

Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England

Contemporary Texts and their Cultural Contexts

Philip C. Almond



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DEMONIC POSSESSION AND EXORCISM IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

This is the first book exclusively devoted to demonic possession and exorcism in early modern England. It offers, for the first time, modernised versions of the most significant early modern texts on nine cases of demonic possession from the period 1570 to 1650, the key period in English history for demonic possession. The nine stories were all written by eye-witnesses or were derived from eye-witness reports. They involve matters of life and death, sin and sanctity, guilt and innocence, of crimes which could not be committed and punishments which could not be deserved. The nine critical introductions which accompany the stories address the different strategic intentions of those who wrote them. The modernised texts and critical introductions are placed within the context of a wide-ranging general introduction to demonic possession in England across the period 1550 to 1700.

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For Tennyson K. Almond
(1907–2001)

It is the easiest thing, sir, to be done.
As plain as fizzling: roll but wi' your eyes,
And foam at th'mouth. A little castle-soap
Will do't, to rub your lips: and then a nutshell,
With tow and touchwood in it to spit fire.
Did you ne'er read, sir, little Darrel's tricks,
With the boy o'Burton, and the seven in Lancashire,
Sommers at Nottingham? All these do teach it.

Ben Jonson
The Devil is an Ass

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page ix</i>
Introduction	1
1 Disfigured by the Devil: The story of Alexander Nyndge	43
2 Two possessed maidens in London: The story of Agnes Briggs and Rachel Pinder	58
3 The witches of Warboys: The story of the Throckmorton children	71
4 The boy of Burton: The story of Thomas Darling	150
5 A household possessed: The story of the Lancashire seven	192
6 The counterfeit demoniac: The story of William Sommers	240
7 The puritan martyr: The story of Mary Glover	287
8 The boy of Bilson: The story of William Perry	331
9 A pious daughter: The story of Margaret Muschamp	358
<i>References</i>	391
<i>Index</i>	396

Preface

In 1981, in his introduction to *Unclean Spirits*, Daniel Walker wrote of taking a step into a largely unexplored field, that of demonic possession and exorcism in early modern France and England. Over twenty years later, it remains still largely unexplored. This book is intended to continue the work then begun. It hopes to open up further territories then merely glanced at, and to provide new maps of terrains thus far merely sketched. It is my hope that the modernised versions of nine of the most significant contemporary stories of demonic possession and exorcism offered below will encourage others to search further.

The introduction proceeds from the assumption that the meaning of demonic possession and exorcism is to be found within the context of the social, political, and religious life of early modern England. More specifically, it argues that possession and deliverance is a cultural drama played out by all the participants within the confines of a cultural script known to all of them. And it suggests that the experiences of demonic possession had by demoniacs, exorcists, and audiences are shaped and configured by their cultural setting. Thus I hope that we come closer to a comprehension of how this aspect of popular religious belief and practice was lived out and experienced in the context of early modern English life and thought.

But this book aims too to bring its readers closer to the events it describes. More than anything else, the texts themselves enable the reader to enter the alien world of the demonically possessed. The nine stories transcribed below were all written by people who were eye-witnesses, or were derived from their reports. They reflect lives lived in radically different ways to ours. They involved matters of life and death, of sin and sanctity, of guilt and innocence, of crimes which could not be committed and punishments which could not be deserved, in ways difficult for us to grasp. Unlike in our world, the numinous Other, the divine and the demonic, are here in every part of the everyday.

Yet, for all that they reflect a common world quite different to ours, these stories are more than that. For they reflect too social conflict and ideological division within the culture of early modern England. They are all written with different strategic intentions to serve the interests of those who wrote them, or compiled them and put them into their final forms. They are intended to persuade the reader of the merits or otherwise of the participants – demoniacs, exorcists, judges, bishops, Catholics, Puritans, Anglicans. They strive to prove the authenticity of demoniacal actions, the propriety of exorcisms performed, the legitimacy of executions for bewitchment, the piety of Puritans and the credulity of priests. They serve the interests of villagers as well as kings, cunning men as well as physicians, demoniacs as well as divines.

For ease of reading, I have modernised early modern spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Place names and personal names have been modernised and made consistent where appropriate. Notes in square brackets reflect marginal notes in the originals. Except as indicated in the notes, the stories below are complete. A little to my surprise, the modernisation of these texts became a much more complex task than I had envisaged. It was an exercise in translation and interpretation and much less one of mere cosmetic work. Needless to say, I trust I have eased access into an inaccessible world while retaining the spirit of the originals.

I am grateful to the University of Queensland for continuing to provide a congenial framework in which to pursue research. I am grateful to Ms Katie Stott for transcribing the original texts onto computer. I wish especially to thank my colleagues, Ed Conrad, Michael Lattke, and Peter Harrison for their continued friendship and support over the twenty years we have all worked together. My partner Patricia Lee has been a continual source of support throughout this project, and I thank her for it. This book is dedicated to my father with happy memories of his love, generosity, and kindness to me over the first half-century of my life.

Introduction

DIAGNOSING THE DEVIL

On 20 January 1573, at seven o'clock in the evening, the torments of Alexander Nyndge began. His chest and body began to swell and his eyes to stare. He beat his head against the ground. He was often seen, we are informed, to have a lump running up and down his body between the flesh and the skin. He gnashed his teeth and foamed at the mouth. He shrieked with pain, and wept and laughed. He had the strength of four or five men, and his features were horribly disfigured. 'The body of the said Alexander', his brother Edward informs us, 'being as wondrously transformed as it was before, much like the picture of the Devil in a play, with a horrible voice, sounding Hell-hound, was most horribly tormented.'¹

His brother had made an instant diagnosis of the cause of Alexander's behaviour, that he was being molested by an evil spirit. It was a diagnosis made in the presence of Alexander. And it was one which Alexander repeatedly confirmed for Edward and his family by his subsequent speech and actions. Edward's quick diagnosis may have been intended to highlight his own perspicacity. But it does suggest that the symptoms of possession by evil spirits were sufficiently common to make the diagnosis possible.

It is impossible to make an accurate estimate of demoniacal behaviour in the early modern period. The exorcist John Darrell reported in 1599 that he had seen ten demoniacs and had heard of six more.² The physician Richard Napier treated 148 people who were believed to be haunted or possessed by spirits.³ I have found references in the contemporary literature to over one hundred possessed persons during the period from 1550 to 1700. Daniel Walker makes the observation that cases of possession were common enough 'for ordinary people to understand them and believe in them'. But as he points out, and contemporary writings confirm, they were 'rare

¹ Anon., 1615, sig.B.1.r (see below, p. 52).

² See Darrell, 1599[?], sig.D.4.v.

³ See Macdonald, 1981, p. 199.

enough to be an exciting novelty and thus attract large audiences'.⁴ What is undoubted is that the discourse of possession was a common feature of the elite and 'popular' grammar of the supernatural in early modern England. In 1621, for example, Elizabeth Saunders taught Katherine Malpas how to simulate possession 'in expectation and hope that much money would be given unto her . . . by such persons as would come to see her in pity and commiseration'. As James Sharpe remarks, 'these two women were confident that possession of this type would be widely recognised, and knew how to simulate it'.⁵

The diagnosis of demonic possession was not usually made so swiftly, nor by 'amateurs'. Often reluctant to accept their loved ones were possessed by a demon, relatives generally consulted the medical experts. Most physicians, when unable to find a natural reason for the symptoms of those afflicted, were not averse to suspecting possession. Their judgement was important in determining that the cause of the afflictions was beyond the natural.

Thus, for example, the Denham demoniac Richard Mainy was sent for a medical opinion which concluded that 'there was no natural cause of my disease, and so there was no remedy but I must needs be possessed'.⁶ When Jane, daughter of Robert Throckmorton, fell ill in November 1589, her parents sent samples of her urine to the physician Doctor Barrow in Cambridge. Only after he had ruled out possible natural explanations did he raise the possibility that the child was bewitched. Similarly, a Master Butler, having examined the child's urine, could find no natural explanation of her ailments.⁷ In early 1596, Thomas Darling's aunt took his urine to a physician for analysis. Although he doubted that the boy was bewitched, he could find no signs of any natural disease in the boy.⁸ Later in that same year, Nicholas Starkie consulted the celebrated John Dee, alchemist and astronomer, about the behaviour of a number of people in his household, all of whom showed signs of possession. Dee advised him to seek the help of godly preachers and to engage in prayer and fasting.⁹ Half a century later, convinced that her torments were from God, Margaret Muschamp would refuse the drugs prescribed by the physicians for whom her mother had sent.¹⁰ William Ringe was able to persuade the astrological physician Richard Napier that he was possessed by four spirits whom he named as Legion, Simon, Argell, and Ammelee, the tempter.¹¹

⁴ Walker, 1981, p. 4. ⁵ Sharpe, 1995, p. 193. ⁶ Harsnett, 1603, p. 405.

⁷ See anon., 1593, sigs.A.3.v.–A.4.r (see below, p. 79). See also Roberts, 1616, p. 52 where the urine of Elizabeth Hancock is taken to a cunning man for diagnosis.

⁸ See Anon., 1597, p. 2 (see below, p. 157). ⁹ See More, 1600, p. 15 (see below, p. 204).

¹⁰ See Anon., 1650, p. 2 (see below, p. 365). ¹¹ See Macdonald, 1981, pp. 156, 201.

It was not uncommon to call in a 'cunning man' to interpret the symptoms. In the case of Thomas Darling, it was the cunning man Jesse Bee who finally diagnosed bewitchment. Soon after the onset of Anne Gunter's illness, her father began to consult cunning men.¹² The cunning man Edmond Hartley, called in to treat his family by Nicholas Starkie in mid 1595, was eventually to be seen as the cause of the problems.¹³ John Barrow sought medical and astrological advice before seeking out a cunning man who diagnosed his son as bewitched.¹⁴

Not all physicians would countenance a diagnosis of demonic possession. Edward Jorden, for example, explained the symptoms of possession in terms of the disease of hysteria or 'the suffocation of the mother'. Jorden was motivated by the possession of Mary Glover, and by the trial of Elizabeth Jackson in December 1602 for having bewitched her. On that occasion, Doctors Hering and Spencer testified to the supernatural origins of her illness, Doctors Jorden and Argent to its natural origins. Judge Anderson, completely unconvinced by Jorden's explanations of Mary's symptoms, found Jackson guilty.¹⁵

According to Jorden, hysteria was 'an affect of the Mother or womb wherein the principal parts of the body by consent do suffer diversly according to the diversity of causes and diseases wherewith the matrix is affected'.¹⁶ Jorden was following the tradition of including under 'hysteria' a whole range of symptoms all believed to arise from gynaecological irregularities, symptoms of which were often included as signs of possession. His book on hysteria was intended to demonstrate that 'divers strange actions and passions of the body of man, which in the common opinion, are imputed to the Devil, have their true natural causes, and do accompany this disease'.¹⁷ While he did not go as far as to deny the possibility of possession and witchcraft, he did plead for caution in the diagnosis: 'both because the impostures be many, and the affects of natural diseases be strange to such as have not looked thoroughly into them'.¹⁸ And of the cure of those seemingly possessed by the prayer and fasting of others, Jorden has a ready psychological explanation in the confident expectation of the patient to find relief through those means.

Jorden's account was predicated on the assumption that naturalistic and supernaturalistic accounts of disease were incompatible. And it was

¹² See Sharpe, 1999, pp. 57–8. ¹³ See More, 1600, p. 16 (see below, p. 206).

¹⁴ See [Barrow], 1663, p. 8. See also [Barrow], 1663, p. 18; and Drage, 1665, p. 39.

¹⁵ See Bradwell, in MacDonald 1991, pp. 26ff. On the history of hysteria, see Veith, 1965.

¹⁶ Jorden, 1603, sigs. C.I.r–v. ¹⁷ Jorden, 1603, title page.

¹⁸ Jorden, 1603, the Epistle Dedicatorie. On Jorden's work see Macdonald, 1991. For the history of Hysteria, see Veith, 1965.

not readily acceptable to those who believed that Satan could be equally involved in both natural disease and supernatural possessions. As Stephen Bradwell wrote, 'Whereas he [Jordan] supposes by placing natural effects to call in natural causes, and by admitting natural causes to exclude supernatural out of doors, he is much deceived. For supernatural efficients can do all the natural may and much more.'¹⁹ Still, Jordan's account of possession as an illness did allow for the possibility that the symptoms of demonic possession did not have to be taken only as either genuine evidence of the supernatural or as the result of intentional fraud by the apparently possessed. Disease was, for Jordan, a genuine alternative to fraud or the activities of the devil and his minions.

Thus, in the summer and autumn of 1605, the demoniac Anne Gunter was interviewed by King James I. Anne had become a subject of considerable public interest, sufficiently to arouse the King's interest. Soon after the first of their meetings, Anne had been handed over to the sceptical Richard Bancroft, then Archbishop of Canterbury, and thence to his chaplain Samuel Harsnett, who had been earlier involved in investigations of cases of alleged possession. As in the case of Mary Glover, Edward Jordan also became involved. At her final meeting with James on 10 October, she confessed that her vomiting of needles and pins had been a fraud, but that she had long been afflicted with hysteria.²⁰

Under formal examination, other demoniacs also put forward hysteria as an explanation for their behaviour in mitigation of their apparent fraud. Between the spring of 1585 and the summer of 1586, six demoniacs were exorcised by twelve Catholic priests, mostly in Denham, Buckinghamshire. Fifteen years later, Bancroft and Harsnett decided to investigate. Three of the demoniacs, Anne Smith, Sara Williams, and Richard Mainy claimed to have suffered from hysteria at the time of their supposed possessions.²¹ To Harsnett, that they were really suffering from hysteria made the opportunism of the exorcising priests even greater: 'let them turn over but one new leaf in Sprenger, Nider Mengus, or Thyraeus, and see how to discover

¹⁹ Bradwell, in MacDonald 1991, p. 57.

²⁰ For James's account of her confession in a letter to Robert Cecil, the Earl of Salisbury, see Hunter, 1963, p. 77. For a comprehensive analysis of the case of Anne Gunter, see Sharpe, 1999.

²¹ See Brownlow, 1993, pp. 223, 349, 381, 386, 401, 409. Brownlow's work includes a critical edition of the book upon which our knowledge of the Denham case is based, namely, Samuel Harsnett's *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, London, 1603. Of Mainy's 'hysteria', Brownlow points out that Harsnett applies the term 'the mother' contemptuously to Mainy, but he also uses the correct term 'hysterica passio'. And Mainy himself is not sure of the correct term. Brownlow suggests that 'the mother' was used colloquially to describe a male condition, but that 'hysterica passio' would normally only be used of women. See Brownlow, 1993, p. 85, n.2. See also Gee, 1624, pp. 62–3. Gee had thoroughly imbibed the work of Harsnett.

a devil in the Epilepsy, Mother, Cramp, Convulsion, Sciatica, or Gout, and then learn a spell, an amulet, a periapt of a priest, and they shall get more fame and money in one week than they do now by all their painful travail in a year'.²²

Others found it hard to distinguish between hysteria and possession. In 1621, before he became convinced that his daughter Elizabeth was the victim of witchcraft, Edward Fairfax, 'neither a fantastic Puritan or superstitious Papist' as he put it, attributed all that she said and did in her fits to 'the disease called "the mother"'.²³ Sir Kenelm Digby related the story of a woman who, suffering from hysteria, believed herself to be possessed by the devil.²⁴ The Puritan divine Richard Baxter wrote of a maid from Bewdley who, suffering from a disease of the uterus from 1642 for four or five years, manifested the symptoms of possession.²⁵ As late as 1698, Susanna Fowles, having been exposed as a fraud, accepted the diagnosis of hysteria 'as a good cloak, as she thought, for her preceding imposture, thinking thereby to colour over the matter, and blind the world'.²⁶

Apart from hysteria, epilepsy also was often looked to as a possible natural explanation of demonic symptoms. When Thomas Darling's illness began, many believed that he was suffering from epilepsy or the falling sickness 'by reason that it was not a continual distemperature, but came by fits, with sudden staring, striving and struggling very fiercely, and falling down with sore vomits'.²⁷ Certainly, there were comparable symptoms – falling down suddenly on the ground, grinding the teeth, foaming at the mouth, self violence, deprivation of the senses, swelling of the body.²⁸ The matter was further complicated by the belief that epilepsy could be demonically caused. But some symptoms of possession were recognised as distinctive of possession, and not associated with epilepsy by those for whom demonic possession was a real possibility – knowledge of other languages, especially Greek and Latin, clairvoyance, extraordinary strength, and revulsion at sacred things, particular sections of the Bible, especially the opening of St John's Gospel, religious objects of various sorts, and so on.

The diagnosis of a natural disease did not necessarily mean the denial of demonic involvement. Some saw natural diseases in general as demonically caused.²⁹ Others saw those suffering from natural diseases as good candidates for infection by the devil. The Dutch physician Levinus Lemnius, for example, many of whose works were translated into English, believed it was

²² Brownlow, 1993, p. 225.

²³ Grange, 1882, p. 37.

²⁴ Digby, 1669, p. 183.

²⁵ Baxter, 1691, pp. 193–5.

²⁶ Anon., 1698, p. 18.

²⁷ Anon., 1597, p. 1 (see below, pp. 157–8).

²⁸ For a contemporary list of symptoms of epilepsy, see Willis, 1685, p. 239.

²⁹ See e.g., Mason, 1612, pp. 41f.

frivolous to refer the causes of illness to evil spirits. But he did accept that the Devil could make naturally caused ailments worse.³⁰ Thomas Browne testified in a 1664 witchcraft trial in England that the fits of some females 'were natural and nothing else but what they call the mother, but only heightened to a great excess by the subtlety of the Devil, cooperating with the malice of these which we term witches'.³¹ The presbyterian divine Richard Baxter believed that Satan used melancholy to move men to despair and suicide.³² In late seventeenth-century New England, Cotton Mather believed 'that the evil angels do often take advantage from natural distempers in the children of men to annoy them with such further mischiefs as we call preternatural'.³³

Demonic possession was often also linked with melancholy, itself an illness which covered a vast array of symptoms. For Robert Burton, religious melancholy was itself caused by the devil, and demonic possession was included in his categories of diseases of the mind. 'The last kind of madness or melancholy', he wrote, 'is that demoniacal (if I may so call it) obsession or possession of devils which *Platerus* and others would have to be praeternatural: stupendous things are said of them, their actions, gestures, contortions, fasting, prophecy, speaking languages they were never taught &c.'³⁴

There were occasions when those suffering from what Burton would diagnose as religious melancholy³⁵ were believed to be possessed by the Devil. Suicidal impulses were seen as evidence of demonic activity. In August 1590, for example John Dee diagnosed Ann Frank, a suicidal nurse in his household, as possessed by an evil spirit.³⁶ His attempts at exorcising the spirit were unavailing. She died in late September having cut her throat. The wife of Francis Drake of Esher in Surrey threatened to kill herself on many occasions. She believed that she was doomed to eternal punishment in hell, that God had forsaken her, that everything she did ensured her eventual condemnation, and that it was too late for her or anyone else to do anything to avoid her destiny. Those around her were convinced that she was possessed by the Devil, and a regime of prayer and fasting was begun to effect her release.³⁷

Suicidal impulses were common among those who, not merely melancholic, also showed the symptoms of possession. Although she was later to

³⁰ See Lemnius, 1658, pp. 86–9. ³¹ See Karlsen, 1989, p. 234.

³² Baxter, 1691, p. 173. See also Stearne, 1648, p. 5. ³³ Karlsen, 1989, p. 233.

³⁴ Faulkner *et al.*, 1989, i.135–6.

³⁵ And what we would recognise as severe clinical depression. On depression, see Wolpert, 1999, and Solomon, 2001.

³⁶ See Halliwell, 1842, pp. 35–6. ³⁷ See Hart, 1654.

deny it, the Denham demoniac Sara Williams may have at one time claimed to have been tempted by a black man to break her neck by throwing herself down a flight of stairs, and on another occasion to cut her own throat with a knife.³⁸ William Sommers was prone regularly to throwing himself into the fire, although he seems never to have injured himself seriously.³⁹ The astrological physician Joseph Blagrave wrote of a maid possessed of the devil, the daughter of a Goodman Alexander, who would strive to get to the stairs so that she might throw herself down.⁴⁰

For those of a more secular frame of mind, the notion that an illness could be both naturally and supernaturally caused was unacceptable, and the symptoms of demonic possession were subsumed under those of melancholy or other physical or mental diseases. For Reginald Scot, for example, the natural explanation excluded the supernatural. The fantasies of witches were merely the result of their melancholic imaginations.⁴¹ Konrad Gesner prescribed a powder as a cure for demoniacs: 'Many also that be Limphatici, that is, mad or melancholic, whom they believed commonly to be resorted to by devils, we have cured them with the same.'⁴² In 1601, the Anglicans John Deacon and John Walker included melancholy along with hysteria and epilepsy among the causes of the symptoms of demonic possession.⁴³ Their colleague Samuel Harsnett concurred: 'The Philosophers' old aphorism is, *cerebrum Melancholicum est sedes daemonum*, a melancholic brain is the chair of estate for the devil.'⁴⁴

Harsnett saw manifestations of possession as reflecting any number of illnesses. If any have an idle or sullen girl, he wrote, 'and she have a little help of the *Mother*, *Epilepsy*, or *Cramp* to teach her to roll her eyes, wry her mouth, gnash her teeth, startle with her body, hold her arms and hands stiff, make comic faces, girme, mow, and mop like an ape, tumble like a hedgehog, and can mutter out two or three words of gibberish, such as *obus*, *bobus*, and then with-all old Mother *Nobs* has called her by chance idle young housewife, or bid the devil scratch her, then no doubt but Mother *Nobs* is the Witch, the young girl is owl-blasted and possessed'.⁴⁵

While not denying the reality of the demonic realm, Deacon and Walker, like Harsnett, drove an Anglican wedge of secularism between papists and Puritans. Reports of rare and strange feats arose not from supernatural,

³⁸ Brownlow, 1993, p. 342. ³⁹ See Darrell, 1599, pp. 11, 14, 37.

⁴⁰ Blagrave, 1672, p. 174. See also, Baxter, 1691, p. 193; [Barrow], 1664, p. 7; anon., 1647, p. 3; Jollie, 1697, p. 10; Mather, 1914, p. 118; Hall, 1991, p. 274; Crouzet, 1997, p. 193.

⁴¹ Scot, 1584, p. 42. See also Anglo, 1973, p. 220f.

⁴² Konrad Gesner, *The Treasure of Euonymus*, 1559, p. 331. Quoted by Kocher, 1950, p. 21.

⁴³ See Deacon and Walker, 1601, pp. 206–8, Walker, 1981, pp. 69–70.

⁴⁴ Brownlow, 1993, p. 304. ⁴⁵ Brownlow, 1993, pp. 308–9.

they declared, but from natural causes, 'from disordered *melancholy*, from *Mania*, from the *Epilepsy*, from *Lunacy*, from *Convulsions*, from the *mother*, from the *menstrual obstructions*, and sundry other *outrageous infirmities*'.⁴⁶ Richard Bernard did not deny the reality of demonic possession. But he did advise jurymen not only to look for counterfeits among demoniacs, but to recognise that such may also suffer from natural diseases such as epilepsy, melancholy, and *hysterica passio*.⁴⁷

Miracles and strategies

Scepticism about the possibility of possession and exorcism was bolstered by the belief that the age of miracles had passed. This enabled both scepticism about miracles in the present and commitment to the truth of the accounts of miracles in the Bible, at least those of Christ, the apostles, and the prophets. Thus, for Reginald Scot, for example, not only did miracles cease after the time of the apostles, but even those biblical miracles not performed by Christ, the Prophets, or the Apostles were not miraculous at all.⁴⁸ Whether aware of it or not, Scot was reflecting an Anglican tradition that the means of salvation was made sufficiently available in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that there was consequently no need of further miracles nor, for that matter, of prophecies. As F. W. Brownlow points out, when, in canon 72 in 1604, Bishop Bancroft prohibited any minister from taking part in 'prophesyings' or in exorcisms by the use of prayer and fasting under pain of deposition from his ministry, 'Skepticism towards prophecy and miracles thus became legally and institutionally a part of the Church of England.'⁴⁹

The denial of the possibility of possession and exorcism on the grounds of the impossibility of miracles in the present was an important part of Bancroft's campaign against exorcism, both Catholic and Protestant. And it was supported in John Deacon and John Walker's *Dialogicall Discourses*. As their representative in the *Dialogues*, Orthodoxus, puts it, 'All true Christian Churches, and the soundest Divines in our days, do generally conclude a final discontinuance of the miraculous faith, in these days of the Gospel; and therefore (by consequence) the undoubted determination of the Devil's extraordinary power of actual possession.'⁵⁰ Moreover, even if the age of

⁴⁶ Deacon and Walker, 1601, p. 206.

⁴⁷ See Bernard, 1627, pp. 47–8. See also Cotta, 1617, pp. 60ff., Lemnius, 1658, p. 391, Taylor, 1697, pp. 28–9.

⁴⁸ See Scot, 1972, pp. 89–90. On Scot, see Estes, 1983. ⁴⁹ Brownlow, 1993, p. 64.

⁵⁰ Quoted by Brownlow, 1993, pp. 71–2.

miracles had not ceased, they argued, the Devil does not have extraordinary power beyond the ordinary powers of nature, and so cannot work miracles like possession.⁵¹

That the age of miracles had ceased was a proposition also accepted by the Puritans, at least in their propaganda against the papists. But for those actively involved in demonic possession, the matter was more complex. The Puritan divine Arthur Hildersham, for example, declared it a dangerous opinion that miracles occur still in the Church. But he did want to argue that, in the case of possession, prayer and fasting had a good purpose in sanctifying God's judgement on the demoniac 'to the beholders, and the possessed himself'.⁵² The puritan exorcist John Darrell's colleague George More clearly recognised the strategic power of miracles in general, and exorcism in particular: 'if the Church of England have this power to cast out devils, then the church of Rome is a false Church. For there can be but one true Church, the principal mark of which, as they say, is to work miracles, and of them this is the greatest, namely to cast out devils.'⁵³ Yet, he wished utterly to disclaim that the consequences of his and others' prayer and fasting were the consequence of any 'extraordinary power in us'.⁵⁴

Similarly, the anonymous author of *A brief Narration of the Possession . . . of William Sommers* in 1598, in defending John Darrell, had to respond to accusations that 'It is Popery to hold that there is any possessions since Christ's time', that 'it is heresy to maintain that the Devil may now be cast out by prayer, and fasting', and that 'miracles are now ceased'.⁵⁵ In response to the first, he pointed to contemporary examples of the symptoms of possession, and in response to the second, to the statement of Jesus that the possessed may be delivered through the prayers and fasting of the faithful.⁵⁶ While claiming that there is no biblical warrant for the ceasing of miracles, he nevertheless declared that removing the Devil by prayer and fasting is not miraculous. The miraculous was only present when those involved had power over unclean spirits, as the disciples of Christ had, and the papist priests don't. Nevertheless, Christians have 'an extraordinary and supernatural lawful means of cure. This is by long and earnest entreaty to beseech Almighty God by mediation of Christ Jesus to release the party.'⁵⁷ Miracle workers they may not have been. But the Puritans wanted it known that they had influence in high places.

⁵¹ Deacon and Walker, 1601, p. 208. See also Harsnett, 1599, Epistle to the Reader.

⁵² Anon., 1597, p. 27 (see below, p. 177). ⁵³ More, 1600, sig.A.3.r (see below, p. 199).

⁵⁴ More, 1600, sig.A.3.v (see below, p. 199).

⁵⁵ Anon., 1598, sig.B.4.v (see below, pp. 258–9). Much of the apologetic section of this work may have been written by Darrell.

⁵⁶ See Matthew 17.21. ⁵⁷ Anon., 1598, sig.C.1.v (see below, p. 262).

John Darrell himself made a similar case for the validity of possession and exorcism, even in an age when miracles were no more. Darrell's strategy was a two-fold one. First, he naturalised possession, arguing that it was no more than 'to be sick of a fever, or to have the palsy, or some other disease'.⁵⁸ Second, he maintained that, while casting out devils by prayer and fasting is wondrous, it is not miraculous. The key to a miracle, he claimed, was that it be done and brought to pass without any means set and appointed by God. To apply prayer and fasting to the disease of possession is to do no more than to apply an appropriate natural medicine to a natural disease. 'The expulsion of Satan by prayer, or fasting and prayer', he wrote, 'is no miracle, because it is brought to pass by means ordained to that end.'⁵⁹ And thus, prayer and fasting 'is as effectual through the blessing of God upon this his ordinance to cast Satan forth of those he possesses as the best medicine we have is to cure any natural disease'.⁶⁰

Miraculous it may not have been. But Darrell recognised the strategic value that exorcism held for the Puritan cause. The practice of prayer and fasting to expel demons, he believed, would more effectively enable Protestants to 'stop the mouth of the adversary, touching the priviledge of theirs of casting forth devils wherein, with their other lying miracles, they glory so much'.⁶¹ God, through his delivering of the demoniacs, would appear to be favouring the Puritan cause.

As aware of the strategic value of dispossessions as Darrell, Samuel Harsnett suspected a disastrous outcome were Protestant dispossessions to become widespread: Protestant would turn against Protestant, and not only against Catholic. Were Darrell and his like not dealt with, wrote Harsnett, 'we should have had many other pretended signs of possession: one Devil would have been mad at the name of the Presbyter, another at the sight of a minister that will not subscribe, another to have seen men sit or stand at the Communion'.⁶²

Harsnett's fears were not realised among Protestant demoniacs. Their devils were more involved in the struggle for individual souls than ecclesiastical bodies, their presence more the outcome of bewitchment by a witch than a symbol of conflict between or within Christian groups. But Harsnett's concerns were confirmed by Catholic demoniacs. He was familiar with the French demoniac Marthe Brossier. Abraham Hartwell had published a translation of a French account of Brossier in 1599, dedicated to Bishop Bancroft.⁶³ Her devil had declared that all the Protestants belonged

⁵⁸ Darrell, 1599[?], sig.d.3.v. See also Darrell, 1600b, pp. 29–30.

⁵⁹ Darrell, 1600b, p. 60. See also Darrell, 1599(?), sig.e.1.r–v.

⁶¹ Darrell, 1599[?], sig.f.3.r. See also Darrell, 1600b, p. 69.

⁶³ See Hartwell, 1599. On Brossier, see Ferber, 1995.

⁶⁰ Darrell, 1599[?], sig.e.1.v.

⁶² Harsnett, 1599, p. 35.

to him.⁶⁴ The Denham demoniacs Sara and Friswood Williams reported that their exorcists believed that most Protestants were possessed.⁶⁵ The demoniac Anne Smith declared that the priests would ask the demons within why they did not trouble them before when they were Protestants, and 'the devil would answer that there was no reason for them so to do because the Protestants were theirs already'.⁶⁶ Richard Mainy's devil informed his listeners that he was sending the zealous Protestant Robert Bedell to hell.⁶⁷ The Devil appeared to William Trayford in the clothes of a Protestant minister.⁶⁸ In general, perhaps not surprisingly, the devils of Denham demonstrated the demonic status of Protestantism and the divine character of Catholicism. As Harsnett put it, 'When the cogge-devil speaks of us, O that is our disgrace and confusion; when he speaks of the Romish Church and the bleeding of the Sacrament, O that is God's oracle and their triumphant exaltation. O despicable heathenish beggery, to go begging good words and credit from the Devil!'⁶⁹

Of course, Harsnett's concerns were only valid ones on the assumption that the Devil would be taken as speaking the truth. And in general he was. There was biblical authority for the Devil's knowing religious truth. The unclean spirit within the demoniac in the synagogue cried out to Jesus, 'I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.'⁷⁰ The Gadarene demoniac recognised Jesus as the Son of God.⁷¹ There was an expectation among both Catholics and Protestants that the devil within the possessed would speak the truth. Paradoxically, the Devil was a defender of the faith. His ability to possess and the faithful's ability to deliver those possessed by him were a defence against scepticism and atheism. Who knows, asked John Darrell rhetorically, 'whether God has therefore sent evil Spirits into sundry English persons to vex them in their bodies that thereby he might confound the Atheists in England? . . . for some special thing no doubt there is moving the Lord more at this time than in former times to send devils into men, Yea, into divers.'⁷²

But, the demonic attestation of religious truth, or any sort of truth for that matter, was something of a two-edged sword. For it contained within itself the possibility of its own denial. And biblical authority pointed in another direction.⁷³ In the gospel of John, Christ had called the Devil a liar and the father of lies.⁷⁴ Thus, as early as 1593, the non-conformist divine

⁶⁴ See Walker, 1981, pp. 34–5. ⁶⁵ See Brownlow, pp. 226–7, 368.

⁶⁶ Brownlow, 1993, p. 386. ⁶⁷ See Brownlow, 1993, p. 373.

⁶⁸ See Brownlow, 1993, p. 323. ⁶⁹ Brownlow, 1993, p. 332. ⁷⁰ Mark 1.47. ⁷¹ Mark 5.7.

⁷² Darrell, 1599[?], sig.g.1.v. See also Darrell, 1600b, pp. 87ff., and anon., 1598, sig.c.2.r (see below, p. 263).

⁷³ Bernard, 1627, p. 208. ⁷⁴ John 8.44.

George Gifford expressed his doubts that the devil within the possessed could be compelled to speak the truth. 'But how can it be proved', he asked, 'that the Father of lies may be bound, and forced through charge and adjuration in the name and power of God to tell the truth?'⁷⁵ The physician John Cotta reminded his readers in 1616 that 'since he is oft a false accuser, and the enemy of God and truth, he may not be credited in himself, no nor truth itself simply as in his mouth'.⁷⁶ And Richard Bernard warned jurors to beware the naming of the witch by the possessed, 'because this is only the Devil's testimony, who can lie, and that more often than speak truth'.⁷⁷ On the other hand, the capacity of the Devil to lie could assist in the defence against the truth of a confession of counterfeiting. Thus, the Devil appeared to William Sommers, we are informed, 'in the likeness of a mouse, threatening that if he would not let him re-enter, and would not say that all that he had done touching his tormenting during his possession was but counterfeit, then he would be hanged. But if he would yield to him, he would save him'.⁷⁸

John Darrell was convinced that the Devil could also produce the illusion of demonic possession. Satan, in his subtlety, declared Darrell, 'has done in the boy some sleight and trifling things, at divers times, of purpose to deceive the beholders, and to bear them in hand, that he did never greater things in him: thereby to induce them to think, that he was a counterfeit'.⁷⁹ So convinced was he of the Devil's repossession of Sommers that he refused to accept the boy's capacity to mimic his former fits.⁸⁰ In Darrell's world, satanic activity was impervious to refutation, even by the demoniac himself. Where the oppositionality of fraud and possession is undermined, truth is forever indeterminate. As Stephen Greenblatt remarks, 'If Satan can counterfeit counterfeiting, there can be no definitive confession, and the prospect opens to an infinite regress of disclosure and uncertainty'.⁸¹

Devils and witches

That there were many possessed by the Devil was not for many a matter of surprise. It was to be expected. For the issue of demonic activity linked with that of the end of the world, and the conviction that, in the last days,

⁷⁵ Gifford, 1593, sig.1.2.i. ⁷⁶ Cotta, 1616, p. 126. ⁷⁷ Bernard, 1627, p. 208.

⁷⁸ Anon., 1598, sig.B.1.r (see below, p. 250). See also Darrell, 1599[?], sig.B.2.r.

⁷⁹ Harsnett, 1599, p. 231. ⁸⁰ See Harsnett, 1599, p. 189.

⁸¹ Greenblatt, 1985-6, p. 337. See also Greenblatt, 1985, p. 18.

this activity would increase.⁸² Thus James I had ended his *Daemonologie* reminding his readers that the consummation of the world ‘makes Satan to rage the more in his instruments, knowing his kingdom to be so near an end’.⁸³ John Denison began his introduction to the possession of Thomas Darling in 1597 by placing it within the context of the end of history and the prophecy that the Devil’s wrath would increase, knowing that he has but a short time.⁸⁴ ‘This prophecy is fulfilled’, he declared, ‘not only in the outrageous fury that Satan uses in raising persecution against God’s Saints by his mischievous instruments, and corrupting men’s minds by his wicked suggestions, but also in tyrannising, according to his limited power over them, by torments . . . And this last kind of tyranny is also apparent, amongst other instances, in the pitiful vexing of this poor child.’⁸⁵ And Darling himself had visions of heaven, hell, and the day of judgement.⁸⁶

That genuine possessions were to be expected in the last days was an important part of John Darrell’s argument against his demoniacs being treated as frauds or sufferers from natural diseases. God is as ready to chastise men in these as in former days, wrote Darrell, ‘And the Devil in regard to the shortness of his time more ready than ever to do his service and best indeavour.’⁸⁷ Moreover the sufferings of the possessed on this side of the grave were a latter day sign of the final destiny of those to be tormented in Hell: ‘If the Devil deals thus with man being sent forth of God but to chastise him for his amendment, how will he intreat him when he shall fall upon him to execute the vengeance to come? . . . If in the former case he cause such crying, gnashing of teeth, and tormenting . . . what gnashing of teeth, what tormenting shall there be in the latter?’⁸⁸ Even Harsnett was inclined to see the ‘lying signs, feigned wonders, cogged miracles, the companions of Antichrist’, as evidence of the latter times.⁸⁹

The bodies of the possessed were also sites of eschatological conflict. The increasing wrath of Satan at the end of his time in the body of the possessed mirrored the increase in his activity in the historical realm. The seven demoniacs of Lancashire were increasingly tormented as the time approached for the departure of the Devil.⁹⁰ ‘I imagined’, said John Swan as the deliverance of Mary Glover approached its conclusion, ‘that his malice

⁸² See especially Clark, 1997, chs. 26–8. ⁸³ James, 1597, p. 81. See also Clark, 1977.

⁸⁴ Revelation 12.12. ⁸⁵ Anon., 1597, To the Reader (see below, pp. 155–6).

⁸⁶ Anon., 1597, pp. 30–2.

⁸⁷ Darrell, 1599(?), sig.D.4.v. See also Darrell, 1600b, p. 27; anon., 1641, pp. 1–2; Jollie, 1697, pp. 18f.; and Harley, 1996, p. 321.

⁸⁸ Darrell, 1599(?), sig.G.1.v. ⁸⁹ Brownlow, 1993, pp. 331–2.

⁹⁰ See More, 1600, p. 62 (see below, p. 228).

was rather grown greater towards the end of his kingdom. And so it fell out.⁹¹

All were agreed that only with divine permission was the Devil able to enter into anyone. This was a simple consequence of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. As George Cole reported, 'The wrath of God is already gone forth against one of Master Darrell's greatest enemies, namely, Master Sale, official of Wesson, whose child is lately vexed with an evil spirit because, as his wife reports, he has been an adversary to Master Darrell.'⁹² On the other hand, both the possessed themselves, and those involved in their deliverance, were apt to give the firm impression that, in their case at least, the Devil was firmly in control, or at best, that God and the Devil were involved in a battle which it was possible for either to win.

This was an ambivalence at the heart of Christianity itself. For Satan was both divine emissary and divine enemy. This was an ambivalence often present in the literature of witchcraft and possession. Thus, for example Levinus Lemnius informed his readers that God winks at the hurts brought upon men by the Devil, indeed, he 'partly instigates the devils and their instruments to rage against many that have deserved to be so punished'.⁹³ But he also reminded them that since Satan's chief end is to abolish the glory of God, he assaults man, both within and without, 'and sometimes he troubles the body, sometimes the soul, and sometimes both, to work their destruction'.⁹⁴

The matter is further complicated by the possibility of two modes of possession. In the one case, the demoniac is possessed as a result of the direct action of devils, in the other, as a consequence of the presence of witchcraft. The difference had important moral consequences. In general, where the Devil has directly entered the body of the demoniac, it is generally as a consequence of the sin of the latter. The possessed are ultimately responsible for their plight. Thus, in the case of Alexander Nyndge, his possessed body is the sign of his sinfulness. The story of Alexander functions as a reminder to its readers of the need for rigorous moral examination of the self to avoid the punishment of God: 'For describing the horror and unheard of misery that fell on him, we may be thereby drawn to descend into ourselves, and to look into our souls while there is yet time, lest Heaven pour down its vials of wrath on us.'⁹⁵ In the case of William Sommers, God used the body of the demoniac to demonstrate the sins of the whole community: 'When Sommers began his gestures, Master Darrell affirmed that they were the

⁹¹ Swan, 1603, p. 21 (see below, p. 306). ⁹² Anon., 1598, sig.A.3.r (see below, p. 246).

⁹³ Lemnius, 1658, p. 385. ⁹⁴ Lemnius, 1658, p. 386.

⁹⁵ Nyndge, 1616, sig.A.3.r (see below, p. 48).

signs, whereby the Devil showed the sins that reigned in Nottingham, and did himself interpret some of them . . . By this course the people were very much amazed, as thinking the Devil to preach so unto them, and so note the sins that reigned in that town.⁹⁶

By contrast, where the Devil has gained entrance as a consequence of witchcraft, the demoniac is more to be construed as an innocent victim of the machinations of a witch. It is hardly then a matter of surprise that those who were possessed and their families were inclined to point the finger of responsibility elsewhere. Accusations of witchcraft were more the norm than the exception. Of the nine cases of possession below, only the first does not include accusations of witchcraft.

For the accused, the results were serious, occasionally fatal. As Jane Kamensky points out, 'to cry witch was to create a witch'.⁹⁷ Alice Samuel, her daughter Agnes, and her husband John were all hanged as a result of accusations of bewitchment made by the Throckmorton children.⁹⁸ As a result of the accusations of Thomas Darling, Alice Gooderidge was imprisoned and died in gaol.⁹⁹ Edmond Hartley, the cunning man, was hanged twice, the second time successfully.¹⁰⁰ William Sommers' accusations saw thirteen persons making court appearances.¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Jackson was indicted for witchcraft on the basis of Mary Glover's accusations, and found guilty.¹⁰² William Perry blamed Joan Cocke for his torments. She was indicted but acquitted.¹⁰³ Margaret Muschamp's illness is blamed on a variety of people, but only Dorothy Swinow, who had had a history of bad relations with Margaret's mother, is eventually indicted.¹⁰⁴ In 1616, nine women were hanged as a consequence of Henrie Smith's accusations that they had sent their familiar spirits to torment him.¹⁰⁵ Six women were tried and found not guilty of bewitching the children of Edward Fairfax.¹⁰⁶

Although there is no biblical precedent for a connection between witchcraft and possession, there is a cultural expectation that the two are related. Within the texts, possession is presented as the direct consequence of an unpleasant encounter with a person later identified as the cause of bewitchment. John Darrell informs us that William Sommers' fits began after he encountered an old woman who extorted money from him and forced him to eat bread and butter.¹⁰⁷ It was after Thomas Darling had heard

⁹⁶ Harsnett, 1599, p. 117. ⁹⁷ Kamensky, 1997, p. 155. ⁹⁸ Anon., 1593.

⁹⁹ See anon., 1597, p. 43 (see below, p. 191). ¹⁰⁰ See More, 1600, pp. 21–2 (see below, pp. 207–8).

¹⁰¹ See anon., 1598, sig.B.1.r. ¹⁰² See Bradwell in Macdonald, 1991, pp. 26ff.

¹⁰³ Anon., 1622, p. 61 (see below, p. 345). ¹⁰⁴ Anon., 1650, p. 27 (see below, p. 390).

¹⁰⁵ See Kittredge, 1956, pp. 322–3. ¹⁰⁶ See Grange, 1882, pp. 32–4.

¹⁰⁷ See Darrell, 1600a, p. 14.

Jesse Bee tell his Aunt that he is bewitched that he fortuitously recalled and recounted the story of his meeting in a wood with an old woman on the same day on which he had become ill. 'As I passed by her in the coppice', he reported, 'I chanced, against my will, to pass wind which she, taking in anger, said, "Gyp with a mischief, and fart with a bell. I will go to Heaven, and you will go to Hell."' ¹⁰⁸ Mary Glover fell ill immediately after an argument with Elizabeth Jackson, Jane Ashton after threats from Edmond Hartley. ¹⁰⁹ William Perry, the boy of Bilson, felt ill after an encounter with an old woman who accused him of ill manners, 'saying that he was a foul thing, and that it had been better for him if he had saluted her'. ¹¹⁰

Various means were used in attempts to ease the symptoms of bewitchment. The blood of the witch was most often sought as a means of cure. The story of the Throckmorton children is punctuated by various attempts to scratch the accused witches. ¹¹¹ In the case of Thomas Darling, some of the bystanders persuaded him to scratch the witch Alice Gooderidge, although it was a practice that the editor of the text disapproved of. ¹¹² Margaret Muschamp believed that her life was saved by the two drops of blood that had been procured, under some duress, from the cunning man John Hutton whom she had accused of bewitching her. ¹¹³

On occasion, the causal relation of witchcraft and possession was reinforced by the claim that the death or imprisonment of the witch cured possession. The cessation of possession demonstrated the truth of the verdict. The execution of the witches both acted as a judicial exorcism and demonstrated the authenticity of the possession. Thus, the story of the possessed Throckmorton children concluded with the following 'proof': 'If any be desirous to know the present state of these children, how they are and have been since the death of these parties, you will understand that, since their day of execution, not any one of them have had any fit at all, neither yet grudging or complaining of any such thing. But they have, all of them, been in as good a state and as perfect health as ever from their birth.' ¹¹⁴

A number of other events were seen as precipitating possession. Among the Denham demoniacs, Sara Williams attributed the onset of her possession to 'ugly visions' of cats, her sister Fid to having been tripped by a devil

¹⁰⁸ Anon, 1597, p. 4 (see below, p. 159).

¹⁰⁹ See Bradwell, in MacDonald 1991, p. 3; More, 1600, p. 17 (see below p. 205).

¹¹⁰ Anon., 1622, p. 46 (see below p. 338). For a number of New England examples see, Mather, 1914b, pp. 100; 1914a, p. 259; Hall, 1991, 198f., Calef, 1914, p. 311, Harley, 1996, pp. 312f.

¹¹¹ See anon., 1593. ¹¹² See anon., 1597, p. 6 (see below, p. 160).

¹¹³ See anon., 1650, pp. 8–9 (see below, p. 372). ¹¹⁴ Anon., 1593, sig.o.4.r (see below, p. 149).

for washing the shirt of a Catholic Priest.¹¹⁵ James Barrow's possession began with visions of rats 'and Cats with Rats in their clawes, . . . coming (as he said) with glasses of Sack in their clawes, and Pasties, offering them to the Child'.¹¹⁶ John Tonken saw a vision of a woman dressed in blue, red, yellow, and green clothes who told him that he would not be well until he had vomited walnut shells, pins, and nails.¹¹⁷ William Sommers' sister Mary Cooper began to throw fits after she was persuaded that possession ran in families and women in the town told her she would be as evil as her brother.¹¹⁸ Margaret Muschamp's troubles began with a vision of two angels, Joyce Dovey's after listening to a sermon, and Margaret Hooper's after prayer.¹¹⁹ The Devil had entered the so-called Surrey demoniac, Richard Dugdale, after he had promised himself to the Devil on the condition he would make him a good dancer.¹²⁰

Visions of the Devil were common among demoniacs not only at the onset of possession but throughout it. Demons often appeared in animal form as rats, cats, and dogs, on occasion as birds, and even as bears. Devils appeared to some as black men, often as children, black, white, or red. Margaret Byrom was terrified by a vision of the Devil in the form of the cunning man Edmond Hartley.¹²¹ On another occasion she was 'grievously molested and sorely frightened with a terrible vision . . . like a foul black dwarf, with half a face, long shaggy hair, black broad hands and black cloven feet'.¹²² On 31 August 1590, Elizabeth Throckmorton cried out grievously about a vision of Mother Samuel with a black child sitting upon her shoulder.¹²³

Possessions, good and bad

Where the demoniac was the innocent victim of witchcraft, she could be constructed as a model of piety and morality. The rhetoric of martyrdom could be employed. Mary Glover was the granddaughter of Robert Glover burned in 1555 during the reign of Mary. It is his words on his way to execution that she repeated as she was finally delivered from the Devil forty-seven years later: 'He is come, he is come . . . the comforter is come. O Lord, you have delivered me.'¹²⁴

¹¹⁵ See Brownlow, 1993, pp. 223f., 339, 362. ¹¹⁶ [Barrow], 1664, p. 5.

¹¹⁷ Anon., 1686, p. 2. ¹¹⁸ See Harsnett, 1599, p. 315.

¹¹⁹ See anon., 1650, p. 1. (See below, p. 364); anon., 1647, p. 1; anon., 1641, p. 3.

¹²⁰ Jollie, 1697., p. 2. ¹²¹ See More, 1600, p. 20 (see below, p. 207).

¹²² More, 1600, p. 29 (see below, p. 211). ¹²³ See anon., 1593, sig.c.4.r.

¹²⁴ Swan, 1603, p. 47 (see below, p. 318).

More generally, where the demoniac was the victim, the categories of godliness and demonianism often overlapped, and the boundaries between possession by the Devil and possession by a spirit from God blurred.¹²⁵ Inspiration, both divine and demonic, could exist simultaneously in the one person. The Denham demoniac Richard Mainy, for example, had many visions and revelations which the exorcist William Weston recorded. Before he was driven out, Mainy's demon Modu was to claim that he was the cause of Mainy's visions. To be sure, Mainy was later to confess that his visions were all feigned. It was by then in his interests to do so. Feigned or otherwise, he was undoubtedly persuasive. On Good Friday, 1586, for example, Weston recorded that Mainy, lying upon his bed, told the Catholics present that his hour was come, exhorted them to be loyal to their faith, and desired all the company to pray with him, 'every person present being moved to great devotion'.¹²⁶ After falling into a trance which lasted two hours, he awoke, 'fetching a great sigh and a groan, and then used these words: My time is not yet come; our blessed Lady has appeared unto me and told me that I must live longer yet, for that God has reserved me for a further purpose to do more good, and to tell of strange wonders.'¹²⁷ On other occasions, he was able sufficiently to persuade his audience that he saw Christ himself accompanied by angels, or the Virgin Mary attended by blessed virgins, that all present would 'fall down upon their knees to worship them, and to pray unto them'.¹²⁸

A central feature of Thomas Darling's possession was his conversations with the Devil. In his resistance to the temptations of the Devil, he mimicked the temptations of Christ. Like Christ, Darling repeatedly resisted the onslaughts of Satan. He was a model of puritan piety. Expecting to die soon, he accepted his impending death with resignation. His only regret was that he would have liked to 'have lived to be a preacher, to thunder out the threatenings of God's word against sin and all abominations, wherewith these days do abound'.¹²⁹ He himself was persuaded, at least at one time, that he had a special status. He believed that, in his dialogues with Satan, he had 'the spirit of God in me'.¹³⁰ And God did provide assurances against those who doubted him. Thomas's last vision was of a dove who told him that he had an enemy who accused him of being a dissembler. 'He will fry in Hell torments', he was told. 'Your eyes will see his judgements. For his sins do smoke into the elements, and do pierce the Heavens.'¹³¹

¹²⁵ See Purkiss, 1998, p. 250.

¹²⁶ Brownlow, 1993, p. 408.

¹²⁷ Brownlow, 1993, p. 408.

¹²⁸ Brownlow, 1993, p. 407.

¹²⁹ Anon., 1597, p. 2 (see below p. 158).

¹³⁰ Harsnett, 1599, p. 290.

¹³¹ Anon., 1597, p. 42 (see below, p. 190).

Whether a possession was demonically or divinely inspired was often in the eye of the beholder. But to speak beyond themselves was typical of those possessed by either God or the Devil. William Withers, for example, was said to have preached as though he were a learned divine: 'and when he speaks, his voice seems to be of such power that all the bed shakes, to the astonishment of the hearers'.¹³² John Darrell was concerned that Darling's piety was in reality the Devil disguised as an angel of light. But he had fewer doubts about William Sommers. He spoke 'most profoundly of some mysteries of religion', wrote Darrell, and 'expounded the Creed, and that very divine-like'.¹³³ In 1592, speaking to Alice Samuel of the joys of heaven and the torments of hell, the Throckmorton children exhorted her to confess to her witchcraft in such heavenly and divine speeches 'that if a man had heard it, he would not have thought himself better edified at ten sermons'.¹³⁴

Seventy years earlier, as Thomas Cranmer informs us, a maid possessed had strange visions and revelations of heaven, hell, and purgatory. While in a trance for three hours or more, a voice could be heard speaking tunefully from her stomach which, 'when it told anything of the joys of Heaven, it spoke so sweetly and so heavenly, that every man was ravished with the hearing thereof; and contrary, when it told any thing of Hell, it spoke so horribly and terribly, that it put the hearers in a great fear'.¹³⁵ Elizabeth Barton, the so-called Maid of Kent, showed many signs of demonic possession but spoke eloquently of heaven, hell, and purgatory, 'and of the joys, and sorrows that sundry departed souls had'.¹³⁶

Margaret Muschamp's illness began with a 'good' possession. From the outset, she was a model of childish piety. Recovering from her first trance, she cried out, 'Dear Mother, weep not for me. For I have seen a happy sight, and heard a blessed sound. For the Lord has so loved my poor soul that he has caused his blessed trumpet to sound in my ears, and has sent two blessed angels to receive my sinful soul'.¹³⁷ Margaret Muschamp preferred the world of her angels to that of the everyday. She continued with them in conversation for hours at a time. She is distraught when her angels are kept from her. When after an absence of twelve weeks her angels return, a crowd gathers to witness the event and to listen to her conversation with them for two hours. She gave such a description of Heaven's joys and Hell's torments 'that no Divine on earth could have gone beyond her'.¹³⁸

¹³² Philip, 1581, sig.A.4.v. ¹³³ Darrell, 1599(?), sig.G.3.r.

¹³⁴ Anon., 1593, sig.F.4.r (see below, p. 105). ¹³⁵ Cox, 1846, ii.273.

¹³⁶ Thwaites 1576, p. 150. ¹³⁷ Anon., 1650, p. 1 (see below, p. 364).

¹³⁸ Anon., 1650, p. 13 (see below, p. 377).

The body possessed was a site of conflict between good and evil. That it was so was the consequence of the possibility that the Devil, or any number of demons, could physically locate in the demoniac's body. Sceptics like Deacon and Walker argued that when the scriptures spoke of possession by demons they did so only metaphorically. To interpret possession literally, they maintained, 'would pester the Church with many absurd and inconvenient opinions'.¹³⁹ Similarly, Thomas Hobbes maintained that the biblical accounts of Satan's entering were to be interpreted metaphorically. And he went on to suggest that, since spirits are corporeal, and since two corporeal entities cannot both occupy the same space at the same time, therefore corporeal possession is impossible.¹⁴⁰ In order to get around this sort of problem, Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist, was later to construct the corporeality of the Devil in terms of the Platonic account of the vehicles of the soul. The Devil in a 'vehicle' of air could be intermingled with other vehicles.¹⁴¹

Though metaphor and reality often overlap in the description of the entrance and exit of the demonic, the possession texts themselves have an overall commitment to a demonic quasi-corporeality. Thus the Devil is seen to enter through bodily openings, nostrils, ears, wounds, the anus, and so on. Most commonly, the Devil entered through the mouth, often mingling with the air that was breathed.¹⁴² The Denham demoniac Sara Williams reported that 'the thing' entered through her mouth, thence to her heart, where it 'burnt her intolerably'.¹⁴³ Elizabeth Throckmorton accused Mother Samuel of putting a mouse, a cat, a frog, and sometimes a toad into her mouth.¹⁴⁴ Edmond Hartley was accused of having breathed the Devil into the Starkie children by kissing them.¹⁴⁵ William Sommers affirmed that the Devil tried to re-possess him by entering his mouth in the likeness of a rat.¹⁴⁶ The Devil asked Helen Fairfax to open her mouth and let him come into her body.¹⁴⁷

And the demons exited in similar ways, through the ear, the vagina, most often through the mouth. John Barrow was delivered of five devils 'as if he was ready to be choked, bursting forth with a kind of belching'.¹⁴⁸ The devil in the daughter of Goodman Alexander departed invisibly with a great cry and hideous noise, accompanied by a sudden gust of wind.¹⁴⁹ Elizabeth

¹³⁹ Deacon, 1601, p. 16. ¹⁴⁰ Kors and Peters, 1973, pp. 346–7.

¹⁴¹ See Almond, 1991, pp. 775–91. ¹⁴² See Lemnius, 1658, p. 385.

¹⁴³ Brownlow, 1993, p. 340. ¹⁴⁴ See anon., 1593, sigs.B.4.v–c.1.r.

¹⁴⁵ More, 1600, p. 16 (see below p. 205). See also Harsnett, 1599, p. 37.

¹⁴⁶ See Harsnett, 1599, p. 129. ¹⁴⁷ See Grange, 1882, p. 41.

¹⁴⁸ Anon., 1664, p. 15. ¹⁴⁹ See Blgrave, 1672, p. 172.

Day had one imp jump out of her mouth like a mouse.¹⁵⁰ The demons left the Lancashire seven roaring like beasts, and in the form of ugly creatures. Margaret Byrom, for example, reported that she felt the devil come up from her stomach towards her breast, thence to her throat. It left her in the likeness of a crow's head with 'a sore throat and a filthy smell.'¹⁵¹ One saw the devil go out as an urchin or hedgehog, another as a hunchback. The demon left Jane Ashton 'like a great breath, ugly like a toad, round like a ball'.¹⁵² In attempting to re-enter them, the spirits returned in various forms – as a bear, an ape, a large black dog, a black raven, a flame of fire, and in the likeness of Edmond Hartley.¹⁵³ At Denham, Hobberdiance vanished as a whirlwind, Lusty Dick as a smell, the demon of pride as a peacock, and Smolkin from the ear of William Trayford as a mouse.¹⁵⁴

Multiple demonic personalities could also co-exist in the body of the demoniac. Around thirty named devils jostled around in the Denham demoniacs, together with over a hundred un-named assistants. The French demoniac Nicole Obry was at one time possessed by around thirty, of whom the chief was the biblical Beelzebub.¹⁵⁵ He was active, not only in France but across the Channel in England, where the demons Brother Glassap and Brother Radulphus who had taken up residence in Thomas Darling reported to him.¹⁵⁶ Joan Throckmorton was possessed by Blue, Pluck, Catch, and Smack, four of the nine spirits that Alice Samuel is said by Smack to have at her disposal.¹⁵⁷ The Lancashire seven had at least two spirits each, 'one to torment them inwardly, with all the torments of Hell' and one or more to stand before them 'to drive them into all fear and astonishment'.¹⁵⁸ At the end of the seventeenth century, Richard Dugdale, the Surrey demoniac, had two voices which spoke in him, 'one most hollow and very hideous, the other more shrill and screaming, yea, sometimes both were in him at once, as if talking one to the other . . . and oft as from a great hard round lump within his Fit swell'd upon his Belly or Breast'.¹⁵⁹ Rachel Pinder had five thousand legions of demons within.¹⁶⁰ A sceptic like Harsnett could come up with good reasons for the presence of many, not least that the expulsion of a large number prolonged the exorcism and heightened the reputation of the exorcist.¹⁶¹ But possession by legion had biblical authority not only in the Gadarene demoniac, but

¹⁵⁰ See Drage, 1665, p. 13. ¹⁵¹ Darrell, 1600a, p. 11. ¹⁵² Darrell, 1600a, p. 13.

¹⁵³ See More, 1600, p. 81 (see below, p. 237).

¹⁵⁴ See Brownlow, 1993. See also Kittredge, 1956, pp. 134–5. ¹⁵⁵ See Walker, 1981, p. 21.

¹⁵⁶ See anon., 1597, p. 34 (see below, p. 184). ¹⁵⁷ Anon., 1593, sig.M.2.r.

¹⁵⁸ More, 1600, pp. 42–3 (see below, p. 218). ¹⁵⁹ Jollie, 1697, p. 24.

¹⁶⁰ See anon., 1574, sig.A.4.v (see below, p. 64). ¹⁶¹ See Brownlow, 1993, pp. 243–53.

in Mary Magdalene who was possessed by seven devils. As a consequence, possession by many, both named and anonymous, was more the rule than the exception.¹⁶²

Profiling the possessed

Driven as they are by their own strategic intentions, it is often difficult to read behind the possession texts. But, even granting that they are often prone to imagining how the possessed ought to have behaved rather than describing how they did behave, they are suggestive of a number of clear patterns among those who were considered to show definitive signs of possession. It is clear, for example, that the manifestations of demonic possession differed little across the range of ages and across gender. Thus, male demoniacs showed the same behaviour as female, and older demoniacs had the same repertoire as younger. Although demoniacal behaviour is nuanced in terms of the denominational allegiances of the possessed, the same general features of possession are evident among the tormented in English Protestant and Catholic contexts, and, one might add, in the European Catholic and Protestant contexts more generally. The features of possession cross borders, as did the texts also. Moreover, over the early modern period more generally, there are no discernible shifts in the nature of possessions. William Sommers is recognisable in Richard Dugdale, the Surrey demoniac, a century later,¹⁶³ as is William Perry, the Boy of Bilson, in Susanna Fowles some eighty years later.¹⁶⁴

It is evident, however, that children and adolescents were more prone to possession than adults. Children lived in a supernatural world populated by elves, ghosts, hobgoblins, bogey men, and demons.¹⁶⁵ Of the twenty or so demoniacs whose stories are recounted below, only one can be considered as a young adult, and two as adults: William Sommers was in his late teens, Jane Ashton thirty years of age, and Margaret Byrom three years older than Jane. Of sixty-four identifiable English demoniacs whose ages I have estimated from the sources, either directly or indirectly, only eight are over twenty years of age. Females, and particularly girls and young women, were also more prone to be possessed than males. In sixty-two cases of possession where the genders of the possessed can be determined, forty-four are females and eighteen males. Of the eighteen males, six can be

¹⁶² Sara Williams was possessed by one devil called Anonymos. For other examples of multiple possessions, see Gee, 1624, pp. 63, 66f.; anon., 1693, pp. 15f.; Drage, 1665, p. 2; anon., 1693, pp. 61–4.

¹⁶³ On Richard Dugdale, see Jollie, 1697, 1698, and Taylor, 1696, 1697, 1698.

¹⁶⁴ See anon., 1698. ¹⁶⁵ See Thomas, 1989.

counted as adults. Of the forty-four females, only three can be said to be of adult age. Thus, among the possessed in early modern England, around two-thirds are female children or adolescents, and around one-fifth boys or adolescent males.

It is not surprising then that analyses of demonic possession have pointed to its function as a form of rebellion against adult authorities. James Sharpe, for example, has pointed out that the possessed had a licence for bad behaviour: 'The decent and comely behaviour which the writers of conduct books recommended as the norm for youth was clearly blown aside by the possessed. They could do and say things which would not otherwise have been tolerated.'¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Diane Purkiss has remarked on the way in which the possessed child's body, if not its mind, 'escapes from the discipline of the godly household'.¹⁶⁷ At the least, it was one way of avoiding prayer. Thus for example, no sooner had Doctor Dorrington begun to pray than the Throckmorton children all fell into their fits, 'with such terrible screeches and strange sneezings, wonderfully tormented as though they would have been torn in pieces'.¹⁶⁸ When the doctor ceased praying, the children ceased being tormented. But 'When he began to pray, they began to shriek. When he ended, they ended.'¹⁶⁹ John and Anne Starkie, Ellen Holland, and Ellinor Hurdman, it was observed, were never troubled at all when allowed to play cards or other games. But if the scriptures were read, prayers used for them, or exhortations addressed to them, 'they fell into their fits'. The consequence of this behaviour was that, for about two years, 'they never came to the church for fear of only increasing their torments'.¹⁷⁰

Possession was a means by which moral imperatives could be violated, guilt mitigated if not removed, and parental authority avoided. Diane Purkiss suggests that Margaret Muschamp's possession 'allowed a range of fantasy ways out of the impasses of the mother-daughter bond'.¹⁷¹ Katherine Wright, one of the exorcist John Darrell's early successes, was a victim of physical abuse as a child.¹⁷² The devils in Mary Hall said that they would have possessed her father if they had had the power.¹⁷³ In the most general sense, accusations of witchcraft by young demoniacs against adults can be read as subversive of all adult authority. Their possession was an extreme reaction to the restrictive piety of the households in which many of them were being brought up.

¹⁶⁶ Sharpe, 1995, pp. 198–9. ¹⁶⁷ Purkiss, 1998, p. 241.

¹⁶⁸ Anon., 1593, sig.B.3.r (see below, p. 85). ¹⁶⁹ Anon., 1593, sig.B.3.r (see below, p. 85).

¹⁷⁰ More, 1600, pp. 39–40 (see below, p. 217). ¹⁷¹ Purkiss, 1998, p. 247.

¹⁷² See Harsnett, 1599, p. 279. The text is oddly paginated, beginning again at p. 279, after p. 296.

¹⁷³ See Drage, 1665, p. 32.

These were not then cases of ‘the Devil made me do it’ so much as his actually being the doer. Possession provided an excuse for outrageous behaviour, and a complete mitigation of it. Far from being condemned, the demoniac received sympathy and concern. The language of demoniacs was clearly often obscene – at least to seventeenth-century ears. On occasion, if only rarely, so was their behaviour. William Sommers, for example, breached the boundary between the human and the bestial. John Darrell reminded his readers of Sommers’ behaviour ‘in acting the sin of whoredom in the manner he did, and that in the presence of so many: also his filthy and abominable carriage of himself with a bitch before divers’.¹⁷⁴ The limits of blasphemy were undoubtedly pushed. When the preachers called for the Bible, some of the Lancashire seven ‘fell to laughing at it, and said, “Reach them the Bibble bable, bibble babbell”’. John Starkie, when asked to say the Lord’s Prayer after the preachers, misnamed every word in it, until they stopped, ‘exceedingly grieved that they [the children] had despised such holy things like dogs and swine’.¹⁷⁵ The maid Joan Harvey sometimes spat at the name of Jesus, and blasphemed God saying ‘God is a good man I can do as much as he; I care not for Jesus, &c.’¹⁷⁶

Children in the early modern period lived on the periphery of adult attention. Not so possessed children and adolescents. They moved from the margins of attention to the centre. Demoniacs took hostages. Ironically, they possessed their parents. Edward Fairfax, always convinced of the genuineness of the possession of his children, was aware that some believed that his children feigned their possession so as to be more cherished by him.¹⁷⁷ Mary Moor was progressively alienated from others as a result of her conviction that her daughter Margaret was genuinely bewitched. At the end of the day, John Darrell, more guilty of credulity than fraud, appeared more a victim of the possessed than they of the Devil.

And they drew large crowds. The audience is central to the event of possession and deliverance as event. In 1564, having heard of the nature of her illness, people from all parts of the city of Chester visited Anne Mylner.¹⁷⁸ A hundred a week were said to be reconciled to Catholicism after visiting the demoniacs at Denham.¹⁷⁹ Over one hundred and fifty people gathered for the dispossession of William Sommers.¹⁸⁰ Mary Glover demonstrated her fits before a range of audiences. Thomas Hinton reported that men of all sorts from all parts of the country went to North Moreton to

¹⁷⁴ Darrell, 1600b, p. 10. ¹⁷⁵ More, 1600, p. 55 (see below p. 225).

¹⁷⁶ Ewen, 1933, p. 191. ¹⁷⁷ See Grange, 1882, p. 124.

¹⁷⁸ See Fisher, 1565, sig.A.4.r. ¹⁷⁹ See Brownlow, 1993, p. 370.

¹⁸⁰ See anon., 1598, sig.B.1.r. (see below, p. 250).

see Anne Gunter's fits and trances.¹⁸¹ In the case of James Barrow, the more people came to see him, the more intense were his fits.¹⁸² William Perry, the boy of Bilson, liked the attention – and the gifts. He confessed that he did not wish to be dispossessed too soon since 'many people did resort to him, and brought him many good things'.¹⁸³ When Margaret Muschamp's angels were due to return, many waited patiently for the appointed time.¹⁸⁴

The presence of crowds suggests not only the fascination in seeing the possessed and hearing the Devil speak. The crowds also acted as judges on the authenticity of what they observed, and consequently as witnesses to the veracity of the events. The texts are full of the names of those who have been or can be called on to testify to what they saw and heard. But they were not merely observers. For they were active participants in the drama of possession and dispossession. And they became emotionally involved. In the words of Rudolf Otto, these were numinous occasions. The mysterious other which they confronted was both terrifying and fascinating, awe-inspiring but captivating.¹⁸⁵ But the thrill of the demonic was tempered by sympathy for the possessed. The onlookers wept out of pity. While Mary Glover was being tormented, there were many among the company who cried out, 'Jesus help. Lord show mercy. Lord strengthen, Lord, confound Satan. Lord, send deliverance.'¹⁸⁶ The story of Margaret Muschamp opened with an account of her piteous state and the onlookers' reaction: 'She was suddenly stricken with a great deal of torment . . . the use of her tongue was gone, with all her limbs, striving to vomit, and such torments as no eyes could look on her without compassion.'¹⁸⁷

Demoniacs became very much principal actors in a public drama. There were long periods of time during which they stayed 'in character'. During a three-hour period, Margaret Hurdman acted out with words and gestures 'the proud women of our times, who cannot content themselves with any sober or modest attire but are ever ready to follow every new and disguised fashion, and yet never think themselves fine enough'.¹⁸⁸

Jesse Bee and Thomas Darling engaged in battle with Satan for long periods of time. Joan Throckmorton had extensive public conversations with the spirits which possessed her. Spectators saw Margaret Muschamp converse on many occasions 'most divinely and heavenly' for hours with her angels.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸¹ See Sharpe, 1999, pp. 45–6. ¹⁸² See [Barrow], 1664, pp. 5–6.

¹⁸³ Anon., 1622, pp. 69–70 (see below, p. 353). ¹⁸⁴ See anon., 1650, p. 13 (see below, p. 376).

