They were perceived as being barely educable. In fact, in this period, most formal education was reserved for males and few women were educated outside the home. Women's literacy rates probably ran at about half those of men. Bodin accepted and propagated these views. He did not expound explicitly on the inferiority of women or their inclination to evil, because he could assume, correctly for the most part, that his readers shared the same opinion. Generally speaking, when people discussed witches, they thought of women. This stereotype of women as witches was widely held. When translated to the reality of the legal persecution of witches, it meant that around

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<sup>10</sup>Jonathan L. Pearl, "A School for the Rebel Soul': Politics and Demonic Possession in France," *Historical Reflections* 16 (1989):286-306.

<sup>11</sup>Jonathan L. Pearl, "Le rôle énigmatique de la *Démonomantie* dans la chasse aux sorciers," in *Jean Bodin: Actes du colloque interdisciplinaire*, 403-12.



eighty percent of all those accused of this crime were women. In fact, many of the men who fell afoul of the courts were accused because of their connection with a woman who was accused first.<sup>12</sup>

The elaboration and spread of elite demonological ideas, layered as they were on popular folkloric beliefs, set the scene for thousands of trials for witchcraft in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The crime of witchcraft was prosecuted by courts all over Europe, in both Catholic and Protestant jurisdictions.

In most places, witchcraft was regarded as a secular crime, and was dealt with in the ordinary criminal courts, along with murder, theft, arson and assault. Ecclesiastical courts, or Inquisitions, dealt with the crime of witchcraft only in Spain and Italy. The Spanish and Italian Inquisitions (two completely separate bodies), while holding that witchcraft was a real offence, tended to treat witchcraft as a problem of popular superstition. They concentrated on educating the accused as to their errors and reconciling them to the orthodox community. Witchcraft was never a major concern for the Inquisitions and relatively few were punished severely for it in Spain and Italy. It was in the north of Europe, where the secular court system looked after this offence, that the heaviest persecution of witches took place.<sup>13</sup>

Much has been written on the witch-hunt in Europe. Some studies have depicted an extended hysteria, in which obsessed judges, using savage torture on the least pretext, sentenced hundreds of thousands, or even millions, to a horrible death in the flames.<sup>14</sup> But an important group of recent studies based on local archival records has helped to draw a more accurate picture of what actually transpired. While still horrifying to the modern sensibility, the totality of witchcraft cases is much less dramatic than previously thought.<sup>15</sup> It is now clear that many of those

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<sup>12</sup>Joseph Klaitz, *Servants of Satan: The Age of the Witch Hunts* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985), 48–104; Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London: Longmans, 1987), 123–39.

<sup>13</sup>Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, 201–06; E.W. Monter, *Ritual, Myth and Magic in Early Modern Europe* (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1983), 62–68.

<sup>14</sup>See Trevor-Roper, *Witch-Craze*; Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating* (New York: Dutton, 1974), 130.

<sup>15</sup>This is well summed up by Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, 170–212. Important local

accused of witchcraft were acquitted or were punished by milder means than death. Judges did evaluate the quality of the evidence. Torture was used to obtain confessions, but many judges applied severe torture only to those against whom the proofs were already quite strong. It should be noted that torture, or the "question," was widely used by courts in ordinary criminal procedure in this period, and that many crimes like murder, theft, treason, heresy, blasphemy, etc. were punished by death. The judge's own beliefs in the area of witchcraft were extremely important in determining how severely the court dealt with the accused. Several large-scale persecutions of particular brutality can be attributed to individual judges. Furthermore, the frequency with which many demonologists complained about the laxness of judges who did not believe in the realities or dangers of witchcraft leads us to believe that many judges were not very zealous in their hunt for witches.<sup>16</sup> There are no comprehensive statistics that tell us in detail how the French courts performed in this area. From all the available evidence, a fairly good guess can be made, however. The courts in France were relatively moderate in their handling of witchcraft. They were more severe than the Spanish or Italian Inquisitions, approximately equal to the courts of England, and much less severe than those in Scotland, Germany or Poland, where the witch-hunt was really concentrated. One recent study of the witch-hunt estimates that around 4,000 were executed in France between 1450 and 1700, with the bulk falling between 1550 and 1650.<sup>17</sup> The same study proposes a global number of around 60,000 executions for witchcraft in all of Europe in the early modern era.

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studies include E.W. Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1976); Christina Lerner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1981); Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970); and Alfred Soman, "The Parlement of Paris and the Great Witch Hunt," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 9:2 (1978):31-45.

<sup>16</sup>Jonathan L. Pearl, "French Catholic Demonologists and Their Enemies in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *Church History* 52 (1983):457-67.

<sup>17</sup>Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, 181-82.

The salient feature of French jurisprudence was the system of Parlements. The Parlements were regional supreme courts. The oldest one, with the largest area of control, was the Parlement of Paris. In Bodin's time there were seven other Parlements in the provincial capitals. They were co-equal in law, that is, none could interfere with another's jurisprudence. The Parlements served as courts of first instance in cases involving the nobility, and as appeal courts for most offences involving commoners, including witchcraft. The lower courts were a mixed bag, including municipal courts staffed by trained lawyers and rural courts run by illiterate peasants. These local courts seem to have often been very severe in their judgements in witchcraft cases. But in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the rulings of local courts were appealed to the Parlement of the region with increasing frequency.

In dealing with cases of witchcraft, the Parlements frequently overturned the severe judgements of lower courts, often releasing the accused or substantially lightening the original penalties. The Parlement of Paris virtually stopped the death penalty from being used against witches in its large jurisdiction after 1610.<sup>18</sup>

The Parlements, the apex of the French legal system, were staffed by wealthy, highly educated lawyers who owned their offices. This pattern of ownership and inheritability of offices is an important and distinctive aspect of early modern France. The members of the high courts enjoyed considerable political independence and social prestige. Most of the important positions on the Parlements either conferred nobility on the incumbent or were reserved for those who were already noble. In the three centuries before the French Revolution, many of France's important intellectuals came from this group in society.

In the Parlements, the judges worked as panels, evaluating charges and evidence as well as deciding on guilt and sentencing. The judges acted as prosecutors, judges and juries. There can be little doubt that it was the judges' social and intellectual status, together with their method of trying cases, that resulted in France's moderate record in witchcraft matters. Several of the cases that resulted in executions in the seventeenth century were carried out

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<sup>18</sup> Alfred Soman, "La décriminalisation de la sorcellerie en France," in *Histoire, économie et société* (Paris: Editions C.D.U., 1985).

outside the normal system, through some government intervention. These cases were very controversial because of the sidestepping of the Parlements' role.<sup>19</sup>

The moderation of the high courts in witchcraft proceedings was very distressing to the writers of demonology books in France. Bodin shared this dismay, but little else with his fellow demonologists. Most of them were a generation younger than Bodin, and thus were raised and educated during the wars of religion. Many French demonologists were taught at the Jesuit College of Clermont of the University of Paris by the famous theologian Jean Maldonat. Maldonat's lectures of the early 1570's emphasized demonological themes and influenced a generation of scholars, including Louis Richeome, Martin del Rio and Pierre de Lancre. For these and many lesser known writers, demonology was connected to the defense of Catholicism in France and was a highly political form of literature. For this group, the Protestant heresy had been born and was spread through the work of Satan, and in turn had made Satan's evil work easier. They argued that witchcraft was the product of this process, and that it proliferated in the wake of the Protestant heresy. Since the French monarchs, from Francis II to Henry IV, did not share their views, and since the Parlements and many other people were hostile to them, their work took on a strident and defensive tone.

### The *Demon-Mania*

The *Demon-Mania* is a lengthy and complex discussion of many aspects of magic and witchcraft. While Bodin divided it into four sections, or books, it really seems to fall into three parts. The first part is a largely theoretical discussion of magic and demons and how far humans can safely involve themselves in the occult. The second part, starting with Book Two, chapter four, covers aspects of witchcraft beliefs and the seriousness of witchcraft as a crime. The third part is Book Four, a detailed legal essay on the prosecution of witches in the courts.

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<sup>19</sup>This was the case in 1609, when Pierre de Lancre conducted a large-scale trial for witchcraft that resulted in around eighty executions, and in the trial of Urbain Grandier in Loudun in 1634.

Throughout the *Demon-Mania*, Bodin was concerned with offenses against the majesty of God. His argument that witchcraft is treason against God is the centre of his very severe approach. In this, he differed strongly from most other French demonologists, for whom the defense of the Catholic church was the prime goal. For Bodin, all religions were worthwhile in controlling and instructing people. The universal laws of God, found in the writings of ancient pagan and Hebrew writers, as much as in Christian authorities, were Bodin's guide in his condemnation of illicit magic and witchcraft. Bodin's sources are an interesting eclectic blend of classical, Hebrew and Christian authorities as well as much hearsay from friends and contemporary writers. For Bodin, the fact that all these ancient and modern authorities agreed that the Devil is real, that witches are real and that they are dangerous and must be condemned was the best possible proof that his arguments were true.

Another important aspect of Bodin's methodology is his interest in the definition and derivation of words as keys to knowledge. The book opens with an extended explication of Bodin's definition of witchcraft and he continually uses the correct defining of terms as the best guide to their meaning and to their truth and utility.

For Bodin, the universe was tied together by occult relationships and was peopled by many demons, who were either good or evil. In this he shares in the interest in mysticism that was so prevalent in his time. The important thing, for Bodin, is that humans stay within the bounds of permissible or legal behaviour in their communication with the world of spirits. Any occult activity that served the Devil's purposes and led to false religion was evil and could lead men to damnation. The concern all through the first section of the *Demon-Mania* is to distinguish legal magic from that which was illegal. As a good lawyer, Bodin sees intent as the main guide to recognizing the line between good and evil, but is very concerned lest people, through ignorance or lack of care, be misled into criminal activities.

An interesting passage is Bodin's description of his unnamed friend's guardian angel. It has been asserted that this really was Bodin himself, that he believed himself to be the beneficiary of special guidance from a benevolent spirit.<sup>20</sup> Another section that

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<sup>20</sup>Christopher Baxter, "Jean Bodin's Daemon and His Conversion to

reveals much about how Bodin's mind worked is his discussion of astrology. He believed in astrology, but counselled strongly against its misuse. Astrology could be useful in medical matters, for example, where it could inform the physician about the inclinations of his patient. But one would pass the bounds of correct behaviour in attempting to use astrology to discover hidden secrets or to predict the future. Even worse was the attribution to the planets of influences that really belong to God. This led directly to idolatry.

In the middle section of the book, Bodin was primarily concerned with establishing the reality and seriousness of many varieties of diabolical involvement in the world. The emphasis in this section is on the crimes witches commit and the penalties that witches deserve. This part of the *Demon-Mania* relies more heavily on contemporary events than the first section. Bodin examines in detail witches' attendance at sabbaths, the reality of werewolves, and the crimes attributed to witches. The worst aspect of the witches' lives was that they renounced and betrayed God in order to serve the Devil. Bodin was also concerned that, in the fight against witchcraft, good people might resort to diabolical means themselves. People had to be on the alert to avoid the Devil's traps. They had constantly to remember that it was easy to fall into idolatry. This again reflects Bodin's continual concern with distinguishing the legal from the illegal.

Book Four is an extended legal treatise on the handling of witchcraft cases in court. In this Book, Bodin relies more on the legal theoretical writings of the late middle ages and Renaissance than on the sources he uses earlier. It is this section that has led modern historians to attribute increased severity in dealings with witches to the influence of this work, since Bodin was unequivocal in stating that witches deserve death. However, as soon as he begins the detailed examination of the legal proceedings necessary to prove someone a witch, things become technical and complicated. Bodin put great emphasis on the need for judges to be well trained, competent and sound in judgment. In advising judges how to proceed, he demanded solid proof of guilt, according to the

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Judaism," in *Jean Bodin: Proceedings of the International Conference on Bodin in Munich*, 18.

standards of the time, in order to find an accused guilty and subject to the death penalty.

Bodin's notions of law, testimony and evidence come from the Roman law tradition that was revived in Italy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and was the basis for the development of legal codes and the practices in Europe from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century.<sup>21</sup> The rules of evidence in the revived Roman law system, while fairly complex, were well understood by lawyers and judges of the day. In order to arrive at a guilty verdict in a serious crime, the court had to have at least two eye-witnesses to the crime. These witnesses, to be credible, had to be upstanding people. Furthermore, and this is typical of sixteenth-century attitudes, a woman's testimony was worth only half that of a man's. In many cases the required testimony was not available. The other firm proof was a freely made confession of guilt by the accused that agreed with the circumstances of the crime and the other testimony. If there were not two eye-witnesses and the accused refused to confess, the court could order the accused tortured in order to produce a confession. In this situation, the judge was to be in possession of at least half the required evidence for a guilty finding—either one eye-witness or a collection of circumstantial evidence (or presumptions). There were rules that governed the use of torture, to prevent undue abuse of the accused. Most important, for a confession extracted through torture to stand as proof, it had to be freely repeated a day after the torture was finished. Torture was widely and routinely used in the whole range of criminal proceedings in this era.

Presumptions, or circumstantial evidence, were admissible in building a case. If the presumptions were numerous and convincing, a judge could order the accused tortured. If the accused did not confess under torture, the case would usually be thrown out, or punishment would be relatively mild. If the person confessed

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<sup>21</sup>For discussions of the legal system of early modern Europe, see Edward Peters, *Torture* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); John Langbein, *Prosecuting Crime in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974); Langbein, *Torture and the Law of Proof* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976); Julius R. Ruff, *Crime, Justice and Public Order in Old Regime France* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

under torture but would not repeat the confession, the confession under torture was to be regarded as a presumption. Bodin specifically counsels against capital punishment in any case relying solely on presumptions.

Bodin's recommendations for the treatment of accused witches in Book Four of the *Demon-Mania* do not stray far from the accepted legal standards of his day. Although he repeatedly called for severe punishment for witches, he insisted that proper legal standards be observed in their trials. Bodin was profoundly committed to the rule of law. He, as did his contemporaries, saw law as necessary to protect society from evil-doers, not as the guarantee of protection for the individual from the state. But he certainly intended that a judge had to have solid proof in order to find a person guilty of witchcraft and to impose the death penalty.

Book Four of the *Demon-Mania* must be read with great care to keep the distinctions between proofs and presumptions, and corporal and capital punishment clear. If the judge, even one who believed in witches, were to take Bodin's counsel seriously in all its details, and demanded the degree of proof recommended in this treatise, it would probably be difficult to put to death many people accused of witchcraft.

Just before publishing the *Demon-Mania*, Bodin wrote an attack on the works of a German Protestant physician, Johann Weyer. Bodin considered Weyer almost as dangerous as Agrippa, labelling him "Protector of witches." Weyer considered learned magic to be dangerous and its practitioners worthy of death. But he defended Agrippa, Cardano and Pomponazzi, all writers Bodin considered to be evil magicians, and who were considered dangerous by orthodox Catholic authorities. Weyer's opinions on witchcraft sharply disagreed with Bodin's as well. For Weyer, witches were foolish old women who suffered from an excess of melancholic humour. This medical condition made them easy prey for the Devil, who tricked them into thinking they could do evil deeds. The remedy for their delusion was physical healing and religious instruction, not corporal or capital punishment. Weyer even held that the demonic pact, a key element in Bodin's concept of witchcraft, was a fantasy.

Bodin attacked Weyer for being a bad Christian and a bad physician. He was especially concerned that Weyer's views might lead judges to regard accused witches as ill, and permit them to



go unpunished. Furthermore, Bodin was shocked and angry that Weyer, like Agrippa, revealed detailed "secrets" of magic and witchcraft that unwary or evilly inclined readers could attempt to use.

As previously mentioned, a number of modern historians have explicitly stated that the *Demon-Mania* caused an upsurge in the number of trials and executions for witchcraft in France. But this opinion has several shortcomings. First, statistics on witchcraft cases in France are very incomplete and unreliable. It is not clear that there actually was any real increase in the rate of trials after 1580. Furthermore, Bodin, while believing in the dangers of the Devil and the reality of witchcraft, disagreed on many important points with the majority of orthodox Catholic demonologists. For one thing, Bodin held that the transport of witches to their sabbaths and the transformation of humans into animals was real, not a diabolical illusion as orthodox opinion held. Bodin also condemned the practice of questioning possessed people during exorcisms to get information from the possessing demons, or to score political points. For these views, as well as for his suspect religious reputation, most French demonologists regarded his book as theologically incorrect and even dangerous. In the 1590's, Bodin's principal works, including the *Demon-Mania*, were placed on the Index of banned works by Catholic authorities.<sup>22</sup> This would have seriously weakened its influence on those judges who, through sympathy with the Catholic zealot position, might have been believers in witchcraft. And these judges must have been a minority, since, as discussed above, the high courts of France were among the most moderate secular courts in Europe in the area of witchcraft.

It is impossible to state with certainty the effect of the *Demon-Mania* on the real world of witchcraft prosecutions. The safest position at this point is to regard it as an open question, keeping in mind that books rarely influence human behaviour as much as their authors hope they will.

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<sup>22</sup>Berriot, "Introduction," in *Colloque entre sept scavans*, xx-xxi. It should be noted that the *Démonomanie* continued to be published in Catholic regions after the ban.

## The Text and This Translation

For this translation, we have used the 1580 first edition of Bodin's *Démonomanie*. Bodin personally edited an edition in 1587, adding some material to the work. This 1587 edition was used for a photofacsimile edition in 1979. We chose the 1580 edition because it was the original version of the work, and because it was the model for all the French editions that followed (eleven between 1581 and 1616). A comparison of the editions shows that, while Bodin reported at some length on a specific trial and added some explanations in 1587, he added nothing of significant value to that edition, and as often confused the narrative as cleared it up. This edition did not serve as a model for any subsequent French edition.<sup>23</sup> Where significant variants occur between the 1580 and 1587 editions, we indicate it in the notes.

This abridged translation contains about two-thirds of the entire text, excluding the "Refutation of the opinions of Johann Weyer." While the refutation is interesting, it is a separate piece on a specific theme. To deal with it properly would require extensive description of Weyer's text, and would add little to an understanding of the *Demon-Mania* itself. A splendid new translation of Weyer's *De praestigis daemonum* has recently appeared making this work easily accessible. Bodin's refutation has been discussed by modern scholars and translated excerpts have been published as well.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>See Marie-Thérèse Isaac, "De la démonomanie des sorciers, Histoire d'un livre à travers ses éditions," in *Jean Bodin: Actes du colloque interdisciplinaire*. The text used here was a copy of the "T" edition of 1580, as defined by Isaac in her study.

<sup>24</sup>For excerpts of the refutation, see H.C. Lea, *Materials towards a History of Witchcraft* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), 2:554-74; E.W. Monter, *European Witchcraft* (New York: Random House, 1969), 47-55. On Weyer, see Christopher Baxter, "Johann Weyer's *De praestigis daemonum*: Unsystematic psychopathology," in *The Damned Art*, ed. S. Anglo (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 53-75; E.W. Monter, "Law, Medicine and the Acceptance of Witchcraft, 1560-1580," in *European Witchcraft*, 53-75. For Weyer's work, see *Witches, Devils and Doctors in the Renaissance: Johann Weyer De praestigis daemonum*, ed. George Mora (New York: SUNY Binghamton, 1991).

In providing a text that is useful for modern readers and that can be used in university classrooms, we have worked to present all of Bodin's important arguments and many of the examples, anecdotes and citations he used to buttress these arguments. In cases where Bodin presented six stories (or sometimes more) to illustrate a point, we have kept two or three. Where Bodin used the same account several times at different places in the text, we generally have kept only one. We have not reproduced the marginal citations where Bodin lists many of his sources. In all of this, we have kept the lines of argumentation as Bodin wrote them. We have endeavoured to demonstrate the strength of the work, and to be true to the author's intentions.

As a major Renaissance scholar, Bodin based his work on an extensive and varied group of sources. He depended heavily on the Old Testament, classical and patristic authorities and a large number of medieval scholastic works. He was immersed in the late medieval legal and canon law traditions. He also cited a large number of recent and contemporary texts like the *Malleus maleficarum*, as well as accounts told by friends and acquaintances. Interestingly, while Bodin condemned the work of Johann Weyer, he mined this book for anecdotes and accounts when they could be useful.

We have provided extensive notes to the text. For Bodin's principal sources, we give full references to the appropriate text. In the case of passing references, we explain the author's significance. We also have provided explanatory notes to passages that require information or background.

## Translator's Note

In this translation I have set out to reproduce as effectively as possible the vitality, suppleness and rhetorical intensity of Jean Bodin's French in his *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (1580). Several aspects of Bodin's language and style make this a formidable task. Certainly the first difficulty is the way that a thinker like Bodin, so distant from us in both time and culture, uses the instrument of language. This is a hurdle that modern translators of the Bible, or perhaps of any pre-Enlightenment work of religious literature, have all encountered in some way. Bodin often draws on deep sources of religious sentiment and theological passion that

are difficult for the modern reader to appreciate. It falls then to the translator to communicate fully, for example, the genuine indignation that Bodin expresses when discussing the crime of "treason against God" committed by witches, his apprehension about the pernicious activities of Satan in society, or his loathing of wretched people who are ready to "renounce God" for personal gain.

Sixteenth century French ("le moyen français") also presents many features which are difficult to incorporate into modern English. Jean Bodin, like most learned writers of his time, was equally or even more at home in Latin, with its long sentences or periods in the Ciceronian style. Thus Bodin has a tendency to create lengthy sentences in French, with an accumulation of verbs and dependent clauses. Often a sentence may contain several ideas, and sentences with closely related ideas may be joined by a colon, or introduced by "Et". The lack of paragraph divisions in the French text can also disorient the modern reader. I have, nonetheless, preserved the rhythm and flow of Bodin's arguments and sentence structure, even though it sometimes meant departing from modern stylistic practice. Still, in the interest of clarity, I have divided a few sentences into shorter units. Paragraph divisions here are meant to reflect clear topical transitions.

Bodin's text also demonstrates a wide range of stylistic registers. In his "overture" to the treatise (Book One) Bodin often assumes a Biblical and prophetic tone, portraying the crime of witchcraft as a demonic activity against the "Law of God." In Books Two and Three the language and style become more informal and anecdotal with accounts drawn from court records of witchcraft trials, and stories about witches told to Bodin or to his associates. In Book Four the text adopts the style of a serious legal treatise, as Bodin makes his recommendations for the proper prosecution of witchcraft trials. And throughout the work Bodin resorts to rhetorical outbursts to express his contempt for witchcraft and its despicable practitioners.

In closely adhering to Bodin's habits of language and style, I have imitated his frequent repetition of favorite words and expressions in successive passages (such as "dire," "faire mourir," "détestable," "notoire," etc.), providing however a variety of translations, or even a different expression if the repetition seemed too burdensome in the English version.

A thorny problem arises with the French noun "sorcier," which may be rendered in English, according to the context, as "witch," "sorcerer," "wizard," etc., and may refer to both male or female witches. There is no convenient English equivalent for the feminine "sorcière" other than "witch" or "sorceress," and when required we must rely on contextual details to confirm that the witch is a woman (e.g. "The witch was burned with her daughter..."). In accordance then with traditional English usage, and modern scholarship on the problem of European witchcraft, the term "witch" may refer to both male and female individuals in witchcraft cases.

Bodin's French syntax and vocabulary occasionally contain ambiguities that would normally not be found with later "classical" or more modern writers. I have, though, guided by careful consideration of Bodin's language and style, attempted to translate his text with consistent clarity, and with fidelity to his thought, especially his legal guidelines for the correct conduct of witchcraft cases in the courts.

Generally I have used the Revised Standard Version of the Bible to treat Bodin's numerous Biblical references and quotations. When it seemed to render Bodin's text more adequately, however, I referred to the Authorized King James Version, or to various recent translations. In some cases it was necessary to translate Bodin's citations directly, when he was quoting loosely from memory of a Biblical passage.

Professor Hugh Parry of the Division of Humanities at York University provided many helpful comments on ancient Greek and Roman culture, as well as invaluable assistance in translating a number of difficult Latin passages cited by Bodin. Professor Martin Lockshin was consulted for Bodin's Hebrew references; and Ms. Susan Rainey of the York University Document Processing Centre typed the text with enthusiasm and expertise.

We hope then that this translation will provide both the specialized scholar and the interested student with an accurate rendering of Bodin's thought in the *Démonomanie* and, within the limitations of a modern idiom, convey the principal features of Bodin's style that made the French text so widely read and consulted in his own time and afterwards.

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## *Author's Preface*

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The conclusion of the proceedings against a witch, to which I was summoned on the last day of April, 1578, gave me occasion to take up my pen in order to throw some light on the subject of witches, which seems marvelously strange to everyone and unbelievable to many. This witch was named Jeanne Harvillier,<sup>1</sup> a native of Verbery near Compiègne, who was accused of having caused the death of many people and animals. She confessed without torture although at first she stubbornly denied it and changed her story several times. She also confessed that her mother had presented her at twelve years old to the Devil, who was in the guise of an unusually tall, dark man dressed in black. Her mother told her that as soon as she was born she had promised her to the Devil, who promised to treat her well and to make her very happy. From that moment she renounced God and promised to serve the Devil. At the same time she had carnal relations with the Devil, continuing until she was fifty years of age or so when she was arrested. She also stated that the Devil came to her when she wished, always in the garb and form in which he appeared the first time, with spurs, boots, a sword at his side and with his horse at the door, which no one saw but she. He also sometimes had relations with her without her husband, who was in bed beside her, noticing.

She was reputed to be a very great witch, and it was almost impossible to keep the peasants from snatching her from the hands of Justice to burn her since they were afraid that she would escape. It was ordered that before proceeding to the final sentencing, they would send to Verbery, her place of birth, to make enquiries about

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<sup>1</sup>Also referred to as Jeanne/Jehanne Hervillier.

her life, and to the other villages where she had lived. It was found that thirty years before she had received the lash for the same crime, and her mother was condemned to be burned, by decree of the Parlement confirming the sentence of the judge of Senlis. Moreover they discovered that she was used to changing her name and residence in order to conceal her acts. Everywhere she had been suspected of being a witch. When she was convicted she asked for pardon, feigning repentance, while yet denying many wickednesses that she had committed and confessed to. But she maintained the confession that she had given of the last murder: that she cast some powders which the Devil had prepared for her, and that she placed them in the spot where the man who had beaten his daughter would pass. Someone else passed there whom she did not want to harm, who immediately felt a sharp pain through his whole body. And since all the neighbours who had seen her go into that place where she had cast the spell saw the man struck on the same day by such a sudden malady, they believed that she had cast a spell. She promised to cure him, and in fact she took care of the patient during his illness, and confessed that on the Wednesday before she was imprisoned, she had prayed to the Devil to cure his illness, but he had answered that it was impossible. She then told the Devil, who was always deceiving her, not to come and see her anymore. He said that he would not come again and two days later the man died. Immediately she hid in a barn where she was found. Those who were present at the sentencing agreed that she indeed deserved death. But as for the form and type of death there was one who was lenient and more inclined to pity, who was of the view that it was sufficient to hang her. The others, after having examined her detestable crimes, and the penalties established by both divine and human laws, and especially the universal custom of Christendom which has been maintained in this realm from earliest times, held the view that she ought to be burned alive. This was decreed and the sentence, against which there was no appeal, was carried out on the last day of April, under the auspices of Master Claude Dosay, the King's Prosecutor at Ribemont.

After her sentencing she confessed that she had been transported by the Devil to witches' assemblies, after using ointments which the Devil gave her. She was carried up so fast and so far that she was quite tired. She had seen a great number of people at the

assemblies who were all worshipping a man in black in a high place, about thirty years old, whom they called "Beelzebub."<sup>2</sup> After that they had carnal relations. Then the Prince preached to them to trust in him, that he would take revenge on their enemies and that he would make them happy. Questioned whether people gave any money, she said no. And she accused a shepherd and a roofer from Senlis whom she said were witches, and she confessed and repented, asking God's pardon.

And because there were some who found the case strange and almost unbelievable, I decided to write this treatise which I have entitled *The Demon-Mania of Witches*, on account of the madness which makes them chase after devils: to serve as a warning to all those who read it, in order to make it clearly known that there are no crimes which are nearly so vile as this one, or which deserve more serious penalties. Also partly to respond to those who in printed books try to save witches by every means, so that it seems Satan has inspired them and drawn them to his line in order to publish these fine books. One was Pietro d'Abano, a doctor, who tried to teach that there are no spirits; it turned out later that he was one of the greatest witches in Italy.<sup>3</sup>

In order that what I have said not seem strange—that Satan has men with titles who write, publish and teach that there is nothing to what people say about witches—I shall give a memorable example. Pierre Mamor, in a brief book *Des lamies*<sup>4</sup> noted that a person named Mr. Guillaume de Line, Doctor of Theology, who was accused and condemned as a witch on December 12, 1453, finally repented and confessed to having been transported many

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<sup>2</sup>In the Old Testament (2 Kings 1:2-5) "Baal-zebul" was the Philistine god of Ekron. The Jewish historian Josephus (c. A.D. 37-c. 100) translates the title as "Lord of the Flies." In New Testament times, the name became a synonym for the head of the forces of evil (Mt. 10:25; 12:24; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15-19).

<sup>3</sup>Pietro d'Abano (or Petrus Aponus/Aponensis) (1250-c. 1315) taught medicine, philosophy, and astrology at the University of Padua. As an independent thinker and author of several medical-philosophical works he was under investigation by the Inquisition at the time of his death. Many of his works were published late in the fifteenth century, including a notorious treatise *On Poisoning (De venenis)* (1473).

<sup>4</sup>Pierre Mamor, of the University of Poitiers, published the *Flagellum maleficarum* in 1490.

times at night with other witches to worship the Devil who appeared sometimes in the form of a man, and sometimes as a goat, renouncing all religion. He was found in possession of a written agreement that he had with Satan, setting out mutual promises, among which the Doctor was obliged to preach publicly that everything people said about witches was only a fable and an impossibility and that one must not believe any of it. In this way witches multiplied and greatly increased in number through his preaching, since the judges gave up their pursuit of witches. This clearly shows that Satan has loyal subjects of every rank and every condition. As Cardinal Benno<sup>5</sup> and Platina write,<sup>6</sup> there were many popes, emperors, and other princes who let themselves be tricked by witches, and who at the end were wretchedly cast down by Satan....Now the impunity of witches at that time was the reason that they marvelously increased in this realm, where they arrived from every direction...so that the witch Trois-eschelles having obtained pardon from the death sentence pronounced against him, on condition that he name his accomplices, stated that there were more than a hundred thousand in this realm—perhaps falsely and in order to lessen his impiety by having such numerous company. Whatever the case he named a very large number. But matters were arranged so well that all or most of them got off, even though they confessed such abominable wickednesses that the air was contaminated. So God in His anger sent terrible persecutions, since He had threatened by His law to exterminate peoples who allowed witches to live....<sup>7</sup>

Thus one must consider as fools or madmen those people who see the strange actions of witches and spirits, who because they cannot understand the cause, or because it is impossible in nature, do not want to believe any of it.

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<sup>5</sup>Cardinal Benno was an eleventh-century author whose studies of medieval popes were published in the sixteenth century.

<sup>6</sup>Battista Platina was a fifteenth-century writer whose works on health and food, the lives of the saints, heresies and schisms were widely published in the sixteenth century.

<sup>7</sup>Lev. 20:1-6, 27; 19:26, 31; Deut. 18:9-14; Ex. 22:18.

Now we find that Orpheus,<sup>8</sup> who lived about twelve hundred years before Jesus Christ, and Homer after him,<sup>9</sup> who are the first authors among the Pagans, left in writing the sorceries, necromancies and spells that are done in our own time. We see in the law of God, published more than two hundred years before Orpheus, that the magicians of Pharaoh mimic the works of God.<sup>10</sup> We see the witch of Saul evoke the spirits and make them speak.<sup>11</sup> The prohibitions included in the law of God about consulting diviners, witches, and pythonic oracles, specify all types of witchcraft and divinations, on account of which God declares that He had exterminated the Amorites and the Canaanites from the earth.<sup>12</sup> For such sorcery Jehu had Queen Jezebel eaten by the dogs, after having her cast down from her palace.<sup>13</sup> We also read the penalties against witches established in the laws of the Twelve Tables which the Roman officials had derived from Greek laws.<sup>14</sup> Again we note

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<sup>8</sup>A legendary poet-magician figure from Thrace who was the reputed founder of Orphism, an influential Greek mystery religion, and composer of a group of Orphic hymns. According to legend, his music could summon birds and beasts and even attract trees with its magical powers. One of the most popular Orphic myths tells of his descent to the Underworld to rescue the soul of his wife Eurydice. In 1462, Marsilio Ficino translated the eighty-seven hymns (actually written in Roman times), and they became associated with Neoplatonic ritual magic. Bodin condemned Orpheus for the evil use of the power of words and music.

<sup>9</sup>In fact, Homer (c. 750–700 B.C.) provides the first recorded descriptions of magical operations in Greek. In the *Odyssey*, 10.203–47, the poet describes the magical transformation of Odysseus' companions into swine by the goddess-sorceress Circe, as well as Odysseus' antidote to the magic furnished by an herb called "moly." See also Odysseus' necromantic summoning of the shades in the *Odyssey* 11.12–224. It is the model for Aeneas' descent to the underworld in Book 6 of Virgil's *Aeneid* and the magical operation of the witch Erichtho in Book 6 of Lucan's *Pharsalia*.

<sup>10</sup>Ex. 7:22; 8:7, 18; 9:11.

<sup>11</sup>1 Sam. 28:3–25.

<sup>12</sup>Ex. 22:18; Lev. 18:24–25; 19:26, 31; 20:1–6, 27; Deut. 18:9–14; 2 Ch. 33:6–9; Isa. 57:3; Nah. 3:4.

<sup>13</sup>2 Ki. 9:30–37.

<sup>14</sup>The Laws of the Twelve Tables, given in 451–450 B.C., expressly forbade anyone, on punishment of death, to transfer his neighbour's crops, by means of magic, into his own fields. See C.G. Bruns, *Fontes iuris Romani antiqui*

that the cruelest punishments found in all the constitutions of the Roman emperors were established against witches, where they are called "enemies of nature," "enemies of the human race," and "maleficent" because of the great wickednesses they commit....<sup>15</sup>

We read Greek and Latin histories, ancient and modern histories, and reports of every country and people who have left written accounts of the things which witches do including the ecstasy in spirit and the transport of witches in body and soul to distant countries carried out by evil spirits, and their return by evil spirits in little or no time. All witches confess this with universal assent, as one can read in the works of Germans, Italians, French and other nations. Plutarch reported this about Aristeeas the Proconnesian and Cleomedes the Astypalean,<sup>16</sup> Herodotus about an atheist philosopher,<sup>17</sup> Pliny about a Hermetimus of Clazomenae,<sup>18</sup> Philostratus about Apollonius of Tyana,<sup>19</sup> and all the histories of the Romans

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(Tubingen, 1909), 30, frag. 8a-b. It was even forbidden to chant magic incantations (*Fontes*, 28). See also Pliny, *Natural History*, 30.12 and St. Augustine, *City of God*, 8.19 for the condemnation of magic in the Twelve Tables.

<sup>15</sup>The Emperor Caracalla (A.D. 211-17) executed anyone even thought to be a believer in magic or occult practices. Later, under laws of the "Codex Theodosianus" (Lib. 5, tit. 16, numbers 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12), countless persons were put to death for believing in or resorting to magic practices.

<sup>16</sup>Aristeeas of Proconnesus, a legendary servant of Apollo, was said to be author of an epic poem on the Arimaspeans, a fictional people of the far North. Stories about Aristeeas, reflecting special interest in Apolline religion, describe "ecstasy," the literal separation of soul from body. While apparently dead in a fuller's shop at Proconnesus, he was said to have appeared on his way to Cyzicus. See Plutarch, *Life of Romulus*, 28, and Herodotus in *The History*, 4.13-15. Cleomedes, a mythical gigantic wild man, was responsible for killing a number of schoolchildren. Fleeing from his punishers, he hid in a great chest. When it was broken open, the chest was empty (Plutarch, *Life of Romulus*, 28).

<sup>17</sup>See *The History*, 4, 94-96 for the story of Salmoxis.

<sup>18</sup>The soul of Hermetimus of Clazomenae was reported to leave his body and wander about, reporting many things from far-off places that only a first-hand observer could know (Pliny, *Natural History*, 7.174).

<sup>19</sup>The sage Apollonius of Tyana (1st century A.D.) appeared before the Emperor Domitian at Rome on charges of murder and witchcraft. After presenting his defense, he mysteriously disappeared, and soon after was seen many miles away (Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 8.10-12).

attested that Romulus was carried up into the air in sight of his whole army,<sup>20</sup> as we read in our own chronicles happened to a count of Mâcon.<sup>21</sup> And it has been established in countless trials that many witches were transported in a short time a hundred or two hundred leagues from their houses, and when they saw the assemblies of witches they called on God to help them. Immediately the assembly of evil spirits and witches vanished, and they were left alone. They returned home after long days of travelling. In short, we note the trials conducted against witches in Germany, France, Italy and Spain, through written accounts; and every day we encounter the innumerable testimonies, reconstructed stories, confrontations, convictions, and confessions which those who were executed persisted in until death. For the most part they were completely ignorant people or old women who had not read Plutarch or Herodotus, or Philostratus, or the laws of other peoples, nor spoken to witches from Germany and Italy in order to agree so completely on everything and on every point as they do. They hadn't read Saint Augustine in the fifteenth book of *The City of God*, who says that one must not doubt in any way and that one would be very impudent to try to deny that demons and evil spirits have carnal relations with women.<sup>22</sup> The Greeks for that reason call them "Ephialtes" and "Hiphialtes," the Latins, "Incubi," "Succubae" and "Sylvans." The Gauls call them "Dusios" (which is the word Saint Augustine uses) some of which are in the guise of men, others in the form of women. All witches agree that they engage in copulation, not while sleeping but awake, which shows that it is not the "oppression" which doctors speak about, who all agree that it never occurs except while sleeping. It would also be impossible that the same thing happen to Succubae as to Incubi. Indeed it is very strange that these witches testify and agree that the evil spirits which show themselves in the form of a man usually are black and taller than others, or small like dwarfs....

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<sup>20</sup>See Livy, *The History of Rome from Its Foundation*, 1.16; Plutarch, *Life of Romulus*, 27.

<sup>21</sup>Bodin indicates that his source here is Hugo Floriacensis.

<sup>22</sup>Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430) is recognized as the Father of Western theology. Bodin was especially influenced by his *City of God*, a powerful attack against the pagan religions of Greece and Rome, written between 419 and 426. See *City of God*, 15.23.

I stated at the beginning that Jeanne Harvillier had confessed that the Devil had always appeared to her in the guise of a tall black man. I shall set down a story which happened on the second day of February, 1578. Catherine Darée, the wife of a ploughman living at Coeuvres near Soissons, while being interrogated by Hunaut, Bailiff of Coeuvres, as to why she had cut off the heads of two little girls, one of whom was her own daughter, the other daughter of her neighbour, answered that the Devil, after appearing to her in the form of a tall and very black man, had incited her to do it, presenting her with her husband's pruning knife. She was tried at Compiègne and then put to death.

I will show in due course the harmony and constant agreement of similar stories of different peoples, and in different centuries connected with the actions of witches and their confessions. One must not persist against the truth when one sees the effects but does not know the cause...Even Plato, although he was a great figure and was nicknamed "divine," when he begins to talk about the actions of witches, which he had diligently researched and examined in the eleventh book of the *Laws*, states that it is a difficult thing to ascertain, and when one does it is difficult to persuade people. Many, he says, scoff when one tells them that witches make use of wax images which they place in tombs, and at crossroads, and bury beneath doorways, and by charms and spells do wondrous things.<sup>23</sup> Our witches have not been to Greece nor read Plato in order to make wax images by means of which, along with some conjurings, they kill people with Satan's help. This has been proven by countless trials, as we shall affirm: especially the trial of the witches of Alençon who did this to bring death to their enemies; and the action against Enguerrand de Marigny was chiefly based on the charmed waxen images, by means of which he was accused of having tried to kill the king...Now although Plato did not know at all the cause of such things, he still considered it true and indisputable, and in the laws of his republic he established the death penalty against witches who would cause men or beasts to die by magic. He very clearly distinguished this kind of murder from murders done without magic.<sup>24</sup> The ignorant think that it is impossible. Atheists and those who mimic the

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<sup>23</sup>Plato, *Laws*, 11.933a; see also *Laws*, 10.909b.

<sup>24</sup>Plato, *Laws*, 11.933b-c.



learned, do not want to confess what they see and thus seem ignorant since they do not know the cause. Witches laugh at it for two reasons: one is to remove the opinion that they are one of them; the other is to establish in this way the rule of Satan. The foolish and the curious want to try it out....Others have renounced God, and dedicated themselves to Satan in order to experience it. But they are like animals who enter into the lion's den and never return. Now men who fear God, and have heard the stories of witches, and contemplated the marvels of God in the whole world, and diligently have read His law and the sacred histories, do not call into doubt the things which seem incredible to human senses, judging that if many natural events are incredible, and some incomprehensible, all the more incomprehensible are the power of supernatural intelligences and the actions of spirits....

Now the secrets of witches are not so hidden that they have not been discovered throughout the world for three thousand years. First of all the law of God, which cannot lie, declared and specified them in detail, and threatened to exterminate peoples who did not punish witches.<sup>25</sup> One must stop there and not quarrel with God about things which we know nothing of. Nevertheless the Greeks and the Romans and other peoples before they heard of the law of God, also held witches and their actions in abomination and punished them with death. "In short, every sect in the world," said Saint Augustine, "has issued penalties against witches."<sup>26</sup> If one must speak to experts to learn the truth, are any more expert than witches themselves, who for three thousand years have reported their actions, their sacrifices, their dances, their nightly transports, their murders, charms, liaisons, and sorceries which they have confessed and continued to confess right up to their deaths? All those who were burned in Italy, Germany, and France agree point by point. Now if the universal assent of the law of God, of the human laws of all peoples, of judgments, convictions, confessions, reconstructed stories, collations, executions—if the universal assent of the wise is not sufficient, what greater proof would one ask for? When Aristotle wishes to show that fire is hot, "It is," he says, "because it seems so to the Indians, the Gauls, the Scythians, and

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<sup>25</sup>See above, note 12.

<sup>26</sup>Augustine, *City of God*, 8.19.

the Moors."<sup>27</sup> As for the arguments that one can make to the contrary, I hope that everyone will be satisfied by the following book. In the meantime we shall leave these master doubters, who doubt whether the sun is bright, or ice is cold, or fire is hot, and when one asks them if they really know their names, they reply that they have to think about it.

Now it is hardly less of an impiety to call into doubt the possibility of witches than to call into doubt the existence of God. He who by His law has assured the latter has also assured the former. But the greatest of all errors has arisen from the fact that the ones who have denied the powers of spirits and the actions of witches have tried to argue in physical terms about supernatural or metaphysical matters, which is a great absurdity. For each science has its own principles and foundations which are different from one another....

In order that the subject, which is in itself difficult and obscure, be better understood, I have divided the work into four parts. In the first book I have spoken about the nature of spirits, the association of spirits with men, and the divine means to learn secret things, then about the natural means to attain the same end. In the second book, in the briefest way possible, I have touched on the illicit arts and methods of witches, without giving anyone, however, the opportunity to use it for wicked gain. I only show the traps and snares which one must avoid, and assist judges who do not have the leisure to research such matters, but wish nevertheless to be instructed in order to establish a judgement. In the third book I have spoken of the legal and illicit ways to prevent or drive away spells. The fourth book treats the investigation and the manner of proceeding against witches, as well as the necessary proofs for the penalties prescribed against them.

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<sup>27</sup>Bodin seems here to be following Sprenger's use of Aristotle in the *Malleus maleficarum* (1486) to lend authority to universally held beliefs. Sprenger writes, "And that which seems true to many cannot be altogether false, according to Aristotle in his 6<sup>th</sup> *Ethics* and at the end of the *De somno et vigilia*. And now also in modern times we have the well-attested deeds and words of witches who truly and actually perform such things" (Pt. 1, Q. 3). See also Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 2.1 (993b1-30).

## *Book One*

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### Chapter 1 The Definition of a Witch

A "witch" is one who knowingly tries to accomplish something by diabolical means. I have set down this definition because it is necessary not only to understand this treatise, but also the judgments which must be rendered against witches. This is a matter which has been neglected until now by all those who have written about witches; however it is the foundation upon which this treatise shall be built. Let us examine our definition then in detail. First I used the word "knowingly," since it is true that error cannot involve any consent, as the law states, so that a sick person who in good faith uses a diabolical formula given to him by a witch whom he thought was an upright man, is not a witch, for he has just cause for ignorance. But this is not so if the witch declares it to him, or invokes evil spirits in his presence, as they sometimes do. I have only given this as an example, and it will be more fully treated below in its proper place.

But we must know what "diabolical means" are. The word "devil" means in Greek "slanderer" because he is always spying on the activities of virtuous people, as one reads in Holy Scripture, and he slanders them before God.<sup>1</sup> "Diabolical means" are the superstitions and impieties fabricated and taught by Satan to his servants to destroy the human race in perdition. For this reason the Hebrews called him "Satan," that is, "the enemy."<sup>2</sup> As Solomon says, God created man in His image to be immortal, but by the envy of Satan

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<sup>1</sup>Job 1:6-11; 2:1-6; Zech. 3:1-2; Ps. 109:6.

<sup>2</sup>Rev. 12:9.

death came into the world, and this is repeated many times in Scripture.<sup>3</sup> Thus he presupposes not only that there is an enemy of the human race, but also that he was created right at the beginning, as is affirmed in Job.<sup>4</sup> And not only Holy Scripture, but also all the Academics,<sup>5</sup> Peripatetics,<sup>6</sup> Stoics,<sup>7</sup> and Arab thinkers<sup>8</sup> agree about the existence of spirits, so that to call it into doubt (as do the atheistic Epicureans)<sup>9</sup> would be to deny the principles of all Metaphysics, and the existence of God, as Aristotle has shown, and the movement of the celestial bodies which he attributes to "Spirits" and "Intelligences," for the word "spirit" signifies angels and demons.<sup>10</sup> Now although Plato, Plutarch, Porphyry, Iamblichus and Plotinus hold that there are good and bad demons,<sup>11</sup> Christians take the word

<sup>3</sup>Wisdom of Solomon 2:23–24; see also Gen. 1:27; 2:17; 3:1–4; Rom. 5:12; Cor. 15:21.

<sup>4</sup>As one of God's heavenly court, Satan has existed since the creation of the world. See Job 1:6.

<sup>5</sup>Philosophers associated with the Platonic Academy founded by Plato at Athens about 385 B.C. A succession of Platonic or Neoplatonic Academies were established at Athens until the time of the Fourth Academy (c.380–529 A.D.). Related to this tradition was also the Alexandrian school of Neoplatonism, which flourished from 430 A.D. to the Muslim conquest of Alexandria in 642 A.D.

<sup>6</sup>The Peripatetics favoured Aristotle's scientific approach to interpreting the universe, while admitting the need for a "first cause" in the origin of the world, and spirits or "intelligences" to drive the planetary spheres.

<sup>7</sup>A philosophical school or sect founded by Zeno in about 300 B.C. and which originally met in the Stoa Poikile, a public hall in Athens. In their teachings, God is an all-pervasive energy that creates and sustains the world. God is also identified with the principle of reason, the "Logos."

<sup>8</sup>Medieval Arab philosophers and commentators were influential in Europe down to the Renaissance period. Their writings included both Aristotelian and Neoplatonic elements. The most influential were Avicenna (980–1037), Averroes (1126–98), and Algazel (1058–1111).

<sup>9</sup>This school, founded at Athens by Epicurus in 306 B.C., recognized the importance of pleasure as an integral aspect of a rationally ordered human life. They rejected the notion of an afterlife, and viewed the gods as forces of nature, or at least as uninterested in the affairs of humans.

<sup>10</sup>Aristotle speaks of a plurality of "unmoved movers" who cause the perpetual movement of the heavenly bodies in *Physics* 8.5 (258b 1–11; 259a 6–13; 259b 28–31); *Metaphysics* 12.8 (1073a 23–1073b). See St. Thomas Aquinas' treatment of this topic in *Summa contra Gentiles*, 3.23.

<sup>11</sup>Plato, *Symposium*, 202e; Plutarch, *On the Cessation of Oracles*, 417–19;

“demon” to mean evil spirits. And the resolution adopted at the Sorbonne on the nineteenth of September, 1398, even condemns as heretics those who maintain that there are good demons, in accordance with the opinion of the early doctors.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, angelic spirits are always considered good. This is an excellent resolution and a necessary one to cut off the excuses and impiety of those who call upon and invoke devils under the guise of good demons. As for the origin of demons it is an extremely difficult thing to confirm, and in fact Plato, when he speaks about it in the *Timaeus*,<sup>13</sup> says that the subject and origin of demons surpasses our understanding, and that we must stop at what the ancients had said about it. So we can follow the opinion of the ancients, who believed that God created all spirits in grace and without sin, and that some tried to rise up against Him, and they were cast down. And in this connection they tell about the fall of the Dragon who brought down with him a great number of stars, represented in the Apocalypse by the Prince of Demons and his subjects.<sup>14</sup> The ancient pagans described this in the Gigantomachy.<sup>15</sup> Even Pherecydes holds this view, calling the dragon “Ophionoeum,” chief of the rebel angels;<sup>16</sup> and Trismegistes in the *Pimander*,<sup>17</sup> the expression of

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Porphyry, *Letter to Marcella*, 21; Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries of Egypt*, 3.31; Plotinus, *The Enneads*, 3.5.6-7.

<sup>12</sup>In 1398, the prestigious Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris officially condemned many forms of witchcraft and magic, labelling them evil, impious, blasphemous and heretical.

<sup>13</sup>*Timaeus* 40e.

<sup>14</sup>Rev. 12:7-9.

<sup>15</sup>This popular Greek myth described the uprising of the ancient race of Giants against Zeus and the Olympian gods. The Giants are wild men or warriors, but later artistic representations show them as snake-legged monsters. See Hesiod, *Theogony*, 617-885.

<sup>16</sup>Pherecydes of Syros (fl. c.550 B.C.), an early Greek mythologist and cosmologist. In his work *Ἐπιτμυχοζ*, he describes the creation of the world by three primal deities: Zeus (the supreme god and the upper heaven), Chronos (the second god and lower heaven) and Chtonie (the earth goddess). Bodin's reference here reflects a Christian theological perspective.

<sup>17</sup>A second century Alexandrian whose work was included with various other syncretic writings collected in the “Hermetic Books” under the ascribed authorship of a Hermes Trismegistus, and translated into Latin by Ficino in the 1460's. See the *Pimander*, 9.3.

Empedocles, who calls the demons "fallen from heaven."<sup>18</sup> Saint Augustine is also of this view in Book 8, Chapter 22 of the *City*, an opinion which due to its antiquity and the authority of those who have held it, is accepted by Christians.

Nevertheless it seems that God created this great Satan, whom Scripture calls "Behemoth," and "Leviathan," at the beginning of the world...<sup>19</sup> And to show that he was not created in grace, we cite the passage in Isaiah, where God speaks thus: "I have made and formed Satan in order to spoil, waste, and destroy."<sup>20</sup> For this reason he is often called "Asmodeus," from the word אשמו, which means "to ruin." Again when God speaks to the Hebrew people about the vengeance which He was to take on all the first-born of men and beasts in the whole Kingdom of Egypt, He says, "I will not permit the Destroyer to enter your houses."<sup>21</sup> Orpheus also calls him the great "Demon Avenger." And since he was a master sorcerer he sings a hymn to him. People also refer to the Psalm where it is written, "This great Leviathan which Thou formed so that Thou couldst triumph over him."<sup>22</sup> Also in Exodus, "I made you, O Pharaoh, to show my power through you,"<sup>23</sup> which means (besides the literal reading) Satan, as He declares in Ezekiel, "Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh, you great Leviathan lying in the midst of your rivers, saying, 'My Nile is mine and I made it for myself,' etc. I will make you the food of the birds of the air."<sup>24</sup> Commentators agree that "Leviathan," "Pharaoh" and "Behemoth" mean this great Enemy of the human race, and that the Kingdom of Egypt represents the flesh and covetousness, and by the river was meant the torrent of fluid nature which always flows on to corruption, which is characteristic of the Destroyer, contrary to God, Creator of all things. For just as the Creator, Father and Progenitor is necessary for creation and generation, so also is the Corruptor

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<sup>18</sup>The poet-philosopher Empedocles (c. 493–c. 433 B.C.) writes that demons get punished for the bad things they do and the duties they neglect. See *Fragments*, 115.

<sup>19</sup>Job 40:15–24; 41:1–34.

<sup>20</sup>Is. 54:16.

<sup>21</sup>Ex. 12:23.

<sup>22</sup>Ps. 74:13–14; cf. also 89:9–10.

<sup>23</sup>Ex. 14:18.

<sup>24</sup>Ezek. 29:3.

necessary to the successive corruption in this elemental world. As well in the thirtieth chapter of the Proverbs of Solomon it is declared that, "the ravens of the Torrent peck out the eyes of one who mocks his father and scorns the teaching of his mother."<sup>25</sup> Here he means the devils of this elemental torrent, who often appear black like ravens, and who extinguish the light of reason of those who scorn the law of nature and mock God. The Hebrews believe moreover, that Satan will perish, and they point to Ezekiel, Chapter 21,<sup>26</sup> and Isaiah, where it is written that God one day will slay this great Leviathan, this great twisting serpent which is in the sea.<sup>27</sup> By the sea he means the fluid and elemental matter which Plato and Aristotle, searching for the origin of evil, said was the cause of all ills,<sup>28</sup> and which Solomon in his allegories and parables calls "woman," when he said that there is no malice which approaches the malice of woman.<sup>29</sup> Sometimes he calls her "wanton," receiving all men as matter does all forms, as Rabbi Maimonides has interpreted it.<sup>30</sup> They also say that men who have dedicated themselves wholly to the service of God in this world will be like Angels of God. "Erunt," declares the Scripture, "sicut Angeli Dei,"<sup>31</sup> and that in the same way men who have renounced God, and dedicated themselves to the service of Satan, in addition to the torments that

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<sup>25</sup>Prov. 30:17.

<sup>26</sup>Ezek. 21 contains the "Oracles on the sword," one of four conventional instruments of God's judgment.

<sup>27</sup>Is. 27:1.

<sup>28</sup>Bodin is referring to Plato's discussion of the "universal nature which receives all bodies" in *Tymaeus*, 50a-e and possibly to Aristotle's remark that the seas produce the lower forms of mortal creature, in *On the Universe*, 393a 1-9. Plutarch also alludes to the discussion which arises from the *Tymaeus* of whether the elements are the origin of evil, or the energy that moves the elements. See *On the Generation of the Soul in the Tymaeus*, 1015E.

<sup>29</sup>Prov. 2:16-17; 5:3-6; see also Prov. 7; 9:13-18; 23:27-28; 30:20.

<sup>30</sup>Moses Maimonides (c. 1135-1204) was the leading Jewish scholar of the Middle Ages. His best known work was the *Guide for the Perplexed*. It and several other of his works were published in the sixteenth century. On the passage by Solomon he writes, "The author compares the body, which is the source of all sensual pleasures, to a married woman who at the same time is a harlot. And this figure he has taken as the basis of his entire book." See M. Friedlander, "Introduction," in *The Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Dover, 1956), 7.

<sup>31</sup>"They will be...like angels of God." An inexact reference to Mark 13:27.

they will suffer, will serve again as devils and executioners of God's justice, and will die in the end, whereas Angels and God's elect will have eternal life.

...Now Saint Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and many Hebrew and Latin theologians maintained that the copulation of demons with women (which they say is specified in Holy Scripture,<sup>32</sup> and which witches have always confessed) originates with diabolical men, whom the Hebrews call "Rochoth," and whom they affirm are devils in human form. In the same way male and female witches who dedicate their children to Satan as soon as they are born, and who carry on the despicable life of their fathers and mothers, are of a diabolical nature. For that reason God, holding this impiety in extreme abomination, set a terrible curse on those who offer their seed to Molech, threatening to tear them from the earth,<sup>33</sup> as he did the Canaanites who acted thus, about whom Solomon says their seed was "cursed by God."<sup>34</sup> Often they even sacrificed their children to the Devil, burning them alive,<sup>35</sup> or massacring them like the sorceress Medea did to take revenge on the daughter of Creon, king of Corinth, who had wedded Jason her lover.<sup>36</sup>

Whether then demons have fallen from the original grace in which they were created and they are immortal, as we maintain, or they are multiplied by the propagation which the Hebrews describe,<sup>37</sup> and God made and formed Satan evil in order to destroy and ruin, so that the succeeding generation in corruption be continued in this elemental world, it must not, however, enter the

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<sup>32</sup>Gen. 6:1-4 gave rise to much speculation amongst theological writers about the possibility of demons or devils coupling with women (and men) and producing offspring. While it was generally argued that such encounters do occur, and are natural with witches, the semen from another person is used to produce offspring. See Augustine, *City of God*, 15.23; *On the Trinity*, 3.8-9; Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Pt. 1, Q. 114, Art. 4; and especially the *Malleus maleficarum*, Pt. 1, Q. 3 and Q. 6; Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 4.

<sup>33</sup>Lev. 20:1-5.

<sup>34</sup>Wis. 12:11.

<sup>35</sup>Lev. 18:21; Deut. 12:31; 18:9-12; 2 Kings 23:10; Ps. 106:36-38; Jer. 32:35.

<sup>36</sup>The version of the Medea story in which the sorceress murders two of her own children is presented in Seneca's tragedy *Medea*, Act V, which follows the treatment in Euripides' *Medea*.

<sup>37</sup>Gen. 6:1-4; cf. also Jude 6.



minds of men that there is iniquity in God.<sup>38</sup> Thus Manes the Persian, head of the Manicheans, to avoid the absurdity that evil came from God, laid down two principles equal in power and origin: one the principle of good, the other of evil.<sup>39</sup> This is the most detestable heresy ever to appear, and one from which Saint Augustine departed,<sup>40</sup> maintaining that evil is only the absence of good.<sup>41</sup> However this did not satisfy those who hold that vices are habits, as are virtues, and that the former as well as the latter are acquired by actions and predispositions.<sup>42</sup>

But all the arguments of the Manicheans are severed at the root, if one considers that there is nothing in this world which is not good, as Dionysius writes in his book *De divinis nominibus*.<sup>43</sup> Nothing is done which is not good in itself, or in relation to other actions, as the "Master of the Sentences" has stated very well.<sup>44</sup> Thus God made plants which are poisonous for some and medicinal to

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<sup>38</sup>Concerning the fall of Satan with the bad angels, and the perfect goodness of God, Bodin adheres to Augustine's argument in the *City of God*, 11.10–17. Also, in spite of his misfortunes, "Job did not sin or charge God with wrong-doing" (Job 1:22).

<sup>39</sup>Manes (or Mani) of Persia (c. A.D. 216–77), after studying with a Gnostic sect in Babylonia, founded the Manichean movement which taught a radical dualism in the universe, with two ultimate realities of Good and Evil (Light and Darkness). Its influence spread through the Mediterranean world, making it one of the most dangerous adversaries of Christian Orthodoxy.

<sup>40</sup>Augustine was a follower of the Manichees for about nine years before his conversion to Christianity. He attacks the "heresy of the Manichees" in the *City of God*, 11.13, 22.

<sup>41</sup>The *City of God*, 11.9, 22; and *Enchiridion*, 11; Plotinus also writes in *Enneads*, 3.2, 5, "Evil is to be defined as the lack of good."

<sup>42</sup>On the role of habits and predispositions in the formation of vices or virtues, see Plato, *Republic*, 7.518e; 10.619c; *Laws*, 7.792e; *Phaedo*, 82b; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 7.4–5; *Eudemian Ethics*, 2.2; 5.1222b 5–14. Among Christian theologians, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1–2, Q. 49–55.

<sup>43</sup>Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite wrote Christian Neoplatonic treatises around the period A.D. 500. His work *On the Divine Names* was an important contribution to the development of Christian mystical literature. See *On the Divine Names*, Ch. 4.

<sup>44</sup>Peter Lombard (c. 1100–60) composed the *Sententiae (Sentences)* in four books which became the standard textbook of Christian theology for much of the Middle Ages. Most of its doctrinal compilations are based on the writings of St. Augustine.

others. Even snakes and vipers which the Manicheans said were creatures of the Devil, serve to make up the most excellent medicine which for this reason is called "triacle," and sometimes cures leprosy and incurable diseases.<sup>45</sup> So it is said of actions evil in themselves, but good in relation to others, so that the robber who kills the traveller to get his booty has committed a cruel and capital act in itself, yet does not know that he has, perhaps, killed a parricide, or that he has taken from the calamities of this world one whom God loved, as Solomon says in the Book of Wisdom, and that God has used him.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless because of this act the robber is hunted down, found, and punished by the inevitable judgment of God. And in closing he gives praise to God. Also although Pharaoh ordered the male Hebrew children to be put to death as soon as they were born, it is stated in Holy Scripture, that God had "hardened him" and made him rebellious against Him, so that the power of God, which was in no way hidden and concealed, be made clear and published throughout the land.<sup>47</sup> This is why Solomon says that the wicked man is very often raised up and sustained, only to serve the glory of God on the day of vengeance.<sup>48</sup> For whatever is done in this world, in the end it all contributes and works to the glory of God. Thus one recognises chiefly the justice and wisdom of incomprehensible God, who can draw forth His praise from the most hateful of men, and who causes the cruelties of the wicked to work to His glory as He carries out His vengeance.

Must one then do evil for good to result? Saint Paul takes up this argument in the Epistle to the Romans on this very topic.<sup>49</sup> Then he responds that those people who speak this way are worthy of damnation, and he concludes his discourse with an exclamation on the wondrous wisdom of God, "O altitudo divitiarum sapientiae, et scientiae Dei! quàm incomprehensibilia sunt, iudicia eius!"<sup>50</sup>

In Paris not long ago, a gentleman was convicted by unchallenged false witnesses of having killed someone whom he had

<sup>45</sup>See *City of God*, 11.22.

<sup>46</sup>Wis. 4:10-11, 14, 17.

<sup>47</sup>Ex. 3:19; 4:21; 7:3,13; 8:15; 9:12, 35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4.

<sup>48</sup>Wis. 3:10; 4:16-20; 6:1-11.

<sup>49</sup>Rom. 3:7-8; 6:1-2, 15.

<sup>50</sup>"O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments..." Rom. 11:33.

never seen. Finding himself condemned by judgment of the court and about to be executed, he confessed that he had poisoned his father. The case is well known to many. I could give a countless number of examples, that everyone may know, but it will be enough to have briefly touched on the subject to show that one must not impute to God that He is unjust to have created Satan in order to destroy, or to have allowed the angels to fall, any more than to blame sewers, cesspools, and other receptacles of filth, which are necessary in the most beautiful palace in the world.

This is why in Scripture after the creation of this world, admirable in beauty, grandeur, and perfection, it is written that God saw that everything He had made was beautiful and wondrously good.<sup>51</sup> For the cesspool of the universe is this little particle of the material world, which Proclus the Academic does not deign to call a "particle of the world," but an "appendix," or "apotelesme";<sup>52</sup> for the sea, and the land, in respect to heaven, are only an imperceptible point, as Ptolemy has well demonstrated.<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless in this cesspool, where the filth and the evil of this universe is collected, there are beautiful and marvellous works of God, Now just as God, who by His nature is only good, cannot fail nor do anything which by nature is not good, also devils if they are by nature evil, cannot do anything which is good in itself. If they are not evil by nature, they may do good, just as angels can fall and commit offences....<sup>54</sup>

As for evil spirits they also serve the glory of God, as executors and executioners of His high justice, and so do nothing except by just permission from God.<sup>55</sup> For since evil spirits never do good, except by accident, or in order that a greater evil might come of it, when for example they cure a sick person to attract him to their

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<sup>51</sup>Gen. 1:31.

<sup>52</sup>In his *Elements of Theology*, the Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus (A.D. 410–85) emphasizes the finiteness of the world as part of the "manifold," and its separation from the unity of the One, the single first cause.

<sup>53</sup>Ptolemy of Alexandria wrote between A.D. 121 and 151. His *Almagest* was the culmination of Greek astronomy and the most influential mathematical treatise on the geocentric conception of the universe, according to which the celestial bodies revolve about the immovable globe of the earth. See *Almagest* 1.6, "That the Earth Has the Ratio of a Point to the Heavens."

<sup>54</sup>See Job 4:18;15:15;*City of God*, 12.1.

<sup>55</sup>See Job, Ch. 1, 2.

devotion, it is then entirely certain that God would never permit any evil to be done unless it was to result in a greater good, as Saint Augustine has well stated.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>*City of God*, 11.17. The notion that the Devil worked his evil in the world with God's permission is a theme that runs through the demonological literature of the era. The authors of the *Malleus maleficarum* devoted two sections to this complex theological issue (Pt. 1, Q. 12, 13). They argue that, while God does not desire that man sin, it would be heretical to maintain that God does not permit sin to exist.

## Chapter 2

### On the Association of Spirits with Men<sup>57</sup>

Partnership and alliance can exist only between similar things, or things which have some similarity or harmony between them. Just as honey bees group together on account of their similarity, and to profit from mutual association, so do ants and other social animals. But between wolves and sheep, between whom God has placed an antipathy, and an irreconcilable and deep enmity, as well as between extremely evil men and righteous men, there can be no lasting partnership, any more than between angels and demons. But there are some men who are neither good nor evil, and accommodate themselves either to one or the other, so that we can say that the intellectual soul of man is midway between the angels and the demons. For we see that this great God of nature has linked all things by means which are in accord with the extremities and has composed the harmony of the intelligible, celestial and elemental world by indissoluble means and connections. And just as harmony would perish, if contrasting voices were not joined by intermediate voices, so it is with the world and its parts. In the sky the opposing signs are joined by a sign which agrees both with one and the other. Between rock and earth we find clay and chalk. Between earth and metals, marcasites and other minerals. Between stones and plants are the species of coral, which are petrified plants producing roots, branches and fruits. Between plants and animals are the Zoophytes, or plant-animals which have feeling and movement and draw their sustenance through their roots attached to rocks. Between terrestrial and aquatic animals are the amphibians, like the beavers, otters, tortoises, and mud crabs. Between aquatic life and birds there are flying fish. Between the other beasts and men are the apes, and between all the dumb animals and spiritual nature (which are the

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<sup>57</sup>This section reflects widely held Renaissance mystical views on the nature of the universe, founded on ancient occult philosophies, that imagined the universe to be constructed of concentric spheres that were connected by divine harmonies. The understanding of these harmonics was considered an important aspect of knowledge in the Renaissance. Astrology, in which the positions of the planets were thought to influence human personalities and events, is a good example of this approach. The manipulation of the harmonies of the universe through forbidden knowledge was one of Bodin's primary concerns.

angels and demons) God has placed man, part of whom is mortal, the body, and part immortal, the intellect.

Now the saints, who scorn the mortal and earthly part in order to unite their intellectual soul with the angels, are the link of the spiritual world with the lower world. This was done in the beginning when Adam was created in a state of grace, having nevertheless the free will to be good or bad.<sup>58</sup> That is why the Hebrews say that God created man last, summoning the angels there, as Philo Judaeus says, to show that he derived from spiritual nature, as well as to join the upper world with the lower world.<sup>59</sup> But as for the other animals, it is written that He commanded the waters to bring forth the birds and the fishes, and the land to produce the other beasts<sup>60</sup>—but not man who was to be the link of the spiritual world with the visible, which has continued between the angels and the saints through prayer and through whom the human race is saved....<sup>61</sup> That is why the Hebrews call the angels “teachers of men,”<sup>62</sup> as men are shepherds of the animals.<sup>63</sup> Plato having learned this from the Hebrews, said that one does not give the care of goats to goats, nor of beasts to beasts, rather to men, and the care of men to angels....<sup>64</sup>

Therefore since angels are good and devils wicked, also men have free choice to be good, or wicked, as God says in His Law. “I have,” He states, “put before your eyes good and evil, life and death, choose then the good, and you will live.”<sup>65</sup> And even more clearly elsewhere it is written, God having created man, left him his free

<sup>58</sup>Gen. 2:16–17; Dt. 30:15, 19.

<sup>59</sup>Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (30 B.C.–A.D. 50) was a Hellenistic Jewish thinker who undertook to reconcile Greek philosophy and Biblical religion. Bodin was greatly influenced by Philo’s theology as well as by his allegorical approach to Scriptural interpretation. Philo emphasized the existence of an hierarchy of intermediaries (e.g. angels) between God and man. See *On the Creation of the World*, 77–78.

<sup>60</sup>Gen. 1:20–25.

<sup>61</sup>Gen. 1:26–27; see also Ps. 8:5.

<sup>62</sup>See Ps. 91:11; Zech. 1:9; Lu. 1:19.

<sup>63</sup>Ps. 8:6–7; Gen. 13:5; 26:14; 46:34.

<sup>64</sup>See *Pbaedo*, 62b, 107e, 108b, 113d; *Symposium*, 188d; *Laws*, 5.727a; 10.899d, 920d–e.

<sup>65</sup>Dt. 30:15.

will, and said to him, "If you wish you will keep my commandments, and they will keep you. I have given you fire and water, you have power to put your hand in one or the other. You have good and evil, life and death, and you will have whichever one you like."<sup>66</sup>

And to show that after Adam's sin, man did not lose free will, the principle is incorporated into the law of God, and it was even said to Cain that he had power to do good or evil.<sup>67</sup> Concerning this Moses Maimonides comments, that all the Hebrews agree that man has free will, and that that is not in doubt, for which, he says, "God be praised."<sup>68</sup> Those are his words. Thus the judgment of the theologians remains valid, that all spirits are good or evil, and separated one from the other, which theologians say is meant by the words that, "God divided the waters from the waters," and that men are the "mean" between the two.<sup>69</sup> For some associate with angels, and others with demons; and one also finds men who care neither for one nor the other. Now friendship and partnership, either with angels or with demons, begins with tacit or express agreements. We shall make use of those words which Saint Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and other theologians used. There are many men who are never given to contemplate intellectual things, and never raise their mind higher than their mouth, living like pigs and dumb beasts, of whom Scripture says, "They are no longer men, but resemble beasts, whose soul dies, together with the body."<sup>70</sup> And as for them it seems that they cannot have communication with spirits, either good or evil, on account of the exceedingly great difference which separates those pigs from spirits, which by their nature are incorporeal and spiritual essences. But in one who gives himself over and turns his thoughts to every evil and wickedness, his soul degenerates then into a diabolical nature, as Iamblichus said, first of all by tacit actions, as we shall show below, then by express agreements.<sup>71</sup> And on the contrary, if a man dedicates

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<sup>66</sup>Sir. 15:15–17.

<sup>67</sup>Gen. 4:6–7.

<sup>68</sup>Concerning human free will in Maimonides' thought, see especially *Other Writings*, ch. 8; *Mishneh Torah* 1.5; and *Guide for the Perplexed*, 2.48.

<sup>69</sup>Gen. 1:6–8.

<sup>70</sup>See 2 Pet. 2:12.

<sup>71</sup>In his influential treatise *On the Egyptian Mysteries*, the Neoplatonist Iamblichus (c. A.D. 250–330) warns of wicked theurgists who invoke demons to serve their ends (3.31).

himself to goodness, and elevates his soul to God, to goodness, to virtue, after his soul has been purified with a divine grace, if he practises the moral virtues, and then the intellectual virtues, it may transpire that he has such communion with the Angel of God that he will not only be guarded by him, but he will feel his presence, and will know the things that he commands and that he forbids him to do. But that happens to few men, and by a grace and special kindness of God...

That occurred very often among the Hebrews, as we find in Scripture which is replete with a thousand examples, when God through His angels ministered to righteous men and spoke through His angels intelligibly to them; to others He spoke by sign without words.<sup>72</sup> Now between those who are in contact with good spirits, there are various degrees. For to some God gave such an excellent angel, that their prophecies and predictions were always certain and infallible, as was said of Moses, Elijah, Samuel, and Elishah.<sup>73</sup> The others were not always infallible, either because some minds are less perfect than others, or because the matter was not so clear. Just as the sun does not shine so clearly through earth as it does in water, nor in troubled water as well as still, so it is with the passions of the troubled soul, or one which is not still and tranquil: it cannot so well receive intellectual clarity.

I said that it is a singular gift of God when He sends His good spirit to the one whom He loves, in order to be heard by him, and guided in all his actions. For it may be that the man is virtuous and God-fearing, and prays to Him diligently, nevertheless God, perhaps, will not grant him His spirit, but indeed will grant him as much wisdom and prudence as he needs....Or if He sends His good angel to guard him, as theologians believe, and as it is stated in Scripture concerning one who is in the charge of God Almighty, who has given commandment to His worthy angels carefully to guard him, wherever he walks....<sup>74</sup>

But he to whom God grants the special grace of tangibly recognizing the presence of His angel and of communicating intelligibly with him, may call himself more fortunate than others; and indeed blessed, if he has the gift of prophecy, which is the

<sup>72</sup>See e.g. 2 Ki. 1:15; Ze. 1:9; Lu. 1:19; Ac. 5:19-20, 8:26; Ps. 91:11.

<sup>73</sup>See Ex. 23:22-23; Nu. 20:16; 1 Ki. 19:5; 2 Ki. 1:15; 1 Sam. 3; 2 Ki. 9-15.

<sup>74</sup>Ps. 91:11-16; see also Gen. 24:7, 40; 32:1.



highest seat of honour to which man can be raised. So one finds that there have always been very few....<sup>75</sup>

The whole of Scripture is filled with such communication between angel and elect. I well know that the Epicureans and Atheists consider it a fable, so I have not argued to make them see the light.<sup>76</sup> However, all kinds of philosophers consider it beyond doubt. Plutarch, in the book he wrote on Socrates' demon, holds as a certainty the association of spirits with men, and affirms that Socrates, who was considered the most righteous man in Greece, often remarked to his friends that he constantly felt the presence of a spirit who would always deter him from evil and from danger....<sup>77</sup> But I can assure you that I have heard from a person, who still lives, that there was a spirit who was constantly near him, and he began to be familiar with him when he was about thirty-seven years old, although the person told me that he thought that his whole life the spirit had accompanied him, telling him by previous dreams and visions which he had had, to keep from vices and improper things.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless he had never noticed him in a perceptible way, as he did after he was thirty-seven years of age. This happened to him, as he said, having for one year before continued to pray to God with all his heart morning and evening, until it should please Him to send His good angel to guide him in all his actions. Both after and before prayer he gave some time to contemplating the works of God, remaining sometimes two or three hours sitting alone, meditating, contemplating, searching in his heart and reading the Bible to find which of all the religions debated on every side was the true one, and he often repeated these lines:

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<sup>75</sup>On the gift of prophecy see 1 Cor. 14.

<sup>76</sup>Bodin and many other writers were concerned that sceptics cast doubt on belief in the existence of angels and demons. The defenders of angels and demons equated scepticism with disbelief in God, that is, atheism. This was a serious offense, punishable by death.

<sup>77</sup>Plutarch, *On the Sign of Socrates (De genio Socratis)*, 580Cff. For Socrates' "daimonion," see also Plato, *Apology of Socrates*, 39C1-40C3, Xenophon, *Apology*, 12, and Apuleius, *On Socrates' Genius (De genio Socratis)*, 154.

<sup>78</sup>P.L. Rose argues that Bodin is speaking of himself in this anecdote about a familiar spirit. See P.L. Rose, *Jean Bodin and the Great God of Nature* (Geneva: Droz, 1980), 164.

Teach me to do Thy will,  
 for Thou art my God!  
 Let Thy good spirit lead me  
 on a level path!<sup>79</sup>

Censuring those who pray to God to support them in their opinion, and continuing this prayer and reading the Scriptures, he found in Philo Judaeus, in the *Book of Sacrifices*, that the greatest and most pleasing sacrifice that the man of righteousness and integrity can make to God, is of himself, after being purified by Him.<sup>80</sup> He followed this advice, offering his soul to God. Later he began, as he told me, to have dreams and visions full of instruction, sometimes to correct one vice, sometimes another, sometimes to keep away from a danger, sometimes to be freed from a difficulty, then another dream not only of things divine, but human as well. And among other things he seemed to have heard the voice of God while he slept, who said to him, "I will save your soul. It is I who have appeared to you before your eyes."

Afterwards every morning at three or four in the morning the spirit knocked at his door, and he got up, sometimes opening the door, and he saw no one. Every morning the spirit continued to do it, and if he did not get up, it knocked again, and roused him till he got up. Then he began to be afraid, thinking that it was some evil spirit, he said. For that reason he carried on praying to God, without missing a single day, that God would send him His good angel, and he often sang the Psalms which he knew almost by heart. And then the spirit made itself known while he was awake, by knocking softly. The first day when he perceptibly heard several knocks on a glass jar, he was greatly astonished. Two days later while he had at his home a friend of his, the King's Secretary, who is still living, and who during dinner heard the spirit knocking this way on a stool to make contact, he began to turn red and be frightened, but he said to him not to be afraid, it was nothing. Anyway, to reassure him he told him the truth of the matter.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Ps. 143:10.

<sup>80</sup>Philo, *On Those Who Offer Sacrifice*, 3.

<sup>81</sup>Bodin omits the incident with the King's Secretary from the 1587 edition of the text.

Now he assured me that since then, it always accompanied him, giving him a perceptible sign, such as touching him now on the right ear, if he was doing something that was not good; and on the left if he was doing good. And if someone came to visit him and to surprise him, suddenly he felt the signal on the right ear; if it was some good man, who came for his benefit, he also felt the signal on the left ear. When he wanted to drink or eat something bad, he felt the signal. Also if he was unsure whether to do or undertake something, the same signal came to him. If he was thinking something evil, so that he would stop doing it, he immediately felt the signal to desist from doing it. Sometimes when he began to praise God with some Psalm, or to speak of His marvels, he felt himself seized by some spiritual force which gave him courage. And in order that he discern the inspired dream from among the other reveries which occur when one is indisposed, or when one is troubled at heart, he was awakened by the spirit around two or three o'clock in the morning, and a short while after he fell asleep. Then he had the real dreams about what he was to do, or believe, concerning doubts that he had, or what was to happen to him. So he says that since that time hardly anything has happened to him for which he did not have some forewarning, nor doubt about things one ought to believe, which was not resolved for him....

But if in company he happened to say some bad word, or go for a few days without praying to God, he was immediately informed in his sleep. If he was reading a book which was not good, the spirit knocked on the book to make him close it. He was immediately deterred if he did something bad for his health, and he was carefully attended in illness. In short, he told me so much about it that it would be an infinite task to try to recount it all. But especially he was told to rise early in the morning, normally around four o'clock, and he says that he heard a voice in his sleep which said, "Who is the one who will be first to arise to pray?" Also he says that he was often told to give alms, and the more alms he gave, the more he felt his affairs were prospering.

And when his enemies had resolved to kill him after learning that he was to travel by water, he had a vision in a dream that his father was bringing him two horses, one red the other white. Because of this he sent for two horses to be rented, and his servant brought him two horses, one red the other white without his having told him what colour he wanted them. I asked him why he did not speak openly to the spirit. He answered that once he beseeched it to speak

to him, but that right away the spirit knocked very hard at his door, as with a hammer, making him understand that it was not pleased. Often it deterred him from stopping to read or write to rest his mind and to meditate alone, and he often heard while awake an extremely subtle and unarticulated voice. I asked him if he had ever seen the spirit in a shape. He told me that he had never seen anything while awake, except some kind of light like a round disc, very bright.<sup>82</sup> But one day when in great danger for his life, having prayed God with all his heart that it might please Him to save him, half-awake, at the break of day he said that he saw on the bed where he lay, a young child dressed in a white robe turning purple in colour, with a face of marvellous beauty. All this he strongly affirmed.

Another time also while in extreme danger, though he wanted to go to bed, the spirit prevented him from doing so, and did not stop until he had got up. Then he prayed to God the whole night without sleeping. The following day God saved him from the hand of murderers in a strange and incredible way. After having escaped the danger, he said that he heard in his sleep a voice which stated, "It must indeed be said, 'He who is in the protection of Almighty God never takes to his bed.'" And to make the story short, for all the difficulties, voyages, and undertakings that he was to do, he asked for God's guidance. Now since he prayed God to grant him His blessing, one night he had a vision in his sleep, he said, where he saw his father giving his blessing.

I certainly wanted to recount what I learned from this person to show that association with evil spirits ought not to seem strange, if angels and good spirits have such partnership and understanding with men.

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<sup>82</sup>"...some kind of light like a round disc, very bright like sunlight, and red like fire at night..." (1587).

## Chapter 3

### The Difference between Good and Evil Spirits

We said that a witch is one who tries to accomplish something by diabolical means. Then we spoke about the association of spirits with men. One must therefore learn the difference between them in order to tell the children of God from witches. This is very necessary to lift the veil of piety, of religion, and the mask of light which the Devil quite often puts on to deceive men. The ancient Greeks and Romans noted that there were good and evil spirits, which the ignorant cannot, and the Atheists will not believe; and the witches who put on a good face in order to allay the suspicion people would have of them, on the surface make fun of this, but really they understand it only too well.

We have plenty of examples that the Devil tries to mimic the works of God, as we read of the magicians of Pharaoh.<sup>83</sup> Thus we read that evil spirits tricked people in ancient times, as they still do now, in two ways: one openly with formal pacts in which it was usually only the greatest simpletons and women who were snared. The other way was to deceive virtuous but very foolish men by idolatry and under a veil of religion, so that Satan, in order to get people to worship him and to turn men away from the worship of a true God, would only deliver his oracles and responses through those women who were virgins and who fasted, and prayed to Apollo and other such gods.<sup>84</sup> The Devil was able to maintain this so successfully that in the Western Islands it was found before the Spaniards took possession there, that their priests made great fasts, prayers and processions, bearing their idols as standards and singing in their honour. Then later they were seized by evil spirits and recounted marvels, as we read in the histories of the West Indies.<sup>85</sup> Generally the priests did not marry, except those who

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<sup>83</sup>Ex. 7:8-12, 20-22; 8:6-7, 17-18; 9:10-11.

<sup>84</sup>The most famous priestess and prophetess was the Pythia at Delphi, who delivered the prophecies of Apollo in a state of frenzy. See Plutarch, *On the Oracles at Delphi*, 405C and *The Obsolescence of Oracles*, 438A-D. Plato testifies to the prophetic "madness" of the priestesses of Delphi and Dodona in *Phaedrus*, 244a. See also Iamblichus on the prophetesses at Delphi and at Didyma near Miletos, *On the Mysteries of Egypt*, 3.11.

<sup>85</sup>By Bodin's time, many accounts of Columbus' discoveries and the Spanish

heard confessions and prescribed penitence, and did not dare to reveal the confessions under pain of severe punishment. And they fasted often, especially when people wanted to harvest or make war, or speak to their god, that is, to the Devil. And to be more greatly inspired they shut their eyes, while others blinded themselves by sacrificing men, and all sorts of animals to their idols. There were also many monasteries of girls carefully guarded by castrated men with their noses and lips cut off, with the death penalty awaiting any girl who would soil her honour—as was done in Rome with the Vestals. Those who wished to be priests withdrew with the priests, dressed in white, to the forests where they spent four or five years, then they took up that office. And the greatest god which they worshiped was the Sun, which they called “Guaca,” and “Paniacana” son of the Sun and the Moon. This whole account, just as it is written here, was repeated before the king of Spain in the Council of the Indies.

Now it is quite well known that the Amorites and other peoples whom God exterminated practised sorcery, sacrificing men to devils, to whom they spoke, and whom they worshiped, chiefly the Sun, calling him especially, “Baal,” which means in Hebrew, “Lord.”<sup>86</sup> From this came “Baalzebub,” which means “Lord of the flies,”<sup>87</sup> because there was not one fly in his temple, as they say that in the palace of Venice there is not a single fly...And even more strange, one finds that the people of the New World held the same belief as the Amorites and the Greeks and Latins about the Sun or Apollo, that he was the god of prophecies. This shows indeed that the Devil had taught all those people that fine science...One must not be amazed then if the peoples of the West were bewitched by Satan beneath the veil of prayers, fastings, sacrifices, processions and prophecies, since the peoples of Palestine, Greece and Italy produced no other nor greater religion. And if one says that the wisest men did not believe in it at all, I find that the greatest philosophers held it to be something

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conquest of the new world had been published. The works of authors like Las Casas, Benzoni, Lery and Thevet were all available in French before 1580.

<sup>86</sup>Dt. 12:31; 18:10-12; 2 Ki. 16:3; 17:15-17; Ps. 106:34-39; 2 Chr. 28:1-4; Judg. 2:11, 13.

<sup>87</sup>See Author's Preface, note 2.

divine and absolutely true. And who was ever, among the philosophers, more divine than Plato?<sup>88</sup>

Nevertheless when the oracle of Apollo answered the Athenians that the plague would not end until his altar which was square on all sides was doubled, Plato the greatest geometer then alive, having found the way to double it in size and mass, said to the Athenians that God had asked them the most difficult question in all Geometry, and which in fact has never been demonstrated yet, in order to turn them from avarice, ambition, and dishonest pleasures, and draw them to the contemplation of intellectual things, and the admirable works of God.<sup>89</sup> The Devil seeing the great plague took that opportunity and profited from it, which greatly strengthened the people's belief concerning the divinity of the oracle....<sup>90</sup>

Now we see how much God hated all these impieties, and especially He forbade the adoration of graven images.<sup>91</sup> The Chaldean translator rendered it "the stone of adoration," which many have interpreted "a statue" without distinctions.

Also Iamblichus writes that the soul is sometimes so completely transported from a man by the divinity, that the body remains insensate, and does not feel either blows or pricks.<sup>92</sup> Sometimes both the body and the soul are transported, and this ecstasy is common with witches who have a formal pact with the Devil. They are sometimes transported in spirit, with the body remaining insensate; and sometimes in body and soul when they go to night assemblies, which has been verified by innumerable trials as shall be discussed below. However, Iamblichus having noticed that evil spirits came instead of good ones, says that "Thurgia," or unworthy sacrifices, displeased the gods and that consequently evil spirits instead of the gods came to men....<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>In *Phaedrus*, Socrates, who is Plato's chief spokesman in most of the dialogues, speaks of the "madness" of the Sibyl and other prophets, and approves of the fact that men of old "held madness to be a valuable gift, when due to divine dispensation" (244b-d).

<sup>89</sup>"For as soon as Plato had doubled the altar on all sides the plague stopped" (1587).

<sup>90</sup>On Plato and the problem of the doubling of the size of the altar at Delos, see Plutarch, *The E at Delphi*, 386E-F, and *Moralia*, 579B-D.

<sup>91</sup>Ex. 20:4; Lev. 26:1; Dt. 5:8.

<sup>92</sup>*On the Mysteries of Egypt*, 3.4.

<sup>93</sup>*On the Mysteries of Egypt*, 3.31.

...But in order to show that the greatest minds, and the saintliest persons are very often deceived, and that the most powerful witchcraft takes on a fine veil of piety, it will be shown below that the invocation of devils (which the most despicable witches do now) is full of prayers, fastings, crosses and consecrated hosts which witches use in this. Not long ago there was a witch at Blois, who in order to cure a woman who was under a spell and languishing in bed, said Holy Mass at midnight in the Church of Notre Dame des Aides, and then stretched herself out on top of the sick woman, muttering some words, then she was cured. Hence it is evident that Satan had taught her that ceremony, which was just as the prophet Elijah did when he revived the son of the Sunamite widow through the power of God.<sup>94</sup> But two months later the woman whom the witch had cured fell ill again and died. When questioned about this, the witch said that she had talked too much, as I learned from Hardouin, keeper of the Lion tavern in Blois. For she had said that the witch who had cast a spell on her had given the spell to someone else, which is a customary thing with all witches who mimic physicians, as we shall explain later on.

The Protector of Witches, after tracing the circles and despicable symbols (which I shall not set down) for finding treasures,<sup>95</sup> writes that one must while digging in the ground say the Psalms: "De profundis," "Deus misereatur nostri, etc.," "Pater noster," "Ave Maria, etc., a porta inferi," "Credo videre bona Domini, etc.," "Requiem aeternam etc."<sup>96</sup> and read the Mass. And to accomplish something else which I will not say, they write on four sheets of virgin parchment, "Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum,"<sup>97</sup> and hang them on all four walls of the house. To do other wickednesses which

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<sup>94</sup> 1 Ki. 17:7-24.

<sup>95</sup> The epithet "Protector of Witches" is applied to Johann Weyer, author of *De praestigiis daemonum* (1563). The passage referred to is in Bk. 5, Ch. 11. Much of Book Five of the *De praestigiis* is taken up with magical signs and invocations. What offended Bodin was that, while Weyer claimed to mock and condemn superstitious conjuring, he described many occult spells and symbols in very specific detail.

<sup>96</sup> "From the depths," "May God have pity on us, etc.," "Our father," "Hail Mary, etc.," "from the gate of hell," "I believe I see the blessings of the Lord, etc.," "Eternal rest, etc."

<sup>97</sup> "Let every spirit praise the Lord."



I will not write, they recite the one hundred and eighth psalm. Moreover, in the year 1568 the Italians and Spaniards going to the Low Countries, carried notes full of spells, which they had been given in order to be safe from all evils.<sup>98</sup> Similarly some Germans wear the "shirt of necessity" made in a detestable fashion which it is not necessary to describe, and many crosses everywhere. In such a case, the Master Sorcerer (who does not deserve to be named) for the invocation of evil spirits wants one to fast first, and then celebrate Holy Mass.<sup>99</sup> It is not then an easy matter to discover witches, nor to distinguish them from respectable people, and much less now than formerly, although all peoples, and all sects of philosophers have condemned witches....

...Thus to say that the sign of good or evil spirits must be determined by good or bad works, is certainly true. But the difficulty is, what are good works? For although fastings, prayers, chastity and modesty, solitude, contemplation, and curing the sick are good works in themselves, however, if they are done to honour Satan, or an idol, or to learn from oracles past or future things, far be it that these works are good, rather they are despicable, diabolic, and damnable.

Now it is evident in the ancient histories that the pagans, who condemned enchanters and those who made storms, as the law says,<sup>100</sup> did all that, and especially the Amorites and Indians. It is true that some were willing witches. But the true sign and touchstone is the law of God, which gives a clear measure of a witch, and the difference between good and evil spirits. For in the law of God all spells are strictly forbidden, and specified in several ways, which makes it clear that others of a similar kind are also forbidden....<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Soldiers in the army of the king of Spain, fighting to suppress the Dutch revolt.

<sup>99</sup>Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535) was an itinerant philosopher-physician who, in 1531, published *On the Occult Philosophy*, which became a very popular and controversial work. This book is an extended exposition and defence of the magical arts, and earned Agrippa a reputation as a great magus. He was Johann Weyer's teacher and Weyer often defended Agrippa's name against his detractors. This alone was sufficient for Bodin to condemn Weyer.

<sup>100</sup>See Author's Preface, notes 14, 15.

<sup>101</sup>Dt. 18:9–14; Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:26.

...Just as Satan sometimes cures livestock and people under spell by means of witches, his ministers (always giving, nevertheless, the spell to another, in order not to lose anything) so he often makes evil spirits come out of demoniacs, pretending to do it by diabolical means, so that one will have faith in spells and idolatries, by which Satan maintains poor ignorant people.

And if one states that wolves do not willingly devour each other, nor evil spirits drive off evil spirits, the answer is that the realm of Satan in this case is not so much divided as it is established and assured, and idolatry supported by such miracles and maintained in this way. Thus it is not unfitting, as Saint Augustine says, that devils should drive out devils, and that the one be ruined by the other, as the wicked are destroyed normally only by the wicked, according to the will of God,<sup>102</sup> as He says in Jeremiah, "I will take revenge against my enemies by my enemies."<sup>103</sup> And if the good often make war against the good, even more properly the wicked against the wicked, and devils against devils....

...Thus God established in heaven the contrary movements and effects of the stars and planets, and the opposing elements, and in all of nature an antipathy on the one hand and sympathy on the other. In this opposition and pleasant contest the harmony of the world is maintained. But the confusion of good and evil spirits has arisen from the fact that the Neo-Academics have posed the principle that one must join and link heaven and earth, the celestial and earthly powers, and conjoin the one with the other to attract divine power, through elemental and celestial means.<sup>104</sup> That is the hypothesis of Proclus, Iamblichus, Porphyry, and other Academics.<sup>105</sup> About this hypothesis one may say that the master of the

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<sup>102</sup>Bodin, like Augustine, notes the frequent historical phenomenon, governed by Providence, in which evil powers are destroyed by other evil powers. Augustine describes, for example, how the wicked tyrant Marius was destroyed by the even more terrible Sulla. The demons favoured this since, "They had more to fear from his correction than from his defeat." See *City of God*, 2.24.

<sup>103</sup>An inexact reference perhaps to Jer. 46:10, but a succinct summary of Jeremiah's message.