¹⁸⁵ See Otto, 1958. ¹⁸⁶ Swan, 1603, pp. 43–4 (see below, p. 317).

¹⁸⁷ Anon., 1650, p. 2 (see below, p. 365). ¹⁸⁸ More, 1600, pp. 26–7 (see below, p. 210).

¹⁸⁹ Anon., 1650, p. 13 (see below, p. 377).

Their possessions were not shortlived. In only being possessed for one day, Alexander Nyndge was unusual.¹⁹⁰ Protestant England did not witness the routinisation of possession that saw, for example, the French demoniac Marie des Vallees, possessed from 1609 to 1655.¹⁹¹ Possessions for months or even years were common, although sometimes with periods of remission. The Throckmortons were possessed for three and a half years until April 1593, the Lancashire seven from February 1595 to March 1597 with eighteen months' remission during that time. Thomas Darling's possession lasted for the better part of the first half of 1596, William Sommers' for several months in late 1597, with a number of re-possessiones in the months following. Mary Glover's possession ended in December 1602, her torments having begun in late April of that year. William Perry was possessed for several months from Easter 1620. Margaret Muschamp's problems lasted from August 1645 until February 1648, James Barrow's for nearly two years.¹⁹²

Possession by the Devil then was a culturally available means by which children and adolescents, and especially young women, escaped their subordination. They expressed their powerlessness in the only way available to them – through their bodies. In so doing they were empowered. Possession by spirits enabled them to break through the culturally imposed limits on their speech and behaviour. The worst excesses of their rebelliousness could be excused and laid at the Devil's door. But they were often vessels, not only of the demonic, but also the divine. To the extent that they resisted the demonic powers and strengthened the faiths of others, they were exemplars of faith and piety. They manifested within themselves both angry rebellion against social norms and passionate adherence to them. Their rebellion then was at a cost – the loss of themselves as integrated personalities, and the creation of their bodies as tortured sites of conflict between good and evil.

The signs of possession

The bodies of the possessed were quite literally 'bodies of evidence', as James Sharpe has pointed out. Anne Gunter's body was 'something upon which contemporaries could draw for proof of the ceaseless war between good and evil'.¹⁹³ The signs of possession provided the evidence that Satan had taken up residence within. Itemisation of the criteria of possession,

¹⁹⁰ Although his story was later re-written to extend the time to six months.

¹⁹¹ See Ferber, 2003, p. 9. ¹⁹² See anon., 1650, title; [Barrow], 1664, title.

¹⁹³ Sharpe, 1999, p. 158.

and the giving of evidence for the demoniacs having fulfilled the criteria, were common features of texts committed to establishing the authenticity of any particular possession. John Fisher, for example, in 1564, gave eleven evidences of Anne Mylner's being possessed.¹⁹⁴ From the depositions provided at the trial of William Sommers, the author of *A brief Narration* in 1598 produced a list of twenty three signs 'proving that William Sommers of Nottingham of the age of twenty years was possessed by Satan, and did not counterfeit as some pretend'.¹⁹⁵ In 1599, John Darrell gave a list of fourteen evidences in defence of Sommers' authenticity, and a year later outlined sixteen evidences of his possession. In his *Daemonologie*, King James listed three defining criteria of possession, strength, physical rigidity, and the ability to speak various languages, though the last of these could be dispensed with were the demoniac possessed with a dumb and blind spirit.¹⁹⁶ After listing eighteen signs of the possession of the Lancashire seven, George More concluded that 'the harmony and consent in signs and actions, both for the matter and manner of strange handling of all these in their several fits, does make it evident that they were all really and corporally possessed'.¹⁹⁷ More went on to remark that some of his criteria of possession could occur singly or in combination without the Devil having possessed the person. But when all or most occurred, he maintained, and especially when they were joined by any one sign beyond the power of nature, then there was a genuine possession. In order to assist jurymen in detecting natural disease or counterfeit demoniacs, Richard Bernard listed ten true signs of possession.¹⁹⁸

The criteria of possession evidenced in demoniacs in the New Testament provided many of these. John Darrell, for example, pointed to 'crying, gnashing the teeth, wallowing, foaming, extraordinary and supernatural strength, supernatural knowledge, with sundry others to the number of eighteen'.¹⁹⁹ In addition to those listed above, the biblical texts also include violence to self and others, inability to hear and speak, entering into coma-like states and pining away, nakedness, dwelling among graves, and in the wilderness. Of these, only the last two failed to occur among early modern demoniacs. It is not perhaps a matter for surprise that most of the biblical signs of possession were common among the possessed of the early modern period. The author of *A brief Narration* in 1598 pointed to the biblical signs of possession – extraordinary strength, knowledge, tormenting of bodies,

¹⁹⁴ See Fisher, 1564. ¹⁹⁵ Anon., 1598, sig.E.3.r-v (see below, p. 284).

¹⁹⁶ See James, 1597, pp. 70–1. ¹⁹⁷ More, 1600, pp. 47–8 (see below, p. 220).

¹⁹⁸ See Bernard, 1627, pp. 49–52. ¹⁹⁹ Darrell, 1599, p. 9.

foaming, wallowing, self beating, gnashing of teeth, casting into the fire – as evidence of possession in his own time.²⁰⁰

But the biblical signs of possession were not the only signs of demonic possession. Nor were they considered definitive of it. For it was recognised that some of the biblical signs of demonic activity could appear among those suffering from natural illnesses, and others were reasonably easy to counterfeit. Early modern demoniacs had extended the repertoire of their biblical models. Out of their creativity, a theological virtue was made. Thus, for example, the author of *A brief Narration* argued for the necessity of other, and less ambiguous signs of possession: ‘But seeing men in this matter are grown more incredulous than heretofore, it has pleased God, besides the signs of possession mentioned in Scripture, to give other signs also, more from cavil to make his glorious works most apparent and certain.’²⁰¹

For many, the supernatural signs of possession, those which appeared to be beyond nature, were the defining signs. Supernatural knowledge or clairvoyance, knowledge of other languages, levitation,²⁰² knockings, smells,²⁰³ demonic ventriloquism, evidence of living things beneath the skin of those possessed, the vomiting of strange objects, were all seen as incontrovertible proofs of possession since, on the face of it at least, they defied natural explanation.

For *A brief Narration*, the running lump beneath the flesh of Sommers, about the size of a mouse was decisive: ‘This one thing alone, if there were nothing else, is sufficient to convince any man whose heart is not hardened that Sommers did not counterfeit.’²⁰⁴ There has been seen and heard running up and down Sommers’ body, reported John Darrell, ‘a lump or swelling between his flesh and skin, in some part of his body of the bigness of an egg, in some other greater or less, moving immediately from one leg to another, and so into the belly, making it as big again as naturally it is, thence into his throat, cheek, forehead, tongue, eyes’.²⁰⁵ The running lump was attested to in three depositions in *A brief Narration*. And Darrell elsewhere points to the depositions of twelve witnesses to it.²⁰⁶

It was a phenomenon often reported among the possessed. Edward Thwaites reported it of Elizabeth Barton, the maid of Kent, some twenty

²⁰⁰ See anon., 1598, sig.C.1.r (see below, pp. 260–1).

²⁰¹ Anon., 1598, sig.B.3.v (see below, p. 256). See also Harsnett, 1599, p. 31.

²⁰² There were few English examples of levitation. But see Ewen, 1933, pp. 91–2.

²⁰³ Smells (as of brimstone) were not a common feature of the English stories. In the case of William Sommers, some deposition recorded strange smells where he lay. See anon., 1598, sig.E.3.v (see below, p. 285). See also Darrell, 1599, p. 39; anon., 1641, p. 6.

²⁰⁴ Anon., 1598, sig.B.3.r. (see below, p. 256).

²⁰⁵ Darrell, 1599[?], sig.B.3.r. See also Darrell, 1599, p. 10. ²⁰⁶ Darrell, 1599, p. 35.

five years before Sommers.²⁰⁷ Steven Bradwell wrote of Mary Glover having a swelling in her stomach, as large as a football, which moved up to her throat and down again.²⁰⁸ Margaret Byrom felt ‘some great thing roll up and down in her belly, like a calf’.²⁰⁹ Judith Gibbes in 1602 had a swelling in her belly. Observers of Mary Pearson a few years later noticed that ‘something of the bigness of a mouse would creep between the skin and flesh of her leg and so ascend upwards to her throat’.²¹⁰ In 1626, Edward Dynham was said to have had something moving up and down in his stomach and belly. Edward Bonavent had the feeling that a mouse ran up and down inside him.²¹¹ Nathaniel Waddington reported that in some of Richard Dugdale’s fits, ‘a swelling as big as a man’s hand in one of his legs moved towards his knee’.²¹² Some of Richard Napier’s patients felt as if things were living within them, others were convinced that they were.

It is difficult to evaluate the textual accounts we have of such things as running lumps and living creatures within the possessed. Michael MacDonald has demonstrated clearly how easily the speech of Napier’s patients ‘could move from trope to true conviction that evil spirits worked within’.²¹³ Not surprisingly, the reports of them occur in those works whose strategic intention is to authenticate a possession. On at least one occasion, the account of the running lump is clearly a literary invention. Thus, in the 1615 version of the possession of Alexander Nyndge, it was reported that ‘he was often seen to have a certain swelling or variable lump to a great bigness, swiftly running up and down his body between the flesh and the skin’.²¹⁴ It was a phenomenon not reported of Nyndge in the original version, and more than likely derived from reports of Sommers. It would be harder to account for the many reports from witnesses of Sommers’ running lump were it not for the fact that Sommers confessed to achieving the illusion by various means.²¹⁵ But his own explanation of his manual dexterity does not adequately explain how so many could be so convinced by a trick that ought to have been easily seen through.²¹⁶ At the end of the day, it is not unfeasible to suggest that the will to believe may have been so powerful among those present as to create the perception that there was a lump between the skin and the flesh of demoniacs.

²⁰⁷ Thwaites, 1576, p. 149. See also Whatmore, 1943, p. 464.

²⁰⁸ Bradwell, in MacDonald 1991, p. 11. ²⁰⁹ More, 1600, p. 33 (see below, p. 213).

²¹⁰ Quoted by Ewen, 1938, p. 38. ²¹¹ See Ewen, 1933, p. 452.

²¹² Jollie, 1697, p. 54. See also Jollie, 1698, pp. 57, 69; Taylor, 1697, pp. 44, 47.

²¹³ Macdonald, 1985, p. 203. ²¹⁴ Anon., 1615, sig.A.3.v (see below, p. 49).

²¹⁵ See Harsnett, 1599, pp. 213–14.

²¹⁶ Although one witness, grabbing at the lump, claimed to have seized hold of Sommers’ hands, and to have been able to expose and mimic other parts of his repertoire. See Harsnett, 1599, pp. 240–1.

Demonstrations of clairvoyance were among the most common supernatural signs of possession. Clairvoyance was almost always found among the lists of signs, and few texts failed to give examples of it. John Cotta saw it as one of those signs which ‘detect and prove a supernatural author’.²¹⁷ And it showed itself in a variety of ways. The Maid of Kent, for example, foresaw the death of a child.²¹⁸ And she was able to tell of events occurring elsewhere simultaneously of which she could have had no knowledge. Anne Wentworth was said to have told many men the secrets of their hearts.²¹⁹ John Darrell also claimed that William Sommers knew of things done and spoken miles away, and ‘to divers strangers coming unto him he made known such secrets, that both they and others, upon the acknowledgement of the truth thereof, wondered greatly’.²²⁰ Four of the Throckmorton children were each able independently to gather the same kind of leaf from every herb in the garden at the same time while in a state of trance.²²¹ William Perry, the boy of Bilson, demonstrated his supernatural knowledge by discerning whenever the woman who had bewitched him was brought into the room where he was, even when ‘she were very secretly conveyed thither’.²²² Richard Dugdale had the useful skill of, among other things, being able to predict the weather.²²³

The speaking of languages, usually Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, which ‘in former time they did never know, nor could afterward know again’²²⁴ was often seen as decisive. Thus, for example, in 1612 James Mason reported on a young man who, it was finally realised, was possessed by a devil ‘especially by speaking of greek and latin’ of which the boy was formerly ignorant.²²⁵ The two youngest girls among the Lancashire seven were able to answer questions in Latin.²²⁶ William Sommers answered questions in both Greek and Latin, although as Harsnett sceptically reported, only in single words and short phrases.²²⁷ The illiterate John Fox was said to have blasphemed fearfully, ‘both in Hebrew and in Greek, cavilled and played the critic, and backed his allegations with sayings out of the Fathers and Poets in their own language, which he readily quoted, so that the company trembled to

²¹⁷ Cotta, 1616, p. 77. ²¹⁸ See Thwaites, 1576, pp. 149–50. ²¹⁹ See Cox, 1846, p. 65.

²²⁰ Darrell, 1600b, p. 15. See also Darrell, 1599, pp. 13, 37; anon., 1598, sig.E.3.r (see below, p. 285).

²²¹ See More, 1600, pp. 37–9 (see below, pp. 215–16).

²²² Anon., 1622, p. 60 (see below, p. 344).

²²³ See Jollie, 1697, pp. 3, 23. See also Blagrave, 1672, pp. 170–1; Sinclair, 1685, p. 138; Sharpe, 1999, p. 104; Cullen, 1698, p. 13; Barrow, 1663, p. 6; Drage, 1665, p. 40; Clarke, 1660, p. 92; Ewen, 1933, p. 97. For a contemporary account of how the Devil can know such things, see Bernard, 1627, pp. 64ff.

²²⁴ Cotta, 1616, pp. 76–7. ²²⁵ Mason, 1612, p. 20.

²²⁶ More, 1600, p. 41 (see below, p. 217). ²²⁷ See Harsnett, 1599, pp. 253–5.

hear such things from one that understood no learning, and that moved neither tongue nor lip'.²²⁸

This ability to speak without moving the mouth, lips or tongue, generally from the stomach (ventriloquy), re-inforced the belief that here, not the demoniac but the Devil was the vocal source. Not only the eyes of the witnesses but their ears also testified to the presence of the demonic. For demoniacs spoke in tones different to their normal voices. For their later theatrical descendants, the ventriloquists' 'dummies', the purpose was to persuade the onlookers that their moving lips expressed their own thoughts, and not that of another. But, unlike their wooden counterparts, these 'dummies' did not move their lips. And therefore to the onlooker the voice which spoke from within expressed the thoughts of another presence within the possessed.²²⁹

The disjunction between voice and body, and the consequent conviction that here were voices from the realms of Hell, was no doubt reinforced when a voice with a low, deep, thick, male timbre emanated from a female body, or from that of a young boy. Joyce Dovey, for example, spoke 'in a bigger and grosser tone than her ordinary speech, and when she speaks, she looks fiercely with something arising big in her throat, and commonly with swearing'.²³⁰ John Fox spoke 'with an audible voice in him, which seemed sometimes to be heard out of his belly, sometimes out of his throat, and sometimes out of his mouth, his lips not moving'.²³¹ Mary Glover could speak with her mouth firmly closed,²³² Susanna Fowles in a shrill, hollow, counterfeit voice with 'her teeth so fast set, that no endeavours could open them'.²³³ Thomas Cranmer in 1533 wrote of a maid from whose belly a voice was heard which 'when it told any thing of the joys of heaven, it spoke so sweetly and so heavenly, that every man was ravished with the hearing thereof; and contrary, when it told anything of hell, it spoke so horribly and terribly that it put the hearers in a great fear'.²³⁴ In the case of William Sommers, blasphemy, knowledge of ancient languages, and ventriloquism could all come together. Thus, Richard Newton heard William Sommers speak plainly 'with his mouth wide open, his tongue drawn into his throat, so that there nothing could be seen of it but the roots in his throat, neither lips nor jaws moving. And he uttered this speech among others, "Ego sum

²²⁸ Clarke, 1660, p. 93. See also, Gee, 1624b, p. 57; Jollie, 1697, pp. 7,23; anon., 1693, p. 61; Baxter, 1691, pp. 83, 126.

²²⁹ On the history of ventriloquism, see Vox, 1993. On the relation of demonic possession and secular ventriloquism, see Schmidt, 1998. That in some recent films, ventriloquist dolls can themselves be possessed is an inchoate reminder of their origins.

²³⁰ Anon., 1647, p. 2. ²³¹ Clarke, 1660, p. 92.

²³² See Bradwell, in Macdonald, 1991, p. 23. ²³³ Anon., 1698, p. 16. ²³⁴ Cox, 1846, p. 243.

rex, Ego sum Deus”, with some other speeches, which this examinant could not understand well, for he is not a good Latinist.²³⁵

The passive body in general was a sign of the presence of the demonic. To be possessed by another was to be closed to sensations, impervious to the world outside. William Sommers would lie as cold as ice, as if dead, ‘senseless and speechless, his eyes out of his head like walnuts, his face black in a strange manner, and all his members and the parts of his body instantly cold for the space of an hour’.²³⁶ According to George More, the spirit threw Margaret Byrom backwards: ‘her senses were taken from her, her eyes were closely shut up, her tongue was plucked double into her throat, her mouth was open, her jaws set, and all her body stretched out as stiff as iron. And thus she lay many times for the space of an hour as a spectacle very fearful to behold.’²³⁷ Mary Glover was rendered blind, dumb, and often paralysed.²³⁸ Almost a century later, Christian Shaw was ‘struck dumb, deaf and blind’. And like other demoniacs, her tongue was immobilised, ‘drawn to a prodigious length over her chin’.²³⁹

Demoniacs were also thought to be insensitive to pain, and not to bleed, while in their states of trance. It was certainly one way to test their authenticity. William Sommers, for example, had ‘pins thrust deep into his hand and leg to test if he did counterfeit. But he was senseless, and no blood flowed.’²⁴⁰ Anne Gunter had pins inserted in the ends of her toes, and in her breast ‘as if it had been a pinpillow’, but she did not bleed when they were removed.²⁴¹ It was reported of Katherine Waldron, visited by King James around 1597, that ‘she would endure exquisite torments, as to have pins thrust into her flesh, nay, under her nails’.²⁴² Mary Glover demonstrated her insensibility when she failed to react to hot pins being applied to her cheek and close to her eye, and being burnt with lighted paper in five places.²⁴³ William Perry never showed any feeling whether pinched, tickled, pricked with needles, or whipped with a rod.²⁴⁴

²³⁵ Anon., 1598, sig.D.2.r (see below, p. 272). See also Barrow, 1663, p. 13; Drage, 1665, pp. 35-37; de Heer, 1658, p. 9; Ewen, 1933, pp. 97, 191; Scot, 1972, p. 72; Taylor, 1697, pp. 43, 45; Jollie, 1697, pp. 4, 24.

²³⁶ Anon., 1598, sig.D.1.r (see below, p. 270). See also Darrell, 1599, p. 11.

²³⁷ More, 1600, pp. 31-2 (see below, p. 212). ²³⁸ Swan, 1603, pp. 16-17 (see below, p. 303).

²³⁹ Cullen, 1698, p. 17. See also Clarke, 1650, p. 189; Barrow, 1664, pp. 5, 16; Petto, 1693, p. 20; Ewen, 1933, p. 191; Sharpe, 1999, pp. 103-4; Fisher, 1565, sig.A.5.v. For other examples of immobilised tongues, see Darrell, 1599, p. 13; Cox, 1846, p. 272; anon., 1597, p. 27; (see below, p. 178); anon., 1622, p. 60 (see below, p. 344); anon., 1598, sig.D.4.v (see below, p. 278); Jollie, 1697, p. 4; Hartwell, 1599, p. 8.

²⁴⁰ Anon., 1598, sig.B.1.v (see below, p. 251). See also, Darrell, 1599, p. 12.

²⁴¹ See Sharpe, 1999, pp. 103-4. ²⁴² Halliwell, 1848, p. 124.

²⁴³ Bradwell in Macdonald, 1991, p. 21.

²⁴⁴ See anon., 1622, p. 55 (see below, p. 344). See also Ewen, 1933, p. 96.

The demoniacs' closure of their bodies to the world outside of them was often re-enforced by a refusal or inability to eat. As in modern times, eating disorders were more prominent among possessed females than males. The tightly clenched jaw of the possessed was a visible sign of the malice of Satan. Elizabeth Throckmorton's eating disorder progressed to the point where her jaws were so tightly clenched that she could not take milk through a quill forced between her teeth.²⁴⁵ Margaret Byrom was incapable of eating and drinking for days at a time, alternating with periods of binge eating.²⁴⁶ Mary Glover did not eat for eighteen days, 'save by way of injection, or forcible powering down with a spoon, and that but a little at once, it was so much resisted in passing down for all that'.²⁴⁷

Demonic anorexia empowered the spiritual selves of the possessed, and, it was often claimed, with no loss to their physical selves. Their survival in the face of their failure to eat, and their general well being, pointed to God's special care of them. Thus, Elizabeth Throckmorton's relatives were convinced that 'God's mercifull providence and care towards the child' would see her through.²⁴⁸ Mary Glover, at the end of her eighteen days of fasting, was said to be 'impaired neither in flesh nor strength'.²⁴⁹ Margaret Muschamp would let nothing come within her jaws, though her lips were moistened with milk and water. Her sixteen weeks of fasting seemed not to have harmed her at all. Margaret, ever the model of piety, 'would smile and show her arms and breast, and say that God fed her with angels' food'.²⁵⁰

Satan took up his abode in the place from which he spoke. So it is no surprise that he controlled what went into the stomach. Nor is it surprising that a sign of the Devil's presence was the regurgitation of objects which he had presumably brought with him. It was undoubtedly one of the more exotic evidences of his having taken up residence within the demoniac. In 1616, John Cotta, for example, reported that the possessed had been seen 'to vomit crooked iron, coals, brimstone, nails, needles, pins, lumps of lead, wax, hair, strawe and the like'.²⁵¹ He saw it as one of the certain supernatural effects of possession. To his list, William Drage added knives, scissors, whole eggs, dogs' tails, pieces of silk, live eels, large pieces of flesh, bones and stones, wood, hooks, and pieces of saltpeter, both vomited and 'voided by stool'.²⁵² The boy of Bilson added threepenny pieces, walnut

²⁴⁵ See Anon., 1593, sig.c.4.v. ²⁴⁶ See More, 1600, p. 30 (see below, p. 212)

²⁴⁷ Bradwell, in Macdonald, 1991, p. 4. See also, Fisher, 1565, sig.A.3.v.; de Heer, 1658, p. 11. For male demoniacs, see Kittredge, 1956, pp. 128–9; [Barrow], 1663, p. 5; Petto, 1693, p. 9. For naturalistic readings, see Reynolds, 1669; Casaubon, 1672, p. 52.

²⁴⁸ Anon., 1593, sig.c.4.v. ²⁴⁹ Bradwell, in Macdonald, 1991, p. 4.

²⁵⁰ Anon., 1650, p. 3 (see below, p. 366). ²⁵¹ Cotta, 1616, p. 76. ²⁵² Drage, 1665, p. 5.

leaves, and feathers to pins, wool, thread, and any food he had eaten.²⁵³ Anne Gunter's repertoire was limited to pins, but she could not only vomit them out of her mouth, but from her nose, out of her chest, and in her urine.²⁵⁴ The eleven-year-old Christian Shaw merely vomited. But her list of objects was large: different coloured hair, curled, plaited, and knotted, hot pieces of coal the size of walnuts, straw and pins, sticks and bones, hay mixed with dung as if from a dung hill, feathers, stones, lumps of candle grease, and egg shells, said to have been vomited.²⁵⁵

As with the running lump, where there were many who were no doubt disposed to believe the evidence of their own eyes, others saw only skulduggery.²⁵⁶ And confessions of counterfeiting did occur. Agnes Briggs, for example, began vomiting hair, thread, a feather, lace, pins, nails, and a tenterhook, after hearing Rachel Pinder's Mother report to John Foxe that her daughter, Rachel, vomited hair, a black silk thread, and a feather. But she later admitted to having faked it all.²⁵⁷ The Denham exorcists were said to have placed objects in the mouths of the possessed.²⁵⁸ Anne Gunter's illusionists' skills with pins were shown to be just that, as were William Perry's.

Beyond the borders of the human

The mouths of the possessed witnessed to the inverted world which the demoniacs inhabited. They vomited strange objects. And, like rabid animals, they foamed at the mouth. William Sommers was said to have foamed at the mouth for an hour so abundantly 'that the foam did hang down from his mouth to his breast . . . in such abundance as is not able to be uttered by any human creature'.²⁵⁹ It was in quantity 'like to the horse, or bear', declared John Darrell.²⁶⁰ Mary Glover's voice was, on occasion, 'like a hoarse dog that barks, casting from thence with opened mouth abundance of froth or foam'.²⁶¹

The Devil himself was often perceived as a mixture of man and animal and, as we have seen, evil spirits often appeared in animal form. Thus,

²⁵³ See anon., 1622, p. 48 (see below, p. 339).

²⁵⁴ See Sharpe, 1999, pp. 44, 172, 184.

²⁵⁵ See Cullen, 1698, pp. 3ff., 15, 33. See also, anon., 1698, p. 23; Petto, 1693, Preface; de Heer, 1658, pp. 4, 10; Baxter, 1691, 44, 74-5, 93-6; Jollie, 1697, pp. 23, 31-4, 43, 51-2; Jollie, 1698, pp. 49, 58; Ewen, 1933, pp. 95, 398.

²⁵⁶ See for example, Scot, 1972, p. 75. ²⁵⁷ See anon., 1574, sig. B.1.r.-v (see below, p. 69).

²⁵⁸ See Harsnett, 1603, pp. 367, 385, 393. See also Law, 1894, pp. 398-9.

²⁵⁹ Anon., 1598, sig. B.3.r. See also Darrell, 1600b, p. 32. ²⁶⁰ Darrell, 1599(?), sig. B.4.r.

²⁶¹ Swan, 1603, p. 42. See also Clarke, 1650, p. 189.

in behaving like animals, the possessed were incarnations of the demonic realm. But because the demonic and the animal overlapped, in occupying the border ground between the human and the animal, the possessed threatened that essential distinction between the animal and the human established by God in the Garden of Eden. As Keith Thomas writes, 'Wherever we look in early modern England, we find anxiety, latent or explicit, about any form of behaviour which threatened to transgress the fragile boundaries between man and the animal creation.'²⁶²

The possessed appeared to onlookers to mimic the behaviour of animals. And their behaviour was so described. They were said to have barked, purred, and meowed, to have croaked like frogs, crowed like cocks, roared like bears, and grunted like pigs. Like the mad, they lost their human identity. William Sommers tried to mount a female dog.²⁶³ William Dugdale ran around on all fours.²⁶⁴ Richard Swettson scratched and bit himself.²⁶⁵ Joan Harvey growled, groaned, howled, and bit like a mad dog.²⁶⁶ Others hopped like frogs, and bounced like goats.

Their facial features were distorted beyond the humanly possible. Their heads were said to rotate through 180 degrees, and to wag prodigiously. Their jaws came out of joint, and their faces turned black. Their eyes bulged as if on stalks, were sunk deep into their sockets, and on occasion changed colour. Their mouths were pulled awry. Some drew their chins up to their foreheads, others had extended tongues like calves.

Their bodies were capable of extreme contortions and acrobatics. William Sommers bounced up and down like a ball, as did John Tonken.²⁶⁷ Christian Shaw was reported to have flown over the top of a bed, Thomas Darling to have leapt as high as the testern of the bed.²⁶⁸ Anne Mylner, bending backwards, could roll around the room like a hoop, as could a young boy from Pychley.²⁶⁹ The Throckmorton children could wriggle like fish on dry land, and turn themselves into hoops, 'their bellies heaving up, their head and their heels still touching the ground, as though they had been tumblers'.²⁷⁰ Anne Gunter caused much astonishment with her dancing ability, as did Thomas Spatchet and Richard Dugdale with theirs.²⁷¹ Elizabeth Day was said to run up the walls and across the ceiling up-side down.²⁷²

²⁶² Thomas, 1984, p. 38 ²⁶³ See Darrell, 1600b, p. 10. ²⁶⁴ See Jollie, 1698, p. 69.

²⁶⁵ See Ewen, 1938, p. 37. ²⁶⁶ See Ewen, 1933, p. 191.

²⁶⁷ Darrell, 1599, p. 37; anon., 1686, p. 3.

²⁶⁸ Cullen, 1698, p. 2; anon., 1597, pp. 17–18 (see below, p. 170).

²⁶⁹ See Fisher, 1565, sig.A.6.r; Cotta, 1617, pp. 71–2. ²⁷⁰ Anon., 1593, sig.B.1.v (see below, pp. 82–3).

²⁷¹ See Hunter, 1963, p. 76; Petto, 1693, p. 6; Jollie, 1697, p. 32. ²⁷² See Drage, 1665, p. 35.

On occasions, the height of demoniacs appeared enhanced. William Sommers, for example, appeared to be like the tallest man imaginable after he once tried to hang himself.²⁷³ Richard Dugdale's neck was stretched 'to a prodigious length'.²⁷⁴ Others seemed to vary in weight. William Sommers seemed so heavy that it took numbers of men to lift him.²⁷⁵ Richard Dugdale was, at times, so heavy that it took two or three strong men to lift him; at other times, he was 'as light as a bag of feathers'.²⁷⁶

Richard Dugdale, like other demoniacs, was violent and unpredictable. John Walmsly testified that he had seen Dugdale 'curse and swear, his gesture being so terrible, it would have frightened a man to come near him and yet, in a moment's time after he [Dugdale] was in such a fear, that he has sought to creep into any hole, or behind anybody, to have hid himself, and so lamented himself, as moved the standers-by with great compassion'.²⁷⁷ William Sommers would throw himself against the chimney so violently that those present thought his neck was broken.²⁷⁸ John Starkie, 'like a mad man or rather like a mad dog', struck and bit at everyone who came near him.²⁷⁹ Mary Glover 'did belch out spittle', as did Joan Harvey, Christian Shaw, and Hannah Crump.²⁸⁰ It was violence combined with extraordinary strength. Evidenced in the Scriptures, strength was one of the sure signs of possession. Two or three strong men could hardly hold the four youngest among the Lancashire seven, nor the twelve-year-old William Perry.²⁸¹ A strong man could not pin down the nine-year-old Jane Throckmorton.²⁸²

Violence was often provoked by the presence of sacred objects and rituals. Catholic demoniacs were especially sensitive, not only to the Eucharistic host, but also to relics, holy water, the sign of the cross, and the Bible. In the reaction of the demoniacs to the cultic objects and rituals of Catholicism, the Devil was seen as legitimating Catholic doctrine and practice. In accord with the more limited range of Protestant cultic paraphernalia and rituals, Protestant demoniacs were more limited in the range of objects and practices that provoked their outrage. Regardless of the tradition, the Devil, clearly inclined to ecumenism, was bipartisan in his fury.

²⁷³ See anon. 1598, sig.E.3.r (see below, p. 285); see also Darrell, 1599, p. 37.

²⁷⁴ Jollie, 1697, p. 4. ²⁷⁵ See Darrell, 1599, p. II. ²⁷⁶ Jollie, 1698, p. 50.

²⁷⁷ Jollie, 1698, p. 51. See also, Jollie, 1697, pp. 4, 6, 8.

²⁷⁸ See anon., 1598, sig.B.4.r (see below, p. 257). ²⁷⁹ More, 1600, p. 15 (see below, p. 204).

²⁸⁰ Swan, 1603, p. 44 (see below, p. 317); Ewen, 1933, p. 95; Cullen, 1698, p. 8; Sharpe, 1996, p. 201.

²⁸¹ See More, 1600, p. 41 (see below, p. 217). Anon., 1622, p. 46 (see below, p. 338).

²⁸² See anon., 1593, sig.B.1.v-B.2.r (see below, p. 83). See also, [Barrow], 1663, p. 10; Pettus, 1693, p. 22; Baxter, 1691, p. 194; Fisher, 1565, sigs. A.6.v-A.7.v.; Taylor, 1687, p. 44; Clarke, 1650, p. 189; Hinde, 1645, p. 149; Tonken, 1686, p. 149; Cullen, 1698, p. 2; Jollie, 1697, p. 55.

There was New Testament precedence for prayer and fasting as a means of deliverance from possession. For Protestants, the biblical assertion that this kind only comes out by prayer and fasting was extended to all kinds of evil spirits. But extended periods of prayer and fasting were also a central part of a developing Protestant regime of spirituality throughout the period, and believed to be efficacious for all manner of special needs.²⁸³ And while there was a theological acceptance that deliverance from possession was up to God, there was too a conviction that prayer could wear the Devil down until he finally submitted and departed.²⁸⁴ That it worked was, for those involved, more proof that Protestantism could be genuinely competitive with Catholicism. Even among the sceptics, there was sufficient recognition of its effectiveness to call forth an explanation. Thus, for the physician Edward Jordan, for example, prayer and fasting is a natural remedy. When prayer and fasting work, he declared, 'it is not for any supernatural virtue in them, either from God or from the Devil . . . but by reason of the confident persuasion which melancholic and passionate people may have in them'.²⁸⁵ It was a view in keeping with the common medical belief of the time in the power of the imagination upon the body.

Protestant demoniacs, if not the Devil himself, clearly resented the primary mode of deliverance – prayer. When Doctor Dorington began to pray for the Throckmorton girls, 'at one instant of time all the children fell into their fits . . . wonderfully tormented as though they would have been torn in pieces'.²⁸⁶ When the bishop prayed with John Harrison, 'the boy was so outraged that he flew out of his bed, and so frightened the Bishop's men that one of them fell into a swoon'.²⁸⁷ Others reacted vehemently to the words 'God', 'Christ', or 'Jesus'. At the mention of God or Christ, John Barrow 'would roar and cry, making a hideous noise'.²⁸⁸ Joan Harvey would spit at the name of Jesus.²⁸⁹

In Protestant exorcisms, prayer and preaching was interspersed with reading of the Bible. As the prime cultic object in Protestantism, the Bible also provoked rage in the possessed. Jesse Bee saw the Devil's reaction to his reading of the Bible in the presence of Thomas Darling as a way of inspiring 'due and godly regard' for the Bible among the spectators.²⁹⁰ Bee would call Satan to battle by reading the first chapter of the gospel of St John. During the reading, Darling would fall into torments, often at the fourth verse, but also at the ninth, the thirteenth, the fourteenth, and the

²⁸³ See Collinson, 1982, pp. 260–1. ²⁸⁴ See anon., 1597, pp. 33–4 (see below, p. 184).

²⁸⁵ Quoted by Macdonald, 1991, p. 28. ²⁸⁶ Anon., 1593, sig.B.3.r (see below, p. 85).

²⁸⁷ Clarke, 1650, pp. 189–90. See also, Cullen, 1698, p. 16. ²⁸⁸ [Barrow], 1664, p. 8.

²⁸⁹ See Ewen, 1933, p. 191. ²⁹⁰ Harsnett, 1599, p. 288.

seventeenth. On other occasions, he was thrown into fits at the fifth verse of the first chapter of the book of Revelation, and the twelfth and twenty fifth verses of the twelfth chapter of St John's gospel.²⁹¹

Within Protestant demonology, the printed word had a quasi-magical power. When Mary Hall went to read in the Bible, the two spirits which possessed her would say, "Mary, do not read;" or "Mary you will not read, for books are all against us;" Her Father would say, "She will read in spite of all the devils", and so she did always without interruption; for when she read she was not molested.²⁹² The Devil tried on several occasions to persuade Thomas Darling to tear the book of devotions given to him by John Darrell. His first act, after his deliverance, was to take the book. And 'he read very cheerfully a good time'.²⁹³

Frauds and fakes?

In the early modern period, three possible causes of possessed behaviour were recognised; genuine possession, illness, or fraud. On occasion, a combination of the last two was recognised as the best explanation. There was no shortage of demoniacs, aspects of whose behaviour was exposed as trickery, or who confessed to having dissembled. And there was no shortage of sceptics, in high and low places, eager to expose them. Agnes Briggs and Rachel Pinder both confessed to fraud.²⁹⁴ William Sommers confessed and reneged on a number of occasions,²⁹⁵ although his defenders continued to point to the impossibility of simulating many of the features of his possession.²⁹⁶ Thomas Darling knew that he had sceptics among his audience whose credibility he needed to call into question, lest they damaged his.²⁹⁷ With King James actively involving himself in possession cases from the time of the possession of Mary Glover in 1602, and Samuel Harsnett's involvement in the cases of Darrell and the Denham demoniacs, secular and ecclesiastical politics were in play, and well publicised exposures were not uncommon.²⁹⁸ The medical explanations of Edward Jorden in the case of Mary Glover, and the exposure of Anne Gunter no doubt created a new group of readers more open to the possibility of naturalistic explanations of possession.²⁹⁹ William Perry's guilt as an imposter drove *The Boy of Bilson* in 1622.³⁰⁰ If the sub-title didn't make it abundantly clear, to title a work

²⁹¹ See anon., 1597, pp. 13, 17, 19, 22 (see below, pp. 166–71).

²⁹² Drage, 1665, p. 33. ²⁹³ Anon., 1597, p. 43. ²⁹⁴ See anon., 1574.

²⁹⁵ See anon., 1598, sig.B.1.r (see below, p. 250).

²⁹⁶ See anon., 1598, sig.C.2.v (see below, pp. 263–4). ²⁹⁷ See anon., 1597, p. 42 (see below, p. 190).

²⁹⁸ See Clark, 1977. ²⁹⁹ See Sharpe, 1999, pp. 180–1.

³⁰⁰ See anon, 1622, title (see below, p. 334).

The Second Part of the Boy of Bilson seventy six years later was sufficient to alert its readers that demoniacal imposture was to be found.³⁰¹

Naturalistic explanations of possession and exposures of fraud also significantly affected the history of witchcraft. On 18 July 1616, nine people were hung at Leicester having been charged with bewitching a boy named Smith or Smythe. It is clear that the case of the Throckmorton children was familiar to those involved, including perhaps Smith himself. In that case, Jane Throckmorton said that she would cease her fits after the accused witch John Samuel said the words devised by her, 'As I am a witch, and did consent to the death of the Lady Cromwell, so I charge the Devil to allow Mistress Jane to come out of her fit at this present.'³⁰² And so she did. Similarly Smith ceased his fits when those accused were forced to make the same charge. A month later, King James examined the boy and, having decided that he was counterfeiting, sent him to George Abbott, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who confirmed the King's opinion. The judges, it was reported, were 'somewhat discountenanced' when they learned they had hanged nine innocent people.³⁰³ As Michael MacDonald has pointed out, the examples of Glover, Gunter, and Smith 'helped to increase the burden of proof and in doing so to refine the debate in terms that made it harder and harder to resolve individual cases decisively in favour of the supernatural'.³⁰⁴ Such judicial care came too late to save the likes of John Samuel, and his wife and daughter.³⁰⁵

It would be as unwise to take at face value confessions of fraud by demoniacs as to believe confessions of witchcraft by those accused of having sent the Devil into them. In both cases, the circumstances were often such as to be conducive to confession, namely, the hope of getting off more lightly. Certainly, the strategic intention of the texts makes it difficult for us to read behind them to the actual events, and to be definitive about counterfeiting. But there are occasions on which the behaviour of the possessed was clearly fraudulent. William Perry's mixing his urine with black ink is a notable example.³⁰⁶ But we can say that the will to believe was as often present among spectators as the will to persuade was often among the possessed. Having said that, it is clear too that the line between simulated and non-simulated behaviour was not a clear one in cases of possession. The one possessed person could at one time be both actively associated with and

³⁰¹ See anon., *The Second Part of the Boy of Bilson: Or, a true and particular Relation of the Imposter, Susanna Fowles*, 1698.

³⁰² Anon., 1593, sig.O.2.r (see below, p. 144). ³⁰³ See Kittredge, 1956, p. 323.

³⁰⁴ Macdonald, 1991, p. li. ³⁰⁵ See anon., 1593, sig.O.3.v (see below, p. 149).

³⁰⁶ See anon., 1622, p. 64 (see below, p. 347).

dissociated from their actions. And the boundary between 'authentic' and simulated behaviour shifted at various points in a demoniac's career.

In short, possession was learned behaviour. And it was 'contagious'. Agnes Briggs became a demoniac the same night that she saw Rachel Pinder's behaviour. Possession spread like the plague among the Throckmorton children. Eventually, twelve people were possessed. Among the Starkie family it began with one son and daughter, and eventually spread to another five people. The demoniacs and their families were also often aware of other episodes of possession. William Sommers, for example, read the story of the Throckmorton children soon after his fits began, as had John Darrell.³⁰⁷ Richard Mainy heard of the signs of the possession of Nicholas Marwood before he ever visited Denham.³⁰⁸ Anne Gunter's father had read the story of the Throckmorton children, a work by Darrell, and Harsnett's *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*. Anne admitted that her behaviour was much influenced by that of the Throckmortons.³⁰⁹

The repertoire of demoniacs also increased during the period of their possession. Mary Glover's behaviour 'developed and changed in response to the actions and expectations of others, some of whom as magistrates, physicians and divines were experts in what to look for'.³¹⁰ And what is true of Mary Glover is true of most demoniacs who sustained their activities over time and in various contexts. They were seldom left in doubt about what was expected of them. Sara and Friswood Williams reported that the priests would often talk in their presence of the possessed overseas and the manner of their fits.³¹¹ John Darrell would tell of the possession of Katherine Wright, and of the scriptural signs in the hearing of Thomas Darling: 'Master Darrell then also repeats unto them the signs of possession mentioned in the Scriptures: as foaming at the mouth, and some others . . . Master Darrell told my friends in my hearing, that they should see me cast into very strange fits the next day, and namely (as I remember) that they should hear the Devil speak in me.'³¹² When Darrell preached on the signs of possession in the ninth chapter of St Mark's gospel, 'the very same signs there spoken of appeared most evidently in the said William Sommers in a most terrible manner'.³¹³ As the various signs of possession were named in a sermon, the four youngest of the Lancashire seven mimicked the preacher 'with unseemly gestures, fearful looks, and ugly countenances in

³⁰⁷ See Harsnett, 1599, pp. 93, 97, 138. ³⁰⁸ See Harsnett, 1603, p. 400.

³⁰⁹ See Sharpe, 1999, p. 62. ³¹⁰ Macdonald, 1991, p. xxxvi. ³¹¹ See Harsnett, 1603, p. 232.

³¹² Harsnett, 1599, pp. 273-4. ³¹³ Anon., 1598, sig.c.4.v (see below, p. 268).

every particular, and in the very same instant and point of time when they were named'.³¹⁴

It was to such theatrical aspects of possession and exorcism that Samuel Harsnett pointed as the key to its explanation as a theatre of imposture. For Harsnett, the deliverance from possession was a carefully scripted performance, and the exorcists the writers and directors. As Stephen Greenblatt remarks, 'Harsnett is determined to make the spectators see the theater around them – to make them understand that what seems spontaneous is rehearsed; what seems involuntary, carefully crafted; what seems unpredictable, scripted.'³¹⁵

This connection between theatricality and possession was noted by Shakespeare, for whom, like Harsnett, possession and exorcism were fraudulent. As Stephen Greenblatt notes, it is the convergence of the exorcism and the theatrical that allows Shakespeare to borrow from Harsnett in his depiction of Edgar's madness, his *hysterica passio*. Demonic possession, he writes, is 'responsibly marked out as a theatrical fraud'.³¹⁶

That Harsnett in his *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* focused on the exorcisms of the Catholic demoniacs at Denham was not accidental. The elaborate forms of Catholic exorcism with its attendant paraphernalia of potions, fumigations, vestments, relics, sacraments, invocation of the Saints, holy water, holy oil, and so on, made for a liturgical event more overtly 'theatrical' than the fasting and long prayer and preaching sessions of the Puritan exorcists.

Determined to expose both demoniacs and exorcists as collaborators in an elaborate drama, the metaphor of 'theatre' served Harsnett's purpose in demonstrating the fraudulent activities of both the possessed and their deliverers. But the image of theatricality is less persuasive if, as I have suggested, the boundary between simulation and authenticity in the possessed is opaque. And there is no logical incoherence in an exorcist's accepting the authenticity of possession, recognising the strategic value of a successful exorcism for one's church, and furthering one's personal ambitions. John Darrell made the most of his opportunities. But, in spite of Harsnett's claims, there is no reason to suspect him of fraud.

This is not to deny the theatricality of possession and exorcism. But it is to suggest that the roles of demoniac, exorcist, and spectator are played out, improvised, developed, embellished, and refined in a series of ongoing

³¹⁴ More, 1600, pp. 40–1 (see below, p. 217). ³¹⁵ Greenblatt, 1985–6, p. 338.

³¹⁶ Greenblatt, 1988, p. 119. See also Brownlow, 1993, pp. 107–31. See also Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* (act 4, sc. 4), *Twelfth Night* (act 3, sc. 4, act 4, sc. 2), and *King Lear* (act 4, sc. 1, act 4, sc. 6).

negotiations and interactions between all the participants within the format of a loosely constructed cultural script known to all the participants. The fictive and the real overlap indistinguishably in a 'real-life drama'. It was a reality play, one which created its own reality for demoniacs, exorcists, and spectators alike. And for this reason, then as now, it is difficult to determine where the real and the unreal begin and end.

The drama itself was ended only when the demoniac, delivered from the Devil and returned to normality, was integrated back into the human community. Thus, for example, with the exception of Jane Ashton, the Lancashire seven resumed their normal lives: 'now they can pray and take delight in praising God. They go to church to hear the word, and continue there with much comfort, and are every way better than they were before.'³¹⁷ Those present at the deliverance of Alexander Nyndge, after a prayer of thanksgiving, 'took the said Alexander, and all of them joyfully accompanying him, to his brother Thomas Nyndge his house, after which his coming thither, he was not known to be perplexed with the like terrible vexations. Deo Trino, & uni Gloria'.³¹⁸ Like Alexander Nyndge, most of them were never to be heard of again.

³¹⁷ More, 1600, p. 83 (see below, p. 238).

³¹⁸ Anon., 1615, sig.B.3.v (see below, pp. 56–7).

Disfigured by the Devil
The story of Alexander Nyndge

To the Puritan family and household of Alexander Nyndge in Herringswell in Suffolk,¹ it appeared that he might have been mad. On 20 January 1573, we are informed, he demonstrated a whole range of behaviours sufficient to lead them to this suspicion. His chest and body swelled, his eyes bulged, he shook, he refused to eat, he bashed his head and other parts of his body against the ground and the bedstead, he gnashed his teeth and foamed at the mouth, a lump ran up and down his body between the skin and the flesh, he was horribly disfigured, and he showed enormous strength.²

Alexander's brother Edward, Master of Arts from Oxford University, read the symptoms quite differently. He saw them as the result, not of madness, but of Alexander's being possessed by a demon. It was a diagnosis which Alexander himself accepted: 'Alexander Nyndge, having his speech then at liberty, said to the same Edward, "Brother, he is marvellously afraid of you, therefore I pray you, stand by me."³ Alexander now speaks from the place which Edward has constructed for him and in the role which Edward has determined for him, as a person possessed by the devil. He physically shows the demon within: 'And within a little time after, the body of the said Alexander, being as wondrously transformed as it was before, much like the picture of the Devil in a play, with a horrible roaring voice, sounding Hell-hound, was most horribly tormented.'⁴ Something else speaks within him in 'a base, hollow-sounding voice'.⁵

The 1615 text was a much elaborated version by an unknown writer of the original edition of the 1570s written by (or at least ascribed to) him in

¹ The town 'Lyeringswell' listed as the place of possession on the title page is unknown. The Nyndges lived in Herringswell.

² See anon., 1615, sig.A.3.v (see below, pp. 48–9). None of the demoniacal behaviours described on this page occurs in the original version.

³ Anon., 1615, sig.A.3.r–v (see below, p. 48).

⁴ Anon., 1615, sig.B.1.r (see below, p. 52).

⁵ Anon., 1615, sig.A.4.r (see below, p. 50).

the 1615 version)⁶ Edward Nyndge, although the latter appears virtually in its original form within the body of the later version.⁷ In the 1615 text, Alexander is possessed for six months, compared to the one day of the original. The original title spoke of ‘the Fearfull Vexasion of one Alexander Nyndge. Beynge moste Horriblye tormented wyth an euyll Spirit. The .xx. daie of Ianuarie’,⁸ while the later edition stretches the period of possession from 20 January to 23 July. The description of his torments in the later version is much developed, and includes many of the almost stylised features of possession that appeared in possession narratives between the time of the two versions. Into the mouth of the Alexander of the later text are placed several lengthy prayers of thanksgiving suitable for all occasions, and not merely on deliverance from possession.

Both versions of the text are driven by the assumption of the authenticity of Alexander’s possession. But, somewhat unusually for sixteenth and seventeenth-century English possession narratives, there is no suggestion that Alexander is the innocent victim of witchcraft. On the contrary, the possessed body of Alexander Nyndge is a visible sign, not of his innocence but of his sinfulness. Alexander is himself the cause of the Devil’s attention. But, ‘If you do earnestly repent of your sins, and pray to God for the forgiveness of the same, my life for yours, the Devil cannot hurt you.’⁹ Moreover, the Devil has been given permission by God to enter Alexander. He is the instrument of God’s fatherly correction, sent to remind Alexander of his duty to God. In the absence of bewitchment, God is seen to be the ultimate and only source of possession. The story of Alexander Nyndge is thus a vivid reminder to the reader of the need for self-examination: ‘For describing the horror and unheard of misery that fell on him, we may be thereby drawn to descend into ourselves, and to look into our souls while there is yet time, lest Heaven pour down its vials of wrath on us.’¹⁰

Alexander’s final prayer is clearly intended to reinforce the message that God alone is the cause of deliverance. But, in the original text, the community of believers is active. And it is their united action which is finally effective in expelling the devil. The twenty or more persons present say the

⁶ The use of the third person plural in the original text suggests the author was an eye witness. Edward Nyndge is certainly the main character, besides his brother. That his name does not appear among the list of witnesses appended to the text is suggestive of his authorship of the original version.

⁷ See anon., 1615, sigs. A.3.r–B.1.v, B.2.v–B.3.r, and B.3.v (see below, pp. 48–57).

⁸ Anon., *A Booke Declaringe the Fearfull Vexasion of one Alexander Nyndge. Beynge moste Horriblye tormented wyth an euyll Spirit. The .xx. daie of Ianuarie. At Lyeringswell in Suffolke*. Imprinted at London in Fleetestreate, beneath the Conduite, at the syne of St Ihon Euangelyste by Thomas Colwell.

⁹ Anon., 1615, sig. A.3.v (see below, p. 49).

¹⁰ Anon., 1615, sig. A.3.r (see below, p. 48).

Lord's prayer together. More importantly, those present together conjure the devil to depart. The community acts as the exorcist: 'We conjure you in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour, the son of the almighty God, that you depart and no longer torment the said Alexander.'¹¹ After a short time, Alexander is able to say 'He is gone, he is gone.'¹²

The text is punctuated with such demonological moments. The 1615 version locates the story of Alexander in a context of the history of evil spirits, and presents it as an example of the successful activity of those malignant spirits which have fallen from heaven. And Edward is clearly familiar with the general rules of exorcism. The evil spirit who wishes only to speak to Alexander is forced to speak with Edward. Edward seeks out the reason for the possession and is told by the demon that he has come for Alexander's soul and body. Edward and the demon engage in debate about the propriety of prayer to the Virgin Mary (with the latter on the Catholic side). Peter Bencham, the town's curate, demands of the spirit where he came from (Ireland), what his name was (Aubon), and whether he intended to leave ('I would come out').

Demonologically, these activities variously constitute the development of the power of the exorcist over the evil spirit. More mundanely, the dialogue with the demon enables the exorcist to manage the extraordinary. The engagement with the possessed through demonological discourse is 'intended to reclassify a protean uncanniness within an established language'.¹³ Unlike a diagnosis of madness, the diagnosis of possession allowed for the possibility of restoration to normalcy. The discourse and practices of demonology provided a series of strategies to effect this return. At the end of the day, or at least at the end of six months, Alexander 'was not known to be perplexed with the like terrible vexations'.¹⁴

¹¹ Anon., 1615, sig.B.3.r (see below, pp. 55–6).

¹² Anon., 1615, sig.B.3.r (see below, p. 56).

¹³ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 255–6.

¹⁴ Anon., 1615, sig.B.3.v (see below, p. 56).

A true and fearful vexation of one
Alexander Nyndge: being most horribly tormented
with the Devil, from the twentieth day of January To the
twenty third of July. At Lyeringswell in Suffolk:
with his Prayer after his Deliverance.

Written by his own brother Edward Nyndge Master
of Arts, with the Names of the Witnesses that
were at his Vexation

Imprinted at London for W. B. and are to be sold by
Edward Wright at Christ-Church gate 1615

The grievous and lamentable vexation of Alexander Nyndge,
fearfully tormented with an evil Spirit, from the twentieth
day of January to the twenty third of July.

The Devil, being the principal agent and chief practicer in all wickedness, it is much to the purpose we have in hand to describe and set him forth, that we may the better be instructed to see what he is able to do, in what manner and to what end and purpose. At the beginning, as God's Word teaches us, he was created a holy Angel, full of power and glory. He sinned, and he was cast down from Heaven. He was utterly deprived of glory, and preserved for judgement. This therefore, and this change of his, did not destroy nor take away the former faculty of devils, but utterly corrupted, perverted, and depraved the same. The essence of Spirits remained, and the power and understanding such as is in angels. The heavenly angels are very mighty and strong, far above all earthly creatures in the world. The infernal angels are, for their strength, called Principalities and Powers. Those blessed ones apply all their might to set up and advance the glory of God, and to defend and succour his children. The devils bend all their force against

God, against his glory, and against his truth and people. And this they do with such fierceness, rage, and cruelty, that the Holy Ghost pictures them under the figure of a great red or fiery dragon and roaring lion and, in very deed, anything comparable to them. He has such power and authority that he is called the God of the World. His Kingdom is bound and enclosed within certain limits, for he is the Prince, but of Darkness. But yet within his said dominion, which is in ignorance of God, he exercises a mighty tyranny. Our Saviour compares him to a strong man, armed, which keeps his castle.¹⁵

And what will we say, for the wisdom and understanding of angels which was given them in their creation, was it not far above that which men can reach to? When they became devils, even those reprobate angels, their understanding was not taken away, but turned into malicious craft and subtlety. He¹⁶ never does anything but for an evil purpose. And yet he can set such a colour that, the Apostle says, he changes himself into the likeness of an Angel of light.¹⁷ For the same cause, he is called the old Serpent. He was subtle at the beginning but continual practice and long experience have made him much more subtle. He has searched out and knows all the ways that may be to deceive. So that if God should not chain him up, his power and subtlety joined together would overcome and seduce the whole world.

There be great multitudes of infernal Spirits as the Holy Scriptures do everywhere show. But yet they do so join together in one that they be called the Devil in the singular number. They do all join together, as our Saviour teaches, to uphold one Kingdom. For though they cannot love one another, in deed, yet the hatred they bear against God is like a band that ties them together. The holy angels are ministering Spirits sent forth for their sakes that will inherit the promise. They have no bodily shape of themselves. But to set forth their speediness, the Scripture applies it to our rude capacity and pictures them with wings. When they are to rescue and succour the servants of God, they can be present with them straightaway from the highest Heavens, which are thousand on thousands of miles distant from the earth.

¹⁵ See Luke 11.21.

¹⁶ The Devil.

¹⁷ See 2 Corinthians 11.14.

Such quickness is also in the devils. For their nature being spiritual and not laden with any heavenly matter as our bodies are, it affords to them such a nimbleness as we cannot conceive. By this, they fly through the world, over sea and land, and spy out all advantages and occasions to do ill.

To declare what those malignant Spirits have effected and brought to pass, or what success they have attained, would be too long and tedious a piece of work. I will therefore loose that point of my compass, and sail forwards in my intended way, to find out and declare the fearful vexation of one Alexander Nyndge, who was grievously tormented with an evil Spirit from the twentieth of January to the twenty-third of July, and is worthy to be remembered both for example and warning. For describing the horror and unheard of misery that fell on him, we may be thereby drawn to descend into ourselves, and to look into our souls while there is yet time, lest Heaven pour down its vials of wrath on us.

You will understand therefore that¹⁸ the first fit and vexation with which this Alexander Nyndge was so fearfully perplexed began about seven o'clock at night, his Father, Mother, and brethren, with the rest of the household being present at that time. And it was in this manner. His chest and body began swelling, his eyes staring, and his back bending inwards to his belly which did at first strike the beholders into a strange wonder and admiration. Yet one of his brothers then also present, named Edward Nyndge, a Master of Arts, being bolder than others of the company were, persuading himself for certain that it was some evil Spirit that so molested him, gave him comfortable words of mercy from the Holy Scriptures, and also charged the Spirit by the death and passion of Jesus Christ, that it should declare the cause of that torment. At which, the countenance of the same Alexander turned more strange, and full of amazement and fear than it was before, and then returned to its former state again.

This Alexander Nyndge, having his speech then at liberty, said to the same Edward, 'Brother, he is marvellously afraid of you. Therefore I pray you, stand by me.'

¹⁸ The earlier edition begins here.

With which words, the same Edward was the more bold, and said to Alexander, 'If you earnestly repent of your sins, and pray to God for the forgiveness of the same, my life for yours, the Devil cannot hurt you. No, rather than that he would, I will go to Hell with you.' Then the Spirit for a small time racked the said Alexander in a far more cruel manner.¹⁹ For he did use such strange and idle kinds of gestures in laughing, dancing, and such like behaviours, that he was suspected to be mad. Sundry times, he refused all kinds of meat for a long time together, insomuch that he seemed to pine away. Sometimes he shook as if he had an ague. There was heard also a strange noise, or flapping, from within his body. He would gather himself in a round heap under his bedclothes and, being so gathered, he would bounce up a good height from the bed. And he would beat his head and other parts of his body against the ground and bedstead in such an earnest manner that the beholders feared that he would thereby have injured himself, if they had not by a strong hand restrained him. And yet, thereby, he received no hurt at all.

In most of his fits, he swelled in his body and, in some of them, so greatly exceeded therein, that he seemed to be twice as big as his natural body. He was often seen to have a certain swelling or variable lump to a great bigness, swiftly running up and down between the flesh and the skin.²⁰ Then would they carry the same Alexander down the chamber, willing him to call upon God for grace and earnestly to repent, and to put his trust only in Christ Jesus. And setting him in a chair, they desired his Father to send for all his neighbours to help to preserve him.²¹ And suddenly he would be strangely handled. For, sitting in a chair when the fit came, he would be cast headlong on the ground or fall down. Then drawing his lips awry, gnashing with his teeth, wallowing and foaming, the Spirit would vex him monstrously, and transform his body and alter the same by many violences.²² Then the said Edward his brother, with one Thomas Wakefield, would lay hands on Alexander and set him in the chair again, and hold him there, all that were in the house praying earnestly.

¹⁹ The later edition resumes.

²⁰ The earlier edition resumes.

²¹ The later edition resumes.

²² The earlier edition resumes.

And the said Edward charged the Spirit with these words, 'You foul fiend, I conjure you, in the name of Jesus our Saviour, the son of Almighty God, that you speak to us.'

At which the Spirit transformed himself in a very ugly way against his chest, swelling upwards to his throat, plucking his belly just to his back, and then ceased for a time.

The party tormented, being somewhat restored, uttered these words, 'Sirs, he will speak with me. I pray you, let him not speak with me.' Whereupon all that were present did pray earnestly, at which the Spirit began to vex him very grievously and swelled sore in the chest. And in a base and hollow voice, it uttered these words, 'I will, I will, I will.' Then replied the said Edward, and said, 'You will not, and I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ that you speak to us, and not to him.' Then the Spirit in a hollow voice said, 'Why did you tell them? Why did you tell them?' Then the said Edward did charge the Spirit, as aforesaid, to tell them the cause of his coming, and why he did torment his brother. To which, the Spirit answered, 'I come for his soul.' Then the said Edward said to the Spirit, 'We have a warrant in the Holy Scriptures, that such as do earnestly repent of their sins and turn to God with the only hope of salvation through the merits of Jesus Christ, you may not have them, for Christ is his Redeemer.' The Spirit uttered, in a base, hollow-sounding voice, these words, 'Christ, he was my Redeemer.' Then Edward said, 'Christ, he is his Redeemer, not your Redeemer, but my brother Alexander, his Redeemer.'

Then the Spirit said in his hollow voice, 'I will have his soul and body too.' And so he began to torment and rack the same Alexander, and disfigure him more horribly than before,²³ forcing him to such strange and fearful shrieking as cannot be uttered by man's power. And he was of such strength that sometimes four or five men, though they had much advantage over him by binding him to a chair, yet could they not rule him. And in showing that strength, he was not perceived to pant or blow, no more than as if he had not strained his strength, nor struggled at all. Sometimes he would cry extremely, so that tears would come from him in great abundance. Presently

²³ The later edition resumes.

after, he would laugh loudly and shrilly, his mouth being shut close.²⁴ And sometimes he was heaved up from the ground by force invisible, the said Edward Nyndge, Thomas Nyndge, Thomas Wakefield, Thomas Goldsmith, William Miles, and William Nyndge Junior, hanging onto the same Alexander to the midst of the house. And the said Edward Nyndge, putting his mouth to the ear of the said disfigured body of his brother Alexander, said, 'Brother, continue in your faith, and if you go to Hell, we will go with you.' Then the force did somewhat fail, and the hangers on drew him to the chair again. Then one of his younger brothers named William Nyndge said, 'We will keep him from the foul Spirit, in spite of your nose.'

At which the transformed body looked very terribly against the said William, and turned his most ugly looks to his brother Edward standing on the opposite side, uttering these words, 'Will you, sir, will you, sir?' To which the said Edward answered, 'Not I sir, but the merits of Jesus Christ will, and him we earnestly pray to keep him from thee.' Then all that were present, to the number of twenty persons and more, fell down and said The Lord's Prayer, with other sentences, every one severally. And one of the company uttered words joining God and the blessed Virgin Mary together, whom the said Edward rebuked, and said, 'You offend God.' At which there came a voice much like Alexander's voice saying twice, 'There be other good prayers.' To which the said Edward made answer and said, 'You lie, for there is no other name under Heaven whereby we may challenge salvation, but only the name of Jesus.' And then the Spirit roared with a fearful voice, and stretched out his neck along towards the fire. And then the said Edward desired Peter Bencham, curate of the town, to conjure and charge him in the name of Jesus the Son of the Almighty that the Spirit should declare to them from whence he came, whether he would go, and what was his name. To which the Spirit made answer in this mumbling manner, 'I would come out, I would come out.' Then Edward charged him, as before, that he should declare his name. And the Spirit said, 'Aubon, Aubon.' They charged him then, as is aforesaid, to make known to them whence he came. And the Spirit made answer in a hollow voice, 'From Ireland, from Ireland.' Then

²⁴ The earlier edition resumes.

they laid the fourth chapter of Saint Matthew against him, where Christ said, 'It is written, you will worship the Lord your God, and him only you will worship.'²⁵ Which sentence, as it was pronounced, the hollow voice sounded, 'My master, my master, I am his disciple, I am his disciple.' Then they answered, 'We grant he is your master, but you lie, you are not his disciple. You are only an instrument and scourge to punish the wicked, as far as pleases him.' And then they laid to him the eighth chapter of Saint Luke where Christ himself did cast out devils.²⁶ And the Spirit answered hollowly, 'Baw-wawe, baw-wawe.' And within a little time after, the body of the said Alexander, being as wondrously transformed as it was before, much like the picture of the Devil in a play, with a horrible roaring voice, sounding Hell-hound, was most horribly tormented. And they that were present fell to prayer, desiring God earnestly to take away the foul Spirit from them. The said Edward then desired to have the window opened for, 'I trust in God,' said he, 'the foul Spirit is weary of our company.' The windows being opened accordingly, within two minutes after, the tormented body returned to its true shape again, the said Alexander leaping up, and holding up his hands and saying, 'He is gone, he is gone, Lord I thank you.' At which, all the people that were then present fell down on their knees with reverence, and yielded to God exceeding praise and thanksgiving. This fit ended about eleven o'clock the same night. And so they went to supper with great joy and gladness.

After four o'clock in the morning, another fit began. And the said Alexander, being in his bed, with great trembling said, 'I will go, I will go.' Then said Edward, 'Brother, call yourself to remembrance, and believe in Jesus Christ your Redeemer, and take this sentence for your defence against him whensoever you see him come. This is the sentence, "Speak for me, my Saviour Jesus Christ.'" Which sentence the said Alexander uttered very earnestly many times, with a trembling and fearful look, as though something had invaded him. But we saw nothing but his belly, swelling a little. This fit continuing half and hour and somewhat more, they took him the Bible to read,²⁷ and so fell to godly prayer against all assaults and temptations in this manner.

²⁵ Matthew 4.10.²⁶ Luke 8.26-40.²⁷ The later edition resumes.

The prayer

O Lord God of eternal glory, and Father of endless mercy, we your unworthy creatures are told in the name of your beloved Son to present ourselves before you, humbly beseeching you for his sake that you will vouchsafe to send down your Holy Spirit into our hearts, to guide and govern us in all godly ways, and to defend us from all manner of temptations of this world and from the assaults of the Devil.

Lord God, of your unspeakable goodness, grant that your grace may always continue with us, and that we never swerve or fall from you. Nor may the foul fiend have any power over us. Let your truth be evermore with us. And make us constant in the same, so that no temptations seduce us, or make us afraid of anything that has power over our bodies, but always confessing that, whomsoever you please to defend, no tyrant will be able to destroy. Strengthen and increase faith, love, and charity in the hearts of all people. Make us able to resist the vain pleasures of the world. Let not the perilous allurements thereof have any power to conquer and overcome us, nor the subtleties of the Devil be able to deceive us. Defend us, O Lord, from the many perils and temptations, which the Devil, our adversary, practices against us, lest we fall into his snares. Let neither his endeavours nor the wanton enticements of the flesh prevail against us. We know, O Lord, that without your sufferance, he of himself can take no hold of us, nor be able to diminish the least hair of our head. Give therefore to us such grace from you that we may be willing to strive against his assaults. And give us also such strength that we may be able to break and beat down the force and vehemency of his strong temptations.

Grant us your heavenly light, by which we may perfectly see and perceive those malicious and cruel ensigns which he lays to entrap us, lest unawares we fall into the same. Even now, O Lord, in these perilous days, the Devil and his minions do most boldly seek to sift us by all means and ways possible, and by evil works to which he moves us and thrusts into our hearts, so that, without the assistance of your grace, he may bring us within the baits and snares laid for our souls. And contrariwise, we of ourselves have no ability nor means to prevail against him, unless you of your mercy vouchsafe to

be gracious to us, to strengthen us by your power, and to defend us in all temptations which he works against us, so that he may not triumph over us to our destruction.

We beseech you from the bottom of our hearts to vouchsafe to be our comfort in all our troubles, to defend us against all temptations, and that it would please you to direct, lead, and govern us in all our hearts, words, and deeds. So will we dwell in safety.

O Lord, you know that, among all creatures, man is most rebellious against you, and his offences and transgressions against you most manifold. And contrariwise, every other creature in its kind does most worthily show your might, power, and promise, and by them is your own omnipotence declared. But we in our lives do show ourselves most unkind and unnatural children towards you, daily offending your Divine Majesty, and every minute transgressing against your laws and commandments, nothing regarding your judgements, which might in a moment destroy us. But you, O Lord, in your mercy do vouchsafe notwithstanding to spare us, admonishing us to repentance and newness of life, that through our faithful conversation we may be saved. Raise us up therefore, good Lord, from our drowsy sluggishness, and careless security.

Allow us not to wallow and tumble ourselves in our grievous iniquities any longer. Let not sin have so much power in us or increase over us. Destroy and overthrow Satan and his policies. And grant, we beseech you, that, even from the bottom of our hearts, we may acknowledge this affliction, which now so grievously pierces our poor brother, to be your Fatherly correction to put him in mind of his duty towards you, lest with too much quietness he might have been drawn, through the flatterings of this vain world, from the remembrance and delight of his spiritual joy in heavenly things. And while it may be your good will and pleasure, O Lord, to exercise him with this your loving correction, give him grace that he may abide whatsoever it will please you to lay on him for his amendment. Strengthen him, O Lord, that he faint not under the burden of this fearful temptation but that, being upheld by the strength of your Holy Spirit in him, he may never cease calling on your name, until you give him full deliverance to his singular

comfort, and your eternal glory. And when it will please you, O Lord, fully to deliver him, we beseech you so to work in our hearts that we all and every one of us acknowledge the same to come from you, to be your work only, that we may be thankful for your so great mercies all the days of our lives, and never forget your loving and Fatherly dealings towards us, so that your holy name may be glorified in our lives, and after death we may be received to that full joy which you have prepared for your elect children, through our only Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen.

After the prayer ended, he fell into a slumber. But it continued not so, but he fell into his former vexation.²⁸ For, about eight o'clock the next morning following, the same Alexander was marvellously deformed and cried out, 'Help me brother Edward, and all you that be my friends, and pray for me. For this foul fiend will come into me, whether I will or not.' And therewithal the said Alexander made a horrible spitting, his belly being swelled as before has been expressed. And then he breathed for a time, and they put on his hose and brought him down into the house, where he was grievously tormented in all his members. And the voice roared exceedingly, but they saw nothing. And Edward, speaking into his brother's ear, said to him, 'Stand to your true repentance brother, and your possessed hope of salvation, which you kept last night, and then God will undoubtedly deliver you.' And presently, the left ear, at which the said Edward spoke so vehemently, was suddenly wrinkled like a clung walnut which falls from the tree before it is ripe.