<sup>104</sup>Bodin alludes both to the Neoplatonic philosophers of late antiquity and to the philosophers of the Florentine Platonic Academy established by Marsilio Ficino in the fifteenth century.

<sup>105</sup>The works of Proclus (A.D. 410–85), Iamblichus (c. A.D. 250–330) and

diabolical art, whose works are published with fine official charters, established all the charms and invocations of devils.<sup>106</sup> They are published everywhere with the licence of princes, which is one of the most dangerous plagues of states. For he composes symbols, which he terms peculiar to the demons of each planet, and which he would have engraved on the metal corresponding to each planet, at the moment when the planets are in their highest point or "house" with a favourable conjunction. Then he wants also to have the planet, the stone, and the animal that corresponds to each planet. With all that, one is to make a sacrifice to the planet.<sup>107</sup> And sometimes he wants the image of the planet and the hymns of Orpheus the Sorcerer,<sup>108</sup> on which the Prince of Mirandola has too often dwelled under the guise of philosophy, when he says that the Orphic hymns do not have less power in magic than the hymns of David in the Kabbala.<sup>109</sup> Also he boasts of having been the first to discover the secret of the hymns of Orpheus who was the master of the sorceress Medea. But one finds that these hymns are composed in honour of Satan....

Now by this same means the Master Sorcerer instructs his disciples in every idolatry, impiety, and witchcraft. It seems though that the Academics, as I said, practised it through ignorance and error, proceeding in good faith thinking that they were doing good. But Agrippa employed it because of despicable impiety, for he was for his whole life the greatest witch of his age. And immediately after his death, writes Paulus Jovius and several others, people noticed a black dog, which he called "monsieur" coming out of his room, which went and dove into the Rhône, and was not seen again.<sup>110</sup>

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Porphyry (c. A.D. 232–c. 303) underline the technique of "theurgy," the summoning of divine and demonic powers.

<sup>106</sup>Again a reference to Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa; see above Book One, note 99.

<sup>107</sup>See *On the Occult Philosophy*, 2.35–47.

<sup>108</sup>*On the Occult Philosophy*, 2.58.

<sup>109</sup>Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94) a Christian philosopher famous for his eclectic erudition, believed that there was an ancient tradition of wisdom, including Orphic, Hermetic, and Kabbalistic writings, that in various ways anticipated Christian doctrines. See his *Conclustones sive theses DCCCC* (1486), [62] n. 4. in *Opera omnia* (1572), or the text edited by Bohdan Kieszkowski, *Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance* 131 (Geneva: Droz, 1973).

Now the law of God wisely provided for such impieties by those who wish to link the realm of the lower world with the upper realm, to "marry the world" (as Pico della Mirandola says),<sup>111</sup> hiding beneath a beautiful veil an extreme impiety, and by means of herbs, animals, metals, hymns, symbols and sacrifices, attract angels and little gods, and through them the great God, Creator of all things. In order to prevent this impiety, I say, God seems to have quite expressly forbidden that one make steps to go up to his altar, but rather that one come directly to Him.<sup>112</sup> The Platonists not having well understood this, tried by means of lower demons and demi-gods, to bring down the higher gods, in order to bring down finally the Lord God. We shall state then that the Platonists, and other pagans, who by a simplicity of conscience, and through ignorance worshiped and prayed to Jupiter, Saturn, Mars, Apollo, Diana, Venus, Mercury, and other demi-gods, while living in a saintly manner, praying, fasting, and doing every act of justice, charity, and piety, were indeed idolaters, but not witches; nor those who are in like error, even though they tried to learn the future through diabolical means, provided they thought they were doing something agreeable to God. This is why we have included the word "knowingly," in the definition of a witch. But one who does have knowledge of the law of God and knows that all diabolic divinations are forbidden, and yet still uses it to accomplish something, that person is a witch....

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<sup>110</sup>Legend holds that Agrippa was always accompanied by a large black dog. The belief that the Devil disguised himself as an animal and served as the "familiar" to a witch or black magician is very ancient. It was believed that when Agrippa died in Lyons in 1535, his familiar threw himself into the Rhône.

<sup>111</sup>"Magicam operari non est aliud quam maritare mundum" (*Conclustones* [60], n. 13).

<sup>112</sup>Ex. 20:26.

## Chapter 5

### On Natural Means to Learn Hidden Things

Natural divination is an anticipation of things future, past, or present—yet hidden—through knowledge of causes connected and dependent on each other, as God established them from the creation of the world. I have stated this definition in order to make certain judgment on which divination is lawful, and which divination is unlawful, or diabolical, according to the terms of the definition which we gave of a witch. Now all philosophers and theologians agree that God is the first eternal cause, and on Him depend all things....

For although Plato set down three principles in the world, namely, God, matter, and form, nevertheless in the *Timaeus* and in the *Theaetetus*, and in many other places, he puts God above all causes, and outside of the chain and sequence of causes.<sup>113</sup> Aristotle similarly demonstrated that of necessity there must be a God, the prime cause, on which all the others depend.<sup>114</sup> This removes the impiety of the Manicheans who tried to maintain that there were two principles, one good, one bad: the second, Creator of the elemental world, and the first, of the heavenly world, and of good spirits.<sup>115</sup> Although Epiphanius says that Marcion proposed three principles and Basilides four, these are condemned and despicable views:<sup>116</sup> for as Proclus the Academician stated, polytheism is really

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<sup>113</sup>*Timaeus*, 28–30, 38c, 53b sq., 55c; *Sophist*, 265b–e; *Statesman*, 269c–e; *Laws*, 10.886–899b; *Republic*, 10.597d; *Theaetetus*, 176b, etc.

<sup>114</sup>For Aristotle's concept of a First Mover, see *Metaphysics*, 5, and *Physics*, 8.6, 258b 10f.

<sup>115</sup>See above Book 1, note 39.

<sup>116</sup>Epiphanius (c. A.D. 315–403), Bishop of Salamis, was, in his famous work *Panarion*, a fervent defender of orthodoxy and a relentless antagonist of all heresies against the Church in his time. Marcion (c. A.D. 85–c. 160) was excommunicated because of a religious movement he organized which was intended to rival the Church. His theological system included a God of Love opposed by a Demiurge, who had created man and ultimately cursed him, and a Son whom God sent into the world. Basilides was a second century Gnostic Christian theologian of the Alexandrian school whose teachings likely included various unacceptable elements of Docetism, Platonism and Stoicism in which the realm of matter (e.g. the flesh) was at war with the spirit.

an atheism, and he who establishes more than one or a countless number of gods is trying to remove the true God....<sup>117</sup>

The Academics and Peripatetics affirm that God is the efficient cause of the first intelligence,<sup>118</sup> which the Hebrews call "Metatron"<sup>119</sup>—which is the cause of the second, and the second of the third, and consequently of the others, up to the final causes. This is why Julian the Apostate, following the error of Plato and of his master Iamblichus, in his work against the Christians holds this opinion, rebuking the Christians who maintain that God is the beginning and origin of both visible and invisible things without means,<sup>120</sup> which is in accordance with the formal text of sacred history, where it is stated, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and then each of the creatures as it is reported in order from the creation of the angels.<sup>121</sup> And the most learned in the secrets of the law say that these words, "God created the heavens and the earth," mean both matter and form, thus disproving the opinion of those who believe that God did not create matter but only form, since the formless matter was already present, which is a pernicious error.<sup>122</sup> It is true that there are some who

<sup>117</sup>On Proclus, see above, Book 1, note 52.

<sup>118</sup>See above, Book 1, notes 5, 6.

<sup>119</sup>In one tradition of the Kabbala, the angel Metatron had a special position. This figure, known as the "Prince of the Countenance," was a heavenly angel who was created with the creation of the world, or even before, and was responsible for performing the most exalted tasks in the heavenly kingdom.

<sup>120</sup>Julian the Apostate (A.D. 332–63), Emperor of Rome from 361, attempted to undermine Christianity and restore ancient pagan beliefs while promoting Neoplatonism. Among his many tracts was his "Adversos Christianos" which attacked the tenets and practices of Christianity. Like his mentors, Plato and Iamblichus, Julian understands creation by the "first cause" as the ordering, according to external Forms, of a chaos of primeval matter. In pagan cosmogonies, other gods, goddesses or divine intermediaries also participate in the creative process. See Plato, *Timaeus*, 28ff. and Iamblichus, *On the Egyptian Mysteries*, 1.5–9. In Gnostic teachings, the creation of the world is carried out by angels.

<sup>121</sup>Gen. Ch. 1, 2. In fact, the creation of the angels is not specifically mentioned in the Biblical account, as Bodin clarifies in the 1587 text.

<sup>122</sup>The usual interpretation of Gen. 1:1 amongst both Christians and Jews is that God, through His will and without intermediaries, created the universe out of nothing ("ex nihilo"), rather than out of pre-existent matter ("materia prima").

believe, like Origen, that God has continually created a succession of countless worlds, and when He wished He destroyed them:<sup>123</sup> that is, the elemental world, every seven thousand years, and the celestial world every forty-nine thousand years, uniting all the blessed spirits in Himself, and letting matter remain confused and formless for a thousand years. Then He renewed by His power all things in their first condition and beauty....<sup>124</sup>

Because of this they say that no mention is made of the creation of Angels at the creation of the World, in order to show that they had remained immortal after the corruption of the preceding worlds, which the Prince of Mirandola considered certain in his positions on the Kabbala.<sup>125</sup> That is what the Hebrews maintain in their secret philoso-

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Both Jewish and Christian commentators refer as well to verses such as 2 Macc. 7:28 and Isaiah 44:24. Maimonides, who assembled a systematic critique of Aristotle's position on the eternity of the universe in *The Guide for the Perplexed* (Pt. 2, ch. 13–25), affirms that "the belief in the Creation is a fundamental principle of our religion" (201). See also Tertullian, *Against Hermogenes*, 21.2; Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 2.8 and Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1, Q. 44–46.

<sup>123</sup>Origen (c. 185–c. 254), a Christian Platonist from Alexandria and one of the most controversial theologians of the early Church. Many of his ideas were deemed heretical, although he was essentially an orthodox Christian thinker. He taught that the world is eternally in process of creation, and that souls pre-existed and continue to evolve. His fullest theological exposition is in his *De principiis (On First Principles)*. Bodin's remark reflects a common misunderstanding of Origen's belief in "Apocatastasis," or "Restoration of all things" in which "the End is like the Beginning." See *On First Principles*, Bk. 1, ch. 6; Bk. 2, ch. 1, 3. It is not clear whether this return to the perfection of the beginning will be reached after a succession of ages, or after the mounting of heavenly spheres.

<sup>124</sup>Bodin is referring to Kabbalistic speculations about the "Work of Creation" embodied in the doctrine of the "shemittot" or cosmic cycles. Originating in twelfth century Kabbalistic schools, this doctrine taught that the basic unit of world history is the 50,000 year jubilee. "Some Kabbalists thought that after each 'great jubilee' a new creation would begin 'ex nihilo,' a view which passed from Bahya B. Asher to Isaac Abrabanel, and from him to his son Judah, who mentioned it in his famous Italian work, *Dialoghi di Amore*." Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: New American Library, 1978), 121. Bodin cites Rabbi Judah, better known as Leone Ebreo, whose *Dialoghi* were published in 1535.

<sup>125</sup>*Conclusiones*, [29] n. 2; [30] n. 28; see also *The Heptaplus*, Bk. 3, "Of the Angelic and Invisible World."

phy, as does Origen.<sup>126</sup> This opinion, although it is not accepted by some theologians, because it seems that one is entering too far into the profound secrets of God, nonetheless cuts short the impiety of those who...say that it is a very strange thing that God after a hundred thousand years, indeed after an endless eternity, had decided three or four thousand years ago to make this world, which must soon perish. In this way also the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer would have some probability, when he says that God made the heavens from the light of His raiment, as of matter.<sup>127</sup> This accords with the saying of Solomon, in which he imagines matter formless before the creation of this world,<sup>128</sup> and also when he states that there is nothing new under the sun.<sup>129</sup> If, however, there had been countless worlds in succession, which must not be preserved,<sup>130</sup> still one must admit that the first matter was created by God, which cannot be denied without impiety. Otherwise the eternity of matter follows from this and the efficient cause as soon as the effect, and many other inevitable absurdities which I have pointed out elsewhere....<sup>131</sup> The Hebrews, the Academics and the Stoics have also

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<sup>126</sup>Bodin confuses here the angelology of the Kabbalistic doctrine of the "cosmic cycle" (see above) with Origen's angelology in *On First Principles* where he simply confirms the official tradition of the church that the angels were the servants of God (and thus His creatures), and leaves the time of their creation to speculation (Bk. 1, "Preface"). On their creation before the world, see *On First Principles*, Bk. 1, Ch. 8.

<sup>127</sup>The dispute between Rabbi Eliezer the Great and Rabbi Joshua concerning the materials of creation is recorded in *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer*, ed. David Luria (Warsaw, 1852), 3:7b ff. Maimonides also reproduces this famous statement of Rabbi Eliezer in *The Guide for the Perplexed*: "Whence were the heavens created? He took part of the light of His garment, stretched it like a cloth, and thus the heavens were extending continually, as it is said: He covereth Himself with light as with a garment, He stretcheth the heavens like a curtain (Ps. civ. 2)" (2.26, p. 200).

<sup>128</sup>Wis. 11:17.

<sup>129</sup>Ecc. 1:9.

<sup>130</sup>The doctrine of "successive worlds" in which the world is destroyed in a fiery conflagration and then recreated an endless number of times was also a central feature of Stoic teachings. See, for example, Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, 2.118, and the Stoic writings recorded in A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, ed., *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 1:274-279.

<sup>131</sup>See Bodin's critique of Aristotle's inconsistencies concerning the eternity of matter (*Physics* 191a 31-32; 193a 29; *Metaphysics* 1049b 1-1051a 1 and *On*



refuted it by common consent,<sup>132</sup> as well as Plutarch<sup>133</sup> and Galen,<sup>134</sup> and even the Epicureans have ridiculed it.<sup>135</sup> So we shall stop there: that God created matter from nothing....

It is written that God made man out of the silt of the earth, after taking the matter, which He had already prepared, which also implies a higher secret, namely, that God made the intellect from the soul....<sup>136</sup> After the first creation of all things, God distributed His Angels, by means of which He renews and maintains His creatures.<sup>137</sup> And when one says that God is the efficient cause, the

*the Heavens* 1.10, 283b 26) in his *Discourse on Method for the Easy Understanding of History* (1566), Ch. 8.

<sup>132</sup>Lactantius had argued similarly that the matter of the universe was created, not pre-existent or eternal, and that it was created by God, stating, "and though I pass over the prophets who testify to the work of the world and the workmanship of God with one voice and like spirit, such is agreed on by nearly all philosophers. The Pythagoreans, Stoics, and Peripatetics hold it and these are the principal schools of philosophy." *Divine Institutes*, trans. Mary Francis McDonald (Washington, 1964), 2:8.131. See also Bodin's arguments in *Discourse on Method for the Easy Understanding of History*, Ch. 8.

<sup>133</sup>Plutarch argues that Plato in the *Tymaeus* must have been treating the "generation" of the world by god literally as an historical event (although out of precosmic materials). See Plutarch, *On the Generation of the Soul in the Tymaeus*, 1013E-F, 1016E, 1017B.

<sup>134</sup>Claudius Galen (A.D. 130-200), a Greek physician, was a prolific writer on medical (and philosophical) issues. His pioneering studies in anatomy, physiology and the treatment of various diseases oriented the teaching of medicine until the sixteenth century and even later. In his work *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, he discusses Plato's account of creation in the *Tymaeus*, and endorses the notion of a "divine craftsman" making the world of fire and earth (7.6.28-31 and 9.8-9.1-7).

<sup>135</sup>The Epicureans paid lip service to the gods, but founded their cosmogony on the atomic theory of Democritus, in which infinite numbers of worlds come into being by the chance combining of eternally falling atoms (Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods*, 1.66). The Epicurean Velleius does ridicule the apparent inconsistencies of Aristotle in *The Nature of the Gods*, 1.33. They categorically reject, however, the notion of creation ex nihilo; as the Epicurean poet Lucretius writes in *De rerum natura (The Way Things Are)*: "So / Our starting-point shall be this principle: Nothing at all is ever born from nothing / By the gods' will" (1.150-53). Trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1969).

<sup>136</sup>Gen. 2:7.

<sup>137</sup>Wis. 7:27.

form and matter of the world, it does not mean that He is the form of the sky, or any creature, but that it is He who gives being to all these things, and that without Him nothing can subsist.<sup>138</sup> When I say, "angel," I mean generally every power, and every virtue which God gives to creatures, so that good and bad spirits, as well as men, and winds and fire are called "angels" in Scripture.<sup>139</sup> Thus when one sees the heavens and the celestial lights move, it is done through the ministry of angels; so that one uses the term "angel" properly, as all theologians and philosophers admit, and even Aristotle states, that if there are fifty heavens, there are as many "angels" or "intelligences."<sup>140</sup> Not that God cannot by His will, without other instruments, conduct all things: but it is more fitting for Divine Majesty to make use of His creatures. This is why one reads in Scripture that God is in the assembly of angels, and that evil spirits are also present in the assembly, as Micaiah the prophet declares to the kings of Juda and Samaria;<sup>141</sup> and God speaks to Satan in the assembly of angels, as it is written in Job.<sup>142</sup> This is what all the Hebrews expound about the "ministry of creatures," which He uses in all things.<sup>143</sup>

We have stated above how he does not speak to men except by His angels;<sup>144</sup> also He does nothing to physical bodies except by heavenly bodies, using their normal powers or suddenly using extraordinary power....<sup>145</sup> So to inquire about the virtues of the heavenly lights, providing that one does not go beyond natural causes, is and has always been lawful—and in that lies the glory of God, who does such wondrous things by His creatures. This is the view of Damascenus,<sup>146</sup> and of Thomas Aquinas in his treatise

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<sup>138</sup> Wis. 1:7; 8:1.

<sup>139</sup> Ps 103:20–22; 104:4; see also *Guide for the Perplexed*, 2.6.

<sup>140</sup> On the plurality of "unmoved movers" in Aristotle's discussion of motion, see *Physics*, 8.5 (258b 11; 259a 6–13; 259b 28–31); and *Metaphysics*, 12.8. See also Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, 2.4; and Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1, Q. 50, Art. 3.

<sup>141</sup> 1 Ki. 22:19–22.

<sup>142</sup> Job Ch. 1, 2.

<sup>143</sup> See Ps. 103:20; Heb. 1:14; see also Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, 2.6.

<sup>144</sup> "...how He does not usually speak to men except by His angels" (1587). See above, Book 1, Ch. 2.

<sup>145</sup> See above, Book 1, note 140. Cf. also Book 1, note 10.

<sup>146</sup> See Damascenus, or Saint John of Damascus (early eighth century), *An*

*De sortibus*, and in his work *De iudiciis astrorum*.<sup>147</sup> Scotus also has the same view.<sup>148</sup> Thus one must not follow the error of Lactantius, who states that Astrology, Necromancy, Magic and Haruspicy were discovered by evil spirits.<sup>149</sup> This is certainly true about the others, but Astrology, and the knowledge of heavenly effects is given by God. Although Calvin deliberately, it seems, when he saw that Melanchthon held Astrology in too high regard,<sup>150</sup> curbed it as much as possible. He nevertheless was compelled to admit the marvelous effects of the stars, adding only that God is above it all, and that one who trusts in God must not fear anything.<sup>151</sup> Ptolemy says indeed the same: that the "Wise One" commands in heaven.<sup>152</sup> This is why Abraham Aben-Esra, a great Jewish astrologer, states that the children of Israel are not subject to the stars.<sup>153</sup> He means all those who have faith in God. But one who does not fear God, says Solomon, "will pass under the wheel,"<sup>154</sup> meaning certainly here the sky, and the celestial virtues and influences....

We have a still more precise testimony of God concerning the power which he gave to the stars, when he speaks to Job. "Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades," He says, "or loose the belt of Orion? Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear with its cubs?"<sup>155</sup> He pointed out all the stars in the sky, which manifest the greatest power in this elemental world, and

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*Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 2.6.

<sup>147</sup>*De sortibus ad Dominum Jacobum (On Casting Lots)*; and *De iudiciis astrorum*. Both works are among the Letters of Aquinas.

<sup>148</sup>Duns Scotus (c. 1265–1308), a very influential Franciscan theologian. Scotus worked to unify Aristotle and Augustine. His works enjoyed great prestige for centuries after his death, and his influence lasted into the eighteenth century. See "Concerning Human Knowledge" in John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings: A Selection*, trans. Alan Wolter (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1962).

<sup>149</sup>*Divine Institutes*, 2.16.

<sup>150</sup>Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) was a well-known German humanist and a close friend and collaborator of Martin Luther. He was an active proponent and defender of astrology, describing it as a necessary and useful science.

<sup>151</sup>Calvin wrote an *Admonition Against Astrology* in 1549, in which the great reformer condemned most of the astrological beliefs of his contemporaries.

<sup>152</sup>See *The Almagest*, 1.1, "Preface."

<sup>153</sup>Abraham Ben Meir Ibn Ezra, a twelfth-century Jewish scholar.

<sup>154</sup>Prov. 20:26.

<sup>155</sup>Job 38:31–32.

which is evident in the regular seasons, in their constant heliacal rising and setting. Then later God says in general to Job, "Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth?"<sup>156</sup> These are all passages which show the great power that God has given to the celestial bodies over the elemental world. Also after the creation of the heavenly lamps, God said that they would be "for signs and seasons, and for days and years,"<sup>157</sup> which does not only mean to count the days, for a million stars would not serve as anything. Now far be it that this power and virtue of the heavenly bodies, so great and admirable, diminish in any way, since by it, rather, the power of God is wondrously enhanced and augmented.

For if we praise God seeing the virtue of a stone, of an herb, or of an animal, how much greater occasion we have to praise God, seeing the grandeur, the force, the brightness, the speed, the order, the awesome movement of the heavenly bodies. That is why the psalmist having praised God for the things which are here below, when he comes to point out the power of the stars, is filled with exaltation, and exclaims as follows:

When I look at Thy heavens, the  
work of Thy fingers,  
the moon and the stars which  
Thou hast established;  
what is man that Thou art mindful  
of him?<sup>158</sup>

And truly, the Heavens are a most beautiful theatre for the praise of God, and the more one knows the effects of these heavenly lights, the more one is inspired to praise God. The greatest dullards are surprised to find that the sea is at high tide when the moon is full or new, and in quarters the tide is low, and that each day the tide is an hour later; and in the same country, same region, same clime, in different ports the time of the incoming and outgoing tide is different. Fishermen find all kinds of empty shells. In short the animals, the plants, and all the elements sense a marvelous change in the blood, humours, and bones at its waning and waxing.

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<sup>156</sup> Job 38:33.

<sup>157</sup> Gen. 1:14.

<sup>158</sup> Ps. 8:3-4.

At full moon carpenters would not cut down a tree to build, until the setting of the moon, otherwise the wood is useless for building. At the same time one must graft and cover the roots of plants, winnow grains and vegetables during the waning of the moon, and other innumerable observations recorded by the ancients which one can find in Pliny, Book 18, Chapter 32.<sup>159</sup> Doctors admit that the critical days of fevers and illness are all governed by the moon. Galen even wrote several books about it, marvelling about something one frequently sees in the horoscope of a patient: that the opposition or quarter of the moon in the sun produces a notable change in patients, as well as when the moon reaches the opposition or quarter of the place from where it set out when the illness began.<sup>160</sup> One also observes with plague and other common diseases that at each quarter, in one instant a countless number of people suddenly die. Now Galen made his judgments according to the experience which he had acquired from the observations of all the ancients<sup>161</sup>—for he did not even know the true movement of the moon, as is apparent from his books. But he would have been much more surprised if he had heard of the effects of the other planets, and of the conjunctions, both in relation to each other and to the fixed stars, especially on the body and disposition of a person. For the ancients have noted as maxims, and through the experience of many centuries, that when Saturn and Mercury are in opposition in a violent sign, as a rule the man who is born then is tongue-tied or mute. When the moon is in the Levant, the person is healthy. The child who happens to be born at the time of the eclipse will not live. One who is born in the conjunction of the moon does not live long. In short, the Arabs having learned the force of the celestial

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<sup>159</sup>*Natural History*, 18.32.

<sup>160</sup>The role of divinatory or medical astrology is actually quite limited in Galen's writing. Galen's medical system is founded on a theory of four bodily humours and four temperaments (which he increases to five) inherited from earlier Greek schools such as the Pneumatics. Galen notes in his *Temperaments* the role of environmental factors, such as geography, climate, food and seasons on the condition of the patient. Renaissance commentators sometimes pointed to treatises like *On Crises* and *On Critical Days* as illustrating Galen's belief in medical astrology.

<sup>161</sup>Galen assimilated, for example, many of the scientific observations of the Peripatetics, and especially the work of the Pneumatic school which was noted for its careful descriptions and its chart making.

influences on the body, did not wish any doctor to be recognized if he did not know about Astrology. Those who had both kinds of knowledge were called "Iatromathematicians" in Greece.<sup>162</sup> To sum it up briefly, from the celestial influences one sees the humours, and both the natural disposition of bodies and of humours.

What has brought criticism upon it has been the ignorance of those who have written about it "in an ill-informed way," as Melanchthon used to say. [But Astrologers must not get involved with making judgments on souls, spirits, vices, virtues, honours, punishments, and much less on religion, as many Astrologers do who after having described the humour and natural disposition of the body according to its horoscope, pass beyond to things which do not concern the body at all, such as, marriages, honours, voyages, riches, and other such matters, where the stars have neither force nor power.] And where they would have some power, it is impiety to inquire about it, and not only impiety, but also an extreme folly. For if the diviner falsely predicts that a man will be burned or hanged, the wretch needlessly suffers a thousand deaths before dying. If the prediction that he is to be burned is true, his suffering is doubled, and he never has respite. If the diviner falsely assures someone that he will be great and rich, it will give him cause to squander his wealth, and be an idler in a vain hope. If the prediction is true, the deferred hope makes the person "live in langour," as the sage says. So when the event happens the pleasure of it is lost. Hence God frequently allows those who inquire about such matters to be deprived of the fortune they are expecting, and permits the evil they fear to happen to them.

But the impiety of those people who make religion subject to celestial influences is inexcusable. Such a person is Julius Maternus,<sup>163</sup> who writes that one who is born with Saturn in Leo will live long, and finally after his death will go up to heaven; and Albumazar,<sup>164</sup> who held that one who makes his prayer to God while

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<sup>162</sup> On the Iatromathematicians or medical astrologers see Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, 1.3.16.

<sup>163</sup> Julius Firmicus Maternus was a fourth-century author of a comprehensive treatise on astrology. His works were published as *Scriptores astronomici* (1499).

<sup>164</sup> Albumazar, or Abu Ma'shar (787-886) was an important Arab astronomer/astrologer. His works were translated into Latin in the twelfth

the moon is in conjunction with another planet, which I will not indicate, and both are at the head of the Dragon, will obtain what he asks for. Pietro d'Abano,<sup>165</sup> a Master Sorcerer if ever there was one, said he practised this to entice men to such wickedness. Hence there is not less impiety than ignorance since the head and tail of the Dragon are only two points of an imaginary intersection, and of two imaginary circles, which have neither star nor planet, and are variable at all times. Moreover Albumazar is even more odious for having dared to set the time limit for religions according to celestial influences, since he said that the Christian religion would come to an end in the year 1460. Yet it has been more than one hundred years since the time expired. In a similar case Arnaldo the Spaniard had ineptly predicted that the Antichrist would come in the year 1345,<sup>166</sup> and Cardinal d'Ailly,<sup>167</sup> who filled his book with such lies discoursing on the end of the three religions, supposes that it has been seven thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight years since the creation of the world, in which he was mistaken by fifteen hundred years according to the calculation approved by Christians and Jews.<sup>168</sup> Also in the horoscope of the creation of the world, he has the sun located in the Ram, which however was in Libra, according to the formal text of the Bible where it is clear that the first day of the world was what we call the tenth of the seventh

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century and were influential in the development of astrology in Europe.

<sup>165</sup>See above, Author's Preface, note 3.

<sup>166</sup>Arnold of Villanova (1235–1311) was a physician to popes and kings, professor at Montpellier and author of some seventy scientific works. His collected works were published in several editions in the sixteenth century. He promoted the reality of witchcraft and often dealt with alchemy and astronomy.

<sup>167</sup>Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly (d. 1420) wrote *Hammer of Heretics*. He was also a promoter of astrology who attributed historical occurrences to the positions of the planets.

<sup>168</sup>Bodin's comments are very approximate here and would make the world about 6,090 years old. After lengthy chronological researches in his *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, Ch. 8, "A System of Universal Time," Bodin concluded, "Let us accept the Jews, the Chaldeans, and the Persians, whose history says that not more than 5,730 years have passed since the creation" (330). Estimates range from Eusebius (6,760 years), Augustine (6,916), Bede (6,893) and Jerome (6,605) to Rabbi Gerson and Kimhi (5,301), Philo (5,628) and Josephus (5,720).

month, which is the sign of Libra.<sup>169</sup> Cyprian Leovice in our time has gone far beyond this, for he says that the end of the religion of Jesus Christ, and of the world, will be in the year 1583.<sup>170</sup> This is a remarkable incongruity in Astrology, and an impiety in religious terms. The judgment of Cardano is no less inept.<sup>171</sup> He calculated and published the horoscope of Jesus Christ in Italy and in France, stating that Saturn in the ninth house signified the desertion of his religion, and Mars with the moon in the seventh showed the kind of death, a ridiculous idea, given that Mars was in its own sign, which is fiery. But it is a much greater impiety to try to subjugate religion to the stars, as did also Aben-Esra who had predicted that a great captain would be born to free the Jews, whom he called "Messiah," in the year 1464, which did not happen.<sup>172</sup>

Leaving then these beliefs and divinations full of impiety and ignorance, we will deal only with natural predictions in regard to celestial influences on bodies and on humours....

One must not determine nor employ fortuitous predictions, which are not founded on experience. And yet, whatever experience one might have, one must always ascribe dominion over

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<sup>169</sup>Although he believed in astrology, Bodin criticizes the attempts of Cardinal d'Ailly and others to cast a horoscope of the creation of the world. Their calculations were bound to be inaccurate since, according to Bodin, they had inaccurately measured the "rate of precession," i.e. the movement of the stars and constellations through the zodiacal houses with the passage of the centuries. See Annabella Kitson, ed., "Bodin's Criticism of Astrology," in *History and Astrology* (London: Unwin, 1989), 102-4. Indeed, Bodin himself in 1587 revises this passage to read, "...the first day of the world was what we now call the twentieth of September, which is the sign of Libra."

<sup>170</sup>Cyprian Leovice or Leowitz was a sixteenth-century Bohemian astrologer, well known in his age. He connected events, historical and future, to astrological conjunctions.

<sup>171</sup>Girolamo Cardano (1501-76) was a physician who published works dealing with medicine, mathematics, physics and philosophy. Much influenced by Agrippa, he seems in turn to have had a major influence on Weyer. His works were very unorthodox and controversial. The work Bodin refers to, *De subtilitate*, appeared in 1550. For Cardano, astrology was absolutely reliable for predicting the future.

<sup>172</sup>See above, Book 1, note 153. The main problem for Bodin, however, is not the inaccuracy of these horoscopes, but the impiety of subjecting God's power and will to the forces of the stars.



everything to God, who can stop the course of the sun and of the moon, as He did at the request of Joshua;<sup>173</sup> and make the sun go backwards, as He did when he prolonged the life of King Hezekiah by fifteen years.<sup>174</sup> There is no doubt that the man who relies on God is stronger, and more powerful than all the celestial influences. This is why an early Platonist said that, he who follows the course of Nature makes himself a slave to fatal destiny and the natural course ordained for all material things; while he who is stirred by the spirit of God surpasses all destinies. But just as the natural science of stars and heavenly lights reveals the grandeur of God, so also are the impostures of the Arabic elections damnable and unlawful....<sup>175</sup>

The other natural divinations are clearer which are derived from the disposition of the weather, because it is common experience. The whole science of meteors is composed of such things: namely, of impressions of fire in the upper region, or of the generation of imperfect bodies in the mid region of the air. For example to see a red moon means wind; a pale one means rain; a bright one means good weather. For the hazy mist which causes winds is just like the smoke which makes the flame of a fire red; and the glowing ember of black coal is red, according to Theophrastus,<sup>176</sup> because the blackness and the brightness are intermingled together. Damp vapour causes rain and takes away the serene brightness of the moon, and when the air is clear that brightness is seen without any difficulty.

Now such natural divinations are the more certain, since the effect corresponds to the cause which is not hard to see as it is when one tries to find the reason that rain comes at one time rather than at another. The Astrologer will say then that the observation of the

<sup>173</sup>Jos. 10:12-13.

<sup>174</sup>2 Ki. 20:1-11; Is. 38:1-8.

<sup>175</sup>Bodin is alluding to "electional astrology" which is "the art of choosing, according to astrological principles, an auspicious moment for a deed or the inception of a project." Annabella Kitson, "Some Varieties of Electional Astrology," in *History and Astrology*, 172. On the Arabic practice of referring to imprecise moon cycles see Kitson, 175.

<sup>176</sup>Theophrastus (372/369-288/285 B.C.) a Peripatetic philosopher who was one of Aristotle's most eminent and productive students. He applied his scholarly abilities to a wide range of both physical and metaphysical problems. Several brief scientific treatises dealing with mineralogical, meteorological and physiological subjects are extant. See especially here his works *On Fire*, *On Winds*, and *On Weather Signs*.

ancients shows that the moon in conjunction with the Hiades or Pleiades, or with the stars of Cancer stimulates vapours, and consequently rain. But some observations are much more certain than others, for example, what all the ancients confirmed and is readily perceived, that when the fourth and sixth moon are bright and clear, it gives a sure portent of the whole moon, unless some significant conjunction occurs. And yet the reason has never been discovered....

I will omit speaking of the natural predictions of doctors which everyone can observe. Galen and Hippocrates<sup>177</sup> treated it throughout their works, and principally in the book *De arte parva*,<sup>178</sup> when it says, for example, that the person feeling a weakness and a trembling of the nerves, can be sure of the onset of gout. And if dysentery begins with melancholy it is fatal. Still, yet there is Phytoscopy, which is the foretelling of hidden things by plants, like the switch of Coryles, or of Hazel divided in halves, held in the hand tilted toward where there are metals. It is something quite commonly experienced by prospectors. Thus ore-bearing earth is put on it to make it rise higher. All these predictions are known from experience, although the causes are hidden and unknown. Nevertheless they are natural, and the search for them reveals the grandeur and wondrous beauty of the works of God.

Now just as the natural means which God gave us to learn hidden and future things are good and praiseworthy, so also are all the natural means which He taught us to support, nourish, clothe, and maintain ourselves in health, strength, and good cheer, and to cure illnesses—provided that one recognize that the strength of the foods and medicines, and other hidden powers which are in elements, plants, rocks, metals, and animals come from God, who withdraws His strength when He sees fit, and who "breaks the strength of bread,"

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<sup>177</sup>Hippocrates of Cos (b. 460 B.C.) was considered the founder of rational medicine in the West. The large and influential collection of medical writings known as the Hippocratic Corpus, cannot, however, be authenticated as the works of Hippocrates.

<sup>178</sup>Galen's tract *Tegni* (*Technē iatrikē*), known in Latin translation as *Ars medica* or *Ars parva*, was an essential text for the teaching of Galenic medical principles from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. During the sixteenth century several new translations of the *Tegni* appeared as well as editions of the Greek text and various commentaries.

as it is stated in the law of God, when He sends famine.<sup>179</sup> But one who considers the strength or the power of natural things as deriving from them, does injury to God, to whom belongs the praise. This is why Galen at the end of his twenty books *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body of Man*, after revealing the admirable secrets found there, concludes thus: "It seems to me," he exclaims, "that we have sung a beautiful hymn in praise of God."<sup>180</sup> And even better, Seneca, criticizing those who used to say, "nature" does this, "nature" does that, says, "Tu naturae Deo nomen mutas"; that is to say, "You change nature into God." How much finer it would be to say, "God" does this, "God" does that.<sup>181</sup> In all of Holy Scripture, this word "nature" is never found. Thus it is always written, "God caused" this to be done, "God caused" that to be done....

It will suffice then from what has been said to establish that the natural means of accomplishing something are lawful and ordained by God, when one offers to Him in return (and not to any creature) honour and praise: either to learn future and hidden things, or to perform any other deed, such as searching for mines by the sign of certain stones and plants, rather than by diabolical means. But I cannot overlook what Giovanni Pico della Mirandola writes in his propositions on magic; that natural magic is only the practice of Physics,<sup>182</sup> which is the snare into which Satan lures the most gentle minds who think that by the strength of natural things one will attract, indeed one will constrain celestial powers. Nevertheless in the twenty-fourth proposition the same author argues that there is nothing that has greater force in magic than figures and symbols.<sup>183</sup> And in proposition twenty-one he maintains that barbarous and meaningless words have more power

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<sup>179</sup>Lev. 26:26; Ps. 105:16; Ez. 4:16, 5:16, 14:13.

<sup>180</sup>The final book of this work is actually the seventeenth book, which Galen calls an "Epode" or a "hymn of praise to the gods," because of the skill and wisdom of the Creator.

<sup>181</sup>Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 B.C.–A.D. 65), statesman, Stoic philosopher, lawyer and man of letters. Among his extant works are nine tragedies and various prose treatises, including his *Naturales quaestiones* on fire, air, water, earthquakes, comets and other natural phenomena. He is best known, however, for his *Letters from a Stoic* (*Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*), which were frequently cited by both Bodin and Montaigne.

<sup>182</sup>*Conclusiones*, [60] n. 3.

<sup>183</sup>*Conclustones*, [61] n. 24.

than those which mean something.<sup>184</sup> We have shown the vanity, or more correctly, the impiety of such things....

The same author makes a really pernicious magic of the Kabbala, and one which entirely destroys the foundations of the law of God. Everyone can see this who looks at it closely, for the Kabbala is nothing but the right interpretation of the law of God, concealed beneath the letter. His aim however, is to work miracles through the force of letters and symbols. I was eager to reveal this imposture so that those who read Agrippa, the Master Sorcerer, and those who are of like mind are not deceived, by using stones, plants, and other natural things to attract celestial forces and influences. This is why Hippocrates in his book *De morbo sacro*, detests witches who boasted in his time of attracting the moon.<sup>185</sup> For it would mean enslaving the gods, he says, to such imposters, and subjugating heaven and earth to men, against all the principles of nature, and against the formal text of Scripture in Job where God speaks of the laws which He gave to heaven over the earth.<sup>186</sup>

Thus the imposture is revealed by the symbols and diabolical figures, and by the barbarous, and sometimes unintelligible words, which have no connection at all with the elements, nor with matter, nor with natural forms, nor with natural qualities, whatever they might be. One must not therefore, under the veil of "nature" hide the sorceries, vanities, and pagan superstitions of idolaters and witches: like many witches in ancient times who had people believe that sorceries were only the forces of plants, animals, stones, minerals and celestial bodies....

We have said that divine predictions or prophecies do not come through nature, nor by the will of men, but by the direct inspiration of God, without device, or by means of the angels, and that natural predictions are done through knowledge of causes preceding effects: and the natural means to accomplish something follows the normal path from causes to their effects. Now human predictions, though they depend somewhat on the nature of things, can, nonetheless, be called "human" inasmuch as they are not always certain, like nature is; nor always uncertain, either through ignorance of the causes, or on account of the imbecility of the human mind. Everyone makes

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<sup>184</sup> *Conclustiones*, [61] n. 21.

<sup>185</sup> *De morbo sacro (The Sacred Disease)*, 4.

<sup>186</sup> Job 38:33.

predictions through experience according to his situation in life. The politician, observing that evil deeds go unpunished and virtues unrewarded in a state, will predict its ruin. But since it does not depend on natural causes, and this prediction is not declared to him in a special way by God, one may call it "human," and this is lawful. But one must not guarantee it as certain and undoubted....

Shepherds similarly foretell the sheep disease which is called "Sheep-pox," on finding hares with abscessed livers. Labourers in the fields predict the year's fertility solely by the appearance of the mustard seed, or of the gooseberries if they are very thick, and other things like this which they have learned from experience, without knowledge of the natural causes, nor divine revelation. And such predictions are not unlawful, unless one tried to guarantee them as infallible....

There are other "human," and nonetheless unlawful predictions since they entail a superstitious credence and fear of vain things, and consequently a distrust of God. For it must be considered an indubitable rule, that one who fears or who believes superstitious predictions, always has distrust of the power of God; as in ancient times when a man going out of his house caught his foot on the doorway, he took it as a portent of misfortune, as they say happened to Brutus the day he killed Caesar,<sup>187</sup> or if the ring drops when the groom places it on the finger of his bride. In these cases the ancients had a form of conjecture which they called "Palmarum augurium," when a member trembled—a natural thing, which has its own natural causes. And as a rule the misfortune happens to the person who believes such things, by a just vengeance of God, and never to the one who laughs at it. This is why Caesar never gave any credence to such vanities, and everything befell him contrary to the portents of the seers. Even when he fell while disembarking from his ship in Africa, he exclaimed then, "I take hold of you, Africa." These soothsaying minions said that it was a bad omen, and nevertheless he won three splendid victories, and defeated all his enemies a few days later.<sup>188</sup> Moreover, he never inquired about the

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<sup>187</sup>Marcus Junius Brutus (85–42 B.C.), a leader in the assassination of Julius Caesar on the Ides of March 44 B.C. He subsequently committed suicide after his defeat by Octavian in the second battle of Philippi.

<sup>188</sup>In January of 46 B.C. Caesar landed in Africa, and within four months defeated the Pompeian forces under Scipio at Thapsus.

outcome of the battle of Pharsalia, where he won the victory against Pompey who had three times as many forces, and who consulted all the soothsayers and magicians before doing battle.<sup>189</sup>

I have noted that many princes have been ruined after seeking the counsel of soothsayers. Ariovistus, king of the Germans, who had four hundred thousand men, governed himself in accordance with the witches concerning the day of battle, which they prevented from being given out before the new moon. Caesar knowing this, as he writes, suddenly gave battle to him, and won.<sup>190</sup> But without going any further we have the example of one who tried to learn the outcome of the battle of Pavia by means of a witch, who evoked before his eyes the host of his enemies<sup>191</sup>: the answer was similar to the ancient oracles, and the outcome grievous for all of France.... We have yet another example in the king of Sweden, and the letters sent to the princes of Germany in the year 1563 which related that King Henry of Sweden had four witches who boasted of preventing the victories of the king of Denmark. But they laid hold of one of them who could not prevent the executioner from burning her alive. The king four years later was seized by his subjects, deprived of his realm, and cast into a prison where he still is.<sup>192</sup> This comprises our remarks on human predictions. Let us now discuss unlawful means.

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<sup>189</sup> "...against Pompey who had two times as many forces" (1587). Caesar defeated Pompey at Pharsalus in 48 B.C.

<sup>190</sup> *De bello gallico (The Conquest of Gaul)*, 1.49-53.

<sup>191</sup> At Pavia, in 1525, the armies of France suffered a crushing defeat by the Imperial forces of Charles V. The battle was one of the greatest military disasters in French history, as King Francis was captured and held prisoner in Spain.

<sup>192</sup> This refers to King Erik XIV who ascended the throne of Sweden in 1560. He went mad in 1567, murdering many nobles and others in fits of rage. In September of 1568, he was deposed by Swedish nobles and kept prisoner by his successor. He died in 1577, probably as the result of poisoning.

## Chapter 6

### On Unlawful Means to Accomplish Something

We have stated that a witch is one who knowingly tries to accomplish something by diabolical and unlawful means. One must know therefore what unlawful means are...

Now, one who is impatient despairs and calls the Devil to his aid. King Saul, after having sought God's counsel on what success he would have against his enemies, and asking the prophets and priests, did not receive any answer regarding the battle, so he turned to a witch to learn the outcome of his affairs.<sup>193</sup> Others do so to find treasures, to cure illness, to enjoy pleasure, to attain honours and high offices, or to learn future or far-off things. And the most wicked, to take revenge on their enemies also call on the Devil who does not always answer when called. The Devil makes one call on him very often, even though he is present and near to the one who is seeking him—as well as to those who are not seeking him.

Now the most despicable witches are those who renounce God and turn to the Devil, and swear that they will lend him all obedience, service, fealty and adoration by express agreement. But there are some people who loathe turning to Satan to learn what they are asking, yet they do not hesitate to turn to witches without attending their sacrifices, which hardly offends God less than to address the Devil himself. There are also some in such cases who would not like to ask Satan for a cure for an illness, but they have no pangs of conscience in approaching witches who pray to the Devil in their presence to grant them a cure. This happened not long ago at Vau, which is outside the city of Laon, where there was a witch who removed the spell from a poor, deathly ill woman. This witch got on her knees, and then with her face to the ground, praying aloud, called on the Devil many times to grant a cure to the woman. Then afterward she said some words, and gave a piece of bread to the woman to eat, and the woman was cured. This is no worse than if the woman had herself prayed to Satan for a cure. And it would be better to die the cruelest death imaginable, than to be cured in this manner.

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<sup>193</sup> 1 Sam. 28:3–25.

There are others who do not want to have any contact with the Devil, nor with witches, but they employ diabolical means carried out by witches with the help of the Devil, who always assists those who make use of such means, and he directs their plans. Now this is called making a "tacit agreement" with Satan, according to the definition of Saint Augustine, because it is different from an "express agreement."<sup>194</sup> Not only Saint Augustine, but also Thomas Aquinas,<sup>195</sup> Durandus,<sup>196</sup> Aegidius Romanus,<sup>197</sup> and the other theologians by common consent say that there are two pacts one makes with the Devil: one express, which Necromancers and other witches who worship him make; the other tacit, or implicit, which is in every kind of idolatry and superstitious observance, knowingly, and without natural cause. That is their definition. It is true that one who thinks he does well to observe the flight of birds to learn if his voyage will be successful, as the ancients did in the form of religion, cannot be called a witch, and does not have an express or tacit agreement with Satan, even though he is an idolater, and does not offend as much as one who does it through curiosity, not knowing it is forbidden by God; and one who does it through curiosity and ignorance does not offend as much as one who does it knowing indeed that it is forbidden by the law of God. This is why we have put the word "knowingly" in the definition of a witch. But that person is guilty who knows the prohibition of the law of God, and yet out of contempt for it gives himself over to such things. He must be punished as a witch, and yet not as rigorously as the witches who have an express agreement with Satan.