At the sight of which, the said Edward, being amazed, called the Curate of the town and desired him to take the Bible and turn to the place of Scripture where Christ gave authority to his ministers, and willed him to read and use that authority for the loosing of the same ear which was so wrinkled together. The same Edward, going to the right ear, uttered thereat many sentences of consolation to his brother, being in a monstrous and horrible vexation. And then divers of them took upon them to conjure and charge the foul fiend as in the first manner, namely, 'We conjure you in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour, the Son of the almighty God, that you

²⁸ The earlier edition resumes.

depart and no longer torment the said Alexander.' And within a while after, the same Alexander stood up and said, 'He is gone, he is gone.'²⁹

Upon which, he joined with his brother Edward in hearty prayer of acknowledgement, and said after him in this manner.

His prayer after deliverance to acknowledge it to
come of God only

O Lord God, I feel in myself how mercifully you have dealt with me. I was grievously tormented, and now by your goodness partly released. I was dangerously assaulted, and now by your mercy partly delivered. This relief, although I must needs confess by infallible arguments to be your only work in me, yet such is the pride of my rebellious flesh, that I fear it will not allow me fully to ascribe the same to proceed of you and your goodness only, but will seek out other fictitious causes, according to the vain devices of my mind. Therefore, I beseech you most gracious Father, that you will so frame my heart that I may, with whole heart and mind and with all the powers of my soul, acknowledge this my release and comfort to be your work only, wrought in me by your Holy Spirit, and that I may be thankful for the same all the days of my life. O Lord, you have sworn by your holiness that you will not give your honour to any other. Seeing then, dear Father, that you have sent me this strength, let me be fully persuaded in heart that it comes from you, that to you I may render due honour, praise, and thanksgiving for the same, and that for the rest of my life I may be assured in heart of you merciful defence in my extreme trouble and vexations. As you have delivered me, that you will according to your promise so continue your merciful grace and favour, that your name may be glorified in me, my soul may be in mercy preserved, and the whole Church edified now and for ever. Amen.³⁰ After this, they took the said Alexander, and all of them joyfully accompanying him, to his brother Thomas Nyndge's house, after which his coming thither, he was not known to be perplexed with the like terrible vexations.

²⁹ The later edition resumes.

³⁰ The earlier edition resumes.

Deo trino, & uni gloria

These things were seen and suffered in the presence of the persons hereunder named, and many others, both men and women.

Sir Thomas Nyndge	John Baron
William Nyndge	Thomas Gathercolt
William Nyndge Junior	Thomas Kent
Henry Clarence	George Richarde
William Pye	Thomas Edwards
George Oldfield	John Neave, alias Bolding
Thomas Wakefield	Ezekiel Clement
Thomas Goldsmith	John Turner, &c.
William Miles	

FINIS

Two possessed maidens in London
The story of Agnes Briggs and Rachel Pinder

On Sunday 15 August 1574, before all the congregation at Paul's Cross in London, Agnes Briggs and Rachel Pinder publicly admitted that they had faked being possessed by the Devil, and publicly repented. The records of their examinations and confessions were read to those gathered by the preacher. That they publicly confessed to having counterfeited demonic possession is not to be doubted. But whether their possessed behaviour was intentionally simulated is not quite so clear. Different strands within the text make possible alternative readings.

The editor of the work remains anonymous, but he is responsible for writing the preface, attaching a number of scriptural verses and part of a homily of St John Chrysostom.¹ He is also to be credited with including four other documents (or parts thereof). Two of these were pamphlets, now lost, which give two different accounts of the exorcism of Rachel Pinder.² Both were published shortly after 16 July, the date on which the handwritten version of the longer of the two was made. The third document gives an account of the examination and confession of Agnes Briggs, conducted by Robert Hodgson on the direction of Sir John Rivers, the Lord Mayor of London, independently of and probably prior to the confession of Rachel Pinder. Archbishop Parker's examination of Rachel Pinder and her eventual confession of fraud on 11 August is the fourth document incorporated by the editor.³

The longer of the two different versions of the exorcism of Rachel Pinder concludes with a list of witnesses, which include the two officiating ministers, William Long and William Turner, and fourteen others, among whom are their wives, Rachel's father and mother, and (probably) her father's brother Peter and his wife, and his sister Susan Pinder. It was probably

¹ The text is part of Chrysostom's first Homily against the Jews. See Migne, *PG*, 48.853–5. I have not included the text below.

² See anon., 1574, sigs.A.3.v–B.2.r, and sigs.B.2.v–B.3.r (see below, pp. 63–6, 66–7, 67–9).

³ See anon., 1574 (should be) sigs.B.3.v–B.4.v, and (numbered) sig.B.1.r–B.2.r (see below, pp. 69–70).

written down by the two presiding ministers. The shorter account of the exorcism of Rachel is written down by George Allen (who was not listed as a witness in the first account) and may not have been present, and lists as witnesses to the event the two ministers, Rachel's father, Sarah Davers (listed in the first account) and William Edwards (not previously listed). The clear purpose of both of these accounts is to attest to the authenticity of the possession of Rachel, and the authority of the ministers, who are probably dissenters, to deal with Satan.

It was the publication of these accounts of the exorcism of Rachel Pinder which motivated the Archbishop of Canterbury to examine her. 'I have travailed much by myself alone, for want of other commissioners', he wrote on 13 August to Lord Burghley, 'to try out a possession, which was very earnestly believed, and set forth and by print recorded and spread without licence. The two printers whereof with others that sold those pamphlets were committed to prison.'⁴

Archbishop Parker's letter to Burghley suggests that his examinations of Pinder were not unprejudiced. He saw demoniacs as socially disruptive. And he was convinced that Rachel's mother Elizabeth was complicit in setting up her daughter as a demoniac. Failing to extract a confession from Elizabeth on 11 August, he imprisoned her at Westminster gate until Rachel and Agnes had done penance at Paul's Cross.

The Disclosing of a late counterfeited Possession, decrying as it does the publication of unlicensed books, was probably published with the approval, if not at the instigation, of the Archbishop. While accepting the reality of witches and sorcerers, the text mounts a series of attacks against the popular acceptance of the reality of possession. *The Preface* declares demonic possession to be 'mere vanity and falsehood'. The confessions of Agnes Briggs and Rachel Pinder are presented to counteract public acceptance of demonic possession and to warn that even 'godly men' like William Long and William Turner may act out of ignorance.

As witches and sorcerers are not to be looked to as the cause of illness, so the text makes clear that they are not to be turned to for its cure. The biblical passages included by the editor exhort the reader to seek assistance from physicians and not from 'wise men and women.' And the homily from John Chrysostom reminds the reader of those who have turned for help to God and not to witches, soothsayers, or enchanters: 'Therefore counsel the sick party manfully to suffer corporal pains, to the end that he might obey

⁴ Bruce and Perowne (eds.), 1853, p. 466. Note 1 confuses Briggs and Pinder.

Christ, and not to go to witches, or to counsel with wise women (as they be called) which are Christ's mortal enemies.⁵

Rachel Pinder was eleven years old when, according to her Mother, she had become possessed by the devil. It was a claim made by Elizabeth Pinder at the home of John Foxe, author of *Acts and Monuments*, more commonly known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. Perhaps she was seeking endorsement of Rachel as a new form of protestant martyr, one persecuted by the Devil himself, rather than his emissary the Pope.

That Rachel was possessed was a conclusion that her mother had drawn, she told the assembly, as a result of Rachel's entering into trances, swellings and heavings of her body, and the vomiting of hair, a silk thread, and a feather. She also exhibited other typical features of demonic possession – demonic ventriloquy, visions of the devil in human and animal form, and accusations of having been bewitched, in this case by an elderly woman Joan Thornton – all of which she eventually confessed to having feigned.

It was from Rachel Pinder that the twenty-year-old Agnes Briggs was to 'catch' possession, perhaps influenced by the attention and approval which Rachel may have received. For she had been present at the home of Foxe when Elizabeth Pinder had 'exhibited' her daughter. On that same night, after she returned home, Agnes began to enter into trances, and to vomit hair, and later lace, nails, crooked pins, to exhibit disfigured faces and strange voices and noises, all of which she too later confessed to having faked.

We do not know if attempts were made to rid Agnes Briggs of her demons. Presumably her fits ceased after her confession of fraud. But the pamphlets included within this text had the original intention of proving that Rachel had been possessed as a result of bewitchment, and that she had been successfully dispossessed in the presence of her family and friends by William Long and William Turner. They report a battle of wits between the Devil and the Protestants assembled, with victory to the latter. Their purpose is propaganda – to demonstrate that Satan (like Catholicism) is the enemy of Protestants, and that they have the power of dispossession. Protestant dispossession by common prayer is already present. But Long and Turner also mimic Catholic exorcists: they 'commanded Satan still, by the mighty power and kingdom of Jesus Christ, to depart out of her. And so he departed.'⁶

⁵ Anon., 1574, sig.B.4.r.

⁶ Anon., 1574, sig.B.2.r (see below, p. 66).

It is reasonable to conclude that Agnes was 'infected' by Rachel. But we can only guess how Rachel 'learned' to behave as a demoniac. It is also feasible to suggest that Rachel heard the stories of other of her contemporary demoniacs such as Alexander Nyndge, Anne Mylner, and the Dutchman at Maidstone, just as demoniacs to come were to hear of her.⁷ Like Satan, stories of possession were in the air.

⁷ See anon., 1615; Fisher, 1565; and Scot, 1972, p. 75.

The Disclosing of a late counterfeited Possession by the devil in two maidens within the City of London.

Printed at London by Richard Watkins.

Cum privilegio.

The preface

To declare, or discourse of the late dissimulation of certain maidens, which were possessed with the Devil, as was commonly reported, may be thought of some men mere vanity, and too superfluous, for that the handling of that matter may sufficiently disclose to wise men, what was done and meant thereby. And yet to detect the willful and obstinate ignorance of such as had the matter in handling, being as they professed themselves godly men, plentifully adorned with faith, and sent of God to disturb the Devil of possession, as if they were very exorcists by office to adjure the devil, may be thought not vain, but necessary, for the instruction of the people in like cases. And although this realm is known by common experience, and of late, to be troubled with witches, sorcerors, and other such wise men and women, as they call them, yet that the Devil would actually so possess men and women in such a manner as was avouched and, to make thereof a plain matter, so constantly reported and spread by their printed books, not publicly licensed, is mere vanity and falsehood, as the parties thoroughly examined, and favourably used, have confessed the same, as hereafter will ensue. Of which causes there is matter enough concerning divers persons, who have been workers in this dissimulation, howsoever it is bolstered out by some certain persons, which for the maintenance of their own estimation, would delude God's good people, and the Queen's Majesty's subjects, with manifest untruth. Therefore, to spare the names of some persons that are faulty in this matter, more of charity will be done towards the persons, if

they will secretly repent, than to seek any revenge of such, by publishing their deservings. Notwithstanding, if any evil disposed persons will yet, after this declaration, seem to be contentious, and speak more than becomes them, they will be answered more fully. And because such pamphlets of Rachel Pinder are already spread abroad, not able to be called in again, this is therefore published to countervail the same in the hearts of God's people, in which will be truly set out some part of the speeches of this maid, Rachel Pinder, and also her confession of that hypocrisy of which she seems to be very sorry and repentant, with confession also of Agnes Briggs. On Sunday the twenty-fifth day of August, 1574, both of them did acknowledge their counterfeiting at Paul's Cross, with repentant behaviour, and their examinations and confessions openly there read by the preacher. And although the vanity of this matter might seem sufficient to instruct men from the like hereafter, yet there is added a part of an homily, written by that learned man John Chrysostom, sometime Archbishop of Constantinople, which may sufficiently instruct us all to beware, not only of witchcraft, but also specially against Jews and witches, which seem to do good and to heal such as be hurt by others. Farewell.

The very copy in words and orthography, subscribed by their hands. The sixteenth of July, 1574.

William Long spoke these words following. 'I command you Satan in the blood of Jesus Christ, speak and tell me why you came here?' And Satan spoke. But we could not understand what he said, but he made a mumbling. But after, he said, 'O Joan, Joan, let Joan alone.' Then William Turner spoke and said, 'I command you Satan in the blood of Jesus Christ, speak out, that all this people may hear you.' Then he said that he could not speak. Then William Turner and William Long said that he lied. And they commanded him, in the blood of Jesus Christ and by his mighty power, to speak more loudly. Then we all on our knees lifted up our hearts to Almighty God, and made our prayers all together, as our Saviour Jesus Christ has taught us

in the first of Matthew's Gospel.⁸ Then we commanded him in the blood of Jesus Christ to tell us who sent him hither. He said, 'Old Joan.' Why did she send him here? 'For her body and soul.' We said, 'You will not have it. Jesus Christ has bought it with his precious blood.' Then he said, 'You lie,' divers times. Then William Turner said, 'Jesus Christ says in his holy Gospel that Satan was a liar from the beginning, and therefore I believe Jesus Christ. I will not believe you. You are a liar.' Then Satan said, 'She has sinned against the Holy Ghost. And her sins were before her face, and he would have her.' Then we said that he would not have her. 'Jesus Christ has bought her with his precious blood and, through faith in the same, has forgiven her her sins, and you will not have her.' Then Satan said that he would have us all. Then we said, 'You will have none of us.' Then Satan said, 'All the world is mine. Hear me, hear me. Did not I take Christ from the cross?' Then we said, 'You are a liar from the beginning. How dare you be so bold to lie in the presence of the Lord Jesus?' Then we commanded him, in the blood of Jesus Christ and in the mighty power of his kingdom, to 'tell us what is your name.' Satan said, 'I could not tell.' We said, 'You lie, you will tell us.' And he said to us divers times, 'You lie.' Then we commanded him, 'In the blood of Jesus Christ and by his mighty power, tell us what your name is and defraud the time no longer.' Then he said, 'Legion, Legion,' divers times.⁹ Then we asked him how many there were in number. Satan said, 'Five thousand legions.' Then we commanded him in the name of Jesus Christ and by his mighty power, 'Come out of the servant of Jesus Christ, and by and by without hurting anything.' Then Satan said that he would tear us all in pieces. Then we defied him and said, 'The Lord God will defend us.' Then Satan said, 'How can you cast out five thousand legions of devils?' Then we commanded Satan, in the blood of Christ and by his mighty power, to come out and do no hurt. Then he said, 'Give me something.' Then we said, 'You will have nothing, Satan.' Then Satan said, 'I will not go.' Then we said, 'You will go to the eternal pit of Hell, which is prepared for you before the creation of the world.' Then Satan said that he would tear her in pieces. And presently, he tormented

⁸ The reference is to The Lord's Prayer which occurs in chapter 6 of St Matthew's gospel.

⁹ The reference is to the Gadarene demoniac. See Mark 5.9. 'And he [Jesus] asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.'

her. And Satan said that he would bring three deaths, one for her, and one for Memphre whom Foxe had begged at God's hand, and one for the maid in Lothbury¹⁰, and 'I will tear Foxe in pieces.'¹¹ Then Satan cried, 'O death, death,' very terribly. Then we all together made our prayers for her and them, that the Lord God would release her. And when we had ended our prayers to God for her, we commanded Satan, by the mighty power and blood of Jesus, to depart out of her by and by without any more words. Then Satan said, 'You have not written it.' Then John Booth, servant to William Long, said, 'If we have not written it, the Lord God has written it in our hearts.' Then we commanded Satan, 'With all our might and power that God has given us, you will depart out of the servant of Jesus Christ.' Then Satan said, 'Give me a cheer and I will go.' And we said, 'You will have nothing.' Then we commanded Satan, in the name of Jesus Christ, to depart without hurting anything. And Satan said, 'Give me an apple.' We said, 'You will have nothing.' Then we commanded Satan to depart. Then Satan said, 'Give me a thread band.' We said, 'You will have nothing.' Then we commanded Satan to depart. He said, 'Give me a little hair.' We said, 'You will have nothing.' Then Satan said, 'Will I have nothing? I had a drop of blood from old Joan to come hither, and will I depart away with nothing?' Then we said to Satan, 'Depart, you will have nothing.' Then Satan said, 'Wag your finger, and I will depart.' Then we said to Satan, 'We will not. You will not have so much.' Then Satan said, 'Give me the paring of your nail.' Then we said, 'You will not have so much to lay to our charge at the day of Judgement.' Then Satan said, 'Say only "I pray you," and I will go.' Then we said, 'We will not pray you, but we will command you, by the blood of Jesus Christ and by his mighty power, to depart by and by without hurting anything.' Then said Satan, 'I will tarry four score years and ten, if you will give me nothing.' Then we made a prayer to the Almighty God, with earnest hearts, craving aid and comfort at his almighty hands for her comfort and delivery. Then we commanded Satan in the blood of Jesus to depart. Then Satan cried with a loud voice and perfect speech that all might hear, 'Hear me, hear me,' divers times, before we would give ear to him. Then Satan said

¹⁰ Agnes Briggs.

¹¹ John Foxe (1516–18), author of 'Foxe's Book of Martyrs'. Foxe had been involved in 1574 in the exorcism of a young law student from the north of England called Briggs.

to us all in our hearing. 'Let me tarry until tomorrow when my lady comes, and I will tell you more of my mind.' Then we said to him, 'You will not tarry for anything.' And so we commanded Satan still, by the mighty power and kingdom of Jesus Christ, to depart out of her. And so he departed.

By me William Long.

By me William Turner.

By me John Booth.

By me William Pinder, Father of the child.

By me Peter Pinder.

By me Rose Harris.

By me Katharine Osborne.

By me Elisabeth Long, the wife of William Long.

By me Jane Turner, the wife of William Turner.

By me Margaret Barkers.

By me Katharine Chalk.

By me Elizabeth Pinder, Mother of the child

By me Anne Pinder, the wife of Peter Pinder.

By me Sarah Davers.

By me Susan Pinder.

By me Maryanne Reave.¹²

William Long asked Satan, 'Who commanded you here? In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you tell us.' Satan answered, 'Old Joan, old Joan.' 'Which Joan,' said Master Debbete? He answered, 'Joan Thornton, dwelling on the Key.' In which way did she command it to go? Satan answered, 'She said the Pater Noster¹³ three times, and then I did come.' Then William Edwards said, 'You lie.' Satan answered, 'No.' Master Long said, 'Then four times.' And Satan said, 'Five times.' William Long said, 'Six times.' And Satan said, 'Seven times.' And Master Long said, 'Eight times.' Satan said, 'Nine times.' And Master Long said, 'Ten times.' Satan said, 'Eleven times.' And then Master Long said, 'Then, Satan, you lie.' And Satan, being asked what was his name, answered, 'Arke, Arke.'¹⁴ And being asked from

¹² The original manuscript was signed by William Long, William Turner, John Booth, and William and Peter Pinder. Rose Harris and Elisabeth Long made their marks.

¹³ The Lord's prayer. ¹⁴ In imitation of the voice of a crow.

whom he learned it, 'From Denham.' And where did Denham teach it to you? 'In the uppermost room of Thornton's house.' How long ago? 'Three years.' 'What did she give you, Satan?' 'One drop of her blood.' 'Where did you have it, Satan?' 'On the forefinger on the inside of her left hand.' 'Where did she keep that which she works by?' 'In her bosom next to her skin.' 'What is it, Satan?' 'Sometimes like a dog, and sometimes like a toad.' And then William Long charged him, in the blood of Jesus Christ, to depart into the bottomless pit of Hell. Satan answered, 'What will you give me?' He said, 'Nothing. And I charge you to depart, and never enter anymore.' And Satan answered that he would. Then said the said Long, 'In token you will not come here any more, blow out the candle.' But he did not blow out the candle, but said, 'Give me a thread.' And immediately the child rose up and held up her hands and said, 'He is gone, he will come no more.' The manner of the voice out of the child was that the lips moved without moving such as could pronounce the words uttered. The eyelids moved, but not open. She had great swelling in her throat and about the jaws, and the voice was somewhat bigger than the child's voice. And speaking with a loud voice, being commanded in the name of Jesus Christ to speak louder, the voice then spoke louder, that all might hear.

I, George Allen, heard all that is on this side written. This done in the presence of

By me George Allen
By me William Edwards
By me William Long
By me William Turner
By me William Pinder
By me Sarah Davers¹⁵

The examination and confession of, &c.

Agnes Briggs, daughter to William Briggs of London, cloth worker, examined, says, that she has been afflicted ever since Lent last past. And the

¹⁵ The original manuscript was signed by George Allen, William Long, and William Turner.

first time that she fell into any trance was about midsummer last. And she says that on Monday next will be six weeks since she was at the Preacher Master Foxe's house, at which time came in one Mistress Pinder, dwelling at Galley Key, and a maid child of her own with her, about eleven years old. And there the said Mistress Pinder demanded of this examinant,¹⁶ how she was troubled. And she answered that she was much troubled in mind. And she, this examinant, says that the said Pinder's wife then declared to the said Master Foxe and others there present, that her daughter had been possessed of a devil. And she said that when she had any trance, she would swell and heave with her body marvellously, and that she did void at her mouth, in her trances, hair, a black silk thread, and a feather, which this examinant hearing, determined to practise the like. And the same night after the said Agnes came home, on purpose she fell into a trance. And before that time, she had pulled some of her hair from her head, which she had put in her mouth. And in her trance, she cast the same out of her mouth. And the next time that she feigned her sickness, she voided out of her mouth a little piece of lace which she had pulled out of her sleeve, and a crooked pin which she had put in her mouth before. And the next fit after that, she cast out at her mouth one crooked pin, which before she herself had bent and put in her mouth. And the next fit after that, she voided out of her mouth one tenterhook which, she says, she took out of a corner of a window in the chamber where she lay, and had put the same in her mouth before. And the next fit, she cast out at her mouth two nails, which she had pulled from the valance of her bed before and had put the same in her mouth. And she says that many and sundry times she did cast out at her mouth crooked pins, which she had bent and put in her mouth before, but to what number she does not remember. And in this time in those fits, she divers times on purpose disfigured herself with divers strange countenances, feigning divers strange voices and noises by her counterfeit, in monstrous manner, to the great displeasure of Almighty God, a slander to his word, a very evil example, and a very great deceit of the Queen's Majesty's people, for which she is heartily sorry and

¹⁶ That is, Agnes Briggs.

repentant, desiring God to forgive her, with intent never to do so again. And she says that all that she did was feigned and counterfeit, and no truth therein. And she says that nobody was privy to her doings but herself.

Examined by me Robert Hodgeson, by the commandment of Sir John Rivers Knight, Lord Mayor of London, in the presence of me James Style, Minister and person of Saint Margaret's in Lothbury, of John Taylor, and John Kent, mercer.

The examination and
confession of. &c.

Rachel Pinder, examined, says that she had trances divers times. And in one trance or fit, she voided out at her mouth certain hair, which she had pulled off from the coverlet that lay upon her, and had put the same into her mouth, which she did divers times. And sometimes she filled her mouth so full that it would stop in her throat, so that she was eager to drink after the same. And her Mother kept this hair together. At another time in a fit, she voided a feather, which she had taken on the bed. And in another fit, she voided at her mouth a little short end of silk, which she had pulled off the bed covering and put in her mouth. Another time, she took a woollen thread, which she had pulled from the side of the covering, and voided it from her mouth. And furthermore, in her trance, she feigned divers strange and hollow speeches within her throat. And she says that all she did and said in her trances was counterfeited, feigned, false, and untrue. And when they commanded the Devil to speak and asked what was his name, she answered, 'Legion.' And they asked who sent him there. Then the said Rachel answered, 'Old Joan.' 'Which Joan,' said they. 'Joan of London,' said she. 'Where does she dwell,' said they. And she answered that she dwelled on the Key. And where there was one that spoke to her in Latin, she answered that she would speak no Latin. And one there was that spoke Dutch to her. And she answered, 'I will speak no Dutch.'

Item. In a trance which she had between Easter and Whitsunday, she said that old Joan had bewitched her, which she says was also but feigned. And further, where she said that Denham had taught the said Joan, she says the

same is untrue, and was, like the other, feigned, for which she is now very sorry, and desires to ask forgiveness of the said Joan Thornton, which she has done. Also, she says that her Mother only willed her before the fit came to what she should liken the Devil, sometimes to a man with a gray beard, sometimes like five cats, sometimes to ravens and crows, &c. And she says she is heartily sorry for her said offences, praying God and the world to forgive her, whom she has mocked and deluded by her subtle and foolish practices, never intending to do so again.

All this she confessed and avouched before the Most Reverend Father Matthew, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Roland Hayward, Knight, Alderman of the City of London, and William Fleetwood Esquire, Recorder of the same city, and others, the eleventh day of August, in the year of our Lord MDLXXIII, and of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth, the sixteenth.¹⁷

¹⁷ The text concludes with a series of biblical quotations under the headings 'Against Witches and Sorcerers' and 'In the Commendation of Phisick', followed by a section of John Chrysostom's first homily against the Jews (see Migne, *PG*, 48.853–5.)

The witches of Warboys
The story of the Throckmorton children

In April 1593, Alice Samuel, her daughter Agnes, and her husband John were hanged for witchcraft. They had been convicted of the bewitching of the five daughters of Robert Throckmorton of Warboys, and the bewitching to death of Lady Cromwell, second wife of Sir Henry Cromwell of Hinchinbrook. After the deaths of the Samuels, the text informs us in its concluding paragraph, none of the bewitched children manifested any signs of possession. 'But they have all of them been in as good a state and as perfect health as ever from their birth.'¹ This was the first well-known case in England of accusations of bewitchment by possessed girls leading to the deaths of those accused.

For the previous three and a half years, the Throckmorton children had shown all of the signs of the possessed. Around 10 November 1589, Jane, ten years of age and the second youngest of the five girls, began to exhibit convulsions and a trance. Within two months, all the sisters, ranging in age from nine to fifteen years, were having violent fits from several to many times a day, of which they later claimed to have no memory.² The oldest girl Joan predicted that twelve people in total would be bewitched, herself and her five sisters, and seven female servants. And thus it happened. When the servants were sent away they recovered, but their replacements became similarly afflicted.

All of them, the servants and the children, blamed Mother Samuel, the next-door neighbour, for having caused their afflictions. The accusations against Mother Samuel continued until her execution in early 1593. Three years after the first accusation against her mother, around Christmas 1592, Agnes Samuel was also accused of bewitching the children. And in early March of the following year, her father was implicated by Elizabeth, the

¹ Anon., 1593, sig.O.4.r (see below, p. 149).

² The sisters ranged from the ages of nine to fifteen at the beginning of their possession: Joan fifteen, Mary around thirteen, Elizabeth around twelve, Jane ten, Grace nine. The youngest child Robert, around six, showed no symptoms.

third oldest of the children. By Christmas 1592, Alice Samuel had confessed all, but her daughter and husband remained defiant to the end.

The overall intention of the text is clear. It is to persuade the reader that the daughters of Robert Throckmorton were genuinely possessed by evil spirits, that his neighbours the Samuels were responsible, and that their deaths were therefore warranted. Unlike the story of Agnes Briggs and Rachel Pinder, the issue of whether the girls were counterfeiting was never seriously addressed as a possibility, although there remains the textual hint that Alice and Agnes had thought so.³ The text also rejects a natural medical explanation for Jane's behaviour. Dr Barrow, a Cambridge physician, having examined the girl's urine and found no natural cause, suspected witchcraft. Being newly arrived in the neighbourhood and not having made any local enemies, it was not a diagnosis they were readily willing to accept.⁴ But as one child after another fell ill, they became convinced.

The text stresses the physical symptoms of the children, iterates and reiterates a set of 'empirical' tests for bewitchment upon various of the children. It emphasises the tests for witchcraft made with Alice Samuel, and then Agnes, and finally in court with John Samuel. Thus, it inexorably draws them into incrimination by themselves and the girls. Granting the guilt of the Samuels, the text constructs the children as victims, justifies the execution of the local yeoman Samuels family as perpetrators, and clears the gentle families involved in pursuing them – the Throckmortons, the Cromwells, and the Pickerings – from responsibility for their deaths. It is clear that others within the community of which the Throckmortons were a leading family needed to be convinced that the Samuels were guilty and that the decision of the Throckmortons to apply the full weight of the law was justified.⁵ The matter was clearly urgent, for the text was written very soon after the trial.

The text thus provides a clue to the authorship of this anonymously published work. It is more than likely edited and published by the father of the children Robert Throckmorton, with authorial contributions by a number of people, Robert Throckmorton himself, Gilbert and Henry Pickering, Dr Dorington the parson of Warboys, and Edward Fenner the presiding judge.⁶ The text falls into two main chronological periods: from

³ See anon., 1593, sigs.F.4.r., I.2.v (see below, p. 106).

⁴ See anon., 1593, sig.A.4.r (see below, p. 79). ⁵ See anon., 1593, sig.H.I.r (see below, p. 116).

⁶ Daniel Walker sees the hand of Gilbert Pickering as the authorial one. The account of Elizabeth at his house is no doubt derived from his account, probably from notes he took at the time: 'And now here in this place which is the open fields, she is willing and forward at every motion to turn herself about, and to set her face homewards again' (sigs.D.2.v–D.3.r). But the editorial transition at

November 1589 until the end of 1590 when Robert Throckmorton disperses his children;⁷ and, after a gap of twenty months, from Michaelmas (or the end of September) 1592 until the executions in April 1593.⁸

The first of these periods is dominated by the beginnings of possession with Jane,⁹ the story of Elizabeth at the home of Gilbert Pickering, Robert Throckmorton's brother-in-law,¹⁰ of Lady Cromwell,¹¹ and of Joan,¹² all interwoven with accusations of bewitchment against Mother Samuel. The second is focused on further stories of the possessions of Jane and Elizabeth, culminating in the confessions of Mother Samuel at Christmas 1592,¹³ and from Christmas 1592 until 5 April 1593, on the stories of Joan, Elizabeth, and Jane, the incrimination of Agnes, climaxing in the trial and executions.¹⁴ Mary and Grace play minor but supporting roles during this final period.

It was a context in which demonic possession could thrive. The children acted out an available cultural script – that of possession by evil spirits. With the possibility of fraud or natural illness ruled out, the continual clinical 'testing of the spirits' and the recording of the results over a long period of time by Robert Throckmorton and Gilbert Pickering (at least) attest to the conviction of the parents and their relatives and friends that the children were the victims of witchcraft. And the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of the parents reinforced the possessed behaviour of the children. All wrote and acted in a drama which sustained itself for three and a half years. The world created by the children and endorsed by the adults was persuasive and pervasive; so much so that eventually even Mother Samuel herself was convinced of the connection between her presence and the children's health, and confessed to having bewitched the children on 23 December 1592: "O Sir," said she, "I have been the cause of all this trouble to your children."¹⁵

The Mother Samuel constructed by the girls is a stereotypical witch. As they demonstrated their piety in exhorting Alice to confess and repent, they condemned her for 'her naughty manner of living, her usual cursing and

the end of the story of Elizabeth at the home of Gilbert Pickering is clearly that of a hand other than Gilbert's (see sig.D.3.v), see below, p. 88. And see Walker, 1981, pp. 49–50. Rosen, 1969, p. 240 detects a number of hands, as does DeWindt, 1995, p. 441.

⁷ See anon., 1593, sigs.A.3.r–E.2.v (see below, pp. 77–94).

⁸ See anon., 1593, sigs.E.2.v–O.4.r (see below, pp. 94–149).

⁹ See anon., 1593, sigs.A.3.r–A.4.v (see below, pp. 77–80).

¹⁰ See anon., 1593, sigs.B.1.r–D.3.v (see below, pp. 81–7).

¹¹ See anon., 1593, sigs.D.3.v–D.4.v (see below, pp. 87–90).

¹² See anon., 1593, sigs.D.4.v–E.2.r (see below, pp. 91–3).

¹³ See anon., 1593, sigs.E.2.v–H.2.v (see below, pp. 93–118).

¹⁴ See anon., 1593, sigs.H.2.v–O.4.r (see below, pp. 119–149).

¹⁵ Anon., 1593, sig.G.3.r (see below, p. 111).

banning of all that displeased her . . . her negligent going to Church and slackness in God's service' and her 'lewd bringing up of her daughter'.¹⁶ But the text also allows us to find a much more sympathetic picture of Alice. There is no hint that she had had confrontations with the children prior to their possession. Like any neighbour, she visits a sick child and sits comfortably by the fire.¹⁷ Two and a half years later, she visits the house upon the birth of a child to Elizabeth Pickering, an aunt of the children.¹⁸ Eventually in desperation, she tries to present herself, like the children, as having been invaded by evil spirits.¹⁹ Pitiful is her attempt, at the age of eighty, to stave off execution by pleading pregnancy.²⁰ The text presents her as victimiser. We can only read her as victim.

The Throckmorton children constructed a similar picture of Alice's daughter Agnes. When she is bailed from jail and taken to the Throckmorton household, the spirits accuse her of bewitching the children all over again, and of intending to deal with them even worse than her mother had done.²¹ But the text also pictures an Agnes terrified of becoming implicated,²² warning her mother not to trust those to whom she confessed,²³ submitting meekly to the tests demanded of her, but finally strong enough to refuse to confess or to plead pregnancy: 'it will never be said that I was both a witch and a whore'.²⁴

It is only a month before his execution that we first hear of an accusation against John Samuel made by Elizabeth.²⁵ His response to her is of a kind with other images of him in the text – a difficult, verbally abusive, and violent man (though innocent of witchcraft). When found guilty he cursed his wife: 'A plague of God light on you, for you are she that has brought us all to this, and we may thank you for it.'²⁶ At the time of her execution, Alice declared her daughter innocent. Her husband she declared guilty. It was her only act of malice.

¹⁶ Anon., 1593, sig.F.4.r (see below, p. 106).

¹⁷ See anon., 1593, sig.A.3.r (see below, p. 77).

¹⁸ See anon., 1593, sig.E.3.r (see below, p. 95).

¹⁹ See anon., 1593, sig.G.I.v (see below, p. 108). The text cuts Alice little slack. There is a hint here in the text, lest any reader feel sympathy for her, that the pains in her belly were the consequence of having been at that time impregnated by the devil. On the possibility of demonic impregnation, see Robbins, 1959, 'Incubus'.

²⁰ See Oldham, 1985. ²¹ See anon., 1593, sig.H.3.v (see below, p. 120).

²² See anon., 1593, sig.F.3.r–v (see below, p. 104). ²³ See anon., 1593, sig.G.4.r (see below, p. 114).

²⁴ Anon., 1593, sig.O.3.r (see below, p. 147). ²⁵ See anon., 1593, sig.L.I.v (see below, p. 129).

²⁶ Anon., 1593, sig.O.2.v (see below, p. 146).

The most strange and admirable
discovery of the three Witches of Warboys,
arraigned, convicted, and executed at the last Assizes
at Huntington, for the bewitching of the five
daughters of Robert Throckmorton, Esquire,
and divers other persons, with sundry Devilish
and grievous torments:

And also for the bewitching to death
of the Lady Cromwell, the like has not
been heard of in this age.

London

Printed by the Widow Orwin, for Thomas Man, and John Winnington,
and are to be sold in Pater Noster Row, at the Sign of the Talbot. 1593

To the Right Worshipful Master

Edward Fenner, one of the Justices of the court of her Majesty's bench.

In these times, Right Worshipful, in which every idle wit seeks to blaze abroad their vainness, there ought to be no small care for the restraining of trivial pamphlets, as well to exercise the readers in matter necessary, as to cut off the writing of things needless. Among others, your Worship's care, as well for the furthering of the truth of this arraignment, being Judge at the trial of the malefactors, as also the crossing of whatsoever pamphlets should have been preferred, respecting either the matter partly or confusedly, emboldens me to prefer the patronage hereof to your Worship. I do not doubt that, as you have been careful as well for the trial and judgement of such heinous offenders and withal taken extraordinary pains in perfecting this work for

the printing to others' example, you will likewise vouchsafe to pardon our boldness.

To the Reader

At length, though long first, gentle Reader, this notable arraignment and examinations of Samuel, his wife, and daughter, for their sundry witchcrafts in Huntington-shire are come to view. It has for special cause been so long deferred, as well that nothing might escape untouched which they had done, as that everything might be thoroughly sifted, lest it should pass any way corruptly. These cares having perfected the work, it is now past the press to your presence, wherein I presume you will find matter as admirable as ever this age afforded.

A true and particular observation of a notable piece of Witchcraft, practised by John Samuel the Father, Alice Samuel the Mother, and Agnes Samuel their Daughter, of Warboys in the County of Huntington, on five Daughters of Robert Throckmorton of the same town and county, Esquire, and certain other Maid-servants to the number of twelve in the whole, all of them being in one house, November, 1589.

About the tenth of November which was in the year 1589, Mistress Jane, one of the daughters of the said Master Throckmorton, being near the age of ten years, all of a sudden fell into a strange kind of sickness and distemperature of body, the manner of which was as follows. Sometimes she would sneeze very loudly and thickly for the space of half an hour together, and presently, as one in a great trance and swoon, lay quietly as long. Soon after, she would begin to swell and heave up her belly so that none was able to bend her, or keep her down. Sometimes she would shake one leg and no other part of her, as if the palsy had been in it, sometimes the other. Presently she would shake one of her arms, and then the other, and soon after her head, as if she had been infected with the running palsy. Continuing in this state for two or three days, amongst other neighbours in the town, the aforesaid Alice Samuel came into the house of Master Throckmorton to visit this sick child. She dwelled in the next house on the north side of the said Master Throckmorton. When the old woman came into the parlour, the child was held in another woman's arms by the fire side. So she went into the chimney corner and sat down close to the child, the grandmother of the child and the Mother being also present. She had not been there long but the child grew somewhat worse than she was at her coming. And all of a sudden she cried, saying, 'Grandmother, look where the old witch sits' (pointing to the

said Mother Samuel). 'Did you ever see,' said the child, 'one more like a witch than she is? Take off her black fringed cap, for I cannot abide to look on her.' The Mother of the child, little then suspecting any such matter as afterwards fell out, was very angry with her child and rebuked her for saying so. And thinking that it might proceed from some lightness in the child's brain by reason of her great sneezing and want of sleep, took her and laid her down upon a bed. And she hung curtains against the windows, thereby hoping to bring her into a sleep. But much ado they had to pacify and quiet the child. The old woman, hearing this, sat still and said never a word. Yet looked very ruefull, as afterwards was remembered by them that saw her. The child still continued her manner of sickness, rather worse than better. Within two days after, her parents sent the child's urine to Cambridge to Doctor Barrow, a man well known to be excellently skilful in physick. He returned this answer, namely, that he did perceive no kind of distemperature save only that he thought she might be troubled with worms. And therefore he sent his medicine accordingly. But the child was no whit the better. So within two days after, they sent again to the same man, declaring to him the manner of her fits more at large. He said that the urine which they then again brought to him showed no such kind of disquietness to be in her body. And the falling sickness,²⁷ which the parents did suspect to be in the child, he would warrant her clear from that disease. Then he sent other prescriptions as he thought good to purge her body, which took no place nor prevailed anything in the child like he looked for. Then the parents sent to him the third time, as his desire was to understand how his physick had worked, declaring that it wrought nothing at all as he looked for, neither that the child was in any way recovered. Then Master Doctor, looking again in the urine, and perceiving the child's body to be in good temper, as he then said, for anything that he saw, demanded whether there was any sorcery or witchcraft suspected in the child. Answer was made, 'No.' Then he said, 'All surely cannot be well.' For it was not possible that the child's body should be distempered by any natural cause as then was declared to him, and no sign thereof at all to appear in the urine. Notwithstanding, for their

²⁷ Epilepsy.

better assurance, if the messenger would go to any other skilful man in the town to take further advice, he said he would be very well contented. Whereupon the messenger went to Master Butler who, considering of the urine, and hearing the manner of the child's trouble, said that he thought it might be the worms. Yet by the urine, he did not perceive it to be. And if it were the worms, then it was a very strange kind of grief to be caused by them in that way. And he appointed the same medicine and physick (for the remedy) which Doctor Barrow had prescribed before. This, being known, was not applied to the child, because Master Doctor Barrow had said that if Master Throckmorton, whom he wished very well, as he then said, by reason of ancient acquaintance with him, would follow his advice, he should not strive any more therewith by physick, nor spend any more money on it. For he himself said that he had some experience of the malice of some witches, and he verily thought that there was some kind of sorcery and witchcraft wrought towards his child. After this answer from Master Doctor Barrow, Master Throckmorton resolved himself to rest on God's pleasure, not striving any further by physick to help his daughter. Yet both himself and his wife were free from any such conceit of witchcraft, which Master Doctor Barrow did suspect, until within just one month after, the very day and hour almost observed, two more of his daughters, older than the other by two or three years, fell into the same like extremities as the other sister before them. And they cried out against Mother Samuel, saying, 'Take her away. Look where she stands here before us in a black fringed cap,' which kind of cap she did indeed usually wear, but she was not then present. 'It is she,' said they, 'that has bewitched us, and she will kill us if you do not take her away.' This thing did somewhat move the parents and strike into their minds a suspicion of witchcraft. Yet considering for what cause it should be wrought on them or their children, they could not imagine. For they were but newly come to the town to live, which was but at Michaelmas before. Neither had they given any occasion, to their knowledge, either to her or any other, to practise any such malice against them. Within less than a month after that, another sister, younger than any of the rest, about the age of nine years, fell into the like case, and cried out against Mother Samuel as the other did.

Soon after, Mistress Joan, the eldest sister of them all, about the age of fifteen years, was in the same state and worse handled indeed than any of the other sisters were. For she, having more strength than they, and striving more with the spirit than the rest, not being able to overcome it, was the more grievously tormented. For it forced her to sneeze, screech, and groan very fearfully. Sometimes it would heave up her belly and bounce up her body with such violence that, had she not been kept on her bed, it could not but have greatly bruised her body. And many times, sitting in a chair having her fit, with her often starting and heaving, she would almost break the chair she sat in. Yet there was no striving with them in this state, for the more they laboured to help them and to keep them down, the more violently they were handled, being deprived of all use of their senses during their fits. For they could neither see, hear, nor feel anybody, only crying out against Mother Samuel, desiring to have her taken away from them, who never came again after she perceived herself to be suspected.

These kinds of fits would hold them, sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, either an hour or two, sometimes half the day, yea, the whole day. And many times, they had six or seven fits in an hour. Yet when it pleased God to deliver them from their fits, they neither knew what they had said, nor yet in what way they had been dealt withal, as hereafter shall be declared in particular.

After Mistress Joan had been thus handled a while, the spirit, so it would seem, would sound in her ears something which she would declare in her fit. And amongst the rest, it showed to her one time that there should be twelve of them which would be bewitched in that house, in one way or other. And it named them all to her, being all womankind, and servants in the house, herself and her sisters being five of the number. All which proved afterwards very true, for they had all their several griefs. And most of them were afflicted in the same sort and manner as these five sisters were, of whom and the manner of their faith, if it would be written in particular how they were dealt withal, there would be no end of this book.

And this may suffice to be known concerning the servants. When they first fell into their fits, they all cried out against Mother Samuel, as the children did, saying, Take her away, Mistress. For God's sake, take her

away and burn her. For she will kill us all if you let her alone.' They had the same miseries and extremities that the children had. When they were out of their fits, they knew no more than the children did, either what they had done or said. And presently, on their departure from Mistress Throckmorton's house, they were all very well as at any time before, and so have continued ever since without suspicion of any such kind of vexations. And those servants that came in their places, the most of them were afflicted in the like way as the others for the space of two years together.

On Friday the thirteenth of February,²⁸ being Saint Valentine's Eve, in the thirty second year of her Majesty's reign, Gilbert Pickering Esquire of Titchmarsh Grove, in the County of Northhampton, being Uncle to the said child, and hearing how strangely they were vexed and troubled, went to Warboys to visit and see them and also to comfort their parents. Coming to the house where they were, he found them all, at that time, very well, as any children could be. And about one half hour after, the said Master Pickering was informed that one Mistress Andley and Master Whittle of Saint Ives, and others, were gone to the house of Mother Samuel to persuade her to come to see and to visit the said children. And because they tarried long, it seemed to the said Master Pickering that they could not get her to come, although the said Mother Samuel had often said that she would come to the said children, whenever it pleased their parents to send for her, and that she would venture her life in water up to the chin, and lose some part of her best blood, to do them any good. But now, as it seemed, her mind was clean altered. The cause was, as it was suspected, that all the said children, as it was said before, cried out against her in their fits, saying that she had bewitched them, and that she also feared the common practice of scratching would be used on her. Nothing less at that time was intended, for both the parents and the said Master Pickering had taken advice from good Divines of the unlawfulness thereof.²⁹ Wherefore the said Master Pickering went to Mother Samuel's house, as much to see her as also to persuade her that, if she were any cause of the children's trouble, it might be amended. He, coming to the said house, found there the aforesaid Master Whittle, Mistress Andley, and others, persuading her

²⁸ 1590.²⁹ That is, of scratching.

to visit the said children. But she, with loud speeches, utterly refused the same. Whereupon, the said Master Pickering told Mother Samuel that he had authority to bring her. And if she would not go with him willingly and of her own accord, he would force and compel her whether she would or not. This he then did, together with her daughter Agnes Samuel, and one Cicely Burder, all of whom were suspected to be witches, or at the least in the confederacy with Mother Samuel. And as they were going to the said Master Throckmorton's house, Master Whittle, Mistress Andley and others went ahead of Mother Samuel, Agnes Samuel, with the said Cicely Burder in the middle, and the said Master Pickering behind them. The said Master Pickering perceived that old Mother Samuel would have willingly talked with her daughter Agnes. But the said Master Pickering followed so closely behind them that they could not confer. And when they came to the door of Master Throckmorton's house, Mother Samuel courteously offered the said Master Pickering to go into the house before her, which he refused. And in the entry of that same house, she thought that, either then or not at all, she would have had time to speak to her daughter. The said Mother Samuel thrust her head as near as she could to her daughter's head, and said these words, 'I charge you, do not confess anything.' Which words the said Master Pickering, being behind them, perceived. And he thrust his head as near as he could between their heads whilst the words were spoken. And hearing them, he presently replied to old Mother Samuel, 'You naughty woman. Do you charge your daughter not to confess anything?' 'No,' says she, 'I said not so, but I charged her to hurry herself home to get her Father his dinner.' In the meantime, whilst these words were being spoken, Master Whittle, Mistress Andley, and others went into the house. And three of the children were then standing perfectly well in the hall by the fire. But no sooner had Mother Samuel entered the hall but at one moment the said three children fell down on the ground strangely tormented. So if they had been allowed to lie still on the ground, they would have leapt and jumped like a quick pickere!³⁰ newly taken out of the water, their bellies heaving up,

³⁰ A young pike.

their head and their heels still touching the ground as though they had been tumblers. And they would have drawn their heads and their heels together backwards, throwing out their arms with great groans, most strangely to be heard, to the great grief of the beholders. But not long after they were thus fallen to the ground, the said Master Whittle took up one of the said children, which was Jane Throckmorton, and carried her into an inward chamber, laying her upon a bed. And being a man of as great strength as most be this day in England, and the child not above nine years old, yet he could not hold her down on the bed. But she would heave up her belly far bigger and in higher measure for her proportion, than any woman with child ready to be delivered, her belly being as hard as though there had been for the present time a great loaf in the same. And in such a manner, it would rise and fall a hundred times in the space of an hour, her eyes being closed as though she were blind, and her arms spread abroad so stiff and strong that the strength of a man was not able to bring them to her body. Then the said Master Pickering went into the parlour where the said child was. And standing on the further side of the bed from the child, viewing the state of her, the said child presently stretched forth her right arm to that side of the bed next to the said Master Pickering. And there scratching the covering of the bed, said these words very often, 'Oh, that I had her. Oh, that I had her.' Whereupon, the said Master Pickering wondered greatly what the meaning of the said words would tend to, and the rather, because the said Master Gilbert Pickering was of that opinion that scratching was merely unlawful. Yet the said Master Pickering put his own hand to the child's hand whilst she was speaking the words. But the child, feeling his hand, would not scratch it. But she forsook his hand and scratched still on the bed, her face being turned to the contrary side from the said Master Pickering, her eyes being closed. And Master Whittle lying in a manner with his whole body and weight over her to hold down her belly, feared that she would burst her back.

Notwithstanding the occasion being thus offered by the child, or rather by the spirit in the child to disclose some secret whereby the witches might be by some means or token made manifest and known, the said Master Pickering went into the hall and took Mother Samuel by the hand. She

went as willingly as a bear to the stake. And he brought her to the further side of the bed from the child, who lay scraping with her nails on the bed covering, saying, 'Oh, that I had her.' Then the said Master Pickering, in very soft speeches so that the child could not hear, said to Mother Samuel, 'Put your hand to the child's hand.' But she would not. Then the said Master Pickering, for example's sake, put his hand to the child's hand, as did also Mistress Andley and others at the same instant. But the child would scarce touch, much less scratch any of their hands. Then the said Master Pickering, without either malice to the woman, confidence, or opinion about scratching, only to taste by this experiment whereto the child's words would tend, took Mother Samuel's hand and thrust it to the child's hand. The child no sooner felt the same, but scratched her with such vehemency that her nails broke into splinters with the force and earnest desire that she had for revenge. Whilst the child was thus scratching, the said Master Pickering did cover Mother Samuel's hand with his own hand, to test what the child would do in this extraordinary passion. But the child would not scratch his hand, but felt to and fro on the bed for that which she missed. And if, by any means, she could come with her hand or but with one of her fingers to touch Mother Samuel's hand, she would scratch that hand only and none other. Yea, sometimes, while the said Master Pickering with his hand did cover Mother Samuel's hand, the said child would put one of her fingers between the fingers of the said Master Pickering and scratch Mother Samuel's hand that lay nethermost with that one finger, all her other fingers lying on the hand of the said Master Pickering without moving.

And in this passion, if at any time Mother Samuel's hand was hidden or withdrawn from the child, she would mourn and show apparent tokens of dislike, as though there had been some great discourtesy offered. And this is to be noted for a most certain truth, for so it was by the said Master Pickering at the Assizes in Huntington given in evidence, that the child's eyes were closed, so that she could not see any person, for so was the nature of their fits. And though at that time the child could have seen, yet her head and neck were so turned backward into Master Whittle's bosom, who covered, as before is said, both her head, face, and body with his body in

such a way and so closely that it was impossible for the child to see the company which stood on the further side of the bed.

This being done, the said Master Pickering departed out of that place into another parlour, where there was a woman holding one of the other children. As the said Master Pickering passed by, this child scraped the woman's apron that held her, saying, 'Oh, that I had her. Oh, that I had her.' Then the said Master Pickering went into the hall, and brought Cicely Burder to the said child. And, for brevity's sake, as the said Master Pickering did with Mother Samuel to the first child, so did he to Cicely Burder. And as the first child did to Mother Samuel, so this second child did to Cicely Burder in all respects.³¹

There was also a third child at that time in the hall who spoke the same words. But the Father of the children, and Master Doctor Dorington, parson of the same parish, came then into the house, not allowing that which was done, by reason of which the third was not put in proof.

The same night after supper, the children being all very well and out of their fits, Master Doctor Dorington made motion to have some prayers before the company departed. The company then kneeling down, Doctor Dorington began to pray. But no sooner had he uttered the first word, but even at one instant of time all the children fell into their fits, with such terrible screeches and strange sneezings, wonderfully tormented as though they would have been torn in pieces. This caused Doctor Dorington to stop in the midst of his prayers and say these words, or the like in effect, 'Were we best to go any further?' But he had no sooner stopped, and his breath ceased from praying, but the children were quiet, but still in their fits. Then he began to pray again. And then the children, or rather the wicked spirit in the children, forced them as before. This was proved often in the time of prayer. For when he had made an end of any one prayer, the children ceased and were quiet. When he began to pray, they began to shriek. When he ended, they ended.

The next day, being Saint Valentine's Day, the said Master Pickering brought home to his house at Titchmarsh Grove aforesaid, one of the

³¹ Although Cicely Burder is an early suspect, she is dropped from the story from this point.

said children called Elizabeth Throckmorton. Being in her fit, she was no sooner on horseback and out of Warboys Town but she was well. And so she continued until she came into the said Master Pickering's house. But no sooner had she entered into the house, but the fit took her suddenly. Being not able to speak, gasping only, 'Thus it comes,' she pitched herself backwards. All the joints of her backbone were, as it were, drawn together. She thrust out her belly so strongly that none could bend her back again, being very strong and heavy. She shook her limbs, and oftentimes her head when it rises so high, but specially her arms, like those who struggle and plunge betwixt life and death. Being both dumb, deaf and blind, her eyes were closed up. Now this held her not a quarter of an hour. But with a gasp she came again to herself, stroking her eyes as though she had been but asleep.

Sometimes, being taken in her fit, she is but deaf only when she can speak, or rather as we think the spirit in her, but very vainly. And she can see also, but with a small glimmering when, if you look on her, you would deem her to have no sight at all. Sometimes also she can only hear, and not everybody, but someone whom she likes and chooses out from the rest. Sometimes she sees only, and as plainly as any other, but neither hears nor speaks anything, her teeth being set in her head. Sometimes she both hears and sees very well, and yet is not able to speak.

Above all things, she delights in play. She will pick out somebody to play with her at cards, but one only, not hearing, seeing, or speaking to any other. But being awake, she remembers nothing that she did, heard, or spoke, affirming that she was not sick but only slept.

She continued well until night. And before supper, at the time of thanksgiving, it vexed her very strangely, taking her at the very name of grace, and holding her no longer than grace was in saying. She sat very well at the table. But no sooner had she put up her knife, but it pitched her backwards. Then, being taken from the table, she was well until thanksgiving, all which time she was most grievously vexed and no longer. Afterwards, she was very quiet and well until motion was made for prayers, all which time it seemed as though it would have rent her in pieces, with such screeching and outcries and vehement sneezing that it terrified the whole company. But prayers being ended, she became quiet, but still in her fit.

Then Master Pickering, and others that were acquainted with the manner of it, said that if any should read the Bible, or any other godly book before her, it would rage as before as long as they read. But because it was a thing very strange, and therefore hardly believed, one did take a Bible and read the first Chapter of Saint John, the first verse. At the hearing of this, she was like one out of her mind. When he that read held his peace, she was quiet. When he read again, it tormented her. When he ceased, it ceased. This divers did prove many times . . .³²

As it has been further very truly observed in this child Elizabeth Throckmorton remaining at Titchmarsh Grove, it follows to declare that every month, from March to July, she has had some vexation of body which is termed by the name of fits, because of the divers manner thereof, so that she was never clear and perfectly freed as it may be thought since her first visitation, although in some of the months she had but only one fit. And now, because it seems to give a fresh onset and a new attempt on her, we have noted in particular how she has been variously handled.

As for the manner of it, you have heard it before to be very strange. It is first perceived commonly to be in her belly by the great swelling and heaving up thereof. From thence, it arises up into her throat stopping the passage of her breath, so that she is oftentimes forced to draw the same with great difficulty as if strangling. Remaining there, it ties her tongue many times, and sets her teeth together. It will further ascend up into her head, and shake the same as if she had the palsy, benumbing all her parts, and depriving her of the use of her senses. Sometimes it will be in her arms and hands in the same way, sometimes in one place, many times in another, and sometimes in all places at once.

For the continuance of it, it has been either short or long, mild or more vehement, as it pleased God to permit. For it has always from the beginning kept a very mutable and uncertain course in dealing with them . . .³³

³² I omit a section here which gives virtually daily details of her fits from February 15 until March 18 or thereabouts (sigs. B.3.v–C.2.r).

³³ I omit a section here which details the period from July 29 to September 8 (sigs. C.2.v–D.3.v). It is characterised by descriptions of her capacities and incapacities, by the adults testing the spirits, taking Elizabeth in and out of the house, her inability to eat, their many attempts to feed her both at home and outdoors, and testing her claims about the activities of her sisters elsewhere. Throughout

Now that you have heard the particular manner of the fits of this child, Mistress Elizabeth, you may imagine and aim at the manner of handling of the rest of her sisters during this time, remaining in other places, who were no less strangely dealt withal than she was. If it were particularly to be observed as is done in her, just as strange wonders, if anything hitherto seem strange, befell every one of them severally, as are these which you have already heard. And by some of them were shown matters of far greater admiration. But this may suffice, lest in entering into the rest, no end could be found, so infinite is the matter.

It pleased the Providence of God that, not long after Master Gilbert Pickering had carried away this child to his house, about a month or so, the Lady Cromwell, wife of Sir Henry Cromwell, Knight, who then lay in Ramsey, a town two miles distant from Warboys, came to Master Throckmorton's house, together with her daughter-in-law, Mistress Cromwell, to visit these children and to comfort their parents, with whom she was well acquainted. She had not long been in the house, but the children which were there all fell into their fits, and were so grievously tormented for the time, that it pitied that good Lady's heart to see them, insomuch that she could not abstain from tears. Whereupon, she caused the old woman Mother Samuel to be sent for. She dared not refuse to come, because her husband was tenant to Sir Henry Cromwell. After she was come, the children grew to be worse than they were before, which caused the greater sorrow. Then the Lady Cromwell took Mother Samuel aside, and charged her deeply with this witchcraft, and used also some hard speeches to her. But she strongly denied them all, saying that Master Throckmorton and his wife did her great wrong, so to blame her without cause. The Lady answered her that neither Master Throckmorton nor his wife accused her, but the children themselves did it in their fits, or rather the spirit by them. One of them, Mistress Joan by name, being then in her fit, hearing the old woman thus clearing herself, for she heard not the Lady nor any other, said that

this time at Titmarsh Grove, the name of Mother Samuel is regularly invoked. On one occasion, Mother Samuel is said to have put a mouse in her belly (sig.c.1.r). On another occasion, she appears to Elizabeth in a white sheet with a black child sitting on her shoulders (sig.c.4.r).

it was she that caused all this. And there is something, she said, that does now tell me so. She asked if nobody heard it but she. She affirmed that it squealed very loudly in her ears, and marveled that nobody could hear it, wishing the old woman to listen to it. But Mother Samuel still continued her denial. Then the Lady Cromwell would have taken her up into a chamber to have her examined more closely, Master Doctor Hall, a Doctor of Divinity, being present. But by no means would she go with them, but rather invented many excuses to go home. In the end, when the Lady perceived that, by no good speeches, neither she nor any other prevailed with her, and that gladly she would have been gone, she suddenly pulled off her head scarf and, taking a pair of shears, clipped off a lock of her hair, and gave it secretly to Mistress Throckmorton, Mother of the children, together with her headband, willing her to burn them. Mother Samuel perceiving herself thus dealt withal, spoke to the Lady thus, 'Madam, why do you use me thus? I never did you any harm as yet.' These words were afterwards remembered, although they were not at that present time grasped by any. Towards night, the Lady departed leaving the children much as she found them.

The same night, after the Lady Cromwell departed from Warboys, she suffered many things in her dream concerning Mother Samuel. And she was very strangely tormented in her sleep by a cat, as she imagined, which Mother Samuel had sent to her, which cat offered to pluck off all the skin and flesh from her arms and body. But such was the struggling and striving of the Lady that night in her bed, and the mournful noise which she made, speaking to the cat and to Mother Samuel, that she awakened her bedfellow. This was Mistress Cromwell, before named, wife to the worshipful Master Oliver Cromwell, son and heir to Sir Henry Cromwell, who that night was away from home. Mistress Cromwell being awakened, and perceiving the Lady thus disquieted, awakened her also. She greatly thanked her for it, declaring how she had been troubled in her dream with Mother Samuel and her cat, with many other circumstances which she did very well remember. Neither could she take any quiet rest or sleep all that night after for fear thereof. Not long after, the Lady fell very strangely sick. And so she continued to her dying day, which was some year and a quarter after her being at Warboys.

The manner of her fits was much like the children's, save only that she had always her perfect senses. For sometimes there would be pain in one arm, sometimes in the other, now in the one leg, by and by in the other, many times in her head. Yea, sometimes it would take her only in one or several fingers or toes, and always shake the grieved part, as if it had been the palsy. And that saying of Mother Samuel, which she used to her at Warboys, which was, 'Madam, I never hurt you as yet,' was never out of her mind. And thus, leaving this good Lady in Heaven with God, we will return to these children.

About Christmas after, the year 1590, for there was nothing noted all that time although there befell a hundred wonders, Master Henry Pickering, uncle to these children, being then a Scholar of Cambridge, went to Master Throckmorton's house. And he stayed there some three or four days. He desired to speak with Mother Samuel. And choosing a convenient time, he requested two other scholars of his acquaintance, then being in the town, to go with him. They agreed to go. And presently they went without the knowledge of any in Master Throckmorton's house. As they were going, she came out of her own house, and crossed the street before them. When they saw her, they determined rather to follow her whither she went than stay her return, because her husband was a contrary man, and would not allow her to talk with any, if he knew of it. She went to a neighbour's house for some balm, and carried a little wooden tankard in her hand and a little barley in her lap, to exchange for the balm. When she came to the house to which she intended to go, the scholar followed her immediately. And he heard her tell her errand to the wife of the house, who did not have that for which she came. Being ready to depart, the scholars desired to speak with her. But she seemed unwilling to stay. Yet they, entering into questions with her, kept her there for a little. But she was very loud in her answers, and impatient, not allowing any to speak but herself. One of them desired her to keep a woman's virtue, and be more silent. She answered that she was born in a mill, begot in a kiln, she must have her will, she could speak no more softly. The greatest part of her speech was railing words against Master Throckmorton and his children. She said that he did misuse her in allowing his children so to play the wantons in accusing her and bringing her name into question. She

often repeated that the children's fits were nothing but wantonness in them and that, if they were her children, she would not allow them so to escape without punishment, one after the other. The scholars inquired about her service of God, and profession of her faith. But all that they could get from her was that her God would deliver her, her God would defend her, and revenge her of her enemy. She always used the phrase, 'My God will do this and that for me,' which, being noted by one of them, he asked her if she alone had a God, or if she did not serve the same God that others did? She answered, yes, that she did. Yet much ado they had to bring her from the phrase 'My God,' to say 'The God of Heaven and earth.' In the end she would needs be gone, saying that her husband would beat her for her long tarrying. Then the uncle of those children, being somewhat more moved than the rest, said at the parting that, if she were the woman that had wrought this wickedness on these children, the vengeance of God would surely wait on her to death. And however she might deceive herself, and she would for a time, yet there was no way to prevent the judgements of God but by her confession and repentance, which if she did not in time, he hoped one day to see her burned at a stake. And he said that he himself would bring fire and wood, and the children would blow the coals. Her answer to him was this, for they were then in the street hard by a pond. 'I had rather,' said she, 'see you doused over head and ears in this pond.' And so they parted.

Now to come to the point, the eldest of Master Throckmorton's daughters³⁴ was then in her fit, sitting at home in a parlour. Her Father and grandmother, with some other of her sisters in their fits, were present with her. Suddenly she said, 'Now is my uncle,' naming him, 'and the two others,' whom also she named, 'going to Mother Samuel. We shall hear some news by and by.' Presently she said, 'Look where Mother Samuel goes, crossing in the streets before them, with a wooden tankard in her hand, and her apron so tucked up before her. I believe,' says she, 'there is somewhat in it. She is gone into such a man's house that keeps an alehouse.' The man's name she could not hit on, but described him by his red head. 'Hark,' said she

³⁴ Joan.

to her sisters, 'Mother Samuel is very loud, and my uncle bids her speak softly, but she says she cannot.' And she repeated to her Father and the rest the same words, viz., that she was born in a mill, &c., in the same way that Mother Samuel spoke them to her uncle and the other scholars. To be short, she declared particularly every word that passed between Mother Samuel and those scholars at that time. And at the parting she said, 'There Mother Samuel, my uncle did touch you I think.' And she repeated again the very same words that her uncle had done, wishing that that day were once come. 'For I myself,' said she, 'would blow the coals.' But it had been as good as if he had said nothing to her, said she, for she wished him over the head and ears in the pond for it. Master Throckmorton was standing by and hearing all this. After the child had said that now Mother Samuel and the scholars were parted, he inquired of his brother, the child's uncle, asking if he knew whither he was gone. Answer was made that he had not come home from the Church since evening Prayer, for it was on a Saturday, but nobody knew where he was. 'It may be,' said Master Throckmorton, 'that he is with Mother Samuel.' And immediately he went out of his own house to see if he could perceive where they were. As he went, he met them in the Churchyard coming from Mother Samuel's. 'Where have you been,' said he? They told him. 'I could have told you as much myself,' he said. And he repeated to them the whole matter, as his daughter before had shown. When they had come into the parlour where she was, there was also another of her sisters in her fit sitting by. And this her other sister could hear her said uncle speak to her, and nobody else. And so by her mouth, for they could for the most part hear one another in their fits, he inquired of her sister all those matters over again, which she did in his own hearing repeat. 'But,' said she, 'the wind was so great that I had much ado to hear them,' whereas indeed there was then no wind stirring. After this, the spirit, or the thing, as the children called it, would many times appear to them in their fits in some kind of shape or other, but most commonly in the likeness of a dun³⁵ chicken, and would talk familiarly with them, saying that they came from Mother Samuel, whom they called their dame, and were sent by her to the children to torment and vex them in that way. It would declare to the

³⁵ Mouse-coloured.

children many times concerning Mother Samuel, insomuch that she could do almost nothing at home for a great time, but the spirit would disclose it. If it were required by the children in their fits, viz., to know what she was then doing at home or in what place of her house or elsewhere she was, the spirit would tell. This was proved true by a messenger presently sent on purpose.

Now the spirits manifestly began to accuse Mother Samuel to the children in their fits saying that it was she that had bewitched them and all those servants which were bewitched in the house. And the spirits told them that, whenever they were in their fits and were either carried to Mother Samuel's house or she forced to come to them, they would presently be well. This was proved true many times, and never failed once. So if the children were at any time in their fits, and in such a state that a strong man could scarcely hold them, they would so struggle, jump, and sprawl in his arms, and were carried to Mother Samuel's house, for it was a very hard thing to get Mother Samuel to Master Throckmorton's house. Yet if they came but once to the threshold of Mother Samuel's door, they would wipe their eyes and say, 'I am well. Why do you carry me? Set me down,' as though some shame had been offered them, in that they were carried in the streets, not knowing anything of the state in which they had been. While they remained in the house, they were very well. But determining once to come away, and offering to come out of the door, they fell presently down on the ground, and were brought from thence in the same state that they were carried thither. Contrariwise, whenever Mother Samuel came to Master Throckmorton's house, whatever kind of extremity these children were in, as it was most wonderfully strange to see them many times, as soon as ever she had set foot into the parlour or hall where they were, they would all presently jump up onto their feet and be as well as any in the house, and so continue while she was present. But when she went to depart, they would all sink down as a stone on the ground. If she turned but her face again and came towards them, they would be as well as before. This was tried twenty times in one hour. And when she departed from the house, she left them in the same state wherein she found them, so long as their fit continued upon them. After this, Master Throckmorton thought good to disperse his children. And he sent them

abroad, some to one friend's house, some to another for a time, to see how they should be dealt withal. Yet he always kept some one of them at home with him.

If it should be declared how these were all severally handled for the time they were abroad, it would take a long discourse, and longer indeed than is thought meet at this time, although very strange things, and such as may seem worth the noting befell every one of them, such as this for example. Being in their fits, they could tell in what case or state their other sisters were at that instant, some of them being separated eight, ten, or twelve miles asunder. And they have said, 'Now is my sister', naming her and the place where she was in her fit, 'very sore handled', as she herself also was at that instant. It was proved to be most true by the just computation of times, with many such like things.

But this may suffice concerning them being abroad, that they were never altogether clear and free from their fit, although it be true that some of them, whether at home or abroad, had not their fits above once in a month, sometimes once in half a year, and one of them was clear a whole year together. And this also is verified and true in some other of these five sisters, that they were never clear nor free from some kind of fit or other three weeks together, I think, scarcely three days since the first day it took them except now, since last Assizes in Lent, at which time these witches were executed.

To pass over all that which might be spoken of them for a year and almost a half,³⁶ we will come nearer to these latter times, wherein the spirits, whether moved by their own malice, as it surpasses the reach of man to sound the depth of the Devil's malice to mankind, or moved by the malice of the senders and setters on, or both, it is not known. Or whether for the conclusion and consummation of their parent's patience in this point, it pleased the wisdom of God, who in his Providence had determined their end, to grant them therefore more liberty for the time, to exercise their malice against these children, we leave it to God. But truth it is, that they were more strangely vexed, and more grievously tormented in their body now of late, and take them generally altogether, than at any time

³⁶ To around mid 1592.

almost from the beginning. And to begin this time at Michaelmas³⁷ last past, or thereabouts, four of these children were all together at Warboys in their Father's house, and the fifth, which was the eldest of them, was at her Uncle's house, Gilbert Pickering Esquire, dwelling at Titchmarsh Grove. About this time, which was Michaelmas 1592, one of these four children, the youngest save one,³⁸ near the age of fourteen years, was in a very strange kind of fit, the manner of which was as follows. Every day for the space of three weeks or more, she had a senseless fit, some time of the day or other, and sometimes many fits in one day. In this fit, she could neither hear, see, nor speak to anybody. Besides her inward grief, she would heave and start and swell up her body, which was very troublesome to her for a time. When she was out of these fits, she would go up and down the house very well. She would eat and drink, and sometimes be very pleasant in outward gesture with her sisters. She would do anything which, by any sign, she did understand should be done. She would make a reverence as she passed by to those where she saw it was due, insomuch that any man ignorant of her state could perceive nothing to be amiss in her. Yet she would never speak to any in particular. Neither could she hear any that spoke to her during that time, except sometimes she would prattle a little to an infant, which was newly home in the house, in which she took great delight.

It pleased God that, around the beginning of these kinds of fits in her, an aunt of hers was then in the house. She was delivered of a child, upon which occasion many of her uncles and aunts, and other kindred and friends, resorted to the house. And some of them stayed a week or ten days together, all which time the child was in these kinds of fits. And as it happened, Mother Samuel amongst the rest came to the house. And she was brought up into the gentlewoman's chamber, where commonly the greatest company was. As soon as she came in, the child in question, being there, espied her. And presently she spoke to her, bidding her welcome, and saying that she was a great stranger there. She fetched her up both meat and drink, and would do anything readily that she willed her to do. In the end, she asked Mother Samuel whose that little child was which she herself had in her arms. The old woman told her, and likewise the name of it, which thing she had also

³⁷ 29 September 1592.