To clarify the word "witch," it is in plain terms a person who makes predictions, and casts fortunes in unlawful ways. For there

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<sup>194</sup> *On Christian Doctrine*, 2.20, 23. See also *City of God*, 8.19.

<sup>195</sup> *Summa theologiae*, 2-2, Q. 95, Art. 2.

<sup>196</sup> William Durandus (c. 1230-96) was one of the most eminent of the late mediaeval canonists. A judge and papal administrator, he wrote the *Speculum iudiciale*, an encyclopedic treatment of canon law in the 1270's that was influential at least up to the seventeenth century.

<sup>197</sup> Aegidius Romanus or Giles of Rome (c. 1247-1316) an Augustinian friar who studied under Thomas Aquinas and later became a prolific theological writer, as well as archbishop of Bourges. Among his works is a treatise on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard and a monograph attacking generally the *Errors of the Philosophers*.



is prediction approved by the law of God, and prediction approved by political laws. We read that Joshua cast lots on the whole army of the people of Israel in order to learn who had taken forbidden booty from the city of Jericho.<sup>198</sup> In the same way Samuel cast lots when it was a question of choosing a king, with these words, "Lord God, give Thy designation," which was the custom of the ancients to drive away any diabolic power and spell.<sup>199</sup> And so the lot fell to the tribe of Benjamin which was the smallest. Then the lot was cast on the heads of families, and the lot fell to the house of Cis. Then the lot was cast on all the household of Cis, and the lot fell to Saul, whom God had previously declared king over the people, so that it would not be thought that sceptres and crowns are granted by chance....

Thus one sees that prediction in itself is lawful, provided that the matter warrants it, and one pronounces these words set down in Scripture, "Lord God, make your choice known"; and not call upon Mercury, lord of the lots, as did the Greeks who first put in the jar an olive leaf which they called "Hermes," that is to say, Mercury. Afterward they drew lots and withdrew first of all the olive leaf.

To correct this paganism, Christians when choosing a king by lots, draw first for God. Even then it is not enough to call upon God when casting lots, but it must only be used in a necessary matter, such as those we have described. Otherwise those who in frivolous matters, or through curiosity, or indeed even in a matter of state, would like to know whether they have to undertake a war or something else of consequence, must not cast lots: for it would be tempting God, which is quite expressly forbidden....

And generally in all matters of consequence pious people asked God's counsel, who even though He did not give an answer sometimes, nevertheless He brought the matter to a successful end if the affair was just, and the heart upright on the part of the one asking guidance....

We shall also include among unlawful predictions Geomancy, which is the one most commonly done, and published and printed in books. It is another diabolic art, and yet founded on chance and on a lucky toss by the one who scores the points, from which come the fifteen figures. We shall make the same judgment on Tephramancy

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<sup>198</sup> Jos. 7:10-26.

<sup>199</sup> 1 Sam. 10:17-24.

which was done in ashes, as Geomancy was done in earth at first, however it is different and not often used. I shall not describe it so that it will also remain in obscurity as well as Botonomancy, and Sycomancy which are even more inept and ridiculous and depended on the casting of leaves blown by the wind at night; and according to the way they met a judgment was made....Among these are also Onomancy and Arithmancy, which worked according to the numbers borne by the letters of each one's name, and arranged in order of the numbers, according to what they could signify. The latter was used only among the Latins. However, the table of numbers which derive from it, is not in any way connected with the value of the Latin letters having numerical meaning. For the letter "M" which means a thousand, is there only worth seventy-eight; and "C" which means a hundred, is there only worth six. Nevertheless those who set store by it interpret by these letters so numbered, the numbers attributed to the beast in the Apocalypse.<sup>200</sup> As for the anagrams of the letters of the transposed name and surname, it is also ridiculous, since the transposition results in completely contrary meanings....

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<sup>200</sup>Rev. 13:18 states that the number of the beast is 666.

## *Book Two*

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### Chapter 1 On Magic in General, and Its Types

The word "magic" is Persian and means "science of divine and natural things." And a "magus," or "magician," was nothing other than a philosopher. But just as philosophy has been adulterated by the Sophists,<sup>1</sup> and wisdom, which is a gift of God, by the impiety and idolatry of the pagans, so magic has been turned into diabolical witchcraft. And the first who was Satan's minister to spread this impiety in Persia was Zoroaster,<sup>2</sup> and nevertheless it was covered by the veil of piety, as the Devil is accustomed to do. For respectable men always abhor wickedness....

This is why Iamblichus, Proclus, Plotinus, Porphyry, and the emperor Julian the Apostate defined magic as the invocation of good demons; and "Goety" as the invocation of evil spirits, which they condemned,<sup>3</sup> and which is practised by those who go to graves at night to dig up the dead and invoke spirits. Even the blind witch who was hanged at Paris in 1574, and who denounced one hundred and fifty or more others, said one day to a gentleman who reported

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<sup>1</sup>The Sophists were wandering teachers who came to Athens in the fifth century B.C. They especially taught Rhetoric and other practical knowledge thought useful for success.

<sup>2</sup>Zoroaster (c. 600 B.C.) was the founder of Zoroastrianism, the national religion of Iran till the Muslim conquest of the region in the eighth century A.D. Jewish thought was influenced by Zoroastrianism during the Babylonian exile in the sixth century B.C., and later even Christianity experienced some influences.

<sup>3</sup>See above, Book 1, note 11.

it to me, that he only wanted to show him "white magic," and not "black magic." As Leo the African writes, the witches of Africa invoke "white demons."<sup>4</sup> Thus one finds that the books of the great doctor in the diabolical art, whom I shall not name because of my desire to bury his impiety forever,<sup>5</sup> at the beginning speak only of physics, philosophy, the secret virtue of waters, plants, animals, and metals, then of numbers and stars. And in the fourth book which is the key he had promised, and which his sorcerer disciples published, he mixes his diabolical poison of symbols, and names of devils and spirits, and their invocation. Avicenna<sup>6</sup> and Algazel<sup>7</sup> make the same error in maintaining that everything done by witches is done by natural causes, which is the real way to trick gentle minds and attract them to all kinds of witchcraft. Likewise they coined the word, "familiar spirit," and in Africa "white demons," in Greece "sibyls," in Germany "white sibyls" and in France "fairies." I certainly wanted to warn readers about this so that they would not be deceived beneath the veil of these fine words. For how can what this good doctor writes be true, that each planet, indeed each star has an evil demon, as well as a good demon, since there are no devils in the heavens, and all evil is enclosed in the elemental world, which is only a small particle of this great universe, and which is more than fifty thousand leagues distant from the sphere of the moon? Now all theologians and philosophers agree that each sphere has its "Intelligence" or "Angel" to move it.<sup>8</sup> Let us say that each star also has its "Intelligence," although no philosopher has ever thought that there were evil spirits in heaven. And much less would two opposing demons agree in their actions, especially in the invariable and immutable movement of the celestial bodies. For man does not do so, who is free to do evil or good, and is sometimes stirred by the evil spirit, when he turns aside and gives

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<sup>4</sup>Leo the African (Hasan ibn Mohammed al Wassan al-Fasi) (c. 1485–c. 1554), a Spanish Moor who travelled widely in Africa, Asia Minor and Europe. He was the author of *A History and Description of Africa*, published in 1556.

<sup>5</sup>A reference to Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa. See above, Book 1, note 99.

<sup>6</sup>Avicenna (980–1037) was one of the great mediaeval Arab philosophers. He was a commentator on Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus.

<sup>7</sup>Algazel (1058–1111) criticized Avicenna's Neoplatonism. A mystical thinker, he was a religious relativist.

<sup>8</sup>On the "Intelligences" who move the spheres, see above, Book 1, note 140.

himself to wickedness, or other times by the good spirit, when he turns back to God. Moreover, how is it possible to invoke the good angel, or white demon of the planets, without committing an abominable idolatry by worshiping either the planet or its demon, or both together? Given especially the manner of sacrifices prescribed by this gentle master who takes the stone, the plant, the animal, the number, the symbol, the metal, the aspect, the time particular to the planet, with the charms, hymns, and invocations, how can one not commit an abominable idolatry?...

This is to respond to Iamblichus, Proclus, and Porphyry, and to these master doctors of the diabolical art, who have attracted ten million people to their impiety, by claiming that it causes everything to unite, and through material creatures to attract the stars and planets, and through them their demons, and then the angels and lesser heavenly gods, and by this means to attain God.<sup>9</sup> However, all these fine mediators attract only Satan, as did Agrippa who wanted to imitate these ancient doctors.<sup>10</sup> So for this reason the twenty-sixth article of the Sorbonne resolution adopted in 1398 cut off and condemned the impiety of those who believe that the power and virtue of celestial intelligences flows into the soul as the power of the celestial lights and bodies flows within bodies....<sup>10</sup>

Now this fine white magic was an impiety because one who wished to make use of it to enjoy or obtain what he desired, wore the effigy of the planet, made and forged with the prescribed solemnities. I wanted very much to point this out because I have seen great lords, and even people of repute, amuse themselves with such impieties, even giving to one of the greatest princes of Christendom, whom it is not necessary to name here, a golden image of Jupiter forged by Theurgy, which he wore to make himself greater, and which was found hanging around his neck after his wretched death.<sup>11</sup> Also he maintained a Neopolitan witch, whom he called his "keeper," with twelve hundred pounds in wages. Now

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<sup>9</sup>See above, Book 1, Chapter 3.

<sup>10</sup>See above, Book 1, note 12.

<sup>11</sup>This likely refers to King Charles IX of France, who died in 1574 at only twenty-four. He was reputed to have died mad. Some held this to have been caused by remorse over the slaughter of Protestants in 1572, but Bodin insisted that it was the result of the King having dabbled in magic and his failure to punish witches and magicians like Trois-eschelles.

God's commandment which says, "You shall not make for yourself a graven image,"<sup>12</sup> uses the Hebrew word, "Pessel," which means any moulded, cut, graven, or engraved image, and the idolatry of those who carry such images and symbols is incomparably greater than those who bow down before the images of these gods I have described, which nonetheless is forbidden by the law of God, on penalty of death.<sup>13</sup> But the difference with the Pythagoreans, Academics and Pagans who practised such things in the clearest conscience is noteworthy. For they were not witches, even though they were idolators, thinking that they were worshiping God, and worthily serving Him by such means. But certainly those people are witches who know that it is forbidden, and know that the Devil is the author and inventor of such wickednesses, and nevertheless practise them.

Let us proceed then in detail, and as soberly as possible go through the means which are unlawful, so as to beware of them, and to consider them carefully for the occasion when one will sit in judgment on those who use them. Hence I find myself somewhat in a quandary. For to show the means and the words which must be used, would be to teach what ought to be buried in eternal oblivion. And also to transmit in an incomprehensible word the impiety which is committed in such a case, does not benefit either the ignorant whom one must warn to beware of the Pit, nor judges who wish to be instructed on the importance of the crime, so as not to pronounce sentence without full understanding. And especially in these times, when the towns, villages, fields and the natural elements are infected with such poison, including even children, so that it would be impossible for me to note a hundredth of the impieties which are committed, and which I do not wish to know—and even if I knew them, I would want to suppress them. But I will set down something in writing concerning what I have read about it in written reports, or from trials which have come forward, although evil spirits every hour invent new sciences, new wickednesses. Now Weyer, who causes himself to be called "defender of witches,"<sup>14</sup> cannot excuse himself of an extreme impiety, of having put in his book the most despicable formulas imaginable,

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<sup>12</sup>Ex. 20:4; Lev. 26:1; Dt. 5:8.

<sup>13</sup>Ex. 20:4-5, 23; 34:17; Lev. 19:4; 26:1; Dt. 4:15-19, 23-24; 27:15.

<sup>14</sup>On Weyer, see above, Book 1, note 95.

so that while on the surface he speaks ill of the Devil and his inventions, nevertheless he teaches them and works directly with them, even writing down symbols and words which his master Agrippa would not publish as long as he was alive. This is why I have, as much as it has been possible for me, covered and hidden what must be buried in oblivion, and satisfy myself that judges know what deserves punishment, and the ignorant do not fall into the snares that this good protector has prepared to trick them and to lure them to Satan's line....

Twenty years ago I happened to be in one of the foremost houses of Paris, when in the presence of several distinguished people, a young man made a sieve move without touching it, and without any other mystery, except by saying certain French words which I shall not write down, and repeating them several times. But as proof that an evil spirit was with that person, someone else in his absence tried to do it, uttering the same words, and nothing happened. As for me, I maintain that it is an impiety. For first it is blasphemy against God to swear by any other than Him, which he did. In the second place, it is a diabolical means, since it cannot be done naturally, and it is forbidden by the law of God. And to claim that the virtue of the words effects something here makes it obvious that it is a diabolical trickery, which evil spirits are accustomed to use to trap the ignorant, and little by little to guide them toward their school. Even Giovanni Pico della Mirandola writes that barbarous and incomprehensible words have more power in magic than those which are understood.<sup>15</sup>

There is no village peasant who does not know that by means of a verse from the Psalms, which I shall not write down, being pronounced while one churns butter, it becomes impossible to make any. And I remember, while at Chelles in Valois, a young lackey prevented the chambermaid of the lodging from making her butter. She threatened to have him whipped to make him remove the spell, and he did. Then after saying the same verse backwards, immediately the butter was made, although almost a whole day had been employed in this. However, if one were to put a very small amount of sugar in it, it is quite confirmed by experience that the butter cannot coagulate. That is a natural antipathy, as for example in

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<sup>15</sup> *Conclustones*, [61] n. 21.

a similar case a bit of copper thrown into an iron furnace, prevents the iron ore from melting and it turns completely to ashes. This is why ironsmiths after lighting the fire, are careful that no one approach their forge, fearing that someone might throw copper into it.

But we may ask if it is lawful to utter a passage from Scripture, such as saying a line from the Psalms when one goes to bed in order to wake up at whatever time one wants. And although the line is meant to incite David to pray and to sing the praises of God, nonetheless I shall not write it, because it is wrong to give a certain force to words, when one need only then to give it some credence. This always induces people to go further, and through such beginnings to fall headlong into superstitious and wicked things. And lest one be fooled by witches, their formulas are full of fine orisons, psalms, the name of Jesus Christ in every phrase, of the Trinity, of signs of the cross at each word, holy water, words from the canon of the Mass, "Gloria in excelsis"; "Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum"; "A porta inferi"; "Credo videre bona Domini," etc.<sup>16</sup> This is all the more contemptible, since the sacred words are applied to witchcraft.

But of all this filth there is none more frequently found everywhere, nor hardly more pernicious, than the impediment given to those who marry, which is called "tying the codpiece-string,"<sup>17</sup> including even children who make a practice of it, with such impunity and license that it is not even concealed and many boast about it. This is not a new thing, for we read in Herodotus that the king of Egypt, Amasis, was tied and prevented from relations with Ladice his wife, until he was freed by charms and solemn prayers.<sup>18</sup>

The Epicurean philosophers laugh at these marvels,<sup>19</sup> but they are astonished by these tiers of codpiece-strings who are everywhere, and they can never offer any remedy for it. That is why in

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<sup>16</sup>"Glory on high"; "Let every spirit praise the Lord"; "From the gate of hell"; "I believe I see the blessings of the Lord."

<sup>17</sup>"...which the ancient Romans called 'vaecordiam iniicere'" (1587). This was a widely feared spell, reputedly cast by a perpetrator who uttered it while tying knots in a string. It was thought to cause impotence in men and frigidity in women.

<sup>18</sup>*The History*, 2.181.

<sup>19</sup>On the Epicureans see above, Book 1, note 9.



the canon "Si per sortiarias" it is stated as follows: "Si per sortiarias, et maleficas artes, occulto, sed nunquam iniusto Dei iudicio permitte, et Diabolo praeeparante, concubitus non sequitur, ad Deum per humilem confessionem est recurrendum."<sup>20</sup> Four or five noteworthy things can be derived from this passage. First that copulation can be prevented by maleficent art, which theologians agree on, and even Thomas Aquinas, in the fourth book of the *Sentences*, Section 23, where it is written, that one can be tied with respect to one woman, and not others; and in the last chapter "De frigidis."<sup>21</sup> In second place that that is done by a secret, and nonetheless just judgment of God, who permits it. In the third place, that the Devil prepares all that. Fourthly, that one must turn to God through fastings and prayers. Now this fourth point is very noteworthy, especially since it is an impiety to try to be untied through diabolical means, as many people do. For it means having recourse to the Devil, and to diabolical superstitions. It is even more strange that young children, who have no knowledge of witchcraft, practise it by saying some words and tying a codpiece-string. And I remember having heard it said to Riolé, Lieutenant General of Blois, that a woman in church noticed a little boy tying a codpiece-string under his hat while a couple was being married. He was caught with the codpiece-string and fled. Also while at Poitiers during the "grands jours" as substitute for the King's Prosecutor in 1567,<sup>22</sup> I presided over some trials of witches. As I recounted the details of the trial to my hostess, who is a young noblewoman of good repute, she spoke at length as quite an expert in this science, in the presence of Jacques de Beauvais, court clerk,<sup>23</sup> and of myself, since we were lodged together. She said that there were more than fifty ways to tie the codpiece-string: one to impede only the husband, the other to impede only the wife, so that the one frustrated with the impotence of his partner, will commit adultery with others. Also she

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<sup>20</sup>"If through sorcery and the magical arts, the hidden but never unjust judgment of God permitting and the Devil preparing it, copulation does not follow, one must hasten back to God through humble confession."

<sup>21</sup>"On the Frigid Ones."

<sup>22</sup>The "grands jours" were sessions, similar to the assizes in England, of travelling courts set up by the Parlements in the 1560's to bring justice closer to the people involved in cases.

<sup>23</sup>"Jacques de Beauvais, then court clerk at the Parlement of Paris" (1587).

said that it was usually only the man who was tied. Then she said that one could bind for a day, for a year, forever, or at least for as long as the codpiece-string would last, unless they were freed, and there was a relationship in which one loved the other, but was mortally hated in return. The other way was that they ardently loved each other, and when they tried to become intimate, they would claw at each other and struggle wildly. In fact while at Toulouse I was told that there had been a man and a woman who were bound in this way, and nevertheless three years later they were reunited, and had fine children. What I find more bizarre is that the lady said that while the codpiece-string remained tied, one could see swellings come out on it, like boils, which were, she said, the signs of the children who would have been procreated if the people had not been bound. And one could also set this spell to prevent procreation, and not copulation. She said even that there are some people whom it is impossible to tie, while there are others who can be tied before marriage, and also after it is consummated, but with more difficulty. Moreover, she affirmed that one can prevent people from urinating, from which many people die. Indeed I knew a poor fellow who thought that he would die from it, and the one who had put the spell on him removed the impediment to make him urinate in public and to mock him. The master witch died some time later in a mad frenzy. The lady also repeated to us the various words particular to each ligature, which are neither Greek, nor Hebrew, nor Latin, nor French, nor Spanish, nor Italian; I do not believe they derive in any way either from any other language. And she specified from what leather and of what colour the codpiece-string had to be.<sup>24</sup> None of the doctors who have ever written on the topic, "De frigidis et maleficiatis,"<sup>25</sup> have understood anything as valuable as what she knew.

And since that was common in Poitou, the criminal magistrate of Niort, on the simple denunciation of a newlywed bride, who accused her neighbour of having bound her husband, had her placed in a dark dungeon in 1560, threatening that she would never get out if she did not release him. Two days later the prisoner sent word to the newlyweds that they should go to bed together. As

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<sup>24</sup>"...and how many knots, and at what point in the Mass, and what words" (1587).

<sup>25</sup>"On the Frigid and Bewitched."

soon as the judge was advised that they were released, he freed the prisoner. And we can show that neither the words nor the codpiece-string do anything, but rather that all that is guided and directed by the artifice and malice of the Devil, who makes use of men, while also aiding their wicked intentions.

And it is important to note that neither the Devil, nor his ministers the witches, have any power at all to bind the other senses, nor to prevent men from drinking and eating, as similarly they do not have the power to remove a single member from a man except the virile organs, which they do in Germany, causing the shameful parts to be hidden and withdrawn into the abdomen. In this regard Sprenger recounts that a man at Speyer believing himself deprived of his male parts, had himself examined by the doctors and surgeons, who found nothing left there, nor any kind of wound. And afterward having appeased the witch who had injured him, he was made whole.<sup>26</sup> He tells another story of a man from Regensburg who seized the witch to strangle her, and she restored him because of force.

And one ought not to marvel if the Devil makes great use of such ligatures, for first of all it prevents the procreation of the human race, which he tries as much as he can to exterminate. In the second place it removes the sacred bond of friendship between husband and wife. Thirdly, those who are bound go and commit wanton acts or adultery. It is therefore a hateful impiety, and one which merits death, as we shall argue in due course. Nevertheless most of those who make use of such ligatures have no express agreement with the Devil, and do not invoke him, but it is quite certain that he is always with such people....

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<sup>26</sup> Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *Malleus maleficarum*, trans. Montague Summers (London: Rodker, 1928; rpt. New York: Dover, 1971); and H. Institoris and J. Sprenger, *Le marteau des sorciers*, trans. A. Danet (Paris: Plon, 1973), Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 7. Like others, Bodin used "Sprenger" as shorthand for the authors of the *Malleus maleficarum*. In fact, Sprenger had rather little to do with this famous work. Its principal author was Heinrich Institoris (or Heinrich Kramer) (1430–1505), an active inquisitor in Germany. James (Jacob) Sprenger (1436–96) was a distinguished Dominican theologian who consented to have his name added to the work to give it greater authority and prestige.

## Chapter 3

### On Formal Invocations of Evil Spirits

Those who believe they do rightly to invoke an evil spirit, thinking that it is God, in order to get counsel and advice, or comfort and help as many still do in the Western Islands,<sup>27</sup> and as the ancient pagans did, are not witches any more than those who worshiped the Sun and the Moon, and other creatures. Indeed one can say that they were "idolaters." As to inquiring whether God takes pleasure in their clear conscience, I leave the judgment to God: for it is usurping too much the secrets of God, such as those did who also damned with eternal damnation Socrates, Phocion, and Aristides the Just as the most hateful sorcerers, and all with the same penalty.<sup>28</sup> The law of God says that one must prescribe the penalty in relation to the gravity of the crime.<sup>29</sup> But among the pagans those who knew the difference between good and evil spirits, and not only made sacrifices of their children, but also committed lewd acts and sodomies, and other abominable filth, against the sound natural reason which God has inscribed on our souls, in order to accomplish their ends, not only were idolaters but also witches. And all philosophers and lawmakers have condemned those men. This is why God declared to His people that He, "tore the Amorites from the earth," and other peoples who gave themselves over to such sorceries....<sup>30</sup> Now Satan does all that he can to subjugate men and

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<sup>27</sup>"...in the West Indies...and even more in the East Indies, where they worship an image of a horned devil with burning eyes, a hideous face, and a half-open mouth, claw-like feet and hands like griffins, and hands full of little images. The people worship it very piously and religiously, offering it great gifts, as the ordinary merchants report in the history of the Spaniards, as also the ancient pagans did" (1587).

<sup>28</sup>The Athenian assembly, charging the philosopher Socrates with impiety in 399 B.C., sentenced him to death by drinking hemlock. In 318 B.C., the assembly also condemned Phocion, a respected general and statesman, to die by poisoning for charges of treason. Some report also that the assembly impeached the virtuous statesman and soldier Aristides for breaking public vows and obliged him to die in exile in about 468 B.C.

<sup>29</sup>See Dt. 13 and 18:20.

<sup>30</sup>Dt. 18:9-14.

draw them back from real worship of the true God. And since God is invisible, men, beholding the admirable beauty of the sun, and the course of the heavenly lights, their virtue and their strange movement, easily let themselves slip into praising or praying to the Sun and the Moon, then later Jupiter, and the other celestial bodies....

After Satan had won that point, getting people to worship the celestial bodies, little by little he got them also to worship the elements, and fire first, which all peoples held in great reverence; then the earth, as mother and procreator of men and of all goods, without looking higher and raising the flight of intellectual contemplation up to God, Author and Creator of all things. From the elements people turned to other creatures, worshipping especially the gods they imagined to have discovered bread and wine, which they named "Bacchus" and "Ceres." The Egyptians worshiped the cow as the most useful animal in the world, by the name of "Apis."<sup>31</sup> Satan to encourage this belief appeared sometimes in the form of a cow, and then at its death people made great lamentations. And even the Israelites, having the superstition of Apis imprinted in their hearts, to represent God who had brought them out of Egypt, made a molten calf, believing that the God of heaven and earth whom they worshiped ought to be represented in the form of a calf.<sup>32</sup> Now God on penalty of death had forbidden them to give Him any form or figure whatsoever, so for this reason His anger became inflamed, and He inflicted a great punishment on the people....<sup>33</sup> Satan went even further: for great princes (affirms Solomon) after losing their children which they fervently loved, in order to retain their memory, had a painted bust made of them, and kept them as precious objects to the point of often kissing them and revering them,<sup>34</sup> as they say even of Augustus who on coming out of the Capitol kissed the image of his young nephew who had died, and was represented in the form of Cupid.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>See Herodotus, *The History*, 3.27-29. On Apis see also E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians* (New York: Dover, 1969) 1:26-27; 2:195-201, 345-51.

<sup>32</sup>Ex. 32:1-8.

<sup>33</sup>Ex. 20:4-5.

<sup>34</sup>Wis. 14:15-16.

<sup>35</sup>Suetonius writes that Livia dedicated a statue of the boy, dressed as a cupid, to Capitoline Venus, but that Augustus kept a replica in his bedroom and used to kiss it fondly whenever he entered. See *The Twelve Caesars*, "Gaius Caligula," 7.

They did the same with great princes. For we read in Herodotus that at the top of the tower of Babylon, there was a temple consecrated to Bel, king of Assyria, whom they called "Jupiter."<sup>36</sup> And after the Assyrians and Chaldeans had begun their empire, exercising monarchy over all the peoples of Asia and a good part of Africa, their sacrifices and superstitions were disseminated and maintained throughout the empire which was wondrously large. It was composed of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces or governments, one of which was Egypt, which is two times as great as the kingdom of France, and little by little it expanded into Greece. For this reason, God, speaking to Isaiah, abhors Babylon for having sent its sorceries and superstitions to all peoples.<sup>37</sup> For Porphyry writing *Ad Boethum*,<sup>38</sup> and Theodoret,<sup>39</sup> and Iamblichus<sup>40</sup> agree that all the ancient superstitions had come from Chaldea. Since when people had begun to deify men, they forged an endless number of gods. For there were no less than thirty-six thousand, as the ancients noted, besides the gods they called "Manes," the spirits of fathers, mothers and parents, which they considered gods, and to whom they made sacrifices which they ate near the tombs. Scripture speaks against these practices, and detests such wickedness where it is written, "Et comederunt sacrificia mortuorum."<sup>41</sup>

And in the shadow of such sacrifices people began to invoke the souls of the dead, which is Necromancy, and is perhaps among the first and most ancient kinds of witchcraft. For we see Isaiah condemning this impiety. "Should they," he says, "consult the dead

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<sup>36</sup>*The History*, 1.181, 183.

<sup>37</sup>Is. 47:8-15.

<sup>38</sup>In *The Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, 9 "Criteria by Which to Test the Origins of Peoples," Bodin refers to a "certain letter to Boethus," by Porphyry (c. A.D. 232-c. 303) the Neoplatonic philosopher, in which he testifies to the antiquity of the Chaldeans. Bodin may have had in mind his famous letter to Anebo of Egypt which criticizes aspects of theurgy in Chaldea, Egypt and the ancient world. See St. Augustine for Porphyry's views about Chaldean theurgy in *City of God*, 10.9-11.

<sup>39</sup>Theodoret (c. 393-c. 466) Bishop of Cyrrhus. See Bk. 1 of his *About the Cure of the Troubles of the Greeks*.

<sup>40</sup>*On the Egyptian Mysteries*, 1.1-2.

<sup>41</sup>"And they ate sacrifices made to the dead" (Ps. 106:28).

on behalf of the living?" This is in Chapter 8.<sup>42</sup> And Saul trying to learn the outcome of the last battle which he had against the Philistines, asked the judgment of the Witch of Endor, who called upon Samuel, or the effigy of Samuel, which only she saw, while Saul saw nothing.<sup>43</sup> Samuel asked him why he was disturbing his rest, since God had abandoned him; and He was his enemy and He had given the kingdom to David because he had not obeyed the word of God, and he and his children would be with him the following day. I know indeed that some theologians claim that it was the Devil, and not Samuel. But a great many believe the contrary and the text of Ecclesiasticus, Chapter 46 formally declares it, where it is stated among the praises of Samuel that he prophesied after his death, predicting the death of the king and the victory of the Philistines....<sup>44</sup>

I learned from the Sieur de Noailles, Abbé de l'Isle, and now Ambassador to Constantinople, and from a Polish gentleman named Pruinski, who was Ambassador to France, that one of the great kings of Christendom wishing to know the fate of his state, sent for a Jacobin necromancer, who said Mass, and after having consecrated the host had the head cut off a young first-born child of ten years old, and had his head placed on the host; then uttering certain words and using symbols, which it is not necessary to know, asked what he wanted. The head only answered these two words, "Vim patior."<sup>45</sup> Immediately the king went into a frenzy, crying endlessly, "Take away this head," and died mad in this way. This story is considered certain and beyond doubt in the entire kingdom where the event took place, although there were only five people present when the deed was done.

We find a story comparable to this one about the emperor Theodoric,<sup>46</sup> who after having Symmachus beheaded, when he was served the head of a large fish while dining, seemed to see the head of Symmachus, and he went into a frenzy and died soon after. And if it is true, who can doubt that God put those two words into the

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<sup>42</sup>Is. 8:19.

<sup>43</sup>I Sam. 28:3-25.

<sup>44</sup>Sir. 46:20.

<sup>45</sup>"I am suffering violence."

<sup>46</sup>Theodoric (A.D. 454-526), Emperor of the Romans and Goths, was the most important of the Gothic kings to rule in Italy.

mouth of that slain child, for he knew neither Greek nor Latin, and seeing the immediate revenge which He took on such an atrocious wickedness. It meant, moreover, that the spirit of the child, or his angel, spoke and tormented the king to avenge himself of such an outrage. For the more innocent the blood, the greater the revenge. Hence we can see a loathsome impiety in taking an innocent person, male and first-born (whom God in His law wants consecrated to Him)<sup>47</sup> and sacrificing him to the Devil to learn future events. This is not a new impiety but a very ancient one....

I met a young male prisoner in 1569 who had killed his wife in anger, and who had been granted pardon, which was confirmed, who nevertheless complained that he could not get any rest since he was beaten by her every night. Still, it is quite well known that that does not happen with every murder. It is true that there are some who believe that if the one who is killed dies without a desire for vengeance, that such a case does not occur. But all of antiquity remarked, and Plato wrote in the first book of the *Laws*, that the souls of the murdered often pursue the murderers.<sup>48</sup> Marsilio Ficino in the sixteenth book of *The Immortality of Souls*,<sup>49</sup> Chapter 5, and Lucretius,<sup>50</sup> and Virgil in Book Four of the *Aeneid* hold it to be true,<sup>51</sup> and judges have confirmed by countless judgments, that when the murderer passed over the dead body without touching it, suddenly the wound bled. Many doctors in civil and canon law concur on this point, and accept this supposition as an argument and a strong conjecture against the accused, sufficient to apply the question. And murderers have often been recognized by this means....

It was not long ago, and within the memory of our fathers, that when one wanted to canonize those who were reputed to be saintly, one read a certain book full of invocations publicly at night. This

<sup>47</sup>Ex. 13:1-2, 12-13; 34:19-20; Nu. 3:13; 8:17; 18:15.

<sup>48</sup>Actually, Plato treats this myth in *Laws* 9.865.

<sup>49</sup>See *Théologie platonicienne de l'immortalité des âmes*, trans. R. Marcel, 3 vols. (Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1964-70).

<sup>50</sup>Lucretius analyses people's guilt for past sins and their fear of Hell in Book 3 of *The Way Things Are* (*De rerum natura*).

<sup>51</sup>In the *Aeneid*, 4.384-90 and 670-72, Dido announces that her tormented soul will pursue Aeneas who abandoned her and thus caused her to commit suicide.



book was called the "Grimoire,"<sup>52</sup> and it was kept secret, on which I will make no judgment, nor on anything done piously and with good intention. But certainly I consider it an abominable thing to use Necromancy and to ask the Devil, the father of lies, the truth, or about hidden things, and even about the salvation of men. For most of these souls, whom necromancers think they attract by sacrifices, are nothing but devils. This is why those who keep dead people's heads, unless they are doctors or surgeons, are engaged in the practice of necromancers. Joachim Camerarius said that not long ago he saw someone who got the Devil to speak through a deceased head.<sup>53</sup>

Now since well fed people and those who were fearful were horrified to visit graves at night and practise such witchcraft, Satan found for them other ways to have himself worshiped, by putting himself into the bodies of those who frequented temples, and speaking through them. This happened most commonly with virgins who were young witches fashioned for such impieties, who fasted and prayed with great devotion in the cave of Apollo, and slept there at night (for the greater the impiety, the more it is covered with the veil of religion and piety) then the Devil entered the body of her who had spent the night in this way, and the next day she divined the things which people had asked, using words and answers which almost always had a double meaning. Such women were called "Pythian priestesses" and sometimes "Sibyls"....<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, all the sibyls were pagans and infidels, of whom Holy Scripture never made mention, and who were never accepted by the Church nor approved by any council whatsoever, although there were more than six hundred councils. But Lactantius, finding that pagans disregarded the Bible, attempted to make his message understood through the Sibylline prophecies, contrived perhaps at whim, in which the pagans believed.<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless people believed

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<sup>52</sup>"Grimoires" were handbooks of magic, very popular in Bodin's time.

<sup>53</sup>Joachim Camerarius the Elder was known for his commentary on Aristotle, *Ethicorum Aristotelis Nicomachtorum explicatio* (1578). He also published a *Natura daemonum*.

<sup>54</sup>On Pythian priestesses, see above Book 1, note 84. Virgil in *Aeneid* 6.42-102 describes the prophetic ravings of the Sibyl of Cumae.

<sup>55</sup>Caecilius Firmianus, known as Lactantius (c. A.D. 250-c. 317) was a professor of rhetoric who became a Christian in his later years. In his greatest

they were doing rightly to attract pagans at that time to the Christian religion by any means available, a view which has been rejected and justly condemned; for one must not mix the prophecies inspired by the mouth of God with the Sibylline prophecies inspired in the infidel pagans by Satan....

Sometimes also the Devil killed the people who visited those caves if they did not ask anything. This is why Fernel relates the story of a sorcerer who had called up a demon, who after he had come, killed him.<sup>56</sup> His assistant asked the Devil why he had killed him and he answered that it was because he had not asked him anything. For Satan wants to be called upon, beseeched, and worshiped by men, and sometimes he tells them the truth in order to be believed when he lies. Or if he does not know the truth, he will speak by circumlocutions and obscurities. But the law of God forbids one to inquire of anyone but Him about the future, nor to believe in it even though it come to pass what evil spirits and soothsayers have prophesied would happen.<sup>57</sup>

We shall conclude then that one must not hear nor believe anything in the way of prophecies except the word of God, or what is wholly in conformity with it—not even if the Angel of heaven had said it; and much less if it is inspired by Satan. Now although the Christians had pillaged and razed the temples of the pagans, especially that of Apollo, still Satan did not stop exercising his power with new idolatries and sorceries which are as much or more frequent than ever. It is true that in ancient times he was worshiped under the guise of religion, and now he comes too often without

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work of Christian apologetic, *The Divine Institutes* (A.D. 304–13), he refers to Sibylline oracles and prophecies, as well as to the Old Testament and Hermes Trismegistus for predictions about the coming Messiah (4.6–21) and in 7.14–27 he discusses the imminent end of the world while referring to Sibylline Oracles, Hermes and Christian eschatological scriptures.

<sup>56</sup>Jean-François Fernel, or Fernelius (1497–1558), was a famous physician of Henry II, King of France, and author of a *Physiology* in seven books, and a treatise *De abditis rerum causis* (*On the Hidden Causes of Things*) (1548). He was not an innovator, but attempted to synthesize and organize classical medicines.

<sup>57</sup>"And when they say to you, 'Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and mutter,' should not a people consult their God?" Is. 8:19. Cf. also Gen. 40:8; Lev. 19:26, 31; 20:6; Mic. 3:5–8; Jer. 14:14; 23:9–40.

calling him, and unseen he flies everywhere to deceive and destroy the human race. For although one who does not call upon or invoke the evil spirit, but receives him and presents himself to him, is certainly not as wicked as the one who calls upon him, prays to him, and welcomes him, nevertheless both deserve death, and each one is a real sorcerer.

Cases of people possessed and assailed by the Devil, are encountered very often in Italy. Almost all are women and one must restrain them as frenzied and deranged maniacs. In fact there were eighty-two of them in Rome in 1554 that a monk from France tried to exorcise; but he was not able to achieve anything. The next day the devils when asked why they had possessed them, answered that the Jews had sent them into the bodies of these women (who were mostly Jewesses) angry, they said, at the fact that they had been baptised. Consequently, the Pope who mortally hated the Jews,<sup>58</sup> would have banished them, if a Jesuit had not argued that men did not have power to send the Devil into a person's body, which is certainly true. Nor does the Devil himself have this power if God does not allow him; but by God's permission it can be done. Nevertheless the demoniacs spoke various languages that they had never learned. And sometimes the evil spirit speaks, as from within the stomach, when the woman's mouth is closed, sometimes with the tongue stretched half a foot out of the mouth, sometimes through the shameful parts. And on this point all the Atheists who deny that there are any devils at all, remain silent. For they concede that with the mouth closed, or the tongue stretched out and motionless, one cannot speak, and even less through the shameful parts. And they cannot claim either that melancholy teaches one to speak Greek, Hebrew, or Latin to a woman who has never learned anything, something which is seen in those who are beset by evil spirits. With respect to this, Fernel, the foremost man of his time in medicine, writes in the sixteenth chapter of *De abditis rerum causis*, that he saw a young, ignorant boy in a mad fury who nevertheless spoke Greek. He said then that he was possessed by an evil spirit.

There are also some people who are tied up by the Devil and whom it is impossible to free, rather one must break or cut the bond. And in fact there is a woman at Mesnil, Madame Rosse, near

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<sup>58</sup>Paul IV, Pope from 1555 to 1559. He was very unpopular, as a result of his fanatical devotion to the Inquisition and his extreme hatred of Protestantism.

Dammartin, who began from eight years old to be tied up by the evil spirit who attached her sometimes to a tree, other times to the foot of her bed, other times to the manger in the barn, or it tied her two hands together, one over the other with a rope or with a length of wicker, or with the tail of a horse or yarn. And that happened so suddenly, that it was done before one could turn one's eyes to see how it was done. Doctor Picard and other theologians saw her, and did everything they could for her deliverance, but all to no avail. Then Houllier, a doctor, mocking the theologians said at the outset that it was a disease of melancholy. But afterward, they saw the mystery with their own eyes, along with a vast number of people, and while the girl was between two or three women. Suddenly they saw her cry out and immediately she was found with both hands bound, so that it was impossible to free her without cutting the tie. He confessed that there was an evil spirit. No one saw anything except the girl who saw a white cloud when the evil spirit came to tie her....

Sometimes a man is compelled and assailed without any illness, and he prophesies, as Saul did when he was agitated by the Devil, who sent him into a furor and made him prophesy.<sup>59</sup> Scripture uses the word "prophesy," as we have described above. And it often happens that if the witch does not obey the evil spirit which is tormenting him, and sending him into a fury, sometimes it kills him. As I heard two years ago, there was a gentleman near Villers-Cotterêts who had a familiar spirit in a ring, which he wanted to use at his pleasure, and subjugate it like a slave, having bought it at a very high price from a Spaniard. And since it lied to him most often, he threw the ring into the fire, believing that he was also throwing the spirit in, as if it could be enclosed. Since then he has gone mad, and has become tormented by the Devil....

Now it has happened to many witches, when they promised and swore alliance with Satan, if they become tired of his company, and they do not turn to God with a true repentance they are beaten and tormented at night, and wish only to die. Jacob Sprenger, Inquisitor of the Faith at Cologne, has left a written record of this, having put

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<sup>59</sup>Saul prophesied when he met the company of prophets after being anointed king by Samuel (1 Sam. 10:9-11). Bodin, however, would be referring here to Saul's deep trance when he prophesied before Samuel while attempting to kill David in Naioth at Ramah (1 Sam. 19:23-24).

to death a great number of witches.<sup>60</sup> For my part, I know an individual (I will not name him because he is still living) who revealed to me that he was in great suffering from a spirit which was following him, and which showed itself to him in many forms. At night it pulled him by the nose, woke him up, and often beat him, and although he begged it to let him rest, it would not stop, and it tormented him constantly, saying to him, "Command me to do something." He had come to Paris, thinking that he would leave it behind or that he could find a remedy for his trouble, under the pretext of a trial which he had come to appeal. Indeed I noted that he did not dare to reveal everything to me. I asked him what benefit he had gained from submitting to such a master. He told me that he thought he would attain riches, and honours, and learn secret things, but the spirit had always deceived him, and for every truth it told three lies; nor had the spirit ever made him one doubloon richer, nor given him the enjoyment of the one he loved, which was the principal motive which had lead him to invoke it. And it had not taught him the virtues of plants, nor of animals, nor of stones, nor other secret sciences, as he hoped, and it only spoke to him about taking revenge on his enemies, or of doing some cunning or wicked trick. I told him that it was easy to get rid of such a master, and that as soon as it came, to call the name of God to his aid, and that he should devote himself to serving God with all his heart. Since then I have not seen the person, nor been able to learn if he had repented. He called his spirit, his "little master." For Satan in order to deceive men has always sought euphemisms, such as "familiar spirit," and "white demon," and "little master," because the words "Satan" and "Devil" are odious. Most sorcerers call him "little master," as I read in the book by the Italian, Paolo Grillando, who put many of them to death....<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Paolo Grillando was a judge in the Italian Inquisition, and author of *De haereticis et sortilegits*, a study of heretics and witches, published around 1525. This text was one of the early influential demonological works.

## Chapter 4

On Those Who Renounce God and Their Religion  
by Express Agreement, and Whether They Are  
Bodily Transported by Demons

The differences between witches are very significant indeed, and they must be well understood on account of the diversity of judgments which have to be given. But the most detestable witches are those who renounce God, and His service; or if they do not worship the true God, but have some superstitious religion, renounce that, in order to give themselves to the Devil, by express agreement. For there is no religion so superstitious that it does not restrain men in some way within the confines of the law of nature: to obey fathers and mothers, and magistrates, and also to avoid doing harm to anyone.

Now Satan wants to tear from the hearts of men all fear of committing offense. And as for the express agreement, it is sometimes made verbally, and without writing. Or sometimes Satan, to be sure of his people, makes them write down their obligation and sign it if they can write, before they can obtain what they ask. Sometimes he makes them sign with their blood, in the manner of the ancients who used this practice to confirm oaths and friendships....Not long ago, that is, in 1571, among those who were denounced as witches by the "blind one," who was hanged at Paris, there was a lawyer whom I shall not name, who confessed that he had transferred his fealty to the Devil, renouncing God, and had signed it with his own blood. Moreover, it has been verified by many trials that the mutual contract between the Devil and the witch sometimes involves a term of one year, two years, or other periods of time. And one person may ask for the power to cure toothaches, and another the quartan fever, or some other illness, on condition that they kill or cause death to others, or perform other abominable sacrifices.

If the Devil distrusts those who give themselves to him forever in order to accomplish something, so that they will not leave his service he is not content to have them formally renounce God. Rather he also wants to mark them, as Daneau noted in his dialogue on witches;<sup>62</sup> but those who willingly dedicate themselves to him

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<sup>62</sup>Lambert Daneau was a French Protestant minister who published a

and whom he knows are firm in their promises, he does not mark, says the same author.

As for these marks, they are certainly a sure sign, which judges frequently see unless they are well hidden. I learned from a gentleman of Valois, that there are some who have the mark between their lips, others under their eyelids, as Daneau wrote, others on their backside when they fear discovery, and frequently on the right shoulder, and women on the thigh or under the armpit or on the shameful parts.

Aubert de Poitiers, a lawyer of the Parlement, told me that he had been present at the examination of evidence in the trial of a sorcerer Mareschal of Château Thierry, who was found marked on the right shoulder, and the following day the Devil had erased his mark. In a similar case, Master Claude Dessay, the King's Prosecutor at Ribemont, told me that he had seen the marks of the witch Jeanne Harvillier, of whose trial he sent me the complete record, and on the following day the mark was found erased. The one who was condemned by the City Provost in 1571, who was called Trois-eschelles du Maine, having obtained immunity in order to persuade him to reveal his accomplices, when he was led into the assemblies, recognised those whom he had seen at the sabbaths, or by some other mark which they know amongst themselves. And to verify his statements, he said that they were marked, and that one would find the mark by undressing them. In fact it was found that they bore a mark like the paw or track of a hare, which had no feeling, so that witches do not feel the punctures when they are pierced right to the bone in the location of the mark. But there was such a great number of them, both rich and poor, that they enabled each other to escape. And so this vermin has always multiplied, in a perpetual testimony to the impiety of the accused and the laxness of the judges who had the responsibility to conduct their trials.

It is stranger still that most witches are not satisfied to renounce God, but also have themselves rebaptized in the name of the Devil, and given another name, which is the reason why witches usually have two names. And it is important to note that it takes only one witch to make five hundred. For to do what is most pleasing to the Devil, and have peace with him, when one has given oneself to

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demonological text, *Les sorciers*, in 1574. The Devil's mark was widely believed in, as part of the pact between witches and the Devil.

him, means attracting many subjects. And usually the wife attracts her husband, the mother leads her daughter, and sometimes the whole family carries on for many centuries as it has been proven by countless trials. In ancient times there were families in Africa and in Italy who caused death by looking at or praising people....The Italians also say when they see that someone is being praised enthusiastically: "Please do not give him the evil eye," which witches do intentionally and unintentionally. For just as praise is proper to God alone, so it is certain that if man is praised without relating the praise to the Creator, it comes to pass that those who are praised, rejoice too much while glorifying themselves, and then Satan carries them off full sail toward the abyss of their inevitable ruin.