³⁸ Probably Jane.

demanded. The child marvelled, saying, 'Is my aunt brought to bed? I am very glad of it. Why then,' she said, 'such and such of mine uncles and aunts promised to be here.' They were then indeed in the house, and some of them in that company. Then Mother Samuel told her that such and such whom she asked for were present. The child said that she saw nobody but her and that little child which she had in her arms, although she looked full in their faces. Many such like strange things then fell out, which are too long to speak of. When the old woman departed, the child lost the use of all her senses, and continued in the same state in which she was when the old woman came into the house.

When she had continued thus three weeks or more, one day she came out of her aunt's chamber into the hall. And she had not been there long, but she fell into a most troublesome fit for the time. But it did not continue long. Presently she spoke and said, 'I am glad, and very glad,' repeating it often. Suddenly, she wiped her eyes and came out of her fit. Her Mother, being in the hall, she asked her blessing, and inquired of many things. And amongst others, she asked how her aunt did, from whom a little before she had come. And she knew of nothing that was done, nor that any company had been there for the space of three weeks before.

It follows to speak of the rest of her sisters together with herself, all of whose grief and extremity of troubles increased, as the year grew towards an end, insomuch that every day brought with it increase of pain, and strangeness in their manner of fits.

Towards Hollantide,³⁹ the spirits grew very familiar with the children. And commonly, towards the end of their fits when the greatest trouble was over, they would talk with them half an hour together, and sometimes longer. The greatest matter of their talk was about the manner of fits which they would have, and concerning Mother Samuel, whose pleasure it was that they should be so used. But the spirits said many times that they would bring her to shame for it in the end. If in this time, being in their fits, they had inquired of their spirit when they would come out of that fit in which

³⁹ All Saints' Day, 31 October.

then they were, and when they should have another, it would have told them, and not missed any whit at all.

If they had asked how many fits they should have the next day following, and the third day, or any day that week, and how many fits they should have in one day, and what manner of fits they would be, whether more grievous or less, how long every fit should continue, and in what part of the day they should begin, and when they should end, it has told them, and not failed in any one point. For it has been presently set down in writing, as the children have spoken it, for it was not possible to remember the times for them all, and proved wholly true.

The times and signs which the spirits did appoint to them, for the beginning or ending of their fits, were usually these: In the morning, as soon as they did offer to arise out of their beds; as soon as they were up or ready; as soon as they asked their Father or their Mother or their grandmother blessing; as soon as they took a book in hand to pray or when they had ended their prayers; as soon as they went to breakfast; as soon as dinner was set upon the board or as soon as they did offer to say grace either before or after dinner; as soon as they themselves were set down to dinner or at the first bit of meat they put in their mouths; or as soon as dinner was ended or they had put up their knife after dinner. The same circumstances were also observed at supper. Or if it had been on the Sabbath day, or any day on which the bells ought to be rung, as soon as the first, second, or third peal rings, or has done ringing, with many such like signs, which would be too long to speak of, appointed by the spirit for the children to fall in or out of their fits, which they duly observed, and failed not a minute, as may be thought.

After they had continued in this state about a month together or thereabouts, whether the spirits were weary, as they oftentimes said to the children in their fits that they now waxed weary of their dame Mother Samuel, or whether through the power of God's goodness and special protection of the children, the spirits perceived that their own malice and the malice of their dame to the children was restrained and kept under in such a way that they could not kill the children as they desired. For we may not think that it

agrees with the nature of the evil spirit to sport and play with man, as these spirits oftentimes did with these little children. They said to them that now, before long, they would bring their dame either to her confession or confusion. And this was the greatest stay of comfort and prop of patience which the parents and friends of these children always had. Namely, when these children were in their greatest torment and miseries as might be devised, in such a way as made the heart of the beholders many times to melt in their bodies, being without all hope ever in this world to see them alive again, yet whenever it pleased God to deliver them out of their fits, they would wipe their eyes and be presently well as if it had never been they, not knowing anything that had befallen them. So that now it would seem that God himself would take the matter into his own hands. And having in his counsel determined an end thereof, so he would also appoint the means to bring it to pass, which was even by the spirits themselves, the instruments of this wickedness. For now they began to accuse Mother Samuel openly to her face, and say that they will not be well in any place, unless they stay in her house, or she be brought to stay with them. And besides that, they shall have more troublesome fits than ever they had, except one of these two be brought to pass.

Master Throckmorton, still thinking that the spirits might lie, was content to try the uttermost for three weeks together. All this time, his children had very many most grievous and troublesome fits, inasmuch that when night came, there was never a one of them able to go to their beds alone, their legs were so full of aches and pains. They had many other griefs besides in their bodies, being out of their fits, which were not usual with them. And one of them also, for all that time of three weeks, never had use of her legs, except it were an hour or two in one day while Mother Samuel was in the house. And then she was able to walk and was very well, as the rest also were. Otherwise her legs were thrust up to her body as if they had been tied with strings. And where you set her down, there you would find her, unless she crept away.

Master Throckmorton perceived that by no means could he get permission of old John Samuel for the old woman to come to his house, although

he offered to allow him up to ten pounds in the year for the board and wages of the best servant in Huntington Shire to do his business in her stead if he wished, besides his promise and bond if he required it, for the well using of his wife while she was with him. He could find no other remedy for the health of his children but to carry them thither which he did. As soon as they came into the house they were all presently well. Realising this, he said that his children should dwell there and that they should not go out of the house. He would provide for their necessities. The man⁴⁰ seeing that there was no striving with the company extinguished the fire although it was a cold season. He said that he would starve them, besides very many evil words which came from him and his daughter at that time. All that day they continued there very well, and did both eat and drink, and read in their book, and were very merry. At night, when the man, John Samuel, perceived that they would lodge there, he thought that they would be very troublesome to him. And therefore he gave his faithful promise that his wife would come to Master Throckmorton's house the next morning, and stay with him. Whereupon Master Throckmorton took his children home. And they were in their fits as soon as they came out of his doors, and so continued all that night. The next morning Master Throckmorton went for the old woman. But she was gone, nobody knew whither. So he sent again for his children who, as soon as they came into the house, were well. Towards night, the old woman came in. She said that she had been two or three miles out of the town. And her husband knew of her going, because she would not come to Master Throckmorton's. When he understood that she had spoken, for she spoke it privately, desiring them to whom she spoke it not to tell her husband, he utterly denied the matter. And presently he fell on his wife and beat her very sorely with a cudgel, many being present, before she could be rescued by them. In the end, when the man perceived Master Throckmorton still to continue in the same mind aforesaid, he was content to let his wife go home with them that night. All went to Master Throckmortons house very well together and so continued the space of

⁴⁰ John Samuel.

nine or ten days following, without any manner of soreness, lameness, or any manner grudging of fits, and in better state than they had been, as it was well known all of them together, for the space of three whole years before. This made the parents right glad, and to use the woman as a welcome guest. At the ten days' end, the old woman entreated Mistress Throckmorton, for her husband was gone forth that morning, that she might go home, making her excuse to fetch something that she wanted. Mistress Throckmorton was very reluctant to grant it, promising that she herself would rather fetch what she would have than that she should go out of her house. Yet the old woman said that nobody could come by that thing that she would have but herself, which happily was true. And promising her present return, she yielded to her request.

Soon after she was gone, some of the children fell into their fits again as before times. And the spirit then talking with them said that now Mother Samuel was feeding her spirits, and making a new league and agreement with them. This was that, although now she came again to the house, they would be no whit the better but rather the worse for her being there, because she did not wish to remain there any longer. This thing seemed to be true that the child spoke. For as soon as she came again, which was not before she was sent for four or five hours after she went, the children which were in their fits at her coming, so continued. And they that were not, after her coming, fell into their fits, all of them crying out that now Mother Samuel had made a new agreement with her spirits, and now they should be no whit better for her presence, but rather the worse.

Master Throckmorton, when he came home and perceived the state with his children otherwise than when he left it, and the cause why, could not be but heartily sorry. Yet he referred all to the good pleasure of God, and would not allow the old woman to depart his house, chiefly for this cause, because his children being in their fits, could neither hear, see, nor speak to anybody but to her. And some of the children could take nothing but that which she either gave them or touched with her hands.

Mother Samuel thus remained with the children. She could not be in any place of the house alone, nor doing anything about the house, but the

children in their fits would reveal it, specially when she was feeding her spirits. For then the children would say, 'Now is Mother Samuel in such a place of the house feeding her spirits.' When they went and looked, there they would find her, but whether doing any such thing or not, God and her conscience are the best witnesses.

Many times also, as she sat talking with these children being in their fits by the fire side, they would say to her, 'Look you here, Mother Samuel, do you not see this thing that sits here by us?' She would answer, 'No,' not she. Why, they would say again, 'I marvel that you do not see it. Look how it leaps, skips, and plays up and down,' pointing at it with their fingers here and there as it leaped. Sometimes also they would say, 'Hark, Mother Samuel, do you not hear it? Hark how loud it is. I marvel you do not hear it. No, you cannot but hear it.' She would deny it, and bid them ask their Father, or some other whom she saw standing by whether they heard it or not. The children would answer that they saw nobody although they stood hard by them. Then would they tell Mother Samuel that it tells them that she both hears it, sees it, and sent it. The Father of these children, Master Throckmorton, to make a kind of test of this matter, one night willed Mother Samuel, as he might have done to any other then being present, to name how many fits those three children that then were in their fits, would have the next day following, and what kind of fits they would have, when they would begin, and how long they would continue. Mother Samuel was very reluctant to do it. Yet, in the end, their Father said that she should do it. She said, 'One of them will have three fits,' naming the child, such and such for the manner, namely, easy fits, appointing the time for their beginnings and endings. 'The other will have two in a like way,' the time appointed by her. And the third will have none, but be well all the day. All which fits proved very justly in every one of them the next day, as she had spoken.

At another time not long after, Mother Samuel was sitting by these children being in their fits as before. Master Throckmorton, their Father, and some other also being with him, demanded of Mother Samuel saying that he had heard that those that were acquainted with these spirits, as the

children say that she is, and had retained them in their service to do for them as they commanded, did feed them and reward them with some thing from them, but most usually with their blood, and that every day. 'Now therefore,' said he, 'make open confession and shame the Devil in telling the truth, whether you do any such thing or not.'

She most vehemently denied it, with many bitter words and curses upon herself, desiring the Lord to show some present token from Heaven on her, that all the world might know that she was such a kind of woman as they suspected her for, if she used any such thing, or rewarded them any such way, or had any spirits, or knew what they were.

Presently after, Master Throckmorton and Master Henry Pickering, uncle to the said children, who was then with him, heard her use such protestations. Being half terrified in their hearts, because they always vehemently suspected her guiltiness, that she would thus violently with her own hands, as it were, pull down the judgements of God on her head, they went out of the doors. And before they were gone ten paces from the house, another young gentleman, Master John Lawrence, cousin to the said children, that stayed behind in the parlour, came to Master Throckmorton and Master Henry Pickering and said that Mother Samuel's chin did bleed. Whereupon they returned into the parlour again where she was. And they saw the napkin, with which she had wiped away the blood from her chin, to be bloody to the quantity of eight or ten drops. Then Master Throckmorton, with the rest, looked on her chin. And there was no more to be seen than on the back of a clean hand. Only there did appear some few little red spots, as if they had been flea-bites. Then Master Throckmorton demanded of her whether her chin used to bleed so or not. She said that it did very often. He asked her who could witness it but herself. She said, 'Nobody,' for it did always bleed when she was alone, and she never told anybody of it.

After she was condemned, she did confess to the said Master Henry Pickering this, her bleeding at the chin, to be the spirits then sucking at her chin, when she made that protestation to M. Throckmorton and him. And she said that when she wiped them off with her hand, her chin bled, which sometimes it had done before, after their sucking, but not often and never so much as then, nay, scarcely the quantity of one drop at any time before.

And this by the way, as a general note throughout the book, where there is one of these strange things set down, if they be so accounted as strange, there are ten omitted, which may as well be put in and, in the judgement of them that hear of them, are no less strange than these. And for that which this book does contain, it is set down suddenly and as it comes to present memory, at the request of divers Right Worshipful, and especially for the motion's sake of the Right Worshipful, Master Justice Fenner, one of the Patrons hereof. And for the truth of the most of these things herein contained, they were given in evidence, and ready to be given against the parties accused, if either need should have required or time served, on the oath of divers gentlemen on the Assizes day at Huntington, before the said parties. And for the rest which were not then alleged, if any will make doubt thereof, there are divers gentlemen of honest report ready to confirm the same on their oaths if need should so require, that were present, some at one time, and some at another, at all these several tragedies as they may be termed.

At another time soon after, the spirits told the children, then being in their fits, the old woman also standing by them, that if their Father Master Throckmorton would then presently go to John Samuel's house, his daughter Agnes Samuel who then dwelt at home with her Father and was not yet brought into question about any of these matters would hide herself, and not be seen by him.⁴¹ Master Throckmorton, hearing them, said that he would go presently and make a test thereof. It is not known whether Agnes Samuel perceived Master Throckmorton or any of his company or whatever else when he came to the house. But she went up into the chamber, there being but one in the house, the stairs of which stood in the same parlour below where her Father was, and the door of which was a trap door. On this, she set sacks of corn and tubs with some such like things to keep it down. Master Throckmorton, hearing a noise in the house, thought there was some such matter in hand and continued still knocking at the door. Presently, John Samuel asked who was there, and what he wanted, with some such like questions. And in the end, knowing whom he was, said that he could not come in. Then Master Throckmorton went to the other side

⁴¹ The children now begin to involve Alice's daughter Agnes in their accusations.

of the house and, finding the back door open, went in. And when he came into the parlour where the man was in his bed, being about eight o'clock or something before, he asked for Agnes Samuel, his daughter, and where she was. John Samuel was not asked to swear an oath. But presently, he swore that as God judge his soul, which was his common oath and used also divers times before the Bench at his arraignment, yea, and until the very time of his execution, he did not know where she was.

Master Throckmorton asked when he last saw her. He answered that since nightfall she had been in the house. But where she now was, he did not know. He asked if she was not in the chamber over them. He swore that he did not know. This thing he could not indeed but know. For it was a very low chamber. And she could not stir her foot in it, but he must needs hear her, besides her going up into it. For the stairs stood close by the foot of his bed. And there was also the noise that she made in the hearing of Master Throckmorton and the rest coming into the house. Master Throckmorton, verily suspecting that she was there, called to her three or four times. And he willed her to answer if she were there, for all that he desired to know was where she was. But she would not answer. Then Master Throckmorton took the candle and said he would go up and see. But when he came to the top of the stairs, the trap door was so tight that he could not budge it. Realising this, he said that he would surely break open the door or break up the ceiling of the chamber. For he would go into it before he left the house. And he willed one of the company to fetch him a bar of iron or some such like thing, for he would do it indeed.

The maid, hearing Master Throckmorton thus resolute, answered that she was there. Then Master Throckmorton willed her to come down, which she did, removing those things that before she had set on the door. So he departed home to his house, challenging the man for his naughty lie, which yet he stiffly stood in. But, to let a hundred of these things pass with their fellows, and to come nearer the old woman's confession and the manner of it. You will understand that Mother Samuel grew now to be marvellously weary of Master Throckmorton's house, both because she could do nothing in the house, but the children in their fits would reveal it, and especially because the children in their fits likewise had told her twenty times to her

face that she should confess this matter before the Tuesday after Twelfth day⁴², and that the spirits had told them that they would force her to confess it despite her, and she had often experience, that whatever the spirits foretold proved most true.

Now this Tuesday which the children so often named, was not then thought, of any that heard it, to be the Sessions day at Huntington, as it is generally in most places of England, no, not within a week or more after the children had spoken of it. Yet they often whispered among themselves, always in their fits as you must understand, about that Tuesday, wishing oftentimes, that it were once come. For that was likely some happy day for them, they would say. For after that day, the spirits had told them, they would never have more fits. So all their joy in their fits was for that day. Yet they would say to themselves that the spirits tell them, that happily it may be before that Tuesday. But on the Tuesday at the farthest, she must confess it, and they must be well. But if she would confess it before, they should be well presently whenever she did confess it.

For this cause, the children in their fits continually would exhort her to confess it, that they might be well. Yet she always would refuse to do it, saying that she would not confess that which she never did know of, nor consented to. The children would answer that they would not wish her to accuse herself for anything, and therefore willed her to look to that in any respect. Yet they said that they enforced no more on her than what the spirits had told them. Yet to speak the truth of these children and no more, if anything herein written of them be strange, this for strangeness goes beyond all other, and for truth equal to the rest. Such were the heavenly and divine speeches of these children in their fits to this old woman, some at one time, some at another, concerning her confession of this fact, that if a man had heard it, he would not have thought himself better edified at ten sermons.

The matter of their speech concerned chiefly the joys of Heaven which she would lose, and the torments of Hell which she would endure if she, being guilty, would not yet confess, and the eschewing of the one and enjoying of the other, if she would confess and be sorry for what she had done. They rehearsed likewise to her her naughty manner of living, her usual

⁴² The Tuesday after 6 January.

cursing and banning of all that displeased her, and especially of their parents, and of them, which she could not deny, her negligent going to Church and slackness in God's service. All of which she confessed to them. But she would now begin to amend, she said. Her lewd bringing up of her daughter, in allowing her to be her dame, both in controlling of and beating of her, which before had been proved to her face and she herself had also confessed. They reminded her also of that which they had heard some speak of when they were out of their fits, namely, that she had said that their fits were but wantonness in them. They asked her now, whether she was still of that mind or not. She answered, 'No,' with many such like speeches. And in the end they concluded with their hearty prayer to God for her, saying that they would forgive her from the bottom of their heart, if she would confess it that they might be well. Besides, they would entreat their parents and their friends, as much as in them lay, clearly to forgive and forget all that was past. Their manner of behaviour in this their exhortation to her was that, as for the most part they began with tears, so they continued. And they always ended with tears, inasmuch as there was not any that heard them that could abstain from weeping. Only the old woman was little or nothing moved.

This kind of behaviour in the children went on until nearer Christmas, yet without the old woman being at all touched or stirred. In the meantime, every day almost, this old woman had a fit of bleeding at the nose. And she bled very much at a time, which is not usual in old age, so that she now waxed faint and looked very pale, insomuch that Master Throckmorton and his wife were very careful for her, fearing some harm would come to her in his house. And they comforted her by all the means they could, not allowing her to lack anything that she desired, if possibly they could come by it. So that she did confess to all that came to her, that she was marvellously well treated by Master Throckmorton, and thought herself greatly bound to him, as truly she had no other cause.

As for her business, she did nothing but her own work, and for her diet, she sat at his own board, or with his children if they were in their fits and could not sit down. And for her lodging, she lay continually in his own chamber, and for the most part with one of his children.

And to tell you one thing more of her before her confession. One of these children, Mistress Elizabeth Throckmorton, was one day ill at ease, and could not eat any meat. Yet, when night came and supper was ready, she thought to make herself amends. But when she was ready to sit at the table, she fell presently into her fit. And yet that was not all the punishment she had. But her mouth was locked up, so that she could neither eat, drink, nor speak. It was a usual thing with them all, to have their mouths shut up especially at meal times, and other times shut and open, half a dozen times in a dinner. So would the spirits sport with them. But she went so to bed, very sorrowful and weeping. What her grief was, none can tell, because she was not able to utter it. When the next day came, she was as sick and ill as the day before, yet out of her fit, and ate very little or nothing at all. When night came, she said she felt herself well amended, and very hungry, not knowing for her part but that she had eaten her supper the night before.

Then was she counseled by them that feared the worst to eat something. But she said that she would not, intending to eat her portion at supper. When the time came and meat was set upon the board, she fell into the same state as she had been in the night before. Master Throckmorton, perceiving this, said to the old woman that stood by her, 'I think, Mother Samuel, you are disposed to torment that wench.' She answered him, 'No,' that she was rather sorry to see it. 'Well,' said he, 'surely you will neither eat nor drink until she can do both. And therefore,' said Master Throckmorton, 'whilst she fasts, you will fast, and when she can eat, you will eat, but not before, use the matter as you will.' And thus they both continued fasting until supper was almost ended and the company ready to arise, the one fasting on necessity because she could not eat, and the other for Master Throckmorton's pleasure because she might not.

The old woman perceived that Master Throckmorton was in good earnest with her and that the meat was carried out of the parlour. Suddenly, God knows for what reason, the child fetched a great sigh, for she had been weeping all supper time, and spoke, saying, 'If I had some meat now, I could eat it.'

Mistress Throckmorton, the child's Mother, hearing her speak, as did also all the rest that were in the parlour, commanded presently that meat should be given to them both, the company not giving notice to Mother Samuel of the matter. So they both fell to their meat very heartily, but especially the old woman, who, as it would seem, was then very hungry, as she had always a good appetite. And from that time onwards, during the old woman's stay in the house, neither that child nor any of her sisters had their mouths shut up at any time when they would eat their meat. Or if they were, they did not long continue so, although it was a common custom with them before to have gone supperless to bed on that very occasion many a time.

After all these matters were passed over, and as it waxed every day nearer and nearer to the time appointed, Mother Samuel every day complained of a new grief to befall her. Sometimes she would cry out about her back, that it was so full of pain, that she was not able to stir herself in her bed all the day long, nor take any rest at night.

Sometimes she would cry out in a similar way about her head, other times about her stomach. Yet she would eat her meat saying that she had a gnawing at her heart. And the next day after, it would be in her knee or lower, so that she would go limping up and down the house. And to speak the truth of her, it would seem that there was something that troubled her, whatever it was, for she would so groan and moan in the night time, one time complaining of this part of her body, another time of that, that indeed she rested but little in the night time herself, and greatly disquieted those also that lay in the chamber by her.

And one night amongst all the rest, she cried out very pitifully about her belly, inasmuch as she disturbed and awakened both Master Throckmorton and his wife that lay by her. Master Throckmorton said, 'In God's name, Mother Samuel, what ails you, and why do you groan so?' Said she, 'I have suddenly a marvellously great pain in my belly, and I know not how it is caused.' 'Why,' said he, 'what is the matter in your belly?' She answered that there was something in it, which she thought stirred. And it was as big as a penny loaf and put her to marvellous pain. Whereupon Mistress Throckmorton arose out of her bed, and went and felt on her belly. And

there was indeed a marvellous swelling to the quantity before likened. But, not staying long with her for the weather was so cold, she did not feel it stir. And be it spoken without offence to women, it may be that she bred then that child with which she said she was, when she was asked what she could say by my Lord the Judge, why sentence of death should not be given against her, as hereafter you shall hear. But whatever it was, she cried out to Master Throckmorton about her belly, and said that she was full of pain.⁴³ And further, she said that she had often told him that she thought there were some evil spirits that haunted his house, which did thus torment his children. This, he told her, he did easily believe was true. 'And now,' said she, 'I verily believe, that one of them has got into my belly.' Master Throckmorton said that all this might very well be true. So she said that it was an evil house and haunted with spirits, and she wished that she had never come into it. He told her that, if there were any evil spirits that haunted the house, they were of her sending, and so he would grant all that she said. In the end, she passed that night groaning and moaning. And the next morning, she said that she was very ill at ease. But the swelling in her belly was gone. And she could not tell where her greatest pain was, it was in so many places. But her stomach was the best of any other part. And after this, she continually complained of one part of her body or other, as long as she stayed in the house.

Within a very short time after, one of the children⁴⁴ fell into a most terrible fit, Mother Samuel standing by. And it was so grievous on her for the time that neither she nor any of her sisters had the like for the space of a year or two before. And her sneezing fit especially was so terrible and strong on her, as if it would have caused her eyes to start out of her head. This fit did greatly frighten Mother Samuel. For she herself did then think that she would see the child die at that moment. And this wrung prayers out of her, so that she desired the Lord then to help the child and to protect her from danger, and she hoped never to see her in the like again. But the more earnest Mother Samuel was in her prayers, the greater was the child's

⁴³ There is a hint here that she may have conceived a child by the Devil.

⁴⁴ Jane.

trouble and torment. And the more often she named God or Jesus Christ, the stronger the child's fit was on her. And at that very instant, as hereafter you shall hear of the rest, when she had thus continued some two hours or more, the spirit spoke to the child and said that there was a worse fit than this to come yet, in which she must be worse handled than this. The child answered that she cared neither for him nor his dame, but willed them to do the worst they could to her for, she said, she hoped that God would deliver her. And soon after, she came out of her fit and was very well. But the sight of this fit was so terrible to Mother Samuel that she would many times pray that she might never see the like again in any of them.

All of the children still continued calling on Mother Samuel to make confession of this matter, saying that she must do it before long, and as good at first as at last. But if she would now do it, so that they might be well before Christmas, they would then think themselves beholden to her. They told her further that now Christmas was at hand. And if she would now confess it, they would be presently well and keep, by the grace of God, a merry Christmas. She answered that she would do for them all the good she could, but for the confession of this matter, she would not. For it was a thing she never knew of, nor consented to. Their Father, Master Throckmorton, hearing his children and the old woman thus talk together, stepped in and said, 'Mother Samuel, you hear what these children say, which is, that if you would confess this fact, they would be presently well. And they say that you must confess it before long. And you know that they are not used to telling lies in their fits. Now therefore, in the name of God, if there be any such matter, confess it. It is never too late to repent and to ask for mercy.' But she made the same answer to him that she had done to the children before. Then he said, 'But what do you say to that grievous fit which the Spirit of late threatened to my daughter Jane? I would like to know when that should be.' 'Oh,' says she, remembering the terror of it, 'I trust in God I shall never see her in such a state again, nor any of them all.' 'Yes,' says Master Throckmorton, 'I verily think that she will have it, you know, and shortly. For the spirit has not failed them in anything he promises.' 'Oh,' says she, 'I trust in God that she will never have it,' speaking marvellously

confidently. 'Why then,' says Master Throckmorton, 'charge the spirit, in the name of God, that she may escape this fit which is threatened.' She presently said, 'I charge you spirit, in the name of God, that Mistress Jane never have this fit.' The child sitting by said, 'The thing speaks truly. I thank God that I will never have this fit that he has foretold of me.' Master Throckmorton says, 'Why, that is well, thanks be to God. Go on Mother Samuel, and charge the spirit, in the name of God, and speak from your heart that neither she nor any of them all have their fits any more.' So she said as Master Throckmorton willed her, speaking marvellously heartily. The same child again said, 'The thing speaks truly. I thank God that I will never have it more after the Tuesday after Twelfth Day.' Master Throckmorton says, 'It is well, thanks be to God. Charge the spirit again, in the name of God, and speak from your heart and be not afraid, that he depart from them all now at this moment and that he never return to them again.' These words she uttered very loudly and very boldly. As soon as she had ended, then those three children that were then in their fits and had so remained for the space of three weeks, wiped their eyes. And at that instant, they thrust back the stools on which they sat and stood on their legs, being as well as ever they were in their lives. Master Throckmorton now had his face towards the children and his back to the old woman. And seeing them stand up so suddenly, he said, 'Thanks be to God.' While he was thus speaking, little knowing or thinking indeed of any such matter, the old woman fell down behind him on her knees and said, 'Good Master, forgive me.' He turned around and, seeing her fallen down, said, 'Why Mother Samuel, what is the matter?' 'O Sir,' said she, 'I have been the cause of all this trouble to your children.' 'Have you, Mother Samuel,' said he? 'And why so? What cause did I ever give you thus to use me and my children?' 'None at all,' she said. Then said Master Throckmorton, 'You have done me the more wrong.' 'Good Master,' said she, 'Forgive me.' 'God forgive you,' said he, 'and I do. But tell me, how did you come to be such a kind of woman?' 'Master,' said she, 'I have forsaken my maker, and given my soul to the Devil.' These were her very words. And old Mistress Throckmorton, their grandmother, and Mistress Throckmorton their Mother, were then in the hall, for this

was done in the parlour. Hearing them very loudly, but not understanding the matter perfectly, they came into the parlour. When Mother Samuel saw her, she asked likewise forgiveness. Mistress Throckmorton, their Mother, presently, without any questions, forgave her with all her heart, yet she could not well tell what the matter was. Mother Samuel asked those three children that were there forgiveness, and afterwards the rest, kissing all of them. The children easily forgave her, for they knew not that she had offended any of them, in their own persons, except what they saw in their sisters, when they themselves were out of their fits. Master Throckmorton and his wife, perceiving the old woman thus penitent, and so greatly cast down, for she did nothing but weep and lament all this time, comforted her by all the good means they could. And they said that they would freely forgive her from their hearts, if their children might never be more troubled. She answered, that she trusted in God that they would never have their fits again. Yet she would not be comforted by anything that they could say. Then Master Throckmorton sent for Master Doctor Dorington, the Minister of the town, and told him all the matter with the circumstances. He desired him to comfort her, which they all, joining together, did as well as they could at that moment. Yet could she not forbear weeping, and so continued all the night. The next day, which was the Sabbath day, and Christmas Eve, Master Doctor Dorington chose his text of repentance out of the Psalms on set purpose to comfort her. And he declared there in the open assembly all the matter of Mother Samuel's late confession, applying his speech directly to the comforting of a penitent heart, and so by consequence to her. All this sermon time, Mother Samuel did nothing but weep and lament. And many times she was so very loud with sundry passions that she caused all the church to look on her. And thus much farther you will know on this point. Master Throckmorton, the same day after prayers were ended, very wisely remembering himself and the old woman's inconstancy heretofore, recalled to mind that there was none present at her confession but himself and Master Doctor, with his own household, who might all be thought partial in this matter. He therefore willed Mother Samuel to come into the body of the Church. And there he demanded of her, before his neighbours, whether that confession which she had made to him and

Master Doctor overnight was wrested and wrung out of her, or whether it proceeded frankly and freely of and from herself. She answered before them all that it came of herself, and she desired all her neighbours to pray to God for her, and to forgive her. Towards night, Master Doctor Dorington, understanding the old woman still to continue in this heavy state, came to Master Throckmorton's house, who is his brother-in-law by marriage, and entreated him, simply out of good will, tendering to the old woman's comfort, to give her leave to go home to her husband. And he would be a go-between so that her husband would receive her, and to reconcile them together, in which the old woman was marvellously obliged. At first, Master Throckmorton did easily grant this request, being as willing to comfort the old woman as any, and acted also as a go-between so that her husband might receive her, little suspecting that anything should fall out thereby otherwise than well. The man,⁴⁵ when he heard of it, spoke bluntly, as his manner was, saying that she might come home if she wished.

Now that you have heard this old woman's confession, it may perchance seem strange in some points to some. But for the truth of it, it is as certainly true as is any part of this book, both the matter and the manner, and the words also observed in all points, as near as possibly could be remembered. Mother Samuel is now on Christmas Eve at night gone home to her husband and her daughter, where we doubt she has a cold welcome for her reception, and the rather because she has confessed this matter. For it would seem that they both set on her, as she herself after confessed, and so far forth prevailed with her that the next morning, which was Christmas day, she denied all that she had said before, and it was no such matter with her. Before night, it came to Master Throckmorton's hearing that this new convert had revolted again, and had denied all that she had spoken to him. The best comfort he had in this was the open confession she made in the church, and thereupon did hardly believe that which was reported of her.

The same day, in the evening, Master Doctor Dorington and Master Throckmorton went to her house to know the truth. And when they came to the door, it pleased God that John Samuel, his wife, and his daughter were talking of this matter. For it would seem that it was all their talk. They,

⁴⁵ John Samuel.

realising this, halted a while. And they heard the daughter say these words, 'Believe them not, believe them not, for all their fair speeches.' Hereupon they both went presently into the house and charged the daughter with these words, which she utterly denied, as did also the Father and the Mother. Then did Master Throckmorton question her concerning the matter which before she had confessed in his house and in the Church, telling her that he had heard that she had denied it again. She answered that she would deny that she was a witch, or any cause of the troubling of his children. 'Why,' said he, 'did not you confess as much to me?' 'I said so indeed,' says she, 'but it is not so.' 'Why then,' said he, 'I must not show you that favour which I promised. I will surely have you before the Justices. But,' he said, 'why did you confess it to be so to me, if it be not so?' She answered, 'For joy.' 'For joy,' said he smiling to himself, marvelling what she could make of it, 'and why for joy?' 'Because,' said she, 'I saw your children so instantly well, after your good prayers and mine.' Then said Master Throckmorton to her, 'I pray God so continue them. Notwithstanding howsoever it be, I will not let pass this matter thus. For seeing it is published, either you or I will bear the shame of it in the end.' And so they departed for that night.

Early the next morning, Master Throckmorton went to Master Doctor Dorington's house. And he told him that he would not allow this matter thus to die in his hand, lest the worse sort of the people should imagine that this was but some device of theirs to bring the old woman into further danger. So they agreed to test her once again in this matter. And sending for her to the Church, they found her farther off from confessing anything that she had said or done than ever she was before. Then Master Throckmorton took her by the hand, and said that both she and her daughter would that day, by God's grace, go with him to my Lord, the Bishop of Lincoln. So he presently sent for the constables. And he charged them with the Mother and daughter, and requested them to provide for the journey.

When the old woman perceived preparation for the journey, the constables ready, and Master Throckmorton also putting on his boots, she came to him and said, 'Master, if you will go with me into the parlour, I will confess all to you alone.' He said, 'I will go.' So they went together. And there

she confessed the whole matter again to him, which she had done before. 'Why then,' said he, 'tell me why have you denied it all this time?' 'Oh,' said she, 'I would never have denied it but for my husband and daughter, who said that I was a fool in confessing to it. And they said that it had been better for me to have died in the same state I was in than to confess myself a witch. For now everybody will call me old witch while I live.' Master Throckmorton told her that if she would persist in confessing the truth, he would show her all the favour he could. In the meanwhile, Master Doctor Dorington comes in to them, and he fell into questioning her. But she seemed somewhat reluctant to confess that to him which before she had done. So he drew her aside, and Master Throckmorton left them. Then did Master Doctor Dorington call for pen, ink and paper, and wrote down that confession which she made.

In the meantime, Master Throckmorton sent to the Church which adjoins his house. And divers of his neighbours were there, for it was about prayers time. He desired them to come with him. And telling them the matter, he placed them close underneath the parlour window, where Master Doctor and this old woman were talking together. When notice was given to Master Doctor, he spoke very loudly. And he willed the old woman to lift up her voice also, faining something, so that the neighbours which were outside might easily hear all the words that passed between them. When they had done, Master Throckmorton went into them in the parlour, and desired them to come forth into the hall. When they came, there stood all the neighbours that had heard this matter. Then began Master Doctor to read in their presence that which the woman had confessed. But she would fain have denied all again. 'No,' said the neighbours to her, 'it is too late to deny anything now for we heard all this with our ears.' They told her the place where they were. When she perceived herself thus caught in a trap, she would have made the best of it. But it would not prevail. As they were thus in the house together, John Samuel, the old woman's husband who had understood that there was something ado in the house concerning his wife, came in. When he was come, Master Throckmorton told him that which his wife had again confessed, and, with the rest, that his wife would

never have denied that which she did but for him and his daughter. 'Have you said so?' said he to his wife, calling her a foul name. And with that he would have struck her, had not others stood between them. The old woman, seeing her husband thus fiercely coming towards her, fell down presently in a counterfeit swoon before them all. Mistress Throckmorton, standing by, was suddenly marvellously alarmed at this, and called for *aqua vitae*⁴⁶ for her. When they took her up, they saw that her countenance was unaltered and that she looked cheerful enough. One of her neighbours standing by, better acquainted, as it happened, with her ways than the rest, said that if they would let her alone, he would be their warrant that she would do well enough. So, soon after, she came to herself again and all was well. These circumstances about her confession are therefore the more expressly set down, although they be not so pertinent to the matter. Nor indeed would they have been declared at all, had it not been reported by some in the country, and those that thought themselves wise, that this Mother Samuel now in question was an old simple woman, and that one might make her by fair words confess what they would. But to leave that to the judgement of them that knew her well enough, Master Throckmorton continued on his journey, intending to discharge himself on the matter. And he caused the old woman with her daughter to be carried the same day to my Lord, the Bishop of Lincoln, and there he examined her and her daughter.

The Examination of Alice Samuel of Warboys, in the County of Huntington, taken at Buckden before the Right Reverend Father in God, William, by God's permission Bishop of Lincoln, the twenty sixth of December, 1592.

Being asked whether a dun chicken did ever suck on her chin, and how often, the said examinant says that it sucked twice and no more since Christmas Eve last. Being asked whether it was a natural chicken, she says that it was not. She knows that it was not a natural chicken because, when it came to her chin, she scarcely felt it. But when she wiped it off with her hand, her chin bled. She says further that the said dun chicken first came to her and sucked on her chin before it came to Master Throckmorton's house,

⁴⁶ Spirits such as brandy or whisky.

and that the ill and the trouble that has come to Master Throckmorton's children has come by means of the said dun chicken. The chicken, she knows, is now both gone from them and from her. And further, she says that Master Throckmorton and Master Doctor Dorington will bring further information of such things as she has not yet declared.

The Examination of Alice Samuel of Warboys in the County of Huntington, taken at Buckden the twenty ninth day of December 1592, before the Reverend Father in God, William, by God's permission Bishop of Lincoln, Francis Crummel, and Richard Tryce, Esquires, Justices of her Majesty's peace within the aforesaid County.

She says that she never did hurt to any, except to the children in question. Being asked how she knows that the said dun chicken is gone from the said children, she says that it is because the said dun chicken, with the rest,⁴⁷ are now come into her. And they are now in the bottom of her belly, and make her so full that she is likely to burst. And this morning they caused her to be so full, that she could scarcely lace her coat. And she said that on the way, as she came, they weighed so heavy that the horse she rode on fell down and was not able to carry her. And further, she says that the upright man, of whom she has confessed to Master Throckmorton, told her that Master Throckmorton was a hard man and would trouble her much. For this reason, he said that he would give her six spirits that would vex and torment his children, and so he did. The spirits had a reward from her by sucking her blood oftentimes when they were outside her body. And she says that the said spirits did suck her blood before she sent them forth anywhere. She says further that, whatever the children of Master Throckmorton spoke in their fits proved true and was true. For example, whenever the said children said that they saw the said spirits then the spirits were there, and she did also see them. And she says that oftentimes she did give a private beck or nod with her finger or head. And then the spirits presently stopped the children's mouths, so that they could not speak until they came out again. And then the children would wipe their eyes and be well again. Further, she says that it was taught her by a man that came to her house. But where he

⁴⁷ Of the spirits.

dwelt or what his name was, she cannot tell. He told her that if she would call the said six spirits they would come. And she called them, and they appeared in the likeness of dun chickens. Their names were as follows: first, Pluck; second, Catch; the third, White; and the other three she called with her mouth with three smacks. And two of them, she, this examinant, sent to Master Robert Throckmorton of Warboys and his wife. And they returned again, and told her that God would not allow them to prevail. Whereupon she, this examinant, sent the said spirits to the children of the said Master Throckmorton, by means of which they have been so strangely tormented, as has been seen by the neighbours and country. She says further that what the children spoke in their fits in her hearing was true, and so it happened. Being asked further what the upright man's name was that gave her the devils, she said that she could not tell. At this, she was persuaded to go into another chamber and demand of her spirits what his name was. Presently she did this. And there with a loud voice, she said these words as follows, 'Oh you Devil. I charge you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that you tell me the name of the upright man who gave me the devils.' She did this three times. And then she returned, saying that her spirits had told her that his name was Langland. And being asked where the said Langland dwelt, she said that she could not tell. Then was she persuaded to go into the said chamber again, and demand of her spirits where the said Langland dwelt, which also she presently did. And there with a loud voice, she said three times, 'Oh Devil, I charge you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, tell me where the said Langland dwells.' Then she returned and said that he had no dwelling. Then was she further persuaded to go again and demand where the said Langland was at that moment. This also she did. And she demanded as before. And she returned with the answer that her spirits told her that he went on the last voyage beyond the seas.

After these confessions were thus made, Mother Samuel and her daughter were committed to the gaol of Huntington. Now that we have brought Mother Samuel to the gaol, we will let her rest there in God's peace and the Queen's until the next general Assizes day held at Huntington. And many things fell out unhappily concerning her, during her continuance in the gaol, of which she was greatly suspected, such as the death of one of

the gaoler's servants whom she threatened, the extreme sickness of one of his children with his present recovery after the scratching of her, and divers other things which are shrewd pieces of evidence against her, if there had been nothing else laid to her charge. Yet because they do not concern the trouble of these children, neither is the matter so perfectly known to the authors of this book, it is therefore but mentioned in passing.

And to come to the daughter Agnes Samuel, who now comes on the stage with her part in this tragedy. You will understand that she was left with her Mother in the gaol until the Session's day held at Huntington the ninth of January following. This day was the Tuesday that the children had so often spoken of to the old woman.⁴⁸

At dinnertime, Master Throckmorton made his request to the High Sheriff and the Justices to bail this maid, and to have her home to his house, to see, if it might please God, whether any such evidences of guiltiness would appear against her, as had before appeared in the children against the Mother. This suit was not easily granted. For it was a demur amongst the Justices whether the maid was bailable by the law in this case or not. In the end, Master Throckmorton continuing his suit, they were resolved of the doubt and granted it. But it was almost three o'clock in the afternoon, as everybody can witness that was then present. The time is here mentioned because it has relation to the next point that hereafter follows, as you will hear.

The report of Master Doctor Dorington of that which happened at Warboys, on Tuesday which was the Sessions day at Huntington, the ninth of January.

About twelve o'clock, a little before dinner, Mary, Joan, and Grace, the daughters of Robert Throckmorton of Warboys aforesaid, Esquire, fell into their accustomed fits of lameness, blindness, deafness, and lack of feeling. Only their youngest brother Robert, of the age of nine years, might speak to Jane with her understanding, and she only might speak in the like manner to Mary and Grace . . .⁴⁹

⁴⁸ The Tuesday after Twelfth day.

⁴⁹ I omit here a brief section in which these children forecast the coming of Agnes, and the nature of their fits on her arrival (sigs.H.3.r-H.3.v).

After Agnes Samuel was brought to Master Throckmorton's house, the children continued for three or four days without any fits at all, so that their parents were put in great comfort that their children would then have been clean delivered from their torments. But it would seem that the matter was not yet brought to an end, for the children fell all of them afresh into their fits again, and were as grievously afflicted as ever they were in the old woman's time. And then the Spirits did begin as plainly to accuse the daughter as ever did the Mother, and to tell the children that the old woman had sent over her spirits to her daughter. And the spirits said that she has bewitched them all over again, and that she will deal worse with them than ever her Mother did . . .⁵⁰

The next day, which was Saturday the tenth of February, for it would be too long to speak of every particular hour although almost every hour brought variety with it, as she⁵¹ lay by the fire side groaning in her fit in the afternoon, she suddenly began bleeding at the nose. And she bled very much. At this she marvelled, for she perceived it, saying, 'I pray God send me good news after this. For it is strange with me to bleed. I did not bleed this much even years before.' When she had much bloodied her handkerchief, she said that it was a good deed to throw the handkerchief into the fire and burn the witch for she knew, she said, that this bleeding came of no good cause. After she had talked thus to herself a little, it would seem that the spirit came to her. For she said, thus smiling to herself and casting her eyes about her, 'What is this, in God's name, that comes thus tumbling to me? It tumbles like a football. I think it be some puppet-player. It is much like his dame's old thumbed cap. What is your name I pray you,' said she? The thing answered, so it would seem, that his name was Blue. For presently, on the question demanded of his name, she made answer again herself saying, 'Master Blue, you are welcome. I never saw you before. I thought,' said she, 'that my nose did not bleed for nothing. What news have you brought?' It told her as before. 'What do you say,' says she, 'that I shall be worse handled

⁵⁰ I omit here a brief section which sets the stage for the progressive incrimination of Alice's daughter Agnes by the children (sigs.H.3.v-H.4.r). Joan, together with her belligerent spirits, Blue, Pluck, Smack, and Catch dominate the story. We pick up the story on Saturday, 10 February.

⁵¹ Joan.

than ever I was? Ha,' says she, 'what do you say.' For she would ever repeat the spirit's words after him, as they all would do when they were talking with them, bending their heads to the ground. 'Do you say that I will now have my fits, when I will both hear, see, and know everybody? That is a new trick indeed. I do not think any of my sisters were ever so used. But I care not for you,' said she, 'do your worst. And when you have done, you will make an end.' These were her very words . . .⁵²

At night presently, on her Father's and Mother's rising from supper, she fell into the fit which before Master Blue had threatened. For she was most grievously wrung and twitched in every part of her body. Sometimes she would thrust forth her arms so straight and so stiff that it was not possible to bend them. Sometimes again, she would so wrest and writhe them clean backwards that no man or woman was able to do the like by their natural strength. She herself cried out very pitifully, sometimes about her stomach, saying that she was very sick, and wanted to vomit. Sometimes she cried out about her head, and at some other times about her belly. And there was never a part or member of her free from extreme pain, she herself ever calling on God to think on her, and deliver her. Sometimes it would so stop her breath, and hold it so long, that when she could recover it again, she fetched a marvellously deep and loud groan. And being oftentimes in this fit and asked by divers that stood by how she did, she answered that she was marvellously sick and full of pain, affirming that she both heard and saw all that were present. In this woeful state, she continued the space of half an hour and more, to the great grief of the beholders, for this was one of the first fits that either she or her sisters had, having their perfect senses. Now suddenly, as she was thus complaining, she fell into her senseless fit, having her mouth also shut up. And now she is deprived of all manner of sense again. Remaining thus quietly a little space, she fetched a great groan, whereupon her mouth was opened. And she spoke saying, 'Here is a rule indeed. I perceive that you are as good as your word with me. From whence do you now come, and what news do you now bring, I pray you?' The thing answered that she must yet be worse handled than all this comes to. Says

⁵² I omit a brief encounter between Agnes and Joan (sigs.H.4.v-1.1.r).

she, 'God is above the Devil, and do what you can. For you will not be able to hurt me. But tell me, why do you punish me worse than all my sisters, having my fits when I can know everybody?' The thing answered, because she told tales of their dame. 'Who is your dame,' she says? He answered, 'Nan Samuel.'⁵³ And this you must understand. In all their manner of talking together, that the children would first repeat the first spirit's answer, before they would ask any further question of them. Then she said, 'If Nan Samuel be your dame, I will tell more tales of her yet. And I hope to tell such a tale of her one day, that she will not be able to answer it, nor you for her.' The thing answered that he would then punish her the more for it. She said that she cared not for that. Then said the thing, 'When was Smack with you?' This Smack was another of the spirit's names. She says, 'I know no such fellow as Smack.' 'Yes,' says the thing, 'that you do. And he it is that tells you all these things. But I will beat him for it.' Says she, 'Do your worst to him or to me, for I care not for you. Farewell.' The thing says, 'Do you bid me farewell?' Says she, 'Fare you well and be hanged.' For you will have the truth as she spoke it. 'And come again,' says she, 'when you are sent for.' Soon after this, she came forth from her fit. And she was very sick and full of pain in her legs. The next day, which was the Sabbath, she was reasonably well all the morning, as she was all other days. But her greatest pangs and fits were always towards night. And thus leaving her until night, you will hear what happened the same day, amongst other of her sisters.

Soon after dinner was ended, there came to the house one Master Throckmorton of Brampton to see how these children did. And staying in the parlour a little while, one of these children, Mistress Elizabeth by name, as she was coming in at the parlour door, fell suddenly into her fit in the sight of them all. This was not strange to any but to the gentleman, because it was a usual thing with her. Continuing thus a little space, Master Throckmorton, the child's Father, said to the other Master Throckmorton his kinsman, 'Will you see cousin,' he says, 'a wonder?' Says the gentleman, 'Have you any greater wonders than to see this sight?' The child's Father says, 'I have as great. For you will see this child brought out of this state in

⁵³ That is, Agnes.

which you now see her, at the pronouncing of certain words by a maid in this house.' Says the gentleman, 'I would like to see that, for I am sorry to see this sight.' So the child's Father called for Agnes Samuel, and willed her to say to the child these words, 'I charge you Devil in the name of the God of Heaven and earth, as I hate you and am no witch, nor guilty of this matter, that you depart from this child, and allow her to come out of her fit.' This said by the maid, the child moved not. Then the child's Father willed her to say thus, 'I charge you, you Devil, as I love you and have authority over you and am a witch, and guilty of this matter, that you allow this child to be well at this moment.' These words were no sooner ended, but the child wiped her eyes, and was as well as any in the parlour. As the gentleman was thus wondering and talking with this maid about the matter, saying that she could tell a pretty tale for herself, another of those children, Mistress Jane, standing by, fell presently into her fit, and the same experience was had by her, as was had by her sister before. And this was very usual amongst them, for it had been proved divers times. And it was foretold by the spirit to one of them being in her fit a fortnight before this time, that whenever Agnes Samuel should say these words, they would be presently well . . .⁵⁴

On Monday next following, which was the twentieth of February, she⁵⁵ began after supper to talk again, having been in her fit an hour or more before. For she had eaten her supper in her fit with two other of her sisters that were also in their fits. Suddenly she said, 'What, are you come now? I had thought you would have come no more, and that we would have been well rid of you. But where have you been,' she said? He answered that his cousin Smack and he had been fighting with Pluck and Catch, and they had beaten them both very much, so that they dare not come to her any more. So they had very much talk about fighting and such other matters, which before are set down. In the end, she asked when she would scratch Agnes Samuel. The spirit answered that if she would now scratch her, then her face would be whole before the Assizes, which must not be. So she willed him to look to that which he promised, for she would keep her nails for

⁵⁴ After this interlude with the kinsman of the Throckmortons, the story returns to Joan and her Spirits. I omit sigs.1.2.r-1.4.r. We pick it up on Monday, 20 February (sig.1.4.r).

⁵⁵ Joan.

her. 'Yes,' says the spirit, 'and she was also consenting to the death of the Lady Cromwell.' 'What,' says Mistress Joan, 'was she also consenting to the death of Lady Cromwell? Even like enough, I thought so,' says she. 'Yes,' says the spirit, 'and to prove this to be true, whenever any stranger will come into the house, you will fall into your fit. And if then Agnes Samuel will come to you and say, "As I am a witch, and consenting to the death of Lady Cromwell, so I charge you to depart and to let her come forth of her fit," you will presently be well.' So Mistress Joan repeated after the spirit the same words which were then set down in writing. 'If it be so,' says Mistress Joan, 'why then I hope she will be hanged at the Assizes as well as her Mother, and that Sir Henry Cromwell will look to that matter.' In drawing the talk to a close, the spirit told her that she would have her fits on the Assizes day, and all the kinds of fits which she has ever had before. But after the day she would have no more fits. But if she had, then woe be to Agnes Samuel. 'For then,' says the spirit, 'I will make her pay for it' . . .⁵⁶

On Thursday following, which was the first of March, Mistress Mary, who had been well and without any fits ever since the Sessions day last at Huntington, was somewhat ill at ease all the morning. And about nine o'clock, she fell into a marvellously great quaking and trembling, and could not hold a joint of her, yet knew no cause why. Soon after, she was taken and fell into a marvellously troublesome fit, continuing therein about half an hour. In the end, she waxed a little better, and she said, 'Is it true? Do you say that this is the day wherein I must scratch the young witch? I am heartily glad of it. For I will surely pay her to the full, both for myself and my sisters.' Master Edward Pickering and Master Henry Pickering, two of the child's uncles standing by with divers others, caused the maid to be brought up into the chamber where the child was to see what would be the outcome of it. They knew very well that the maid was able to keep herself from being scratched, if three such as the child was were to be set on her at once. As soon as the maid came into the chamber where the child was, the child said, 'Are you come, you young witch, who has done all this

⁵⁶ I omit here further testing of Agnes by Joan and her spirits (sigs.1.4.v-k.2.r). On 1 March, Mary re-enters the story with her desire to scratch Agnes.

mischief?' The maid seemed to stand amazed at those words, for she was not accustomed to hear any such hard speeches from the child. So one in the company willed the maid to take up the child and carry her down, for her legs were taken from her.

Mistress Mary allowed herself very quietly to be taken up in her arms, and clasped her hands about her neck. But even as the maid began to lift her up, she fell to scratching of her so eagerly and so fiercely that it was a wonder to all that saw it, saying, 'I will scratch you, you young witch, and pay you in full for this punishing of me and my sisters. The thing tells me, that I would have been well, and never had had my fits any more but for you.' The maid stood still holding down her head, for the child knelt on her knees, and cried very pitifully, yet either would not or could not once pluck away her head. 'No,' said the child, 'I know you cry, but the spirit said that I would not hear you, because I should not pity you. And he it is that holds you now so that you cannot get away from me.' So the child scratched her face until the skin came off the breadth of a shilling. But there came no blood at all but water. In the end, the maid brought her down into the parlour where the child, sitting a while on her stool, seemed to be wonderfully sorry for what she had done. And she said, 'I would not have scratched Nan Samuel, but the thing told me that I should do it. And it forced me thereunto, stretching forth my arms, and straining my fingers whether I would or not, and made me scratch her.' And truly, they that saw the manner of it and knew the mild disposition of the child, might easily see that she was overruled in the action, for she was carried with such vehemency and cruelty for the time against the maid that it appeared to be altogether besides her nature. The child continued in her fit till an hour after dinner. And then, being asked of these matters, was altogether ignorant of any such thing and would not believe it. But when she saw the example on the maid's face and, being told that she had done it, she broke into tears and was marvellously sorry to see it.

The next day, being Friday, Mistress Mary was in a very mild and solemn fit all the morning. And a little before dinner she said to herself and her sisters that were also in their fits, 'I am glad and marvellously glad.' But she

would not tell the reason why. Presently, she said to the thing that stood by her, 'But I know that you will lie to me as you have oftentimes done.' 'No,' said the thing, 'I used not to lie.' 'No ado,' said she, 'who are you, I pray you?' The thing answered, 'Smack.' 'What,' said she, 'are you that Smack that used to come to my sister Joan and tell her so many things?' 'Yes,' he said, saying further that he never told her sister Joan any lie hitherto, neither was this a lie that he told her. Then Mistress Mary declared to her sisters, all being in their fits, what Smack had told her. This was that, after dinner, she would come out of her fit and never more have any fit, because she had scratched Agnes Samuel. So her sisters wished that Smack would come to them, and tell them the same. So after dinner she came forth from her fit, as she said, and never had more fits afterward from that day to this, thanks be to God . . .⁵⁷

Mistress Elizabeth, one of these children and before spoken of, was all this week troubled with very sudden and extraordinary fits. For she was twitched and wrung in her body more grievously this week than she was many months before. These violent passions in her made us conjecture that there was some extraordinary matter in hand. For it could not be that such violence should continue long. If it had, it could not but have cost her her life. And to pass over many matters of strangeness which befell in that week, we will come to Saturday which was the tenth of March. On this day, as this child sat at supper, it would seem by the manifold signs she made with her hands and head and by her humming with her voice, that she would gladly have spoken to something that stood on the table. But she could not. Her mouth was shut up. Then she began to lament marvellously bitterly for a good while. Yet she could not declare her grief. Soon after, she fell into a most troublesome fit which would not allow her to sit on her stool. Then the maid, Agnes Samuel, was willed to hold her, which she did. And after a while, she began to grow more quiet. And another of her sisters younger than she, Grace by name, was more troubled than she was. So Nan Samuel set down the one, and took up the other. And as she

⁵⁷ The story returns to Joan and her dealings with her Spirits (sigs.κ.3.r-κ.4.r). We pick it up again on sig.κ.4.r with Elizabeth on 10 March.

was holding this Mistress Grace in her arms, the other child, Mistress Elizabeth, that sat close by her, suddenly said to her in a marvellous anger, 'Now I can see the young witch which I could never do before, since she came to the house in my fit.' The company that sat at supper thought that there was some extraordinary matter in hand, that the child should call the young maid witch. For it was never heard by anybody that she ever gave either her or her Mother any ill word before, either in her fit or out of her fit. Presently she said to her, 'My sister Joan's Devil told me, just now as I sat at supper, that I must scratch the young witch.' As soon as she had said so, she slipped from the bench on which she sat. And she fell on her knees, for she was not able to stand. And she caught the maid, that stood close by her holding the other sister, by the hand. And she scratched one of her hands most fiercely to see, with both of her hands. And she said that it was she that had bewitched her and all her sisters, and that she would have been well long since but for her. 'Oh, you young witch, Oh, you young witch, shame on you, shame on you, who ever heard of a young witch before?' And thus she cried, with such vehemency of speech and eagerness of scratching, that both her breath and strength failed her. When she had regained her breath, she fell on her again. And she said that this was her sister Joan's Devil who used not to lie, that made her scratch her for, said she, 'I would not have scratched you, and it was completely disagreeable to my will to do it. But the Devil makes me scratch you, stretching forth my arms, and bending my fingers. Otherwise I would not do it. But I must do it, and so must all my sisters scratch you, though they be ever so unwilling to do it, as I myself now am.' These words she uttered and many more to the like effect in that time, in which she scratched her. All this time, the maid still held the other child in her arms, never once offering to pluck her hand away from her. But she cried out very pitifully, desiring the Lord to think on her. Then one that stood by demanded of her, and willed her to speak her mind as she thought, whether the child did scratch her of her own will and desire or not. She answered that she thought she did not. 'No,' says she, 'I know she did not, and it is no part of her will thus to scratch me.' The child, when she was weary the second time with scratching of her, suddenly put forth

both her hands and said, 'Look you here. The Devil says that I must scratch her no more now, for my fingers are thrust forth so straight that I cannot bend them.' And so it appeared that they were. For she held forth her hand, and her fingers were very straight and stiff. Then she rubbed her hand on the maid's hand that bled a little, and wiped the blood on her own hands. And the child did this oftentimes, while she talked with her. Presently, the scratching ended. The child began to weep, insomuch as many tears fell from her eyes. And she cried marvellously bitterly, and said to the maid, 'I would not in any way have scratched you. But the Devil made me and forced me whether I would or not. Oh, that you never had deserved to be thus used.' And her manner of complaining was as if she had committed some great offence. When this weeping fit was somewhat assauged, she began to exhort her, lifting up her voice with such vehemency and desire for her amendment, that we may verily think that the like was never heard to come forth from a child's mouth. It is not possible to set down all the words of exhortation she spoke to the maid at that time. But these were some of them, and the very words as near as could be remembered. 'Oh, that you have grace to repent of your wickedness that your soul might be saved. For you have forsaken your God, and given yourself to the Devil. Oh, if you knew what a precious thing your soul was, you would never then so lightly have parted with it. You have need to pray night and day to get God's favour again. Otherwise your soul will be damned in Hellfire for ever. You do oftentimes pray here at home when we pray, and likewise at Church. But you pray in vain because you do not pray with your heart. But I will pray for you with all my heart, and I will forgive you, and desire all my sisters and all my friends to forgive you, if you will confess your fault. But you have a hard heart,' said she, 'and the Devil holds your heart, and will not allow you to confess it. But you must confess it whether you wish to or not, when your time is come. But oh that you would now confess it so that your soul might be saved.' When she used these words, as she often did, she would repeat them over, three times at the least, with such vehemence that it was strange to hear. For she would never cease uttering them as long as her breath would serve. Then she told her, 'My sister Joan's Devil stands

here before my face.' And she pointed with her finger to the place. 'And he tells me that, in spite of you, you shall one day confess it or else you will be hanged. For before you do confess it or be hanged, we will not be well. But if you would even now confess it, we will be presently well. Therefore, defy the Devil now and confess it, so that God may forgive you, and so that your soul may be saved. If you would think,' said she, 'of the torments of hell, and that your soul must burn in hellfire, unless you do confess and repent, then you would not now stand so stiffly in the denial of it as you do. But you are a wicked child, and you have been a witch this four or five years and more. You have done more hurt than to me and my sisters. For you have killed my Lady Cromwell and more. The Devil that stands here tells me so. And you would have killed my sister Joan in this her sick week. But God will not let you. What a wicked heart you have that nothing will content you but our deaths. You and your Father,' said she, 'were the cause why your Mother denied that which she did once confess. She was in a good way,⁵⁸ and would never have gone from her words had not you and your Father been. And if your Mother's soul be damned, you and your Father must answer for it,' with many such like speeches. 'For your Mother,' said she, 'had confessed a truth, and was sorry for her naughtiness. Everybody had forgiven her, and would have prayed for her. Oh, that she had never gone home, so that her soul might have been saved. Your Mother is a witch, your Father is a witch, and you are a witch. But of all the three you are the worst. Your Mother would never have done so much hurt as she has done but for you. And thus has the Devil told me, you wicked child. You are a wicked child. The Lord give you grace to confess and to repent that your soul may be saved. Oh, that your Father were now here. For the Devil now says that I should scratch him also. He is a witch and a naughty man. Oh, that he were here that he might hear me now speak to him.' Then two of the child's uncles, Master John Pickering, and Master Henry Pickering, being there present, were entreated by the child's Father to see if they could, by any means, procure old Samuel to come to the house. But it was thought by the company to be a

⁵⁸ For salvation.

labour lost before they went, the man was of so churlish a nature, and always so difficult to bring to the house. Notwithstanding, they went. And when they had gone twenty paces from the house, they did perceive the same man to be coming along very quickly towards the house. So they agreed to pass by him in silence, to see whither he meant to go. The man went directly to Master Throckmorton's house. They, perceiving this, followed him back again, and were as ready to go into the house as he. When they were come into the hall, and were even at the door ready to go into the parlour where the child and the other company were, the child herself says, 'He is come, he is come. I will go scratch him.' So she pressed forwards on her knees, for she had no use of her legs, towards the parlour door as if she would go to him. Yet this is most certain, that she was then in such a place of the parlour that she could not see any part of the hall, and therefore not the man. Then Master Doctor Dorington, being present, perceiving the child so to go on her knees, stopped her, and caused the man to be called into the parlour. When he came in, she still pressed to go towards him, and said, 'I must scratch him, I must scratch him.' Suddenly she stopped, saying, 'I must not scratch him. Look you here.' And she showed her hands, how her fingers were shut up close together. 'If he had been here even now,' says she, 'the devils say I should have scratched him, but now I must not.' Then Master Throckmorton, the child's Father, demanded of the man John Samuel why he came to his house. He answered that one in the field told him that his Daughter was sick and therefore he came. Then Master Throckmorton and Master Doctor Dorington charged him to tell the truth who it was and not to lie, as he would answer for it. He answered that he would not tell them. Notwithstanding they urged him. At last, he said that his brother's daughter came to his house and told him that she saw Master Doctor Dorington and Master Throckmorton's man come to this house together. And then he, thinking that it was something to do with his daughter, came therefore to see the matter. But this was thought by the company not to be a sufficient cause to bring him to the house, where before he could not be gotten to come without a precept from the Justices. The child continued still crying out against him. And she said that he was a naughty man and a

witch, and but for him and his daughter, his wife's soul might have been saved, and therefore he must answer it before God one day. And so she repeated over again many of her speeches to him, which before she had said to his daughter, exhorting him to prayers and to ask God forgiveness. The man was so rude in his behaviour, and so loud in his speeches, that the child could not be heard for him. His answers to the child were, that she lied, and so did all the company, in saying he was a witch. And he said that she had been taught her lessons well enough, and that she was above seven years old,⁵⁹ though indeed she was not twice seven, with many such like speeches. And he would not be silent, nor allow the child to speak anything until he was almost forced to it by the child's Father, although he might perceive very well, as also did all the company, that the child could not hear him, nor answer to any of his speeches. Nor yet did she stop her words at his talking in anything she intended to speak to him, although he greatly interrupted the same if she could have heard him. But she neither heard him nor any other in the company. Yet she saw him and his daughter, and not any other. Towards the end, when the child had thus exhorted the Father and the daughter for the space of an hour and an half, Master Throckmorton, the child's Father, told the man John Samuel that his daughter Agnes, by a charge which she had, commanded the Spirits to depart from his children, and they had departed. He therefore willed him to use the same words which his daughter before had used, to see what would come of it. He said that he would not, neither would any make him to speak them, and he would not be brought to it for anything. Then did Master Throckmorton tell him that, seeing he came to his house unsent for, he would not depart until he had spoken them, as long as the child continued in her fit, if it were a week before she came out of it. Then did Master Doctor Dorington, the rather to bring him on, speak the words before him. So did also two or three of his neighbours, honest men in the town, that were then present and saw all these matters in the child. But this would not persuade the man, until in the end he perceived that Master Throckmorton was resolute not to allow

⁵⁹ The age of understanding.

him to depart until he had spoken them. Then he began to speak them as he was taught by Master Throckmorton. The words were these. 'As I am a witch, and consenting to the death of the Lady Cromwell, so I charge the spirit to depart from Mistress Elizabeth Throckmorton at this time, and to allow her to be well.' The man had no sooner spoken the words, but the child presently arose, and was very well, marvelling to see such company there. Then was the child asked if she knew of anything which she had done or said. And divers particulars were named to her. But she knew of no such thing, saying that she had been asleep. And she was ready to weep because they charged her with such things. So the company departed. And she went to bed, being very well . . .⁶⁰

Within two days after, Mistress Grace, the youngest of all those five sisters sat in the maid's arms in a very troublesome fit. Suddenly she fell to scratching the maid's hand, marvellously fiercely to see. But she was not able to speak. Her mouth was shut up. Yet did she groan and weep greatly as if she had been doing something against her will. But such were the child's short nails and want of strength that she could not once graze the skin of the back of her hands. Of this child, there are not many things noted because, for the most part, her mouth was shut up during the time of her fits. Yet she had very many most grievous and troublesome fits. For she has sat in a chair or on a stool by the fire side sometimes a whole day together, groaning and weeping most lamentably to see, and was never clear from her fits since the first beginning . . .⁶¹

The next strangers that came to the house were Master Henry Cromwell, one of Sir Henry Cromwell's sons and, with him, one of Sir Henry's men. And this was on the Thursday following being the twenty ninth of March. When they came into the house, Mistress Joan was well. But they had not stayed there a quarter of an hour but she fell into her fit, and was very severely

⁶⁰ The story reverts to Joan talking with Smack about scratching Agnes (sigs.L.3.v–L.4.r). A brief account of Grace is now given concerning her scratching of Agnes on 21 March.

⁶¹ The story returns again to Joan. On 25 March she has a long conversation with Smack. All the Samuels are accused of bringing about the death of Lady Cromwell. The spirit foretells that her fits will end on the Assizes Day. He tells Joan that Agnes's Mother had nine spirits, three named Smack, Pluck, Blue, Catch, White, Calico, and Hardname. John Samuel is accused of bewitching his next-door neighbours, the Chappel's (sigs.L.4.v–M.3.v). It is now 29 March, four days before Joan's scratching of Agnes to which she had been looking forward for some time.

handled before them, as was also her sister Jane, whenever the maid⁶² named God, or Christ Jesus. And in the end, she was brought out of her fit three several times by three several charges as before. Many strangers in that week came to the house. And she had these several fits as you will hear on Monday following which was the day appointed for scratching. Mistress Joan fell into her fit a little before supper, and so continued all supper time, not being able to stand on her legs. As soon as thanksgiving after supper was beginning to be said, she jumped up on her feet and came to the table side, and stood with her sisters that were saying grace. And presently, when grace was ended, she fell on the maid Nan Samuel, and took her head under her arms, and first scratched the right side of her cheek. And when she had done that she said, 'Now I must scratch the left side for my Aunt Pickering.'⁶³ And she scratched that also until blood came out of both sides very abundantly. The maid stood stone still, and never once moved to go from her. Yet she cried very pitifully, desiring the Lord to be merciful to her. When she had done scratching, Mistress Joan sat herself on a stool, and acted as though she had been out of breath, for she breathed marvellously heavily, though the maid never struggled with her, and was never able to hold a part of her. But she trembled like a leaf, and called for a pair of shears to pare her nails. But when she had them, she was not able to hold them in her hands. So she desired somebody to do it for her. Then Master Doctor Dorington's wife who was her aunt, standing by her, took the shears and pared her nails. But Mistress Joan herself saved the nails as her fingers were pared. And when she had done, she threw them into the fire, and called for some water to wash her hands. After she had done this, she also threw the water into the fire. When this was done, this Mistress Joan fell on her knees, and willed the maid to come and kneel down by her, and to pray with her. They said The Lord's prayer together and likewise the Creed. But it would seem that Mistress Joan could not yet hear the maid, for she would speak incorrectly many times. And then the company would help her out. But Mistress Joan did not wait for her, so that she had ended her prayers before

⁶² Agnes Samuel.

⁶³ This is Mistress Pickering, wife of John Pickering of Ellington. Joan had accused Agnes on 25 March of having bewitched her.

the maid had half done hers. After this, Master Doctor Dorington took a prayer book, and read certain prayers which he thought good. And when he had done, then Mistress Joan fell to exhorting the maid, and gave her many good exhortations. And as she was thus speaking to her, she fell into a marvellous weeping. And she sobbed so greatly that she could not utter her words well, saying that she would not have scratched her, but that she was forced into it by the spirit. As she was thus complaining, Mistress Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of her younger sisters, being suddenly taken in her fit, unknown to any in the company, came hastily on the maid and caught her by one of her hands and gladly would have scratched her, saying that the spirit says that she also must scratch her. But the company willed the maid to keep her hand from her, which she did. So they strove together for a great while until the child was breathless. Then the child said, 'Will nobody help me?' She repeated the words twice or thrice. Then her sister Mistress Joan said, being still in her fit, 'Will I help you sister Elizabeth?' 'Aye,' said she, 'for God's sake, good sister.' So Mistress Joan came and took one of the maid's hands and held it to her sister Elizabeth. And she scratched it until blood came. And she seemed to be marvellously joyful that she had gotten blood. She pared her nails also and washed her hands and threw all into the fire. After all this, before the company departed, the maid helped Mistress Joan out of her fit three several times one after the other, by three several charges as you have heard before. And likewise she brought Mistress Elizabeth Throckmorton out of her fit by saying, as she has bewitched Mistress Elizabeth Throckmorton since her mother confessed.