But let us pass on. Doctor Grillando, an Italian, and the five Inquisitors who conducted the trials of many witches in Germany and in Italy, are in agreement with the trials carried out in this realm of those who were convicted. And especially at Lyons, Loches, Le Mans, Poitiers, Senlis, and Paris. Jean Chartier, who composed the history of Charles VII,<sup>63</sup> says that Guillaume Edeline, Doctor of the Sorbonne, was condemned as a witch on Christmas Eve, 1453, and he confessed that he had been transported many times at night to the witches' assemblies, where he renounced God, and worshiped the Devil in the form of a billy goat, kissing its rear. But to clarify what I said, there is no trial more remarkable than the trial of the witch of Loches, which is of recent memory. For there was a poor fellow who noticed that his wife sometimes was missing at night, and remained away a good part of the night; and about this she said that she was tending to her chores, or that she went to her neighbour's to do the washing. And when her husband had proven her guilty of lying, since he had a sinister conviction that she was engaged in debauchery, he threatened to kill her if she did not tell him where she went. Realizing herself in danger, she told him the truth, and to prove it, "If you wish," she said, "you shall come too," and she gave him some ointment, with which they both greased themselves. After a few words, the Devil transported them from Loches to the Landes of Bordeaux,<sup>64</sup> which is at least fifteen days from Loches. The fellow discovering himself in the company of a great number of unfamiliar sorcerers and witches, and devils

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<sup>63</sup>Fifteenth-century author of a history of Charles VII.

<sup>64</sup>A region of sandy plains in south-west France.



hideous to behold in human form, started to say, "My God where are we?" Immediately the company disappeared, and he found himself naked, wandering through the fields until morning, when he met some peasants who directed him to the road. Upon returning to Loches, he went straight to the criminal magistrate, who after hearing the story, arrested his wife, who confessed everything point by point, all that we have described, and without duress acknowledged her crime.

There was also at Lyons a young noblewoman a few years ago, who got up at night, and lighting the candle took a jar of ointment and spread it over herself, then with a few words she was transported away. Her lover who was in bed with her, seeing this mystery enacted, took the candle and looked everywhere. Not finding her, but just the jar of grease, out of curiosity to learn the power of the ointment did as he had seen done, and suddenly he also was transported, and found himself in the region of Lorraine with the coven of witches, where he was terrified. But as soon as he called on God to help him, the whole company disappeared, and he found himself all alone naked. He returned to Lyons where he denounced the witch, who confessed, and was condemned to be burned....

Paolo Grillando, an Italian jurisconsult who tried many witches, writes that in the year 1526 near Rome, there was a peasant who saw his wife apply grease to herself at night completely naked, and then no longer finding her in his house, on the following day he took a cudgel, and did not stop beating her until she had confessed the truth, and asked for pardon. The husband pardoned her on condition that she would take him to the assembly that she described. The next day, the wife smeared him with the grease she had, and they both found themselves heading to the assembly each one lightly riding on a billy goat. But the wife warned the man to be careful not to say the name of God, unless in mockery, or in blasphemy. For they all agree that the Devil immediately leaves the one he is carrying on the roadways, which clearly shows that the grease does nothing, and that the Devil transports them faster than a bowshot.... Now at the assembly, the wife had him stand a little apart in order to witness the whole mystery, until she had done reverence to the head of the assembly, who was pompously dressed as a prince, and accompanied by a great multitude of men and women, who all paid homage to the Master. And then he observed after the reverences, that they did a dance in a circle with their faces turned outward from the circle so that the people not seeing each

other face to face, as in ordinary dances, perhaps would not have the opportunity so easily to observe and recognize each other, and denounce the others if they were arrested by the officers of justice. When the dance was finished the tables were set out with many meats. Then the wife made her husband draw near to do reverence to the prince. He then sat down at the table with the others, and finding that the meats were not salted, and that there was no salt on the tables, he complained so much that he was brought salt, or what seemed to be, and before having tasted it he exclaimed, "Now praised be God since the salt has come." As soon as he had said, "praised be God," suddenly everything disappeared: people, meats, and tables, and he was left alone, completely naked, very cold, and not knowing where he was. After daybreak he found some shepherds whom he asked where he was, who told him that he was on the hillside of Benevento. This is the finest estate of the Pope beneath a great walnut tree, a hundred miles away from Rome. He was forced to beg food and clothing, and on the eighth day he arrived back at his home very thin and wasted. Then he went and denounced his wife who was arrested, and he denounced others who were burned alive, after confessing the truth....

I have remarked in many accounts and trials that the locations of witches' assemblies are distinctive and indicated by some trees or crosses: at the trial of the witches of Poitiers<sup>65</sup> it was learned that they assembled near a certain cross known in the whole region, and at which for a hundred years witches had assembled, as Judge Salvert told me was discovered from old records going back for more than a hundred years. And at Maubert near Toulouse, it was verified that the witches' assemblies took place at the local cross, and they danced as they customarily do in other spots. One of them named Béronde was about to be burned when she was brought before a young noblewoman who wanted to deny that she had been there, and she said to her "Don't you know that the last time when we performed the dance at the village cross, you were carrying the jar of poisons?" This witch Béronde was burned....

As for being transported, I have read that it takes place after the ointment, and often without ointment: sometimes on a billy goat, sometimes on a flying horse, sometimes on a broom, sometimes on

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<sup>65</sup> "...at the trial of the witches of Poitiers who were burned in the year 1564..." (1587).

a pole, other times without any pole or beast. Some go naked, as do most in order to grease themselves, as we have described; others dressed, some at night, others by day. But usually at night, and most often between Monday and Tuesday night....It was not long ago that in the region of Maine many were burned who also confessed going often to the Sabbath at night, and doing the same things which I have recounted, with which the court records are filled of late, and the trial was moved to many locations. I will cut this shorter on account of it being quite a well known matter, because there were not less than thirty witches who denounced each other through mutual envy. Their confessions agreed about the transporting, the worship of the Devil, the dances and the renunciations of all religion.

We also have within recent memory the trials of the witches of Valéry in Savoy, conducted in 1574, of which Daneau has given quite an ample summary, in which one can see that the Devil on every occasion is consistent with himself. For in the confessions of the witches of Valéry and their comparison one hears of bodily transport on just a pole without ointment, then the abjuration of God, the worship of the Devil, the dances, feasts, and the kissing of the shameful parts of Satan in the guise of a beast, then the obligation to commit a thousand evils, and the powders given to everyone. One witch had performed this mystery for thirty years.

And sometimes the Devil showed himself in the guise of a very black and hideous man. As for the meats and the people who vanished, we have a testimony concerning this in the work of Philostratus of Lemnos, a Greek author. He wrote that Apollonius of Tyana having entered a house where sorcerers had such feasts, harshly threatened them, and suddenly everything disappeared, tables, meats, people and furniture, and there was left only a young man whom the witches had newly seduced.<sup>66</sup>

And without going so far, many people who are still quite alive, know that one of the Counts of Aspremont welcomed and entertained magnificently everyone who came to his home, and they had great satisfaction of exquisite meats, of service and of an abundance of all things. Nevertheless, when the men and the horses had left

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<sup>66</sup>See the famous story of Menippus and the lamia in *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 4.25.

his home, they died of hunger and thirst. This I learned from several people who are still living....

I am including a great many authorities from many peoples and nations so that the truth will be made clearer, and by so many examples experienced so often, not by dreams or reveries, but by contradictory judgments, by coaccusations of accomplices, recriminations, depositions, convictions, confrontations, confessions, condemnations, executions. Among these there is a memorable one from Germany which Joachim de Cambray cites in his book *Natura daemonum*,<sup>67</sup> which tells that a woodcutter while going at night through a wood, heard the noise and the dances. He followed on and drew near to where he noticed some silver goblets, which he made off with after all the witches and devils suddenly disappeared. He took them the following day to the magistrate, who summoned those people whose insignia the goblets bore, and they denounced the others who were executed.

The other example is even more remarkable of an execution which was carried out at Poitiers in 1564, which was described to me while I was present there. Three sorcerers and a witch were condemned and burned alive, after being convicted of having caused the death of many people and animals. They confessed that they did this, moreover, by means of the Devil who furnished them with powders to bury beneath the entrances of stables, sheep-folds and houses and they declared that three times a year they went to the general assembly where many witches congregated near a cross at a crossroads, which served as a sign. Also present there was a great black billy goat which spoke like a person to them, and they danced around the goat. Then each kissed his rear while holding a burning candle. After that the billy goat was consumed in fire and each one took some of the ash to kill a steer or cow of his enemy. For one it was to kill an ewe, for another a horse, for another to induce languor, for another to bring death to people. And finally the Devil said to them with a terrible voice these words, "Take revenge or you will die!" Following that each returned as they had come with the aid of the Devil. It is important to note that they were obliged to go three times a year to make this sacrifice to the Devil, mimicking the sacrifice of the he-goat described by God's law in

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<sup>67</sup>On Joachim de Cambray or Camerarius, see above, Book 2, note 53.

Leviticus, Chapter 16,<sup>68</sup> and the commandment which declared that all males had to appear before God three times a year, at the three solemn feasts....<sup>69</sup>

I also read the summary of the trial of the witches of Potez, which was communicated to me by Master Adrian de Fer, Lieutenant General of Laon, which reported their confession, how they were transported near Longny at the Frenquis mill by pronouncing certain words, which I shall not set down, with a broom or chimney-cleaner, and they found the others who each had a chimney-cleaner in hand, and with them six devils who are named there. And after renouncing God, they kissed the devils in human form, though extremely hideous to behold, and worshiped them, then they danced with their brooms in their hand, and finally the devils copulated with the women. Then they asked for powders to destroy cattle, and it was decreed that they should return there eight days later, which was Monday after sunset, and they were there for about three hours and then taken back.

I had forgotten to mention that each witch must render an account of the evil he did, on pain of being soundly beaten. As for this last point, Bouvin, Bailiff of Châteauroux, while deputy for the region of Berry at Blois, told me that he had burned a witch denounced by her daughter whom the mother had taken to the assemblies, and she had presented her to the Devil for instruction. Among other villanies, she confessed that they danced around the billy goat and finally that each gave an account of what he had done since the last assembly, and on what he had used the powder. One said that he killed a child, another a horse, another that he made a tree die. And because one was discovered who had done nothing since the last assembly, she got several raps with a cudgel on the soles of the feet, along with mockery and laughter from all the others. And he said that they often had to get new powders. This conforms with what I read in another trial of a witch who confessed that she got no rest unless she did some evil deed every day, even just break a vessel. But one day when her mistress caught her deliberately breaking a crockery vessel, she confessed the truth, and asked that she be put to death because she said that she had no peace unless she caused someone to die, or committed some evil.

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<sup>68</sup>Lev. 16:5-28.

<sup>69</sup>Ex. 23:17.

This shows clearly that it is not the powder, but Satan, who seeks only the destruction of the human race, and who wishes to be served and worshiped often. For the powder is buried very often one or two feet beneath the ground. Also I remember that Fournier, a learned man, and Councilor of Orléans, told me that the widespread and well-known rumour was that witches' assemblies were carried out near Cléry, where the devils reported everything that had been done in various districts, because they record in detail all the actions of men. This is the means witches use to foretell the future. The witch whom I described did not appeal the sentence, saying that she preferred to die than to be tormented more by the Devil, who gave her no rest.

But it is important to note that there is no assembly carried on where they do not dance, and according to the confession of the witches of Longny while dancing they would cry, "har, har, Devil, Devil, jump here, jump there, play here, play there." And the others would chant "sabbath, sabbath," that is to say, the feast and day of rest, raising their hands and brooms up high to testify and give a sure witness of gladness and that willingly they serve and worship the Devil, and also to mimic the worship which is due to God... But the witches' dances make men frenzied and women abort, so it can be said that the "volta," which witches brought from Italy into France, besides the insolent and lewd movements, has the curse that a countless number of murders and abortions result from it. This is a matter of the highest consequence for a state, and something one should prevent in the most rigorous way. And since the city of Geneva hates dances more than anything, Satan had taught a young girl from Geneva to make any person dance and jump about, whom she touched with an iron wand which he had given her. And she mocked the magistrates claiming that they could not put her to death; and she never wished to repent until she was condemned to death. I learned the facts from a man who was there. But he told me that as soon as she was arrested she was seized with fear and violent trembling, saying that her master was abandoning her, and that he had promised her that she would not die, and that she was the only one who could see him.

Concerning the frenzy, one sees clearly that all frenzied and deranged people engage in such dances and violent leaps. And there is no more expedient means to cure them than to make them dance calmly and in a slow rhythm, as they do in Germany to

madmen who are stricken with the illness named after Saint Vitus, and Modestus.<sup>70</sup>

To end this chapter I will give the conclusion of the dispute resolved before Emperor Sigismund, which Ulrich Molitor wrote in a little book which he composed on this topic, in which it was determined through innumerable examples and judgments, that Satan really transported witches in body and in soul.<sup>71</sup> Thus it would be mocking the Gospel story to call into doubt whether the Devil transports witches from one spot to another, since it is stated in the Gospel that Satan transported Jesus Christ to the top of the temple, then onto a mountain.<sup>72</sup> For the largest and soundest body of theologians believe that he really was transported body and soul...

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<sup>70</sup>St. Vitus's dance is a special form of rheumatic fever (Sydenham's chorea) which causes involuntary twitching or writhing movements. The term is also commonly applied to a range of neurological disorders.

<sup>71</sup>Ulrich Molitor, a jurist from Constance and professor at the University of Pavia, published *De lamis et phitonictis mulieribus (On Female Sorcerers and Witches)* in 1489. For a modern translation of this work see *Des sorcières et des devtneresses*, Bibliothèque magique des XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles, 1 (Paris: Librairie Critique Emile Nourry, 1926). On the witches' transport see Ch. 5, 12.

<sup>72</sup>Mt. 4:1-11.

## Chapter 6

### On Lycanthropy and Whether Spirits Can Change Men into Beasts<sup>73</sup>

...The most difficult thing to believe, and the most wonderful, is the changing of the human figure into a beast and even more from one body into another. Nonetheless, the trials conducted of witches and the divine and human histories of all peoples, are undeniable proof. We read in the book of the five Inquisitors of witches, which I have mentioned quite often, that a witch named Staufer in the territory of Bern, who had many enemies, often escaped suddenly from their midst, and could not be killed except in his sleep. He left two disciples, the greatest witches in Germany, Hoppo and Stadlin, who brought tempests, lightning and violent thunderstorms.<sup>74</sup> And without going very far from this realm, we have a trial conducted at the Parlement of Dôle, and the writ issued on January 18, 1573,<sup>75</sup> against Gilles Garnier from Lyons....The aforesaid Garnier on Saint Michael's day, while in the form of a werewolf, seized a young girl of ten or twelve years old near the Serre woods, in a vineyard in the wine region of Chastenoy, a quarter of a league from Dôle. There he killed her with his paw-like hands and his teeth, and ate the flesh of her thighs and arms, and took some to his wife. And in the same form a month later, he seized another girl, and killed her. He intended to eat her had he not been prevented by three people, as he confessed. And fifteen days afterward he strangled a young child of ten years old in the vineyard of Gredisans, and ate the flesh of his thighs, legs and abdomen. And later in the form of a man and not of a wolf, he killed another boy of twelve or thirteen years old in the woods of the village of Pérouse, with the intention of eating him, had he not been prevented, as he confessed without force or constraint. He was condemned to be burned alive, and the sentence was carried out.

One finds still another trial conducted at Besançon, by the Inquisitor Jean Boin in December 1521, reported in France, Italy

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<sup>73</sup>This is one of the most controversial sections of this work. Most orthodox authorities denied the reality of the transformation of humans into animals, believing it to be a devilish illusion. They roundly condemned Bodin's views.

<sup>74</sup>*Malleus*, Q. 1, Ch. 15.

<sup>75</sup>In the 1587 text this is amended to 1574.



and Germany, and which Weyer, the defender of witches described at length in Book 6, Chapter 13 of the *Prestiges*.<sup>76</sup> For this reason I shall be brief. The accused were Pierre Burgot and Michel Verdun, who confessed to having renounced God, and sworn to serve the Devil. And Michel Verdun took Burgot to the edge of the Châtel-Charlon, where each one had a candle of green wax which gave a dark, blue flame, and they performed the dances and sacrifices to the Devil. Then after spreading ointment on themselves they were turned into wolves who ran with an incredible swiftness. Then they were changed into men, and often changed back into wolves, and coupled with she-wolves with the same pleasure they normally had with women. They also confessed, that is Burgot did, to having killed a young seven year old boy with his wolfish paws and teeth, and he would have eaten him, except that the peasants gave chase to him. And Michel Verdun confessed to having killed a young girl who was picking peas in a garden, and he was pursued by the Seigneur de la Cuvée. Furthermore, both had eaten four other girls besides; he noted the time, the place, and the respective ages of the children. And he reported that by sprinkling people with a powder they caused their death.

I recall that the King's General Prosecutor, Master Bourdin, recounted another case to me, which had been sent to him from the Low Countries, with the whole trial summary signed by the judge and the court clerks. It concerned a werewolf who was wounded in the thigh by an arrow, and who later was found in his bed with the arrow which was pulled out of him, now that he was changed back into the form of a man; and the arrow was recognized by the one who had shot it, and the time and place was confirmed by the person's confession.

Job Fincel in Book 11 of the *Marvels* writes that there was also at Padua a lycanthrope who was caught and his wolf paws were cut off and at the same instant he found himself with his arms and feet cut off.<sup>77</sup> This corroborates the trial conducted against the

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<sup>76</sup>After the long and grisly account condensed by Bodin, Weyer used the following chapter to refute the story and ridicule the belief in the transformation of men into wolves. As he argues in dealing with witches, he states that the whole thing is only an illusion caused by the Devil.

<sup>77</sup>Job Fincelius, *Wunderzeichen, warbaffte Beschreibung und grundlich Verzeichnung schrecklicher Wunderzeichen und Geschichten* (1556).

witches of Vernon who usually gathered and assembled in an old ruined château, in the guise of a great number of cats. There were four or five men who decided to spend the night there, where they were attacked by the multitude of cats. One of the men was killed, and the others all scratched up, however they wounded several cats which were later found changed into women and severely wounded. And since that seemed unbelievable the investigation was abandoned. But the five Inquisitors who were experienced in such cases left a written deposition that there were three witches near Strasbourg who attacked a labourer in the guise of three great cats. In defending himself he wounded and chased off the cats who were found ailing in bed in the form of badly wounded women at that very moment. When questioned about this they accused the one who had hit them. He told the judges the time, and the place that he had been attacked by cats, and that he had wounded them. Pierre Mamor in a brief treatise he wrote about witches says that he witnessed this change of men into wolves when he was in Savoy.<sup>78</sup> And Henry of Cologne in the treatise which he wrote, *De lamits*, considers it beyond doubt.<sup>79</sup> And Ulrich Molitor in a little book which he dedicated to Emperor Sigismund, records the debate which was held before the emperor.<sup>80</sup> He says that it was concluded for strong reasons, and with the experience of countless examples, that such a transformation was real, and he claims himself that he saw a lycanthrope at Constance, who was charged, convicted, sentenced and then put to death following his confession. There are available several books published in Germany, which attest that one of the greatest kings of Christendom, who died not long ago, often was changed into a wolf, and he was reputed to be one of the greatest sorcerers in the world. Yet Greece and Asia are even more infected with this plague than are the peoples of the West, as our merchants report, and they have to confine and imprison those who change this way into wolves. And in fact in 1542 in the empire of Sultan Suliman, there was such a great number of werewolves in the city of Constantinople, that the emperor accompanied by his guard went out in arms and rounded up one hundred and fifty of them, who vanished from the city of Constantinople in view of all

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<sup>78</sup>Petrus Mamor, *Flagellum maleficarum* (1490).

<sup>79</sup>A probable reference to Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa who was from Cologne.

<sup>80</sup>On Ulrich Molitor see above, Book 2, note 71.

the people. The story is related by Job Fincel in Book 2 of the *Marvels*, and in this all other peoples concur.

The Germans call them "Wer Woolf," and the French "loup-garous," the Picards "loups varous" which is derived from "lupos varios," for the French put "g" for "v." The Greeks call them "Lycanthropes," and "Mormolycies." The Latins label them "varios" and "versipelles," as Pliny noted while describing this change from wolves into men.<sup>81</sup> François Phoebus, Count of Foix, in his book *On Hunting*,<sup>82</sup> explains that this word "garoux" means "gardez-vous," "beware," which Judge Fauchet pointed out to me. This is quite probable: for the other natural wolves hunt animals, but these ones more often men. This is why one can say, "Beware!"

Pomponazzi<sup>83</sup> and Paracelsus,<sup>84</sup> among the foremost philosophers of their time, believe that the transmutation of men into beasts is a certainty. Caspar Peucer,<sup>85</sup> a learned man and son-in-law of Philip Melanchthon, writes that he had always thought that it was a fable, but after its having been attested by various merchants and trustworthy people who frequently conduct trade in Livonia, where many have even been charged and convicted, and after their

<sup>81</sup>Pliny, *Natural History*, 8.34. Pliny affirms however that such stories are false.

<sup>82</sup>This actually was Gaston III Phoebus, Count of Foix, a fourteenth-century nobleman who wrote a treatise on hunting that was printed several times in the sixteenth century.

<sup>83</sup>The Aristotelian philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi (Pomponatius) (1462–1525), who taught at Padua and other Italian universities, tried, however, to provide a naturalistic explanation for magical and marvellous events in his *De naturalium effectuum admirandorum causis seu de incantationibus* (*On Causes of Natural Effects or on Spells*) (1567). He was also considered heretical by many for his arguments against the reality of demons and his position that the immortality of the soul cannot be demonstrated by philosophy.

<sup>84</sup>Theophrastus Paracelsus (1493–1541) was a famous and controversial German physician. He rejected classical medical theory and treatments and many of his approaches seem to presage modern medicine and psychiatry. But his theories are an arcane mix of occult and natural observations, and he should not be considered as a modern. He published ten books of which the tenth is the key to all the others, entitled *Tenth Book of the Arch Doctrines* or *On the Secret Mysteries of Nature*.

<sup>85</sup>Caspar Peucer (1525–1602) was an influential German Protestant physician who wrote an encyclopaedic work on divination, *Commentarius de praecipitis generibus divinationum* (1553).

confession put to death, says that he is obliged to believe it, and he describes the way they do things in Livonia. Every year at the end of the month of December, there is a scoundrel who goes and summons all the witches to be present at a certain place, and if they fail to do so, the Devil compels them with blows from an iron rod, so hard that the bruises remain. Their captain goes on ahead and thousands follow him traversing a river, and when they have crossed it they change their shape into wolves, and fall upon men and flocks, and inflict enormous damage. Then twelve days later they return to the same river, and are changed back into men....Now this is a very strange thing. But I find it even stranger that many cannot believe it, since all the peoples of the earth and all antiquity agree about it. For not only did Herodotus describe it two thousand two hundred years ago,<sup>86</sup> and four hundred years earlier, Homer,<sup>87</sup> but also Pomponius Mela,<sup>88</sup> Solon,<sup>89</sup> Strabo,<sup>90</sup> Dionysius Afer,<sup>91</sup> Marcus Varro,<sup>92</sup> Virgil,<sup>93</sup> Ovid<sup>94</sup> and a countless number of others....<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>*The History*, 4.105. Herodotus says that he does not believe this tale about the Neuri.

<sup>87</sup>A reference to Circe's transformation of men into animals (*Odyssey*, 10.233-43), some of which are wolves (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 7.18).

<sup>88</sup>Pomponius Mela of Tingentera (near Gibraltar) wrote a popular geographical survey in Latin of the inhabited world, *De chorographia*, in three books (c. A.D. 37-41), which gave details of physical nature, climate and customs.

<sup>89</sup>Solon (c. 640/635-561/560 B.C.), Athenian statesman and poet. He travelled extensively to Egypt, Cyprus and probably Asia Minor.

<sup>90</sup>Strabo (64/63 B.C.-A.D. 21), Greek historian and geographer. His *Geography* in seventeen books combines elements of history and mythology.

<sup>91</sup>Possibly a reference to Dionysius "Periegetes," a Greek author (c. A.D. 300) who in hexameter verse described the known world up to the time of Eratosthenes (c. 275-194 B.C.).

<sup>92</sup>Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 B.C.) was considered the greatest scholar among the Romans, although most of his work was subsequently lost. His writings covered every domain of science, from history to rhetoric, jurisprudence, geography and Roman religion. St. Augustine in the *City of God* has references to his lost *De cultu deorum*, *De gente populi Romani*, and *De philosophia*.

<sup>93</sup>*Aeneid*, 7.18; *Eclogues*, 8.97.

<sup>94</sup>Ovid recounts the story of Lycaon, a barbaric king of Arcadia whom Jove turned into a wolf in *The Metamorphoses*, 1.199-261.

<sup>95</sup>See, for example, Plato, *Republic*, 565d, who relates that in the worship of Zeus Lycaeus a man is sacrificed and whoever tastes of his flesh becomes a

I remarked above that it only takes one witch to spoil a whole family. And Copas, who wrote the *Olympionica*, states that Demaenetus Parrasius, after having eaten the liver of a child who was being sacrificed to Jupiter Lycaeus, was turned into a wolf.<sup>96</sup> Marcus Varro, the most erudite man of all the Greeks and Latins, (as Cicero says) cites this and also considers it beyond doubt.<sup>97</sup> The history of Olaus Magnus referring to the peoples of Lapland, Norway, Finland and Sweden, who are still pagan and full of evil spirits and witches, says that they frequently change from men into beasts.<sup>98</sup> And whoever would like to see innumerable examples, which I am omitting for the sake of brevity, only has to consult Olaus, Saxo Grammaticus,<sup>99</sup> Fincel, and William of Brabant....<sup>100</sup>

Many doctors observing such a strange thing, and not knowing the reason for it, so as not to appear ignorant, have stated and written that Lycanthropy is an illness of sick men who think they are wolves, and go running through the woods. But it would take many arguments and witnesses to refute all the peoples of the earth and all the histories, and particularly sacred history since Paracelsus, Pomponazzi and especially Fernel,<sup>101</sup> the foremost doctors and philosophers of their time, and for many centuries, considered Lycanthropy an absolutely certain, true and undoubted thing.

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wolf. Petronius in *Satyricon*, 61–62, writes of a sorcerer who could turn himself into a wolf.

<sup>96</sup>Copas or Skopas is mentioned in Pliny, *Natural History*, 8.34.82 as the author of the *Olympionicon*. The story which Bodin refers to is cited by Pliny. See also St. Augustine, *City of God*, 18.17

<sup>97</sup>Bodin's reference to Varro is erroneous here. The citation is found in Pliny as noted above. See also Pausanias, 6.8.2.

<sup>98</sup>Olaus Magnus (fl. 1530), of Gothic origin, was a prince as well as a Christian priest. He wrote twenty-two books concerning the affairs of the Goths.

<sup>99</sup>Saxo Grammaticus was a Danish historian (c. 1150–1216) and author of *Gesta Danorum (Deeds of the Danes)* in sixteen books, which mixed history, legend and folklore.

<sup>100</sup>The text apparently confuses here William of Paris (or Auvergne), theologian, and later bishop of Paris until 1249, who wrote the *De universo*, and Thomas of Brabant, medieval author of *About Bees*. See *Malleus maleficarum*, Pt. 1, Q. 3 where they are referred to together as important writers on Incubi and Succubi.

<sup>101</sup>See above, Book 2, note 56.

Thus it is really quite ridiculous to measure natural things against supernatural things, and the actions of animals against the actions of spirits and demons. Still more absurd is to cite illness, which would only be in the person of the Lycanthrope and not affect those who see the man change into a beast, and then return to his own shape. Saint Chrysostom says that the witch Circe had so stupefied the companions of Ulysses by bestial pleasures, that they were like pigs.<sup>102</sup> Here it seems that he means only their reason was paralysed and deadened and not that their body was changed. However, all those who have written about Lycanthropy, both ancient and modern, are in agreement that the human form changes while the mind and reason remain intact....<sup>103</sup>

And there is no evidence that God did not give this power to Satan, for the counsel of God is incomprehensible, and the power He gives to the Devil is unknown to men, since it is declared in Job that, "...there is no power so great on earth which can resist him."<sup>104</sup> Also one notes that the person who was executed at Dôle, who changed from man to beast, and the ones in Savoy confessed to have eaten numerous children. A just judgment of God permits them to lose their human shape and to become wolves as they deserve. For from earliest antiquity male and female witches have had the evil reputation of eating such meats, even digging up dead bodies and gnawing them to the bone. Pausanias commented on this and said that it was a terrestrial demon....<sup>105</sup> And whatever the cause, divine and human histories, and the assent of the soundest body of theologians, with the experience and judgments of so many centuries and peoples, and of the most learned, compel the most stubborn to acknowledge the truth, which I shall always relate to the soundest views of the theologians who do not agree with the canonists on the questions which we are treating. But in whatever way, it is clear that men are sometimes transmuted into beasts while their human shape and reason remain. Either it is done by the power of God directly, or He gives this power to Satan the executor of His will.

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<sup>102</sup>St. John Chrysostom (c. 347–407), Patriarch of Constantinople, was a celebrated preacher and one of the Church's greatest expositors of the Bible.

<sup>103</sup>See also on this topic Bodin's *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime*, 2:22–25.

<sup>104</sup>Job 41:33–34.

<sup>105</sup>Pausanias, 8.2.1–6.

And if we admit the truth of the sacred story in Daniel, which cannot be called into doubt,<sup>106</sup> and of the story of Lot's wife changed into motionless stone,<sup>107</sup> it is certain that the changing of man to ox or to stone is possible as well as into so many other animals. This is the argument which Thomas Aquinas invokes speaking of the transport of the body of Jesus Christ onto the mountain, and onto the temple.<sup>108</sup> If it is possible in one instance, it is possible in all, for it is stated that that was done by Satan.

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<sup>106</sup>In Dan. 4:28-37, Nebuchadnezzar is changed into a beast-like creature for seven years and then restored.

<sup>107</sup>Gen. 19:24-26. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of stone when she looked back to see the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

<sup>108</sup>Mt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13. St. Thomas Aquinas discusses the power of Satan and the magic arts to effect transformations in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, 2.7, 8; the *Summa theologiae*, 1, Q. 114, Art. 4; 2-2, Q. 92-94. See also Augustine, *City of God*, 18.18.

## Chapter 7

## Whether Witches Have Copulation with Demons

At the beginning of this work we said that Jeanne Harvillier, a native of Verbery near Compiègne, confessed among other things that her mother had been condemned to be burned alive, by decree of Parlement, in confirmation of the sentence of the judge of Senlis, and that at twelve years of age her mother presented her to the Devil who appeared as a tall black man, dressed in black, wearing boots and spurs, with a sword at his side, and a black horse at the door. Her mother said to him, "Here is my daughter whom I promised to you." And to the daughter, "Here is your friend who will make you very happy." Afterward she renounced God, and religion, and then he laid with her carnally, in the same manner and way that men do with women, except that his semen was cold. After that she continued this every eight or fifteen days, even while she was in bed near her husband, without his noticing it. One day the Devil asked her if she wanted to be pregnant by him, and she said she did not.

I have also read the summary of the interrogations of the witches of Longny en Potez, who were also burned alive, which Master Adrian de Fer, Lieutenant General of Laon gave me. I shall set down here some confessions on this point. Marguerite Bremont, wife of Noel Laueret, said that last Monday, after nightfall, she was with Marion her mother at an assembly, near the Frenquis de Longny mill in a meadow. Her aforementioned mother had a chimney-broom between her legs saying—I shall not write the words down—and suddenly they were both transported to the spot indicated above, where they found Jean Robert, Jeanne Guillemine, Mary, wife of Simon d'Agneau, and Guillemette, wife of one named le Gras, who each had a broom. Present also in that place were six devils, who were in human form, but very hideous to look at, and then after the dance was finished the devils laid with them, and had relations with them. Then one of them, who had led her in dance, took her and made love to her two times, and remained with her for the space of more than half an hour: but he ejaculated extremely cold semen. Jeanne Guillemine agrees with the statements of the latter, and says that they were a good half-hour together, and that he released extremely cold semen....

Jacob Sprenger and his four assistant Inquisitors of witches, wrote that they tried innumerable witches, executing a very great number



of them in Germany, and especially in the district of Constance and Regensburg in 1485,<sup>109</sup> and that all of them universally without exception, confessed that the Devil had physical copulation with them, after making them renounce God and their religion. And what is more, they write that there were many who had repented, and retired without being charged, and who confessed the same; namely, that devils for as long as they had been witches, had had copulation with them....<sup>110</sup>

Now Sprenger goes even further, for he says that many times in the fields and in the woods witches undressed and consorted with the Devil in broad daylight, and often had been seen naked in the fields. Sometimes also their husbands found them conjoined with devils whom they thought were men, and struck at them with their swords but did not hit anything.<sup>111</sup>

Paolo Grillando, an Italian jurist who has tried many witches, recounts in the book of *Charms* that in September of 1536 he was asked by a priest from Saint Paul's near Rome to conduct the trial of three witches who finally confessed among other things, that each witch had sexual relations with the Devil.<sup>112</sup> We read also in the history of Saint Bernard,<sup>113</sup> that there was a witch who frequently consorted with the Devil with her husband nearby, without him noticing it. This question (namely, whether such copulation is possible) was debated before Emperor Sigismund, and indeed whether from such copulation something could be born. It was resolved, contrary to the view of Cassian,<sup>114</sup> that such copulation is possible, as well as procreation, in accordance with the usual gloss, and the opinion of Thomas Aquinas on Chapter 6 of Genesis which says, that those who originate from this are of a different nature than those who are procreated naturally....<sup>115</sup> Also doctors do not

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<sup>109</sup>The 1587 text places their activities in 1475.

<sup>110</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 4.

<sup>111</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 4.

<sup>112</sup>Paolo Grillando (Paulus Grillandus), *Tractatus de haereticis et sortilegiis* (1536). The date of this incident is given as 1536 in the revised 1587 text.

<sup>113</sup>St. Bernard of Clairvaux, a twelfth-century French abbot and Church reformer.

<sup>114</sup>John Cassian (c. 360–435), an important figure in the early history of monastic orders, wrote the *Institutes* on the general principles of the monastic life.

<sup>115</sup>*Commentary on the Sentences*, 2.8, 1, 4.

agree on this: among them some hold that succubi receive the semen of men, and use it with women as...incubi, as Thomas Aquinas says, which seems an unbelievable thing.

But whatever the case, Sprenger writes that the Germans (who have more experience with witches,<sup>116</sup> for they have had them since earliest times, and in greater number than in other countries) believe that from such copulation sometimes children result, which they call "Vechselkind," or "changelings" which are very much heavier than others, but are always thin, and would dry up three nurses without getting fat. These are devils in the form of children, who copulate with their witch nurses, and often one does not know what they become....

Giovanni Francesco Pico, Prince of Mirandola, writes that he met a sorcerer priest named Benoit Bern, 80 years old, who confessed to having had copulation for more than 40 years with a demon disguised as a woman, who accompanied him without anyone noticing it, and he called her "Hermione."<sup>117</sup> He confessed also that he had sucked the blood of many small children, and committed many other execrable wickednesses. He was burned alive. And he writes as well of having seen still another priest, 70 years old, who confessed also to having had similar copulation for more than fifty years with a demon in the form of a woman. He too was burned. And of more recent memory, in 1545 Magdalena de la Cruz, a native of Cordoba in Spain, abbess of a convent, realizing that she was suspected among the nuns of being a witch, and fearing the fire if she were to be accused, tried to avert it by obtaining pardon from the Pope; and she confessed that from twelve years of age, an evil spirit in the form of a black Moor entreated her to surrender her honour, which she consented to, and continued for thirty years and more sleeping frequently with him. By means of him while she was in church, she was raised up high, and when the nuns took communion, after the consecration the host came through the air right to her in view of the other nuns who considered her a saint.

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<sup>116</sup>In fact, it was in the German parts of Europe that the witch-hunt was most severe. Perhaps one-half of all the executions for witchcraft took place in Germany. See *Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 2, Ch. 8.

<sup>117</sup>Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola (1470-1533), nephew of the previously mentioned Giovanni Pico. The book referred to by Bodin is *De rerum praenotione*, published in 1502.

And the priest too found then he was missing a host. Sometimes also the wall would open up to show her the host. She obtained pardon from Pope Paul III, claiming that she had repented. But I am of the opinion that she was dedicated to Satan by her parents right from her mother's womb. For she confessed that from the age of six Satan appeared to her, which is the age of awareness in girls, and he solicited her at twelve, which is the age of puberty for girls. As we said, Jeanne Harvillier confessed the same thing and at the same age. This story was published throughout all Christendom.

We read another story of more recent memory which happened in Germany at the convent of Nazareth in the diocese of Cologne, where there was a young nun named Gertrude, fourteen years of age, who confessed to her companions that every night Satan came to sleep with her. The others wanted to try it and were seized by evil spirits. But as for the first woman, Johann Weyer, who writes the story, says that in the presence of several people of high standing at the convent on the 25th day of May, 1565, they found in Gertrude's chest a love-letter written to her demon....<sup>118</sup>

Master Adam Martin, prosecutor on the bench at Laon told me of having conducted the trial of the witch of Bièvre, two leagues from Laon, in the year 1556. She was condemned to be strangled, then burned, however she was burned alive by error of the executioner, or to state it better, by the just judgment of God who taught that one must prescribe the penalty according to the magnitude of the crime, and that there is no wickedness more worthy of the fire. She confessed that Satan (whom she called her companion) was frequently intimate with her, and she felt his cold semen. And perhaps the passage in the law of God which declares, "Cursed be he who gives his seed to Molech," may be understood from these cases;<sup>119</sup> and may be understood also from those who dedicate their children to devils. This is one of the most despicable wickednesses which one can imagine....

For fathers and mothers dedicated their children before they were born to Satan, and continued such an abomination from father to son; and they were even accustomed to dedicating their first-born to Satan, as Ezekiel writes in Chapter 20.<sup>120</sup> Others dedicate them

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<sup>118</sup>Johann Weyer, *De praestigijs*, Bk. 4, Ch. 12.

<sup>119</sup>Lev. 20:2.

<sup>120</sup>Ez. 20:26, 31.

in the mother's womb, as occurred in 1575 when a German gentleman becoming greatly vexed at his wife said that she would give birth to a devil. She produced a monster hideous to behold, thus he was reputed to be a great sorcerer....

## Chapter 8

### Whether Witches Can Send Illnesses, Sterilities, Hails and Rainstorms, and Kill Men and Beasts

All philosophers, theologians and historians agree that demons have great power, some more, others less; some lie more than others, some are more wicked than others, and in general the ancients held the basic principle that terrestrial and subterranean demons are more cruel, more malicious, more lying....

But we have stated above that all demons are wicked, lying, false, enemies of the human race, and that they do not have more power than God allows them. Nevertheless witches think they are all-powerful....

For God has ten thousand ways to punish men, and "great treasures of vengeance," as He says:<sup>121</sup> sometimes by Himself, sometimes by His angels, sometimes by beasts. In short, all Nature is ready to avenge injury done to God. But the foundation of all impiety upon which witches rely, and for which they give themselves to the Devil, are the promises which he makes to give them this power, or to teach them the powders, the words, the symbols to make themselves loved, honoured, and rich, to live in pleasure, and destroy their enemies. As we said, this has been discovered through the confessions of many witches. Those are the promises he makes them when they renounce God. And since he is the first author of falsehood, also one finds that there is nothing but deceptions in everything he promises, except vengeance, and only on certain people, and so long as God grants him permission for it....

And one must believe that there is nothing done, either by demons or by witches, which is not done by a just judgment of God who permits it, either to punish those who deserve it, or to tempt and strengthen the good. This is why God speaking of His vengeance says, "There is no affliction or calamity which does not come from me."<sup>122</sup>

Now of all the actions which witches attribute to themselves, there is scarcely any more conspicuous than to make lightning and storms, which the law treats as an established fact. And in fact in

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<sup>121</sup>Dt. 32:34-35.

<sup>122</sup>Amos 3:6.

the book of the five Inquisitors it is stated that in 1488 there occurred in the diocese of Constance a violent storm of hail, lightning, and rain which ruined the fruit for four leagues around.<sup>123</sup> All the peasants accused the witches. Two women were arrested, one Anne of Mindelen, the other Agnes. On being put to the question, after having denied it, finally they confessed separately that they had been in the fields the same day with a bit of water: with one knowing nothing of the other they had each made a trench, and stirred up the water in the trench at noon, with some words which it is not necessary to repeat, invoking the Devil. And after that as soon as they were back home the storm arrived. They were burned alive...

It may be that the Devil foreseeing the storm coming naturally, urged them to do it to make themselves feared and revered. This is customary with Satan when he foresees plague, sterility, or the death of livestock, to make witches believe that it is by his power that they bring, or drive away the plague and the tempest and the famine, as in truth happens very often, but not always.

The same author writes in another trial which he conducted of a witch from the district of Constance that she, on finding all the inhabitants of her village at a wedding, dancing gaily, annoyed that she had not been invited, had herself transported by the Devil in broad daylight in view of the shepherds onto a small mountain which was near the village. Not having any water to put in the trench which she had made in order to stir up the storm, as she confessed was the way, she urinated and stirring the urine in the ditch uttered some words. Soon afterward the sky which was beautiful and clear, darkened and violently hailed, but only on the village and on all those who were dancing. Then the witch returned to the village. When they saw her, they concluded that it was she who had caused the storm. Then after her arrest the shepherds testified that they had seen her transported in the air, which she confessed after being charged and convicted. She was burned alive...<sup>124</sup>

We read also in Pontano a memorable story in Book 5,<sup>125</sup> that when the French found themselves besieged by the Spanish in the town of Sessa in the Kingdom of Naples, and everything was burning up

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<sup>123</sup> *Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 15.

<sup>124</sup> *Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 3.

<sup>125</sup> Giovanni Pontano (1429–1503) was a poet, historian and man of letters. Bodin refers to his *De bello neapolitano*, Bk. 5.

with dryness and heat, and the French were reduced to desperate straits from lack of fresh water, there were there several sorcerer priests who dragged a crucifix through the streets at night, addressing it with a thousand insults and blasphemies, and they threw it into the sea. Then they offered a consecrated host to an ass, which they buried alive beneath the door of the church. And after some spells and despicable blasphemies (which it is not necessary to hear) there fell such a violent rain that it seemed a real deluge. Consequently the Spaniards gave up the siege. This custom of dragging the crucifix and holy images into the river to get rain is still practised in Gascony. I saw it done at Toulouse in broad daylight by little children before all the people, who call that the "tiremasse." And there was someone who threw all the images into the well of Salin in 1557. Then the rain fell in abundance. This is an outstanding wickedness which is overlooked through laxness, and a doctrine of some witches of that region who have taught this impiety to the poor people, while singing some songs, as did the priests of Sessa in the Kingdom of Naples.

As for livestock, frequently witches cause it to die by placing some powders beneath the threshold of the door, not that it is the force of the powders, which would make the witches die who carry them on their person, rather than the animals which pass over them. Moreover, witches always hide them a foot beneath the ground. But it is Satan only who is its minister. I will add that in a sheepfold in Berry three hundred white beasts died instantly in this way.

And not only does Satan exercise the power which God gives him in storms, hail, and lightning and on fruits and animals, but also on men and above all on the wicked. I stated before that the witches who were burned at Poitiers in 1564 confessed that at the assemblies where they gathered at night to worship the Devil in the form of a billy goat, at the conclusion the billy goat said in a terrible voice, "Take revenge, or you shall die!" Also they confessed that they had brought death to many animals and men, and they said by way of excuse that there was no other way to save their lives. For the natural property of Satan is to destroy, waste and ruin, as God says in Isaiah, "I have made and formed Satan to ruin, waste, and destroy."<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless He does not permit this except for the execution of His Justice.

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<sup>126</sup>Is. 54:16.

Now the most wicked murder among animals is of man, and among men that of an innocent child. It is the most pleasing to Satan, like the case we described of witches who receive children and offer them to the Devil, and immediately put them to death before they have been presented to God, making witches believe that there is some part of little children (which does not have to be named) by means of which witches think they can do great things. To show the impudent deception of the Devil, Nider writes that he conducted the trial of one named Stadlin in the diocese of Lausanne, who confessed to having killed seven children in their mother's womb; also that he had caused all the livestock of that household to abort. When asked by what means, he said that he had buried a certain animal, which it is not necessary to name, beneath the sill of the door. It was removed and the miscarriages stopped in the whole household...<sup>127</sup>

We read in the history of Monstrelet that there was a witch from Compiègne who was found in possession of two toads baptized by a priest, which she used in her spells.<sup>128</sup> This would seem ridiculous if one did not see such a thing practised everyday. In fact after Master Jean Martin, Lieutenant of the Provost of Laon, had condemned the witch of Sainte Preuve to be burned alive, undressing her they found two great toads in her pockets. And while I was writing this story, I was informed that a woman gave birth to a toad, near the city of Laon. The astonished midwife and those assisting at the birth gave testimony concerning this....

The five Inquisitors of witches also recount that among others, they tried a witch who confessed that she had placed the consecrated host into her handkerchief instead of swallowing it, and put it into a jar where she was feeding a toad, and put it all with other powders which the Devil gave her to place beneath the doorway of a sheepfold while uttering some words, which it is not necessary to write, in order to make the flock die. She was caught in the act, convicted, and burned alive.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup>Johann Nider (c. 1380–1438) wrote one of the earliest demonological works in Europe, *Formicarius (The Ant Heap)*, around 1435. His work was an important source for the authors of the *Malleus*.

<sup>128</sup>Enguerrand de Monstrelet (c. 1390–1453), a Burgundian who continued Froissart's chronicle of French affairs down to 1444.

<sup>129</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 6.



Now Satan's ruse is not only to dazzle the eyes and deprive men of a knowledge of the true God, but also to uproot from the human spirit all religion, all conscience and even that which everyone believes to be the true God, to make himself revered, or at least to make men worship what they know is not God, and to rely on animals, revering them and expecting a cure or salvation from them, even the most filthy creatures....

It is not then poison, nor bones, nor buried powders which cause death; but Satan, at the prayer of the witches by the just permission of God. And to demonstrate it more clearly, I have a trial which was sent to me by the Sieur de Pipemont, a virtuous gentleman, conducted against Barbe Doré, who was condemned to be burned by decree of Parlement, January 11, 1577 after confessing that she had brought death upon three men by tossing a bit of powder wrapped in paper on the spot where they would pass by, while praying in the name of God, and of all the devils, etc. I shall not put down the other words. Everyone knows that poison, whatever it is, cannot have such an effect, much less dry powder. Also the sentence of condemnation states that it is on account of the spells which she practised. One notes as well the atrocious blasphemy of linking God with His creatures in such a prayer. And it declares also that when she wanted to keep others from being touched by the spell, that she prayed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit that when you passed by there you would not be harmed.

Now to illustrate the difference between natural illnesses and those which occur through spells, one often sees those who are bewitched die in languor, and sometimes cast out iron fittings, hair, pieces of cloth, broken glass. The English doctor of the Palatine princes writes that in 1539 there was at Ulrich a man named Nenssesser, a bewitched ploughman, from under whose skin they pulled out an iron nail, and he felt such great pains in the bowels that he cut his throat in desperation. He was opened up in the presence of all the people of Ulrich and there was found a rod, four steel knives, two horseshoes, and a ball of hair.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, Nider, who has tried a countless number of witches, claims to have seen a witch, who with a single word caused persons suddenly to die.

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<sup>130</sup>This story comes from Weyer, *De praestigiis*, Bk. 4, Ch. 9. Bodin's version contains many errors of detail, including the nationality of the physician.

Another one caused her neighbour's chin to turn upside down, a hideous thing to see....

But without the pact with Satan, though a man had all the powders, symbols, and witches' words, he could cause neither man nor beast to die. And though the Devil can make animals die with divine permission, nevertheless in the activities of witches, he wants them to give their assent and to set their hand to the task. Take for example what Sprenger says, that he tried a witch who had killed twenty-three horses of a merchant from Regensburg. She said that she had only made a trench, in which the Devil had put some powders beneath the sill of the door: this meant being personally implicated.<sup>131</sup> As in a similar instance, those who make wax images of their enemies, and prick and stab them, having first pledged themselves to Satan, and renounced God, and made the horrible sacrifices they customarily do. By this means they cause death to their enemies, if God permits it, which He does not often do. For out of a hundred, perhaps, there will not be two injured, as has been learned from the confessions of witches. Nonetheless, it is simply a murder carried out by the Devil, and the prayers of the witch....

Witches in their assemblies give an account of all their acts which they commit, as I established above, and of all that has been done in any part of the world whatsoever, as was discovered at Orléans in the assembly of the witches of Cléry. We read in a similar case in Sprenger, that he had seen a sorcerer named Puncker, in the village of Lendenbrunnen in Germany, whom Satan had taught to shoot arrows at the crucifix on Good Friday.<sup>132</sup> In this way, and with some words which it is not necessary to know, he could by shooting into the air kill three men every day, after he saw and recognized them, with the firm and deliberate intention of killing them, though they be shut up in the greatest fortress in the world. Finally the peasants of the village tore him to pieces without the form or pretense of a trial, after many murders were committed by him. This was in 1420, when the Germans still knelt before the crucifix. For there is hardly less impiety in doing injury to what one thinks is God, than in doing injury to God: since that is done in spite of God who looks at the heart and the intent, which is the basis of all

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<sup>131</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 14.

<sup>132</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 16.

actions both good and evil, as Thomas Aquinas says.<sup>133</sup> One knows very well that properly speaking, God cannot be injured. And just as those who spit in the sky do not sully the sky, but the filth falls on them. Thus the injury one thinks one does to God, falls on the head of the one who did it...

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<sup>133</sup>*Summa theologiae*, 1-2, Q. 19, Art. 8.



## *Book Three*

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### Chapter 1 Lawful Ways to Prevent Witchcraft

Histories teach us that spells are not new illnesses, but on the contrary that in ancient times there were a hundred times more, even though there are many now. For we see in the law of God which was made known about three thousand one hundred and fifty years ago, that Chaldea, Egypt and Palestine were infected with them; and from the earliest histories one finds that the territory of Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy (which were still only half-populated) were already filled with this vermin.

We see the prohibitions and rigorous penalties ordered by the law of God against witches, and the execrable wickednesses for which God's fury became enflamed, extirpating the Canaanites from the earth, not for idolatries or other sins which were common then to all other peoples, but for the abominable witchcraft which they practised.<sup>1</sup> We see before and after the Trojan war, which was about two hundred years after the publication of the law of God, the cruel sorceries of Medea, the transformations of Circe, of Proteus,<sup>2</sup> and the Thessalian necromancies.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore we read in the history

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<sup>1</sup>This is an extremely important point for Bodin. The universal condemnation of witches in ancient and modern societies was one of his central arguments for the need to believe in witches and to act strongly against them. See Dt. 18:9-14; Lev. 18:3, 21; 19:31; Ex. 7:11.

<sup>2</sup>In the *Odyssey* (4.385ff), Homer depicts Proteus as an Egyptian demon, servant of Poseidon, who has the power to take all manner of shapes, but if held till he resumes his true shape, will answer questions. See also Virgil, *Georgics*, 4.387ff.

<sup>3</sup>Thessaly, a district of northern Greece, was famous for its witches and

of Titus Livy, Dionysus Halicarnassus and Plutarch that Romulus was transported in a tempest whirlwind and several others whom we have noted above.<sup>4</sup> And more strange, those who were carried off in spirit by demons, as we have described, or carried away in body and spirit, and those whom the Devil held beleaguered, or spoke through them, were reputed divine by the common people. One reads how Hippocrates, in his *De morbo sacro*, loathes witches.<sup>5</sup> We note that Plato among the pagans made an excellent law in the eleventh book of the *Laws*, where he wants witches, who by charms, words and ligatures, and by wax images cast enchantments or cause men or livestock to die, to be put to death.<sup>6</sup>

After the appearance of the law of God and of the Christian religion, not only did people begin to abhor what they had worshiped, but even before the appearance of the law of God the pagans themselves abhorred spells and divinations. (For Ulpian, although he was a pagan and a foremost enemy of Christians, and composed seven books on the punishment of Christians, nevertheless he detested witchcraft and all divination, which they called "unlawful."<sup>7</sup> And although there was a witch named Martha in the time of Marius who promised victory over enemies by means she said she possessed, nevertheless the Senate did not wish her to be consulted, as we read in Dio.<sup>8</sup> Also the Persians, who were more infected with this vermin, finally used the cruelest tortures against witches, crushing their heads between two stones, as Plutarch describes.<sup>9</sup> But publication of the Divine Law has very much

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necromancers. See especially Lucan's gruesome description of Thessalian witchcraft in his epic *Pharsalia* (6.333ff.).

<sup>4</sup>On the transport of Romulus see above, Author's Preface, note 20. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a rhetor and historian, taught at Rome (30-8 B.C.) and was the leader of an influential literary circle. His historical work, *Antiquitates Romanae*, in 20 books covered the founding of Rome to the First Punic War.

<sup>5</sup>See *De morbo sacro* (*The Sacred Disease*), 4.

<sup>6</sup>*Laws*, 11.933.

<sup>7</sup>Ulpian (Domitius Ulpianus, d. A.D. 228) one of the last Roman jurists of the classical period. His works were the chief source for the Justinian Digest.

<sup>8</sup>Dio Cassius was a Roman senator (A.D. 193-c. 230) who wrote a history of Rome.

<sup>9</sup>The source of Bodin's reference to Plutarch is uncertain.

diminished the power of Satan.<sup>10</sup> And the peoples who long remained or who still are pagans are badly tormented by evil spirits day and night, as in the countries of Norway, Finland, Lapland and other northern regions, and in the Western Islands, as one can find in the history of Olaus Magnus and in the history of the Indies, especially in Brazil and other neighboring countries, where they still sacrifice and eat men....

It has often been observed that witches have predicted and affirmed the day and the manner of their death. There are a thousand examples, but I find none more recent, and which have happened closer to here than that of a sorcerer of Noyon, who was a very good friend of the bishop of Noyon.... Hoping to avoid death, on the day that Satan had declared to him he would be killed, he went to the house of the bishop, whom he told that he was to be killed that day. After he had dined at the bishop's table, someone arrived who asked to speak to him. He answered that he should come up, which he did, and while speaking to him he killed the sorcerer between two doors. I have the story from Mr. Louis Châtelain, Lieutenant of Noyon and from several others, who have vouched for it.

One must therefore, to avoid these misfortunes, preach often the law of God and imprint His fear on the great, the middling, and the small, and engrave His faith especially in their hearts. For if it is so that the name of this great God, terrible and all powerful, pronounced with good intent, and by one who fears God, drives away the troops of devils and witches, as we have shown above to have occurred many times, how much it is to be hoped he will withdraw on hearing the praises and the works of God preached, read, announced and spoken of. This then is the greatest, the best, and the easiest way to drive away witches, charms, spells and evil spirits from a realm. For as long as blasphemies on the one hand, and atheism on the other have credit, one must not hope to drive away evil spirits, nor witches, nor plagues, nor wars, nor famines. Not that it is possible to drive witches away completely without there always being some, who are just like toads and grass-snakes on the ground, spiders in houses, caterpillars, and flies in the air who are

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<sup>10</sup>Bodin is referring to the laws and statutes contained in the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch), as well as their reiteration in the writings of the Hebrew prophets, the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament.

engendered by corruption and who attract the poison from the earth, and the infection from the air. But well cultivated land, purified air, and cleared trees are not so subject to this infection. And if one lets the vermin multiply, it engenders corruption and infects everything. Thus that people is happy indeed which has wise governors, good magistrates, and especially good pastors who know how to instruct it well. Evil spirits then will not dwell there long.

But one must keep from listening to those who preach that what is said about witches is only an illusion, as this sorcerer doctor preached, about whom we spoke above, who confessed that the Devil had instructed him to preach this way.<sup>11</sup> And just as God sends plagues, wars, and famines by the ministry of evil spirits, executors of His Justice, so also He does with witches, and especially when the name of God is blasphemed, as it presently is everywhere, and with such impunity and license that little children make a practice of it.

Now all the wickednesses, parricides, incests, poisonings, murders, and adulteries, are not as great, nor so deserving of punishment by any means as blasphemies, as theologians agree. For other wickednesses are chiefly against men, as Samuel said, but blasphemies are directly against the honour of God, and in defiance of Him.<sup>12</sup> For that is the normal word one uses. And since that impiety prevailed in the time of Charles IX more than ever, King Henry III on his accession issued a holy edict against blasphemers. But its implementation was scorned, to the great dishonour of God and the impunity of blasphemers—to whom it is not enough to have audaciously denied God, unless they add that they do so willingly. And there are still to be found people who blaspheme in rhyme, such as one named Boursier de Troye in Champagne. He was arrested while blaspheming on Good Friday in the year 1569 and condemned to have his lip cleaved with a hot iron, to make amends, and to pay a fine of five hundred pounds. He appealed this and so escaped from prison. However it was God's will that he be arrested again seven days later, and by verdict of the court was deemed mistried, and in the amended sentence he was condemned to make a public apology clad in his shirt, to have his tongue pierced with

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<sup>11</sup>A reference to Johann Weyer. See above, Book 1, note 95.

<sup>12</sup>1 Sam. 2:25.



a hot iron, and later to be hanged. But since then, out of a million there has not been one executed. Nonetheless the law of God states that anyone who has cursed the name of God shall be stoned, which is the cruelest death of all, as Moses Maimonides comments.<sup>13</sup>

I wanted to point out this impiety which is spread throughout this realm, and yet goes unpunished. Our fathers used to say in times past in all their actions and undertakings, "If it please God," and at the close of business, "Praise be to God," and in taking leave and saying goodbye, "God keep you"; whereas the Greeks said, "Be of good cheer" and the Hebrews, "Peace be with you," which is the salutation of all the peoples of Asia and Africa who use the Turkish and Arabic word corrupted from the Hebrew tongue, "Schala malec." The Italians and Spanish kiss hands. But I do not find any better custom than ours, and which has the marvelous consequence, as we have shown with three or four examples, that those who had been led to the sabbaths by their wives, not knowing what it was and exclaiming, "Oh my God, what is this?" put to flight the whole assembly of evil spirits and witches. But also there is no more wicked blasphemy than to call upon God to make a spell, which witches never do without conjoining Him with His creatures, or invoking Him to do an evil deed, or as some poets who interject Him into filthy things, which is a blasphemy against the name of God.

This in general is the way to prevent witchcraft. But in particular each father must instruct his family to pray to God morning and evening, to bless and give thanks to God before and after meals, and to give at least one or two hours one day of the week to have the Bible read by the head of the family in the presence of the whole family. The ancient custom of our kings, and which was practised best of all by Saint Louis in his early youth,<sup>14</sup> was that on rising from his bed, the king kneeled and asked pardon for his sins and thanked God for having kept him that night, and prayed to Him to continue His holy protection over him. Then the Bible was read while the king got dressed. That had a marvelous effect on the whole realm in general, and encouraged each family in particular to do likewise.

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<sup>13</sup>Lev. 24:10-16; cf. Moses Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, 3, Ch. 37, 41.

<sup>14</sup>Louis IX (1214-70), King of France, was an exemplar of medieval kingly sanctity.

For the people will always follow the humour of their prince, including the most despicable perjuries and blasphemies. There was one prince who named only the Devil in all the oaths he swore. This is one of the most wicked customs there is, to call upon and swear by the Devil, as many do. Sometimes the Devil carries them off in the prime of life, just as he did in 1551 in Germany in the town of Wildstadt when he saw a woman who constantly swore by the Devil. She was carried off right before everyone's eyes. And in a similar case after a host had stolen the purse of someone who was lodging with him, and claimed that he would give himself to the Devil for judgment if it was true, the Devil took him away, and he has not been seen since.<sup>15</sup>

Fernel recounts another story of a small child who was taken away while calling on the Devil.<sup>16</sup> That is why insofar as families are concerned, one has to close the gate not only of cities, but also of every house to witches and spells.

There is indeed still another remedy: not to fear Satan at all, nor witches. For there is, perhaps, no greater way to give power to the Devil over oneself than to fear him. Also it is an affront to God to fear the Devil. For this reason many times in the law of God, it is expressly forbidden to fear in any way the gods of the pagans, who can do neither good nor evil.<sup>17</sup> In fact it has often been seen, and is still seen every day that a witch cannot harm a person who denounces her and who tramples her underfoot, knowing that she is a witch.

There is certainly also another way since witches confess that one who gives charity cannot be harmed with spells, though in other respects he may be imperfect. Weyer, the defender of witches, writes in the fourth book, chapter ten,<sup>18</sup> that the nuns of Wertet in the county of Horn, were tormented with evil spirits for three years and more. And it was noted that the circumstance arose among other causes, from the fact that a pound of salt was lent to an old witch who was not thought to be a witch, on condition that she would give back three pounds two months later, which the witch

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<sup>15</sup>On these incidents see Weyer, *De praestigiis*, Bk. 4, Ch. 19.

<sup>16</sup>On Fernel see above, Book 2, note 56.

<sup>17</sup>Ex. 20:3; 34:14; Deut. 4:39; 6:13-14; Jer. 25:6; Ps. 76:7; Is. 44:15-18; Hab. 2:18-20; I Cor. 8:4-6.

<sup>18</sup>*De praestigiis*, Bk. 4, Ch. 10.

did. Then the nuns found grains of salt scattered in their convent, and at the same moment they were besieged by evil spirits. Not that it was the only cause, but while unjustly accused of many vices, still it happened that instead of giving charity, they lent to the poor with usury. This is why witches who are forced by Satan to do evil, to kill, to poison men and animals, or to be tormented without relief when they have no enemies whom they can take revenge on, go asking for alms and one who refuses them while he has something to give, will be in danger, provided that he does not know they are witches. For the witch has no more power than over one who gives him alms, if he knows that he is a witch. And one must be very careful not to give charity to those who are rumored to be. But one who does not give them alms, not knowing that they are witches, with great difficulty will avoid being harmed, as has often been verified. In fact I learned when I was at Poitiers during the "grands jours" in 1567, as one of the substitutes for the Public Prosecutor, that there were two very pitiful and poor sorcerers, who asked for alms in a rich house. They were refused. They cast their spell on it and everyone in the house was driven mad and died insane. Not that it was the reason for which God delivered them into the power of Satan and the witches his ministers, but because being wicked in other respects, and not having pity on the poor, God had no pity on them. Also Sacred Scripture calls alms תְּרִכְתָּר; that is, "justice." And whereas we say, "give alms," they say "give justice," as being one of the things which most justifies the wicked....<sup>19</sup>

Nonetheless, the surest and most effective way of all, is to have faith in God, and to trust in Him like a high and unassailable fortress. It is, says Philo, the greatest and most pleasing sacrifice one could make to God.<sup>20</sup> It was on this account that Abraham received so many blessings, about whom Scripture says, "He trusted in God, and it was imputed to him as justice."<sup>21</sup>

In fact all witches who claim to cure illnesses and remove spells first ask the one whom they wish to cure to believe firmly that they will cure him, and to have faith. That is customary, and it is a wicked idolatry, for it is giving to the creature the faith which belongs to

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<sup>19</sup>"For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin." Tob. 12:9. Cf. also Tob. 4:10; Ps. 112:9; Sir. 3:30.

<sup>20</sup>*On Those Who Offer Sacrifice*, 3.

<sup>21</sup>Gen. 15:6. Cf. also Ro. 4:3 and Gal. 3:6-9.

the Creator. Also Satan uses all his tricks and his power to cure the one who puts his faith in him....However, when Sprenger was conducting trials of witches he heard that that does not occur except with illnesses brought on by spells.<sup>22</sup> Also that witches cannot cure natural illnesses, any more than doctors can cure illnesses caused by spells. There was a witch cobbler in Paris who cured in this manner the quartan fever, by only touching the hand. But anyone who would not believe that he could cure, did not get well. I saw another individual who was from Mirebeau-en-Poitou who cured toothaches in the same way. And seeing my Lord Charles des Cars, Bishop of Langres and Peer of France afflicted by a quartan fever, he said to him that he knew a man who would surely cure him. The following day he brought him a man who touched his hand, and asked him what his name was. After learning his name, he said to him, "Have faith in me that you are cured." I was in his room then. And because I began to smile, as did also le Fèvre, a learned doctor, hearing this new saint filled with miracles, "No," he said, "I bet anyone a hundred crowns, that he is cured." After he had left I said to the bishop of Langres, that it was the normal way of witches to gain the faith of men in order to dissuade them from having faith in God, and ascribing to His praise all the good and ill that happens to us. The bishop's fever did not let up, and it lasted two whole years. The man, seeing the bouts of fever continue, said with a red face that he had done as much for the bishop as he ever did for any man: but he did not say what he had done.

People have noted from early antiquity that evil spirits try harder to work harm at certain times, and they appear principally at night rather than during the day; and on the night between Friday and Saturday rather than other days, as Lavater in Book 1, Chapter 8 gathered from the ancients....<sup>23</sup>

And in many trials I found that evil spells were set usually on Saturday. After a long search for the reason, I read in the Hebrew commentaries of Abraham Aben-Esra on the fourth article of the Decalogue,<sup>24</sup> that God had solemnly commanded that one abstain

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<sup>22</sup> *Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ludwig Lavater was the German Lutheran author of *De spectris, lemuriibus et magis* (1570), a study of apparitions and ghosts.

<sup>24</sup> Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1164) of the Spanish school wrote an important Biblical commentary.

from work and sanctify Saturday above all, and that that day be consecrated among all the others.<sup>25</sup> Then he continues, and argues that God gave power to evil spirits to chastise and do harm the fourth and the seventh night. And that one must indeed be careful not to give offense, nor to do any kind of work on Saturday. But he gives an astrological reason, which seemed more strange to me; namely, that Mars and Saturn, which astrologers call "maleficent," have power those two days. This planet Saturn in Hebrew is called "Sabthai," which means "resting," and the word "Sabbath" means "rest." And the law of God prescribes that one must abstain from work on the feast of the holy day right after sundown.<sup>26</sup> In fact I have seen some trials where the witches testified that they gathered the night between Monday and Tuesday, like the case of Longny en Potez, where the witches confessed that while dancing with devils they raised high their broom and cried, "Har, Har, Sabath, Sabath," as in another case from Berry....

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<sup>25</sup>See Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-14.

<sup>26</sup>Lev. 23:3.

## Chapter 2

## Whether Witches Can Assure the Health of Vigorous Men, and Provide a Cure for the Sick

One must not be surprised if there are witches in the world, given the promises that Satan makes to those who have pledged and dedicated themselves to his service: to make them rich, powerful, and honoured, and to enjoy what they desire. And since discerning men discover the deceit right away, and witches for the most part are stupid and ignorant scoundrels scorned by everyone, besides not having wealth, honours, and riches, nevertheless, there are some people so miserable that they cast themselves fully aware into Satan's snares. Some do it through curiosity, others to confirm his fine promises, reckoning that they will be able to pull out when they wish. But after they are caught in it, out of a hundred there is not, perhaps, a tenth who extricate themselves. Some, beset by pain, pledge themselves to the Devil in order to get well, like a certain lawyer from Paris, whom I do not wish to name, who was brought to court in the year 1571. He confessed that while gravely ill he surrendered himself to the Devil in order to get well, and he himself wrote and signed the contract with his blood. This excuse true or false helped him then. Others do not surrender themselves to the Devil, but they do not resist allowing themselves to be cured by witches, whose voices, as Saint John Chrysostom says in his book *De fato*, Chapter 7, one must "flee like the plague."

Now one finds witches in Spain who are called "Salutadores," who make a living curing illnesses. And there was in Anjou an old Italian woman who cured sicknesses. In 1573, when the judge forbade her to dabble any more in treating illnesses, she appealed to the Parlement, where Jean Bautru, my colleague and fellow Angevin, pleaded her case eloquently and learnedly. But it was demonstrated that the means by which she effected her cures were unnatural: such as cat's brain, which is a poison, crow's head, and other such things, which shows indeed that it is not by virtue of some good oils and salutary ointments, as do many good people charitable towards the poor; but by unnatural means, or by charms....

I believe...that witches can sometimes remove the evil spell and illness which other witches, or they themselves have given. But not all, nor always, and also it is normally necessary, they have testified,

that they give the spell to someone else otherwise they cannot escape having the affliction fall on them. But as for maladies which occur other than by spell, witches confess they cannot cure any. In order to find whether there is a spell, Sprenger writes that they verify it by putting molten lead in a vessel full of water on the patient.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless he also writes that there are evil spells set by some that others cannot remove, nor sometimes they themselves. And as a positive example I shall put forward Jeanne Harvillier, who was burned alive. She confessed that she had cast the spell to kill a man who had beaten his daughter, and another person passed over the spot, who suddenly and at the same instant felt himself struck in the back and all over the body. Thereupon he was told that it was she who had bewitched him, because she was rumoured to be a witch. She promised to cure him and began to care for him. She confessed that she had prayed to the Devil, and used several means, which it is not necessary to tell, to cure him. Nevertheless Satan answered that it was impossible. So she told him not to come to her any more then. And the Devil answered her that he would not. Soon afterward the sick person died, and the witch went and hid, but she was found. From that point I conclude that it is not within the power of witches always to cure those who are ill through evil spell, since they cannot always cure those whom they themselves have bewitched.

In the second place it is believed that if witches cure a man under an evil spell, they must give the spell to someone else. That is common knowledge from the confessions of many witches. In fact I saw a witch from Auvergne, a prisoner at Paris in 1569, who cured horses, and sometimes people. He was found in possession of a great book full of hairs from horses, cows, and other animals of every colour. When he had cast the spell to kill some horse, people came to him, and got it cured by bringing him some hair, and he gave the spell to another animal, but he did not take any money. For otherwise, he said, he would not have cured it. So he was dressed in an old woolen cloak made of a thousand pieces.

One day after he had cast a spell on the horse of a gentleman, they came to him. He cured it and gave the spell to his servant. They approached him also to cure the servant. He answered that they should ask the gentleman which he preferred to lose, his

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<sup>27</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 12.

servant, or his horse. The gentleman found himself somewhat at a loss. While he deliberated, his servant died, and the witch was arrested. One fact to note is that the Devil always wants to gain in the bargain, such that if the witch removes the spell from a horse, he will give it to another horse which will be worth more. And if he cures a woman, the illness will fall on a man. If he cures an old man, the illness will fall on a young boy. And if the witch does not set the spell on another, he is in danger of his own life. In short, if the Devil cures the body, he brings death to the soul....



## Chapter 3

Whether Witches May Obtain through Their Craft  
the Favour of People, Beauty, Pleasures,  
Honours, Riches and Learning, and Give Fertility

What draws the wretched to the slippery precipice of the path of perdition, and to devote themselves to Satan is a depraved belief which they have that the Devil grants riches to the poor, pleasure to the afflicted, power to the weak, beauty to the ugly, knowledge to the ignorant, honour to the scorned, and the favour of the great. Nevertheless, it is obvious that there is no one more miserable, more knavish, more hated, more ignorant, more tormented than witches, as we have shown above....The beauties one admires in the whole world, and in its parts, are rays of divine beauty, and beauty can come only from God. But no witch has ever been seen who could by charms, or otherwise, disguise her face to make herself more beautiful than she was. On the contrary, people commonly use the expression, "Ugly as a witch." In fact Cardano, who was reputed to be a great witch, remarked that he had never seen any who were not ugly, which I certainly believe. For even Cardano did not deny that his father was a great witch, and that he could put himself into a trance at will, which is more than his father could do. He affirms also that evil spirits are foul-smelling, and foul-smelling is the place they frequent. From this, I think, derives the fact that the ancients called witches "foetentes," and the Gascons "fettilleres," on account of their foul smell, which comes I believe from copulation with devils, who perhaps take the bodies of the hanged, or other ones like those for carnal and corporal acts. Weyer also has noted that possessed people are strongly foul-smelling.<sup>28</sup> And though Hippocrates thought that demoniacs were afflicted by epilepsy, still he says that they stink.<sup>29</sup> Thus one can conclude that women, who naturally have a sweet breath very much more than men, by intimacy with Satan become hideous, doleful, ugly and stinking to an unnatural degree.

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<sup>28</sup> *De praestigis*, Bk. 4, Ch. 11.

<sup>29</sup> *The Sacred Disease*, 14.

As for the pleasures desired by them, and by those whom they love, we have shown above, from many who have been arrested and convicted of being witches on their own confession, that they also confessed that they abandoned themselves to Satan in carnal intercourse, and that they were displeased when they found some sort of very cold semen, as they have testified. I have cited the depositions above. Sprenger writes that he has conducted the trials of innumerable witches, who all confessed without being questioned on it, to having copulation with Satan.<sup>30</sup> One ought not to presume that they preferred to give themselves to such lovers, who torment them day and night, unless they continue in the service of their master.

As for the favour one desires from people, we see that such people are avoided and hated like death. I recall that Trois-eschelles, while in the presence of a king, performed an example of his craft, which truly amazed the king, for from a distance he separated the loops of a golden chain, and made them, it seemed, appear in his hand, and yet the chain was later found together. But immediately the king sent him out and never wanted to see him again, so that instead of being favoured, he was tried and condemned as a witch by the Provost, as we said earlier.

As for honours and dignities, we see that there are no people more scorned or loathed than those. So we read in Samuel a passage that the ancient Hebrews noted well, where God speaks thus, "Those who honour Me I will honour, but those who despise Me will be disdained."<sup>31</sup> This is not the word of man, it is the word of God, which is more certain than all the demonstrations in the world. Oh, if ambitious men knew this fine secret, how they would magnify the glory of God in order to earn endless praise, and how they would be afraid to dishonour God, so not to be disdained and defamed....

But what contempt, what dishonour, what more despicable villainy can one imagine than what witches suffer when they are forced to worship Satan in the guise of a stinking billy goat, and to kiss it on the part one does not dare write or frankly say? This would seem completely incredible to me if I had not read it in the

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<sup>30</sup> *Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 4.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Sam. 2:30.

confessions and convictions of innumerable witches submitted to the death penalty....

One must conclude then that all power, honour and dignity comes from the hand of God; and true pleasure and assured happiness from the spiritual tranquility which God gives to those who have faith in Him. Spirits possessed by Satan have never felt a spark of this pleasure since they are cruelly and continually tyrannized in their soul. As for riches, it is well known that there are great hidden treasures, and that Satan is not ignorant of where they are. This is entirely true. Nevertheless no witch ever earned a penny at his trade, as they all agree. Now one normally sees that the rich who become witches to get richer sink into poverty; and those who are poor remain wretches their whole life. So it is quite certain that riches in Scripture are called "blessings," because God grants them....<sup>32</sup>

Now if it is so, as it is indeed true, that the Devil cannot make one rich, nor give hidden treasures, nor the favour of people, nor the enjoyment of pleasures, nor knowledge, but only vengeance against the wicked, and not even against all, what misfortune can be greater than to make oneself Satan's slave for so little recompense in this world, and eternal damnation in the other?

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<sup>32</sup>1 Kg. 3:11-13; 2 Chron. 1:11-12; 1 Chron. 29:12.

## Chapter 5

### On the Unlawful Means Which Are Used to Prevent Evil Spells and to Dispell Illnesses and Charms

This question is one of the most difficult which can be broached in this treatise, and one which is not settled among theologians, and experts in canon and civil law. For the latter hold that one can get rid of evil spells by superstitious means....But many theologians—the largest and soundest segment—believe that it is idolatry and apostasy to employ the aid of devils and witches to prevent or drive away evil spells....They agree that it is better to suffer death. Now this view is most godly, while the other is damnable and forbidden in the law of God, as we shall show below....

Barbe Doré who was burned by decree of the Court in confirmation of the sentence of the Provost Saint Chrestofle at Senlis, January 19, 1577, confessed to having cured some individuals whom she had bewitched after cutting open a pigeon and putting it on the stomach of the patient pronouncing these words, which are recorded from her trial, "In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, of my Lord Saint Anthony and of mister Saint Michael the Angel, may you be cured of the illness," commanding him to make a novena each day at the village church. The most catholic person in the world will find this formula very fine and good. But I hold that whereas it would be good in itself, it is a blasphemy against the majesty of God to take it from Satan, or from the witch who gets it from Satan. Futhermore, all these orisons which come from Satan, must be abhorred by everyone. For she confessed that Satan had taught her this remedy, as is found in her trial, which the Seigneur de Pipemont, an honorable gentleman, sent me....

I learned also from Master Antoine de Lonan, Lieutenant General of Ribemont,<sup>33</sup> that there was a witch who revealed another witch with a sieve, after having said some words, while someone named all those who were suspected. When they happened to name the one who was guilty of the crime, then the sieve moved constantly.

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<sup>33</sup>Master Anthoine de Louain Lieutenant of Ripemont (1587).

And the guilty witch, as it turned out, came to the house, and was later condemned. But one also ought to have brought to trial the one who used the sieve. All that is done by diabolical art, so that those who see the marvel go even further in order to learn all about witchcraft. For Satan is already assured that the witch is his, and he wants to win others....<sup>34</sup>

Here someone will say, "Isn't it a very good thing to discover witches in order to punish them?" I grant this. And robbers and murderers too. But one must never do evil in order that good may result, as Saint Paul says;<sup>35</sup> and less in a matter of witchcraft than in any other thing....

The Faculty of the Sorbonne resolved and decreed that it is a pure heresy to drive away evil spells with evil spells. The resolution is dated September 19, 1398,<sup>36</sup> in which it is not stated that Satan and his subjects cannot drive away an evil spell by an evil spell, but that to look for such means is impiety. For if Satan cures the bodily wound, he always leaves an ulcer on the soul....Now it is a thousand times better to die, than to try such a loathsome remedy which cures the body, and kills the soul. One still sees the ritual of the witch putting her face to the ground, which is the way that the old prophets Moses, Joshua, and Elijah prayed when they wanted to appease God's wrath....<sup>37</sup>

Even Hippocrates writes that there were many charlatans who boasted of curing epilepsy, claiming it was the power of demons, and they plunged into the ground or threw into the sea the spell of expiation. Most of them were just scoundrels. But in concluding he adds these words: "Only God wipes away sins, who is our salvation and deliverance."<sup>38</sup> I have set down the words of one whom we call "pagan," to teach us to have a horror of such impieties....

One also sees the terrible and inevitable judgment of God, who takes revenge on His enemies by His enemies, as He declares in Jeremiah.<sup>39</sup> For frequently witches reveal the evil spell, and kill each

<sup>34</sup>Weyer discusses this kind of conjuring in *De praestigijs*, Bk. 2, Ch. 12.

<sup>35</sup>Ro. 6:1-2; 3:8.

<sup>36</sup>On the Sorbonne resolution see above, Book 1, note 12.

<sup>37</sup>See Ex. 34:8; Jos. 5:14; 1 Ki. 18:42. Also Abram (Gen. 17:3) and Lot (Gen. 19:1) prayed face down.

<sup>38</sup>*The Sacred Disease*, 4.

<sup>39</sup>On Jeremiah's declaration see above, Book 1, note 103.

other, since it cannot matter to Satan what means they use, provided that he brings an end to the human race, by killing the body, or the soul, or both together. I shall give an example which occurred in Poitou in the year 1571. King Charles IX, after dining commanded that they bring him Trois-eschelles, whom he had granted his pardon so that he would denounce his accomplices. He confessed before the king, in the presence of many great lords, the witches' manner of transport, their kinds of dances, sacrifices offered to Satan, lascivious acts with devils in the form of men and women, and that each one took powders to bring death to men, animals and crops. And since everyone was astonished at what he said, Gaspard de Coligny,<sup>40</sup> who was then present as Admiral of France, reported that they had arrested a young boy in Poitou a few months earlier, accused of having killed two gentlemen. He confessed that he was their servant, and that he saw them cast powders in houses, and on wheat while uttering these words, "A curse on these crops, on this house, on this land." When he found these powders, he took some and threw them on the bed where the two gentlemen were sleeping. They were found dead in their bed, all very black and swollen up. He was absolved by the judges. Trois-eschelles then recounted many similar stories.

We must conclude that if the king, who had a strong constitution and was robust, had had this master sorcerer and his accomplices burned, God would have granted him a long and happy life for such executions. For the word of God is very clear that one who causes a man worthy of death to escape, brings down upon himself the other's penalty, as the prophet said to King Ahab, that he would die for having granted pardon to a man deserving death.<sup>41</sup> Now it was completely unheard of to grant pardon to witches. It is true that one can say that it was to denounce the accomplices that he was granted pardon, but they all escaped.

Returning to our topic, Sprenger (who has executed a countless number of witches and learned their secrets) writes that there are some incurable evil spells, and others which cannot be removed

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<sup>40</sup>Gaspard de Coligny was one of the principal leaders of the Protestant forces in the Wars of Religion. He was assassinated in Paris in 1572. In the previous year, he and the King were in the Poitou to conclude a truce following a major Catholic victory.

<sup>41</sup>1 Ki. 20:41-42.

except by giving the spell to someone else. In other cases, by giving the spell to the one who cast it. Some people recover from only one illness, others from several. Some others do not recover unless they are outside of a radius of two leagues from their home, and from certain persons. Some never remove the spell, unless it is with the consent of the one who gave it. When he tried to learn from the witches the reason for all that, they answered that everything was done according to the bargain they had made on entering Satan's service, and by express agreements....<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 2.

## Chapter 6

On Those Who Are Beleaguered and Pursued by  
Evil Spirits, and Whether There Is Any  
Means to Drive Them Out

We have spoken of those who willingly by tacit or express agreements have dealings with evil spirits. Let us discuss now those who are beleaguered and pursued by them, and whether there is any means to drive them away. I am not bringing into question whether there are persons beleaguered by evil spirits, for all the sacred and profane histories are full of cases, especially in the Gospel,<sup>43</sup> and in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter Sixteen.<sup>44</sup> There was a young slave girl who had a spirit which spoke through her. It talked about hidden things and the fortunes of many: and for one truth there were ten lies. She said that Saint Peter and Saint Paul preached the way of salvation—in this way her master gained, and the Devil enticed people to ask the truth from the master of deception....

But the proof one sees of those who are possessed by the Devil, is that they speak different languages which they have never learned. There are few of them in France, however we do find cases. A year ago a young child of twelve years old, named Samuel, from the village of Uvantelet near this city of Laon, and son of a gentleman, the Seigneur des Landes, one month after the death of his mother was seized by a spirit which tormented him greatly, struck him with slaps and sometimes entered into his body. If someone tried to remove the child, it pulled him back by force. The father, on account of the religion he professes, did not want him to be exorcised.<sup>45</sup> I do not know whether he has been freed since then. Twelve or thirteen years ago also a woman from Vervins was seen who was possessed by an evil spirit, and she was exorcised in this city of Laon. I shall pass over this because there have been several books published about it.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>See Mt. 8:28–34; 9:32–33; 12:22; Mk. 5:1–20; Lk. 8:26–39; 11:17–20; 13:32.

<sup>44</sup>Ac. 16:16–18.

<sup>45</sup>The Protestants held that demonic possession should be cured by prayer, not exorcism.

<sup>46</sup>This was Nicole Aubery, who was exorcised in a highly publicised and politicised way in Laon in 1566. This case was widely cited by Catholic



Italy and Spain have a great number of these cases who must be confined, and who speak Greek, Latin and other languages without having learned them. Or to state it better, the spirit speaks in them. For the spirit in the girl from Vervins, when she stuck out her tongue right to the larynx, spoke fluently. Melanchthon writes that in Saxony he saw a demoniac woman,<sup>47</sup> who could not read nor write, and yet she spoke Greek and Latin and foretold that cruel war of Saxony in these words: "There will be terrible things in this country and madness in this people." Fernel in his *De abditis rerum causis*,<sup>48</sup> recounts that he also saw a young demoniac boy who spoke Greek, even though he could not read.

Hippocrates...thought that it was only epilepsy.<sup>49</sup> But the difference has been well noted by posterity, and in Greece itself since people remarked the various languages and divinations of the beleaguered—which are not observed in those who have epilepsy.<sup>50</sup> Also the mark is evident, and many completely different symptoms. And those who want to confirm it—I mean witches—say in the ear of the patient, "Exi Daemon, quia Ephimolei tibi praecipunt."<sup>51</sup> Suddenly the demoniac patient falls as in a faint, then some time later he recovers, and tells of far-off, true and unknown things. After that he is released from the demon. But if it is epilepsy, that does not happen. The other kinds of people who have the Devil in their body are witches, who are not troubled in such a way that people notice it; or those who in their devotions think they are doing good, and are seized by demons for a time, as were the Pythic priestesses in Greece....<sup>52</sup>

Witches agree in countless trials that if a witch who has made an open declaration and an express agreement with the Devil forever, leaves his service, and repents of what he has done without praying

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polemicists as the "Miracle of Laon," as proof that only the Catholic Church inherited Christ's gifts of exorcism.

<sup>47</sup>On Philip Melanchthon see above, Book 1, note 150.

<sup>48</sup>On Fernel, see above, Book 2, note 56.

<sup>49</sup>*The Sacred Disease*, 6.

<sup>50</sup>On the topic of possessed people speaking in foreign or unintelligible tongues, see, for example, Michael Psellus of Nicomedia (A.D. 1018–78/9) *De operatione daemonum (How Demons Operate)*, Ch. 14.

<sup>51</sup>"Depart, demon, because the Ephimolei command you."

<sup>52</sup>On the Pythic priestesses see above, Book 1, note 84. See also Plutarch, *On the Oracles of the Pythia*.

to God, he will be mistreated, tormented and beaten, unless God by His grace preserves him. I remarked before that I have met one individual who was followed everywhere by an evil spirit, and could not get rid of it, and when he was sound asleep the devil woke him by pulling on his nose and ears, asking him whether he did not wish to ask him for something. Sprenger says that he condemned many witches who were very happy that they were being put to death, claiming that they were beaten by the Devil if they did not do his commandments and that otherwise they had no rest whatsoever.<sup>53</sup> I also mentioned a gentleman living near Villers-Cotterêts, to whom a Spanish soldier had sold an evil spirit in a ring. Since it did not obey the gentleman as he had hoped, he threw the ring into the fire. Since then it has not ceased to torment him. There are also some persons who used to be witches, and who renounced God, and swore alliance to Satan; as they are familiar with his deceptions they pay no heed to him. Satan does not do anything to them however, for he is satisfied that they belong to him. There are others who just seem to be mad, and who laugh and jump about for no reason...and indeed, if a man's madness does not derive from illness, it is one of the signs that the person is possessed by an evil spirit.

One sees people also who are not otherwise mad; and yet they sleepwalk, as if they were awake. It is a lethargy, or some other illness of the brain which happens sometimes to the most sensible people. I have seen three persons suffering from this malady who had no pain. Even Galen confesses that he was ill this way once and went half a quarter-league sound asleep, until he hit a stone which made him fall and woke him up.<sup>54</sup> But there are some who go very often at night with their eyes closed and climb up on houses, churches, and inaccessible high spots, where the most alert and sensible person in the world could not get up. And if they are called by their name, immediately they fall to the ground. Sprenger reports having seen some fall this way at Orléans.<sup>55</sup> There was also one roving about at night followed by his companion who slept with him; and when he saw him go into the river he did not try to follow him. But fearing that he would go too far, he called him by his

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<sup>53</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 2.

<sup>54</sup>On Galen see above, Book 1, note 134.

<sup>55</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 3.

name. All of a sudden he fell down completely asleep, and was drowned. It must be presumed that an evil spirit was troubling him. However, I am not certain about it, for it may be that the man on hearing his name, woke up with a start, which was enough to make him fall. But I do not find any evidence of him climbing up to inaccessible spots and dangerous precipices while asleep, and coming back without stumbling or injuring himself. Whatever the case may be, it must not be deemed that one who is beleaguered by an evil spirit, and tormented by it, is shut off from the way of salvation, as the saints have concluded. In fact, Saint Paul in the first Epistle to the Corinthians speaking about the one who had abused his mother-in-law says, "It is expedient that the man be given up to Satan, so that his spirit be saved on the day of judgment."<sup>56</sup> It must be understood that he meant excommunication, which is still practised. It remains for us to examine ways to drive out evil spirits either from people, animals or homes.

Concerning ways to drive out demons, Pope Alexander I instituted holy water. As for conjurations, they are quite commonly known. "Exorciso te N. per Deum vivum, et caetera."<sup>57</sup> And then the orison "Deus misericordiae et caet.,"<sup>58</sup> and after the execration, "Ergo maledicte Diabole, et caet."<sup>59</sup> then another prayer, and again the execration, up to three conjurations, while burning all the charms and maleficent powders which are found in the home of the one who is possessed by the devil...

Nevertheless the evil spirits do not often go out in spite of all that. I mentioned previously that woman who was possessed by an evil spirit, and who still lives at Menil, near Dammartin. She was often tied up by a spirit after the age of eighteen which did her no other harm.<sup>60</sup> Doctor Picard and several others exorcised her in Paris in 1552, but that achieved nothing. Nevertheless, I have heard of others who, trying to exorcise the devil, are seized by him themselves, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles about two disciples who tried to drive out the evil spirit from the body of a person. Suddenly the devil seized hold of both of them, and left the one he

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<sup>56</sup>1 Cor. 5:5.

<sup>57</sup>"I exorcise you (name) by the living God, etc."

<sup>58</sup>"God of mercy, etc."

<sup>59</sup>"Therefore, accursed Devil, etc."

<sup>60</sup>"...after the age of eight...." (1587).

was tormenting.<sup>61</sup> We have a similar story in Saint Gregory in the first dialogue.<sup>62</sup> There was a priest who when he saw a woman seized by the devil, took a stole and placed it on the woman. Suddenly the devil lay hold of the priest and left the woman....

Sometimes devils go away at the command of witches, as they say about Apollonius of Tyana, who drove out devils, or rather they obeyed him to give him the prestige to deify himself, as he tried to do, and found numerous disciples who made more of him than of Jesus Christ.<sup>63</sup> Simon Magus did the same thing.<sup>64</sup> For there is no finesse or subtlety which Satan does not think of in order to make men commit idolatry. His power is not ruined by this, but firmly established....

Sometimes the devil groans, as if he was suffering great pain, and they claim to be the soul of this or that person, in order to keep men always in error. We have quite a number of these stories. Pierre Mamor tells one which happened in France at Confolens-sur-Vienne, in the home of one called Capland in the year 1458, where a devil who said he was the soul of the deceased woman, moaned and cried out, lamenting very loudly.<sup>65</sup> He admonished them to make many prayers and pilgrimages, and revealed many true things. But someone said to him, "If you want us to believe you, say 'Miserere mei Deus secundum etc.,"<sup>66</sup> but he replied that he could not. Then those present ridiculed him, and shuddering they fled. The same happened to Nicole Aubery, from Vervins, about whom Mr. Barthélemy Faye, Counsellor to the Parlement, wrote the story

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<sup>61</sup>Ac. 19:13-16.

<sup>62</sup>A reference to the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) who became Pope in 590.

<sup>63</sup>On the exorcisms and miraculous cures of Apollonius see e.g. Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 3.38-40, 4.20, 8.7. While others sometimes considered him divine (3.50, 5.24, 7.38), according to Philostratus, Apollonius himself denounced any such claims (8.5, 7). Bodin may have been influenced by *The Treatise of Eusebius, the Son of Pamphilius, against the Life of Apollonius of Tyana Written by Philostratus, Occasioned by the Parallel Drawn by Hierocles between Him and Christ*. This work is included at the end of the Loeb edition of *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.

<sup>64</sup>On Simon Magus, see Ac. 8:9-24.

<sup>65</sup>On Pierre Mamor, see above, Author's Preface, note 4.

<sup>66</sup>"Have pity on me Lord according to etc."

in which he said that Satan appeared to her while she prayed on the grave of her father, as though issuing from the tomb.<sup>67</sup> And he told her that she had to say many masses, make some pilgrimages to specified locations, and after all that he did not stop tormenting that poor woman, although at the beginning he said that he was her grandfather. Nevertheless, in the end he said that he was Beelzebub....

Thus we read that evil spirits are not as frequent in towns as in villages, nor in villages as in wild or watery places, as written in Job, Chapter Forty-one.<sup>68</sup> That is why the evil spirits which people call "St. Anselm's fire" appearing at night, follow the waters and often cause people to drown. Now in order to drive them off, I do believe that people with the fear and word of God can help, but without the fear of God they can do nothing at all.

I shall give as an example music which is one of the things which has the most strength against evil spirits, as it is written of Saul, that the evil spirit left him while David played his harp.<sup>69</sup> It is true that David had the Holy Spirit then, and nevertheless he says that Saul's torment did not cease except at the sound of the harp, either because music is a divine thing, and the Devil only likes discordant sounds; or because harmony conspiring with the soul, returns bewildered reason to its original state. As the ancients remarked, music cures the body through the soul, just as medicine cures the soul through the body. In fact there is a type of madman in Germany, who recovers only at the sound of an instrument, when the musician adapts his music to the shaking of the madmen. Then little by little it causes the frenzied person to follow calmly the rhythm of the musician. In this way it cures by making him rest. People call it the "Saint Vitus disease"....

Thus there is nothing which expels evil spirits sooner and forces them to leave. But it is praise for the Creator and not for creatures. How then, someone will say, is it possible that the sorcerer Apollonius expelled demons, and how do the witches in our time still have that power instantly to cast out evil spirits? I shall answer

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<sup>67</sup>A counsellor in the Parlement of Paris, Faye published an account of the exorcism of Nicole Aubery in 1571.