We will now leave Mistress Joan until the Assizes day, and retire a little back again to Mistress Jane, who is the youngest of Master Throckmorton's children save one, and has drunk as deep of this cup of affliction as any of her sisters has done. And as she first talked of it, so she was the first that disliked, and disclosed the author of it, for she it was that first cried out against Mother Samuel, and said that it was she that had bewitched her, before either her parents or any other that came towards her suspected any witchery at all. Since this time, as there has been great cause to think, whereas she was the first that gave occasion to suspect the old woman, and

indeed did herself openly accuse her, so she has been therefore amongst all the rest the most extremely dealt withal. For there was never any of her sisters, Mistress Joan excepted, that did abide such heavy blows, such dangerous and mortal temptations, as she has done. For she has been often and divers times tempted to cast herself into the fire and into the water, and to deprive herself of life by cutting her throat with her own knife. And these things have thus appeared in her, namely, that she has many times in her fits suddenly pulled the knife out of her sheath, and if she had been abroad, she has thrown it from her as far as she could. If within the house sitting at the table, or in any other place, she has thrown it under the table or in some corner of the house, saying that the spirit now tempts her to kill herself. But she will not, desiring the Lord to strengthen her against them. And when she has come out of her fit, she has acknowledged no such matter, marvelling who has taken her knife from her. And as for the danger of fire, this thing has also been proved many times in her. For she has pressed forwards, and strained herself to thrust her head into the fire. And she has been permitted to come so near the fire with her head and face that, resting only on the strength of one that restrained her, had she been let go, she would have fallen flat into the fire, to her utter danger of perishing therein. And the same experience in her has as often been made by water, saying always that the Devil does tempt her to both. Yet this has been observed continually in all these temptations, that she was never tempted to any of these dangers, that ever was known, being alone, but always when there were some company and assistance by to help her. Which thing thus considered, whether it has proceeded of the gracious Providence and goodness of God it cannot be denied but that it has shown itself most strange and most wonderful, both in the preservation of her, as also in the rest of her sisters, in these their troublesome extremities. Or whether it has been some secret illusion and mockery of the Devil to deceive the bystanders, it remains doubtful and cannot be determined amongst men. But whether one or the other, or whatever, God deserves the glory.

On Friday, which was the fifteenth of March 1592, this Mistress Jane was very much troubled with her fit, sitting at the table in dinner time, as she

had been for a fortnight or three weeks before that, more extremely used at meals than at any other time of the day. For always, a little before she would sit down either in giving of thanks or presently after, her fit would surely take her. On this day, as she sat at dinner, it seemed that something that sat on the table talked to her about Nan Samuel. For she would listen for a while to it and then look back with a heavy countenance to the maid that stood behind her, shaking her head as if some sorrow were at hand. Now this Mistress Jane had been often told by her other sisters being in their fits, that the spirit had told them that she would also scratch Nan Samuel before the next Assizes, happen when it would. But she would always make this answer to them, that she would not scratch her, let the Devil do what he could against her, although the spirit had told her as much as she had oftentimes said. But she always withstood the spirit in words to his face, saying that she would not do it. On this night, as she sat at supper with the rest of her sisters, she fell into a very extreme fit, bowing and bending her body as if she would have broken her back, shaking her hands so that she could not hold her knife steady. And many times, it would thrust it against her arm. When this fit was ended, then the spirit seemed to talk to her again, as it did at dinner. For she used the same manner of gesture to Agnes Samuel that stood behind her as before, and gave rather great signs of sorrow than otherwise. Suddenly, she arose from the table and went to the upper end thereof, casting a marvellously heavy and discontented look to the maid. By this it was perceived that the child had something in her mind that she could not utter, for her mouth was shut up which she did greatly dislike. Then the maid was willed to ask her how she did. The child's mouth was presently opened and she answered her, 'The worse for you, you young witch,' and turning away her face from her, as if she loathed to look on her. This was news to the maid to be called young witch at her hand. So she continued questioning her, as she was willed. But the child turned away her face, and covered her ear which was closest to her saying that she could not abide to hear her or see her. Then the maid was willed to ask her what the matter was. The child answered that the spirit says that she must scratch her. 'When must you scratch me,' says the maid.

Presently, the child's mouth was shut up so that she could make no answer. Then did the child begin to weep, most lamentably to see. Yet her weeping was so mixed with anger towards the maid that oftentimes, looking on her, she would suddenly turn away her face from her, with such a yearning voice, her teeth being set together as if the evil spirit had been whetting and kindling her fury against the maid. Continuing thus a quarter of an hour, the maid was moved to ask again when she should scratch her. The child answered by signs, for she could hear her but not speak, holding up her finger at 'Yes', and holding it down at 'No'. So it was easily gathered that she would scratch her presently after supper as soon as grace was said. Then the maid asked in what part she would scratch her. She answered by sign that it would be on her right hand, which was the contrary hand to that which her sister Elizabeth had scratched a week before. Then Master Throckmorton, the child's Father, caused Master Doctor Dorington and some other neighbours in the town to be sent for. When they were come he declared to them what the child had uttered concerning the maid. In this time, before they had come together, there was half an hour spent. All this time, the child continued marvellously pensive and heavy, weeping very pitifully, yet often fiercely darting out of the place where she sat towards the maid, as if she would have fallen on her before the time. So one of the children, being in her fit, gave thanks. As soon as it was ended, the child sank down on her knees, for she could not stand, and fell on the maid with such fierceness and rage, as if she would have pulled the flesh of her hand from the bones. Yet was she scarcely able to scratch the skin, saying to the maid that the spirit that stands there by her tells her that Pluck holds her heart and her hand, meaning the maid's, and will not allow the blood to come. When the child was weary with scratching, she breathed and said that she must have another fit at her. Then Doctor Dorington moved the people to pray with him, all which time she kneeled very quietly. But when prayers were ended, she presently fell to work again on the maid as before, saying these words to her with tears trickling down her cheeks, 'I would not scratch you, but the spirit compels me saying that I must scratch you as well as my other sisters have done and as my sister Joan also must do before the

Assizes.' For this was, if the time be marked, almost three weeks before the Assizes.

At the first scratching, the maid seemed to move somewhat from her. But the child followed still on her knees, saying to her that it were as good to take it now, as at another time, for she must fetch blood on her, and she must have her pennyworths of her. She further said that she knew that she did now cry, which indeed she did, but that she could not hear her, for so much the spirit told her before, because she would not pity her. When the child was weary and breathless, she stopped scratching, and wiped that little blood and water together, which came from the maid's hand on her own hands. Then Doctor Dorington began to instruct the maid and to exhort her with many good speeches saying that God would surely not suffer her to be thus cried out on by these wicked spirits and afflicted in this sort by these innocent children contrary to their wills, if she were not consenting or at the least concealing and had some knowledge of these wicked practices, which her Mother had confessed. The maid very stiffly denied all that could be said, and desired God to show some present token on her that they all might know that she was guilty of these matters. Presently, after these words, her nose began to bleed, and she bled very much, which, whether it were a sign of God's sending at that time in token of her guiltiness or not, that he only knows, and man, I think, may without offence greatly suspect. Yet this she could say, being charged withal, that she had bled four times the day before, which thing was very true. She bled very much every time, always saying that she had not bled so much to her remembrance in seven years before, wishing that this often bleeding would foreshadow no evil towards her. In the end, the child herself said that the thing which now stands by her does tell her that she must not come out of her fit until the old man John Samuel, the maid's Father, will come and pronounce certain words to her, which she must tell him. Then was she asked by the maid and others that stood by what those words would be. But the child could not hear anybody. By and by she herself said, 'What, is her Father come into this reckoning now? And will I never come out of my fit until he speak these words that, even as he is a witch and consented to the death of the Lady Cromwell,

so to charge the spirit to depart from me, and then I will be well and not before? He looked so ill-favouredly at me, I did even think,' said she, 'that he was as bad as the worst.' Then Master Throckmorton, hearing those words of his daughter, desired Master Henry Pickering, the child's uncle, and two other of the neighbours, to go and see if they could procure him to come. But he refused to come. So the company departed for that night. And the child went to bed in her fit and so continued until the Assizes day, as hereafter you shall hear. Yet her Father did not cease to send for the man every day, and to go to him himself. Yet he could by no means procure him to come to his house. On the Sunday following, which was the eighteenth of March⁶⁴ in the morning, the spirit came again to her. Then the child said, 'The thing says that I would not both hear and see the young witch if she were here,' for so the spirits always called her, 'and see the thing⁶⁵ also which I never did before, all of them together.' Then the maid was called for. And she asked the child what the thing says to her. She answered that the thing tells her that now she must be startled as well as her sister Joan does whenever she names God, that she must not come out of her fit this week nor the next, and perhaps never, until one of these three things come to pass. These are, she said to the maid, 'Either your Father must come and speak these words to me, even as he is a witch and has consented to the death of the Lady Cromwell, or you must confess that you are a witch and have bewitched me and my sisters, or else you must be hanged.' Then the maid was willed to ask the child whether she would come out of her fit whenever or where ever her Father spoke these words to her. Then the child asked the spirit. And the spirit answered that she would. And so for that time, the thing departed. And she continued in her fit, the manner of which was as follows. She would sit sometimes in the house all the day long, like one in a melancholic passion, not speaking to anybody nor desirous of any company. Sometimes again she is very lightsome and merry and will sport and play with her sisters a great part of the day, yet not hearing nor seeing anybody, nor speaking to anyone particularly. When anyone passes by her,

⁶⁴ This should probably read 17 March.

⁶⁵ The spirits.

she will say, 'Yonder goes such a coloured gown, I marvel how it goes alone. Yonder is a pair of nether stocks of such a colour, or yonder is a hat, a pair of shoes or a cloak, but I can see nothing else.' If one had shown her their hand with a ring on their finger, she would say, 'Yonder is a ring hanging in the air. I marvel how it hangs and nobody holds it.' Many will think these matters incredible, but assuredly they are most true. This thing also was many times proved while those kinds of fits continued on her, that, sitting at dinner or supper, she would suddenly have her mouth shut. And if Agnes Samuel had then come and held a knife to her mouth and put it between her lips, her mouth would have been presently opened, and not before. And thus the spirit has dealt with her five or six times in a dinner time. And in this fit, she continued three weeks but one day, for so long did it take her before the Assizes . . .⁶⁶

And in the same evening, after the Court was broken up, Master Justice Fenner, who for that time was Judge alone, had a desire to see Mistress Joan Throckmorton, then being at the sign of the Crown of Huntington. Being the place where the said Judge then lodged, he went into the garden to the said Mistress Joan, then in the company of other women. There the Judge, with a great assembly of Justices and gentlemen, met the said Mistress Joan Throckmorton in a fair garden walk. She was at that time out of her fit and perfectly well. And after some speeches made by the said Judge to Mistress Joan, she fell into one of her ordinary fits. Her eyes were closed up, shaking her shoulders. And her arms were stretched right out. She was ready to fall to the ground, but that she was assisted by her Father. And not being able to stand, she was led into an arbour, whither went also both the Judge and the other company. There they saw the said Mistress Joan grievously tormented, most pitiful to behold. Many good prayers were made both by the Judge and all the company, but no ease appeared. Then the Father of the said Mistress Joan told the Judge that there was one in the company, naming Agnes Samuel, that, if she would say certain words in the manner

⁶⁶ On the day of the Assizes, Joan travels with Agnes to Huntington and lodges at the Crown Inn. During the day she is visited by 'five hundred men' who tested her and viewed her fits (sigs. n.3.r–n.3.v). That evening she is visited by Judge Fenner.

of a charge, then the said Mistress Joan would be presently well, a thing desired by all the company. Therefore the Judge caused the said Agnes Samuel to stand forward, and to know the charge, which was repeated by Master Throckmorton, Father of the said Mistress Joan. The words were these. 'As I am a witch, and a worse witch than my Mother, and did consent to the death of the Lady Cromwell, so I charge the Devil to let Mistress Joan Throckmorton come out of her fit at this present.' But before Agnes Samuel spoke the charge, to make some trial in others of the effect thereof, the Judge himself, Doctor Dorington, Master Throckmorton and others, spoke the words of the charge. But the said Mistress Joan had small ease by their speeches, neither would she come out of her fit. Then both the Judge and the other company made many good prayers and petitions to God, but no improvement appeared. After this, Agnes Samuel was commanded by the Judge to make some good prayers to God for the ease of the said Mistress Joan, which she did. At which time, if the said Agnes Samuel prayed to God or Jesus Christ, then the said Mistress Joan was in effect more troubled than before. And the reason was foretold by the said Mistress Joan and all her other sisters by the spirit, that whenever the said Agnes did use the name of God or Jesus Christ, they would be worse troubled than when any other spoke the words. For he that is perfect God Almighty will not allow his name to be used in the mouth of such a wicked creature, which was then proved true. Then Agnes Samuel was commanded to say, 'As I am no witch, neither did consent to the death of the Lady Cromwell, so I charge the Devil to let Mistress Joan come out of her fit at this present.' But all this was to no purpose. Lastly, the said Agnes Samuel was commanded to say the right charge, which was, 'As I am a witch, and a worse witch than my Mother, and did consent to the death of the Lady Cromwell, so I charge the Devil to let Mistress Joan Throckmorton come out of her fit at this present.' These words were no sooner spoken by the said Agnes Samuel, but the said Mistress Joan Throckmorton wiped her eyes and came out of her fit. And she made a low curtsy to the Judge. And so she remained about half a quarter of an hour. And then she fell into another kind of fit, first shaking one leg after the other, then one arm after the other, and then her

head and shoulders, with other extraordinary passions, to the great grief of them that were present, and the Judge greatly lamenting the case. When both he and many others had made some good prayers, and finding no ease, they caused the said Agnes Samuel to repeat another charm, viz., 'As I am a witch and would have bewitched to death Mistress Joan Throckmorton in the last week of her great sickness, so I charge you Devil to let Mistress Joan come out of her fit at this present.' Which words being said by the said Agnes Samuel, the said Mistress Joan was presently well. Then the Judge asked her where she had been. She answered, 'I have been asleep.' 'I pray God,' said the Judge, 'send you no more such sleeps.' Soon after, she fell into one of her other ordinary fits, with a most strange and terrible kind of sneezing and other passions. These were so vehement and pitiful to be heard, that it moved all the company at one instant to pray to God to save her, fearing that her head would have burst in sunder, or her eyes start out of the same. So the Judge made no delay, but caused the said Agnes Samuel to speak the other charm which was, 'As I am a witch, and did bewitch Mistress Pickering of Ellington, since my Mother's confession, so I charge you Devil to let Mistress Joan come out of her fit at this present.' Which words being spoken, presently the said Mistress Joan was as well as ever she was in her life, and so has continued without any grief or fits until this day. The Lord be thanked therefore.

The next day being Thursday, in the morning, there were three several indictments made and delivered to the great Inquest, of which the one was against old Father Samuel, old Mother Samuel, and Agnes their daughter, for bewitching to death the Lady Cromwell, late wife of Sir Henry Cromwell, Knight, of Finchingbrook in the county of Huntington, contrary to God's Laws and the statute made in the fifteenth year of the Queen's Majesty's reign that now is &c.⁶⁷

The other two indictments were framed on the said statute for bewitching of Mistress Joan Throckmorton, Mistress Jane Throckmorton and others, contrary to the said statute. The indictments being delivered to the grand Jury, the evidence was given them privately by Master Dorington, Doctor

⁶⁷ The 1563 Witchcraft Act.

of Divinity and Parson of the town of Warboys aforesaid, by Gilbert Pickering Esquire, of Titchmarsh in the County of Northampton, by Robert Throckmorton Esquire, Father of the said children, by Robert Throckmorton Esquire, of Brampton in the said County of Huntington, by John Pickering and Henry Pickering Gentlemen, and by Thomas Nut, Master of Arts and Vicar of Ellington. The grand Jury made no great delay but found them all guilty. And about eight o'clock, the evidence by the forenamed gentlemen was openly at large delivered in the Court to the Jury of life and death. And with great patience of the Judge, it was continued till one o'clock in the afternoon. So many of these proofs, presumptions, circumstances, and reasons contained in this book were at large delivered, as that time would afford, which was five hours, without intermission or interruption, until both the Judge, Justices, and Jury said openly that the cause was most apparent. Their consciences were well satisfied that the said witches were guilty and had deserved death. And there withal, the gentlemen ceased to give any further evidence. And this as no final thing is to be remembered, that Mistress Jane Throckmorton on Friday the twenty sixth of March last past, being in one of her accustomed fits, said that the spirit told her, she would never come out of her fit until old Father Samuel had said these words, 'As I am a witch and consented to the death of Lady Cromwell, so I charge the Devil to allow Mistress Jane to come out of her fit.' And this she published openly in the hearing of many. Therefore her Father sought means, both by himself and others, to have John Samuel come to his house to the child, but they could not prevail. Wherefore the said Jane continued in her senseless fits with many pangs and vexations in every part, as they are before described, from the said sixteenth of March until the fourth of April, which was three weeks except a day. Also on this day,⁶⁸ the said Mistress Jane was brought to Huntington. And there in her fit was set in the Court before the Judge, where many questions were demanded of her. But she answered to none, for the Devil would not allow her to speak. Her eyes were open, yet such a mist was before them that she neither knew

⁶⁸ The account of Jane's cure in court is placed out of sequence. It should have been included before the decision was made on the guilt of the Samuels.

nor did see her Father who was next to her, and divers of her uncles and friends. Then the Judge caused old Samuel to be brought from amongst the other prisoners to the upper bar, near to the place where the Clerks sat, where also stood the said Jane. And the Judge was told before that if old Samuel would speak the words before recited, the said Jane should be well. The Judge therefore asked him whether he by any means could cause the said Jane to come out of her fit. He denied the same. Then the Judge, as he was informed that the said Samuel had a charm made of certain words which, if he would speak them, the child would be well, therefore recited the charm. And he willed him to speak the words. But he refused the same and said, 'I will not speak them.' The Judge persuaded him and entreated him, insomuch that the said Judge, the rather to encourage the said Samuel, himself openly spoke the charm, as did also Master Doctor Dorington and others then present, by the Judge's appointment. Yet he refused the same. Many good and godly prayers were openly made to God, both by the Judge and others, for the ease of the child, at which the child seemed not to be moved. Then the Judge willed Samuel to pray to God for the comfort of the child, which he did. But when he named God or Jesus Christ, the child's head, shoulders, and arms were sorely shaken, and in effect more troubled than before. Then the Judge said that, if he would not speak the words of the charm, the court would hold him guilty of the crimes of which he was accused. And so eventually, with much ado, the said Samuel, with a loud voice, said in the hearing of all that were present, 'As I am a witch, and did consent to the death of the Lady Cromwell, so I charge the Devil to allow Mistress Jane to come out of her fit at this present.'

Which words, being no sooner spoken by the old witch, but the said Mistress Jane, as her accustomed order was, wiped her eyes, and came out of her fit. And then, seeing her Father, she knelt down and asked his blessing. And she made a curtsy to her uncles that stood near her, whom before she gave no indication of knowing. And wondering, she said, 'O Lord, Father, where am I?' For it seemed that she neither saw nor heard before, nor knew how she was brought into such a presence. Then the Judge said, 'You all see, she is now well, but not with the music of David's harp,' alluding to the

place of Scripture where King Saul, being vexed by an evil spirit, received comfort and help when David played on his harp before him.⁶⁹ Then the confession of old Mother Samuel, before specified, made the twenty sixth day of December, 1592 last past at Burkden, before the Reverend Father in God, William, Bishop of Lincoln, was openly read. So also was read the confession of the said Mother Samuel made at Burkden aforesaid the twenty ninth day of December, 1592 before the said Reverend Father in God, William, Bishop of Lincoln, Frances Cromwell, and Richard Tryce, Esquires, Justices of her Majesty's peace within the county of Huntington, which also is before specified. After these confessions read and delivered to the jury, it pleased God for the further proof and overthrow of these wicked persons to rear up more witnesses unexpected at that time, who spoke some things of their own knowledge, and some of report. The first was Robert Poulter, vicar and curate of Brampton aforesaid, who said openly that one of his parishioners called John Langley, at that instant being very sick in his bed, had told him that one day he, being at Huntington at the sign of the Crown, did in the hearing of old Mother Samuel forbid Mother Knowles of Brampton aforesaid, to give her any meat for that she was an old witch. And thereupon in the afternoon, as he went from Huntington to Brampton, having a good horse under him, it presently died in the field. And within two days after, by the Providence of God, he did escape death, twice or thrice very dangerously. And though it pleased God not to allow the Devil to have the mastery of his body at that time, yet presently after, he lost as many good and sound cattle to all men's judgements, as were worth twenty marks. And he himself, not long after, was in body extraordinarily handled. And the same night of the day of the Assizes, as after it proved true, the same John Langley died. Also the forenamed Master Robert Throckmorton of Brampton, who before had given some evidence against the said witch on the children's behalf, now spoke for himself that he likewise at Huntington and in other places, having dealt very roughly in speeches with the said Mother Samuel, on Friday the tenth day following, had one of his two

⁶⁹ 1 Samuel 16.23

year-old beasts die. And on Sunday next after, another beast of the same company and like age died also. The next week after, on Friday, he had a yearling calf die. And the next Sunday following, he had another calf of the same company and like age die also. The next week after, on Friday, he had a hog die. And the next Sunday after, he had a sow having ten pigs sucking on her die also. Whereupon, advice was given to him that whatever thing next died, to make a hole in the ground and burn the same. Likewise, the fourth week on Friday, he had a very fair cow worth four marks die. And his servants made a hole in the ground and buried the same cow in it. And they threw faggots and fire on her and burnt her. And after that, all his cattle did well. Of this last matter, Mother Samuel being examined the night before her execution, confessed the bewitching of the said cattle, in manner and form as is declared.

Then the gaoler of Huntington gave this evidence. A man of his, finding Mother Samuel very unruly whilst she was prisoner, at one time chained her to a bed-post. Wherefore, not long after, his man fell sick and in all respects was handled as the forenamed children were, with heaving up and down of his body, shaking his arms, legs and head, having more strength in him in his fits than any two men had, crying out against Mother Samuel, saying that she did bewitch him. And thus remaining in this extraordinary course of sickness, about five or six days after, he died.

The said gaoler said also that, not long after the death of his servant, he had one of his sons fall sick, and was for the most part handled as his servant beforenamed was. So that it was most apparent that he was bewitched. Therefore the said gaoler went into the prison, and brought Mother Samuel to his son's bed-side. And there he held her until his son had scratched her, and so presently his son recovered. And to draw to some end, the jury of life and death, in the afternoon, found all the Indictments *Billa vera*, which, when old Father Samuel heard, he said to his wife in the hearing of many, 'A plague of God light on you. For you are she that has brought us all to this, and we may thank you for it.'

Then the Judge came to sentencing. And he asked old Father Samuel what he had to say for himself, why judgement of death should not be pronounced on him. At this, he answered that he had nothing to say, but the Lord have

mercy on him. Then the Judge asked old Mother Samuel what she had to say for herself to stay judgement. At this, she answered that she was with child, which set all the company to laughing greatly, and she herself more than any other because, as she thought, no judgement would have been given for that reason. Her age was near four score. Therefore the Judge moved her to leave that answer. But by no means would she be driven from it, until at length a jury of women were empanelled and sworn to search her. They gave their verdict that she was not with child unless, as some said, it was with the Devil and no marvel. For after she was found guilty, there went the forenamed Master Henry Pickering to her where she stood amongst the prisoners to persuade her to confess the truth. And, amongst other things, she confessed that the forenamed William Langley who gave the spirits to her, had carnal knowledge of her body when she received them. Some are of the opinion that it was the Devil in man's likeness.

After all this, the Judge asked Agnes Samuel, the daughter, what she had to say why judgement of death should not be given her. At which time there was one, a prisoner standing by her, that willed her to say that she was also with child. 'No,' said she, 'that will I not do. It will never be said that I was both a witch and a whore.' And so the Judge, after very sound and divine counsel given severally to them all, proceeded to judgement which was to death. The next day, certain godly men went to the prison to persuade the condemned parties to repentance and to confess their sins to the world, and crave pardon at God's merciful hands. At which time Mother Samuel was asked by Master John Dorington, Esquire, one of her Majesty's Justices of the County of Huntington, whether she did not bewitch the Lady Cromwell. She said, 'No, in truth, I did not.' Then her husband, old Father Samuel, standing behind and hearing her deny the same, said, 'Deny it not, but confess the truth. For you did it one way or other.'

The confession of the old woman Alice Samuel to certain questions that were demanded of her by master Doctor Chamberlain at the time and place of her execution being on the ladder.

First, being demanded what were the names of those spirits with which she bewitched, she said that they were called Pluck, Catch and White, which names she often repeated. Being asked whether she had bewitched

the Lady Cromwell to death or not, she answered that she had. Being asked with which of her spirits she did bewitch the said Lady to death, she said, 'With Catch.' And being demanded for what reason she did it, she answered, 'Because the said Lady had caused some of her hair and her hair-lace to be burned.' And she said that Catch willed her to be revenged of the said Lady and thereupon the said Mother Samuel bade him go and do what he would. And being asked, what Catch said to her when he came back again, she confessed that he said that he had been revenged of her. Moreover she confessed, and on her death did say for truth, that she was guilty of the death of the Lady Cromwell. Being demanded whether she had bewitched Master Throckmorton's children, she confessed that she had done it. Being asked with which of her spirits, she said that it was Pluck. Being asked what she said to him when she sent him about that matter, she confessed that she willed him to go torment them, but not hurt them. Being asked how long they should be in that state, she said that she could not tell and that she had not seen Pluck since Christmas last. Being asked what she did with White, she said that she never did hurt with him. And she said that she had sent him to the sea, and that he had sucked on her chin. But the other two had not any reward. And likewise, she confessed that she had those spirits from one whose name, she said, was Langley. Where he dwells she knew not. And because her husband would not confess anything of the witchcraft at the time of his death, nor of the awareness of himself or his daughter as accessories to the same, it was demanded of her whether her husband was privy to the death of the Lady Cromwell or not. She answered, 'He was.'

Being demanded whether her husband was a witch or had any skill in witchcraft, she said, 'He had,' and that he could both bewitch and unwitch. But touching her daughter, she would in no way confess anything, but fought by all means to clear her. And as for her daughter herself, she confessed nothing at all touching the witchcraft. But being willed by Master Doctor Chamberlain to say The Lord's Prayer and the Creed as she stood on the ladder ready to be executed, she said The Lord's Prayer until she came to say, 'But deliver us from evil,' the which by no means she could pronounce.

And in the Creed, she missed very much, and could not say that she believed in the Catholic Church.

After the execution was ended and these three persons were thoroughly dead, the gaoler, whose office it is to see them buried, stripped off their clothes and, being naked, he found on the body of the old woman Alice Samuel a little lump of flesh, in manner sticking out as if it had been a teat to the length of half an inch. Both he and his wife perceiving this, at the first sight thereof, they meant not to disclose it, because it was adjoining to so secret a place which was not decent to be seen. Yet in the end, not willing to conceal so strange a matter, and decently covering that private place a little above which it grew, they made open show of thereof to divers that stood by. After this, the gaoler's wife took the same teat in her hand and, seeming to strain it, at first there issued out as if it had been beesenings, to use the gaoler's word, which is a mixture of yellow milk and water. At the second time, there came out in similitude like clear milk, and in the end very blood itself. For the truth of this matter, it is not to be doubted of any. For it is not only the gaoler's report to all that require it of him, but there are forty others also in Huntington shire, of honest conversation, that are ready to confirm the same on their own sight.

And thus you have the story of these three witches of Warboys, as plainly and briefly as may be delivered to you. If any be desirous to know the present state of these children, how they are and have been since the death of these parties, you will understand that, since their day of execution, not any one of them have had any fit at all, neither yet grudging or complaining of any such thing. But they have all of them been in as good a state and as perfect health as ever from their birth. God's blessed name be evermore praised for the same. Amen.

FINIS

CHAPTER 4

The boy of Burton *The story of Thomas Darling*

Thomas Darling was a passionate Puritan. In February 1603, he was sentenced to lose his ears for having libelled the Vice Chancellor of the University of Oxford, John Howson, a vehement opponent of Puritanism. It was the third occasion on which he had come to the attention of the public. In 1600, he had been involved in the trial of the Puritan exorcist John Darrell for fraudulently claiming to have dispossessed Thomas Darling, and a number of other demoniacs. And he had been the leading character in the events which took place in Burton on Trent in 1596 which form the backdrop to this text, and which led, in part, to the trial of John Darrell.

On 17 February, 1596 Thomas Darling began to have a series of fits which were to continue throughout the next five months. Earlier on this day he had come across an old woman in a wood wearing a grey gown with three warts upon her face. As he passed by her, he passed wind, to which she responded, 'Gyp with a mischief, and fart with a bell. I will go to Heaven, and you will go to Hell.'¹ Suspicion for having bewitched Thomas fell on the sixty-year-old Alice Gooderidge who, like her mother Elizabeth Wright, had long been suspected of devilish practices. She was arrested and confined in Derby gaol on 14 April.

After scratchings, and the discovery of witch's marks upon her body, she confessed upon 2 May that she had met Thomas in the wood and responded to his calling her the witch of Stapenhill by asking him 'Every boy does call me witch, but did I ever make your arse to itch?'² The next day, 3 May, she repeated the statement, adding that she had sent the devil in the form of a little red and white dog which she called Minny to torment the boy. Alice was returned to jail where little more is heard of her fate until the last

¹ Anon., 1597, p. 4 (see below, p. 159).

² Anon., 1597, p. 25 (see below, p. 177).

sentence of the book: 'Now the witch is dead. Had she lived, she would have been executed.'³

On that same day, 3 May, Thomas was visited by the staunch Puritan divine Arthur Hildersham, and a number of other ministers including John Darrell,⁴ all of whom prayed for his deliverance. On 27 May the boy received another visit from Darrell who suggested that his family and others should follow a regime of prayer and fasting. The following day a number of devils are vomited out of his body. Although attacked by Satan again on 8 June, Thomas resisted. God bound 'Satan fast in a chain',⁵ and Thomas remained untroubled from that day.

The version of the text which we have was edited and prefaced by John Denison⁶ at the request of a Mr Walkeden, Thomas Darling's grandfather. Before its final publication it was read by Hildersham and Darrell, the latter of whom (Denison later claimed) made a significant amendment.⁷ But Denison worked from notes made by Jesse Bee who had been present throughout Thomas's possession. Jesse Bee was a 'private Christian and man of trade (Preface)', 'a sadler'.⁸ But he was also a 'cunning man'. Called in after the failure of medical treatments of the boy, it was his diagnosis of bewitchment,⁹ which set the stage for the ensuing events.

As with the narrative of the Throckmorton children, this text is driven by the need to demonstrate that Thomas Darling was genuinely bewitched, and that the punishment of the guilty witch was merited. Alice Goodridge is implicated, accused, scratched, examined for the witch's marks she had pathetically attempted to remove, confesses, even elaborates on her activities. The reality, of witchcraft, good and bad, is embedded in the narrative. Bee is a witchcraft specialist. Not only Alice and her Mother, but her husband and daughter are suspected and examined.¹⁰ On 17 April, a witchfinder accuses Alice and offers to cure the boy.¹¹ The next day, Widow Worthington, the good witch of Hoppers, offers her assistance, as does

³ Anon., 1597, p. 43 (see below, p. 191). Alice is tormented by a demon after its departure from Thomas (see p. 38, below, p. 187). As a first offender, Alice would have been sent to prison for a year. Certainly, she died in prison during this time. See Darrell, 1600c, p. 40.

⁴ Although no mention is made of Darrell being among the ministers in this text, we know from Samuel Harsnett's account of Thomas Darling that he was present along with his "right hand man" George More. See Harsnett, 1599, pp. 270–1.

⁵ Anon., 1597, p. 42 (see below, p. 190).

⁶ The Preface was signed 'J. D.' But Harsnett, 1599, p. 267 cites a John Denison as the editor. See also Darrell, 1600c, p. 172.

⁷ See Harsnett, 1599, pp. 268–9, and Darrell, 1600c, p. 172.

⁸ Anon., 1597, To the Reader (see below, p. 156). Harsnett, 1599, p. 2.

⁹ See anon., 1597, p. 4 (see below, p. 159).

¹⁰ See anon., 1597, pp. 8, 10 (see below, pp. 162, 164).

¹¹ See anon., 1597, p. 14 (see below, p. 167).

another witch from Coventry. Thomas's mother 'sharply reproved them for attempting a thing so unlawful'.¹² A week later, Thomas's uncle cannot be persuaded to seek help from other witches. His mother relents, but the attempt is forestalled as 'wicked and dangerous'.¹³

One of Denison's main purposes is to combat those who deny the reality of witches. A mysterious stranger who visited the boy on 17 April said that 'there were no witches' and accused him of dissembling.¹⁴ Thomas was distressed, but his piety won the day. Just before his final return to health in mid June, God reminded Thomas, 'you have an enemy here on earth that says you are a dissembler. He will fry in Hell torments.'¹⁵

The text also voices Puritan concerns about Catholic claims that only their priests have the power to dispossess.¹⁶ Arthur Hildersham expressed the orthodox Anglican position on exorcism, before hinting at the use of prayer and fasting to sanctify what was God's judgement.¹⁷ Darrell's eventual active intervention established the Puritan case for the power of communal prayer and fasting in deliverance from the devil against papist pretensions.¹⁸

Denison also saw the possession of Thomas Darling as being played out in an apocalyptic context. The vexing of Thomas is a proof of the prophecy in the Revelation of St John: 'The Devil, says he, has great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time.'¹⁹ He is thrown into cruel fits when Jesse Bee reads the first chapters of this work. Thomas has visions of heaven and hell and the day of judgement. The body of Darling is itself a site of warfare between good and evil, and prefigures the final battle between God and Satan. "Come Thomas," says Jesse Bee, "will we provoke him to battle?" To whom the child answered, "yes, very willingly".²⁰ This consisted in reading the Bible, usually the Gospel of John, which Protestant activity inevitably provoked Satan's rage.²¹ Just as Satan's activity in the world increases towards its end, so also does his tormenting of Thomas as his departure from the

¹² Anon., 1597, p. 18 (see below, p. 170). ¹³ Anon., 1597, p. 22 (see below, p. 174).

¹⁴ Anon., 1597, p. 15 (see below, p. 168). The editor declines to name him (thus suggesting the readers would know the name). Reginald Scot, whose *Discovery of Witchcraft* was published a decade earlier may well be intended.

¹⁵ Anon., 1597, p. 42 (see below, p. 190).

¹⁶ See anon., 1597, To the Reader, p. 26 (see below, p. 156).

¹⁷ Hildersham and George More were more than likely not convinced that Thomas was possessed but were persuaded by Darrell. See Harsnett, 1599, pp. 270–1.

¹⁸ See anon., 1597, pp. 36–8 (see below, pp. 185–7).

¹⁹ Anon., 1597, To the Reader (see below, p. 155). The reference is to Revelation 12.12.

²⁰ Anon., 1597, p. 17 (see below, p. 170).

²¹ Jesse Bee was later to suggest that Thomas willingly cast himself into fits when the Bible was read so that 'those who were present might thereby the better be brought to think that the Devil could not abide it and so have a more due and godly regard afterwards of it.' Harsnett, 1599, p. 288.

boy approaches. And Thomas's fits increase in number and severity until the arrival of Darrell on 27 May.

As the site of the battle between good and evil, Thomas mimics Christ in his resistance to the Tempter. He is the exemplar of Puritan piety and Protestant faith. When he is first afflicted he accepts the prospect of death with equanimity, although he wished 'that he might have lived to be a preacher, to thunder out the threatenings of God's word against sin and all abominations, wherewith these days do abound'.²² In his torments, he becomes a true martyr. The spectators react as if witnessing a martyrdom: 'Satan's raging against him did increase in such a manner as caused the beholders to shed tears abundantly.'²³ John Foxe saw the connection between the torments of martyrs and those of demoniacs when he dispossessed a law student called Briggs in 1574. Foxe's account circulated widely among Puritans and may well have influenced Denison (and/or Thomas Darling).²⁴

How does the text view Thomas Darling? He is certainly not considered to be simulating his behaviour. He is a saint and not a sinner, a puritan martyr, and a victim of bewitchment. But does it see him as both divinely inspired and possessed by the devil? Judging from the work's title, John Denison thinks so. But the text itself is much more opaque, reflecting as it does uncertainty among those who were actually involved. And the uncertainty turns on the issue of whether genuine puritan faith and piety is compatible with genuine demonic possession.

That he is bewitched, and that the devil is the cause of his fits, all but the anonymous stranger are agreed. But the diagnosis of possession is only made by John Darrell towards the end of the narrative. Darling himself was later to claim that only after Darrell's diagnosis did he think of himself as possessed.²⁵ And only after this diagnosis, do we have a 'genuine' possession when we hear the devils themselves speaking through Thomas. Prior to this, we only hear Thomas's divinely inspired responses to his internal dialogue with Satan. But the diagnosis of possession raised the question whether these godly responses were themselves demonic, and it threatened his saintly status.

Darrell himself was later to conclude that all the speeches of Thomas were 'uttered by Satan transforming himself into an Angel of light'.²⁶ Eccarshall, the pastor of Burton, suspected the same.²⁷ Jesse Bee, on the other hand,

²² Anon., 1597, p. 2 (see below, p. 158). ²³ Anon., 1597, p. 28 (see below, pp. 178–9).

²⁴ See Purkiss, 1998, pp. 237–8; and Thomas, 1972, pp. 574–6.

²⁵ Harsnett, 1599, p. 272. ²⁶ Harsnett, 1599, p. 292.

²⁷ See anon., 1597, p. 16 (see below, p. 169).

held firm to his conviction that Darling was both possessed and, in his responses to Satan, 'directed by the spirit of God'.²⁸ Under duress, Darling was later to confess that he was a counterfeiter, a confession he withdrew shortly after. Under the influence of Darrell, he was also to admit that his divine dialogues were in reality demonic. But I suspect that his original deposition in Darrell's trial reflects his genuine conviction of his own special status: 'as I know at this present for a certainty, that I have the spirit of God within me, so do I with the like certainty believe that, in my dialogues with Satan . . . I had the spirit of God in me, and by that spirit resisted Satan at those times, by alledging the scriptures to confound him.'²⁹

²⁸ Harsnett, 1599, p. 291.

²⁹ Harsnett, 1599, p. 290.

The most wonderful and true story of a certain Witch named Alice Gooderige of Stapen Hill, who was arraigned and convicted at Derby at the Assizes there.

As also a true report of the strange torments of Thomas Darling, a boy of thirteen years of age, that was possessed by the Devil, with his horrible fits and terrible Apparitions by him uttered at Burton on Trent in the County of Stafford, and of his marvellous deliverance.

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To the Reader

Time has proved by experience, Christian reader, that which St John by the spirit of Prophecy foreshadowed. The Devil, says he, has great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time.³⁰ For this prophecy is fulfilled, not only in the outrageous fury that Satan uses in raising persecution against God's Saints by his mischievous instruments, and corrupting men's minds by his wicked suggestions, but also in tyrannizing, according to his limited power over them, by torments. This first kind of cruelty the former ages have felt when the third part of the sun and the moon and the stars were smitten by the Roman dragon, and stung by the Turkish scorpions and other locusts of the like stamp. The other manner of villainy has shown her fruits too plentifully in this our age in the cooling of charity and quenching of the Spirit, that our Saviour's prophecy, which cannot be far off, may be fulfilled, 'When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on the earth?'³¹ And this last kind of tyranny is also apparent amongst other instances, in the pitiful

³⁰ Revelation 12.12.

³¹ Luke 18.8.

vexing of this poor distressed child. And as the Holy Ghost has left such conflicts for the spiritual warfare of his children, so has he not left them without weapons to withstand the fury of their enemies. For, in temporal persecutions and afflictions, they have patience for their buckler, so that they may learn to say of them with Job, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord.' And in all manner of temptations of Satan, they have the whole armour of God, yea, and those weapons that are able to overthrow the Devil's strongest holds, as will well appear even in this small treatise. Concerning the strangeness thereof, it is left to your consideration, gentle reader. And for the truth of it, if it should be called in question as not unlikely, the abundance of false and frivolous devices broached in these days, a thing much to be lamented, does oftentimes abridge truth of her credit. But, besides that, for the particulars, a hundred more witnesses might be produced than are here inserted, and divers of them of good worth and credit. The matter itself is well known to the right Honourable Sir Edmund Anderson, Knight, Lord Chief Justice of the common pleas, as being voluntarily confessed to him by the witch, who was on the same arraigned and convicted before his Honour at Derby, and therefore is not lightly to be excepted against. Besides also, it was compiled by a private Christian and man of trade who, being with the boy in almost all his fits, did both take notes at the time of all that was done and spoken, and conferred also afterward with the witnesses of best judgement and credit, that he might be sure of that which he had set down. In a word, I think there can scarcely be any instance shown, the Holy Scriptures excepted, whereby both the peevish opinion that there are no witches, and the Popish assertion that only their priests can dispossess, may be better controlled than by this. The first kind of people, I rather think, are to be pitied than confuted, daily experience crying out against their folly. The other may hereby see their too peremptory conclusions overthrown, since he whose advice and help was used in this matter is very well known to be a faithful preacher of the Gospel, and so consequently an enemy to Popery. Wishing you therefore so to regard it as for the truth and weight thereof it will deserve, and to reap such fruit by it as being well regarded it may yield, I bid you farewell in Christ.

A report of the torments and deliverance of
Thomas Darling, a boy of thirteen years of age, that
was possessed by Satan, at Burton on Trent.

On Saturday the twenty seventh of February, Robert Toone, dwelling in Burton on Trent in the County of Stafford, uncle to this Thomas Darling was going to Winsell Wood, which is distant from Burton about half a mile, to hunt the hare. He took the boy with him. And being earnest in following his game, he lost him. After he had wandered up and down for a while and could not find his uncle, he returned home to his Uncle's house, where he waited. Having come home, he waxed heavy. And afterwards, he grew to be very sick, vomiting and casting up what he had eaten at dinner, and so was got to bed. The next morning, he had sore fits with extreme vomitings, so that all who saw him judged it to be some strange ague. In the time of this extremity in his fits, he would point many times with his hand, saying, 'Look where green angels stand in the window.' And not long after he would often complain that a green cat troubled him, which thing was judged by his friends to proceed from lightness in his head. Many other things also happened in these times worth noting, whereof in respect of the unexpected event, there was no note kept. His sickness waxing more vehement, his aunt went to a physician with his urine. He said that he saw no signs of any natural disease in the child, unless it was the worms. His sickness still increasing, notwithstanding anything prescribed or ministered, she went again with his urine to the physician. He judged as before, saying further that he doubted that the child was bewitched, which she, holding incredible, imparted to nobody. Rather, she imagined it to be although some strange, yet a natural disease. Divers others also judged it to be the falling sickness³², by reason that it was not a continual distemperature, but came by fits, with sudden staring, striving

³² Epilepsy.

and struggling very fiercely, and falling down with sore vomits. Also, it took away the use of his legs, so that he needed to be carried up and down, save in his fits, for then he was nimble enough. How he spent the time between his fits, it is worth the observing. His exercises were such as might well have befitted one of riper years, wherein he showed the fruits of his education, which was religious and godly. With those that were good Christians he took great pleasure to confer. To them he would signify his daily expectation of death, and his resolute readiness to leave the world and to be with Christ. And all his love to the world, he said, extended thus far, that, if God had so been pleased, he might have lived to be a preacher, to thunder out the threatenings of God's word against sin and all abominations, wherewith these days do abound. In these fits and such like speeches, he continued till mid-Lent Sunday, being the twenty first of March. That day, besides that his wonted fit took him, he began in other and more strange manners to be vexed. For he sank down like one in a swoon. Forthwith they took him up, and laid him on a bed where, having lain some small time, he rose up suddenly, striving and struggling in such a way that it was enough for two or three to hold him. Then he fell suddenly on his back and, lying in such a manner, raised up his legs one after the other so stiffly, that the bystanders could not bend them in the back of the knee. And thus, continuing a while with grievous roaring, at last he raised himself up on his feet and his head, his belly standing up much above his head or feet. Continuing so a little time, he fell down on his back groaning very pitifully. Then rising up, he ran around on his hands and his feet, keeping a certain circular course. After that, striving and struggling with groaning, he began vomiting. And then, coming to himself, he said, 'The Lord's name be praised.' This was the first fit that he had. And he was ordinarily handled in this way during the time of his possession, save that he did seldom run around in that manner that is aforesaid. The fit being thus ended, he fell on his knees suddenly in prayer, and that so pithily that the bystanders wondered thereat, as much as they did at his strange visitation, being no less comforted by the one, than they were before grieved at the other.

The next day he had many fits, in which he would often point at a green cat that troubled him, and still entreated his friends that were present to pray

for him. Between his fits, he requested them to read the Scriptures which, when they could not do for weeping to behold his misery, they sent, at the boy's request, for one Jesse Bee who dwells in Burton on Trent. He took the notes of the whole matter. And after some speeches, the boy entreated him to read where he would. He read the eleventh chapter according to Saint John till he came to the fourth verse, at which time the boy was thrown into a fit like the former. This usually lasted about half of quarter of an hour. Jesse continued reading the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth of John's Gospel, and the first and second of Revelation. During which time, his fits continued one immediately after the other. Ending with a vomit, he used to say, 'The Lord's name be praised,' and many times, 'Lord Jesu receive my soul.' When Jesse either ceased to speak of any comfortable matter or to read the Scriptures, the boy was quiet from his fits. But when he was so religiously occupied, they came thick upon him. Jesse Bee, considering and observing this, told the boy's aunt that he suspected that the boy was bewitched. On which occasion, though she doubted of the matter, she told him as before, both of her going to the physician and the physician's judgement concerning the boy's sickness which he³³ overhearing, yet said nothing. The next morning, he said to the maid that made him ready, 'I heard my Aunt tell Jesse Bee that I was bewitched. The same Saturday that my sickness took me, I lost my uncle in the wood, and in the coppice I met a little old woman. She had a gray gown with a black fringe about the cape, a broad fringed hat, and three warts on her face. I have seen her begging at our door. As for her name I know it not, but by sight I can know her again. As I passed by her in the coppice, I chanced, against my will, to pass wind which she, taking in anger, said, "Gyp with a mischief, and fart with a bell. I will go to Heaven, and you will go to Hell." And forthwith she stooped to the ground. I stood still and looked at her, viewing every part of her, wondering what she stooped for. So I came home, and she went to Winfell.' Hereupon, a more vehement suspicion arose. Some judged it to be the witch of Stapen Hill. Others, because she was old and little abroad, rather thought it to be Alice Gooderidge her daughter, who was

³³ The boy.

held in great suspicion by many to be a dabbler in these devilish practices, as afterward it proved. Thus the boy's fits continued daily, from the twenty third of March till the eighth of April, to the great trouble of his aunt in looking after him, and attending on such as came to see him, whereof many were of very good account. When, in his fits, he was deprived of the use of speech, he would make signs of praying with folded hands, sometimes lifting them up, and sometime striking them on his breast. Oft times also in these fits, he would suddenly and amazedly open his eyes, staring and shrieking most pitifully, clapping both his hands on his face, not being able to endure the sight of such fearful objects as he beheld. In this manner he was tormented in the day, and had reasonably good rest in the night, except for some fearful dreams, whereunto he was much subject. Being asked if he could remember what he did when he made such signs, he answered that sometimes he prayed, and sometimes the cat tossed him up and down in a string. And thus for a good time he could remember, and readily tell of his troubles.

The Thursday before Easter, being the eighth of April, there came to see the boy Mistress Walkeden of Clifton, his grandmother, and Mistress Saunders, his aunt. When they were told what the boy said concerning meeting a woman in the wood, Mistress Walkeden, on the witch's cursing, the boy's sudden sickness, his strange handling, and the physician's judgement, thought it more than probable that the boy was bewitched. And by the marks that he had taken, she perceived that it was Alice Gooderidge which had thus bewitched him. Yet out of conscience reluctant to accuse her till it appeared on sure proof, she sent for her to come into the town to talk with her privately. When, with much ado, she was come, they brought her into the chamber where the boy was. The boy fell suddenly into a marvellously sore fit, which being ended, Mistress Walkeden asked her if she knew that boy. She answered that she knew him not. Many other questions were asked but in vain, for she would not confess anything. Some of the bystanders persuaded the boy to scratch her, which he did on the face and the back of the hands, so that the blood came out apace. She stroked the back of her hand on the child, saying, 'Take blood enough child, God help you.' To this, the boy

answered, 'Pray for yourself. Your prayer can do me no good.' Here by the way, touching this practice of scratching the witch, though it is commonly received as an approved means to discover the witch and procure ease to the bewitched, yet, seeing that neither by any natural cause nor supernatural warrant of God's word it has any such virtue given to it, it is to be received amongst the witchcrafts, whereof there be great store used in our land to the great dishonour of God. But to our matter. When Robert Toone, the boy's uncle and his schoolmaster, saw that Mistress Walkeden could not prevail with this bad woman, they took her aside. After many questions, she granted that she was in the wood that Saturday which the boy spoke of, and that she saw no boy but Sherrat's boy. Further, they demanded of her when she received the Communion. She said, 'twelve months ago.' And asking what she received, she answered, 'Her damnation.' They asked her whether she knew what she said. She answered again, 'What would I receive but my damnation?' They caused her to say The Lord's Prayer and the Creed, which she hurried through with much ado. But when she came to these words in The Lord's Prayer, 'And lead us not into temptation', and in the Creed to 'Jesus Christ,' 'the Holy Ghost,' or 'the Catholic Church,' she would not say any of those words. After these examinations, she departed to her own house. The next day he had many sore fits in which, because he would clap his hands on his face and shriek pitifully, they asked him the reason thereof at the end of his fit. He answered that the green cat which he saw had eyes like flames of fire and that caused him thus fearfully to hide his eyes. And he said that the pain which he endured was very grievous, like being pricked with daggers or stung by bees, which caused his crying. As this his vexation moved many that came to see him to shed tears, so did it not a little grieve his Uncle Toone who, seeing these fits to increase, thought it good that the witch was brought before a Justice. And so he went with Jesse Bee, on the tenth of April before Master Thomas Graysley, Esquire and Justice of Peace, craving his precept to that purpose. This he granted and directed it to the Constable of Stapen Hill, to bring both this Alice Gooderidge, who was almost sixty years of age, and old Elizabeth Wright also, Mother to this Alice, who had been four or five times before him on

suspicion of many such crimes. The precept thus granted forth, they were brought before Master Graysley to whom she would confess nothing, save that she met a boy, which she thought to be Sherrat's boy, who had broken her basket full of eggs, in Abel's Close and, said she, 'If my words did him any hurt, I am sorry.' But that word 'bell' she did not remember that she used. The next morning when the boy would rise, his shirt was knit in divers knots between his legs. And being asked how that came, he said he could not tell. All that day he continued in senseless fits, with grievous groaning and fearful screaming, crying out, 'Look where the witch stands with three warts on her face.'

The next morning, being Saturday about six o'clock, at which time his keepers, thinking not the hour of his fits to be come, took no great care of looking to him, he was suddenly thrown under the bed, crying fearfully, 'Flames of fire, flames of fire.' Forthwith he got on the bed, being fearful and amazed in his countenance. About four o'clock, at which time his fits were wont to leave him, they did now take him in a wonderfully fierce manner till midnight, with greater extremity than at anytime before. He had seldom more intermission than to vomit and say, as it was his usual manner in most extremities, 'The Lord be praised.' In these fits, he shrieked pitifully and fearfully, desiring them to take away the black cat. Both now and most times he made signs of prayer with folded hands, striking on his breast.

The fourteenth of April, Sir Humphrey Ferrers and Master Graysley met at Robert Toone's, who caused thither to be brought Elizabeth Wright and Alice Gooderidge, together with her husband and daughter. Master Graysley, after some questions concerning his fits, commanded that the Bible should be delivered into the boy's hands. He began to read the first Chapter of St John's Gospel, till he came to the fourth verse. At which place, when he read, he was thrown into a most cruel fit. Presently after this, the old woman Elizabeth Wright came into Robert Toone's house which, as soon as Master Graysley understood, he caused her to be brought into the parlour where the child was. But she was very unwilling to come in, crying, 'Alas that ever I was born. What will I do?' Master Graysley spoke loudly to her, asking if she could do the boy any good. She answered that her daughter

had that at home with which she would do good. He caused her, with much ado, to look on the boy. As soon as ever she did, he fell into a strange and cruel fit. Lying on his back, his eyes standing staring open in fearful manner, his teeth set in his head, his arms clapped close to his sides, and all the parts of his body quaking very fearfully. Master Graysley had her kneel down and pray for him, which she did, but so as nobody could understand what she said. Whilst she prayed, the fit continued. And therefore they thrust her out of doors. This being done, the boy's fit presently ended. Sir Humphrey and Master Graysley agreed that certain women should search the mother and the daughter severally, to see if they could find any such marks on them as are usually found on witches. They stripped the old woman and found behind her right shoulder a thing much like the udder of an ewe that gives suck with two teats like two great warts, the one behind under her armpit, the other a hand's length off towards the top of her shoulder. When they had found these, they put on her clothes again, leaving the place bare, that it might be seen both of Sir Humphrey, Master Graysley, and divers others of good worth, as indeed it was. They bade her say The Lord's Prayer, which she hurried through after her manner, leaving out these words still unsaid, 'And lead us not into temptation.' Being then asked how long she had those teats, she answered that she was born so. Then did they search Alice Gooderidge, and found on her belly, a hole of the bigness of two pence, fresh and bloody, as though some great wart had been cut from the place. The justices examined her concerning the bewitching of the boy, but she would confess nothing. Then Sir Humphrey took her to the boy, and asked him whether this were she that thus bewitched him. He answered that it was surely she. Then did Sir Humphrey bid him to scratch her. When the boy offered to do this, his hand was presently benumbed and plucked to his side. And he was tormented in every part. Four several times he attempted to do this, but still with like success. He was bidden to lay his hand on the bystanders, which he did without difficulty. Then they proceeded to examine her concerning her hurt. She said that she went to fetch a little meal on Easter Eve out of the chamber. And coming down on a ladder, her foot slipped and she, having a knife in her hand, thrust herself in the

belly. They asked the judgement of a surgeon. His answer was that it was likely to have been so a long time, for it was not festered, and seemed to be sucked. Sir Humphrey charged her with witchcraft about one Michael's cow which, when it broke everything that they tied her in, ran to this Alice Gooderidge's house, scraping at the walls and windows to come in. Her old Mother Elizabeth Wright took it on herself to help on condition that she might have a penny to bestow on her God. And so she came to the man's house, knelt down before the cow, crossed her with a stick in the forehead, and prayed to her God, since which time the cow continued well. With this she was urged by the justices, and with the hurt on her belly, how it could be so and her clothes not cut, whereto she made shifting answers to no purpose. Then they put her aside, and examined Oliver Gooderidge her husband, and her daughter also. They were found to disagree in their tales concerning the matter. Whereupon Sir Humphrey committed her to Derby Gaol, but dismissed her Mother.

The next day, the boy had a very grievous fit in which, lying still a while, he began to throw up both his feet suddenly, beating them against the ground with great vehemency. And at length, being in a trance, he spoke saying, 'Do you say you are my God, and that I am your son. Go Satan, there is no God save the Lord of hosts.' Pausing a while, at last, he said again, 'And would you have me worship a molten calf? I will worship nothing but the Lord God, and him only will I serve.' Again, being silent awhile, he said, 'Will you give me three towns if I will worship you? Go Satan, it is written, I will worship the Lord God only. And do you say that if I will not worship you, you will torment me three times more? If you torment me three hundred times, yet can you not touch my soul.' After this, he was tormented three several times over every part of his body. This being ended, he desired to go to the window to refresh himself, being hot and faint. There he praised God for his mercies, telling them that stood by that, if Satan came again, he would ask him many questions and charge him with many things, for he remembered what he had spoken as well as any that was present. Having thus rested about a quarter of an hour, he was thrown into two several fits, comparable with the former in cruelty. And at the last, he spoke saying,

'I charge you by the living God to tell me who sent you. Do you tell me your Mistress sent you? What is your Mistress's name? Do you say you will not tell me before tomorrow? And why, I pray you, will you not? Do you say you will torment me twice more? Do your worst. My hope is in the living God, and he will deliver me out of your hands.' Having spoken these words, he was cast into two several fits like the former which, being ended, he desired the bystanders to join with him in humble and hearty prayer. And so he fell on his knees, praising God that he had somewhat revealed his enemy Satan to him, and beseeching him to continue his goodness in manifesting him more plainly. The bystanders asked him what he heard and saw in the sharp conflicts, for they neither saw nor heard anything but him replying and answering. He told them that the great cat tossed him up and down in a string, and that a thing spoke to him with a voice small and shrill. The next day, about nine o'clock, he was cast into a grievous fit and, being cast on his back, he was bereft of all use of any part of his body. And at length he spoke, saying, 'Do you say I am your son? I am none of yours. I am the poor servant of the Lord of hosts.' And pausing a while, he said, 'Do you offer me a kingdom, if I will worship you? I will none of your kingdom, for it is but earthly. The Lord has reserved for me a kingdom in Heaven. I will charge you, you Devil, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost to tell me what is your name. Do you tell me that your name is Wrythe? I charge you, tell me what is your Mistress's name? Do you say anon? You have always been a liar, and the Father of lies, and do you say that, unless I will worship you, that you will torment me three times more than you did before? If you torment me three thousand times more, my faith is so strong that I will worship none but the living God.' These words being finished, he was cast into three several fits, with all the former torments, drawing together his joints and sinews, and writhing him with tossing and turning him very around most pitifully. These fits and speeches continued about half an hour. After this, he was cast into another fit, his eyes closed up, his legs lifted up as stiff as stakes, and all his senses taken from him. This fit ceasing, he was well till twelve o'clock at noon. And then he was cast into another fit, lying flat on his back and lifting his feet up. At last he

said, 'Do you say you will give me a palace and make me a king if I will worship you? Go Satan, I will worship the Lord only. Do you say you will mitigate my torments if I will worship you? Go Satan, I will worship none save only the Lord God my Saviour, my sanctifier and redeemer. Do you say that, if I will not worship you, you will torment me thrice? Do your worst, Satan, my faith stands sure with my God, at whose hands I look for succour.' Having uttered these and some other such words, he was cast into three several cruel fits, after which he had rest till two o'clock. At this time, there came divers worshipful personages on purpose to behold the manner of the child's so strange vexing. They caused him to read the Bible, which caused Satan to rage, so that he was cast into a fit terribly tormented and vexed, so that it did much humble the beholders and move them to commiseration and pity, for the child's so distressed state. While these things happened, it was reported that the old witch Elizabeth Wright was in the town, a thing somewhat rare. For it is thought that, except at the time of her former examination, she was not so far in half a year before. Presently they sent for her.

In the mean time came in master Bagot the younger of Blithfield, wishing to be an eyewitness of these strange reports. He requested the boy to take the Bible and read. He, being unwilling to read himself, wished Jesse Bee to do as much, which he did. And when he came to the fourth verse of the first chapter of St John's Gospel in these words, 'In it was life and the life was the light of the world,' the boy was thrown into a fit. About the end of this fit, it was said that the witch was come, whom they had sent for before. She was presently brought in and stripped by certain women so that they might see her suspected place. Whilst they stripped her, she cursed the day of her birth, making great outcries and using utter speeches against all that offered to accuse her. And being asked who brought her to Burton, she said, 'The Devil.' Being asked divers questions she did not like, she would answer that she did not hear. Much ado they had to get her to come near the boy or to look on him. And it would have been good for him if she had never come at him. For as soon as she kneeled down by him and cast her eyes on him, he was suddenly taken with such a vehement fit as before he had on the like

occasion. This was more grievous than many others. He lay on his back, altogether deprived of the use both of his members and senses, except his eyes, for they stood wide open, very fearfully to the beholders. And all the parts of his body did quake and shake like aspen leaves. Whilst she was on her knees at her devilish prayers, the child was grievously tormented. Therefore they thrust her out of the doors. Which being done, he recovered himself and, his fit ended, he said, 'The Lord be praised.' Mistress Dethicke of New-hall also came in to behold with others these strange sights. At her request, Jesse Bee read the first chapter of the Gospel of St John. And when he came to the fourth verse, the boy was cast into a fit like to those which before he had on the like occasion.

In these his fits, as also in those that he had after, he could neither conceal what he said nor what Satan said to him. The next morning, he had two fits between eight and twelve o'clock, at which time Master Graysley came again to see the child. And whilst he was there, there came in two men of Stapen Hill, near neighbors to Alice Gooderidge, who said they came from Derby. They were entreated by her to tell Robert Toone that, if he would be good to her, she would reveal the whole truth of the matter. And further, they offered him their company thither on Monday, which was agreed on by the advice of Master Graysley. But news came that there was one who, being skilful in discerning of witches had been with Alice Gooderidge at Derby, and affirmed flatly that she was a witch, offering to make open trial of it and to cure the boy. Robert Toone accepting this offer very willingly, a time was appointed for this man's coming thither. But to return to the boy. About eleven o'clock, he had a sore fit, with increase of torments, groaning very grievously, and shrieking very pitifully. And being cast on his back with his legs thrown out, as commonly he was, at the last he uttered these words, 'Do you say that I am your champion? I will be none of your champion. I am the servant of the Lord of hosts. What, do you offer me a bag of money if I will worship you? Go Satan, I will none of your money. The Lord in Heaven has money enough in store for me. And do you say that you will torment me twice more grievously than before? Do your worst Satan, my trust is in the Lord God. Do you say your Mistress will

have it so? I charge you in the name of the Father, &c., to tell me what your Mistress's name is. Do you say you will not reveal your Mistress? With that, Satan tormented him again. This passing with a vomit, his Mother began to comfort him, exhorting him to put his trust in God, to whom he said, 'My whole trust is in him. For the Lord has my enemy in a chain, and keeps him in a circle which he will not pass.' And having remained well about half an hour, he was again pitifully tormented. And at the last he spoke these words, 'Do you say you will give me whatsoever I will ask you, if I will be your champion? I defy you and all that you offer me. I will be none of your champion. I charge you in the name of the living God to tell me what your Mistress's name is. Do you say that your Mistress has given you a drop of her blood for your dinner, and that therefore you will tell no tales of her? And do you say my faith is but weak? Satan, it is too strong for you to overthrow. Do you say you will torment me worse than ever you have done? Do your worst. My trust is in the Lord my God.' Forthwith he was pitifully tormented, after which, being asked what he saw, he answered, 'The green cat,' as he usually told them, asking angrily, 'Did not you see her? Oh,' said he, 'This has been a grievous torment to me.' This ended, being hot and faint with the extremity of his torments, he desired to be carried to the window to take the air. Whilst he sat there, there came in one whose name I'll pass over in silence. And being a stranger, he began to examine the boy concerning poetical and other school points. The boy was weary of his company and conference, as indeed he had great reason, being unfit for such an occasion. And he desired to be carried into another chamber which was immediately done. But this supposed friend followed him and renewed his former speeches, uttering also an oath that grieved the boy exceedingly. The Mother, understanding it, came and asked what the stranger said to him that so troubled him, for he wept pitifully. The party himself answered before the boy, 'I spoke no hurt to him.' 'No,' said the child, 'You bade me I should not dissemble, saying that there were no witches. Also you asked of me if I thought there were a God? God save me from such comforters. I pray you all to pray for me that the Lord would deliver me from this temptation.' At the speaking of these words, he was

thrown into a cruel fit which, being ended, that man who thought there were no witches departed. But Master Eccarshall, the pastor of Burton, being present stayed, still comforting the boy and his sorrowful mother, persuading him that if Satan spoke to him again he should not answer him, because he was a liar. And he endeavoured by his words to make the boy believe him. These things ended about two o'clock. he remained well till four. Then was he thrown into four several fits, one presently after another, the last whereof was most intolerable, coughing and tormenting him very pitifully. It seemed by his looks and gestures that the evil spirit spoke. But because of Master Eccarshall's advice, he kept a discontented silence, as he told afterward to his Mother. But she advised him that, if it should speak again, he should not fear or forbear to answer it. About this time, some meat was prepared for him. But before he could take it, he was thrown into a cruel fit wherein, after Satan had shown a while his rage, he spoke saying, 'Do you say that I will worship you? I will worship the Lord of hosts only. I charge you, in the name of the Father, of the Son, &c. to tell me what your name is. Do you say you will not tell me before tomorrow? You are a liar. I have ever found you so, and I will not believe you. Do you say you will torment me far more grievously than ever you have done? I care not for all that you can do to me. In the Lord is my trust, who will deliver me when his good pleasure is.' Presently Satan tormented him according to his wonted manner. After that fit was ended, and he had been quiet a while, Jesse Bee persuaded him to be courageous, to take to himself the shield of faith, and to offer Satan the combat. The child, finding himself strong in the Lord, whose assistance he had before obtained in his former conflicts, agreed to his motion. So Jesse read the first chapter according to St John till he came to the ninth verse, 'That light was the true light,' &c. At these words, he was thrown into a marvellously sore fit, which vexed and tormented him in every part of his body. This being ended, Jesse asked him if he should read again? The boy answered cheerfully, 'Read on in God's name.' So he read till he came to the thirteenth verse, 'Which were born not of blood,' &c. At these words, he was thrown into grievous torments, like the former. When these ended, Jesse asked if he should still read? The boy answered, 'Proceed

in the name of God.' Then read he the fourteenth verse, 'The same Word became flesh,' &c. At these words, he was tormented the third time, yet not so vehemently as before. He, proceeding forward, read till he came to the seventeenth verse, 'The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' Forthwith, he fell into the fourth fit, the feeblest of any he yet had, Satan no doubt finding his force quailing and his fiery darts quenched. So Jesse read on, the child cheerfully and attentively hearkening, till he had finished the chapter without any trouble to him. The next day, among other fits, he had one much more vehement than the rest, his torments being increased, and his strength so great that two strong men were not able to rule him. After this fit, Jesse Bee said, 'Come Thomas, will we provoke him to battle?' The child answered, 'Yes, very willingly.' So they looked for the Bible. But the boy's uncle had taken it to the Church. Then did the boy desire Jesse to resolve him in this doubt, whether it were hurtful for one to eat or drink before he receive the Sacrament of the Lords Supper. Being satisfied concerning this point, and casting down his head to call to remembrance something else whereof he doubted, he was suddenly thrown into a grievous fit, groaning and screaming most pitifully, turning around on all fours, like a pig on a spit. And suddenly, do what the keepers could, he leaped up to the top of the bed, catching hold on the testern³⁴ with his hands and hanging by his arms, not withstanding his eyes were closed up. And being in this state, he said, 'Do you say that I shall hear news within these two or three days? I pray God it be good news.' He was at last cast into a trance, uttering divers such comfortable speeches, as he did in his other trances. This day there came one to them, having been of her own accord with widow Worthington, the good witch of Hoppers, as they call her, and told them, 'She said that the boy was bewitched. Yet she could not help him, unless his Mother or some of his nearest friends came to her.' The same answer was given by a witch around Coventry to another, looking for some help on the boy's behalf. But the Mother of the child, detesting the Devil's help, thanked those two for their kindness towards her, but sharply reproved them for attempting a thing so unlawful. After these fits, he rested

³⁴ The wooden framework supporting the canopy and curtains.

reasonably quietly till the next day, when at about one o'clock, seeming very well, he received some meat. But Satan showed himself to be a right Satan, even a sore enemy to the child, envying the good of his body when he saw himself unable to hurt his soul. He hindered his digesting of it, as many times he did by casting him presently into divers fits, which, like all his fits usually, lasted about half a quarter of an hour and ended with a vomit. Many that were beholders of the child's torments little hoped that he could have ever lived or recovered. But God be praised that Satan's power is limited by him who is Lord of both life and death.

When these conflicts were ended, Jesse Bee said to him, 'Thomas, will we take the sword with two edges, and bid Satan the battle?'³⁵ The boy, being well acquainted with the phrase, answered, 'If you will read, I will gladly hear.' So he read the first chapter of St John's Gospel which, whilst he was reading, the child was thrown into three fits. After these fits, he was very cheerful and desirous to have the book so that he might read himself, which he did. And when he came to the fifth verse of the first chapter of Revelation, for that chapter he read, he was thrown into a cruel fit which, being ended, he gave the book to Jesse Bee, entreating him earnestly to read onward. So Jesse Bee finished the chapter, and read also the second and was never interrupted in reading them with any more of the boy's fits.

On the twenty first of April, between nine o'clock in the morning and two in the afternoon, he had ten fits, yet the last of them was most extreme. In the midst of it, he would open his eyes amazedly and presently clap both his hands on them, being thrown into most violent torments throughout all the parts of his body. And being cast on his back, he threw forth his legs fiercely, beating them against the ground vehemently. And after that, lying in a quiet trance, he opened his mouth, saying, 'Do you say that you will give me a crown, if I will worship you? I regard you not, nor your crown. For the Lord has reserved a crown of righteousness for me in Heaven.'

Then, pausing awhile, he spoke again saying, 'Do you say that you will give me towns and countries if I will worship you? Away Satan away, you are a liar, and the Father of lies. I will not believe you, away.' Forthwith,

³⁵ Revelation 2.12.

his mouth was closed up, and his teeth set fast in his head, inasmuch that he laboured to open them with his own hands. But he could not. Yet when he had remained a while thus, the Lord, by his almighty power, opened his mouth, and he boldly said, 'I charge you, Satan, in the name of the Father and of the Son.'

At this word, his mouth was fast closed again. Yet was it not long before the Lord, by his power, opened it again. So he proceeded, saying, 'I charge you, tell me what is your Mistress's name? Do you say that you will not? And do you say you will torment me ten times more?' No sooner were these words spoken, but he was tormented above measure. Next day between ten and one o'clock, he had two ordinary fits, and at the end of these, one extraordinary in which, being thrown on his back, with his accustomed torments, he uttered these words, 'Would you have me worship you, you liar, you wicked wretch? You are the Father of all lies. I charge you, get away from me, away, away.' These words he uttered disdainfully, shaking his hands at him. And after he had paused a while, he said, 'Do you promise me all my desire, if I will worship you? Ah, wicked tempter, I charge you in the name of the Father, &c., 'to tell me your Mistress's name.' These words he uttered with an interrupted voice, but repeated them presently very courageously, saying also, 'And do you say that your Mistress has given you a draught of her blood? I am glad of it, for then will I know her shortly. And do you say you will torment me twice more?' At these words, he was cast into two sore fits, so that Satan kept his promise to him. His torments caused him to scream very loudly and groan pitifully, flinging out his hands as though he fought with Satan, and stamping fiercely as if he trod him under foot. This combat ended, he lay still about a quarter of an hour. And then, having been a while tormented lying on his back, he said, 'Do you say that, because I vex your Mistress, you will torment me more?' These words being spoke, he was cast into such torments as were grievous to the beholders. And having overcome the extremity of the same, he spoke, with his eyes shut saying, 'What, do you say that I will worship you? You have no faith Satan. I will fight with you with the word of the everliving God. Away, away, I charge you in God's name to get you hence.' Again, after more fits,

he said, 'What, do you say that you will make me as strong as a giant and as rich as the greatest potentate in the world, if I will worship you? The Lord my God can make me strong, and give me all good things.' Having paused a little, he spoke again saying, 'Do you say, if I will not worship you, you will make me a four-footed beast? That lies not in your power, since God has made me a reasonable creature. My faith, Satan, is strong. And do you say that you will torment me grievously for your Mistress's sake?' Forthwith he was grievously tormented, crying out, 'A bear, a bear.' His mouth was stretched out, and he roared fiercely like a bear, crying out, 'He tears me, he tears me.' These torments ended, he lay amazedly, with the sweat running down his face. Being again tormented, he spoke saying, 'Will you give me a land full of all fruits if I will worship you? The Lord in Heaven has goods enough for me. You did send a bear, your Hell hound to torment me. You did tell me that I should hear news within two or three days. Do you say your Mistress has commanded you not to be an hour from tormenting me, because I vex her? Is that your news?' At these words, he was presently cast into grievous torments, staring amazedly and crying out, 'Flames of fire, flames of consuming fire.' He threw away all things he could find by groping, for his eyes were shut, and wound himself up closely in the bed clothes. Scarcely had these torments an end, but others began wherein, being grievously afflicted, he cried out, 'A fiery dragon, a fiery dragon.' These torments continuing, he said, 'Now you foul fiend, now you show yourself in your likeness.' Presently he struck both his hands on his face, shrieking and crying fearfully, 'A fly, a fly.' Being asked what he had seen in these conflicts, he answered, 'Many and fearful things.' But he remembered them not, neither could he tell that he spoke, though he called to mind a thing spoke to him. The twenty fourth day, about eleven o'clock, he fell into an extreme fit, which shook him pitifully in all parts of his body, making him roar like a bear. Being asked after the fit what he had seen, he answered that a great bear came roaring on him. Four fits more he had before four o'clock, at which time Master Edward Cockin came into the house and, finding him well, bade him read the twelfth of John, which he did till he came to the fifteenth verse, 'I am glad for your sakes that,' &c.

And then was he cast into a fit presently. On this, there came in another desiring to see the like trial. So the boy read till he came to the twenty fifth verse, 'I am the resurrection,' &c., at which words he was again thrown. This desire that many had to have the boy read that they might see him in his fits, savoured but of a tempting curiosity, and is not acceptable. But to go on. The boy's torments continuing, Robert Toone was altogether without hope of his recovery, both because the witch confessed nothing and the man that promised help failed, whereat he grieved exceedingly. Many persuaded him to send divers witches, which he refused. But his wife purposed to attempt it, and sent for a messenger who had before been employed by others in the like business. He found the boy in a fit when he came, and thereupon uttered these words, 'Who would allow him to lie thus, and not seek any help he could get?' Whereunto, an honest man, not acquainted with their purpose, answered, 'To seek help from a witch is wicked and dangerous.' The messenger was pricked in conscience with his speech, and would not go. Robert Toone was not a little glad they were stopped in so unlawful an enterprise. This day also, unknown to the boy's friends, another had been with widow Worthington, the witch of Hoppers, and brought this answer that, unless the boy and his friends believed her, she could do him no good, which they detested.

The twenty sixth of April, after nine fits in the morning, about one o'clock, he was thrown into a very sore fit, and in the same was grievously vexed and tormented. At the last, he spoke thus, 'What do you say? If I will worship you, you will make me a God, but if I will not, you will make me a toad? It lies not in your power, Satan, to make me what you wish, but in the power of my Creator. And do you say you will torment me twice? Do your worst, the Lord is my trust, and I know he can and will deliver me.' Being then suddenly tormented, he did struggle most fiercely, roaring fearfully like a bear crying, 'A bear, a bear,' and by and by, 'A dragon, a dragon.' After this, he was quiet about a quarter of an hour. And then suddenly, he fell into the like torments, and spoke as before saying, 'Do you say that you have brought me good news? I pray God it be. And do you say that if I will curse God, you will release me from all my pains and torments? What Satan, would you

have me curse my Creator, who spared not to send his only begotten Son Jesus Christ out of his bosom to shed his most precious blood for my sins. Ah, wicked tempter, I charge you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to tell me what is your Mistress's name? Do you say that your Mistress has rewarded you, and therefore you will torment me more than ever you did? I care not a straw for you. What, Satan, do not seek to insult in your subtle cruelties. For the Lord will release me from you when his good will and pleasure is.' And so, with some more torments, this fit ended.

The next day he that promised to cure the boy came to prove her, who was had in suspicion, plainly to be a witch. He wished Robert Toone only to procure him a warrant to fetch her from the Gaol promising, since he hated all conjuration and enchantment, that it should be manifest what course he took for effecting those matters. This day and both the next he had many sore fits. On the last of April, between nine and three in the afternoon, he had fourteen fits. At this time, the witch's liberty being procured, she came to town, and was brought to the boy, to whom she said, 'God help you my child.' Whereupon he was presently cast into most strange torments, differing both in manner and cruelty from the former. Three strong men could hardly hold him, he was so strong. He shrieked pitifully, sticking out his tongue, and having his neck so twisted that his face seemed to stand backward. This pitiful spectacle did wring many tears from the beholders. So from three till nine at night, he had twenty seven of these torments, and then they left him quaking and marvellously dismayed. These fits being laid to the witch's charge, she answered that she indeed did vex the child, but if they would forgive her, it would cease. Two or three went to Stapen-Hill to see what the old woman did this while, suspecting she had a hand herein. When they came there, they found her on her knees praying, no doubt, to the Devil. On the first of May, about seven in the morning, he was cast into a fit. This was the day wherein the cunning man would make the witch confess, and a week after cure the boy. So he sent for her from the Town Hall to Robert Toone's, where many worshipful personages were ready to see proof of his skill. Being brought, they laboured to make her confess voluntarily,

to whom she answered that this was the first that she ever committed, and if they would procure her liberty, she offered to confess all the truth freely. Presently her speech was interrupted so that she could not speak. But she prayed them to forgive her. Then the man, seeing this would not prevail, began to test his conclusion. He put a pair of new shoes on her feet, setting her close to the fire till the shoes, being extremely hot, forced her through increase of the pain to confess. This was his ridiculous practice. She, being thoroughly heated, desired a release and she would disclose all, which granted, she confessed nothing. Being therefore threatened more sharply, she offered to reveal all privately to Mistress Dethicke. And going with her into a parlour, when she began to speak, her wind was stopped, so that she could not say anything but, 'I pray you, forgive me.' By this time, it was eleven o'clock, and the boy had had eight fits, and was brought into the parlour where she was. She said, 'Thomas, I pray you forgive me, and be good to me.' At which words, he fell into a marvellously sore fit. After this, the company continued threatening and persuading her. But all she would say was that she was sorry for him for she mistook him, thinking him to be the Sherrats' boy, and thinking to have been revenged on him for breaking her eggs. When they saw that they could prevail no more, they sent her again to the Hall. And the company departed, after which the boy had eight fits.

The next morning Jerome Horabin, Edward Weightman, and Mistress Caldwell went with others to hear what confession she would make. At their coming she spoke thus, 'I met the boy in the wood the first Saturday in Lent and, passing by me, he called me witch of Stapen Hill. I said to him, "every boy does call me witch, but did I ever make your arse to itch?"' Further she said, 'I pray you, get help for the boy. For God's sake, get help for the boy.' Again she said, 'God give me grace to confess the truth.' And when she would have spoken more, she said, 'I cannot, I cannot, my wind is stopped.' Mistress Caldwell asked her if she would be prayed for. 'Yes,' said she, 'I pray you desire Master Eccarshall to pray for me that the Lord would open my heart so that I may speak the truth.' The third of May, in the morning, Robert Toone, Edward Weightman, Richard Teate, and others went again to examine the witch. She confessed to them saying, 'The first Saturday in

Lent toward evening, I met the boy in the wood, and he called me witch of Stapen Hill. And I said again, "Every boy does call me witch, but did I ever make your arse to itch?" Forthwith, I stooped to the ground, and the Devil appeared to me in likeness of a little spotted dog, red and white, and I called him Minny. Seeing that every boy calls me witch, therefore go your ways and torment this boy in every part of his body at your own pleasure. Forthwith, I strained every part of my body, forcing my self to vomit, saying in this manner, "Vex every part of him." 'Further,' said she, 'The dog followed the boy to Burton. And as I returned from Winfell, whither I went to buy a goat's worth of eggs, he met me again telling me he had fulfilled my request. And at my yard's end he departed from me, since when he has been divers times with me at Derby Gaol, and these two nights at Burton Hall. And continually he scratches my head and scrapes in the straw.' Again she said, 'The boy will not mend unless you seek for help. You may have help enough.' She would have spoken further, but something stopped her throat. And she said, 'Come out you foul serpent.' From eight till twelve, the boy had twelve sore fits with pitiful groaning. At three, came Master Hildersham of Ashby de la Zouche with divers other godly ministers. After having made trial of the boy's faith by certain questions, Master Hildersham said openly that, howsoever the Papists boasted much of the power their priests had to cast out devils, and the simple everywhere noted it as a great discredit to the ministers of the Gospel that they do lack this power, yet did he profess that there was no such gift in them, and that though the Lord oft in these days, by the prayers of the faithful, cast out devils, yet could he not assure them to cure him. To hold this faith of miracles to remain still in the church is an opinion dangerous. That seeing to be possessed is but a temporal correction, and such as whereby both the glory of God and the salvation of the party may be furthered, it can not without sin be absolutely prayed against. All which notwithstanding, he said that there is a good use of prayer in such a case, and of fasting also, to procure that the judgement may be sanctified to the beholders, and the possessed himself, yea to obtain that he may be delivered also from it, if the Lord see it be best for his own glory. In which persuasion, he being the mouth of the rest, they all prayed, during

which time the child was not interrupted. Whereas Alice Gooderidge said her familiar was like one William Gregory's dog of Stapen Hill, there arose a rumour that his dog was her familiar. Wherefore he,³⁶ with his neighbour Master Cox, went the next day to examine her concerning this report. And she said, 'My Devil, I say, was like your dog.' 'Now out upon you,' said Gregory, and departed. She, being further examined, said that she had her familiar from her Mother. On the sixth of May, he had twelve fits in the forenoon, and ten in the afternoon. These last were as grievous as any before. After one of them there took the chamber pot, he started suddenly saying, 'Look where a man comes out of the chamber pot.' In another fit he cried out, 'Flames of fire, flames of fire.' And in another, he said, 'I see the heavens open.' In most of these fits he stuck out his tongue which was very black, having his face twisted towards his back, groaning and shrieking lamentably. Being asked if he remembered what was done, he said that it seemed to him that he was wrung and tossed up and down. After these fits, he remained well till next morning. On Friday he was, by seven o'clock, cast into a fit. But about eight, he fell into marvellously strange torments, both for continuance and extraordinary cruelty, his tongue thrust out of his head, his mouth drawn awry, first toward one ear, then to another; his face very strangely disfigured. In his extremity, he made signs to the bystanders to pray, and he, by folded hands and other gestures, gave testimony that the Spirit of God was mightily labouring against his infirmities.

By and by, his eyes opened. And whatever he caught, he, as it seemed, threw it against Satan. And straightaway his eyes were shut up again, so that he could not open them with his fingers, which he tried to do. His mouth was opened, and he said, 'Oh pray, pray, never more need to pray.' So the company joined in humble and hearty prayer. But he, hearing them not, though they prayed loudly, said, 'Why do you not pray?' Presently his mouth being shut and his teeth set fast in his head, he stamped, as it were, in triumph of Satan. And lifting his hands towards Heaven, he struck them with reverence on his breast. Satan's raging against him did increase in such

³⁶ William Gregory.

a manner as caused the beholders to shed tears abundantly. For they could no sooner imagine a ceasing, but straightaway his fit began again. And this conflict lasted long, in which time he often uttered these words, 'Do what you can, Satan. This will do you no good. Is it so?' And such like. And after obtaining the use of his tongue, he proceeded saying, 'Away, Satan. I have on my head the helmet of salvation, and I am girded about with truth. Jesus Christ has shed water and blood for my sins, and I sweat but water. O Lord, your apostles were whipped and scourged for your truth, and they departed, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer for your name's sake. And now, O Lord, I rejoice that you account me worthy to suffer these cruel torments.' Presently, he fell into torment again. At the last, lying on his back quietly, he desired the bystanders to sing the sixth Psalm. And so they did, he singing with them very cheerfully. While they were singing, he was often interrupted and joined with them again toward the end, having lain in a trance, so that they could scarcely perceive any motion. He said, 'I see the Heavens open. Hearken, I hear a heavenly noise.' And lying still a while, he met with them at the tenth verse, 'And now my foes.' 'That,' said he, 'is Satan.' And so he continued singing till the psalm was ended. All the psalm through, he sweated exceedingly, and dried his face as if he had not been in his fit. After this, he desired them to pray for him whilst he lay down and slept, and so fell into a trance. Having lain still a while, he fell to quaking and starting fearfully saying, 'Do you say my sins are great, Satan? The Lamb of God has taken them away.' Divers other interrupted speeches he uttered, and slumbered again. At length, he cried out, 'Wild horses, wild horses, they tear me, they tear me.' And then was he tormented over all the parts of his body. After that, he slept somewhat slumberingly, having a most heavenly and joyful vision. When he awoke, he looked cheerfully. And being asked what he saw in these trances, he could not call anything to mind.

This day, he was cast into seven cruel fits exceeding all he had before. For besides his mouth being drawn awry, and he in every part vexed, his shoulder bones were thrust out of joint, with other torments most lamentable. Thus they ended, for he remained till eleven o'clock grievously vexed, and almost without intermission. In these his torments, being for the most

part senseless, he used to utter divers interrupted speeches, some fearful, others comfortable, the bystanders being requested by him to sing psalms and pray. Many times he had his ears shut and his mouth stopped, so that he could neither hear nor speak. Yet he would join with them in prayer and singing as long as he could without interruption. When he was fully recovered, he looked very cheerful, giving God thanks for his assistance. They asked him many questions concerning his trances, but he could remember nothing that was done. On the nineteenth day of May, he fell into trances mixed with torments in which, as he suffered grievous pains, so did he utter many strange speeches. Sometimes he was so writhed, that no beholder thought it possible for him to live. Sometimes he lay so still, that there scarce appeared any sign of life in him. After he had lain a while in a trance he said, 'My Saviour Christ Jesus was tempted, and why then should not I be so?' Pausing a while he said, 'I hear a voice from Heaven. The Lord speak to me.' And pausing again, he held up his hands, his eyes being fast closed, and said, 'Look where my brother Job is.' Then he opened his eyes, but his mouth was fast shut. He would have opened it with his hands, but could not. Then pausing a little, he said, 'No, no, I will not. The Lord has flatly forbidden it in his word.' So lying a while he said, 'Heaven opens, Heaven opens. I must go thither.' Then, clapping his hands for joy he said, 'I see Christ Jesus my Saviour. His face shines like the sun in its strength. I will go salute him.' And indeed he did rise, going apace with such strength that his keepers could scarcely hold him. Presently, he began trembling and stamping, crying, 'A dog, a dog, for God's sake, take away this dog. Away with this filthy dog that came out of Hell.' And after a pitiful screaming, he said, 'O Master Hildersham, I thought he would have torn me in pieces. Preach judgement against all sinners, flames of fire, flames of fire. See Master Hildersham, preach and teach. Oh, fast and pray night and day.' After these speeches, he clapped his hands, looking cheerful, though his eyes were closed, saying, 'Christ Jesus my Saviour comes clothed in purple.' Then he seemed, by his gestures, to embrace him, saying, 'Holy is your name. Your name, Lord Jesus, is to be exalted for evermore. I have seen such sights. O Lord Jesus bless me from them.' Presently he was overtaken

again with fear, saying, 'Do you say this is the bottomless pit where the damned be? Master Hildersham, we have need to pray. Oh, preach and pray.' Straightaway after he looked cheerful, even pleased, saying, 'Your name, O Lord Jesus, is to be exalted above all things. Your name is to be blessed for ever.' Lying a while in a trance, he clapped his hands saying, 'O, O, Christ Jesus my Saviour and his apostles.' Then seemed he to embrace the apostles, and worship our Saviour saying, 'O Lord Jesus, you suffer for my sake. Your name be praised. Yea, I say from my heart, your name be praised.' By and by, turning his head, he pointed saying, 'Look where Judas is frying in torments.' After this he fell again into a trance, and lay as if he were dead. But he spoke fearfully thus, 'Ah, look in this place of torments where drunkards are hanged by the throats, swearers and filthy talkers by their tongues.' And having spoken of other torments for other sins, he said, 'Oh great judgements, great judgements,' which words he uttered as woefully as if he had been in the jaws of Hell, and the contrary as comfortably as if he had been in Heaven. After this, falling into a trance, he started suddenly and said, 'Yonder comes Mother Red Cap. Look how they beat her brains out. See what it is to be a witch. See how the toads gnaw the flesh from her bones. Oh pray, pray, look what wailing, and weeping, and gnashing of teeth yonder is. Lord show us your mercy. Take me by the hand Master Hildersham, and let us go to Heaven.' Thus, this fit ended after half an hour. Being asked what he had been doing, he answered, he had been sleeping for he remembered nothing. Having been well about a quarter of an hour, he fell into a quiet trance, and at length said, 'O Master Hildersham, look where God's chariot is come to fetch you and me.' See how God loves us. By and by, he began to quake, and cried, 'Lo, lo, the green cat comes out of Hell.' Then falling into a quiet trance, he said, 'Look where the seven churches be,'³⁷ and presently he screeched saying, 'Lo, lo, seven ugly devils. Look, they go down to the bottomless pit.' Pausing again he says, 'See how many kings and rich men go to Hell, even they that were so brave, and fared so daintily, and were so strong.' After this, he fell into a

³⁷ The reference is to the seven churches in Asia to whom the Book of Revelation is addressed. See Revelation 1.4.

trance saying, 'Come Master Hildersham, the Lord bids us come. Let us go.' And so he went on, and could hardly be stopped. But straightaway his joy turned into heaviness, for he seemed to have bodily combats with his spiritual enemy. These fits ended, he remained well a quarter of an hour. Then falling into a sudden trance, he said with trembling, 'Ha, ha, ha, I told you of this before, that after joy comes sorrow. Look you how I am tormented. Oh that I could see my Saviour Christ Jesus.' Forthwith he arose, clapping his hands with great joy, and said, 'Look where he comes, your name be praised, your name be praised.' Anon, he had a comfortable vision of the day of judgement, crying aloud, 'The trumpets sound. See, see, the graves open. The dead arise, and all men come to judgement. Hark how the angels cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."' Then pausing a little, he said, 'Look, look how the wicked fly away like a flock of doves. Yet see, a flame of fire overtakes them.' After much variety of fits he cried, 'A fiery Dragon, a fiery Dragon tears me in pieces. Oh, he tears me, he tears me.' And with these torments, this fit ended between twelve and one. About three, he fell into a trance and torments like the former. For, after he had spoken fearfully of the torments of the damned, he burst into pitiful speeches. Quaking, he said, 'Look where seven devils are. Look where a roaring lion is.' Then he fell into a quiet trance and forthwith clapped his hands, saying, 'I see a milk white dove flying towards me. See where my Saviour comes. His face shines like the sun.' These words uttered, he was again terrified. And so with some more torments and trances this fit ended. The two days following, he had many fits and some trances, uttering the like speeches as before. The twelfth of May, he was removed from his uncle Master Saunders' house at Caldwell being three miles distant, where he had six fits. From the thirteenth to the twenty third, he was handled after his accustomed manner. The twenty third of May, he was cast into eighteen fits, worse than the former. For his shoulder bones were thrust out of joint, his mouth drawn awry. And amongst other complaints, he cried out about his legs, saying that they thrust pins into them. And this is worth the observation, that commonly, on the Sabbath, when the boy was remembered by prayer in godly assemblies, Satan did show his most extreme cruelty. The

twenty fourth and twenty fifth, he was tormented much like the day before. The twenty sixth, he was assaulted more fiercely, both in respect of the number and quality of his fits and torments. In these, he did oftentimes cry out saying, 'Look where Satan comes from under the bed.' And oftentimes, 'Thunder, thunder, lightning, lightning, flames of fire, flames of consuming fire, a bear, a bear, a dragon, a dragon. Look where Satan comes down the chimney. Look, look, for God's sake, take me from him.' And thus, in these terrible fits, this day passed. The next day, there came one John Darrell, a faithful preacher of the Word, to him. Seeing him in divers of his fits, he assured his friends and him that he was possessed with an unclean spirit telling him, out of St James chapter four, verse seven, that the only way for his deliverance was to resist Satan in which, if he failed, he would sin against God because it was a breach of a commandment, 'Resist the Devil,' &c. He told him that, for his further encouragement, he had a promise of victory, in that it is said, he will or shall flee, that by the Devil is not to be understood only the temptations of the Devil, but even Satan's very person. And proceeding to confirm the child's faith in this resistance, he afterwards exhorted his parents and the whole family to prepare themselves against the next day for that holy exercise of prayer and fasting alleging, to put by all doubts, the words of Christ, 'This kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting.'³⁸ Whereto, they being very willing, importuned John Darrell for his presence and assistance. To which he answered, his assistance in prayer and fasting they should have, but not his presence, as well to avoid note of vainglory, as also that he saw no such necessity by reason of the child's stern faith. Nevertheless, giving them order for their exercise, appointing them the help of a book called *The Enemy of Security*,³⁹ and putting them in good comfort, he foretold them what interruptions were likely to follow by the enemy's rage. And, says he, 'When you will see these things come to pass,' which indeed fell out accordingly, 'then know for certain as he is possessed,' which his friends at Caldwell stood in doubt of, 'so look that deliverance is at the door, and therefore faint not in the mid-way.'

³⁸ Mark 9.29.³⁹ I cannot identify this work.

Thus he departed. The next day, the family with some others in the fear of God being together, the holy exercise of prayer and fasting was taken in hand. And after some prayer was used for the assistance of God's Spirit and prayer for the remission of sins, he was very grievously and often tormented and, as a result of his fits and torments, much interrupted therein, spending much time about the same. A prayer against the temptations of Satan was used. And in the beginning thereof, he was presently taken with a dumb fit. And coming to himself, he began to pray again. And his fits came again and again, as often as he came to any substantial point. After a while, he fell into a trance. And at length, a small voice came from him saying, 'Brother Glassap, we cannot prevail, his faith is so strong. And they fast and pray, and a preacher prays as fast as they.' After these words, he fell into a fit, and so into a trance, a voice being heard from him, big and hollow saying, 'Brother Radulphus, I will go to my Master Belzebub, and he will double their tongues.' Then beginning again to pray, he fell into a fit, and after into a trance. Afterward, coming to himself, he pointed towards the chimney, saying, 'Lo where Belzebub stands, and the witch by him. I charge you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost to tell me whether this be she that did bewitch me or no? Do you say it was she? Now the Lord, I beseech him, forgive her, and I forgive her.' Further he said, 'I charge you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost to get you from me, and come no more at me. For it is written, "Resist the Devil, and he will fly from you."⁴⁰ And presently he said, 'He is gone, he is gone.' Then prayed he again, and at the third word was thrown into a fit and a trance, wherein a voice was heard from him, his mouth being wide open, as still it was when these voices were uttered, saying, 'Radulphus, Belzebub can do no good. His head is struck off with a word. But I will go fetch the flying eagle and his flock.' Presently after these words, he fell into another fit and a trance and, lying so said, 'I see an angel in the window like a milk white dove, sent from the Lord to be with me to comfort and assist us. But that is nothing in respect of the Lord himself.'

⁴⁰ James 4.7.

Then, beginning to pray again, he fell into a fit and a trance, in which one of the old voices was heard from him, saying, 'We cannot prevail. Let us go out of him, and enter into some of these here.' This voice came twice, and it made the bystanders afraid. Then, reading again, he fell into a trance. And the former voice was heard from him, speaking very hollowly, as both those unnatural voices not uttered by himself were, and saying, 'I would they were all gone but one that is among them, and then we would do well enough.'

Then he read again and, being cast into a trance, one of those voices was heard, saying, 'There is a woman earnestly at prayer. Get her away.' One in the company called John Alsop answered aloud and said, 'We cannot spare her.' Yet did none of them all that were there know that she was praying till, looking back, they saw her earnestly at prayer in a corner, being behind them.

Beginning again to read, he was suddenly cast into a trance. And a voice was heard which said, 'He will be tormented till tomorrow at night, do God and you what you can.' But Satan was proved a liar. Recovering and reading again, he was again snatched into his trance. The voice was heard again, saying, 'We cannot prevail, we cannot prevail, their Church increases.' At which time, two came in to join in prayer with the company. After this, reading again, he fell into a trance. And a voice was heard from him saying, 'Here comes one of my people.' With that they looked back, and were aware of a man of bad life coming into the parlour. And although the boy was in his fit, yet he made signs with his hand to the company to get him away, which one of them perceiving did so. Presently he awoke and read. And he was interrupted by a trance, wherein a voice said, 'Tear the book, tear the book.' And with that, although his eyes were closed, he snatched at the book which one had in his hand and tore out one leaf from it. He also attempted this in every one of his fits from that time till two o'clock. And being restrained, by reason that one held the book and another his hands, he would bite, strike and spurn them with his feet at the beginning of his fits, wherein he was far stronger than he was wont, and his torments more exceeding in greatness and number. Between eight in the morning and two in the afternoon, his countenance

was strangely disfigured, his mouth set wide open, and sometimes drawn awry, his face turned backward, and his arms and shoulders thrust out of joint. In this time he had one fit and trance, wherein a voice said, 'We cannot prevail, for they will not be assisted by witches. Brother Radulphus, we cannot prevail. Let us go to our Mistress and torment her. I have had a draught of her blood today.' Forthwith it ceased, and straightaway he was in a trance again. And a small voice was heard saying, 'I will stop your mouth. I will stop your mouth.' At which instant, he was so stopped in his throat that the company thought he had been strangled. In another fit, a voice said, 'Your prayers do not prevail. They are not heard.' Whereunto Master Rampan, the schoolmaster of Burton, replied, 'You are a liar of Satan, for it is written, "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,"' &c.⁴¹ About two o'clock, he had a marvellously strange fit, tormenting him most pitifully, in the end whereof he strained to vomit with great vehemency, and got up some phlegm and bile. At which time, if he were possessed with two spirits, as it is probable he was, one of them went out of him. So from two till four, his fits continued but decreasing in strength, and being without speech. About three, the company perceived him to be faint. They persuaded him to eat something to refresh him, which he did, having touched neither meat nor drink all the whole day before. But before and after his meat, he said The Lord's Prayer, and other prayers in the book, which before he had attempted to read and could not, without any interruption. About six o'clock, being carried on his keeper's back, for he had no use of his legs from three months before, his fit came on him very suddenly, and he cried out like a bear. The bystanders betook themselves to prayer. During this fit, he had many miserable torments, causing him to roar and shriek extremely. On the day of his deliverance, he had many such senseless trances that yielded no sign of life, save that his heart might be discerned to pant a little. At last, being laid on his bed, anon he began to heave and lift vehemently at his stomach and, getting up some phlegm and bile, pointing with his finger and following with his eyes, he said, 'Look,

⁴¹ Matthew 18.20.

look, see you not the mouse that is gone out of my mouth,' and so pointed after it to the furthest part of the parlour. Then he fell into a quiet trance. When this ended, he was well till seven o'clock, at which time he and two or three more went to supper. And as he was sat at the table, he fell into a trance and was thence carried to bed. As he lay there, a voice was heard saying, 'My son, rise up and walk. The evil spirit is gone from you. Arise and walk.' On this happening, his keeper said, 'Let us see if he can walk with our help.' But he answered, 'No, I can go by myself, I thank God.' And so, standing on his feet, he went presently forward without any difficulty. And considering with himself this blessed change of his miserable estate, of his own accord, he fell flat on the ground, giving God thanks for his wonderful deliverance, and that in such an excellent manner as was to be admired in a child. But no doubt, the same Spirit which armed him with faith and patience in the time of his torments, instructed him how to give thanks and pray. Being thus fully recovered, he went presently into the town that it might appear what Jesus had done for him to the praise of his glory and admiration of those that had been acquainted with his marvellous visitation.

The next morning, Robert Toone went to the Gaol and demanded of the witch how she did. 'O Master,' said she, 'never worse. For I have had such an ague this night that I had thought my joints would have been torn asunder.' They that dwelt by the prison could not sleep for the noise that was there that night. So it is likely that the Devil was as good as his word, when he said he would torment her.

After he was thus marvellously delivered, he stayed the next day at Caldwell, and from thence went to his Grandfather's, Master Walkeden's, at Clifton. There the aforesaid John Darrell repaired to him, and counselled him to be now most heedful lest the unclean spirit, returning and his heart empty of faith, bring seven worse than himself with him as our Saviour expresses, assuring him that Satan would strive to repossess him.

John Darrell departing, the boy dwelt at Clifton till the fifth of June, which day he returned to Burton. There, the sixth day being the Sabbath and the seventh, he spent in religious exercise. The eighth, he went to school, from whence Satan had long kept him. In the afternoon sitting at his book,

he said to his fellows, 'If you will go with me into the churchyard, I will show you a strange thing.' Whereupon they went into the school porch, which their Master did not mind because they had their books in their hands, where, after he had walked a while, he sat down and said he was weary. And presently, he complained of one of his legs, even crying out. His Master hearing this, came to him. And remembering his former trials, he prayed, moving the child to say after him, 'O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake, have mercy on me.' But mostly he cried, 'Oh, my legs, my legs.' Here is to be noted that, however Satan grievously assaulted him, yet did he not once torment him, because he was not as before in him, which also some of the boy's words confirmed.

Being brought home to his uncle's with many following and flocking after him, he groaned pitifully, crying also, 'Daggers, daggers.' And at length he said, with a fearful countenance, 'I am afraid of Satan.' The company did encourage and comfort him against such temptations, persuading him to prayer. This he performed with great difficulty, crying as before, 'Oh, my legs. Oh, my legs.' They urged him to pray. He pointed with his finger, saying, 'What woman is that which stands there?' Still they urged him with prayer. And while they expected it, he said, 'What a thundering is here? I cannot abide this thundering.' Then he fell into a trance and, having lain a while, a voice was heard from him saying, 'He fell a little and I caught him.' By and by awaking, he rose up amazedly and said, 'Where am I? I was just now in the school.' But they told him what had happened. So he came down from his bed and, seeing himself well, he prayed and read a chapter quietly. And so he remained well all that night. The next morning, the boy's uncle thought it very convenient to labour by prayer to remove this heavy displeasure of God, and the danger of these temptations wherewith the boy began again to be assaulted. And to that end, he sent for two of his neighbours, and spent an hour in prayer and reading the Scriptures. At last, as the boy was reading, he stopped, saying, 'What woman is that which stands there?' They persuaded him to go on and not regard the illusions of Satan. So he read on and was presently cast into a trance. And after he had lain a while, he said, 'Behold I see a Lamb, hark what the Lamb says. "You did fall and he caught you. Fear

not, the Lord is your buckler and defender.” After this, he read on and, within a little time, fell again into a quiet trance, saying, ‘Do you say that if I will worship you, you will make me understand the secrets of all men’s hearts? Away Satan, it is hidden from you. The Lord only is the searcher of the hearts and reins.’ Then did he read again. And forthwith, he was cast into a trance. ‘What fair woman is this that is so gorgeously apparelled? Do you say that you will give her to me if I will worship you? Away Satan. I neither care for her nor you. The Lord is my comfort, and him only will I worship. the Lamb and the Dove desire not to be worshipped, but you always desire worship.’ Again he read and fell into a trance, saying, ‘Do you say that if I will swear an oath you will give me a hundred pounds? Away Satan. Would you have me take God’s name in vain? I will not.’ He read again and, at the third word, was snatched into his trance, saying, ‘Would you give me a bag full of gold and silver, if I will never read nor pray to God any more? Away Satan. I neither regard your gold nor silver. The Lord and his Word is better to me than all the gold and silver in the world.’

They offered him the book again. And he falls presently into a trance, saying, ‘Would you have me tear the book? I will not tear it, do what you can. Will you tear him in pieces that continues reading?’ He meant Richard Teate, who read on when the boy was interrupted. ‘Satan, you cannot touch him. The Lord will not allow you to hurt a hair of his head.’ Straight after these words, he was snatched into his trance and said, ‘Do you bid me open my mouth? What if I do open my mouth? Do you say that you will enter into me? Away Satan, you cannot enter into me, except the Lord give you leave, and I trust he will not.’ Again after this, he falls into a trance saying, ‘Come Master Hildersham, let us six go to Heaven,’ at which time there were just six in the parlour. Then, before he could read two words, he fell again into a trance and said, what Satan, would you have me become a traitor? God defend.’ These words proceeded from him with great vehemency and earnestness of spirit. Then, pausing a while, he says again, ‘Do you say that when I am asleep you will pluck out my throat? I care not for you. You cannot touch a hair of my head, except God give you leave.’ Again, being in a trance, he said, ‘Do you say that you will set the house on fire and burn

us all? Do your worst, Satan, you cannot touch our soul.' Then he read again, and at the second word started amazedly saying, 'Look where the bear comes. Look, look, do you not see how he comes against us with open mouth? Hark how he roars.' Then said he, 'Away Satan, and get you hence. Yes, I charge you in the name of the everlasting God to get you hence.' They offer him the book again, and he read not three words but he was overtaken with a quiet trance wherein, lying a while, he said, 'Oh, I see a milk white dove. The dove says, "Fear not, you will have better news."' Again he began to read. And again he was snatched into his trance, and said, 'Do you say that the Lord has given you leave to enter into me. Away Satan, you are a liar. I know he will not allow you to enter into me.' Again, after he offered to read, he was cast into a trance. And, lying very quietly, he says, 'Hark, ho, look what a fair dove is there. The dove says that the Devil uses enemies towards me. Hark, hark what the dove says. You have an enemy here on earth that says you are a dissembler. He will fry in hell torments. Your eyes will see his judgements. For his sins do smoke up into the elements, and do pierce the Heavens.' Then pausing again a while, he says, 'Hark what the dove says, "Wheresoever the glory of God is shown, there are always some enemies to resist it."' He began to read again, but at the third word fell into a trance saying, 'What, do you say that you will torment me? Do you say that you will carry me into a wood, and cast me out at the window? My Redeemer lives. The Lord of Hosts is his name. I fear you not. Remember that Satan.' And pausing a while, he says, 'Master Hildersham, see, see how the world passes away. Yea, it must pass away, it hurries on apace.' Then he begins to read again and, at the third word, is cast into a trance. And at length, he says, 'See what a little of God's word does, how it chases him away. See, see how Satan flies away.' Again, being about to read, he started suddenly and said, 'This book is a flame of fire.' And presently, he fell into a trance, saying, 'Would you have me tear the book? Away Satan. I will not tear it.' Then lying still and pausing a while, he said at length, 'Look where the dove comes. Hark what the dove says, "The Lord your God has tied your enemy Satan fast in a chain. Unless you fall again, he will never tempt you. Hold fast and forget not."' The child continued his speech saying, 'O Lamb of

God that takes away the sins of the world, your name be praised, your name be magnified and extolled for evermore.'

Forthwith he opened his eyes. And taking the book, he read very cheerfully a good time. Then did he and all the company joining with him humble themselves before the Lord God, glorifying and praising his holy name for his comfortable presence and gracious assistance in this miraculous work. And so, having continued in prayer a good while, the boy at last arose, finding the dove's words true and himself very well, both in mind and body. And so, thanks be to God, he has remained ever since, which the Lord continue to his own glory, the joy of the godly, and the child's comfort, Amen. Now the witch is dead. Had she lived, she would have been executed.

FINIS

Shortly you shall have the true story come forth from those seven in Lancashire that were possessed with unclean spirits, and all seven delivered at one time by this man.

Printed at London for John Oxenbridge dwelling in Paul's Churchyard at the sign of the Parrot. 1597

A household possessed
The story of the Lancashire seven

In December 1596, Nicholas Starkie a gentleman of Cleworth in Lancashire visited the celebrated Dr John Dee, astronomer and alchemist of Manchester about the possession of a number of persons in his household. In February 1595, his daughter Anne and his son John, nine and ten years of age, began to show signs of possessions. Later three other children resident in the household, Margaret Hurdman, Ellinor Hurdman, and Ellen Holland, became similarly possessed. Eventually, a maid Jane Ashton, thirty years old, and a poor relation Margaret Byrom, thirty-three years of age, acted demonically.

John Dee had had experience of demoniacs. In August 1590 a nurse in his household, Ann Frank, had become possessed by an evil spirit which he had attempted to exorcise by prayer and (unusually) the anointing of her breast with holy oil. The exorcism was unsuccessful. Two weeks later she tried to drown herself in his well, and three weeks after that successfully cut her own throat.¹

John Dee, perhaps as a consequence wary of any direct involvement, counselled Nicholas Starkie to gain the assistance of 'some godly preachers, with whom he should join in prayer and fasting for the help of his children'.² And it was upon this advice, and having heard the story of Thomas Darling, that Starkie sought the services of John Darrell and George More.

John Dee also called in Edmond Hartley, a witch, whom he sharply reproved. Edmond Hartley had been engaged by Nicholas Starkie in mid 1595 to treat Anne and John, and the other children who became possessed after his arrival. They responded well to his treatment of 'certain

¹ This is one of the rare cases of a demoniac successfully taking her own life. There is no evidence in Ann Frank's case of the usual manifestations of possessed behaviour. The diagnosis of being inhabited by the devil may have been made, not on the grounds of the usual signs of possession, but on that of the oft made connection between severe depression and demonic possession. See Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

² More, 1600, p. 15 (see below, p. 204).

popish charms and herbs³ for eighteen months. Threatening to go overseas, Hartley, a cunning man in more ways than one, was able to extract forty shillings a year from Starkie on the promise that he would stay and treat the children. It was his further demand of a house and grounds from Starkie, and Starkie's suspicion that he was the cause rather than the cure of the children that sent him to Manchester to consult John Dee.

After Dee's reproof of Hartley, the children were quiet. But three weeks later, they began again their accustomed fits, now joined by the two older women, Margaret Byrom and Jane Ashton. Hartley was not only greedy, but lecherous. He had kissed all of the possessed, so the text alleges. This was his downfall. Rarely for the English cases, the sexual and the demonic combined: 'His manner was that, when he meant them a mischief, then he would kiss them if he could, and therewith breathe the Devil into their bodies.'⁴ Only the maid Joan Smith was able to escape his advances; only she, we are assured, escaped possession.

It was his pursuit of Margaret Byrom to her home in Salford that was to be his undoing. Found with her by some preachers there,⁵ they suspected witchcraft and had him arrested. He was tried at the Lancaster Assizes in early March 1597 and convicted of having bewitched the children. The most decisive piece of evidence was Nicholas Starkie's account of Hartley's conjuring. While he was with Hartley in a wood around Autumn of 1596, Hartley had made a circle on the ground 'with many crosses and partitions' which he desired Starkie tread out. After which, he said, 'now I shall trouble him that troubled me, and be even with him that sought my death'.⁶ Hartley denied any wrongdoing. But at his execution, the rope broke whereupon he 'penitently confessed'.⁷ He was hanged a second time.

When George More wrote this work, he had been in prison for almost two years. In May 1599, John Darrell had been condemned as a counterfeit, and he and George More, deposed from the ministry, had been imprisoned. For George More, the conviction and execution of Edmond Hartley was a crucial part of Darrell's and his defence. The first part of More's *true Discourse* was intended to demonstrate that he and Darrell, and the seven possessed, could not have been guilty of 'cosinage and counterfeiting'⁸ as Samuel Harsnett's *A Discovery of the Fraudulent Practices of John*

³ More, 1600, p. 13 (see below, p. 203). ⁴ More, 1600, p. 16 (see below, p. 205).

⁵ According to Darrell, 1600a, p. 6, by Matthew Palmer, a preacher, who was coincidentally, the curate of John Dee.

⁶ More, 1600, p. 14 (see below, p. 204). According to Darrell, 1600a, p. 1, his words were, 'I will meet with them that went about my death.'

⁷ More, 1600, p. 21 (see below, p. 207). ⁸ More, 1600, p. 6 (see below, p. 199).

Darrell (1599) had alleged. On the contrary, for More, the legal outcome demonstrated that the seven had been genuinely possessed and had been truly bewitched by Edmond Hartley.

In the second part of *A True Discourse*, More re-inforces his argument that the possession of the seven was genuine by detailing the signs of possession that they all exhibited. For More's readers, the signs must have been sufficiently known to them as signs of demonic possession that the iteration of them would be persuasive. And while More recognised that the sceptical might find any one of the signs symptomatic of more common natural illnesses, the union of all or most of eighteen signs listed in the one individual (and in this case seven individuals) would, he believed, 'prove a very sound and corporal possession'.⁹ And the presence of acts above the power of nature – preternatural knowledge, extraordinary strength, unexplainable familiarity with Latin – was, for More, decisive.

Most of the possessed also demonstrated demonically inspired skills unique to them. John Starkie preached eloquently and sang angelically, Margaret Hurdman possessed a gift for mimicry, Margaret Byrom was adept at visions of demons, and the untutored Ellen Holland showed advanced skills in spinning. John, Anne, Ellen, and Ellinor showed remarkable botanical knowledge, and expertise in dancing. Somewhat surprisingly, More is surprised that the children are well when playing games, but were fearfully tormented when the Scriptures were read, prayers were said, or exhortations were directed at them.

More's vivid account of the dispossession of the seven follows.¹⁰ It was ten days after the death of Hartley, on the afternoon of 16 March 1597 that Darrell and More arrived at Cleworth. There had been some respite since the death of Hartley. But Darrell and More were convinced that Satan was present but dormant. They were not disappointed. The children immediately threw fits in their presence. By midnight, the family had been prepared by More and Darrell for the deliverance of the seven which was to take place on the following day.

By seven o'clock on the following morning, the five children, together with Jane Ashton and Margaret Byrom, had been brought into the parlour and were laid on couches while the family and a large crowd of neighbours gathered.¹¹ After an initial Satanic outburst, prayer and preaching continued until three o'clock in the afternoon with the possessed reasonably quiet, until in a sign that Satan (always at his most violent before his expulsion)

⁹ More, 1600, p. 48 (see below, p. 221). ¹⁰ See More, 1600, pp. 49–63 (see below, pp. 221–8).

¹¹ According to Darrell 1600, p. 10, in addition to himself, More, and the local pastor Dickens, about thirty people were assembled.

recognised the end was near, the seven 'broke out into exceeding loud cries, all seven roaring and bellowing in such extreme and fearful manner that they troubled us all, being so violent and outrageous that they had much ado to be held'.¹² After almost two hours of battle, Satan departed.

The core of Samuel Harsnett's charges against John Darrell was that he was the chief actor in 'juggling and deluding the people by counterfeit miracles'¹³ in the dispossessions of William Sommers, Thomas Darling, and the seven of Lancashire. More's defense of Darrell in *A true Discourse* is to minimise Darrell's role in the deliverance of the possessed in the Cleworth case. According to Darrell himself, he, More, and Dickoms were all equally involved in the dispossession of all seven.¹⁴ But More provides an alternative story, one which, by marginalising Darrell's role, magnifies his, an outcome More both recognises and hopes to avoid.¹⁵

According to More, towards the latter part of the day of 17 March, Jane Ashton, being exceptionally violent, was separated from the others and treated alone by Darrell and Dickoms. In the meantime, the prayers of More and the crowd in attendance effected the deliverance of the remaining six, to the expressed disappointment of Darrell. The seven signs of dispossession listed in the last part of the text were intended to demonstrate the authenticity of their deliverance and the state from which they were delivered. The next morning, Darrell, More, and Dickoms prayed in turns until around midday when Jane, hearing that More wished another to take his place, begged him to continue. The Devil departed soon after.

In spite of the key role of More in the story of the Lancashire seven, the text makes no suggestion that More has any unique powers as an exorcist. On the contrary, it endorses a Puritan theology of exorcism. Deliverance from possession is 'no extraordinary gift, peculiar to any one man, but common to all the faithful, as well to one as to another. And the mean and simple people have as great privilege and power to cast out Satan by their faith and fasting and fervent prayer, as either he, or I, or the best and chiefest preacher.'¹⁶ Dispossession is ascribable to the 'ordinance of Christ'¹⁷ and not to powers inherent in any individual, in spite of papist claims to the contrary.

Except for Jane Ashton, all remained free of Satan and continued from that time in good health. Jane Ashton went to live with a Catholic Uncle in remote Lancashire, converted to Catholicism, became re-possessed, and

¹² More, 1600, p. 62 (see below, p. 228). ¹³ Harsnett, 1599, Epistle to the Reader.

¹⁴ See Darrell, 1600a, pp. 10–13. ¹⁵ See More, 1600, p. 74 (see below, pp. 233–4).

¹⁶ More, 1600, p. 77 (see below, p. 235). ¹⁷ More, 1600, p. 6 (see below, p. 199).

was used by Jesuits to demonstrate their power of exorcism.¹⁸ Anne Starkie was to marry a Henry Moes in Leigh in 1615. John Starkie was to become a colonel in the Parliamentary forces. He died at the age of eighty in 1665. As for Margaret and Ellinor Hurdman, Ellen Holland and Margaret Byrom, to have been once 'possessed by the devil' remains their only historical claim upon our interest.

¹⁸ See More, 1600, pp. 71, 82–3 (see below, pp. 232, 238). See also Darrell, 1600a, p. 13, and Harsnett, 1599, pp. 2–3.

A true Discourse concerning the certain possession and dispossession of seven persons in one family in Lancashire, which also may serve as part of an Answer to a fained and false Discovery¹⁹ which speaks very much evil, as well of this, as of the rest of those great and mighty works of God which be of the like excellent nature. By George More, Minister and Preacher of the word of God, and now, for bearing witness to this and for justifying the rest, a prisoner in the Clink²⁰, where he has continued almost for the space of two years.

Remember you magnify the work of God which men behold. Job 36.24.

We speak that we know, and testify that which we have seen, but you receive not our testimony. John 3.11.

1600

To the Christian Reader

Forasmuch good reader, as it is the manner of men that set forth any story, though it be but short, to give a reason of their purpose therein lest they should seem either rashly to attempt that which is not convenient, or otherwise busy themselves to bring forth that which is not necessary, for this cause I have thought it good to prefix these reasons ensuing to this

¹⁹ The reference is to Samuel Harsnett, *A Discovery of the fraudulent Practises of John Darrell*, London, 1599.

²⁰ The Clink formed part of the Bishop of Winchester's Palace, built in Southwark in 1127. It was in use as a prison by 1161. Its main purpose was as England's official prison for religious offenders.

discourse, that so the weighing of them might make the matter something more worth in their conceit, with whom nothing, though of itself it be ever so savory, tastes well except it be rare and excellent, neither can they digest that which is very good and wholesome except it be of great consequence and expectation. This sort may dislike the handling of this strange story in this harsh manner, while they affect great and high things. Yet the moving causes of setting it out being considered, may overcome that curiosity and work some contentment.

First then, the story of the possession and dispossession of Thomas Darling, and also many things concerning the strange handling of William Sommers to second the same, are both put in print. And though the truth of both be sufficiently cleared therein, yet there is great opposition both by word and writing offered on set purpose to hinder the crediting of either. I thought it fit to add to these two the story of those in Lancashire, as famous as the rest, both in that they were seven in one family all possessed at once, as also that they were all seven dispossessed within two days by prayer and fasting, and that this also being published as the third glorious witness of the wonderful works of God wrought and seen in three several Shires of our land, all men might be the more moved to believe the truth of these things, seeing at the mouth of three such sufficient witnesses, it is so surely sealed up and confirmed.

Secondly, in respect of the Papists who do more malign this particular of Lancashire than any of the rest, labouring mightily and by many means both to discredit and abolish it, whereupon some of them have given it out, that those seven were not possessed. Others say that they were all seven possessed, but never yet dispossessed. And some others of them affirm that they were all dispossessed, yet not by preachers of the Gospel, but by their seminary and mass priests, and this last runs currently among them.

For there being eight or nine seminaries in the Clink, divers of them stood out against me to my face, and told me that whatsoever was done in Lancashire by us was done by conjuring and knavery. And though Master Starkie himself did justify the whole matter and cleared it from all their

slanders, and that before the chiefest of them in the Clink, yet they received not his testimony. But they told him that they had received the report of this from a gentleman in that country, whom they would credit before him in this case. And no marvel, for if the Church of England have this power to cast out devils, then the Church of Rome is a false Church. For there can be but one true Church, the principal mark of which, as they say, is to work miracles, and of them this is the greatest, namely to cast out devils. And hereupon, conferring at another time with two of them, they brought out this bold protestation, that if we could prove any such power to be in our Church and show them an infallible instance or example to justify the practice thereof, then would they join themselves to our Church assemblies, and freely embrace our religion.

Thirdly, in respect of that gross and great error which is a common and received opinion among the most, namely, that we do challenge to ourselves some special gift to cast out devils above other men. Though we have utterly disclaimed this, yet many do ignorantly ascribe the effect of the work wrought rather to some extraordinary power in us than to the ordinance of Christ, which in no case ought so to be.

But chiefly I have taken in hand this brief discourse for the better clearing both of Master Darrell and myself from those accusations and slanders of cosinage²¹ and counterfeiting, with which we are charged both by word and writing, as if we were guilty thereof, even in this particular of Lancashire.

For there is a book of a large volume lately come out under the name of S. H.²² crossing and contradicting the whole course of proceeding for Master Darrell's clearing, yoking me also with him in this devilish legerdmain, as they term it, calling us a couple of cousining hypocrites, using also many other bad terms.

The title of this book is termed, *A Discovery of fraudulent Practises concerning pretended Possessions*. It contains five books, the first of which does more concern me and the matter of fact for Lancashire, than the rest do. So much therefore as I can conveniently for the clearing of both,

²¹ Cheating.

²² Samuel Harsnett.

I will answer to, and leave the rest to him who has just occasion offered, to use his best defence in that behalf.

Lastly, this Discoverer, whosoever he be, finds great fault with some of our friends that they spoke so much of the dispossession of Sommers in a little treatise or two, but nothing of the dispossession of these seven in Lancashire and of some others. And he seems sometimes to challenge us to make our answer if we have any more to say, and to speak for ourselves what we can.

On these just occasions, I have undertaken this short discourse, hoping hereby to detect the falsehood of this discovery concerning this particular fact, by clearing it, and in it the rest which are like it, of such malicious slanders as are raised against it, so that all things being faithfully described from point to point appertaining to this matter, all men may see both what great cause I have above any other to defend this as the wonderful work of God, as also that it might better appear whether we or they that have written and dealt against us, be deepest in this dissimulation and who be greatest cousiners and deceivers.

A brief and true discourse containing the certain possession and dispossession of seven persons in one family in Lancashire, namely of John Starkie, Anne Starkie, Margaret Hurdman, Ellinor Hurdman, Ellen Holland, Margaret Byrom, and Jane Ashton, which may serve, as an interim, for a piece of an answer to that fraudulent discovery lately come out, which depraves these, as well as the rest of those great and mighty works of God, which be of the same kind.

In this discourse, I mean not to meddle with that deceitful and depraving *Discovery*, further than concerns this matter of fact for Lancashire only, reserving all matters of opinion, and the answering of all their objections, to a more full and fitter time. And so avoiding all tediousness as near as I can, I will endeavour fully and plainly to reveal the truth, that I may quickly dispatch the story.

And because the drift of this desperate detractor is to detect our dealing with these seven to be a deceivable practice, as well as the rest which are, by him, pretended so to be, and because his chiefest opposition to this work consists in five principal things which, being sorely urged and easily received, will endanger greatly the credit of the story, in respect hereof I will digest this whole discourse into five principal heads or chief, which may serve fitly, both to give more light to the story, and for a more direct answer to the *Discovery*.

In the first place, I will as truly as I can describe the state of these persons and of their strange and troublesome afflictions together with the outward causes and occasions thereof, which also continued for the most part for the space of two years and a half, before we came to them.

Secondly, I will set down the strange signs shown forth by them, both generally and particularly, to prove that they were truly and actually possessed.

In the third place, I will show the causes and occasions of our coming into Lancashire, and what beginning and preceding we made in performing that great work which we took in hand.

Fourthly, I will manifest the means and clear the manner of their deliverance.

And lastly, I will briefly mention the signs of their dispossession which may serve to clear it from all suspicion.

These points I propose briefly to touch, and not to handle them at large according to the worthiness of the matter, which indeed is such as does deserve both a more full discourse and also a more pregnant faculty to commend it, than I am able to afford.

In the first place, order requires that we show the state of these seven persons afflicted, before we come to them, which was most strange and fearful, and how it came to pass, and of the continuance of it for the space of two years and more, all which may plainly appear by this which follows.

At Cleworth in Lancashire within the parish of Leigh, there dwells one Nicholas Starkie, gentleman, who married a gentlewoman who was an inheritrix, and of whose kindred some were Papists. Some of these, partly for religion, and partly because the land descended not to the heir's male, wished and vowed still to pray for the perishing of her issue. And accordingly, four of her children, though at their birth likely to live, yet afterward pined away in a most strange manner.

Some of Mrs. Starkie's kindred, observing how one child after another pined away, moved with compassion told Mistress Starkie of the said unnatural vow. She hereupon conceived such a grief, that she made an estate of her land to her husband and his heirs, all issue failing herself. After this conveyance was made, Mistress Starkie had two children, a son and a daughter, both of which prospered well till they came to ten or twelve years of age. But then, with five more in her family, they were possessed and vexed with evil spirits, as the sequel does declare.

First, in the beginning of February 1594, Anne the daughter was taken with a depressed heavy countenance, and with a certain fearful starting and pulling together of her body. About a week after, John Starkie the son was taken as he was going to school, and was compelled to shout vehemently, not being able to stop himself. After this they waxed worse and worse, falling often into strange and extreme fits.

Wherewith Master Starkie grieved and, having been charged two hundred pounds or thereabouts, carelessly sought a remedy. For, to speak of no more, he went to a Seminary Priest who could do no good because, forsooth, he had not then his books. Whereupon Master Starkie continued still seeking for help and heard of one Edmond Hartley, a witch. He made him acquainted with the state of his children, and with large offers craved his help. In the end, Hartley consented to come. He, being there and having used certain popish charms and herbs, by degrees the children were quiet. And so they continued, seeming to be well almost a year and a half. All this time, Hartley often came to visit them. At length he feigned as though he would go into another country, but whither Master Starkie might not know. And when he began to go his way, John Starkie began bleeding. And Hartley came to him and said that if he had been but forty roods²³ from him, none could have staunched the bleeding. And thus it fell out at other times.

Then Master Starkie, fearing lest his children would be much troubled in his absence and he uncertain where to find him, offered to give forty shillings a year pension for his assistance in time of need. At first, he consented to accept this offer. But afterward, not satisfied, he coveted more, a house and ground. When Master Starkie refused to give these, he threatened in a fume, in the absence of Master Starkie but in the hearing of many, that if he would not satisfy his desires, he would make such a shout at Cleworth as never was heard. This was also effected in such a hideous and fearful manner, as the like in England has not been heard.

After this Master Starkie went to his Father's house. This Hartley went with him. After he²⁴ was in bed, he was sorely tormented all night long. The

²³ A rood or rod is about six to eight yards in length.

²⁴ Hartley.

next day being recovered, he went into a little wood not far off from the house, where he made a circle a yard and half around, with many crosses and partitions. When he was finished, he came back to call Master Starkie, telling him what he had done. And he desired him to go and tread out his circle, for he said he might not do it himself. This being also accomplished, he said, 'Well, now I shall trouble him that troubled me, and be even with him that sought my death.'

When Master Starkie perceived this, and many other bad qualities in this fellow, he waxed weary of him, especially seeing that there was no amendment in his children but rather that they became worse and worse. He then sought, though secretly, for other help from the physicians. And after that, he went to one Doctor Dee at Manchester, who wished Master Starkie to crave the help and assistance of some godly preachers, with whom he should join in prayer and fasting for the help of his children.

He²⁵ procured also the said Hartley the witch to come before him, whom he so sharply reprov'd that the children had better rest for some three weeks after.

But then they began their accustomed fits. First, John Starkie, about the fourth of January 1596. As he was reading a book, something gave him such a thump in the neck that he was suddenly struck down with a most horrible shriek. And he said that Satan had broken his neck, lying there pitifully tormented for the space of two hours.

At night on the same day, being in bed, he suddenly leapt out with such a terrible outcry that amazed them all, being tossed and tumbled a long time, being exceeding fierce and strong like a mad man, or rather like a mad dog, that I may so speak, snatching at and biting everybody that laid hold on him, not sparing in that fit his own Mother, smiting furiously all that came near him, hurling the bed-staves at their heads and throwing the pillows into the fire.

His sister Anne likewise began again to be troubled, and three other young girls in the house, of whom Master Starkie had the education, with

²⁵ John Dee.

their portions committed to him by their parents. The first was Margaret Hurdman, fourteen years of age; the second Ellinor her sister, of ten years; the third Ellen Holland, of twelve years. All these had many strange and sore fits, being possessed by this witch's means. His manner was that, when he meant them a mischief, then he would kiss them if he could, and therewith breathe the Devil into their bodies. He kissed John Starkie, and all the maids that were possessed, Margaret Byrom, Jane Ashton, and all. He struggled much with one Joan Smith to have kissed her. But with much ado she escaped his hands so that, of all the maid servants, she only was preserved and not once troubled at all. Whereupon Ellinor said in one of her fits, that if Edmond had kissed her, three men could not have held her.

Margaret Byrom of thirty three years, a kinswoman to Mistress Starkie, came to Cleworth to see her friends. While there, she began to be troubled like the rest, and by the same means. For Hartley the witch, being in a sore fit in the night, she in a desire to comfort him, went into his chamber and sat down by his bed side, and began to speak to him. And it was not long before he rose up. And sitting on his bed, he leaned his head down to the maid who sat just underneath him, whereupon she was suddenly taken that she could neither stand nor speak. When she endeavoured to arise, she could not. When others held her up, she sank down and became senseless. But Edmond the witch left her and went to another room. And he had no more fits after while he was at Cleworth, though he had divers before he met with this maid.

Jane Ashton, of the age of thirty years, was the last that was possessed. She confessed that once, coming across Edmond, he told her that she had best be content, or else he would anger the best vein in her heart. At other times, she said, he offered great kindness and large promises in the way of marriage, and had kissed her also. The like loving affections he sometimes showed to Margaret Byrom, as she confessed. And he had kissed her also as it was thought.

About the fourteenth of January, the five youngest began their strange fits again, entering into them normally by a very sudden and fearful shrieking, barking and howling, in such a hideous noise as cannot be expressed.

Shortly after this time, Margaret Byrom hastened homeward to her Mother's house at Salford near Manchester, hoping to find some more ease and relief from her fits than she did at Cleworth. She taking her leave, Edmond the witch said he would go home with her even though he never came again. So she went, accompanied by him and another. Seven miles on the way, she had ten fits. When she was recovered, she desired Edmond to tell her how she might be helped. He told her plainly that both she and the rest were past his hands, and that no one man could do them any good. It was too great a work, but they must be three or two at the least with fervent and hearty prayer.

After she came home, her fits doubled and still increased. Edmond came to her every day. As soon as she saw him, she fell straight into a fit, in which she was more sorely handled than ever before. There came in divers to see her. And some preachers, who found Edmond with her, and suspecting him by some signs, asked him what he did with the maid. He said that he came to pray with her. 'Pray', said one, 'Why man, you cannot pray.' 'Yes, but I can,' said he. 'Say The Lord's Prayer then,' said the preacher. And he began to fumble around it very ill-favouredly, and could not for his life say it to the end. They then thought him to be a witch, and caused him presently to be apprehended and brought before two Justices of the Peace, where he was examined. And after divers witnesses had come against him, the Justices sent him back to Margaret Byrom so that she might accuse him to his face. But as soon as she saw him, straightway she fell down backwards and became speechless. This was tried the second time. Yea, five times was he brought to her, and she was ever cast down and struck dumb, so that she could not speak one word against him.

Yet, when he was taken away and set behind the backs of the people, she recovered herself, began to speak to him and to charge him with many things. On these accusations of hers and many other testimonies taken against him for witchery, he was sent by the Justices to Lancaster Gaol. On the way there, on the second of February 1597, he came by Cleworth to fetch his clothes to take with him. And all the children, seeming to be well before he came, presently they fell into very violent and outrageous fits.

They went to him all at once, attempting to strike him. It was much ado for two strong men to hold the least of them. And if they had not been forcibly restrained, the witch would have been in great danger, for they were as fierce and furious against him as if they would have torn him to pieces.

After this, about the beginning of March, Master Hopwood, Justice of the Peace, came on purpose to take the testimony of these five children against Edmond the witch, to carry to Lancaster at the Assizes to further his indictment. Then these five each became speechless. And being called for one after another, they fell and sunk down on the way, not being able to go, nor to stand nor speak one word. After the Justice was gone, they complained that Edmond had stopped their mouths, and would not allow them to speak.

At the same time, Jane Ashton began to howl and to bark, when she was to be brought in for a witness against Edmond. Whereupon one of the younger girls in her fit then said, 'Ah, Edmond. Do you trouble her now, when she would testify against you?'

Margaret Byrom also, two nights before her examination against Edmond, had divers apparitions, wherein she was sorely terrified by the Devil in Edmond's likeness, charging her deeply to take heed what she said against him, for now the time was come.

And when the Assizes came, Edmond was brought forth, arraigned and convicted. Master Starkie, charged him with bewitching his children. He proved this sufficiently and made it evident to the whole bench. For all that, they could find no law to hang him. Whereupon Master Starkie called to mind the making of the circle, whereof we have already spoken, which, being delivered on his oath, was received. Yet Edmond stiffly denied it, and stood out against him. And he told him to his face that he should not hang him, let him do what he could. For the Devil had promised him that no halter would hang him. Yet the Jury convicted him, and the Judge condemned him. Hartley was hanged and the halter broke. Whereupon he penitently confessed that he had deserved that punishment and that all which Master Starkie had charged him with was true. And so he was hanged out the second time.

Now this being so, as you have heard, how detestable then is that *Discovery* which is come out, fraught with so many fraudulent accusations against this cause, especially charging these seven persons to be all counterfeiters, and that Master Darrell had taught them that deceitful trade, coupling me equally with him in that crafty juggling, as they call it, and making us bewitching mates and joint companions, working together in that counsage. Against this infamous slander, that which hitherto has been observed is sufficient to clear us. For herein we have seen the parties proved to be bewitched. Secondly, the party bewitched every one of them. Thirdly, the causes thereof mentioned in the beginning. Fourthly, diverse and sundry witnesses. Fifthly, his apprehending, examining, imprisoning, indicting, condemning and executing are on record. Moreover, the Jury, the Judge, and the Bench, together with the whole Assizes held at Lancaster, about the sixth of March, Anno 1597, do all bear witness to our innocence and do justify us to be just men concerning this matter and with great indignation do detest and defy, all detecting discoveries to the contrary whatsoever. And last of all, there is that memorable execution of Edmond Hartley the conjurer and witch, who was hanged with a witness, the gallows, the halter, and his double hanging, together with that last and famous confession out of his own mouth that he was the man that had done the deed, and alone guilty of bewitching these seven several parties, and of sending evil spirits into them. This famous champion does challenge this Discoverer to be but a deceitful detractor, and a false accuser of the brethren, and is also most sufficient to clear us in this matter, against all atheists and Papists, and the whole world.

And thus much will suffice
for the first point.

The second part

The second thing that must be cleared in this discourse is the possession of these seven persons, to which purpose I will proceed to show first the strange signs acted by every one of them in particular, and after contract

them more briefly in the general. By which I hope that it will appear to the impartial reader, that such great things were done by them as be very hard and unusual quite beyond the nature of things, and such as neither by art nor any human skill could be counterfeited. So that, as the first part of this Discourse has cleared us from counterfeiting, this may be sufficient to prove the truth of their possession, contrary to that overbold and confident confutation made by the Discoverer, who labours both tooth and nail to cross and contradict the same.

First, John Starkie, son and heir of Master Nicholas Starkie, among sundry, had some very rare and strange fits, in which he showed very extraordinary knowledge. For he, being but the age of twelve years or thereabouts, did in his trance declare the strange sins of this land committed in all estates and degrees of people, and denounced the fearful judgements of God due to them. He then exhorted his parents and the people there present to repent, that they might avoid all those grievous plagues, and wished that all the whole land might do the like. After this, he made a most excellent prayer, first for the whole church, then for the Queen's Majesty for the subduing of her enemies, for the continuance of her life and peaceable government, for the upholding of the Gospel and for all the true Ministers of Christ, for those that have authority, for his parents, and all the people of God. In this exhortation and prayer, he continued over two hours performing the same so excellently, both for the matter and manner of handling and uttering the same, that they that heard it did admire it, and thought that a good preacher could very hardly have done the like. This being done, he sung a good piece of the fourth Psalm in a most sweet and heavenly tune as ever might be heard. All this was done in a trance, his eyes being closed up. And he neither knew what he said or did. In this long and continued speech, his Father wished him to lie still and to speak no more, saying to him, 'Son, you injure your head, and cannot tell what you say.' 'Yes,' Father, said he, 'I know well what I say.' 'Then,' said his Father, 'you can tell me how many persons are in this chamber and what are their names.' Thereupon he counted them and told the names of every one of them to the number of eighteen or nineteen, his eyes being closely shut up, as they had been all the morning before, the neighbours and some strangers having come in after

he began his fit. And in the end, he said to his Father, 'There is now one of your tenants newly come into the chamber.' He told him his name and that he dwelt far off in the peak. 'Let him come,' said he, 'and take me by the hand, and I will see and be well for this time.' And so it came to pass, at which they all marvelled. And they asked him whether he remembered what he had said all that long time. And he flatly denied that he had spoken anything at all.

Secondly, Margaret Hurdman, of thirteen years of age, being in a trance three hours long, and possessed at that time, as it seemed, with a spirit of pride, did most lively express both by words and gestures the proud women of our times, who cannot content themselves with any sober or modest attire but are ever ready to follow every new and disguised fashion, and yet never think themselves fine enough. Whereupon she said, 'Come on my lad,' for so she called the spirit that stood before her in that likeness to teach her all the tricks of pride, 'Come on and set my neckerchief on the one side as I do on the other.' And as she was a setting of it, she said to him, 'Thus, my lad, I will have a fine smock of silk. It will be finer than yours. I will have a petticoat of silk, not of red but of the best silk that is. It will be embroidered a foot high. It will be laid on with gold lace. It will have a French body, not of whalebone for that is not stiff enough, but of horn for that will hold it out. It shall come low in the front to keep in my belly. My lad, I will have a French farthingale.²⁶ It will be finer than yours. I will have it low at the front and high behind, and broad on either side, that I may lay my arms on it. My lad, your gown is crimson satin, but mine will be of black wrought velvet. It will be finer than yours. I will have my sleeves set out with wire, for sticks will break and are not stiff enough. I will have my periwinkle²⁷ so fine, finer than yours. I will have my cap of black velvet with a feather in it, with flutes of gold, and my hair will be set with pearls, finer than yours. I will have my neckerchief set with a collar and starched with blue starch, and pinned with a row or two of pins.' With this she snatched the neckerchief from her neck and threw it at him, saying, 'You take it, for I cannot make it as fine as yours. I pray you, come and help me to set it as fine

²⁶ A hooped petticoat.

²⁷ Headdress

as yours. My lad, I will have a busk²⁸ of whalebone. It will be tied with two silk points, and will have a gathered wrought stomacher²⁹ embossed with gold, and a girdle of gold finer than yours. I will have my hose of orange colour. This is my request, and my cork shoes of red Spanish leather, finer than yours. I will have a scarf of red silk, with a gold lace about the edge. I will have a fan with a silver handle and a mirror set in it, finer than yours. My lad, you must bring me a pair of gloves of the finest leather that may be, with two gold laces about the thumb, and a fringe on the top with flutes and red silk underneath, that I may draw them through a gold ring, or else I will none of them.