<sup>68</sup>A reference to Leviathan, a mythological sea monster or great crocodile who lies in the waters of the river. Bodin treats him as a figure of Satan.

<sup>69</sup>1 Sam. 16:14-23.

what was resolved at the Sorbonne in 1398: "They are heretics who think that by charms one can coerce Satan, who makes a fine pretence of being coerced."<sup>70</sup> And so when one sees witches cast out evil spirits, it is not expelling them nor forcing them to go out, but it is by mutual consent. We read in Leo the African that the sorcerers whom they call "Muhazimim," while tracing some circles and symbols on the brow of the demoniac, after they have interrogated the demon, command it to go out, and immediately it goes out.<sup>71</sup> Jacob Sprenger writes in similar terms about the witches in Germany.<sup>72</sup> By doing this Satan begins quietly to take possession of the soul, whereas he only possessed the body through force and violence. In such a case when one resorts to superstition and idolatries, then the evil spirit goes away, and pretends that it is forced to do so, in order to entice the ignorant to continue in their idolatry. In Germany if there is a demoniac or bewitched person who suspects some witch of having sent him an evil spirit, or cast some other evil spell, the judges, and even the Imperial Chamber, have the witch say these words in the presence of the person under spell, "Benedico tibi in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti in tuis bonis sanguine et armento."<sup>73</sup> Then suddenly the bewitched are freed. The most righteous man in that country by saying the same words cannot do this, which clearly shows the understanding between the evil spirit and the witch....

At the convent of Kentorp in Germany, the nuns were troubled by evil spirits in a strange way in 1552. The witches and ladies who were questioned answered that it was the cook of the convent, named Elsa von Kamen. She confessed that she was a witch, stating that she had prayed to Satan, and cast spells for that effect. She was burned alive with her mother. These demoniacs were raised into the air every day, and sometimes every hour, and fell back down without injury. Then they were tickled on the bottoms of their feet and laughed endlessly. Sometimes they struck each other. When some virtuous person was saying his prayer, or speaking seriously

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<sup>70</sup>"Hæretici sunt, qui putant Dæmones maleficiis cogi posse, qui se cogi fingunt." On the Sorbonne resolution see above, Book 1, note 12:

<sup>71</sup>On Leo the African, see above, Book 2, note 4.

<sup>72</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 2.

<sup>73</sup>"I bless you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in your goods, kin, and herd."

about God, they were annoyed. And if they said their hours in Latin, and minor prayers, or if one spoke to them of playing or having fun they no longer felt pain and were greatly relieved; and everyone gave off a strongly stinking breath.<sup>74</sup>

...Occasionally the bestial appetite of some women makes one think that it is a demon, as occurred in 1566 in the diocese of Cologne. In a convent there was a dog people said was a demon, which lifted up the dresses of the nuns to abuse them. It was not a demon, in my opinion, but a normal dog. At Toulouse there was a woman who indulged in this abuse, and the dog tried to violate her in front of everyone. She confessed the truth, and was burned. There was another woman who was brought a prisoner to Paris in 1540, convicted of the same thing. And it seems that the law of God by reason of the abomination and wickedness, did not confine itself to prohibiting that on pain of death,<sup>75</sup> but it even forbids offering to God the cost of a harlot, and the price of a dog in one and the same clause.<sup>76</sup>

It may also occur that Satan is sent by God, since it is certain that all punishment comes from Him through His usual instruments, or without instrument, to avenge such a foul deed. So it happened at the convent of Mount Hesse in Germany where the nuns were demoniacs; dogs were seen on their beds, lewdly assaulting those who were suspected to have made shameful use of them, and to have committed the sin they call, the "silent sin."<sup>77</sup> I wanted very much to inform the reader about this so that people will be careful not to coerce the will of young girls who bear no affection for the vow of chastity.

But it is remarkable how many people resort to exorcisms, since the holy prophets never practised them: they abhorred questioning or asking anything of Satan, or doing anything that he commanded.<sup>78</sup> Rather, the presence of holy persons drove out the evil

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<sup>74</sup>From Weyer, *De praestigiis*, Bk. 4, Ch. 10-11.

<sup>75</sup>Ex. 22:19; Lev. 18:23; 20:15-16; Dt. 27:21.

<sup>76</sup>Deut. 23:18. More recent translations of the passage make it clear, however, that the "price of a dog" is a contemptuous reference to the fee of a male prostitute.

<sup>77</sup>By the "silent sin" Bodin meant masturbation. The story comes from Weyer, *De praestigiis*, Bk. 4, Ch. 10.

<sup>78</sup>This passage, critical of contemporary Catholic exorcism practices, earned Bodin severe censure from orthodox demonologists.

spirits—along with the praise of the one, sole God. In the time of the early Church, people had the demoniacs come into the congregation, and all the people prayed to God, as we read in Saint John Chrysostom,<sup>79</sup> and in Saint Clement who gives a most beautiful orison,<sup>80</sup> and in Theodorus Lector.<sup>81</sup> We read that the king of Persia in the early Church, commanded that demons be cast out. Prayers were made in the church and the demons were cast out. And in Theodoret we read that the bishop of Apamea by addressing his prayer to God, with his face touching the ground, cast out the demon who was in the temple of Jupiter.<sup>82</sup> This is why the law of God formally commands that one raze the temples where the pagans made prayers to their images: so that the name of God not be sullied, contaminated nor beseeched there some way or other.<sup>83</sup> And in Saint Augustine...we read that people did nothing but pray to God to cast out demons, without becoming familiar, or trifling with them, and without in any way questioning Satan,<sup>84</sup> as happened to some people in Germany: they even believed Satan's words, and others carried out his commands, which is a despicable and damnable impiety....

Johann Weyer recounts that he saw a demoniac girl in Germany,<sup>85</sup> and while a certain exorcist was questioning her, Satan replied that the girl had to go on a pilgrimage to Marcodurum, a city in Germany, and that every three steps she kneel, and that she have a Mass said on the altar of Saint Anne, and she would be freed; he predicted that the sign for her deliverance would come at the end of the Mass. This was done, and at the end of the Mass she and the priest saw

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<sup>79</sup>On Saint John Chrysostom see above, Book 2, note 102. In his marginal notes to the 1580 text Bodin refers here to the *De incomprehensibili Dei nativitate* of Chrysostom.

<sup>80</sup>St. Clement of Rome was one of the first bishops of Rome in the first century (c. 91–c. 101). He was author of the so-called *First Epistle of Clement*, the most important first century Christian document outside the New Testament. Other spurious works bear his name.

<sup>81</sup>Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350–428), a theologian and biblical scholar who became Bishop of Antioch in 392.

<sup>82</sup>On Theodoret, see above, Book 2, note 39.

<sup>83</sup>Dt. 12:1–5.

<sup>84</sup>*City of God*, 22.8.

<sup>85</sup>Weyer, *De praestigiis*, Bk. 5, Ch. 14.



a white image, and thus she was freed. In the year 1559 on the 17 of December in the village of Loen in the County of Ivilliers the curate dared to question the Devil carefully, who was holding a girl beleaguered, whether the Mass was good, and why he was pushing and forcing the girl to go immediately to Mass when the bell was rung. Satan replied that he wanted to see to it, because it meant calling into doubt the basis of her religion and making Satan its judge....

Mr. Barthélemy Faye, President of the Parliamentary Appeals Court, writes that while Nicole Aubery, a native of Vervins was praying over the grave of her grandfather, there rose up as if coming from the ground, a man wrapped in his shroud, and he said to the young woman that he was her grandfather, and that for him to pass from the pains of Purgatory, she had to say many Masses and make a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Liesse. After that he showed himself and he seemed to be her grandfather, and he continued to have many Masses said. When they stopped saying Masses the young woman was tormented. Finally Satan said that he was Beelzebub. Since the story is well known to all France, I shall not say anything more about it.

But there is another more recent one, well known to Parisians, though unpublished, which took place in Paris in the rue Saint Honoré. A haberdasher had taken his niece into his home when she was orphaned. One day as the girl was praying by the grave of her father at Saint Gervais, Satan presented himself to her alone in the form of a tall black man, taking her hand and saying, "My friend, don't be afraid, your father and mother are well. But you must say some Masses, and go on a pilgrimage to Notre Dame des Vertus, then they will go straight to Paradise." Because Satan is very careful about the salvation of men, the girl asked who he was. He replied that he was Satan, and that she not be surprised. The girl did what she was commanded. After that, he said to her that she had to go on a pilgrimage to Saint James.<sup>86</sup> "I couldn't go so far," she said. Since then Satan never stopped bothering her, speaking familiarly to her as she went about her chores when she was alone. He said, "You are very cruel, you wouldn't wound your breast with scissors

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<sup>86</sup>The pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint James (d. 44) at Santiago de Compostela in Spain was immensely popular, especially from the twelfth to the fifteenth century.

for love of me." She did this to satisfy him and quickly to have done with him. But following that, he asked that she give him something, even asking her for some of her hair. She gave him a lock of it. Sometimes he tried to persuade her to cast herself into the water, and other times to strangle herself, and he put a rope from a beam around her neck and would have strangled her, had she not cried out. So that one day her uncle, after trying to take her side, was so soundly beaten that he remained ailing in bed for more than fifteen days.

Another time Satan tried to violate her and possess her carnally, and because of the resistance she put up, she was battered into a bloody state. Among many who saw the girl, one named Choiny, Secretary of the Bishop of Valence, told her that there was no better way to drive off the spirit than by not answering him about anything that he said: even if he were to command her to pray to God, which he never does unless blaspheming Him, and always conjoining Him with His creatures in mockery. And in fact Satan when he saw that the girl did not answer him, and did not do anything whatsoever for him, took her and threw her on the ground, and since then she has seen nothing of him. Mr. Amiot, Bishop of Auxerre, and the girl's curate had not been able to do anything. This formula seems to me to be a very good one....

## *Book Four*

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### Chapter 1 On the Investigation of Witches

We have spoken about the ways to drive out evil spirits: but they would be driven out in vain if witches recalled them. For Satan is always on the lookout to come when called—and very often without being called. We have prescribed the mild measures and the easily administered medicines; namely, to instruct the people in the law of God, and to lead them into His service. And if all that cannot restrain the wicked in the fear of God, and turn witches from their despicable life, one must apply cauteries and hot irons, and cut off the putrefied parts. Since, in truth, whatever punishment one prescribes for witches, even roasting and slowly burning them, that pain is not nearly as great as what Satan makes them suffer in this world, not to mention the eternal pains which are prepared for them, for the fire cannot last an hour, indeed half an hour before the witches have died. But of all the sins which entail their own penalty, such as avarice, envy, drunkenness, wantonness, and other such things, there is none which punishes its victim more cruelly, nor longer than witchcraft, which takes revenge both on the soul and on the body....

We have shown that their craft cannot enrich them nor give them pleasure, honour, or knowledge, but only the means to commit base filth and wickednesses, in which Satan employs them. And for reward in this world he forces them to renounce God, and to worship him and to kiss his rear in the form of a he-goat or some other foul animal. And instead of resting, he transports his slaves at night to commit the filthy acts which we have described. Thus the death penalty prescribed for witches is not to make them suffer more than they are suffering by punishing them, but to bring an end to the wrath of God on the whole people; also in part to bring

them to repentance and to cure them, or at least if they will not change their ways, to reduce their number, surprising the wicked and preserving the elect. It is therefore, a very salutary thing for the whole body of a state diligently to search out and severely punish witches. Otherwise there is a danger that the people will stone both magistrates and witches. This happened a year ago at Haguenone when two witches who rightly had deserved death were sentenced, one to the lash, and the other to be in attendance. But the people seized them, stoned them and drove off the officers. Another very notorious witch living at Verigni, who died last April, took children, and after being accused of many sorceries was acquitted. But she avenged herself so effectively that she killed both people and countless livestock, as I learned from the inhabitants. And I have marvelled at why many princes have set up inquiries and named special commissioners to conduct the trials of thieves, financiers, usurers, and highway robbers—and have left unpunished the most detestable and horrible wickednesses of witches.

It is true that from earliest times there have been sorcerer-princes, or those who have wanted to be served by witches, by whom nevertheless, they are always cast down from the high seat of honour into the abyss of every misery and calamity. For they inquire of witches whether they will gain victory, and God makes them vanquished. If they ask Satan who their successor will be, God makes their enemies their successors. If they ask witches whether they will be cured of their illnesses, God hastens their death, as we have shown with innumerable accounts. In this way God punishes sorcerer-princes whom magistrates cannot punish. Sometimes also God makes subjects rebel against sorcerer-princes, and usually He punishes them through the witches themselves.

Since Satan and witches enact their mysteries at night, and witches' works are hidden and concealed and they cannot easily be sighted, the investigation and proof are difficult. This is what prevents judges from passing sentence or convicting people of such a despicable crime: a crime which involves every wickedness imaginable, as we have shown above. It is necessary therefore, in a case of this nature where such abominable crimes are done so secretly that one cannot discover them through respectable people, to verify them through accomplices, and people guilty of the same crime, just as is done with thieves; and only one is needed to denounce an infinite number of them....Now there are several ways to proceed with the punishment of witches: either through regular

judges or special magistrates. For in addition to the regular judges, it is necessary to establish special magistrates for that purpose, at least one or two in each province. But I do not mean, however, that authority be removed from regular judges to exercise jurisdiction, either from bias or rivalry, but rather that they will lend mutual assistance in such a holy task. In earlier times ecclesiastical judges had this authority to the exclusion of lay judges. There is extant a decree of Parlement issued in the proceedings against the bishop of Paris in 1282. But later, authority was granted to civil magistrates while excluding churchmen, by decree of the same Parlement in 1390, which was solemnly set forth. Subsequently Poulallier, the Provost Marshal of Laon, after arresting a number of witches, tried to bring that under his jurisdiction, but his suit was dismissed by decree of the court. It was then that Satan succeeded so well that people were of opinion that all that was said about him was nonsense. In order then that judges not wait until a complaint is lodged, or until the king's prosecutors wake up, they must without request give information about suspects, which is the most secret method, and perhaps the best. But since some are frightened, and others do not wish to get involved with documenting evidence themselves, it is very necessary that crown prosecutors, and their deputies, become complainants. This is the second way. For it is really their responsibility to attend to everything and to prepare the prosecution for heinous crimes. Now since crown prosecutors very often are more negligent in their responsibility than judges, it is adviseable that each be admitted as a plaintiff in this crime, including the crown prosecutor. If, however, he does not wish to be involved, let private individuals nevertheless be permitted to lay charges for the prosecution and conviction of this crime; and without delay, whether it is a matter of personal interest or not, as is required in this realm for all other crimes, provided that in this case one respect the requisite solemnities of common law stated in the law, "qui accusare, de publicis iudiciis."<sup>1</sup> This is the third form of proceedings that one can adopt.

The fourth will be effected by denunciations without the crown prosecutors having to name the informers, unless slander is very apparent (and the accused then is fully absolved in accordance with the Edict of Moulins) and unless the prisoner is released "quousque,"<sup>2</sup> or it is announced that he will be more fully investi-

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<sup>1</sup>"Who [has the right] to accuse, concerning public judgments."

gated, as must be done if there is any evidence or presumption. Now since this plague of witches is more common in villages and in areas outside of towns, and poor simple people fear witches more than they do God or all the magistrates, and do not dare to come forward as accusers, or as informers, it is necessary to implement for the detection of this crime which is so odious the praiseworthy custom of Scotland, practised at Milan, which is called "Indict"; namely, that there be a box in church, where it will be easy for anyone to deposit a piece of paper with the name of the witch, the act committed by him, the place, the time and the witnesses. Then, in the presence of the judge and the crown prosecutor, who would each have a key to the box fastened with two locks, the box will be opened every fifteen days to inform secretly against those who are named. This is the fifth and the most reliable way of proceeding.

The sixth method must be done by monitory letters, which is a very necessary measure to compel those who do not dare, or who will not make an accusation or refer a case to the court or lay a complaint. The seventh is to admit his accomplices as accusers for the same crimes against the others while promising impunity to the accuser, and keeping the promise with him provided that he repent and renounce Satan. This is the opinion of Jean Durand,<sup>3</sup> one of the greatest jurisconsults of his time, under the rubric "de accusat.,"<sup>4</sup> who argues that this privilege ought to be given to the accomplices of witches. Although according to common law, associates are not admissable accusers, nevertheless the law "Tullia, de ambitu,"<sup>5</sup> gave similar prerogatives to competitors to convict each other of the crime of corruption, in order to accede to positions. As reward then the winner had impunity, and took over the position of his competitor. And even though the witch is warned before making his denunciation, one must however always promise impunity, and reduce the penalty of those who will confess without torture, and who will denounce their associates. This is a very reliable way to find out who the others are. For it is quite certain that it is only fear of death which prevents confession of the truth. This was observed after King Charles IX had granted grace to Trois-eschelles, condemned to

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<sup>2</sup>A provisional release, at the pleasure of the court.

<sup>3</sup>On William Durandus, see above, Book 1, note 196.

<sup>4</sup>Short for "de accusatione/accusationibus" (on accusation[s]).

<sup>5</sup>The Tullian law on unlawful canvassing (of favours) and corruption.

death as a witch, on the proviso that he would denounce his accomplices. He revealed a great number of them, as I recounted earlier.

If this does not succeed, one must arrest the witches' young daughters. For frequently it has been found that they were taught by their mothers, and taken to the assemblies. And at a young age they will be easy to persuade and set straight with promises of impunity, which their youth and the bad influence of their mothers ought to obtain for them. They named then the persons, the time, the place of assembly, and what is done there. In this way Bouvin, the Bailiff of Châteauroux learned everything that was done by a young girl whom the mother had won over....

If they are afraid to speak the truth in front of several people, the judge must have two or three people hide behind a tapestry, and hear the depositions without writing them down; then get the confessions and write them down. This is especially important since judges who have never tried witches, or who have never seen any, or who are not well-informed, will find themselves in a quandary. One must first of all and as soon as possible, begin interrogating the witch. While that is certainly useful for all crimes, for this one it must be done. For it has always been found that as soon as the witch is arrested, she immediately feels that Satan has abandoned her, and terrified she confesses willingly then what force and torture could not extract from her. But if she is left in prison for some time, there is no doubt that Satan will give her instruction.

One must begin then with light and humorous matters, such as conjuring tricks, without a court clerk, and conceal one's desire to know all about it. This is what they listen to most willingly. Then little by little inquire whether their father and mother practised this craft. As I urged, for example, that they inquire diligently about the mother of Jeanne Harvillier, whom we spoke about earlier. They sent a formal request for information to Verbery, the town of her birth, and it was learned that she had been condemned to be burned more than thirty years before, and Jeanne Harvillier, her daughter, then very young was sentenced to the lash. For there is nothing more common than mothers winning over their daughters, and dedicating them to Satan—often as soon as they are born. In fact Jeanne Harvillier's daughter on seeing her mother a prisoner took flight....

The second point must be to learn what region the witch is from, and whether she has moved about at all. For it is commonly found that witches go from place to place and from one village to another,

unless their possessions keep them in one place. This is because they are afraid of being denounced when they are discovered, and that people will learn the reason why they have moved, and keep a careful watch for their faces. For such people would not dare to look you directly in the eye, nor neglect anything during the trial respecting their manner, their composure and their speech.

Now it has been confirmed by experience that witches never cry, which is a very great presumption, since women shed tears and sighs for little or nothing. But the Inquisitors Paolo Grillando and Sprenger,<sup>6</sup> state that they were never able to make a single witch cry.

One must also make careful note of inconsistencies and repeat many times at different intervals the same line of questioning. But one must, if possible, pursue the interrogation concerning all the charges without interruption, so that Satan does not dissuade them from telling the truth. For this reason Daneau states very well in his brief Dialogue that the witch must never be left alone when she is a prisoner. She speaks to the Devil, he says, who dissuades her from telling the truth, or makes her depart from what she has confessed and always promises her that she will not die, which creates many obstacles...<sup>7</sup> There are others to whom Satan promises that they will be very happy after this life, which prevents them from repenting, and they die obstinate in their wickedness. Others already condemned to death, kill themselves, as we have often seen. And some deny what they have confessed under torture, and reduce the judges to such confusion that due to lack of evidence, they are obliged to release them from prison. But one who has confessed his wickednesses without torture, if he later denies it, ought, however, to be convicted if the confession is supported by other presumptions and pieces of evidence. And since witches exercise their wickedness on their enemies, one must diligently inquire if the person presumed killed or bewitched bore any hostility toward the witch who is suspected of it, and intensively question the witch about each point of enmity. It is also necessary in order to get the truth from those who are accused or suspected, that judges appear to have pity on them, and tell them that it is not they, but the Devil who forced and compelled them to cause peoples' death. So for this reason they are innocent.

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<sup>6</sup> *Malleus*, Pt. 3, Q. 15.

<sup>7</sup> On Daneau, see above, Book 2, note 62.



If one finds then that the witches do not confess anything, they must be made to change their clothes and have all their hair shaved off, and then undergo interrogation. And if there is partial proof or any strong presumptions, torture must be applied. For everyone agrees that witches carry drugs to ensure silence, although the Devil comforts and reassures them. Nevertheless, having lost the drug, they think that they will not be able to withstand the torture, which means that very often they tell the truth without torture...for Sprenger the Inquisitor writes that if the witch has the spell of silence on him, he will not feel any pain whatsoever under the question, and will never confess the truth...<sup>8</sup> But before applying the question,<sup>9</sup> one must give the impression of preparing numerous instruments, and ropes in quantity, as well as assistants for tormenting them, and keep them for some time in fear. It is also expedient before making the accused go into the torture chamber to have someone cry out with a dreadful cry, as if he were in torment, and tell the accused that it is the torture being applied, dismaying him this way and extracting the truth. I saw a judge who put on such a dreadful face and terrible voice, threatening hanging if they did not tell the truth, and in this way terrified the accused so much that they confessed immediately, as if they had lost all courage. This technique works with timorous people but not with bold ones.

One must also plant some shrewd and very skilled spies who say they are prisoners for the same crime as the accused witch, and in this way get his confession. And if he will not say anything, he must be led to believe that his fellow prisoners have denounced him, even if it had not occurred to them to do so. To avenge himself then he will give back perhaps, the same. All this is lawful according to divine and human law, though Saint Augustine in *De mendacio*,<sup>10</sup> and Thomas Aquinas, hold the view that one must never lie with eight kinds of lies...<sup>11</sup>

One must of necessity admit that it is a virtuous, praiseworthy and necessary thing to lie to save an innocent person's life, and damnable to tell the truth and cause his murder. This is why Plato

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<sup>8</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 3, Q. 15.

<sup>9</sup>A euphemism widely used in legal writing at the time for applying torture.

<sup>10</sup>St. Augustine wrote his first treatment of the complex problem of lying, *On Lying (De mendacio)*, in 395.

<sup>11</sup>*Summa theologiae*, 2-2, Q. 109-10.

and Xenophon permitted magistrates to lie in order to govern the people, as one does to sick people and to little children.<sup>12</sup> So must one do in justice in order to get the truth about hidden wickednesses. Now of all the wicked deeds in the world, there are none more conspicuous nor more hateful than those of witches....

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<sup>12</sup>*Republic*, 3.389b; 5.459c-d; *Laws*, 2.663d. Xenophon (c. 430-354 B.C.), once a disciple of Socrates at Athens, later participated in Cyrus' campaign against Ataxerxes as a cavalry officer with Greek mercenaries. Among his numerous works the *Cyropaedia* and *Hieron* treat principles of political rule.

## Chapter 2

### On the Evidence Required to Prove the Crime of Witchcraft

Among the proofs upon which a sentence can be based, there are three that may be called necessary and indisputable. The first is the truth of the acknowledged and concrete fact. The second is the voluntary confession of the one who is charged and convicted of the crime. The third is the testimony of several sound witnesses. As for evidence such as public reputation, forced confession, presumptions of law or other such things, one can say they are "presumptions," some of which are greater than others, but not indisputable proofs.

Now the truth of the acknowledged and concrete fact is the clearest proof. For there is acknowledgement of fact, acknowledgement of law, and acknowledgement of strong presumption: but properly there is only acknowledgement of concrete fact. This acknowledgement is stronger than all the witnesses in the world—even than voluntary confessions by the accused. For example, if one produces for the judge fifty witnesses who all with one accord testify that Pierre is dead and bewitched by the action of the person who is accused of the murder, and nevertheless he turns up before the judge quite alive, then the judge must disregard the witnesses and their testimonies.... Thus such a proof is stronger even than voluntary and legal confession by the accused....

One must, therefore, insist on the truth of the concrete fact which the judge sees, or knows, or touches, or perceives, or apprehends by one of the five senses. This proof is never dismissed either by decrees, or judgment, or by customs. And although after the conclusion of an investigation, one is not allowed to give evidence, still that proof is admitted which is based on concrete fact. So doctors argue. And if by decree or by custom it was forbidden to admit any exception, nonetheless the exception of a clear fact is always admissible and cannot be rejected.... Even more so in criminal cases, where there is never exclusion of evidence, a clear fact is always admissible. Thus when poisons and spells are found on the witch who is arrested with them, or in her room, or in her chest, or she is discovered digging beneath the doorway of a stable, and the poisons are found there that she was caught hiding, and livestock dies, one can assert in this case that it is a clear and concrete fact. If one finds the person who is accused of being a

witch in possession of toads, hosts, human members, or waxen images pierced with needles, in the prosecution of this crime these are concrete facts in such cases.

If one sees a witch or suspected witch kill a child...one can assert that it is a clear fact in order to convict her of being a witch, even if she had confessed (as she did) that the Devil made her do it, inasmuch as she was not insane....For there is nothing more normal for witches than to murder children. If one sees a witch threaten her enemy who is hale and hearty, or she touches him, and instantly he falls dead, or he becomes a leper, or suddenly he becomes deformed or crippled or struck by a sudden illness, as we have shown by many examples—it is a clear and concrete fact, if as well it is rumoured that she is a witch. If the judge sees that the witch removes the spell and enchantment by prayers addressed to the Devil, calling upon him aloud, it is a flagrant fact of indisputable proof to the judge and to others. If it is done in the judge's presence, he must in this case pronounce the death sentence without further inquiry. If it was done in the judge's absence with witnesses present, one must proceed by testimonies and confrontations, should the fact be denied. If one finds the agreement and the mutual compact between the witch and the Devil, signed by him, in his chest, as I remarked above, it is a concrete fact if the witch's signature is acknowledged by him. The clearest and the strongest proof then, is one which brings to light the truth that one is seeking through tangible items.

Thus one can give as an example of a clear fact, if the witch speaks to the Devil, and the Devil, although he is invisible, answers her. For hearing is not less, but much more certain than seeing; indeed all the more certain since hearing can be deceived less than seeing which is often mistaken.

It is also a clear fact if the witch at one moment is discovered missing from her bed and her house, with the doors locked, after retiring at night to the same bed, then later she is found in her bed as we have previously shown in a number of examples. In all these cases, and other comparable ones of clear facts which come before judges, they may base a conviction according to the respective facts, as we shall describe later—even if the witch refuses to confess; the more so if the witch's confession is concurrent with the clear fact; and even more if there are sound witnesses.

It is also a clear and certain proof, if the witch bewitches or bedazzles the eyes, or charms with words, something the law of

God has very specifically noted, when it states, "One who bewitches the eyes, should be put to death," using the proper Hebrew term "mescaphat."<sup>13</sup> For the law of God has established that this proof is indeed sure and sufficient to convict a witch who has a formal compact with Satan, as well as one who puts a spell on men or animals or crops, or moreover, one who rises in the air, makes a dog speak, cuts off members with an outpouring of blood and then rejoins the members: this is a clear proof....

The second means of clear and certain proof is when there are several sound witnesses who testify about tangible things by perceptions, and about intangible matters by arguments and sound reasonings. For the clarity of an acknowledged fact must be evident to the judges and to others present, and it does not suffice if it is apparent to the judge alone, or only to others. And the proof of sound witnesses concerning transitory actions is not recognised as concrete fact when, for example, the witnesses report having seen the witch do one or several acts of necromancy, or invoke Satan, or invisibly depart and then return with the doors locked. These are transitory actions and ones at which judges cannot often be present. The proof is somewhat stronger if the witnesses testify about several acts, and they agree about the time, the place, the people and other circumstances, and stronger yet if the witch in the presence of the judge and others makes some invocation to Satan. It is recognition of fact and such proof is among the strongest for establishing a conviction. And if the confession of the accused is concurrent with the testimony of the witnesses, the proof is even more certain. Nevertheless, great certainty cannot be attained without a confession of the sorts of acts that I have noted. For it would not suffice that several witnesses testify, some time after threats made by the accused against his enemy, that he fell ill. That would indeed serve as a presumption to strengthen the proof. And even if suddenly, and at the moment that a witch threatened or touched someone, he fell dead, judges are reluctant to condemn the witch if there is no other proof or presumption, or confession. Nor would I wish to advise the death penalty in such a case, but rather other corporal punishments. For all peoples by common consent have admitted that the punishment ought to be increased or reduced, according to the degree of proof....

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<sup>13</sup>Ex. 22:18.

When I said, "several sound witnesses," the law stipulates at least two. But one must not look for a great number of witnesses for such despicable things which are done at night, or in grottoes or secret places. But what shall we say if three witnesses give evidence about three entirely different acts? That is, the first testifies to having seen a witch hollow out and dig beneath the threshold of a door, or at a crossroads, for that is normally where witches place their spell; and then that people or livestock have died there. Another testifies that after the same witch had touched someone, he suddenly fell dead. The third that after she had threatened her neighbour, he fell into a languor. I maintain that these three sound witnesses, with some other presumption, are adequate grounds for a death sentence, even though the witnesses each tell of different acts. For they are universally associated with the crime of witchcraft. In this case all authorities are in agreement that the proof is sufficient for hidden crimes such as fraud, murder, usury, adultery and other crimes which are committed as secretly as possible, and especially the casting of spells. If then three witnesses in such a case are sufficient to prove usury, or fraud, or adultery, they ought all the more to suffice for the most vile and hidden of any crime one can imagine...but...also Bartolus goes further. For he is of the opinion that for such occult crimes presumption and conjectural proof are sufficient, and he is not alone in his view...<sup>14</sup> It is true that it would not be adequate grounds for a death sentence, but for any other penalty up to but not including death. And not only doctors in civil law, but also authorities in canon law hold the same view....The reason, moreover, is relevant: since witnesses agree on the universal occurrence and general crime, singularity of evidence is not incompatible or objectionable, but it aids and strengthens the proof....For in this case the proof is not sufficient, especially when it involves death or corporal punishment, where the proof must be much stronger than in a civil suit. This is why in a criminal action the suppletory oath of proof is not admissible, as it is in a civil case concerning minor matters.<sup>15</sup> Not admissible either is the practice of relying on one witness to justify a

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<sup>14</sup>Bartolus of Sassoferrato (1313-57) was famous for his application of Roman law to contemporary legal problems. He was Baldus' teacher.

<sup>15</sup>A suppletory oath is an oath (given by a party in his own favour) admitted to supply a deficiency in legal evidence.

sentence affecting honour or life, as it is in a civil proceeding with the consent of the parties. Thus when one affirms that one imperfect proof cannot be combined with another imperfect one, that means two proofs, two witnesses, two presumptions or two different crimes: for example, when one witness testifies about a homicide, another testifies about an adultery, and another about a theft. It certainly indicates a wicked person—but not that he has been proven an adulterer, or a murderer, or a thief, justifying a sentence of corporal punishment. For the law of God does not permit the testimony of one witness to be the proof for establishing a judgment of guilt;<sup>16</sup> nor do civil laws allow one to impose the least financial penalty....And although Giovanni d'Andrea<sup>17</sup> and Dr. Alexander<sup>18</sup> hold that one good sound witness is enough for sentencing to the question, they are not followed, and for this reason King Louis XII by express command forbade it in this realm. But it will certainly suffice to bring the accused to the question for all other crimes. And if there is some presumption with a sound witness, it will be sufficient to apply the question in cases which warrant capital or corporal punishments. But in this crime which is so outrageous and so hidden, I shall indeed take the position that the opinion of Alexander and Giovanni d'Andrea be followed, and that to apply the question, all that be required is one witness, an upright man above reproach or any kind of suspicion, whose testimony is accompanied by reason or sense. I mean those against whom nothing can be alleged, especially those who have never suffered a conviction incurring disrepute; and not if they are accused of being murderers, adulterers, incestuous or impaired by other crimes which are considered infamous "de facto." And yet their testimony is useful with others, as is the practice in this whole realm regardless of the infamy of the deed, or of the canons in this regard, which allow one to admit such criticisms. But this must not be done. For if one admits the particular accusations against unconvicted witnesses, one would have to try all the witnesses on the specific charges, and

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<sup>16</sup>Nu. 35:30; Dt. 17:6; 19:15.

<sup>17</sup>Giovanni d'Andrea (1275–1348) was a Professor of Canon Law at Bologna and an important writer on legal aspects of heresy, accusations, and proofs.

<sup>18</sup>Alexander of Hales (c. 1185–1245) was a well-known Franciscan theologian. He was a proponent of St. Augustine, and was known as Doctor Irrefragibilis or Doctor Doctorum.

consequently the wicked would escape, and respectable people often would be calumniated. Nonetheless, the judge must not apply the question on account of a witness who is in fact disreputable, even though he is not convicted: but only if this witness is joined by other witnesses or by strong presumptions....

If, moreover, it is objected that a juriconsult does not admit the testimony of a woman accused of adultery, and yet acquitted, the juriconsult says, "Puto notam obesse,"<sup>19</sup> and he refers only to women, who are always less credible than men. In fact by the edicts of Venice of 1524, and of the whole Levant, one must always have two women to equal the testimony of one man, and four women for two male witnesses. Similarly according to the law of the Romans women were not admissible to testify in a will or concerning conjugal obligations.<sup>20</sup> And according to canon law women in a criminal action are not admissible as witnesses on account of the imbecility and fragility of the sex. But juriconsults and emperors have warned that the greatest wickednesses would go unpunished if it were not allowed. So for this reason they wisely provided that evidence be furnished about crimes by all people, and the reason is peremptory. For with legitimate acts one is able to take such witnesses as one wants, but for crimes such as one can. This is why in this realm, and in any well-ordered state canon law has no place in this regard, and civil law is followed. And for the matter in question it is very necessary to give credence to women even though they are de facto "disreputable," as our doctors state, or "ignominious" in the words of the juriconsult or other Latin authors, as a shameless woman would be. For juriconsults admit women as witnesses so that criminal acts do not go unpunished, which is a very important and compelling reason, as the juriconsult declares.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>"I think that her infamy stands in the way."

<sup>20</sup>Roman women did indeed lack marriage and property rights before the courts during the republican period and earlier. With the promulgation of the Julian laws under Augustus, however, the legal prerogatives of women were radically altered. Further reforms were instituted in the later empire, and finally by Justinian under the influence of Christianity. See P.E. Corbett, *The Roman Law of Marriage* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1969), and Juvenal, *Satires*, 6.212-30.

<sup>21</sup>This statement demonstrates the misogyny that was very widespread in the sixteenth century. Bodin did not feel the need to explain this matter too fully, since he was sure that his readers shared these opinions. In general, Bodin,



It is necessary for the same reason, and one very much greater, to admit people disreputable in fact and in law as witnesses against witches, provided that there are several concurrent witnesses with evidence, or else one must not hope that such an execrable impiety will ever be punished. Now everyone agrees, and judges know very well how to put it into practice, that accomplices in the same act of robbery or murder give evidence against each other when one cannot otherwise get at the truth of the matter, and not only against others who have committed a similar murder....In Germany they have a very bad custom of not putting the guilty person to death unless he confesses, although he is convicted with a thousand witnesses. It is true that they apply the question so violently and cruelly that the person remains crippled for the rest of his life. Now since this does not happen except in "exceptional crimes" and not in others, as the doctors state, who do not even consider accomplice witnesses with presumption sufficient to apply the question. Thus it is necessary that in exceptional crimes such as poisoning and witchcraft, the crime of treason, or murder, the accomplices of the same act be admissible to give full evidence, unless there is a pertinent objection, such as, the accomplice is a great enemy of the one whom he accuses of being involved in the evil spell.

One must not, moreover, take into account whether it is a father or son. Their testimony against each other must not be admitted for other crimes, even though there were no other witnesses, out of respect for blood ties. But this crime is singular. And it is necessary to hear daughter testify against mother in this crime of witchcraft because it has been learned from innumerable judgments that the witch-mother customarily leads her daughter into perdition. Bouvin, Bailiff of Châteauroux, had one burned three years ago who had taken her daughter to the assemblies, who later revealed everything. If a father and son in the crime of treason are permitted to testify against and denounce each other, and if the laws prescribe punishment for one who kills his father, seeking to ruin his fatherland (as the law states, and everyone agrees on that point) why will they not be allowed to testify against each other in a crime of treason against God, and in a wickedness which outweighs all others? One

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like most people of his day, believed that the majority of witches were women.

must not then insist on the ordinary rules for handling, challenging or admitting witnesses in such a hateful crime as this one....

One must not...be limited to the normal procedures which forbid hearing a son testify against a father, or a father against a son, for this crime surpasses all others. Now it is certain in terms of law where there is danger, necessity or any inordinate situation that one must not be bound by legal strictures—on the contrary then, this is proceeding soundly according to law....Thus a witness who has come forward without being called to testify against a witch must be heard, even though in another matter he might not be admissible. I shall make exception only for the objection of a major enmity arising from a cause other than witchcraft. For what righteous man does not hate the enemies of God and of the human race, whereas private enmity for another reason could lead to slander against the innocent. And even though a witness in other cases be convicted of perjury, and must be rejected, nonetheless in this crime he will be admitted along with others, unless he bears some outstanding hatred for the defendant. Furthermore, although a lawyer and a prosecutor cannot and must not be obliged to testify concerning their clients, nevertheless they must be compelled to do so in this crime, since many have argued that they can be forced to give evidence about their clients if the opposing party calls for it, either in a civil or a criminal action. Also although accomplices do not constitute necessary proof in other crimes, nonetheless fellow witches denouncing or giving testimony against their accomplices constitute sufficient proof to pass sentence, especially if there are a number of them. For it is quite well known that only witches can testify about being present at the assemblies which they attend at night. Thus one finds in Sprenger that the magistrates of Germany convict witches on the strength of the testimony of accomplices, even though the accused may deny it....<sup>22</sup> For the judge who is well-practised in his office and very competent, will evaluate the testimony according to the appearance of the witness, his face, his station and countless other factors. But it is absolutely necessary to bear in mind that the crime of witchcraft must not be treated in the same way as others. One must, rather, adopt an entirely different and exceptional approach for the reasons which I have set out. We

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<sup>22</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 3, Q. 4.

have discussed the first and the second clear proof, let us now treat the third which is confession.

## Chapter 3

## On the Voluntary and Forced Confessions of Witches

Often judges are puzzled by the confessions of witches and are reluctant to base a sentence on them, given the strange things that they confess, because some think that they are telling fables. Others fear that such desperate people are just seeking to die. Now one must not believe a person who wishes to die, as the law states. I recall reading in Tertullian that the bailiff of a proconsul in Africa, asked aloud during a hearing if there were any Christians, in order to punish them according to the custom which prevailed at that time. Immediately several raised their hands saying that they were one of them, in order to be executed and die as martyrs. The proconsul seeing them resolved to die as martyrs said, "Go and throw yourselves into the sea which is right before you, and cast yourselves down from mountains and housetops, or hang yourselves from the trees, and look for someone who will sentence you to death."<sup>23</sup> Julian the Emperor on seeing a young Christian woman with her small infant hanging from her breast, who ran toward death to be martyred, forbade the execution of Christians: not to protect the one who was running to her death, but because (he said) the other Christians were making them gods after their death.<sup>24</sup>

There are others who wish to die not for the honour that they hope to gain, but because of extreme despair or pain. One must not listen to them....Sprenger reports having seen witches who confessed their wickedness and begged the judge to put them to death, or else they would kill themselves, because the Devil tormented them unless they obeyed him, they said.<sup>25</sup> The judge must not follow the will of such persons. For it is considered certain that the witch whom the Devil afflicts and torments is repentant, and is on the way to salvation, and so it is necessary to keep her in prison and instruct her, applying moderate and salutary punishments.

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<sup>23</sup>Tertullian of Carthage (c. A.D. 160–c. 225), who was raised as a pagan, became after his conversion a champion of orthodoxy, especially against Gnosticism. A prolific apologist, he is considered by some as the Father of Latin theology.

<sup>24</sup>On Julian the Apostate, see above, Book 1, note 120.

<sup>25</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 2.

But if one sees that she does not wish to repent, one must pronounce the death sentence, even though the witch begs to be put to death. And as for those who have confessed and repented before being charged, the judge must not pay them any heed, unless some murders confessed by her come to light; provided, however, that the confession is genuine, and that she who repented had not just foreseen her inevitable indictment.

Now there are two kinds of confession: one voluntary and the other forced. Both may be given in court or outside of court. The one given outside of court may be in the presence of many people or just one, either friend, relative, enemy or confessor. All these circumstances are to be taken into account, not because the truth is more true in court than outside of court, nor before an audience than before a confessor. Indeed on the contrary, most people conceal in public what they confess in private, either from shame or fear, as is often seen with thieves who reveal to their confessor what they would never say in court. The proof, however, is not as strong from an extrajudicial confession as a judicial one; nor from a forced as from a voluntary one. And among voluntary confessions, one made before interrogation has more effect. For sometimes the judge tricks the one whom he is questioning, and on occasion puts words into his mouth....It is up to the prudent and experienced judge to separate the facts while conducting the cross-examination. One must not, moreover, be bound by the view of those who hold that when the judge is in possession of the facts set forth by the plaintiff, he add that the confession will be taken as having been made out of court. This has no validity, for cross-examinations are judicial acts....In addition if the confession of the party before the judge without cross-examination is not on the facts set out, nevertheless it is stronger than if it was based on cross-examinations, as the law affirms. In a criminal action, and especially in this crime of witchcraft, the normal approach to charges must not be followed. On the contrary, the judge must get the truth by every means that he can imagine.

Now the answer of the accused is certain or uncertain, and what is certain is affirmative or negative, or else the defendant says that he does not know what it is. The answer is uncertain when the accused answers in circumlocutions or by equivocation. If the accused affirms something false or if he denies something true, he is not as guilty as one who answers in circumlocutions. For in this case one must take the equivocal answer as a confession to his detriment, for everyone must be sure of his facts, and the excuse

of error will be of no avail in this case if he does not answer appropriately. But the difficulty is whether one ought to consider the accused as having confessed if he will not answer anything at all, as occurs sometimes in the context of civil proceedings. One need not hesitate to assume the facts as confessed to the detriment of his case where cross-examinations are concerned, or on account of denials in the court records. But when the death penalty is involved, one must not consider the facts as confessed, if there is no proof by witnesses. If there is proof, however, silence will have the effect of a confession on the part of the defendant, leading to a conviction according to the merits of the case. Not however, if the silence comes from a witness who must be compelled to testify by fines or prison sentences. The judge, nevertheless, must first proceed with tortures, according to the rank of the persons, against the one accused of witchcraft who will not answer anything, providing there is a good witness or several presumptions. And if he will not say anything under torture, the crime will be half confessed, and punished in accordance with the amount of proof, as we shall explain later. Also in such a case one who purposely gives an obscure answer is deemed to have confessed. Although legally speaking, such an answer is not enough proof for other crimes when it concerns corporal punishment, unless there are witnesses—which is not necessary with a clear and voluntary confession—with this crime, however, so secret and loathsome, it is sufficient along with other presumptions. And although doctors have established confession as one of the necessary and indubitable proofs, as holds in civil actions, nevertheless there are noteworthy differences in the circumstances of the place, the time, the people and the crime, such as the confession of a child or an elderly man, of a wise man or a fool, of a man or a woman, of a friend or an enemy, in court or outside of court, of an injury or of a parricide, under torture or without torture. This diversity must be carefully weighed by a wise and expert judge. One must not, moreover, invoke the first law “de Confessis” for other crimes which carry capital punishment: that one who has confessed be considered as condemned, unless there are other sufficient presumptions....Especially if the confession is made under torture or just prior to torture. For the law considers such a confession made in anticipation of torture like one made under torture, since the fear of torment is itself a torment.

With respect to witches who have a formal compact with the Devil, and who confess to having been at the assemblies, and other

wickednesses which cannot be learned except by their confession or from their accomplices, such a confession free of torture constitutes proof, if made by the one who is charged, especially if he is suspected and reputed as such, even though it is not apparent that he caused death to people or livestock. For that wickedness is more detestable than any parricide imaginable. And if it is proposed that one must not concentrate upon the confession of something unnatural, as some state, it would not be necessary then to punish filthy Sodomites, who confess the unnatural sin. But if one means "unnatural" as something "impossible," that is wrong. For what is impossible by nature, is not impossible: such as all the actions of Intelligences, and the works of God contrary to the course of nature, which one often witnesses; and even Hippocrates remarked that all the common illnesses come from God, or in his words, have something "divine and counter to the course and order of natural causes," about which physicians know nothing.<sup>26</sup>

It is then a pure sophistry to say this wickedness is impossible by nature—therefore it is impossible. Just as one might say about a wicked man, he is a good choirmaster, therefore he is good. Now we have shown by divine and human authorities, and by the proof of all antiquity, and by divine and human laws, experience, judgments, convictions, confrontations and confessions, the transport of witches, and that both sterility and storms are brought about through their agent.<sup>27</sup> It is therefore possible. Thus when one asserts that a confession to be believable must report something which is possible and true; and that it cannot be true unless it is possible; and nothing is possible in law except what is possible by nature: it is a sophistic and specious argument—and nevertheless its assumption is false. For the great works and marvels of God are impossible by nature, and nonetheless true. The actions, moreover, of Intelligences and everything that pertains to Metaphysics is impossible by nature, which is the reason why Metaphysics is entirely distinct and different from Physics, which treats only of nature. One must not then measure the actions of spirits and demons by the effects of nature. So that if it is true that in one minute the "primum mobile" turns more than five hundred thousand leagues according to natural proof,<sup>28</sup> it is

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<sup>26</sup>*The Sacred Disease*, 1-2.

<sup>27</sup>See above, Book 2, Chapters 4, 8.