My lad, I will have my basin and ewer of silver, and my towel of silk, finer than yours. I will have my gelding and saddle and furniture fit, my footstool also fine and brave, or else I will not ride. I will have my cloak and savegarde³⁰ laid with lace most fine and brave, and finer than yours.' And presently after this, she said, 'I defy you, Satan, and your pride, for this is your illusion and deceit. I will none of it.' And then reverting, she said, 'Jesus bless me.' But remembered nothing that she had either said or done.

At another time in her fit, she went to the maids as they were washing clothes, and began to wash with them. And though they were two lusty women, and she but a young girl, yet she washed more for the space of an hour so quickly and so finely, that they could not come near her.

The third is Margaret Byrom, of whom there be many things worthy to be observed. She, being at Master Starkie's house about the end of January, was for the space of a whole day and a night grievously molested and sorely frightened with a terrible vision. It appeared to her lying in bed, swelling and tumbling, like a foul black dwarf, with half a face, long shaggy hair, black broad hands and black cloven feet. She, ever fearing lest he came to carry her away, began to pray. He threatened that, if she did pray, he would carry her away. She was in such a strait, that she knew not what to do, whether to pray or not to pray. Yet in the end, she resolved that she would pray to the Lord, for her help was in him alone, who indeed gave her strength and courage to call earnestly to him. Presently Satan left and vanished away.

²⁸ A strip of wood, steel, whalebone or other rigid material used to support a corset.

²⁹ An ornamental chest covering worn under the lacing of a bodice.

³⁰ An outer petticoat worn to protect the dress while riding.

At her Mother's house at Salford, six times within six weeks, Satan sought to torment her by not allowing her to eat or drink for divers days together. And if at the earnest request of her friends she did offer to drink, he would cast both her and the drink down together. And again at other times, she would eat up all, were it never so much, with such snatching and greediness like a hungry dog. All was fish that came to the net. She spared nothing, devouring all that came, and yet still crying that she had nothing. She thought she could have eaten up half a calf. And yet after that great abundance of meat and drink, her belly seemed as empty as at the first, so that they all wondered at that which she had eaten, and marvelled also which way it went.

Sometimes also, the spirit would appear to her in the likeness of a great black dog, with open mouth and the greatest chain that ever she saw, being very thick and long, drawing it after him, with which he crossed her, and took her legs from under her. She had little rest for the space of six weeks, either day or night. Yea, many times when the people stood round about her, she was taken suddenly, and violently cast headlong sometimes under the bed, sometimes under the covers. And sometimes she was thrown to the bars of the fire, and there she lay as if Satan meant to roast her. When she sat on a stool, he would suddenly throw her quite backwards, as if he meant to have broken her neck.

After this he appeared in the likeness of a big black cat with very fearful broad eyes, which came staring her in the face, running by her and around her. And throwing her down and leaving her senseless, he departed. And about half an hour after that fit, the spirit came like a big mouse leaping on her knee, and cast her down backwards as before. Her senses were taken from her, her eyes were closely shut up, her tongue was plucked double into her throat, her mouth was open, her jaws set, and all her whole body stretched out as stiff as iron. And thus she lay many times for the space of an hour as a spectacle very fearful to behold.

It was usual also, with the spirit, to come to her in the night in the likeness of a black man with half a face, which took her just as she was going to bed, and would be sure to throw her backwards. And she being recovered and

got into her bed, it would come and sit on the top of her head, holding its four fingers on her forehead very heavily. It held her very firmly so that she could not see nor stir. Yet for all that, her kerchief and headgear were pulled off. And though they had tied it up and bound it on very fast, yet suddenly in a moment he plucked all asunder. And her hair, that was so tightly tied up, was broken loose, and brought about her ears. And this was tested twice or thrice in a night. When they had done the best they could to keep it on yet, in the twinkling of an eye, it was all undone. He marred their work in that point, and they lost all their labour. And whenever he took his leave and departed, his manner was to give her a great thump on the back part of her head, insomuch that with those thumps she felt her head sore a good while after.

At another time, she learned three very excellent graces by the apparition and instruction of the spirit. She never could read, nor ever heard them before in all her life, as she protested. Yet she learned them suddenly, and she rehearsed all three very perfectly. And so it is like she can do till this day.

About the tenth of February and at some other times before, she felt, as she thought, some great thing roll up and down in her belly, like a calf. It pricked as if the head and nose thereof had been full of nails, as she thought, with which, being sorely pained, she was compelled to shriek. She was exceedingly swollen by it. And sometimes it pulled her as she thought in a hundred pieces. It made a loud noise in her belly, like that in the belly of a great trotting horse. It caused her to bark and howl. Then it would plump down into her body, like a cold whetstone on her left side, whereupon the rest of her body was benumbed with an extreme cold, wherewith she fell a quaking, her teeth also chattering in her head. And if then she offered to warm herself at the fire, she was presently thrown backwards. After these fits, her breath stank so ill that her neighbours came not near her for the space of a day and a night. Yea, it was so exceedingly offensive that, after the fit, she herself could perceive it, and could very hardly endure it.

Further to finish this particular, six several times in her fits at Cleworth, every time six spirits appeared to her, five of them very black, fouler than

blackamores,³¹ marvellously ugly to behold. These she felt shoving and thrusting great nails into her to torment her, as she thought, wringing and bending her, as if they would break her backbone. The other spirit was in her eyes, like a very fair little child, so fine and comely as ever might be seen. She said that it always sat next to her, and would say to her, 'Fear not, for you will have no harm.' And because it was so amiable, she was ever catching and desiring to take it, but her hand being stayed by some that stood by, immediately she was more sorely troubled, and fell a tossing and tumbling as at other times.

Ellen Holland and Ellinor Hurdman, the one being ten, the other twelve years of age, were both of them, by the malice of Satan kept fasting for the space of three days and three nights. For so long, they remained senseless, and did neither eat nor drink anything, wherein he laboured that they might both of them perish and pine away. And when the third night was come, Ellen Holland called for the hour glass. And she told them that she must now have a fit, and must not come out of it for the space of four hours. She then called for a distaff³² and a spindle, and bade them turn the glass, for she would spin an hour and a half of that time. And though she was but a child and, as it were, but beginning to learn to spin, yet she did it at that time so finely and with such expedition as was thought impossible for a very skilful woman to do the like, and stopped just at the end of the appointed time. And then she had most cruel and terrible fits, till the glass had run out the rest of the time, and reverted just at the four hours end, as before she had said. But what she had said or done in all this time, that she did not remember.

Likewise, Ellinor Hurdman told them that she must have a fit three hours long. She called for the hour glass, and bade them turn it and mark it well. Presently, with the turning of the glass, she fell into a trance, her eyes closely shut up, and her face turned quite from the glass, the other way. Notwithstanding, she measured the time most distinctly as the glass did run, dividing the hour into four quarters by very just and equal proportions.

³¹ Ethiopians.

³² A metre long cleft staff on which wool or flax was wound.

according as it was most duly observed. She reckoned it herself, and named every quarter as it had run out, saying thus, 'A quarter run,' 'Half hour run,' 'Three quarters run,' and the fourth time, 'Turn the glass,' even just when it had run out. And so did she the second time and missed not, and the third likewise till it was out. And then, just at the very time, she reverted and said, 'Jesus, bless me,' and so was restored for that time. Among all the strange things acted by them, there was none better marked than this. It was done in the day, in the presence of many witnesses. Master Starkie was himself the man that did chiefly observe it. And to the best estimate that he could give, the quarters were most equally divided and the proportion most just in the measure. They all marvelled greatly at this, and could not choose but impute this supernatural skill to the work of Satan, who as well by his strange and cunning suggestions, as by other enforced signs, does make it evident, that that working subject is in his power, and possession.

Furthermore John Starkie, Anne Starkie, Ellen Holland and Ellinor Hurdman, these four, had the use of their legs taken from them for the space of seven hours. And being so all that time, they went only on their hands and their knees, out of one chamber into another, and that as fast as if they had had the use of their feet. They could rest in no place, but went without ceasing all that while. They could leap up from the floor to the bed, and down from the bed to the floor, hopping so up and down, as lightly as frogs. And so they continued for the space of seven hours at the least.

This time being out, they were restored to the use of their legs. But yet they still remained both senseless and speechless. In this state, they all four went into the garden. And forthwith, every one of them gathered one leaf of every kind of herb that grew therein. From the greatest to the least, they missed not one, even to the very grass. This being done, they came again into the house. And then they went first into the hall, then into the parlour, and then into every chamber in the house, excepting one which was locked. And there in the windows of these several rooms, every one of them laid down one leaf, of the same kind of herb which they had gathered. For look, where any of them did lay down one, there all the rest would lay down another of the same sort, and no more, nor no other.

Now mark the strangeness of this act which, howsoever it seem in itself to be but a trifle, yet in the trial of it, it will prove a wonder if the circumstances be duly considered. For first, the herbs were many, seeing the garden is large. Secondly, the rooms were many, for it is a gentleman's house, and it is of good receipt. Thirdly, they were four, and they were but children, the eldest was not above twelve years old. And yet, that they should gather of every sort, one leaf only and no more. Fourthly, that the herbs being mingled altogether in their hands, yet that every one did most quickly and readily, without any searching at all, lay down the right herb, so that in every place there were ever four, just of one and the same kind. Lastly, and that which is the chiefest of all, that all this, as was duly observed, was done and dispatched within less than one hour, in so divers rooms and sundry places, yea, on the stairs and thresholds of these rooms, and in their own chamber where they lay themselves. Not only in every window, but against every staunch of the window were these herbs thus laid down in the manner aforesaid.

This was searched and found to be thus speedily and exactly done, as is said above. If it would have been performed by another four of good discretion, the circumstances considered, it would have been the work of a whole day, and yet not so excellently performed, as it was by these. When they did it, they were all out of their right minds, not knowing at all what they did, in so much that, when they came out of their trance, they marvelled where they had been. And they could not be persuaded that they had done this strange thing, though it was shown to them by plain demonstration.

These four also in another trance did dance as finely as if they had come out of the dancing school, one of the youngest playing with her mouth as cunningly for the present as if she had been a minstrel.

It was further observed that, in those times when they were so subject to have their fits very often and very thickly, and to be sorely vexed and tormented, yet for all that, if they went to cards or other games, they were not troubled at all during the whole time of their playing and gaming. And though they went away from home, being invited to a gentleman's house to hear a play, yet all that while they were not troubled nor one whit disquieted. But contrariwise, if either Scriptures were read or prayers used for them or

exhortations applied to them, then ordinarily they fell into their fits. And they were very fearfully tormented, so much so that for the space of two years or thereabouts, till they were delivered, they never came to the church for fear of only increasing their torments.

Moreover, the four youngest girls, being possessed with scorning spirits, in the day of their dispossession and in the time of the last sermon did show the same. For when the word was applied to them, showing what strange things Satan works in the children of disobedience, such as grinning and gnashing of teeth, staring with their eyes, making grimaces with their lips, thrusting out their tongues, and drawing their mouths awry very ugly, &c., as these particulars were named, one after another, so they all four did in action answer the word of God which was spoken. They showed such unseemly gestures, fearful looks, and ugly countenances in every particular, and in the very same instant and point of time when they were named. And though not one of them did see what another did, yet for all that they did jump so rightly in showing and setting out these unseemly signs, as that it could very hardly be discerned which of the four was first or last in performing of the same. Further, such was the great and extraordinary strength that were in these four in the time of their fits, that though some of them were but of the age of ten or eleven years, yet two or three strong men could hardly hold one of them.

And the two youngest and some of the rest, though they were unlearned and never went to school, yet in their fits they were able to make answer to Latin questions propounded to them so truly and readily, as if they had soundly understood them. And herein were they tested sundry times. And if now they should be examined therein, they can neither answer nor understand one word.

There be also many other very strange things, acted by every one of these in particular, which if they should be set down, every one, they would fill a large volume. For brevity's sake therefore, most things are omitted. And this also is most certain, that very many strange things, and as wonderful as any that here have been spoken of, were lost and let slip for want of care and good observation.

Now it is worthy to be marked that, though these possessed persons had every one some things peculiar to themselves which none of the rest did show, and that so rare and strange that all the people were forced to confess it was the work of an evil spirit within them, so had they also many things in common one with another, and were in their fits for the most part handled alike.

- (1) They had all and every one of them very strange visions and fearful apparitions, whereupon they would say, 'Look where Satan is. Look where Beelzebub is. Look where Lucifer is. Look where a great black dog is, with a firebrand in his mouth. See how Satan runs at me with a spear in his hand to stick me to the heart, but God will defend me.'
- (2) They had every one of them two spirits at the least, one to torment them inwardly, with all the torments of Hell, as it were, for the present, and either one or more to stand before their faces, most ugly and terrible to behold, to drive them into all fear and astonishment.
- (3) They heard very hideous and fearful voices of the spirits sundry times, and did make marvellous answers back again to them very directly and strangely.
- (4) They were in their fits ordinarily so held in that captivity and bondage that, for an hour, two, or three, and longer time, they would neither see nor hear nor taste nor feel anything but the devils, they employing them wholly for themselves, vexing and tormenting them so extremely, that for the present they could feel no other pain or torture that could be offered to them, no, not though you should pluck an ear from the head, or an arm from the body.
- (5) They, all of them, were taken suddenly with a very fearful shrieking and a marvellously strange howling and shouting, making a noise as it were to call on and to waken one another, so that the spirits, being raised up, might go to their work and proceed to torment their subjects according to their custom. When one began, they all followed after in order, observing time and tune, as if it had been the ringing of seven bells. And such was the strangeness of these

voices, that the uttering and framing of them exceeded all cunning invention or the skill of any counterfeit imitation. And the effect was also so fearful, that it was both terrible and troublesome to the whole country, and wrought a wonderful astonishment in all that heard it.

- (6) Further, they all of them had their bodies swollen to a wonderfully huge bigness, and almost incredible, if there had not been many eye-witnesses to it.
- (7) They had also a marvellously sore heaving and lifting, as if their hearts would burst, so that with violent straining of themselves, some of them vomited much blood many times.
- (8) They had their faces disfigured, and turned towards their backs, a fearful thrusting out of their tongues with a most ugly distorting of their mouths, being drawn up, as it were, to their ears.
- (9) They were all of them very fierce, offering violence both to themselves and others, wherein also they showed very great and extraordinary strength.
- (10) They blasphemed God and the Bible, they reviled the preachers, railed on such as feared God, scorned all holy prayers and wholesome exhortations, which being offered and applied to them, they became ever much worse.
- (11) For the most part, they delighted in filthy and unsavoury speeches, very agreeable to the nature of that unclean spirit which then dwelled within them, insomuch that, in the very sermon time when such unseemly behaviour was spoken against, the evil spirit wrought most maliciously and spitefully against the grace of God. And it forced one of them, though she was a maid, to utter openly in the hearing of the people such filthy uncleanness as is not to be named.
- (12) Most of them were both blind, deaf, and dumb for divers days together.
- (13) They were out of their right minds without the use of the senses. They were especially void of feelings, as much sense in a stock as in one of them. Or, in a way, it was as possible to bring a dead man back

to life as to alter or change them in their trances or fits, in anything that they either said or did.

- (14) They were kept fasting a long time. And divers of them, for the space of three days and three nights, did neither eat, nor drink anything, Satan intending thereby to procure their pining away.
- (15) In their fits, they had divers parts and members of their bodies so stiff and stretched out as were inflexible, or very hard to be bent.
- (16) They showed very great and extraordinary knowledge, as may appear by the strange things said and done by them, according to that which we have already set down in the particulars.
- (17) They all in the end of every fit always said thus, 'Jesus, bless me.' Yea, though they had forty or a hundred fits in one day, as it is certain some of them had, yet they never missed saying thus. But as sure as they had a fit, whether it were short or long, so sure it was that it would be ended with this prayer, 'Jesus bless me.' This was ever a sure sign that they were restored to the use of their senses for that time, which never failed.
- (18) After their fits, they were always as well as might be. And they felt very little or no hurt at all, although they had been ever so sorely tormented immediately before.

Now this harmony and consent in signs and actions, both for the matter and manner of strange handling of all these in their several fits, does make it evident that they were all really and corporally possessed.

Notwithstanding, that is true which is objected, namely, that sundry of these signs may be in one that is not possessed. For one may see very fearful sights and strange apparitions, and may be haunted with evil spirits and driven into great fears and frights, and yet not be possessed.

Another may be both lame and blind, and dumb and deaf.

The third may be very fierce, offering violence both to themselves, and others.

The fourth may gnash and foam and stare with his eyes, and fall down fearfully and suddenly, and lie as if he were dead.

And so it may be said of divers others, which may in many other ways be very strangely handled, and yet not one of them truly possessed.

The reason is because when sundry of these signs are severed from the rest, and go alone by themselves, or else are found but two or three, or some few together, then such signs may arise, as effects from some other working cause in the subject, or from the immediate hand of God, or some other way.

But when all these signs concur and meet together in one man, or the most of these, being joined with any one act above the power of nature, such as supernatural knowledge, and extraordinary strength, or any such impossible work, then, if it will be examined either according to the Scriptures or histories or reason itself, it will prove a very sound and corporal possession. And so by consequence, the great variety of strange signs and supernatural acts performed by these seven, and shown as well in every particular, as in those things which they had in common one with another, does easily conclude a very true and sound possession.

The third part

The third part of this discourse concerns our coming to Master Starkie's house and the occasion thereof, how we came to have to deal with these seven persons. Our entrance into, and our whole carriage in that action being truly set down, may serve to discharge us of those grievous slanders contained in the *Discovery*, charging on us both the names and practice of cousinsers, jugglers, exorcists, imposters, &c.

First then, the continuance of these troubles in Master Starkie's house, the remembrance of Doctor Dee's counsel to send for some preachers, the imprisoning of Edmond the witch in Lancaster Gaol, the hearing of the boy of Burton³³ who, being strangely afflicted, received help and deliverance by Master Darrell's advice. On these occasions, Master Starkie sent for Master Darrell three several times before he came. He always imparted the news to the brethren as it came to his hand, because he would attempt

³³ Thomas Darling.

nothing in those cases without very good consideration and lawful consent. In the end, it was concluded that he should go. And he thought fit that I also should go with him, as a companion on the journey and a witness to all his proceedings according to his own request.

This being done, Master Darrell wrote his letter to Master Starkie, in which he promised that, after some present and important business was dispatched, he would come and visit him, desiring likewise the assistance of some faithful ministers about Master Starkie, especially his pastor, to join with us.

Master Starkie read this letter in the presence of John Starkie, his son, and some others. After which time, he, the said John, had no fit at all till the day of our coming thither. The rest had some little fits, but not as grievous as before. In these fits, they would say to the spirit, 'You naughty lad, you make us sick, for you know the preachers will come shortly.'

So we, having prepared ourselves for this journey, went at the time appointed towards Lancashire, where we had never been in our lives before. And on Wednesday the sixteenth of March, about one o'clock, we came to Master Starkie's house at Cleworth. Hearing that we were come, Mistress Starkie with John Starkie her son and Anne her daughter, with some others of the family, came forth to meet us, and received us with great joy. And they brought us into the hall, where we found Master Starkie himself, being then ready to rise from dinner. After our welcome to him, he commanded the meat to be brought again. And he desired us to sit down at table, and so we did. Presently, after praising of God, we began to inquire of Master Starkie the state of his family, and asked him how they did. He answered that he thanked God that they were all much better than they had been. But John Starkie especially had been well for a fortnight together and not so much as once troubled. And Anne Starkie his daughter had been well divers days before our coming, without any fit at all. And the rest began to mend now since Edmond the witch was hanged. And both he and his wife did not doubt but that they would now do well. When we heard this, we suspected greatly Satan's lurking in them. And we desired to see those that were still troubled, which were particularly three who were all quiet in the kitchen. He called for them to come up into the hall. And so they came. First, the

eldest came near to the table and made a low curtsy. And presently, in a moment, she was thrown into a chair, about three yards distant from the place where she stood. There, she reared backward in the chair as though she had been asleep, her body stretched out to the furthest, and as stiff as iron. This being done, in comes the second, who did like the first, and was suddenly cast to a tableside, just opposite the other. Afterwards, comes in the last with both her hands close to her face. And she uttered these words, 'I am come to counsel before I am called.' And straightaway, while the word was in her mouth, she was thrown backward to the benchside, where she sat all aghast like the rest. Hereupon we arose from the table, being much amazed at the strangeness of the sight. And we went to look at them and see in what manner they were visited. And after we had viewed them well, within a quarter of an hour, they all stood up. And among many oddly pleasant though unusual speeches, one of these three spoke merrily thus about the hanging of Hartley the witch who was newly executed. 'Do they think that they could hang the Devil. I wish no. They might hang Edmond, but they could not hang the Devil, for they were two, Edmond and the Devil.'

And afterwards, they began to rail and revile and to strike with both hands and feet. And they could not be controlled till they were moved into an upper chamber. There they continued together, talking one to another, mocking and scorning such as held them down, or said, or did any good to them. And so they remained, deprived of the right to use their senses, both speaking and doing much evil, and yet utterly ignorant and senseless in all that passed from them. Thus they continued from that hour, being two o'clock on the Wednesday till six at night on Thursday, when it pleased God to deliver them and the rest.

Then we went into the garden and consulted with Master Starkie what was to be done. We agreed on this course, namely, to take in hand the exercise of fasting and prayer the next day, considering with ourselves where we might get some other godly preacher to join with us, to assist us in that work. We thought of divers. But in the end we made choice of one Master Dickoms, the minister at Leigh, which is the Parish Church of Master Starkie. Whereupon we sent for him.

In the meantime, we determined to prepare the whole family for the next day, to make them all as fit as we could for that holy work, and chiefly that they might be truly humbled and sanctified, that so we might with the more courage and comfort join with them the next day in fasting and prayer. But when some of the possessed were tested, they were found incapable of all good counsel and instruction, and yet had the ability and power to resist and scorn the same. After some half hour spent this way with some of them, the rest of the possessed had all come into the chamber. Margaret Byrom, whom Master Starkie had caused to be sent for, was newly come from Manchester, and Jane Ashton also, who before our coming was not much suspected. Yet she that day, in the morning, had her belly swelled as big as a woman with child. And straightway on our coming, she made a strange shrieking and howling, like the rest had. So Master Starkie, holding his son John, and Mistress Starkie holding her daughter Anna fast in their arms, Master Darrell began to exhort them. Presently John Starkie and Anne cried out mightily, with such outrageous roaring and bellowing that they could not for a long time be restrained. And John Starkie, being cast and held down on a bed, was most fearfully tormented, and as pained in his stomach and pulled in his belly, heaving and lifting, as if his heart would burst. Whereupon he shed many bitter tears. And so he continued, sometimes crying out exceedingly loudly in these tormenting fits to the great grief of the beholders. And while we laboured to comfort them by exhortations, we were scorned by the first three that lay by on beds in every good word that we spoke. And they would take it into their mouths, and mock it. When we called for the Bible, they fell to laughing at it, and said, 'Reach them the Bibble bable, bibble babbell.' It went so round in their mouths from one to another, and continued with many other scorning and filthy speeches that we could not stop. Thereupon we proposed to leave them for a while, again exhorting John Starkie to trust in the Lord, to be patient in that affliction, and to pray to God. And we desired him to say after us *The Lord's Prayer*. But he was the more tormented a great deal, and not a word could he speak. But that scorner that lay next him did say *The Lord's Prayer* after us, misnaming every word as far as we went in it. For when we perceived such horrible blasphemy, we dared not proceed.

But we gave up before we ever came to the end, being exceedingly grieved, that they had despised such holy things like dogs and swine, that would, if they could, have turned again and all to rent us. Whereupon we were forced to give place to the Devil, who indeed at this time bestirred himself. He worked mightily such torments and such troubles in all the possessed, with such outrageous spite and contempt, I am persuaded, the like of which was seldom or never seen. And all of this was intended to discourage us in that skirmish, to drive us out of the field and, if it were possible, not to dare to set on him any more.

The truth is, we were greatly discouraged at that time, not knowing well what to do. We left them so, having spent a good while with them. And we went into a garden to refresh ourselves. It grew towards suppertime. We were requested to come in and, being set at supper, Master Dickoms, whom we had sent for, came in. We told him what strange things had fallen out since our coming thither, and of our purpose to fast and pray with the family, if he would join with us. This thing he was very ready to do. And having decided also to prepare the family thereunto, we went about it. Having the whole family together, and divers honest neighbours for the holding and tending of the possessed, we made entrance into the preparation, which was by way of exhortation. We found them very loud, forward, and rough to deal with, to such an extent that we could hardly get an audience. But we perceived the great malice and spite of the Devil that wrought against us, labouring violently to trouble us that we might again give up the work as we had done before. We were provoked in this respect with great zeal to pray against him, and with all the desires of our souls to entreat the Lord to put the Devil to silence, and that he would charge and command the evil spirits to hold their peace so that we might both have good audience in praying and speaking the Word, and also perform all other duties profitably without hindrance. This came to pass accordingly. For we found the Lord near and ready to hear us. He presently showed his power in commanding Satan to silence and to be still. And they obeyed him, for there followed a great calm. So we went forward, performing that service which remained with much comfort. This preparation being finished, by this time it drew toward midnight. We all went to bed to take some rest, that being thereby

refreshed, we might be the better able to perform a greater service the next day. We had bound ourselves to this, being exceedingly encouraged to set on it with sure hope of the victory, in that the Lord had put the pawn and pledge of it into our hands overnight, giving us such plain experience both of his presence and of his power. By reason whereof, our faith gathered great strength that, seeing the Lord had blessed our endeavour thus far in the entrance and given us such good success in the preparation, he would not fail to be present with us in the battle itself, to show his power and to work with us till we had trodden Satan under our feet. Therefore, when the morning came, we prepared ourselves in the best way that we could, that that holy exercise of fasting and prayer might be performed both by ourselves and all that should join with us therein, with most fruit, that we might attain to the mark that we set before us, namely, the confounding of Satan and the full deliverance of the possessed. There was also great preparation in the family to set all things in good order, that we might not be troubled in the work. And having a fair large parlour already trimmed, they brought in thither certain beds or couches, on which they laid the seven sick possessed persons. All this while, the honest neighbours nearby coming in, the room filled apace, some holding and tending the sick possessed, and some sitting by. It was now about seven o'clock, and all things were made ready. The parties were still being troubled. Their torments were still increasing and their fits doubling on them. Sometimes, they were either howling or crying, or else lifting, heaving, or vomiting, or else scorning or railing, or cast into a trance which was always at the end of their fits, being like a time to catch their breaths, and then to it again. The sight and hearing of these things was so wonderful that a man cannot possibly come near to describing it. Nor was there ever such a thing seen in our days nor in the days of our fathers, such a number in one place lying in such a fearful manner, so miserably vexed by the Devil. We could not choose but be exceedingly affected with great sorrow and grief in compassion for their miseries, which provoked us to offer up our prayers with strong crying and tears to God who was able to hear and to save us from that which we feared.

With such reverence as was meet, we then began the exercise of humbling our souls to God, in the mediation of Jesus Christ. And by the direction of the Holy Ghost, we proceeded in the work till it was finished. In this proceeding, it is fit to observe divers strange events which happened. For the possessed, being of divers kinds, we had more ado with them. For four of them were possessed with scorning spirits and quite bereft of the right use of their senses. We were much more troubled with them than with the other three who were ever very sober, though they were very sore tormented. And yet through the great mercy of God, after we had made a beginning, God bridled the rage of Satan and so restrained his fury, that after he had made his flourish in the beginning and showed his power, as then he will do the worst he can, it pleased God, as before in our preparation overnight, so in the exercise itself where many were assembled together, to make them all quiet and to keep them all in order. Thus, from seven o'clock in the morning till three o'clock in the afternoon, we went forward without any great interruption save that, now and then, some of them had some sudden fit for the space of half a quarter of an hour which, being ended, we went on. We still perceived the Lord working with us, giving us oftentimes sundry signs of the victory, whereby we were much encouraged. For in the first sermon, whilst Master Dickoms was preaching, Margaret Hardman, who was the principal and chief of the scorers, was plainly heard, both by some of the preachers and of the people, to use these words oftentimes, 'I must be gone, I must be gone, whither will I go? Whither will I go? I will not die, I will not die,' repeating over again and again the same thing, half a dozen times at the least, in a fine low voice and in the tune of singing.

After this, there appeared no great distraction till three o'clock in the afternoon. And toward the end of my sermon, as the Discoverer has revealed, the above named Margaret Hardman was heard again to utter these words, 'I cannot tarry, I cannot tarry, I am too hot, I am too hot, let me go, let me go.' These words gave us this comfort, that Satan would not long keep his hold. For he was so heated by fasting and prayer, and by the word of God so zealously and powerfully applied, as if fire were put into his hole to burn him out. For hereupon, before the sermon was or could be ended,

she with all the rest broke out into exceedingly loud cries, all seven roaring and bellowing in such extreme and fearful manner that they troubled us all, being so violent and outrageous that they had much ado to be held. For Satan then being ready to depart, did first vex all the veins of their hearts and did so torment them, that they were forced to lay about them with both hands and feet, to pull their hair and to rent their clothes, to knock their heads and to strike themselves, crying out with open mouths and roaring as if they were mad.

Then was there such struggling and striving between us and those seven devils, crying out so loudly with such violence and extension of voice, labouring who should be loudest, till our voices were spent and no strength almost left in us. This battle continued very nearly the space of two hours, till we were exceedingly weakened with long and loud crying up to Heaven. But it pleased God to weaken Satan's power much more, and to tread the evil Spirits under our feet. And thus much may serve to show, what beginning we made in this work, and how we proceeded therein, and that our whole course and carriage held in this cause thus far may clear us, that we neither sought work nor set ourselves to work, though we be charged so to do by this *Discovery*, as may appear by the scope of the whole last chapter of the first book. Neither in dealing with these strange afflictions, have we used either delusions, jug-

glings, exorcisms, or any such vain
and ridiculous fooleries as they have
detected in the popish priests, nor
yet any such lightness as should
be condemned by men that
meddle with matters
of such moment.

The fourth part

Now, it follows in the fourth place, to describe briefly the means and manner of the dispossession of these seven persons, so that it may appear that Master

Darrell was neither the only, nor yet the principal agent therein, contrary to that which the Discoverer falsely reports of him, chapter 1, page 2, namely, that though he had gloried in two exploits, yet his name was not so famous till he had dispossessed seven persons in Master Starkie's house at one clap. And for proof hereof, they allege the story of the boy of Burton, in the end of which book it is thus written, viz., 'Shortly you will have the true story come forth of those seven in Lancashire, that were possessed with unclean spirits, and all seven delivered at one time by this man.'³⁴ And the more to confirm this, they allege Master Darrell's own testimony in his answer to the six articles of his examination, quoted in the margin, thereupon inferring thus, 'By this man,' meaning Master Darrell, 'as he himself has confessed.' I will therefore first set down the truth concerning their deliverance, and prove after that Master Darrell is made the principal in this action by this Discoverer, but only under a pretence, and for a further stratagem.

For the truth, first, you have heard already, that we were three preachers that exercised that day, of whom I was the last. And indeed in the latter end of my sermon, as the Discoverer has revealed, they grew to be so strong that they could very hardly be held down on their beds, though they had lain before reasonably quiet.

But chiefly one of them, namely Jane Ashton, being both the strongest and worst of all the rest, was also more violently vexed, having her fits so sorely and so thickly, that we feared she would either have fainted and fallen down, or else have yielded to Satan, who laboured mightily to make her workable to his purpose. Whereupon Master Darrell and Master Dickoms, the other preacher that joined with us, being much affected with her misery as by force of her fits, had her forcibly carried aside from the rest. They both attended on her, striving with all their power to uphold and strengthen her.

In the meantime, the other six, being sorely tormented and struggling with those that minded them, were got from them and were tumbled from their pallets to the floor and near to the fire side where, by the good providence of

³⁴ See above, p. 191.

God, I was brought, even into the midst of them. And there, being assisted with the prayers of their parents and the people, we earnestly entreated the Lord for them, with strong and mighty cries. And it pleased God to hear us at that instant. For those six were all suddenly strangely and fearfully cast down before us, where they lay all six alongside one another altogether senseless, their bodies stiff and stretched out, as if they had been stark dead, for the space of half a quarter of an hour.

In this time, Master Dickoms came to me. And he saw all of them laid as dead, and how they rose up again one after another in order as they fell, acknowledging that they were freed from the evil spirit, and that he was departed from them.

Whereupon every one, on their own, with great joy and gladness of heart, gave thanks to God for that benefit.

All this while, Master Darrell was with the other maid, standing at a great window in another part of the parlour, which was both long and large, so that he neither saw nor heard of the deliverance of these six. He neither knew when they were cast down, nor when they rose up, nor once suspected any such thing until such time as they, being perfectly restored, stood on their feet, leaping and dancing and praising God. We also were all filled with exceeding joy, which was testified by shouting and clapping of hands, so that the earth rang with the praises of God, and the whole house was filled with the sound thereof.

Now the diligent observing of the state and condition of these six persons in one hour: what violent passions and extreme outrage they were in for the beginning of the hour, driven and drawn to cry and roar with all madness and fury, and to do they knew not what; and then, secondly, in the last part of the hour, to be quite changed into another condition, carried as it were with all force and violence into other contrary extremities of unspeakable and excessive joys the best way, to be so suddenly brought from the bondage and torture of Satan into the glorious liberty of the sons and daughters of God. By these signs and sudden change, it is most evident that the first state is so manifest the work of Satan, and the second so cleared to be the work of God, that it cannot possibly be the work of flesh and blood, neither could it be counterfeited by any man. For I am persuaded that if six of the

most cunning wits that be in the world would join their heads together to make another such work, yet they could not deceive the senses of such men as had seen by experience, and had made some trial of these strange and great works. For they could quickly discern their close juggling and crafty conveyance to be but delusions and hypocrisy, and so would their wickedness be manifested to all men.

By this it may appear that Master Darrell was not the principal or chief actor in their dispossession. Nor can he indeed be so accounted, seeing that at the very time while we were crying to the Lord for these six, he was separated to another work and busily employed another way, namely, instructing, comforting and strengthening the maid, who remained all this while miserably vexed by the Devil.

Whereupon, at our being there, he complained to me concerning the dispossession of these six and told me that he saw never a one of them when they were delivered which, he said, grieved him exceedingly.

After this also, I confess that to be true which the Discoverer has disclosed book 1, chapter 10, page 56, namely, that I took all these six to me and exhorted them to continue in the fear of God, telling them that Satan would seek to enter into them again. I admonished them to resist him by faith and prayer, and by putting on all the whole armour of God, encouraging them by all means to stand fast, saying thus to them, 'If you do manfully resist, no doubt but you shall see that Satan will fly, not being able to do you any harm.'

And as they regarded well this counsel, so it pleased God to bless it accordingly. For he gave them such strength and courage, though five of them were but children, that they did most strongly resist him, so that though his assaults were usually very fierce and importunate for the present, yet could he not prevail with the least to yield to him. And so hitherto they have all six been preserved both safe and sound, without any further molestation, to the great praise and glory of God.

Now while I was thus employed about those six, Master Darrell took great pains with the maid, hoping still that she would have been dispossessed that night also. But it came not so to pass. Whereupon, through the deceitfulness of Satan who had drawn her to dissemble and brought her

to an impudent outfacing of the truth, we were driven to give up for that time, intending in the morning to renew the exercise of fasting and prayer on the behalf of that maid only. When we had entered into this, she was more sorely vexed and tormented than ever she was before till it was about noon or one o'clock. About this time, she also, through the great mercy of God, received help and deliverance.

For when we had all three in order performed this duty of prayer, she having wrought us all one after another till we were weary, when it came to my turn the last time, having continued sometime, I desired another to take my place. When the maid heard this, she suddenly caught me by the hand, held me fast, and said to me, 'No, for God's sake, do not leave me yet. Stick to it a little longer, and you will see that he will depart shortly.'

Hereupon, receiving this good encouragement, I continued still. And with the joint assistance of the rest, we earnestly entreated the Lord for her. So it was not long before she was cast into a trance, lying as if she had been fast asleep. Anon, she burst out into weeping so that the tears trickled down her cheeks apace in a very extraordinary manner. After this, she presently rose up, and thanked God that the evil spirit was departed from her.

She also, being violently assaulted by the Devil, resisted manfully as the rest did, and likewise prevailed, and so was by the mercy of God preserved during all the time she was in her Mistress's house. But afterward she departed thence. And she dwelt with her uncle, a Papist, in the furthest part of Lancashire, where there resorted to her certain seminary priests, by whose conjurations and magical enchantments, as it is reported, the evil spirit was brought into her again. Since this time, she has been exceedingly tormented, and so, like Sommers, continues still repossessed.

As therefore the good providence of God may be discerned in the disposing of all things, so also it shows itself most clearly in the well ordering of this whole action, if it be well observed: First, in sending me with Master Darrell to be a witness of those strange and unwonted works of God; secondly, in not using Master Darrell as the chief instrument, neither for the dispossessing of the six the first day, nor yet for the deliverance of the seventh on the second day; thirdly, in that without his labor they were

prepared by faith and prayer and other spiritual armour to resist the evil spirit, by means whereof they were preserved from re-possession.

For if Master Darrell had been the most chief in dispossessing of these seven and of Thomas Darling, as he was of other two, namely Katherine Wright and of William Sommers, then surely it would have been thought that he had had some special gift that way above other men, and this Discoverer might have had the greater show of advantage in charging him so deeply and so often with that matter.

For which cause, without question, it pleased God to prevent him in these seven. And as for Thomas Darling, Master Darrell only gave advice to his friends to fast and pray, and humble themselves on his behalf, and so they did. Neither he nor any other preacher being present, it pleased God at their prayers, being but nine or ten simple people to be entreated, and to deliver the party from that possession. The result was that, by divers and sundry experiments, it might appear to all the world that this is no extraordinary gift peculiar to any one man, but common to all the faithful as well to one as to another. And the mean and simple people have as great privilege and power to cast out Satan by their faith and fasting and fervent prayer, as either he, or I, or the best and chiefest preacher.

Out of the premises then, it may be inferred that, if there be any evil in this work, it is rather to be imputed to me than to Master Darrell. For in truth, as the Lord lives, there is no occasion of evil in him concerning this matter. For if he had wrought craftily at other times and practised deceit, why would it not have appeared and broken out as well in dealing with these seven as in other places? But I am persuaded, such is his simplicity, that he is as clear and was ever as free from counterfeiting as I myself am. And I dare boldly protest, even before the Lord, that such a thought came never once into my mind.

Now howsoever it might seem more expedient for me to be silent in these things least I should seem or be taken even as a fool in boasting myself, yet herein I may say with the apostle, you have even compelled me.³⁵ For indeed, so great is the inconvenience that has come by the misconceiving

³⁵ 2 Corinthians 12.11.

and misreporting of this matter of fact, that it has enforced a necessity of manifesting the truth thereof in the plainest manner which yet hitherto, for modesty's sake, has been suppressed for the space of three years, and likely never to have come to light, if our innocence could have been cleared without it.

But now I must return to the Discoverer and proceed to perform my promise, which is, to prove that the purpose of the detector, to make Master Darrell the principal agent in this dispossession, is only under a pretence and not that he is so persuaded. My reasons are these. First, to pretend Master Darrell to be principal in this as well as in all the rest is great policy. For under this pretence, all that they charge him with concerning teaching of Sommers has the greater colour of truth. Secondly, by enforcing this, as they do much in their book, it does more easily persuade men to believe that he is a very common and lewd practicer and deceiver. Thirdly, by this title of principal and in all places where he comes to be the chiefest, it presupposes an extraordinary juggling skill, and a singular cunning in legerdemain, as they term it. Whereupon they say that when he began with Katherine Wright, then he dealt but rudely and unskillfully, but after he had practised with Thomas Darling and the seven of Lancashire, then he was his craft's master. Fourthly, it helps to justify that accusation of vain glory, and that he desires to have a great name and to make himself famous, or else that he is the only man that has a peculiar prerogative to cast out devils above all men, seeing that wheresoever he comes, he bears away the bell, as they say, and that no body can do the feat but he. Fifthly, under this pretence, they may with less prejudice proceed against him, seeing that in four several actions, though they find some accessories, yet they find none principal but himself. And thus policy has preferred him to be principal, when indeed they know he is not, so of purpose to do him a mischief, and to dishonour the cause itself, even the great work of God.

And that they are not persuaded that he is the principal in this work, it may thus appear: Because they have the story of this matter of Lancashire penned by Master Dickoms, as is plainly confessed and proved in the *Discovery*, wherein the dispossession of these seven is most plainly described with the circumstances thereof, according to that which I have here set down.

And therein, Master Darrell, except that he was the man that was sent for to come, and principally aimed at, is made equal. Concerning this book, I speak that which I know, for I was examined in that whole story out of it, from the beginning to the end. And yet the Discoverer will take no knowledge of this matter which is written there, though it be most sure and certain, because it makes against him, and takes the rash testimony of the printer, which spoke only as he heard that Master Darrell was the man. And as for Master Darrell himself in his testimony, it was either mistaken or misreported. For I dare say that he would not say that those seven were delivered or dispossessed by him principally. Yet the *Discovery* urges both these testimonies to the full, because they seem much to make for him in all the former respects.

If then, this may be received for the truth, as indeed it is, I doubt not but that all suspicion of counterfeiting and conjuring, and of all other bad dealing wherewith we have been most unjustly charged, may be removed, as may also that gross error, which is too, too common, of ascribing any gift or extraordinary power of casting out devils to any one man more than to another, be both vanquished and suppressed. For herein all men may most clearly see that the good hand of God, in blessing his own ordinance, and the poor endeavours of his servants, is the only inward and efficient cause of this great work of dispossession, that so all the glory there-

of may wholly and only be ascribed
to him who works all
things, according to the
pleasure of his own will,
to whom be praise
for ever.

The last part

Now it follows, last of all, to set down the signs of dispossession shown forth by these seven immediately before their deliverance, in, and after the same. And therewith also briefly to show the return of the spirits being cast

out, how sundry times and divers ways, by many strange and fearful assaults, they seek to re-enter. This also may serve as an answer to that proof of the *Discovery* contained in the ninth and tenth chapters touching those points, so that these signs being conferred according to divine and historical observation, those that be indifferently minded may be able to judge what cause they have to scorn these signs, and to sport themselves with them as they do.

The first sign to manifest these dispossessed was that the spirits did rent and tear the possessed, insomuch that they were more sorely vexed and tormented immediately before they left them, and even as it were at their departure, than ever they were at any time before. So it is said, when Christ charged the spirit to come out of the child, then the spirit rent him sorely, and afterwards came out, Mark 9.26.

The second sign is that they cried out with loud voices, and roared out exceedingly after the manner of beasts, most fearful and lamentable to hear, being never so fierce and outrageous in any of their fits, as even then when the spirits were forced and compelled to come out of them. And of this sign it is thus written, that unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed, Acts 8.7.

Thirdly, they were cast down suddenly and lay all along stretched out as if they had been dead. And so leaving them as dead, the evil spirits departed from them. And thus it is written of the child whom Christ dispossessed, when the unclean spirit came out, he was as one dead, insomuch that many said, 'he is dead,' Mark 9.26.

Fourthly, the evil spirits departed out of the possessed in the likeness of some ugly creature. And every one of the seven saw and perceived the spirits to depart out in a several likeness. One was in the likeness of a crow's head, round, which when it was out, went and sat in a corner of the parlour, with darkness about it a while. Then it went out of the window with such a flash of lightning that all the parlour seemed to her to be alight with fire. It left also behind it in the maid a sore throat, and a most filthy smell, insomuch that her meat was very unsavoury for a week after.³⁶

³⁶ [Margaret Byrom].

Another said that it went out like a man with a great hunch on his back, as big as a man, very evil favoured and ugly to behold.³⁷

The third saw him go out like an urchin or hedgehog. And he crept out, as she thought, at a very little hole of the window.³⁸

The fourth, like a foul ugly man with a white beard and a great bulge on his breast, bigger than a man's head.³⁹

The fifth, like a black man, or like the fourth as aforesaid.⁴⁰

The sixth perceived it to go out in the likeness of a great breath, ugly like a toad, and round like a ball.⁴¹

The last, like an ugly man with a great hunch on his back, &c.⁴²

Fifthly, the evil spirits did presently return to them again in the same likeness that they went out, and sought to re-enter. And being resisted, they departed. And then they returned after in other likenesses seeking still, both by promises and threatenings, to prevail. Sometimes the spirit in the likeness of a man proffering bags of gold and silver, and showing them all manner of costly and sumptuous things, tempting them thereby to yield to him, and to let him in, enforcing his temptations by promising of honours and pleasures, and great preferments. Of the return of the spirit when he is cast out, and his seeking to re-enter, we read in Matthew 12, Luke 11.⁴³ And for his diversity of temptations and large offers to prevail, it is evident in his dealing against Christ, Matthew 4. In these assaults to re-enter, the spirits appeared sometimes in the likeness of a bear with open mouth, sometimes of an ape, sometimes of a big black dog, sometimes of a black raven with a yellow bill, sometimes of a flame of fire, sometimes of divers whelps. But most usually they appeared in the likeness of Edmond Hartley, a conjurer who had bewitched them, and was also hanged at Lancaster for that fact, and for conjuring. In these apparitions, if he could not prevail with his large offers and fair promises, then he would terrify them with very fearful threatenings, that he would cast them into pits, or break their necks, or some other way to plague them, saying that they would never prosper.

³⁷ [John Starkie].

³⁸ [Ellinor Hurdman].

³⁹ [Anne Starkie].

⁴⁰ [Ellen Holland].

⁴¹ [Jane Ashton].

⁴² [Margaret Hurdman].

⁴³ Mt.12.43-5; Lk.11.24-6.

Whereupon, when he saw that, in assaulting of them, he lost all his labour and prevailed not, he laboured at the length to be revenged of them for resisting of him. To which purpose, he did trouble them in all the parts of their bodies, in their eyes, with many uncomfortable sights, to terrify them. He tied their tongues that they could not pray, nor speak as they should. He pinched them in their arms, so that they could not lift them up, nor stir them for a good time. He pricked them in their knees and in their legs so that they could not walk, or yet if they did walk, that then they went lame and limping for an hour or two together, and could not possibly go upright. They had pain also in their feet and in their head. Thus they were molested. But still they so resisted that they gave him the foil, so that in the end he was forced to leave them and to flee away.

Sixthly, they being all dispossessed by fasting and prayer according to the ordinance of Christ, since that time all their swellings and torments have ceased, neither have they been troubled nor vexed with any more fits. Only Jane Ashton, repossessed, has manifested the same by sundry fearful signs, and is now become worse in every way than she was. But as for the rest, they have continued now for the space of two years and a half very peaceably and quietly. Nor have they shown forth any sign of possession, nor any suspicion thereof.

Lastly, they all gave great thanks to God for their deliverance, and that of themselves so freely and cheerfully in so excellent and heavenly a manner, so that they could never do the like, neither before, nor since. They are also so changed in their conditions, and their manners so well reformed, that a man will hear no evil come from them, nor any unseemly behaviour. And now they can pray and take delight in praising God. They go to church to hear the word, and continue there with much comfort, and are every way better than they were before.

And thus I have finished this discourse, wherein I have dealt faithfully to my power, and whereby I have detected this Discoverer to be a great deceiver, like a traveller that takes on him to discover divers countries wherein he never came, and to describe the state and people of certain new found lands, the situation whereof he never knew nor heard of, only a mere

fiction of his own invention. Thus has this detractor dealt with us, and with this most honourable and famous fact of Lancashire, in describing it to be a vain and ridiculous practice, detecting therein great deceit and much legerdemain. And yet for all that, he never saw the practice of it with his eyes, neither did he ever hear any evil detected or deceit used therein. This work was never yet called in question nor ever examined by way of trial, as is plainly confessed in the *Discovery*. And hitherto, there has not been found any one witness to bring in any evidence to prove it counterfeit, nor any Christian ever yet heard to open his mouth to speak any evil against it.

The reader therefore may much wonder at the intolerable boldness of this malicious accuser, that dares undertake to discover men and their dealings, especially preachers of the Gospel, to be lewd cousiners and most notorious deceivers, and yet never saw nor knew any evil by them, or any sure and certain signs of any suspicion thereof. And may also see how injurious they are to this unblameable work that, in an insatiable desire to discredit it, they have cast an evil name on it, defaming it for a fraudulent practice, though it was never tried nor yet ever detected to have deceit or bad dealing in it by any in the world besides themselves. These men, yet being mere strangers to the cause, will needs condemn it before they hear it, and punish the parties that have practiced in it, as most impious, before they know what evil they have done. And now, having thus wronged us, being just men, yea, both robbed and wounded us as I may say, we must be bound to the peace, and must promise neither to publish nor practice these matters, or else remain prisoners still, with expectation of further

punishment, which we are willing to
endure, seeing we cannot choose
but speak those things,
which we have both
heard and seen.

This discourse, good reader, was dispatched in December last. The difficulty of printing has hindered the publishing of it thus long.

The counterfeit demoniac
The story of William Sommers

When *A brief Narration* was published in 1598, the exorcist John Darrell and his colleague George More had been convicted of counterfeiting, were 'deposed from the Ministry, and committed to close prison', awaiting sentencing.¹ George More was to die in prison. John Darrell was out of prison but in hiding some two years after. Darrell had been convicted, upon the word of William Sommers, that he had taught Sommers how to counterfeit possession when Sommers was a young man of around nineteen or twenty years of age.

A brief Narration is the first of thirteen works, the publication of which was motivated by the case of Sommers and the trial of Darrell.² It begins with an editorial introduction by a George Cole, written after the trial of Darrell. A narrative account of the possession of William Sommers is followed by a series of arguments for the genuine possession of Sommers against reasons to the contrary which were written between the Archbishop of York's Commission in March 1598 and Darrell's trial in June of that year.³ These two sections may have originally come from the pen of John Darrell in prison. The text concludes with a number of depositions given at the York Commission by witnesses to Sommers' behaviour as a demoniac.

Because of the large number of texts around the story of William Sommers, and the controversy surrounding the case, it is difficult to construct the story. But the broad outline in *A brief Narration* is consistent with other accounts. In early October 1597, William Sommers, apprenticed to a musician in Nottingham, began to throw fits which suggested he was possessed. Darrell, already widely known for his treatment of the possessed, was sent for, and finally persuaded to come to dispossess the boy. He arrived on 5 November, and set 7 November as the day for prayer and fasting. Sommers was dispossessed after the prayers of Darrell and 150 others upon this day.

¹ Harsnett, 1599, pp. 8–9. ² See Rickert, 1962, pp. 64–7.

³ Walker, 1981, p. 64 lists the trial incorrectly as occurring in 1599.

His success led to his first permanent appointment as a preacher at St Mary's in Nottingham.

There were sufficient sceptics within the town for Darrell to have to defend the authenticity of Sommers' possession. Darrell preached vehemently against those who doubted that, granting his continuing recovery, he had ever been possessed. Darrell was persuaded that 'Satan would not give him over, until in the end he had repossessed him.'⁴ Mr Aldridge, the vicar of the church, reported that the people became offended 'with the hearing of, nothing in his sermons, but of the Devil.'⁵

It had become important to Darrell's credibility that Sommers should be repossessed. And Sommers was to oblige before the end of November. So convinced was Darrell of the genuineness of Sommers that he was hopeful of ridding England of all its witches. Around 22 or 23 November, Sommers again obliged by naming thirteen. All were arrested but all, except for two, were discharged. One of these was Doll or Alice Freeman, cousin to a Mr Freeman, who was an Alderman of Nottingham.⁶ She had also been named as a witch by Mary Cooper, Sommers' sister, who had also become possessed. Alice was eventually acquitted in April 1598. But in the meantime, Freeman attacked Sommers, accusing him of having bewitched to death a certain Sterland of Swenton.⁷ In January 1598, Sommers was committed to prison. He was soon released on bail, but confined in an institution, St John's, in the care of John Cooper and Nicholas Shepherd.⁸ Then began the long series of possessions, confessions of counterfeiting, and re-possession which were to characterise Sommers' career as a demonic from this point.

Crucial to the defense of Sommers' authenticity and Darrell's credibility was the claim that Sommers' confessions of fraud were made under physical duress, and more importantly, under demonic persuasion: 'Sommers was committed to prison, where the Devil appeared to him in likeness of a mouse, threatening that if he would not let him re-enter, and would not say that all he had done touching his tormenting during his possession was but counterfeit, then he would be hanged. But if he would yield to him, he would save him.'⁹ Thus, it could be argued by those who believed Sommers was genuinely possessed that his confessions and his simulations of possession were themselves an aspect of his possession. To his detractors, his confessions and his ability to simulate his fits became the crucial evidence in constructing all of his behaviour as fraudulent. Nottingham was divided

⁴ Harsnett, 1599, p. 145. ⁵ Harsnett, 1599, p. 146.

⁶ See anon., 1598, sig.B.1.r (see below, p. 250). ⁷ See Harsnett, 1599, p. 149.

⁸ See anon., 1598, sig.E.2.r (see below, pp. 282–3). ⁹ Anon., 1598, sig.B.1.r (see below, p. 250).

into factions: 'The parties taking on both sides began to be extraordinarily divided, one railing on another, at their meeting in the streets . . . The pulpits also rang of nothing but devils and witches, with which men, women, and children were so frightened, as many dared not stir in the night.'¹⁰

A commission of twelve men was established by the Archbishop of York in March 1598 to investigate. The depositions contained in *A brief Narration* were taken at this time. Sommers was called before the Commission and confessed that he was a counterfeit. He then proceeded to act so convincingly as a demoniac that the Commission concluded he was genuinely possessed.¹¹ Sommers rejected his former confession: 'being come to himself, he did confess his possession and gave himself body and soul to the Devil, if he did counterfeit'.¹² Dissatisfied with the outcome of the York Commission, the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, summoned Darrell to London to be examined by the Commissioners for Ecclesiastical Causes, and there imprisoned him, along with George More.

A brief Narration tells us that Sommers accused Darrell, not only of having conspired with him in Nottingham, but of having trained him as a counterfeit demoniac as early as 1592 in Ashby, all of which Darrell denied.¹³ It does not tell us that Katherine Wright and Thomas Darling were also summoned as witnesses, confessed to fraud, and to having been trained by Darrell in simulating possession. But it does make the point that a man whose character had never before been questioned was condemned by the word of a young man about whose integrity there was serious doubt: 'but Sommers' bare word, now grown to be a man of great credit, though he had confessed himself heretofore to have been a counterfeit, was better believed than Master Darrell, a godly and faithful man of honest conversation, long approved by the best Christians and ministers where he lived'.¹⁴

There can be little doubt that, even by Elizabethan standards, Darrell was treated unfairly, not least in not being allowed to present a defence, to have the Nottingham depositions included, nor to have Sommers simulate some of the more extraordinary features of his demoniacal behaviour mentioned in the depositions – particularly the rare though not unique feature of the running lump. On the other hand, Darrell's sincerity verged on gullibility. Sommers was given ample opportunity to 'pick up' demoniacal behaviour from Darrell's public utterances. On the night of his arrival in Nottingham, for example, Samuel Harsnett informs us, Darrell spoke publicly in the presence of Sommers of possession in the Scriptures, of the

¹⁰ Harsnett, 1599, p. 8. ¹¹ See anon., 1598, sig.B.1.v (see below, p. 251).

¹² Anon., 1598, sig.B.1.v (see below, pp. 251–2).

¹³ See anon., 1598, sig.B.2.f (see below, p. 252).

¹⁴ Anon., 1598, sig.B.2.f (see below, p. 252).

cases of Katherine Wright, Robert Darling, and the Lancashire Seven.¹⁵ And Sommers had read an account of the Throckmorton children.

John Darrell was no doubt a victim of the anti-Puritan campaign of the Bishop of London, Richard Bancroft, and his secretary Samuel Harsnett. And *A brief Narration* was driven by the need to defend the cause of what it saw as the godly John Darrell and his simple Puritan ways against the ungodly and worldly representatives of the ecclesiastical establishment. No irony was intended in citing Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians in defence of Darrell to conclude the arguments in favour of the authenticity of Sommers' possession: 'God has chosen the foolish things of the world, "to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty"'.¹⁶

The possibility that William Sommers was neither possessed nor simulating possession, but was (at least on some occasions) 'genuinely' a demoniac was never canvassed. By the time *A brief Narration* and other later works were published, the issue had become too politicised for that possibility to be introduced. As a sincere but deluded demoniac, Sommers would not have served the cause of the supporters of Darrell. They required a genuine possession and dispossession. And only a fraudulent, and not an innocent and deluded Sommers could enable Darrell's opponents to find him party to a fraud. It was Darrell's integrity that had to be questioned, not his naivety. As for William Sommers, after the trial of John Darrell, he disappears from historical view, and his character then, as now, remains a puzzle.

¹⁵ See Harsnett, 1599, p. 113.

¹⁶ Anon., 1598, sig.c.2.r (see below, p. 263).

A Brief Narration of the possession, dispossession, and repossession of William Sommers: and of some proceedings against Mr John Darrell preacher, with answers to such objections as are made to probe the pretended counterfeiting of the said Sommers.

Together with certain depositions taken at Nottingham concerning the said matter.

Anno MDXCVIII

You will here receive, gentle reader, a short narration of a large matter, together with certain depositions taken at Nottingham, tending to the manifestation of a marvellous work of God lately shown among us. It is written, as it seems, by some friend of this cause and of the witnesses thereof to stay, if it may be, the malice of some and rashness of others, who will not be reclaimed from impugning or basely esteeming of this glorious work, a greater than which has scarcely been heard of, saving performed in like cases, either in our days or in the days of our forefathers for many years. If it were particularly and fully discovered, as we wish it might be, how strangely this William Sommers came to be possessed by means of a witch in Worcestershire, who sent a wicked spirit into him which he called Lucy, how he was tormented during his possession, how the foul spirit raged and the Lord Jesus prevailed at his dispossession, how he was subtly tempted, and again repossessed, and how extraordinarily he has carried himself since his dispossession; and if it were particularly and fully discovered how the Devil has busied himself against the servant of Christ Jesus who was the chief means of the dispossession, and how some persons truly otherwise fearing God have been incredulous, some on one fancy and some on another, speaking Jeremiah 23.16 by vision out of their own heart and not from the Lord's mouth or, although

some persons gave credit to his work, the witnesses thereof have not taken it to heart much less vouchsafed to visit, comfort, and relieve them,¹⁷ or to use some lawful means and mediation to our godly Magistrates, as they should, on the behalf of the men of God their brethren whom God has honoured to suffer for the testimony of this his holy truth. If, I say, all these things were fully discovered and well weighed, doubtless a man must needs be astonished and expect a rarer event of these things than can be yet conceived. A man must needs be equally astonished by the way the Providence of our merciful and heavenly Father is to be wisely observed and with great humility to be revered, that he has allowed this matter to be called in question, and for so long time to be ventilated and scrutinized as it has been. Doubtless, as we have experience of our dullness in apprehending and profitably meditating on other marvellous acts of the Lord daily shown before our eyes, so if this work had not been mightily impugned, we would also have negligently flipped over it and the residue of like nature lately performed, without yielding such due honour to God and to the powerful exercises of prayer and fasting as appertains. Although God thus turns the rage of man to his glory, yet I would advise them who slander this work and persecute the servants of God without cause to take heed, lest they be found even fighters against God. For he that sits in the Heaven sees their devices and laughs them to scorn, and they and all their conspiracies, plots, slandering, and time wasting will consume like a snail that melts. But this mighty work, seeing it is of God and was without question a deed done according to the witness given to it, cannot be reversed or destroyed but defies the malice, and subtlety of the Devil. Though Master Darrell should be consumed to ashes, the truth thereof will break forth as the light, and the glory thereof as a burning lamp. God has lit a candle, not in a corner, but has advanced it as it were on a candlestick in the heart or centre of our land, that the beams thereof might shine forth and give light to all the Realm. It is not in their power, though it has been given out by a great man among them that, seeing they have taken it in hand they will have the credit

¹⁷ That is John Darrell and George More, then in prison.

of it, altogether to eclipse or wholly to hide it under a bushel. When they have had their influence but a little, they will be ashamed of their own folly. Now, till the time appointed be expired, let all faithful-hearted men beware, lest they take God's name in vain by basely esteeming this mighty work, or bear false witness against their neighbours in crediting lying rumours against those men of God who do now, or hereafter will, suffer in this holy cause. I pray, consider with me a little these circumstances and proceedings, and impartially consider with whom the right stands. Master Darrell and Master More, who are now imprisoned for giving testimony to this truth, have been both of them for many years approved godly ministers, just and simple hearted men, fearing God, of good reputation among the best Christians, and diligent preachers where they lived. God has marvellously blessed their joint labours in dispossessing seven persons together in Lancashire, which is so notorious and free from challenge that the enemies to this action of Nottingham dare not once to call it into question. The Papists take knowledge of the possession and dispossession in Lancashire. But they would fain have us believe that their seminary Priests were the only actors. Yea, this fancy has taken such impression in them that some of them have not doubted to say, if it can be proved that Master More, and Master Darrell did perform that work, they would disclaim their religion and embrace ours. They that have accused and prosecuted against Master Darrell are men that have blasphemed the Scriptures, Popish persons, and known enemies to the preaching of the Gospel. The wrath of God is already gone forth against one of Master Darrell's greatest enemies, namely Master Sale, official of Wesson, whose child is lately vexed with an evil spirit because, as his wife reports, he has been an adversary to Master Darrell. The proceedings against him and others have been very violent. He was put to silence by the Archbishop of York without sufficient cause warranted by law. And, as if this had been too little – to be deprived of the use of his ministry and of his livelihood having a wife and five children, he was called before the Commissioners of Canterbury province and, without hearing or examining his cause, was suddenly committed. Brought before the seat of justice, they who at the same time gave gentle audience to Papists, Arians,

atheists, and blasphemers, would not permit him to speak almost anything in his own defence but, as though he had been the most damnable wretch in the world before any conviction, exceedingly reviled him.

Judges became parties, pleaders and accusers. Some stormed that any should be present as witnesses to their doings. They would not allow one of the depositions to be read before them. The Commissioners and deponents were contemptuously rejected. A charge was given that no copies of the depositions should be divulged. Imprisonment was threatened to divers, only because they were acquainted with Master More, saying none ought to be favoured that were disgraced before them. Master Darrell, having but one copy of the depositions, delivered it to them for their satisfaction. And, though they promised him that it would be returned when his wife required it, they threatened her with Bridewell.¹⁸ There has been running to the court to forestall the Lords and Ladies of honour, and to hinder the presenting of petitions on Master Darrell's behalf to the right Honourable Lords of the Privy Council. And because Thomas Darling, a boy of Burton on Trent of the age of fifteen years or thereabouts, had been dispossessed by prayer on advice taken from Master Darrell, as appears by a book published some years ago, in hatred of Master Darrell, the books were called in and the printer imprisoned as if he had published a fined matter. Master Bainbridge, a gentleman of good reckoning in Derbyshire, was required by the Bishop of London to show his opinion touching the said Darling. He answered that it was the common voice of the country, which he believed to be true, that he was indeed possessed and dispossessed. The Bishop told him in great anger that if he had not heard well of him, he would clap him in prison for so saying. Thus having dealt with the printer and Master Bainbridge, he then thought meet to examine the matter perhaps to see whether he had done well or not, thus to determine, and then to hear. So he sent a pursuivant¹⁹ for the boy of Burton. The pursuivant, having received forty shillings from the boy's friends, the boy was kept in the Bishop of London's house and committed to the tuition of Master Harsnett who lately had been vomited

¹⁸ That is, with prison.

¹⁹ A warrant officer.

out of Cambridge for his erroneous opinions. None of the boy's friends were allowed to come to him. He was allured by promises, terrified by threatenings such as that he would be hanged as the Burgundian was, whom they showed to him, hanging at London all a day long for a murder. Also it was threatened that he would be whipped and laid in Newgate. He was a close prisoner in a chamber two days, the boy of Nottingham appointed for his keeper, who with the profane serving men were always scorning him, being a stranger among them. Letters were contrived in Master Darrell's name to him, willing him to acknowledge a counterfeit possession. And letters were returned by him wherein he protested the truth, and would not in any way be removed from it. All this was practiced to heap shame, if it might be, on Master Darrell. But when they perceived that the power of God in the boy was stronger than the malice of Satan, they let him go. But I do not hear that the forty shillings was again restored. Not finding any help herein to prove Master Darrell a practitioner in counterfeiting with this boy of Burton, a Commission was directed to five persons in Nottingham, Satan could not have wished better, that is, to the very same men who have persecuted Master Darrell at Nottingham, York, and London ever since this matter came in question. This was to dispute the former depositions taken by virtue of a Commission awarded from York as is set forth in this treatise. It fell out that Robert Cooper, the Clerk of St Mary's in Nottingham caused the ninety fourth Psalm to be sung before these Commissioners sat in Commission. I do not know if this was done on purpose or by accident, but sure it is that it so galled them, because it describes the like practices of old as they now had in hand, that the poor man was fetched up to London for this heinous fact. These proper Commissioners refused such as were willing to justify the truth on their oaths. They picked out whom they wished, and wrote what pleased them. When they were to examine Master Aldridge and his curate, they caused them to swear that they would not reveal to any others the things whereof they should be deposed. What goodly stuff they have returned, time and malice will make known to us. Yet all this being not sufficient to obscure and suppress the work of God, if any man about Nottingham do say that Sommers was possessed and dispossessed,

he is threatened to be bound to good behaviour. Behold and wonder at the violence of these men. Do you think that if they had a good matter in hand, they would be half so zealous. O Lord, if it be your good will, open their eyes and turn their hearts that they may see and comprehend this great and wonderful work which you have among us, that the faith of us all may be strengthened, our love to you and your ambassadors increased, Satan confounded, and our sinful lives amended, to the great praise of your holy name and our everlasting comfort in Christ Jesus. Amen.

G. CO.²⁰

A BRIEF NARRATION OF THE
POSSESSION, dispossession, and repossession of
W. Sommers, and of some proceedings against Master
JOHN Darrell, preacher, together with answers to such
objections as are made to justify, or show the pretended
counterfeiting of the said Sommers.

William Sommers of Nottingham, of the age of nineteen or twenty years, about the beginning of October 1597, began to be strangely tormented in body and so continued for divers weeks to the great astonishment of the beholders and trouble of his friends. And he gave great signs that he was possessed by a wicked spirit, whereupon the Mayor and some of the aldermen of Nottingham, understanding that Master Darrell, a minister of God's word dwelling in Ashby de la Zouche, had by prayer and fasting restored eight or nine persons that in like sort had been vexed, did instantly send for the said Master Darrell to come to Nottingham to take some pains about the said Sommers. This he refused to yield to sundry times, because he took on himself no greater power in such cases than was incident to any godly minister, or other persons, which was only to entreat the Lord in the name of Christ Jesus to dispossess the wicked spirit out of the possessed person. Yet, by their importunate letters and messengers, he condescended to their desires. And he came to Nottingham on the fifth of November in the

²⁰ George Cole.

year aforesaid, having never before that time, to his knowledge, seen the said Sommers. The seventh day of November, being Monday was appointed for the exercise of prayer and fasting, to the end that the said Sommers might be dispossessed, which Almighty God, only at the prayers of Master Darrell and others to the number of one hundred and fifty persons brought to pass. Whereupon Master Darrell was retained as preacher in Nottingham, that populous town, having had no settled preacher before this time since the beginning of her Majesty's reign. Sommers, being dispossessed, revealed certain witches, whereof one was called Doll Freeman, allied to one Freeman an alderman of Nottingham. This Freeman, offended that his kinswoman should be called in question, threatened Sommers that he was a witch, laying to his charge some presumptions tending that way. Sommers was committed to prison, where the Devil appeared to him in the likeness of a mouse, threatening that if he would not let him²¹ re-enter, and would not say that all that he had done touching his tormenting during his possession was but counterfeit, then he would be hanged. But if he would yield to him, he would save him. Thus a new stipulation being made between them, the Devil entered. And afterwards Sommers still pretended that all which before he had done was only counterfeit. Yet this notwithstanding, on his repossession he was horribly, in spite of his face, tormented as before, as appears from divers of the deponents if the time when the things which they deposed were done be well observed. To search into the truth hereof, a Commission was awarded from the high Commissioners for the province of York to certify the matter to twelve principal persons of account thereabouts. Master Darrell had taken the names of three score persons who were ready to have been deposed touching the extraordinary handling of the said Sommers. Seventeen of them being sworn, examined, and their depositions taken, Sommers was called before the Commissioners to be examined himself, whether he had counterfeited or not. He told them that all that he did was but counterfeit. The High Sheriff exhorted him in the name of God

²¹ [That the Devil desires to re-enter is proved by Matthew 12.42 and Mark 9.25, and by experience, and from Thyraeus, *de Daemoniacis*, part 4, chapter 1, sections 6–7.] The reference to Matthew's Gospel should be to 12.44–5. The work of Petrus Thyraeus is *Daemoniaci cum Locis Infestis* (Cologne, 1598).

to tell the truth. Then suddenly Sommers was violently cast into one of his fits before them all, where he wallowed up and down the chamber where they sat in a fearful manner. There were pins thrust deep into his hand and leg to test if he did counterfeit. But he was senseless, and no blood flowed. At length being recovered as out of sleep, they asked what he had done. He said that he could not tell. Whether he had not been pricked with pins, he said, 'Yes.' They asked where, and he showed the wrong hand. When he was examined, how the hole came in his other hand which had been pricked, he said that it was there before. Being demanded, why he fell down, he answered that a pain came over his stomach. Then he was conveyed away. And being absent, he was worse tormented than before. They brought him back again to know if he would confess who persuaded him to say he had counterfeited. As he went up a set of stairs through a gallery, if he had not been stopped, he would have cast himself headlong over the gallery in order to break his neck. When he was brought before the Commissioners the second time, he was more terribly handled than before, inasmuch that the Commissioners and all that were present were fully satisfied that he then was corporally possessed. And they ceased to examine any more witnesses. Master Walton, Archdeacon of Derby, being present, and a principal enemy to Master Darrell, acknowledged it was the finger of God on this rare accident. Then there was generally great rejoicing in Nottingham inasmuch as it had pleased God thus to manifest the truth when it came to trial. After the Commission was returned to York, Sommers was committed to the custody of certain honest persons where he was still tormented as before. And in his fits, he said how the Devil had appeared to him in prison in the likeness of a mouse as aforesaid, and how the Devil and also certain persons²² had advised him to say that he was but a counterfeit, and what promises they made to him. Also, he told of things that happened at that time elsewhere without having knowledge from any. These things were taken down in writing by some that heard him. And they are ready to be deposed thereof, if they might be allowed. And being come to himself, he did confess his possession and gave himself

²² [One of these is a great persecutor of Darrell and is suspected to be a witch.]

body and soul to the Devil, if he did counterfeit. The Archbishop of York, after the depositions came to his hands, was satisfied that indeed Sommers was possessed. Yet having received letters from some great personages, he took occasion to silence Master Darrell pretending this sole cause, that Master Darrell did hold that the Devil might be dispossessed by prayer and fasting. Yet he told him that this was his private opinion, and that he would willingly alter it if he might be better informed. But the Archbishop never endeavoured to inform him better. But after good words, such as that he was an honest man, &c., he sent him away silenced. The matter thus apprehended at York, the Commissioners of the province of Canterbury summoned Master Darrell before them. He appeared for the day and being used with hard speeches, was sent to the Gatehouse. Sommers was brought up to London, and committed to a barber of East Smithfield, a man of evil report. And afterward, he was taken into the Bishop of London's house. The matter was so well handled that Sommers persisted in saying that he had been a counterfeit. And at length, seeing this to be so plausible, grew to be so impudent that he said Master Darrell had hired him to counterfeit, had been acquainted with him four years before, had caused him to practise his feats in Ashby park, and had informed him after his coming to Nottingham how he should demean himself in the time of his dispossession, all which Master Darrell on his oath denied. But Sommers' bare word, now grown to be a man of great credit, though he had confessed himself heretofore to have been a counterfeit, was better believed than Master Darrell, a godly and faithful man of honest conversation, long approved by the best Christians and ministers where he lived. But Master Darrell was hereupon close prisoner for a week. And eventually, he was again summoned to Lambeth. Here, taken up with hard speeches as if all that Sommers had said was true, and not being allowed to answer for himself, the dispositions which might best show the matter being taken away and withheld from him, he was remanded to the prison, where he still lies till, it please God, his cause may be heard. Now to the end that it may appear on what ground Master Darrell has been thus handled, and taken up with speeches as the most impudent rascal that ever came before them,

ass, heretic, a Devil, one that had seven devils, that he would be the Devil's martyr and either recant at Paul's Cross, or be burnt in Smithfield, and such like, and for the better clearing of the truth, I will deliver such objections as have been made against him, with evident answers, as I hope, to every one of them.²³

*There have been many counterfeits, therefore Sommers did counterfeit.*²⁴ This does not follow.²⁵ For we may with as good reason say that many have not counterfeited, therefore Sommers did not counterfeit. Second, there could never any man counterfeit such things as Sommers in truth has done.