<sup>28</sup>The "primum mobile" in the Aristotelian system of planetary spheres is the

also possible that in a short time an evil spirit carries the body of a witch all around the world, which is just a point in respect to this great heaven. I say then that the confession of witches about being transported is possible and true, and even, moreover, that witches with the aid and invocation of evil spirits kill men and beasts. As we read for example in Holy Scripture, that in Egypt at the hour of midnight, in one moment the Devil slew the first-born of both men and beasts.<sup>29</sup> The kingdom was two hundred leagues wide, and four hundred long, as Strabo and Pliny agree, and was the most populous and richest under the sun....<sup>30</sup>

Now to confirm the proof of witches' confessions, one must link them with the confessions of other witches. For the actions of the Devil are always consistent in every country, just as an ape is always an ape, dressed in sackcloth or in royal purple. This is why one finds that the confessions of witches in Germany, Italy, France, Spain and of the ancient Greeks and Romans are similar. And most often witches are denounced by each other....

When there is no proof, and it is impossible to get any, concerning for example the nocturnal assemblies of witches, to know whether the whole confession must be accepted as true, this bears on the charge as well as on the discharge of the accused. For it seems that this is a case where one must accept the whole testimony, or reject it entirely.... A person is convicted of treason who knew about a conspiracy and did not reveal it, even though he gave no assent to the conspirators. That is common knowledge. Even more so is one guilty who knew about the crime of divine and human treason, the most hateful possible, and conceals it....

But we must see how the judge is to conduct himself if the witch confesses the deed, and then later denies it. In this instance one must distinguish specifically whether the first confession was made before a competent judge, without torture, when the witch was arrested and charged. In this case I maintain that one must concen-

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outermost sphere, beyond the sphere of the fixed stars, that encloses the whole universe. All motion in the universe came from this primary sphere which was turned by the "first unmoved mover"; see *Metaphysics*, 12.8.1074a12. The detailed observations and calculations recorded by Ptolemy in the *Almagest* (A.D. 150) essentially retain and adapt this geocentric system.

<sup>29</sup>Ex. 12:29-30.

<sup>30</sup>Strabo, *Geography*, 17; Pliny, *Natural History*, 5.47-65.



trate upon the first confession and proceed to pass sentence, when there would be no other proof. For it has often been observed that witches instructed by the Devil in prison have denied their confession. And since this crime is the most hidden and execrable of all, one must consider the voluntary confession of witches when they are charged as sure and indisputable proof. I remember that in 1569 there was a canon of Laval who was accused of putting poison into the chalice of the Dean of Laval, who after taking it while saying midnight mass, collapsed, but still vomited the poison. The accused confessed voluntarily, and without torture. Later finding himself condemned to death, he appealed to the Parlement of Paris. He changed his story, however, and dropped his confession. Nevertheless, he was sentenced to the flames by formal decree and I saw him being led off to his execution. The court would not have done this, if the confession had been extracted under torture.

But what shall we say if the confession is made before an incompetent judge; that is, does it constitute proof? Many believe that it does not constitute either proof or presumption because of torture. Furthermore, most canonists maintain that an extra-judicial confession is not prejudicial in any way to the one who has given it, and much less to accomplices. Others argue that confession before an incompetent judge is useful only for presumptions and conjectures....This is not to say that confession either in court or outside of court, either before a competent or incompetent judge does not more or less constitute proof. In fact the most skilled in practice hold that confession has no effect in the absence of the party, if his presence there is necessary. And if the incompetent judge had cognizance of the fact, but went ahead with the trial, so that the accused confessed in his presence, and if the procedures are rendered void on account of incompetence or some other invalidity, the evidence nevertheless retains its weight—otherwise many crimes and criminals would go unpunished. This danger must be prevented by every means, as the law states: and be done in such a way that the iniquity and absurdity of the law is overcome, especially with the deeds of witches where the proof is so obscure and the wickednesses so hidden, that out of a thousand there is hardly one punished. Incompetence must not destroy the proof.

We have treated voluntary confession, which is the third proof termed "necessary." As for forced confession which is made under torture, it can certainly be used as proof if the accused persists in his confession after the interrogation. If he does not persist, it is a "presumption" rather than a "necessary proof."

## Chapter 4

### On Presumptions against Witches

When the three clear proofs are lacking, namely, concrete and acknowledged fact, the matching testimony of sound witnesses, and the voluntary and repeated confession of the accused charged before the confession, one must examine the presumptions which may serve in the conviction and sentencing of witches. Now there are "rash presumptions," "probable presumptions" and "strong presumptions." As for the last it may be based in law, and it is stronger than all the other proofs. Against it contrary proof is not admissible....The law states that one must not give credence to the mere confession of one who is a murderer, unless it appears confirmed by the body of the victim.<sup>31</sup> But presumptions which are legitimate and set forth in the law, are based on a natural reason....

If there is clear proof to the contrary, it is admitted against the presumption, although many hold that that proof is not admitted against presumption of law. For the proof of one who shows receipt of payment is admitted, though he would not swear to have paid, or tender back the oath, since he could have forgotten whether he had paid or not, and did not know whether he had the receipt. But one must not take as a presumption of law the bedazzlements of the eyes which witches perform, and the unnatural miracles. For the law of God establishes this proof as sure and indisputable: "You will not let live one who charms the eyes,"<sup>32</sup> something which they make no attempt to conceal. For the law of God holds it to be entirely certain and indisputable that all those who enchant have a pact with Satan, and are doing something against the course of nature.

If then, to come now to presumptions concerning witches, one finds slain children in their mother's hands, even though there was no one but her at home, it must not be presumed that she committed the parricide, since the presumption of all law is to the contrary, and she will be absolved unless there is very clear proof by which to convict her of the parricide. But if she is rumoured to be a witch,

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<sup>31</sup>Bodin stresses the importance of circumstantial evidence, even when there is a confession, by the example of a slave who was put to death because of his confession of a homicide. Later, however, the supposed victim was found alive.

<sup>32</sup>Ex. 22:18; Dt. 18:10-11.

it must be presumed that she is the murderer of her own children, unless she is vindicated by proofs to the contrary. At Coeuvres on the second day of February, 1578, it happened that Catherine Darée cut the throat of two girls: one was hers, the other her neighbour's; however, she was not accused of being a witch. But she confessed that the Devil, in the guise of a tall and very black man, had made her do it. She was burned, for she would not appeal, although the bailiff of Coeuvres advised her that she could appeal. She said that she had well deserved it. In a similar case the Baron de Rais was convicted, and he confessed to killing and sacrificing eight children to the Devil, and that Satan told him he even had to sacrifice his own child and tear it from the womb of its mother. She caught wind of it, and in this way he was brought to trial...<sup>33</sup>

One must, therefore, presume that the witch is a parricide, given the presumption of divine law.<sup>34</sup> And if the witch's child is not found, one must presume that he sacrificed it to the Devil, unless he proves otherwise.

The presumption of divine law is founded in reason. For one who has lost all divine piety, and has made himself a slave of the Devil, has also lost all human affection and pity and natural feeling. And it must be presumed that he has done everything that witches are accustomed to do. And although one must presume something to have been done by error rather than by malice, unless the contrary is evident, nevertheless one must always presume that witches have done nothing by error, but by wickedness and impiety.

All kinds of wickednesses must be presumed normal with witches, in one who is a witch, whereas one who has only been sentenced for theft or fraud, must not be accused nor presumed guilty of any other evil but theft or fraud. If therefore a witch has been convicted as a witch, she will always be known as a witch, and consequently presumed guilty of all the impieties that witches are well known for. And even if the sentence is not carried out, the accusation, her reputation, and the widespread rumour will be enough to establish a strong presumption and the infamy of the

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<sup>33</sup>Gilles de Rais (1404–40) was a wealthy French nobleman who fought alongside Joan of Arc. He was charged with the abduction, rape and torture of over one hundred children in ghastly Black Mass rituals. He confessed under torture and was executed.

<sup>34</sup>Dt. 18:10; Lev. 20:3; Is. 57:3–5.

deed. For if the law requires that a woman accused of wantonness but released remain with a bad record for the rest of her life, how much more ought one to regard that woman ill-famed and dishonoured who has the reputation of being a witch? For it is a most powerful presumption that when a woman is reputed to be a witch, she is one; and this is enough to sentence her to the question, with some pieces of evidence combined with the public rumour, even though the order of Louis XII, King of France, does not permit one to apply torture unless there is an irreproachable witness, as well as items of evidence. Nor must one apply torture either on account of a widespread rumour in other crimes. On that there is almost complete agreement among authorities, although according to the custom of Mantua, an "acknowledged reputation" requires four witnesses who testify to having heard it, in order to apply the question in all crimes which merit death. With all the more reason one who has the widespread and steadfast reputation of being a witch ought to be put to the question. Conversely, if the woman is accused of having killed someone, and she has never been suspected of being a witch, unless the proof of the murder is very clear, one must not pass sentence of guilt, but order that it be more fully investigated, and release her in the meantime from prison. But when one wishes to adhere to the public report, and hearsay, the account must have started with trustworthy people, and not enemies. This limitation seems necessary to me in order to deprive the wicked of the chance to slander upright people. Nor is it necessary that the widespread report come from most of the people, as some have desired. For if the city is large, it is quite enough that the report be from all the neighbours, who know the life of their neighbors better than do others farther away. Thus it will take twenty people, enough to make two large groups, in order to prove a widespread rumour.

If it is objected that one must not be governed by the opinion of a crowd, which is reckoned to be useless, that is certainly true when one can judge the opposite for tangible reasons, or through arguments based on reason. But when it is a question of witches, rumour is almost infallible, especially if there is apparent reason. And even more so if in addition to public opinion there are pieces of evidence: for example, if the witch when she is arrested exclaims, "I am dead!" or, "Don't make me die, I'll tell the truth!" For it is then that she feels a distinct change in her mind....For it is a sure sign of wrongdoing when the person condemns himself before he is accused....

As for conjurations of words and prayers to Satan which the witch performs to remove evil spells, it is a most powerful presumption that that person is a witch. For even civil law punishes certain exorcists with death. This law refers to those who practised the craft of conjuring devils, and in fact expelled them. They were at that time the greatest sorcerers who under the veil of religion, as Hippocrates states...performed conjurations and prayers.<sup>35</sup> Although the law does not punish with death one who cures with such methods, the law of God, however, requires that a witch receive the death penalty.<sup>36</sup> For it is certain that he has had dealings with Satan, and for one that he cures, he makes two ill, as we have shown. And even if there were only the obligation to the Devil, after having renounced God, it deserves the cruelest death imaginable.

The other clues are the countenance of the witch who usually lowers her eyes and does not dare to look one straight in the face; inconsistencies in the cross-examinations; and especially if the witch is the offspring of a witch father or mother. For it is a very strong argument along with public opinion, since the most pleasing sacrifice that the Devil desires of such folk is that they pledge and dedicate their children to his service as soon as they are born, as I noted with some examples....<sup>37</sup> One can make a rule which will not have many exceptions: that if the mother is a witch, so also is the daughter....As far as witches are concerned, this rule is almost infallible, as it has been found from innumerable trials.

Another presumption is if the witch does not cry, which is one of the strongest presumptions that Paolo Grillando and the Inquisitors remarked through having executed a very great number of them. Lieutenant de Ribemont, whom I spoke of previously, told me that one of the witches whose trials he conducted confessed that she could shed only three tears from her right eye. This seemed noteworthy to me.

Another presumption is if the witch was discovered in someone else's home or stable, and then shortly after death or illness suddenly struck someone, even though the witch was not found in possession of powders, and she was not seen to cast the spell....We have the recent accounts, especially from Casale in Piedmont, where

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<sup>35</sup>*The Sacred Disease*, 2.

<sup>36</sup>Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:27; Dt. 18:10-13.

<sup>37</sup>See above, Book 2, Chapters 4, 7.

it was noticed that a person named Androgina went into other people's houses, and soon after the people died. She was apprehended, and she confessed the conspiracy of all her fellow witches, about forty in number, who smeared door latches to bring death upon people. That happened in 1536 and later again at Geneva there occurred a similar case in 1568, and the plague was in that city for nearly seven years where many died...<sup>38</sup>

Another presumption is the association with accused and convicted witches, which is also very noteworthy. For everyone joins with his own kind. It is also a great presumption when the female suspect is accustomed to making threats. For the impotent nature of women burns with an incredible appetite for vengeance, and she cannot hold her tongue if she has the power to do ill whenever she threatens. And if after threats death ensues, it is a most powerful presumption in all crimes, and a necessary one in this crime....

Now the trial of so despicable a crime as this must be handled in an extraordinary way and differently from other crimes. He who would like to keep legal tidiness and normal procedures would pervert all divine and human law. One must not submit witches to mild torments. For judges have observed that they do not take much notice of it, which could let them go unpunished. Because after torture, if the accused is a good talker he is set completely free. This is the greatest danger that can arise in the investigation of this crime of divine and human treason, which includes every crime imaginable. For although the Devil cannot deliver a witch from the hand of justice, it has been observed, however, that witches are not abandoned by Satan unless they repent. Satan even names for them the one who is their enemy. I heard from Mr. Adam Martin that when he conducted the trial of a witch from Bièvre, she often said to him, "I know for sure that you will play a bad trick on me," and before the sentence was pronounced on her, she told him that he would have her burned alive. This was done by mistake of the executioner who according to the sentence was to strangle her. But they are unable, or rather they are dissuaded by Satan from telling the truth. And sometimes he prevents them from feeling the pain,

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<sup>38</sup>Savoy was reputed a centre of witchcraft activities. Both it and neighbouring Geneva were troubled by fears that witches spread plague through the use of diabolical ointment. All through the 1560's and 70's this region saw several hundred trials and dozens of executions for this crime.

as Sprenger the Inquisitor writes, who does not favour submitting witches to the question mildly.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless I will always recommend, if it is a young girl, a small child, or a delicate woman or some dainty person, if there are strong presumptions, that some be introduced to the torment with terror, while others be submitted to it; but not the old witches, hardened and stubborn in their wickedness. Also after extracting the truth from one who has been put to the question, he must be carefully guarded so that the Devil does not speak to him, and then once again twenty-four hours later repeat his confession, in accordance with the order of King Louis XII. For to extract the necessary proof, one must persist, as the order stipulates, which has been confirmed by many decrees. On the other hand if the witch renounces her confession subsequent to the question, one must not base a death sentence on it, nor any other corporal punishment, unless there were other presumptions.

I stated above that the order of Louis XII which forbids applying the question on the strength of one valid witness, unless there is other evidence, must not apply in the present crime or the proof can only be obtained with great difficulty. For if in a crime of human treason it is permitted to apply the question on a simple presumption, as has always been the practice, and even doctors agree that in other crimes one may apply torture on the testimony of a single valid witness, and pass the death sentence on the testimony of two witnesses, in accordance with the law of God and human statutes,<sup>40</sup> with greater cause judges must promptly...apply the question for such an abominable crime on the testimony of a valid witness, or on strong and compelling presumptions. The reason is that one sound witness constitutes a half proof; for example if a husband testifies that he was taken by his wife to witches' assemblies, but she denies it, she must be put to the torture, unless she alleges unusual hatred or perjury on the part of her husband. For these two points of objection are always admissible, especially perjury, which must never be allowed as testimony for a presumption or evidence unless it is supported by a good witness or another very strong presumption, for example if the witch bears a mark....This would

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<sup>39</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 3, Q. 13. In the next section, though, the authors of the *Malleus* state that the judge should begin with mild torture, and proceed to harsher methods only if that fails.

<sup>40</sup>Nu. 35:30; Dt. 17:6; 19:15. See above, Book 4, Chapter 2.

certainly be a most powerful presumption and sufficient with other evidence to make a conviction.

The deposition of a repentant witch who implicates many others at his death, must be used as a strong presumption against them. For it must be presumed that since he has repented and called upon God, he has told the truth. But also one must not believe it if the witch has died obstinate as most of them do, and cannot bear hearing about God....Everything depends on the discretion of a prudent and skilled judge who can see whether the one who is dying is speaking to get revenge, and he can diligently inquire whether he had a grudge against those whom he is denouncing....For this justificatory fact which hinges on its obviousness is stronger than all the contrary proofs and presumptions when it is a concrete fact.

As we said earlier, the truth of the concrete fact against a witch is the clearest proof of all. But the maxim of law is, that the less legitimate proof must suffice whenever one cannot get the proof in heinous and especially nocturnal crimes such as this one. But the skilled judge will combine all the presumptions in order to register the truth, provided however that he does not do like many judges in Germany who seek other witches to make sieves dance in order to learn whether the one accused is a witch. Or by having little children take new shoes smeared with pig grease to church where witches cannot get out unless those who have the shoes allow them. Or indeed to tie both feet and hands of the witch and set her gently in water: if she is a witch she cannot sink to the bottom. For the Devil in this way makes a sorcery of justice, which ought to be sacred....



## Chapter 5

### On the Punishment That Witches Merit

There are two ways in which states are maintained in their status and greatness: reward and punishment—the former for the good, the latter for the bad. And if there is a lapse in the distribution of these, one must expect nothing but the inevitable ruin of the states, though it is not necessary that every crime be punished. For there would not be enough judges to judge them, nor executioners to execute them. Out of ten crimes fewer than one is punished by magistrates. Usually one only sees poor scoundrels punished. Those who have friends or money most often escape from the hands of men. Indeed it is true that neither their friends nor their riches will save them from the hand of God. But those people greatly delude themselves who think that the penalties are only established to punish the crime. I maintain that it is the least benefit which accrues to the state. For the greatest and the chief one is to appease the anger of God, especially if the crime is directly against the majesty of God, as this one is....<sup>41</sup> The second benefit of the punishment is to obtain the blessing of God on the whole country. As it is written for example in the law of God, "After you have destroyed with fire and sword the city from amongst my people, and from amongst your brothers, which has left God to serve idols, and you have killed every living soul, both men and beasts, you shall erect a heap of stone, a memorial, in triumph, and then I will extend my great mercies upon you, and will shower you with my favours and blessings."<sup>42</sup>

The third benefit one receives from punishment of the wicked, is to strike fear and terror into others; as it is described in the law of God, others having seen the punishment are afraid to commit offence.<sup>43</sup> The fourth benefit is to preserve them from being infected and harmed by the wicked, as plague victims and lepers infect the healthy.<sup>44</sup> The fifth effect is to reduce the number of the wicked....<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Cf. Dt. 13:17–18; 30:1–33; Nu. 25:4.

<sup>42</sup>Bodin is conflating the verses of Dt. 13:12–18.

<sup>43</sup>Dt. 13:11; 17:13; 19:20; 21:21.

<sup>44</sup>Cf. Lev. Ch. 13, 14.

<sup>45</sup>"You must purge the evil from among you." Dt. 13:5; 17:7; 19:19; 24:7.

The sixth is so that the good can live in security. The seventh aim is to punish the wicked.

I indeed want to enumerate the benefits and uses which result from the punishment of the wicked. Now if ever there was a way to appease the anger of God, to obtain His blessing, to dismay some by the punishment of others, to preserve some from the infection of others, to reduce the number of the wicked, to secure the safety of the good, and to punish the most despicable wickednesses that the human mind can imagine, it is to chastise witches with the utmost rigour. However, the word "rigour" is a misnomer, since there is no penalty cruel enough to punish the evils of witches, since all their wickednesses, blasphemies, and all their designs rise up against the majesty of God to vex and offend Him in a thousand ways. Some people raise objections to burning witches, even witches who have a formal pact with Satan. For it is principally against those witches that one must seek vengeance with the greatest diligence and utmost rigour, in order to bring an end to the wrath of God, and His vengeance upon us. And especially since those who have written on it interpret a magic spell as heresy, and nothing more—although true heresy is the crime of treason against God, and punishable by the fire.<sup>46</sup> It is necessary, however, to note the difference between this crime and simple heresy. For we showed initially that the first occupation of witches is to deny God and all religion.<sup>47</sup> The law of God condemns that person who has left the true God for another to be stoned, which all the Hebrew commentators say is the most terrible form of execution.<sup>48</sup> This point is very significant. For the witch whom I have described does not just deny God in order to change and take up another religion, but he renounces all religion, either true or superstitious, which can keep men in the fear of committing offence.

The second crime of witches is, after having renounced God, to curse, blaspheme and scorn Him, and any other god or idol which he feared. Now the law of God declares as follows, "Whoever curses

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<sup>46</sup>The *Malleus* argues that witchcraft was a heresy which arose from the "foul connection" between humans and the Devil (Pt. 1, Q. 2, 4). For its authors, witchcraft was the worst of all heresies. They also argued that witchcraft was a sin of treason against the Divine Majesty (Pt. 1, Q. 4).

<sup>47</sup>See above, Book 2, Chapter 4.

<sup>48</sup>Dt. 13:10. Cf. Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, 3.41.

his God shall bear his sin. He who blasphemeth the name of the Lord shall be put to death"<sup>49</sup>....

For it seems that God wants to show that those who blaspheme what they think is God, do blaspheme God, with respect to their intention, which is the foundation of the hearts and minds of men: like the witches described above who broke the arms and legs on crucifixes, which they thought were gods. They also offered toads the host to feed on. One sees then a double outrage of impiety with witches who blaspheme the true God, and anything they think has some divinity, so as to uproot all pious conviction and fear of offence.

The third crime is even more abominable. Namely, they do homage to the Devil, worship him, offer sacrifice, and the most despicable make a trench and put their face in the ground praying and worshipping him with all their heart....This abomination surpasses any penalty that man can conceive, considering the formal text of the law of God, which requires that one who only bows down to pay honour to images, which the Greeks call "idols," be put to death....<sup>50</sup> Now witches are not content to worship, or only to bow down before Satan, but they offer themselves to Satan, pray to him and invoke him.

The fourth crime is even greater: many witches have been convicted, and have confessed to promising their children to Satan. The fifth is even worse; that is, that witches are frequently convicted by their confession of having sacrificed to the Devil their infant children before they are baptised. They raise them in the air, and then insert a large pin into their head, which causes them to die and is a crime more bizarre than the one before. In fact Sprenger relates that he had one burned who had killed forty-one of them in this way.<sup>51</sup>

The sixth crime is even more horrible. For witches are not satisfied to offer their own children to the Devil and burn them as a sacrifice...but they even dedicate them right from the mother's womb...which is a double parricide with the most abominable idolatry imaginable.

<sup>49</sup>Lev. 24:16.

<sup>50</sup>Ex. 20:4-5; 32:7-10; Dt. 13:6-10; 27:15; Num. 25:1-5.

<sup>51</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 13. In the story referred to, the witch confessed to killing "more than she can count."

The seventh and the most common is that witches make an oath and promise the Devil to lure as many as they can into his service, which they customarily do, as we showed earlier. Now the law of God states that that person who is called this way, must stone the one who tried to entice him.<sup>52</sup>

The eighth crime is to call upon and swear by the name of the Devil as a mark of honour, as witches do having it always on their lips, and swearing only by him, except when they renounce God. This is directly against the law of God, which forbids swearing by anything other than the name of God. This, Scripture says, gives glory to God.<sup>53</sup> Thus judges said in taking the oath of parties or witnesses, "Glory be to God."

The ninth is that witches are incestuous, which is the crime they have been charged with and convicted of from earliest times. For Satan gives them to understand that there was never a perfect sorcerer or enchanter who was not born from father and daughter, or mother and son....All these impieties are directly against God and His honour, which judges must avenge with the utmost rigour, and bring an end to God's wrath against us. As for the other crimes of witches, they concern injuries done to men, which they will avenge whenever they can. Now there is nothing so displeasing to God as to see judges avenge the smallest offences committed against themselves or others, but dissemble the horrible blasphemies against the majesty of God, such as those I have cited about witches.

Let us continue then with the other crimes. The tenth is that witches make a profession of killing people, and worse of murdering little children, then boiling them to render their humours and flesh drinkable, which Sprenger says he learned from their confessions,<sup>54</sup> and the Neopolitan Battista della Porta writes about it in his book on magic.<sup>55</sup> And still another fact to underline, is that they put

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<sup>52</sup>Dt. 13:6-10.

<sup>53</sup>Jer. 5:7; 12:16; Is. 45:23; 65:16.

<sup>54</sup>*Malleus*, Pt. 2, Q. 1, Ch. 13.

<sup>55</sup>Giambattista della Porta (1535-1615) wrote many works that, like those of Agrippa, Cardano and Weyer, earned him suspicion of heresy through the combination of science and the occult. He tended to ascribe witchcraft phenomena to natural physical and psychological causes. Bodin is likely referring here to his *Magiae naturalis sive de miraculis rerum naturalium* (1560).

children to death before they are baptised. These are four circumstances which make the murder very much worse.

The eleventh crime is that witches eat human flesh, especially of little children, and of course drink their blood....But one sees that it is a vile belief the Devil puts into the hearts of men in order to make them kill and devour each other, and destroy the human race. Again it must be noted that all witches customarily make poisons, which is enough to justify the death sentence....

Now murder, according to the law of God and the laws of men, merits death.<sup>56</sup> And those who eat human flesh, or have others eat it, also deserve death: as for example, a baker in Paris who made a business of making pies from the flesh of people hanged. He was burned, and his house razed to the ground....

The twelfth is particular, killing with poisons or spells, which is distinct from simple homicide....For it is a much more serious offence to kill with poison than with overt violence, as we shall presently point out; and even more serious to cause death by sorcery than by poison....

The thirteenth crime of witches is to kill livestock, something which is customary....The fourteenth is common, and recognised by law, namely, killing crops and causing famine and sterility in an entire region. The fifteenth is that witches have carnal copulation with the Devil, (and very often near their husbands, as I remarked earlier), a wickedness they all confess to.<sup>57</sup>

There then are fifteen detestable crimes, the least of which merits a painful death. This does not mean that all witches are guilty of such evils, but it has been well established that witches who have a formal compact with the Devil are normally guilty of all or of most of these evil deeds. Now when there are several crimes committed by one person, and through several acts, they must all be punished, and there can never be impunity for one crime because of the concurrence of another. It is necessary, as Bartolus states, to impose several separate penalties either according to laws and ordinances or arbitration of the judge. In such a case if several crimes are committed through the same act, even though the crimes are of the same category (for example, parricide is also homicide) nevertheless it will be governed only by the penalty for parricides. Now the

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<sup>56</sup>Dt. 19:1-13.

<sup>57</sup>See above, Book 2, Chapter 7.

law of God which prescribes the death penalty, does not set out in detail the evil acts of witches. But it is written only that the sorceress is not to live....<sup>58</sup> Not only does God show the magnitude of the crime, but also His will that swift and true justice be done regarding it; and particularly the law calls for the death sentence so that the penalty is not reduced for the female sex, as it is done for all other crimes in legal parlance....And as for court sorcerers, since this vermin approaches as near to princes as it can, not only now but from earliest times, in order to ruin the whole state, they lure princes into it, who then later lure their subjects. The law here is noteworthy. For it is stated that if there is a sorcerer who follows the court, or magician, or soothsayer, or augurer or one interpreting dreams by divining art, of whatever rank and however great a lord he might be, he shall be exposed to torments and tortured without making allowances for his rank. This law should be engraved in gold letters on the doors of princes, for they have no more dangerous plague in their following....And since the crime is more detestable, the penalty must be more severe. That is to say, stoning where the penalty is practised, or burning which is the normal penalty observed from earliest times throughout Christendom....

If with the crime of witchcraft it is established, either by confession or by witnesses, or by factual evidence that the witch caused someone's death, the crime is even greater, especially if it is a child. And even should it happen that the spell cast by the witch to bring about the death of his enemy, made another person die, nevertheless it is punishable by death. If she caused someone's death while trying to make him fall in love, she also deserves death, even though she may not be a witch, as the law says. But with one who is not a witch, the penalty ought to be lightened.

The difficulty, however, very often lies solely with the proof, and judges find themselves hampered only by that. If then there are no valid witnesses, or confessions by the accused, or factual evidence, which are the three proofs we have described on which a death sentence can be based, but there are only presumptions, one must distinguish whether the presumptions are weak or strong. If the presumptions are weak, one must not convict the person as a

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<sup>58</sup>Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:27.

witch—nor acquit her either. Rather, one must declare that it will be more fully investigated, and in the meantime release the accused.

But if the presumptions are strong, one may consider imposing the death sentence because of the important difference which separates this crime from others. For where other crimes are concerned one must not sentence anyone to death on a presumption, however strong it may be. But those who cannot be condemned receive other penalties, such as the galleys, the lash, or some fine according to the rank of the persons and the weight of the proof. So it seems that in so abominable a crime as this, one ought to hand down the death sentence if the presumptions are strong. Nevertheless, I do not recommend that because of strong presumptions one pass sentence of death—but any other penalty except death.... One must be very sure of the truth to impose the death sentence. Here someone will say that one must either acquit or convict. If the case is valid, death is not enough. If it is not valid one must acquit him, or at the most declare that it will be more fully investigated, in the meantime releasing the prisoner with the proviso that he appear again when required to do so, etc. Nor is one to employ corporal punishment, or strip anyone of their honour because of presumptions....

Proof for good and compelling reasons is enough, as Baldus says....<sup>59</sup> And for the same reason the proof of household witnesses is admissible for things done secretly in the home, which otherwise would not be admissible.

Now the wickedness of witches is usually done at night, in a deserted place, away from people, and by means one could never suppose or think of. It is sufficient, therefore, to have strong presumptions to impose corporal punishment in such a revolting case, and up to but not including bodily death. That is to say, beatings, amputations, brandings, life imprisonments, fines, confiscations, and other such penalties except banishment, unless the witch is confined to a particular place. For it is a normal thing with witches to move from one place to another when they have been discovered, carrying the plague elsewhere. And if they are obliged not to move from a place, they no longer dare to do anything, realizing they are watched and suspected. As for life imprisonment,

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<sup>59</sup>Baldus de Ubaldo (1320–1400) was one of the greatest of the medieval jurors. He wrote a commentary on the Justinian Corpus Juris Civilis.

although it is forbidden in ordinary law, canon law, however, has made more provision for it, especially in the present case. For there is nothing that witches fear more than prison, and it is one of the best ways to make them confess the truth and bring them to repentance. But one must not separate them from other prisoners who are not witches. For it has been found by experience that when they are alone the Devil makes them persist in their wickedness, and sometimes helps them to end their lives.

If then a witch is seized in possession of toads, lizards, communion wafers, or other strange bones and ointments, and if she is rumoured to be a witch, such presumptions are very strong and compelling. Or if in the past she was brought before the courts, and never cleared, it is an extremely compelling presumption. Or if she has been seen coming out of the stable or sheepfold of her enemy, and then later the livestock of the sheepfold dies. Or if those whom she threatened have died afterward or fallen into a languor, especially if there were several of them, it is a most powerful presumption. Because of these presumptions, even though there was no other proof from confession or witnesses, one must however pronounce sentence according to the above mentioned penalties, up to and excluding death. This is the rule that we must adhere to, setting aside the death penalty, and softening the rigour of the laws when one proceeds upon presumption. And one must not be governed by those who claim that judges must not sentence anyone to corporal punishment on presumptions, however strong they may be....

After the trial is carried out and completed on strong presumptions, such as we have described, one must prescribe a sentence of corporal punishment: otherwise there will never be punishment for wicked deeds if one punishes only the crimes for which one has obvious proof. This is a difficulty which the jurisconsult has addressed in order to make a conviction, even though there may be uncertainty when several have transgressed which one ought to be punished. And although it is only then a question of damages, nonetheless the reason for financial penalty in a civil suit is comparable to corporal punishments in a criminal action, and especially in outrageous crimes like the one in question. So that Baldus clearly argues that one ought to impose sentences of corporal punishment based on presumptions.... I certainly admit that it is better to acquit the guilty than to condemn the innocent. But I say that one who is convicted on acute presumptions is not



innocent: for example the one who was discovered with his bloody sword near the murder victim with no one else around, plus other conjectures which we have pointed out....How much more necessary it is then, to prescribe corporal punishments when the presumptions against witches are strong. And when there is factual evidence one must impose capital punishment: for example, if the one accused of witchcraft was found in possession of human members, especially of little children, one must not hesitate to pronounce the death sentence. For there is concrete factual evidence. If the one accused of witchcraft, in order to cure someone invokes the Devil openly, or with his face to the ground prays to his "little master," as they say, there is concrete factual evidence. One must not have misgivings about imposing the death penalty, as did Mr. Jean Martin who condemned to the flames a witch from Sainte Preuve, who was accused of making the mason of Sainte Preuve stooped and impotent. She had him take a bath, and gave him three lizards wrapped in a handkerchief, enjoining him to throw them into the bath, and to utter, "Go in the name of the Devil." For the invocation of the Devil is a hateful idolatry, and this point alone was enough to convict her even though she did not confess anything, and there was no proof of her having made the mason impotent. For many remove the charm and the illness given by other witches. One must also proceed against them if one sees that the remedies they apply are not natural or fitting (such as the three lizards, which were never found afterward in the bath; or for example the witch of Angers, whom we have mentioned, who to effect a cure used cat's brain, which is a strong poison, and crows' heads and other filth) and with other presumptions and information, one must impose corporal punishment.

If it happens that a witch invokes or calls on the Devil, one must without doubt pronounce sentence of death, for the reasons stated above; and not only of death, but one must condemn such monsters to be burned alive, according to the general custom observed from earliest times in all Christendom. The judge must never deviate or depart from this custom and general law, or reduce the penalty unless there is an important and compelling reason. For the law states that it is one and the same to reduce or remit the penalty at all. And moreover, the law deems guilty a judge who remits or reduces the penalty of the law....Indeed it goes even further. For it brands a judge with infamy for this reason. And that poses no problem in terms of law. Furthermore, the law requires that one

punish with confiscation anyone who remits or reduces the prescribed penalty—and sometimes with exile and other penalties according to the difference in the cases, including punishing the judges with the same penalties that the guilty and convicted person would be punished with, as the law states....And if it is true that the judge is guilty and must suffer the penalty for treason, who remitted or reduced the penalty for treason, as the law states, how much more guilty is the judge who remits or reduces the penalty of someone who is guilty of treason against God?...As much may be said of those who send witches away acquitted (even though they are guilty) and give as their only excuse that they cannot believe what is said about them: they deserve death. For it calls into doubt the law of God, and all human laws and histories, and countless executions carried out against this for two or three thousand years, and grants impunity to all witches. If someone tells me that all sentences in this realm are discretionary, I grant it, unless the death penalty is restricted by decree or by custom. Now according to very ancient custom, witches in all of Europe are condemned to be burned alive.

We have spoken chiefly about witches who have a sworn compact and a formal partnership with the Devil. But there are other kinds of witches whom we have treated at length in the second book, who are not so loathsome, but who still have partnership with the Devil in diabolical acts, such as those who tie codpieces, which is an abominable wickedness.<sup>60</sup> And although there are some who do it without having a formal agreement or partnership with the Devil, nonetheless the act in itself is diabolical and deserves capital punishment. For one who practises it cannot deny that he is a transgressor of the law of God and of nature, preventing the consequence of marriage ordained by the law of God.<sup>61</sup> For the result of it is that it is necessary to dissolve the marriages, or at the least it binds them in sterility, which in plain terms is a sacrilege. Nor can he deny either that it is murder—for one is not less a murderer who prevents the procreation of children than if he had cut their throats. In the third place he removes the mutual friendship of marriage, which is the sacred hearth of nature and of human society, and he puts there a great hatred. For normally these

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<sup>60</sup>See above, Book 2, note 17.

<sup>61</sup>Gen. 4:1-2.

codpiece tiers instil a violent hatred between the two partners. Fourthly, this tying is done at the very instant the minister pronounces the holy words, and when everyone ought to have his mind fixed on God. The person who ties comes and mixes in diabolic words and mysteries, which is a hateful impiety. In the fifth place he is the cause of the adulteries and debaucheries which ensue. For those who are bound, burning with lust beside each other, go and commit adultery. In the sixth place many murders also result, committed against the person of those suspected of having done it, who very often had never thought of doing it....It is therefore necessary, since this crime is multiplying rapidly, and these are the beginnings and the foundations of witches, to impose capital punishments for this crime which is directly against the law of God and nature....As for the other kinds of sorceries, which are performed to learn future events, as is Geomancy, and other such things, which we alluded to in the second book,<sup>62</sup> given that all these kinds of divination are diabolical and inventions of the Devil, forbidden by the word of God, all those who have been involved in it, and have been convicted for the first time must be sentenced to fines and reparations; then on the second time to the lash, and branded; and the third time hanged.

There are also those who profess to cure by removing a spell, as they claim, or by diabolical means drive off a storm, and prevent rains and hail. The law does not demand that they be punished, but I maintain that such doctors ought to be questioned and examined to learn whether they are witches, and until proof is found, they must be forbidden on pain of corporal punishments to dabble with medicines, and a close eye kept on them.

With respect to Chiromancy which is practised by those who meddle in fortune telling by hand lines, I recommend that they who make it their occupation, as some do, on the first occasion be forbidden to practise it ever again, upon suitable penalty. The books of Chiromancy and Geomancy, furthermore, which are sold everywhere should be burned, and printers and book-sellers prohibited to print or display any for sale, with penalty for those who have been discovered with any in their possession to be exacted the first time by fines, and the second by public amends. And so that no

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<sup>62</sup>Actually, Bodin treats Geomancy and other types of occult predictions in Book 1, Chapter 7.

one plead ignorance it would certainly be necessary to specify the authors in detail, and to enjoin all judges to burn on the spot any books of magic which have been found in inspecting inventories....

Now it is indisputable that conjurers and charmers have a formal compact with the Devil, as well as all those who practise Necromancy, Psychagogy, Goety, and other such things. [With regard to natural Astrology and its knowledge, since through it are known the marvels of God, the courses of the celestial lamps, the years, and the seasons—plus the fact that it is necessary for doctors and for the use of meteoric instruments, it must not be mixed with the others. But one must prevent the abuses of those who profess to divine the situation and the life of people, which brings with it a distrust of God and impiety. This is why the finest science in the world has been maligned, so that the words, “Astrologus,” “Mathematicus” and “Chaldeus” in laws are often taken to mean “sorcerers.” But excellent sciences must not be rejected because of their abuse. Otherwise one would have to condemn all the arts and sciences in the world, even the law of God....In all matters where the human mind is frightened by superstitious fear, or cut-off from faith in the one, sole God, cleaving to vanities of whatever sort, God is offended by it, and it is true idolatry. For this reason pagans themselves proclaimed a heavy penalty against them....<sup>63</sup> One must pay careful heed to the distinctions between spells, in order to weigh their heinousness and gravity, distinguishing between witches who have a formal agreement with the Devil, and those who employ ligatures and other arts of sorcery. For there are some things which cannot be suppressed or punished by magistrates, such as the superstition of many people about not walking through the fields, which the pagans feared, as they feared bleeding from the left nostril, or meeting a pregnant woman before dining. But it is a much greater superstition to carry rolls of paper hung around the neck, or the consecrated host in one’s pocket. This is what Judge Gentil did, who was found in possession of a host by the executioner who hanged him at Montfaucon. And other similar superstitions...which are strictly forbidden by the law of God and the prophets because of the distrust toward God, and the idolatry toward creatures.<sup>64</sup> It

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<sup>63</sup>On pagan sanctions against witchcraft see above, Author’s Preface, notes 14, 15.

<sup>64</sup>See Dt. 18:9–14 on blasphemous and idolatrous superstitions.

cannot be corrected except by the word of God—but certainly the magistrate must chastise the charlatans and notebearers who sell that filth, and banish them from the country....

Now it is a double impiety in the person of those who are priests and pastors. But the impiety is much greater when the priest or pastor has a pact with Satan and he converts a sacrifice into a despicable sorcery....How much more punishable then is the sorcerer-priest who, instead of consecrating, blasphemes execrably. This is why Plato makes foremost among his laws one which requires that the sorcerer-priest be put to death without remission.<sup>65</sup> For the indecency of the sorcery is much more atrocious in one who handles sacred things. Because instead of sanctifying them he pollutes, he soils, he blasphemes execrably. As did the curate of Soissons whom Froissart tells about, who baptised a toad, and gave it the consecrated host.<sup>66</sup> He was burned alive without observance of canon laws which only excommunicate sorcerer-priests. It is true that one can say it is the ecclesiastical penalty, which does not prejudice the penalties of lay magistrates. Now just as proportionally in harmonic justice the penalty is greater and the crime more serious because of the station of the people, such as the doctor who poisons, the teacher who violates his pupil, the judge who wrongs someone, the notary who commits falsehood, the goldsmith who makes counterfeit money, the vassal who betrays his lord, the citizen who sells his country, the subject who kills his prince, the prince who breaks faith are much more worthy of punishment, and generally all those who fall short of their office: thus the sorcerer-priest is not only more wicked than all of them, but also more despicable than all other witches who are not priests. For this person deserts his God to abandon himself to the Devil, and betrays sacred things which he ought above all to have kept holy and inviolable. Thus the priest...who has been charged and convicted of setting spells with mirrors, or rings, or axes, or sieves, or other such things which are performed even without formal invocation of the Devil merits death, and the others banishment. In other crimes, save for spells and sacrileges, it is not proper that a priest be punished so severely. Rather the dignity of his person ought to diminish the

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<sup>65</sup>Plato, *Laws*, 11.933d-e.

<sup>66</sup>Jean Froissart (c. 1337-c. 1410) wrote a chronicle of the wars of the French and English from the period 1325 to 1400.

penalty. And one who gives offence to the priests and ministers of God must be punished more severely than for all others: inasmuch as his dignity is greater and his person must be sacred and inviolable. But also when he so forgets himself as to dedicate himself to Satan, the punishment cannot be great enough. <sup>f</sup>For it has been found in countless trials that witches very often are priests, or they have secret dealings with priests. And by money or by favours they are induced to say masses for witches, and they accommodate them with hosts, or they consecrate blank parchment, or they place rings, inscribed blades or other such things on the altar, or beneath the altar cloths as has often been discovered. <sup>p</sup>Not long ago a curate was caught in the act, and he escaped since he had a good protector, who had given him a ring to place beneath the altar cloths when he said his Mass.

After the priests and ministers of God, the magistrates who are guardians and depositories of justice must be investigated, and if necessary, punished should any be found. For if there is a magistrate involved he will always let witches escape, and will maintain in this way the reign of Satan. And the first presumption against the magistrate who is a witch is when he makes a joke of such witchcraft. For under the pretense of laughter he brews his fatal poison....And not without cause did the law seek rigorously to punish court sorcerers: for it takes only one witch-courtier to taint all the princes and ladies who follow the court and to infect the sovereign prince, because of the curiosity of great lords to see and learn the conjuring tricks of sorcerers, thinking that in this way they will achieve great things. Thus Satan holds nothing in higher recommendation than to entice princes—for as soon as they are steeped in it they execute the will of Satan, make mockery of all religion, give an example to their subjects of every lewdness, incest, parricide, cruelty, and exaction; provoke seditions among their subjects or civil wars to see the spilling of blood, and make sacrifice to the Devil, to whom nothing is more pleasing than innocent blood. For he wishes to preserve the wicked....

But what penalty does one merit who pledged himself to Satan in order to be cured of an incurable illness, although we have shown above that out of ten there is scarcely one who gets better, and even then only from spells?<sup>67</sup> In this case the ignorant person would to

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<sup>67</sup>See above, Book 3, Chapter 2.

some degree be excusable from capital punishment, but not an educated man, although ignorance has no place in this crime. For no one can say that through error he mistakenly denied God his Creator in order to give himself to the Devil. Thus one sees in every trial that Satan desires a free will. But indeed the error may be excusable only with such persons, among the illicit workings of spells, who do not have a sworn agreement with Satan, such as the sorcery of rings, mirrors, sieves and other such things which some do because of having seen it performed, just as we explained above. And yet they must not remain without some penalty for the first offence, and for the second they must receive corporal punishment, and for the third death, since even a purse snatcher is normally sentenced to death for the third offence, as is almost the universal custom.

What shall we say then of those who have invoked evil spirits and performed the mysteries to attract Satan, but he did not come (although he never fails to, even though he did not answer, as he mimics the sly bawds who make one implore them)? One cannot say that it is only an attempt, but a detestable, accomplished and perfected witchcraft. Thus capital punishment is called for, and a reduction of the penalty for attempts which produced no effect has no place in this case....That is, to have invoked and beseeched Satan, which also is a direct renunciation of God. Thus it is an abuse of both divine and human laws to pardon a penitent witch, under the pretext that the laws and canons require one to pardon repentant heretics....For one who recognises something contrary to the law of God, even though he may be a heretic, nonetheless after he has revised this view his conscience remains intact. But one who worships Satan or denies God (although the one cannot be without the other) has set into effect something which cannot be undone....And as for those who did not renounce God, but who made use of characters, circles and invocations, which they found written in some forbidden books, and though the "familiar spirit," as they say, did not come, one must distinguish the rank of the persons. If it is an ignorant joker who does not think that such familiar spirits are devils, he must be punished by stiff fines....And if the person who made such an invocation is an educated man and of sound judgment, he merits death. For it cannot be denied in this case that he knowingly invoked Satan. And if the one who is sentenced to make amends for such wickedness is stubborn, and he refuses to obey justice, he must be sentenced to death....

It is not within the power of princes to pardon a crime that the law of God punishes with death, such as the crimes of witchcraft. Moreover, princes do a great offence to God to pardon such horrible wickednesses committed directly against His majesty, since the smallest prince avenges his injuries with capital punishment. So those who let witches escape or who do not carry out their punishment with utmost rigour, can be assured that they will be abandoned by God to the mercy of witches. And the country which tolerates them will be struck by plagues, famines, and wars—but those who take vengeance against them will be blessed by God, and will bring an end to His wrath. This is why one who is charged and accused of being a witch must never be simply let off and acquitted, unless the calumny of the accuser or informer is clearer than the sun. Since the proof of such wickednesses is so hidden and so difficult, no one would ever be accused or punished out of a million witches if parties were governed, as in an ordinary trial, by a lack of proof. This is why the ordinance does not permit judges to do so in crimes unless the matter allows it...

I recall having read in the *Malleus maleficarum*, that the plague did not stop in the region of Constance until they had exhumed a witch and reduced her body to ashes.<sup>68</sup> As in a similar case there was a woman in the village of Verigny who was charged and accused of many evil spells, and because of the difficulty of the proof, released. Later I learned from the inhabitants that a countless number of livestock and people had died. She died in April, 1579. Since her death all the inhabitants of Verigny and their livestock have been at peace and no longer die as before. This shows clearly that with the end of the chief cause, comes the end of the effects, even though God brings down afflictions on those whom He pleases.

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<sup>68</sup>This reference to the *Malleus* is uncertain.



## Publications of the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies

### **Renaissance and Reformation Texts in Translation:**

Lorenzo Valla. *The Profession of the Religious and Selections from The Falsely-Believed and Forged Donation of Constantine*. Trans. O.Z. Pugliese. 3rd ed. (1998), pp. 114.

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