*Sommers himself said he did counterfeit.*²⁶ First, Sommers likewise said that he did not counterfeit, yea, gave himself body and soul to the Devil.²⁷ If he had counterfeited, as will be disposed, why should he not be believed as much with an execration denying as barely affirming he did counterfeit? Second, Sommers is not to be believed when he affirms an impossibility. For it appears by the depositions that he did such things, as by human power without the Devil are not possible for him to do. Third, Sommers for fear that he would be counted a witch said that he did counterfeit, as appears in the narration, and now perceiving that this is well pleasing to some great personages, he does more impudently stand in defence of it. Fourth, if Sommers did counterfeit, he is to be burnt as a blasphemer for saying that he was God, Christ, and that he made Baptism. And if he be not punished, we must conclude that he did not counterfeit, else men will imagine that the reverend Fathers would tolerate blasphemy. Hitherto, he has rather been rewarded.

*Sommers' own confession is more to be credited than all the deponents. He best knows what he himself did. The depositions are not worth tuppence, the Commissioners simple men.*²⁸ First, Sommers being in his fits knew not what he himself did or said or was done to him, as has been confessed by himself, and is deposed, and further may be.²⁹

²³ I have modernised the format of the text from this point for ease of reading.

²⁴ [First objection]. ²⁵ [First answer]. ²⁶ [Second objection].

²⁷ [First answer]. ²⁸ [Third objection]. ²⁹ [Answer].

Second, there can be no exception taken against the witnesses. If it were a case of high treason, or in matters concerning any man's life or lands in England, so many and such witnesses are sufficient in any other court of justice in England. Six of the Commissioners were in degree of Esquires, or better. The residue, save the Mayor of Nottingham, a very simple man, were men of learning. They cannot be noted of partiality, save such of them as were enemies to Master Darrell. For the others, if there be fault in them, let them be sent for and punished. But it is not likely that any will be called till more impartiality be procured, but such only as will seek rather to obscure than to reveal the truth of these proceedings.

*Sommers can act all those things again that are deposed.*³⁰ First, if he can act them all in such manner and form as is deposed, then he is either still possessed, or more than a man. For no human power can do the like.³¹ Second, let him be brought before some impartial persons, let the depositions be read, and let him act the same in such manner and form as is deposed, by natural or artificial power. Then Master Darrell will yield that he did counterfeit. If he cannot, as undoubtedly he cannot, then plead no longer for the Devil, but punish that imp of Satan as a wicked liar and blasphemer of the mighty work of God.

*He says he seemed to be stronger than four or five men in his fits, because he looked terribly. And they were so afraid they dared not use their strength on him.*³² It appears, by the depositions of Robert Aldridge, John Wood, Joan Pic, John Strellie, Richard Mee, and William Langford, that they and others laboured with all their might, and strength so that they sweated continually.³³ And they could not rule him, he neither sweating, panting, nor changing colour.

*It was an easy matter for him to trouble three or four persons, being carried aloft on their shoulders. Such strength he can show again.*³⁴ It is deposed that being on his bed, and on the ground, and sitting in a chair, he was so strong, he could not be mastered by three or four persons joining together their united forces, as appears by the depositions.³⁵

³⁰ [Fourth objection]. ³¹ [Answer]. ³² [Fifth objection].

³³ [Answer]. ³⁴ [Sixth objection]. ³⁵ [Answer].

Where some say he had a swelling in his body, it was nothing but the wind-colic.³⁶ A strange colic that would run in a variable size between the flesh and shin, up and down his body, from leg to leg, then to his toe, belly, ear, root cheek, throat, tongue, and eye, changing the colour of the eye, and making the part in which it was inflexible and heavy as iron.³⁷ Yet if Master Darrell should by prayer and fasting cure such a colic, he ought rather to be revered than reviled.

But Sommers denies that it ran up and down his body in that way.³⁸ It is deposed by eleven witnesses. Many more also will be ready to depose.³⁹

But where do you find that in Scripture, asked my Lord bishop of London.⁴⁰ Master Darrell affirmed that there were twelve things deposed concerning Sommers' possession, which he could not possibly counterfeit. He was allowed to produce the running of this lump up and down his body as one of them, which was directly proved by manifold witnesses. When some that had seen the depositions knew this to be most certainly deposed they had nothing to object but 'Where do you find that in Scripture?' Whereby they show manifestly that some of them do fight against the light of their own conscience. For they themselves, knowing that Sommers could not counterfeit this, neither could Master Darrell possibly instruct him how to practice any such feat, had nothing in reason to answer. But lest by their silence they should seem to be convinced and confounded, they object a matter nothing to the purpose, namely, that this is not found in Scripture. The weight of which objection is this:

All impossibilities are found in Scripture. This is not found in Scripture. Therefore this is not an impossibility. Who does not feel the grossness of this argument, as if a man might not name a thousand things impossible to be performed by W. Sommers which yet are not to be found in Scripture. It is not possible for Sommers to go home in an hour, yet this is not found in Scripture. It is not possible for Sommers to touch the stars, yet this is not found in Scripture. No more surely is it possible for

³⁶ [Seventh objection]. ³⁷ [Answer]. ³⁸ [Eighth objection].

³⁹ [Answer]. ⁴⁰ [Ninth objection].

Sommers to counterfeit such a variable motion as was evidently seen and felt on his body, though it be not to be found in Scripture. This one thing alone, if there were nothing else, is sufficient to convince any man whose heart is not hardened that Sommers did not counterfeit. Much less could Master Darrell be an accessory to him in such iniquity. Second, all the signs mentioned in Scripture might more easily be deluded by this conceit of counterfeiting than this moveable swelling.⁴¹ Yet the Devil in those days was not so witty as to ascribe all possessions to counterfeiting. But seeing men in this matter are grown more incredulous then heretofore, it has pleased God, besides the signs of possessions mentioned in Scripture, to give other signs also, more free from cavil to make his glorious works most apparent and certain.

*The kitlings that seemed to move vnder this coverlet, where he laie, was but the motion of his own hand. One put his hand under the coverlet and caught Sommers' hand moving.*⁴² First, if this be true then he had five hands in bed with him for there seemed to be five kitlings sometimes, as is deposed by Robert Aldridge.⁴³ Second, it may be after the time that he pretended to counterfeit. Some confederate of his might catch his hand under the coverlet to delude the former accidents. Third, this motion was when Sommers' hands and feet were held. Deposed by Thomas Gray. Fourth, lastly deposed, that the rising up under the coverlet being felt, it yielded like a bladder full of wind when it is pricked, and filled again as with wind. And sometimes it tapped, like the foot of a kitling.

*Those things which he told in his fits to be said and done in his absence, he understood by the people who were with him that talked of such matters, supposing he heard them not.*⁴⁴ By the depositions, it is plain that he spoke of things done in his absence, at the instant when he spoke of them, such as that of the examination of Millicent Horseler, and of Master Darrell's and Master Aldridge's coming, unknown to any there present.⁴⁵

⁴¹ [Such swelling is observed in others as a sign of possession. Vide Thyraeus, *de Demoniacis*, part 1, chapter 3, section 3].

⁴² [Tenth objection]. ⁴³ [Answer]. ⁴⁴ [Eleventh objection]. ⁴⁵ [Answer].

*Where it is said, he spoke, his mouth open, not moving tongue, cheeks, &c., he can do so again. For gaping, he can say, Hang, hang.*⁴⁶ It is deposed by Richard Newton that he spoke a continuous speech, his mouth being wide open, his tongue drawn into his throat, uttering these words among others, 'Ego sum rex, ego sum Deus.'⁴⁷

*He can foam as he did before by keeping soap in his mouth and working it with his tongue.*⁴⁸ Perhaps he brought this conceit from the barber's shop. It is deposed by Master Langford that he continued his foaming for the space of an hour in such an abundant manner, that the foam did hang down from his mouth to his breast, notwithstanding that it was continually wiped with cloths, in such abundance as to not able to be uttered by any human creature, not having received anything from six in the morning till five at night to augment it.⁴⁹

*When he threw himself into the fire, he knew there were some present speedily to rescue him.*⁵⁰ He was thrown with such violence against the chimney that they that were present thought that his neck had been broken.⁵¹ He could not suddenly be taken out of the fire for, it is deposed, he was of such a weight as is not possible to any natural body. So as there were three or four forced to join in taking him up, yet he had not his hair singed, nor was himself hurt.

*When he fell down before the Commissioners, it was done by the advice of the Mayor, and some of the aldermen at Nottingham, who persuaded him to it. And they should have given him a watchword when to rise up, but it was forgotten. Whereby, alas the poor boy was in great pains through the Mayor's forgetfulness.*⁵² First, then perhaps the Mayor and aldermen were co-plotters in this counterfeiting.⁵³ Methinks they should be punished as well as Master Darrell. Second, could they by teaching or by practising stop the issuing of blood when he was deeply pricked with a pin, both in his hand and leg? How came it to pass that he had forgotten which hand was pricked? Why did he purpose to counterfeit, and yet would tell them that he fell down because a pain came

⁴⁶ [Twelfth objection].⁴⁷ [Answer]. 'I am King, I am God.'⁴⁸ [Thirteenth objection].⁴⁹ [Answer]. ⁵⁰ [Fourteenth objection]. ⁵¹ [Answer].⁵² [Fifteenth objection]. ⁵³ [Answer].

over his stomach? However it is an easy matter to delude such as were absent by words, yet the Commissioners being choice men of the country both for learning and authority could not be deceived by such a paltry companion. For the matter was so apparent to them that they held it superfluous to proceed any further to examination of witnesses, inasmuch as Master Dalton the Archdeacon confessed it to be the finger of God, and shrunk away ashamed, being convinced with the evidence and demonstration of truth.

*He says that Master Darrell taught him to counterfeit, and how to behave himself at the dispossession.*⁵⁴ First, this relies on the axiom and infallible principle whereupon most of the objections are founded, namely this, 'Whatsoever Master Sommers says is true.'⁵⁵ He says that Master Darrell instructed him to counterfeit, &c. Let them prove the proposition, and we will yield the conclusion. As if a godly minister were not better to be believed on his oath, than the bare affirmation of a lewd boy whom they say was a counterfeit. Second, if Master Darrell should say or swear that Sommers by his teaching can do these things, he were not to be believed. For none can by teaching or learning practise impossibilities. Therefore, it is a mere vanity to seek to draw Master Darrell into any confederacy in this action, unless they prove these witnesses to be all perjured persons. Third, Master Darrell never came to him without always also finding company with him. He never, to his knowledge, saw him before the fifth of November, 1597, as he has deposed. Fourth, why would Master Darrell teach him to counterfeit more than others, whom he has dealt withal in like cases of dispossession, especially the seven in Lancashire, whereof four were under twelve years, troubled two years before he came to them? Two of them were children of a gentleman of good credit, who was out two hundred pounds of charges as a result of their possession and could not expect any advantage by giving out that six in his family were vexed by Satan. The procurer of their trouble was indicted and executed for conjuration. Yet till this likewise be proved counterfeiting, a possession and dispossession must be held for granted.

It is Popery to hold that there is any possession since Christ's time. And it is heresy to maintain that the Devil may now be cast

⁵⁴ [Sixteenth objection]. ⁵⁵ [Answer].

out by prayer, and fasting. Miracles are now ceased. These are but devices to maintain your hypocritical fastings.⁵⁶ To hold there are possessions and may be dispossessions by prayer and fasting is neither Popery nor heresy.⁵⁷ If it be, why do they not send for Master John Ireton of Legworth, a man known to be as learned and sound in religion as any of them, who shamefully confounded Archdeacon Walton in this question, and offered to maintain the same in the University, there being indeed, as I am verily persuaded, nothing in the Scripture, the Apology, or the articles of religion professed in England, nor in the armoury of Confessions, nor in any sound Protestant Divine to the contrary? In this, and in other⁵⁸ questions, it is fit to be known what men learned in the law do tell us⁵⁹ that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners ought not to determine any matter to be heresy, but only such as has heretofore been determined to be heresy by authority of the Canonical Scripture, or by the first four General Councils, or any of them, or by any other General Council, wherein the same was declared to be heresy by the express and plain words of the Canonical Scripture, or such as has heretofore been judged heresy by the Parliament with the assent of the Clergy in the Convocation, as appears by the statute made in the first year of her Majesty's reign and the first chapter. There have been possessions before Christ's time, which may be seen by these things which are recorded of the exorcists among the Jews,⁶⁰ and of the⁶¹ Oracles, Engastrimythoi,⁶² and others among the Gentiles. Since Christ's time, there have been infinite examples testified by the⁶³ monuments of all ages. A thing so usual in the times of antiquity, since Christ and his Apostles, that I marvel any men who would seem to be learned and do profess great reading, should beware their ignorance in such a trivial matter. Jerome in *Vita Hilarion* speaks of one Hilarion who dispossessed very nearly two hundred persons. Omitting others, I will only cite Tertullian

⁵⁶ [Seventeenth objection]. ⁵⁷ [Answer].

⁵⁸ [vi. Whether a Bishop or Elder be all one in Scripture, whether Christ suffered in soul, &c.].

⁵⁹ [1 Elizabeth, c.1]. ⁶⁰ [Josephus, *de Antiq.*, Matthew 12.27].

⁶¹ [Leviticus, 20.27, 1 Samuel 28.7 who had the Devil in them in their belly. Also called Pythonists. Acts 16.16-18].

⁶² Those who talk in their bellies. A contemporary discussion of reports of such ventriloquism may be found in Hartwell, 1599, sigs. E2v-E3r.

⁶³ The marginal note contains a long list of citations.

in his *Apology*, who made the like offer in his time, as was made of late by Master More, a godly Minister, to the Bishop of London touching W. Sommers for which he was committed to the prison of the Church. 'Let a man,' says Tertullian,⁶⁴ 'that is vexed by a Devil be brought before your judgement seat. And add the command of the meanest Christian, the spirit will speak and confess himself to be an unclean spirit. Let one of those folk be brought whom you think to be inspired of a God, &c. If he dare lie before a Christian, or if he confess not himself to be a Devil, take the Christian to be presumptuous, and let him die for it out of hand,' &c.⁶⁵ 'Now none will speak his own shame, but rather the which may sound to his honour. Surely they will not tell you that Jesus is a deceiver, or of the common stamp of men, or that he was stolen out of his grave as has been reported to you, but that he is the power, the wisdom, and the word of God, that he sits in Heaven, and that he will come to judge us. And on the contrary part that themselves be devils, damned for their naughtiness, and waiting for their dreadful doom. And this because, being afraid of Christ in God and of God in Christ, they yield to God and Christ, and to the servants of God, and Christ.' And again elsewhere he says, 'We do not only despise the devils,⁶⁶ but also we bind them, and do daily traduce them and expel them out of men, as is well known to very many.' Of corporal possessions also, even in these days, we do read in credible histories of the West Indies.⁶⁷

But⁶⁸ to seek no further, there has been evident demonstration hereof in our own land, where the symptoms or signs of possession mentioned in Scripture have been apparent in the parties possessed, namely⁶⁹ extraordinary strength,⁷⁰ knowledge, and tormenting of the bodies,⁷¹ foaming, wallowing, beating of themselves, gnashing with the teeth,⁷² casting into the fire, and such like. When the signs of possession and dispossession have been delivered out of the Scripture, the very same at the naming of them,

⁶⁴ [Tertullian in *Apologia*].

⁶⁵ The Tertullian reference to this point may be found in *Apology*, ch.23.4–7. See Roy Defferari (ed.), *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington DC, The Catholic University of America Press, 1950), 10.72. I cannot locate the remainder of the passage.

⁶⁶ [ad Scap., chapter 3]. The passage is actually from *ad Scapulam*, chapter 2.

⁶⁷ [Lirie and others].

⁶⁸ I resume the original formatting of the text. ⁶⁹ [Luke 8.29].

⁷⁰ [Luke 8.28, Acts 16.16 and 19.15]. ⁷¹ [Mark 9.20]. ⁷² [Mark 9.22].

the work corresponding with the word sufficiently to confound all atheists, have at that instant been shown in the persons affected,⁷³ being themselves senseless, not remembering afterward what had happened to them. When the godly men have called on the Lord to dispossess the wicked spirit out of the tormented creature, he has answered, as it were from Heaven, 'Be it to you, as you have defined.' Lastly, when Satan has been dispossessed, he has, as the Scripture says, walked in dry and barren places, seeking rest, but finding none, and returning back into the house from whence he came. He has appeared in divers shapes,⁷⁴ persuading the parties by promises and threatenings to let him re-enter. Some have yielded, like Jane Ashton in Lancashire, this Sommers and others. And they have been⁷⁵ grievously tormented as before without giving hope of recovery, seeing our Saviour says that in such cases, 'The spirit taking seven, worse dwell there, and of such is worse than the beginning.'⁷⁶ Others have repulsed him, and would not relent, either by his allurements or threatenings. Whereof he has outwardly in their body so pinched and tormented them that they could not go without halting for a good time after. Yet he, being still resisted in faith, has after many assaults ceased to trouble them any further. The miraculous curing of fevers, palsies, leprosies, and other diseases by Christ and his Apostles gave credit to the Gospel. Yet the like diseases remain to this day. Seeing therefore there may be possessions at this day as before, for what has been done, that may not again be done, the Devil being as malicious and powerful as in times past, 'What shall we do,' says P. Martyr, 'with them that be taken and tormented with devils? Will we forsake them? Undoubtedly they must not be forsaken. Yet we must not by adjurations command them to go forth. Wherefore,' says he, 'we will use faithful prayers for the recovery of them.'⁷⁷ The like is the opinion of Phillip Melancthon, and the godly learned King of Scotland, men more⁷⁸ judicious and better grounded in religion than these that speak at random of Poperly and of heresy. To remove the Devil by prayer and fasting is no miracle. 'This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting,' says our Saviour. If God by prayer should heal⁷⁹

⁷³ [Note this you atheists]. ⁷⁴ [Matthew 12.43]. ⁷⁵ [Mark 9.25].

⁷⁶ [Matthew 12.45]. ⁷⁷ [1 Reg 8]. ⁷⁸ [in Epist. Monologie]. ⁷⁹ [Matthew 17.21].

the fasting, sickness, or frenzy, or should grant rain, drought, victory, or such like requests, were this a miracle? Christ, and his Apostles spoke the word only, as the Centurion says, and it was done. They commanded, and it came to pass. The disciples had power given them against unclean spirits, and to heal all diseases.⁸⁰ This indeed was miraculous. But Master Foxe, Master Greenham, Master Darrell, Master More or others in these days neither challenge nor have any power, only in an extraordinary case. In this, the physicians say that there is *θειοῦ τί*, something divine or supernatural, not curable by any human ordinary skill. They use an extraordinary and supernatural lawful means of cure. This is by long and earnest entreaty to beseech Almighty God by mediation of Christ Jesus to release the party. God has done this, and these men are witnesses hereof for our good. And woe be to them who have prevailed against Satan, and heard with their ears and seen with their eyes the great works of Almighty God, if they should relinquish the truth of God for the fear of man. Touching the ceasing of miracles there is no determination thereof in Holy Scripture, neither is that article in this action to be controverted. Sure we are that the Scripture, the deity, and all religion is by some among us as much called in question as ever heretofore. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners can witness how many atheists and blasphemers have been brought before them. Likewise there be some who call themselves Christians, and also ministers of the Gospel who yet, in their practices, live like atheists and make a scorn of the exercises of religion, namely, preaching, praying, fasting, sanctifying the Sabbath, reading the word of God, giving thanks at meat, using the phrases of the Scriptures. And they do revile and hate others because they refrain from swearing, lying, filthy speaking, gaming, plays and such abominations of this age wherein we live. It is to be doubted that neither the word nor miracles can prevail with those men. 'When God shuts, no man can open.' When Lazarus was raised from the dead, 'Many believed, but some were hardened and complained about our Saviour.'

Though some saw Christ visibly risen from the dead, yet they still doubted. Therefore all is too little to unbelievers. The greater and more

⁸⁰ [Matthew 8.8, Acts 16.18, Matthew 10].

noble the works of God are, the more earnest is the Devil in obscuring them. If there were no other proof hereof but this matter of Nottingham, it were sufficient to exemplify the exceeding subtlety and malice of Satan to us. For by disgracing this wonderful work of God, the powerful preaching of the Gospel is hindered in Nottingham, where it has been a stranger for many years. A number of people in that town whose hearts were opened hereby to receive the Gospel are left to the wolf. The holy exercises of prayer and fasting are shamefully scorned. Wicked and Popish persons are kindly entertained and highly commended. The witnesses of Christ Jesus and enemies of Satan are evilly treated. The Papists' opinion, who hold that Satan cannot possibly be dispossessed by the ministry of any Protestant, is mightily countenanced. The atheists and carnal Gospellers who, not knowing the power of godliness and holy exercises, do attribute all things to art, chance, or nature are exceedingly hardened.

It cannot be endured that those kind of men who are accounted the scouring of the world should be thought to have such interest in Christ Jesus that, as a result of their falsely-termed verbal prayers and hypocritical fastings, he should as it were visibly descend from Heaven, and tread down Satan under their feet, whereas other men, who account themselves more learned, excellent, and wise than they, do not with all their physic, rhetoric, pomp, and primacy accomplish the like. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world, 'to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty'.

Thus much touching the objections which have been made to prove the pretended counterfeiting of W. Sommers. But how by counterfeiting he could speak a quarter of an hour together, his mouth being shut. How he could stop his temples and pulses from beating. How his eye, hands, and face would be unnaturally black and turn by and by into their natural colour. How there would be extraordinary smells in the place where he lay. How he would violently with great force be cast against the iron bars and posts of the chimneys receiving no hurt. How he could be taller than the highest man in Nottingham. How all his body would be as cold as ice and heavy as iron. How his face would be turned quite backward, his

neck thrown round about without hurt to him. How he, being naturally weak, would so oftentimes exert so many strong men, himself not panting, sweating, nor changing colour. How he made his tongue to swell to the size of a calf's tongue, and his eyes as great as beast's eyes. How he would forget continually what he did or was done to him in his fits. How his legs, crooked with falls, should be inflexible as any iron. How the colic would run along all his body in a variable quantity. How such a colic would be cured by prayer and fasting. How in his fits he would utter strange voices which at other times he could not do again, as is deposed. How he did counterfeit all these impossibilities, when the Sadducees, Galenists, and naturalists of our time have considered of the matter, we will expect some new objections suitable in discretion to the former. In the meantime, 'Let him that is filthy, be filthy still.' But do Satan what he can, wisdom will be justified of her children.

Surely the rage of man will turn to your praise.

Psalm 76.10.

Depositions taken at Nottingham the twentieth of March, An. 1597 by virtue of a Commission granted from the Right Reverend Father in God Mathew Archbishop of York, and others of her Majesty's high Commissioners
before John Therrald Esquire, High Sheriff of the County of Nottingham, Sir John Byron Knight, John Stanhope, Robert Markham, Richard Barkins Esquires, Peter Clerk, Mayor of the town of Nottingham.

Miles Leigh, official of the Archdeaconry of Nottingham, John Ireton, Parson of Legworth, John Brown, parson of Loughborough, Robert Evington, parson of Normanton on Dore, and Thomas Bolton, ministers, and preachers of Gods Word.

Commissioners appointed for the taking of the same.

(1) Thomas Hays of Kirkby in Ashfield in the county of Nottingham, clerk and preacher of⁸¹ God's word, sworn and examined, says that, being at Nottingham on All Saints' Day to attend on Sir Charles Candish, he was entreated by the said Sommers' Mother to come to the house where William Sommers was. And there he found the said Sommers wonderfully tormented. And at the name of Jesus, he was oftentimes suddenly cast on⁸² the ground, the one leg being bent crookedly towards this examinant, not able to straighten the same. In this leg, he saw something run, and so out of that leg into the⁸³ other, thence forthwith into his belly, greatly swelling the same insomuch that the same was much bowed upwards. And when the same departed thence, he saw it plainly in his throat, in his tongue, and in his cheek near to his ear-root. Appearing there at that time,⁸⁴ he perceived the quantity of the yolk of an egg. And lying his hand on it and taking it between his fingers, he found the same in softness and quantity to the yolk of an egg. And being doubtful what to think or say of such a strange sight, this examinant went thence to Master Atkinson of the same town of Nottingham with whom he had often been, and sent for such as were troubled with melancholies or temptations to seek for some natural cause, if he might. But after many answers to him touching convulsions, falling sicknesses, and such others, he could conceive none that might lead him to the finding of a natural cause. So he procured Master Ebbings, and Master Aldridge the⁸⁵ same day to come to him where, in their prayers and presence, he had divers fits as⁸⁶ before, giving out words that it was no disease but the Devil.

(2) Robert Aldridge, clerk, vicar of Saint Mary's in Nottingham, sworn and examined,⁸⁷ says that he first came to William Sommers on Thursday the third of November, as he thinks. He found him lying on a bed, with no bed clothes lying on him but only his own hose. And he saw a thing the size of a mouse running up his right leg. And he called⁸⁸ to God in prayer. Immediately it moved out of the right leg into the left. And laying his hand thereupon, immediately it moved into his belly. There it swelled to a very

⁸¹ [Thomas Hays].

⁸² [At the name of Jesus cast down].

⁸³ [The leg bound].

⁸⁴ [A running swelling].

⁸⁵ [No disease, but the Devil].

⁸⁶ Sommers.

⁸⁷ [Robert Aldridge].

⁸⁸ [Running swelling].

great size, twice as big as his body as he thinks, and from thence into his breast. And there it was the size of his fist, and from thence into his neck, and from thence under his ear, where it remained in the bigness of a french walnut, not changing his former colour. And so it remained there for the space of a quarter of an hour. And the said Sommers lay on his back, his hands held by two standing there the whole time this examinant was there.

And this examinant further says that he heard in a strange hollowish voice, that he was⁸⁹ his. And this examinant answering said that he lied, that he was God's, and that he had made a promise to God in Baptism to be his. Then the voice answered that he was God, Christ, and a king, and that he made Baptism, and that he made him his by a new⁹⁰ Covenant, for he had given him three pence, and that it was in the boy's sleeve which, being searched, there was none such to be found. Then it said again that it was in his glove.

This examinant also further says that the said William Sommers, on the seventeenth of November last, from the hour of seven o'clock to three o'clock in the afternoon of the same day, continued strangely and diversly vexed and tormented. And he had such strength as five men had much ado to keep him down. During this time, he exceeded⁹¹ in swelling, screeching, roaring, striking out violently, and very fearfully gnashing his teeth and foaming at his mouth. And he also says that, on the eighteenth of November, between seven and eight o'clock in the morning, he went into the house of Robert Cooper where William Sommers lay to hear how he had done the night before. And he, standing in the hall, heard a great knocking in the parlour where the boy lay. And suddenly he⁹² rushed in, where he found the boy alone in his bed, lying with his face upward in his fit, with his mouth drawn awry and his eyes staring as though they would have started out of his head. And this examinant, kneeling down to pray, heard the knocking again, under his knees as he thought. And in the bed under the coverlet, he saw the form and shape as it were of five kitlings in number to the view of his eye. And again, this examinant saw⁹³ the bed clothes at the feet to shake, move, and leap like the leaves of an aspen tree shaken with the wind.

⁸⁹ [A hollowish voice]. ⁹⁰ [Blasphemy].

⁹¹ [Extraordinary strength]. ⁹² [knocking] ⁹³ [Kitlings].

(3) William Hind, tailor, of the town of Nottingham, sworn and examined, says that, at his coming to the said Sommers, he found Master Aldridge there, being Friday the fourth of November, as this Examinant thinks. And he saw a swelling in his neck the size of a great walnut, and from thence to the bone of the cheek, and there it was the size of a great hazelnut. And from thence, it moved into his eye. And the skin of his eye waxed black. And because this examinant had heard before that the said Sommers did counterfeit, he laid his hand on the said swelling on the cheekbone which, swelling, did tremble like an aspen leaf in a calm wind and was very soft. But in that place he did not change his natural colour.

(4) Thomas Westfield, clerk in the county of Nottingham and preacher of God's word,⁹⁴ sworn and examined, says that on Sunday night, being the sixth of November last past as he thinks, being desirous to see the strange things which he had heard of the said Sommers, came thither with Master Darrell to see him, where he found him with a great swelling under the left ear to the size of a walnut. And from thence it moved into the⁹⁵ eye where it did not seem so large. But it caused a great blackness in his eye. And on⁹⁶ that, this examinant laid his hand where he felt a certain moving, and his eye changed into its natural colour immediately, and so changed eight times betwixt three and six o'clock in the morning.

(5) William Aldred of Colwick, clerk and preacher of God's word in the county of Nottingham, sworn and examined, says that on the sixth of November last, being the Sabbath, Master John Darrell and divers other ministers, whereof this examinant was one, together with the Mayor of Nottingham and others, came into the house where the said Sommers was about seven o'clock in the evening. And after prayers made to God, the said John Darrell exhorted with many words all such whose hearts God would touch with his fear, to prepare and assemble themselves the next day at seven o'clock in the morning, and to consecrate that day wholly to the Lord with fastings and prayer, and so departed from them at that time. And the ministers withdrew themselves and conferred about the keeping of the said exercise. It was thought good that this said examinant should begin the next day. There

⁹⁴ [W. Hinde].

⁹⁵ [The running swelling].

⁹⁶ [Eye skin black].

were assembled at the time appointed about a hundred and fifty persons. And this examinant, beginning with prayer, preached against the sins⁹⁷ of our time. The boy lay sometimes silent, being tormented wonderfully by fits in his body in the meantime, such as heaving up his body, stretching his lips awry, one towards the one ear and the other towards the other ear, opening his mouth wide as if it⁹⁸ were foursquare, thrusting out his tongue, and putting it double again into his throat,⁹⁹ with many fearful cries and shrieks. This examinant, having ended his sermon, the above named John Darrell began with prayer, at which time the torments in the boy seemed to be doubled. And after exhortation to the people ended, the said John Darrell discoursed of the signs of possession as they are in order in the ninth chapter of Mark. The very same signs there spoken of appeared most evidently in the said William Sommers in a¹⁰⁰ most terrible manner. For he shrieked and roared with a loud voice, he foamed abundantly, he gnashed with his teeth, his body distracted several ways. And the preacher coming to these words, 'All things are possible to him that believes,' answer was made from the boy, 'You lie.' And with terrible countenance, staring with his eyes, gaping with his mouth stretched out, his hands with fingers bent like eagle's talons towards the preacher as if menacing him, with leaping up with his body, and other threatening gestures, he was restrained by his keepers. And thus he continued the whole discourse of faith. But when he began to speak of the signs of dispossession, as it follows in the same chapter, the said William Sommers was again tortured with the former torments more forceably. And the said John Darrell, speaking at length on this text, 'He came out of him,' the said W. Sommers made as though he would have vomited. And the said John Darrell besought God to glorify his word and work. Then the whole congregation, breaking their hitherto continuous silence, cried out all at once as it were with one voice to the Lord, to relieve the distressed person. And within a quarter of an hour or thereabouts, it pleased God to hear their prayers. For the body of the boy was taken and thrown across the bed, in which manner he lay as if he had

⁹⁷ [One hundred and fifty persons].

⁹⁸ [Mouth distorted]. ⁹⁹ [Tongue doubled into his throat].

¹⁰⁰ [The signs appeared according to the Word].

been dead for a season. The preacher then glorifying God and willing the people to be thankful which was accordingly performed, the boy turned himself over and on his knees rendered thanks to God for his delivery. By which time, the sun being set, the exercise ended and the boy went home with his master.

(6) Joan Pie, wife of Robert Pie, baker, of the town of Nottingham, sworn and examined, deposes and says that about a week before Master Darrell was sent for to come to W. Sommers, being the night of the Saturday before All Saints' Day, this examinant came to the house of Thomas Porter where the boy lay. And after a while, he fell into a fit of laughing. And then presently he was thrown suddenly to the foot of the bed, his body doubled and his head between his legs. And then suddenly, he was plucked round in a¹⁰¹ heap as though his body had been like a large brown loaf or a strike,¹⁰² and so rolled in the bed. He was cast up from the bed like a ball, three or four times together, about half a yard in height, the coverlet being so tightly wrapped about him that all that were present had much ado to pull the clothes from him. And this examinant came many times to the said Sommers purposely to see the accidents that did show his possession, wherein she desired to be satisfied. And this examinant also says that about All Hallowstide and many others times, she has seen the said Sommers handled with such violence that, when his fit had come, he was so strong that sometimes there have been four or five women, and they could not hold him lying flat on the ground. And, notwithstanding all their¹⁰³ force, he beat his members one after another, his legs, arms, and head, as though he would have beaten his head in pieces, if he had done it in God's name. And that part, or members, which the fit did possess, three or four could not hold it, or bend it. This¹⁰⁴ examinant further says that on All Hallows' Eve, at noon or thereabouts, she was with the said boy with sundry others. He was sitting in a chair about two yards from the fire side. And suddenly, he was cast towards the fire, his head lighting on the iron that kept up¹⁰⁵ the fire, and one of his hands in the fire. And they being three or four, taking him up to save him from

¹⁰¹ [His body doubled, &c.].

¹⁰² A cylindrical wooden vessel containing around a bushel, eg. of wheat.

¹⁰³ [Extraordinary strength]. ¹⁰⁴ [Leg, heavy, inflexible]. ¹⁰⁵ [Cast into the fire].

burning, could not set him in the chair again. For his legs were so bowed that they could not all straighten them. And he was so heavy that they could scarcely¹⁰⁶ lift him. And neither his head hair, nor any part of his body was hurt or burnt by the¹⁰⁷ fire. And she further says that there was a small line which tied up a painted cloth which was hung over the bed, to which the said Sommers stretched out his hand. But he could not reach it. And then, to their imagination, he, seeming to exceed the stature of the tallest man in the town, suddenly got his chin over the said line. And so with his hands, he plucked the line so firmly about his neck that they who stood by had much ado¹⁰⁸ to save him from hanging. She further says that the boy, in one of his fits the night before Master Darrell came, said that Darrell was coming, when neither she nor any other to¹⁰⁹ her knowledge had any certain intelligence that Master Darrell would come. For the messengers which went for him had brought answer that he intended not to come till the next week. And she also further says that, on the said Saturday on which Master Darrell came to the town, he was more extremely handled than before. And he lay many times with his mouth extraordinarily void and strangely open. And he spoke these words, viz., 'I will use W. S.'s tongue and members for three days,' without moving or stirring his¹¹⁰ tongue or lips in speaking any of the said words. And she says that the speech was in the ordinary voice of W. Sommers. And this deponent further says that an hour and a half before Master Darrell's coming to the town, the boy fell into an extreme fit in such manner as she and those who were present judged that verily he was dead. For he lay¹¹¹ senseless and speechless, his eyes out of his head like walnuts, his face black in a strange manner, and all his members and the parts of his body instantly cold for the space of an hour. And being asked, when his fits were past, whether he remembered the extremity or any part, he denied that he remembered anything. And during the time of his extremity,¹¹² they endeavoured many times to recover him by giving him aqua vitae and other comfortable things, but it wrought nothing in him to revive him. And Master Darrell being come into the town, the boy instantly spoke of it with these words, 'I have but a small time now to stay, but I will shortly return.'

¹⁰⁶ [Leg bowed]. ¹⁰⁷ [Though so heavy as hardly by three or four taken out, yet unhurt].

¹⁰⁸ [Extraordinary stature]. ¹⁰⁹ [Extraordinary knowledge].

¹¹⁰ [Speech without moving tongue or lips]. ¹¹¹ [For dead]. ¹¹² [No remembrance].

And Master Darrell coming in¹¹³ at the rear-side of the house without the knowledge of the boy, as she verily thinks, the boy foretold his coming. And he had also foretold Master Aldridge's coming at sundry times. This examinant says likewise that, at divers times when the boy was in his fits, she has felt smells like brimstone. And she also says that, being in his fits, she has seen a swelling in his foot which moved from toe to toe, and so to his leg, and from thence in¹¹⁴ his body the size of a threepenny witlof, and so to his throat the size of a rat, and under his ear the size of a walnut, and in his eyebrows like a black clock. And so it moved from place to place, which this examinant and others have sensibly seen and felt. And this deponent further says that, after the time of his dispossession, the boy revealed by speech certain whom he named to be witches. Amongst the rest he named one Millicent Dorselie, who dwelt at Bridgeford, whom Master Darrell and Master Aldred carried to Master Parkins to be examined. And the boy, about one o'clock the same day, uttered in his fits these words, 'Now they have her, and are examining her. And she says she does all by prayer. And now she is saying her prayer.' And this was not known to this¹¹⁵ examinant or any other then present, to her knowledge. And she further deposes and says that at divers times she has heard a clapping in his bed as though it had been the clapping of three hands, and that she has seen a motion in the bed as though it had been the creeping of three kitlings, which she and divers others have endeavoured to Take hold¹¹⁶ of but never could. For when they have attempted the same, it has vanished. And, to their sight, his hands and feet never moved. And at other times, at the foot of his bed, there was a knocking as though it were under the bed to their understanding. And in some of those extreme fits, he would cry, 'Now she comes, now she comes. Now she will break my neck.' And thereupon his neck was thrown about as though it had been¹¹⁷ broken, with his mouth stretched out on the one side immeasurably, sometime on the one side, and sometimes on the other.

(7) Richard Newton, glover, of the town of Nottingham, sworn and examined says that he, hearing of the strangeness of the extremities of the said Sommers, came to him with a full determination to understand whether

¹¹³ [Extraordinary knowledge]. ¹¹⁴ [Running swelling]. ¹¹⁵ [Extraordinary knowledge].

¹¹⁶ [Kitlings]. ¹¹⁷ [Neck thrown and mouth drawn aside immeasurably].

his strange actions were counterfeited, or not. And he thought to satisfy himself with a full understanding of the truth of the cause. And he found the said Sommers in his fit. And he heard him speak plainly with a continued speech with his mouth wide open, his tongue drawn into his throat, so that there¹¹⁸ nothing could be seen of it but the roots in his throat, neither lips nor jaws moving. And he uttered this speech among others, 'Ego sum rex, Ego sum Deus,' with some other speeches, which this examinant could not understand well, for he is not a good Latinist. And this was done in the sight of many.

(8) Henric Nuffie, locksmith, of the town of Nottingham, sworn and examined, deposes and says that he came to the said Sommers to keep watch over him. And about ten or eleven o'clock in the night, he saw him with his mouth wide open. And he spoke certain words to John Wigan in Latin, which this examinant did not understand, neither his jaws nor tongue moving, he did so speak. And this examinant saw these things clearly, for he came very near him to behold him.

(9) William Langford, surgeon, of the town of Nottingham, sworn and examined, deposes and says that it is true that the same day of his dispossessing, being the seventh of November, he did gnash, wallow, and foam in such an abundant manner, that the foam¹¹⁹ did hang down from his mouth to his breast, notwithstanding it was wiped away continually with cloths, and that he continued for the space of an hour. And it was in such abundance that this examinant did not think it possible to be discharged from any human creature. And so much the more he did marvel at it, for the said Sommers had not taken anything from six o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon to augment it in any way. And he did shriek with three voices severally so hideously¹²⁰ that they were not like any human creature, but rather the one of them was like a bull, the other like a bear, and the third a very small voice, and such as this examinant thinks cannot be counterfeited. And this examinant further says that the said Sommers did show extraordinary strength, and especially on the seventeenth of February

¹¹⁸ [Speech with mouth open, his tongue drawn into his throat, neither lips nor jaws moving].

¹¹⁹ [Foaming exceeding].

¹²⁰ [Shrieking hideously, like a bull, and a bear, and a small voice uncounterfeitable].

last,¹²¹ when this examinant, a kinsman of his, and one other servant to Master Gray could not hold him. And then this examinant felt his temples, and the pulses of his arms which had no motion but were senseless as he had been, and like a dead man. And all the outward parts¹²² of his body were cold, which he purposely then did test, for the strangeness thereof. Nor did he extraordinarily pant or blow that this examinant could perceive. And this examinant says that he has heard him make rhyme of the Scriptures, and heard him sing in so small a tuneful voice that out of his fit he could not sing the like, as this¹²³ examinant made proof of, of very purpose. And hearing him sing many times before to his perfect memory, he did never hear him sing with so small a voice. And this examinant further says that, on the said seventh of November last, which day the said exercise for his dispossession was appointed, this examinant came to the house of the said Thomas Porter where the said W. Sommers was. And there, finding the said Sommers on his knees praying, and with him some company in prayer, this deponent secretly told some in the company that it was appointed that the said Sommers was to be conveyed to the place where the said exercise was to be used. And thereupon, unknown by audible speech to the said Sommers, he was suddenly cast across the bed. And this deponent, with five or six others, had much trouble, though they used their whole¹²⁴ strength, carrying him to the said place where the said exercise was appointed and kept. And this examinant, having only the managing of his head, could not continually hold it by his strength, but sometimes it was taken from him. He also says that, on the said seventh of November, the said Sommers, being extremely tormented and toiled and his buttons thereby opened, he saw a rising or swelling in the bottom of his belly which, to¹²⁵ his knowledge, moved the clothes. And his chest and stomach being bare, he visibly saw the same rising or swelling, the size of a goose egg or a halfpenny white loaf, ascend up to his chest, and so to his throat, at which he acted as though he would have vomited. And therein, he continued till the time of his dispossession, as was generally thought by all the bystanders. For in a trice, he was suddenly thrown

¹²¹ [Extraordinary strength, February seventeenth]. ¹²² [Temples, pulses, not beating].

¹²³ [A small tuneful voice]. ¹²⁴ [Five or six with much ado carry him].

¹²⁵ [The running swelling].

over, by what motion they which were then present could not conceive by any human experience or practice.

(10) Thomas Gray, Esquire, of Gray's Langley in the county of Leicester, sworn and examined, says that, about the third day of December last, he was in the house of one¹²⁶ Cooper Clarke of St Mary's in Nottingham wherein he saw W. Sommers lying on a bed, being held by sundry persons at his feet and also at his head, so that it seemed to this deponent thereby that he was in some fit. But by the countenance of his face, it seemed to this examinant that he, the said Sommers, did but dissemble. Whereupon this examinant, considering the strange report which he had heard from divers credible persons concerning matters in fact done by the said W. Sommers in the time of his possession and dispossession, desired of God in his heart that some manifest token might be shown to him for his better understanding of the truth in the matter. And immediately, he saw a moving under the uppermost covering of the bed not far distant from the end¹²⁷ of the said W. Sommers' leg, who lay in a round lump panting. Perceiving this, this examinant pointed at it, and said to the bystanders, 'What might this be?' Whereupon one of them said, 'It is his foot.' Then those that sat at the foot of the bed answered, 'We have his feet here, and do hold them.' Then this deponent, for the better understanding thereof, laid his hand on the said lump. And he felt it move. And clasping his hand together, he felt that it yielded, like air or wind. And opening his hand again, it filled the same in a very full manner. And this examinant, taking away his hand, saw the clothes settle very softly down, like a bladder being blown full of wind falls together after it is pricked. And immediately, the same moving was on the other side of the said W. Sommers. And this deponent, seeing it and laying his hand on the place where it was before, said, 'Here it is even now.' And at that very instant, this deponent without moving of his hands sensibly felt something under the clothes beat very fast in the palm of his hand, like the foot of a kitling, or such like thing.¹²⁸

(11) John Wood, clerk, of Lenton in the county of Nottingham, sworn and examined, says that, on Friday the seventeenth of February last, being

¹²⁶ [December third].

¹²⁷ [The running swelling].

¹²⁸ [Beating like the foot of a kitling].

credibly informed that W. Sommers was very miserably tormented and piteously vexed with most strange fits, he was desirous to visit him. And to that end, he went with some others of his friends to the house of Robert Cooper, clerk of St Mary's in Nottingham aforesaid, where at his coming thither, the said W. Sommers then was. And this examinant found him in a fit, wherein he perceived that three or four men had enough to do to hold him. And this¹²⁹ examinant, thinking with himself that it was impossible that a boy of his age and strength should in such a way stretch three or four lusty fellows, desired to know whether his strength was such as they pretended or not. In another of his fits, which lasted from between nine and ten o'clock until it was past twelve, this examinant desired to deal with him himself for satisfaction of his own mind. And to the end he might have the better advantage, as he thought, he stepped behind him as he was sitting in a chair and got a firm hold of the muscles of his arms, as though he would have pinioned him. But when this examinant perceived that he could not hold him but that he would slip from him, whether he would or not, he was forced to let go his hold there. And with his fingers firmly locked one into another so that he could not in any way slip from him as before, by virtue of the fact that both his arms were tightly closed about his body under his arms, he so held him. But the said Sommers so exerted this examinant so that, in struggling with him, both his hat fell from his head and his cloak from his back. But when the bystanders¹³⁰ saw that this deponent was almost overcome with striving with him, two of them laid hold on him with him, the one by the one leg, and the other by the other leg, and this examinant still at his body. He so exerted them all for the space of an hour or thereabouts, that in the end they were all breathless, and forced to give their place to others standing by. Whereupon this examinant, presently stepping before him on purpose to see whether he either panted or drew his breath shortly or not, found him with his eyes shut and his mouth and lips firmly closed. And he was so far from panting that this¹³¹ examinant could not perceive him draw his breath. And whereas they all were very hot, and this examinant in a very great sweat, he for his part neither sweated, nor yet had so much

¹²⁹ [Extraordinary strength].¹³⁰ [Extraordinary strength].¹³¹ [No panting].

as any redness in his cheeks. Afterwards, this examinant, heard that it was noised abroad that the said W. Sommers had confessed that all that he had ever done was counterfeited and that he was delivered to John Cooper and Nicholas Shepherd as his keepers for trial of the truth. And learning also that the said W. Sommers was with his said keepers at Lenton, this examinant desired to talk with him to the end that he might test whether he counterfeited or not. For he thought to himself that, if he did counterfeit, he would remember something that this examinant did to him, considering that he never came to him but once. And to the end that no exceptions might be taken against this examinant's words, he requested his neighbour Master Forster, a very honest and God fearing man, to accompany him thither. Telling him beforehand the purpose of his going, he willingly went with him. When this examinant came to him, after they had given over their work, and all the workmen were departed, he asked leave of his said keepers that he might talk with the said W. Sommers not secretly but openly. This request being granted openly before the said Master Forster and his said keepers, this examinant asked him first whether he did remember that he was ever with him in any of his fits. He answered that he did. Then this examinant asked him if he could remember anything that he did to him. He answered that he could. Being asked by this examinant what it was that he did, he said that he nipped him by the finger with his thumbnail. And with that, he made a¹³² sign with his own nail on his own finger, saying, 'you nipped my fingers thus.' But this examinant, answering that it was an untruth that he spoke, willed him in the name of God to shame the Devil in speaking the truth. For, said this deponent, 'Every lie is of the Devil.' Whereto the said Sommers answered that indeed he did not nip his finger. 'But,' said he, 'you did bend my finger thus.' And with that, he bent his finger with his own hand. To the end, said he, that 'you might try whether I had any sense or feeling, or not.' This examinant likewise affirmed that to be an untruth also. He exhorted him again in the fear of God to speak the truth. Then after he had paused a fair time, this examinant asked him the third time what he had done. And then he answered directly and said, 'If you did not so to me, I cannot tell anything that you did.' When this examinant perceived

¹³² [A remembrance].

that he could not remember anything that he did, after a short exhortation to him to serve and fear God, he went away with Master Forster. And when they were gone as far as a man may shoot an arrow, his said keeper John Cooper called to this examinant saying, 'Master Wood, Master Wood, the lad remembers now what you did.' And this deponent, asking him what it was, his said keeper answered that the lad said that he read from a book and prayed over his sister lying on a trundle bed. But this examinant answered that to be an untruth also. For, said he, 'All that were in that house will witness that I touched no book in that house that day.' He answered again after a little time that, although he read not over her, yet he prayed over her. Whereunto this examinant answered that he but guessed at that because, as he thought, he might well know that no Christian man, seeing them in such extremities, could forbear to pray for them. And thus they left them.

(12) John Strellie, Gentleman, of the county of Nottingham, sworn and examined, deposes and says that he, desired to see William Sommers of whom he had heard strange reports of being possessed with a Devil and dispossessed and, as it was thought, repossessed again. He came to the house in Nottingham where the said Sommers was kept about the eighteenth of February. There he found him in one of his fits in the presence of John Darrell and W. Aldred, preachers of the Word of God, with others. The said Sommers, amongst many other strange things, did show himself of such great strength that this¹³³ examinant with three others could scarcely hold him. But he made them all sweat in great abundance, the said Sommers neither sweating nor breathing to their perseverance.¹³⁴ And so for that time he left him. And coming to him on Monday the twentieth of February in the presence of the parties named above with others, they found him¹³⁵ very well to their thinking. And exhorting him out of the Word of God, he was suddenly thrown from the place where he sat, with his head knocked to the furthest post of the chimney in such a violent manner that they thought his neck had been broken. Being¹³⁶ of such a great weight as they thought was impossible for any natural body, and being¹³⁷ laid on a bed and lying in his fit about half an hour, many strange things were seen. His neck was

¹³³ [Extraordinary strength]. ¹³⁴ [Four sweating abundantly with holding, he not breathing].

¹³⁵ [February twentieth]. ¹³⁶ [Cast against the post of the chimney]. ¹³⁷ [Exceedingly heavy].

doubled under him. He was, as it seemed, tormented in his inward parts,¹³⁸ with one of his legs being of a very massive weight. A little thing was seen to move in divers parts of his body,¹³⁹ swelling the body and rising into several parts of the face to the size of a crab or walnut. And after coming to himself again and continuing well a¹⁴⁰ small time, he was suddenly cast into the fire in the presence of them all. And being¹⁴¹ suddenly taken out without any hurt to him from the fire, being of weight as aforesaid, many strange things appeared in their presence such as foaming, wallowing, gnashing his teeth, shrieking, roaring, and seeming to be strangely tormented in his body, with the same swelling through his body and face as before, uttering in his trance divers strange¹⁴² speeches, his mouth wide open, his tongue drawn into his throat but not speaking in that time, and other things which be now out of memory.

(13) Richard Mee, butcher, of Nottingham, sworn and examined, deposes and says that on Sunday night, as he thinks, the sixth of November, he came to the said Sommers to keep watch over him about nine o'clock at night, and found with him Master Westfield and others. And between three and six o'clock in the morning, he heard a voice saying that he would have his right eye, and then he would have his left. And immediately, a great blackness was in his left eye, the voice being, as he thinks contrary to his natural voice.¹⁴³ And this examinant further says that a day or two before, and sundry other times, this examinant did see a swelling in his arms and legs, they being naked the size of a¹⁴⁴ walnut moving from place to place in his body. And he felt it in his belly the size of a sixpenny brown loaf, and it was so hard that he could not press it down with his hand, which this examinant tried to do by putting his hand under the bedclothes.

This deponent also says that he has seen him stand and turn his face directly¹⁴⁵ backwards, not moving his body, and that his eyes were as large as beast's eyes, ready as he thinks to start out of his head.

¹³⁸ [Neck doubled]. ¹³⁹ [One leg very heavy]. ¹⁴⁰ [The running swelling].

¹⁴¹ [Cast into the fire]. ¹⁴² [Speech, his mouth wide open]. ¹⁴³ [Blackness in his eye].

¹⁴⁴ [The Running swelling].

¹⁴⁵ [Face turned directly backwards, his body not moving, eyes large as beast's eyes].

And further, he says that he has seen him fall down before them, and that one of his legs would be crooked with his fall. And this examinant has tried to pull his leg straight¹⁴⁶ out, but could not by any means move it. And he has seen him draw his mouth very strangely to one side, as he imagines could not be done by any natural course, for he¹⁴⁷ did never see any do the like. And his tongue would be thrust out of his mouth to the size of a calf's tongue. This examinant further says that he has seen him laugh very¹⁴⁸ strangely, and suddenly shriek like a swine when he is in sticking, and wallow, gnash his teeth, foam at the mouth very strangely and be, as he thought, senseless. And these things were done before Master Darrell's coming to him. And he says that the said Sommers would be violently cast into the fire, standing a yard and a half away from¹⁴⁹ the fire, and none of his clothes burnt or hair singed.

And further, this examinant says that the said Sommers, in many of his fits, showed extraordinary strength, so that sometimes three, sometimes four, sometimes six, sometimes more could scarcely hold him and keep him down. And during his said fits,¹⁵⁰ he was not perceived to pant or blow more than if he had not strained his strength or¹⁵¹ struggled at all. And this examinant further says that, from the said Sommers, there came a big voice uttering these words, that there was no God, that he was God, that he was king and prince of darkness. And in saying The Lord's Prayer, he could not be¹⁵² persuaded to say 'Lead us not into temptation,' but 'Lead us into temptation.' And also, he says that he has smelt such exceedingly sweet smells in the room where the said¹⁵³ Sommers was that he could not endure the same for the exceeding sweetness thereof.

(14) Elizabeth Milward, spinster, of the town of Nottingham, sworn and examined, says that the Saturday in which Master Darrell came to the town, the said William Sommers was extremely tormented, in such a way that he lay for an hour and a half clean dead to their judgement, being senseless,

¹⁴⁶ [Leg crooked with falls].

¹⁴⁷ [Yet by no means to be straightened. Mouth strangely drawn aside].

¹⁴⁸ [Tongue big as a calf's. Laughter strange, and then shrieking]. ¹⁴⁹ [Cast into the fire unhurt].

¹⁵⁰ [Extraordinary strength. Six or more scarcely able to hold him].

¹⁵¹ [No panting]. ¹⁵² [Blasphemy]. ¹⁵³ [Exceeding sweetness].

speechless, and without breath to their sight. In this¹⁵⁴ time, he was presently as cold as ice, and his hands unnaturally black. Being covered,¹⁵⁵ they could not see the rest of his body. And though they gave him *Aquavitæ* and other comfortable things to revive him, yet in all that time they could not. And his body was so heavy that they could not lift it up. And the first word he uttered was this, 'Darrell¹⁵⁶ comes, Darrell comes. He will have me out. But I will come again. For Nottingham and Lenton are jolly towns for me.' And she further says that the first time she called any of their neighbours in to help him, she heard a thumping or knocking in his bed. And she, putting her hand into his bed, felt the said knocking, as she thought, at a hollow place¹⁵⁷ above the chest of his body. She heard this knocking as she went down the stairs, being so fearful that she dared not stay above with him.

(15) John Pare, clerk, of Plumtree in the county of Nottingham, sworn and examined,¹⁵⁸ deposes and says that he came to the town of Nottingham on the Monday which was the day of the exercise of fasting and prayer for William Sommers, about nine o'clock before noon. And hearing the exercise in hand at the house of one Smale, went thither about ten o'clock to hear what was done. And he found Master Darrell and Master Aldridge, and divers others there, where they continued till the hour of three o'clock in the afternoon in preaching and prayer. And the crowd was so great that he could not come to the sight of the boy till about the said hour of three o'clock. And then he saw the boy lie grovelling on his face on the bed, and a certain swelling or rising under his clothes the size of a¹⁵⁹ mouse, which moved from place to place, to divers parts of his body. And this examinant also says that he heard a thumping or knocking in the boy's bed in three several places¹⁶⁰ at once. And he, putting his hand into the bed, felt it sensibly knock under his hand. And he was persuaded that it was not the boy's hands, because they could not reach so low.

(16) John Clerk, cordwinder, of the town of Nottingham, sworn and examined, deposes¹⁶¹ and says that on Sunday the sixth of November, as he remembers, he came towards the Church of St Mary's in Nottingham. And

¹⁵⁴ [Dead, to their seeming, an hour and a half].

¹⁵⁵ [Cold as ice, face and hands black].

¹⁵⁶ [Heavy].

¹⁵⁷ [A fearful knocking].

¹⁵⁸ [Fifteen].

¹⁵⁹ [The running swelling].

¹⁶⁰ [A knocking in three several places at once].

¹⁶¹ [Sixteen].

hearing that the boy, meaning William Sommers, was in some torment, he went into the house of Thomas Porter and found the said boy in a fit in which he uttered to one Edward Garland these words, viz., 'Edward Garland, are you there? How do your children do? I will have one of them, even the youngest.' To which the said Garland answered, 'I defy the Devil for he can have no power over me, nor my children.'

And this Examinant says that, after a little time, the boy came to his senses and then, being asked whether he would rise, he answered that he would. And so the clothes being taken off, this examinant saw in his chest within his shirt a swelling or rising the size¹⁶² of a rat, which this examinant took hold of, and found it as soft to his feeling as a down pillow. And thinking to hold it firm, it presently moved. And then the boy said it was gone down into his leg. And this examinant says that he saw him at sundry times when divers of his members, his legs, arms and others were inflexible and exceedingly heavy, above nature, like iron. And this examinant, being asked to what purpose he came to¹⁶³ see the boy, said he came to be persuaded in his opinion, hearing such strange things and accidents.

(17) W. Hunt, baker, of the town of Nottingham, sworn and examined, deposes and¹⁶⁴ says that he did see W. Sommers in his fit lying for dead, to his thinking. In this fit, he heard a voice proceed from the said Sommers. And his lips were closed shut. And he¹⁶⁵ did neither move his lips nor jaws to his understanding. And he continued so speaking for the space of a quarter of an hour. And this deponent further says that, in the same fit, he did see a thing the size of a walnut running in the flesh of the said W. Sommers, about his face, forehead, and eyes, and so run about his face to his ear.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² [The running swelling].

¹⁶³ [Members inflexible and heavy].

¹⁶⁴ [Seventeen].

¹⁶⁵ [Speech mouth shut].

¹⁶⁶ [The running swelling].

The several answers of W. Power, John Pepper, John Cooper, and Nicholas Shepherd, on certain questions propounded to them for the discovery of the practices with W. Sommers to cause the said W. Sommers to affirm his dissembling of possession.

(1) William Power, gentleman of the town of Nottingham, sworn and examined, says that John Cooper, being asked by this examinant whether the said W. Sommers was a counterfeit or not, did say that when Master Darrell cast out the Devil, he had not appointed him any place to go to, but 'we have sent him into a herd of swine at the town's end,' or words to that effect. These words were spoken about amonets [sic] past.

(2) John Pepper, tailor, of the town of Nottingham, sworn and examined, says that he did hear the said John Cooper say that when Master Darrell had cast out the Devil, he had not appointed him any place to go into, 'but now that I have cast him out, I have sent him into a herd of swine, and now he will come no more,' or words to that effect.

(3) John Cooper of St John's in Nottingham, and one of the keepers of the said Sommers, sworn and examined, says that he did not know any who persuaded the said Sommers to confess himself to be a dissembler, except this examinant himself threatened to whip him. He also confesses that one Wilkinson and two others came to the house of St John's about eight or nine o'clock at night, and he, thinking it an unlawful hour, would not allow them to come to the boy. But he said he would indict him if he came on the ground, for he was not his friend. This examinant also says that he never knew one Nicholas Aire to have access to the boy to his knowledge. This examinant further says that it is true that there was an ointment brought to the said boy by Nicholas Shepherd, one of his keepers, appointed thereunto

by William Gregory, the Mayor's Clerk, with which the said Sommers was anointed, because he might be the more nimble to show his tricks. But he did not hear words of charm at the anointing of the said boy. He also confesses that he said that Master Darrell has cast out the Devil, as he says, but has not assigned any place to go into, but he had sent him to Colwick hill.

This examinant also says that the said boy, since his coming to St. Johns, had no fits, save three times, one immediately after his coming, and the last when some of the wives came to the house. And then he fell down. But after this examinant had put the said wives out of the house and given him some words of correction, he presently arose.

(4) Nicholas Shepherd, fletcher, of the town of Nottingham, sworn and examined, says that he never knew of any promises made or other matter used to the said boy to make him to say that he counterfeited. But in one of the boy's fits, he himself threatened to have a pair of pinchers to pinch him by the toes if he used those tricks. But he reminded him that Master Jackson promised that if he would declare the truth, he would be good to him and help him to service in London. This examinant also confesses that Master Hurt, Master Jackson, and Master Freeman, Aldermen, and William Gregory, the Mayor's Clerk, desiring to have the boy do some of his tricks, answered that his leg was so sore that he could not show them. And the said Gregory commanded that some ointment might be given him, which this examinant did. And the boy anointed his knee and gave some to his sister to anoint her finger which was strained.

A Brief of the aforesaid depositions, proving
that William Sommers of Nottingham of the age of
twenty years was possessed by Satan, and did not
counterfeit as some pretend.

(1) There seemed to run along his leg and thence into his toe, belly, throat, tongue, cheek, eye, and other parts, a lump, sometimes less, sometimes bigger than an egg, being soft, deposed by eleven, sixteen, seventeen.

(2) The lump being in his leg, it was heavy and inflexible like iron, by four, the sixth, twelfth, fourteenth, sixteenth.

(3) He had such extraordinary strength that sometimes three, four, five, six or more were scarcely able to rule him, deposed by six, the second, sixth, ninth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth.

(4) When four or five struggled with him so that they were wearied, he did not sweat, pant, or change colour, deposed by three, the ninth, eleventh, thirteenth.

(5) He wallowed, gnashed with his teeth, stared with his eyes, and foamed at his mouth excessively. By five, the second, fifth, ninth, twelfth, thirteenth.

(6) There seemed to run under the coverlet where he lay, as it were kitlings, to the number of four or five, deposed by three, the second, sixth, tenth.

(7) His face and mouth fearfully distorted, one lip towards one ear and the other toward the other, deposed by three, the fifth, sixth, thirteenth.

(8) His face turned directly backwards, not moving his body at all, by two, the sixth, thirteenth.

(9) His neck doubled under him, by Richard Mee, the thirteenth.

(10) His body doubled, his head between his legs, suddenly plucked around like a round brown loaf, cast up like a ball from the bed three or four times together, half a yard high, deposed by Joan Pic, six.

(11) Being cast into the fire against the walls and iron bars of the chimney with great violence, and there lying sometimes, he received no appearance of hurt at all, deposed by three, the sixth, twelfth, thirteenth.

(12) His body seemed to be extended to the height of the tallest man when once he endeavoured to hang himself, deposed by Joan Pic, six.

(13) He told of divers things done in his absence, without notice given by any person, deposed by two, the sixth and thirteenth.

(14) Strange speeches uttered by him in his fits in a strange voice, that he was his, that he was God, Christ, and a King, that he made Baptism and 'I will use Sommers' tongue and member for three days,' **EGO SUM REX, EGO SUM DEUS,** that there was no God, that he was King and Prince of darkness. Also before Master Darrell had seen him, he said, 'Darrell comes, Darrell comes. He will have me out, but I will come again, for Nottingham and Lenton are jolly towns for me,' deposed by the second, seventh, thirteenth, fourteenth.

(15) Being recovered out of his fits, he knew not what he had said or done, by the sixth, eleventh.

(16) In his fits, strange smells were in the place where he lay, by the sixth and thirteenth.

(17) A strange knocking perceived about his bed in his fits, both his feet and hands being held unmoveable, by four, the second, sixth, fourteenth, fifteenth.

(18) He cried hideously, sometimes like a bull, bear, swine, and in a small voice impossible to be counterfeited, by three, the second, ninth, thirteenth.

(19) His leg would be crooked with his falls, and remain inflexible, by two, the first, thirteenth.

(20) He spoke in a continuous speech, his mouth being wide open, his tongue drawn into his throat, neither lips, nor jaws moving, by four, the sixth, seventh, eighth, twelfth.

(21) He spoke a quarter of an hour together, his mouth being closed shut, by the seventeenth.

(22) In his fits, his temples and pulses did not beat, he lay for dead, cold as ice, deposed by the ninth, fourteenth.

(23) His eye was black, and changed colour in his fits, by the third, fourth, thirteenth.

FINIS

The puritan martyr
The story of Mary Glover

In the early evening of Thursday 16 December 1602, Satan departed from fourteen-year-old Mary Glover, the daughter of the staunchly Puritan Timothy Glover, merchant of Thames Street in London. Life returned to her body, and lifting her hands up high, she cried out ‘He is come, he is come’, and then, ‘The comforter is come. O Lord, you have delivered me.’ These were the words of her Grandfather, Robert Glover, we are informed, as he was going to be executed by burning.¹

Mary Glover was the granddaughter of Robert Glover, burned at Lichfield during the reign of Mary on 20 September 1555. For the Puritan John Swan, Mary, like her grandfather, is the victim of persecution both demonic and official. Swan’s anger, like that of John Darrell and George More, is directed against Samuel Harsnett in his capacity as Chaplain to Richard Bancroft the Bishop of London, and discrediter of exorcists, both Catholic and Protestant. Harsnett had referred to Swan, along with three other Puritan ministers involved in the dispossession of Mary, as ‘devil-finders and devil-puffers, or devil-prayers’ in his *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*.² It was both this defamation and Harsnett’s belief that ‘the opinions of witches [to] be brainless imaginations’³ that motivated Swan to give us his very detailed account of a Puritan exorcism.

In prefacing his work with a letter to King James I, Swan was no doubt optimistic that he would receive a sympathetic hearing. Being familiar with James’ *Daemonologie*, he was aware of the King’s belief in the reality of witchcraft and possession.⁴ And he knew that the details of Mary Glover’s

¹ Swan, 1603, p. 47 (see below, p. 318.) And see Townsend, 1965, vol.7, pp. 398–9.

² Brownlow, 1993, p. 331. ³ Brownlow, 1993, p. 2. See also p. 68.

⁴ See James, 1597. James had maintained the reality of possession, and the effectiveness of prayer for deliverance. James was soon to become more sceptical about possession. In *Counterblast to Tobacco* in 1604, he wrote that if tobacco could chase out devils it would serve as a relic ‘both for the superstitious Priests, and the insolent Puritans, to cast out devils withal.’ See Kittredge, 1956, p. 319.

possession were to be written up by two others, 'learned and Christian',⁵ to dispel the theory of Edward Jorden that Mary was only suffering from Hysteria.⁶

Swan was aware too that the genuineness of Mary Glover's possession had been legally attested to.⁷ In early December 1602, Elizabeth Jackson had been found guilty of bewitching Mary Glover, and was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and to stand four times on the pillory and confess her offence. And Swan had also the support of the presiding judge, Lord Anderson, that Mary Glover was the victim of a supernatural and not a natural malady. 'Divines, Phisitions', he declared, 'I know they are learned and wise, but to say this is natural, and tell me neither the cause, nor the cure of it, I care not for your judgement. Give me a natural reason, and a natural remedy, or a rush for your physick.'⁸

At the end of April 1602, Mary was sent on an errand by her mother to Elizabeth Jackson. Accusing Mary of malicious gossip, Elizabeth cursed her, hoping that 'an evil death will come upon her'.⁹ Mary immediately felt ill. The following Monday afternoon, after another confrontation with Elizabeth, she became speechless and blind, her neck and throat swollen and misshapen. For the next eighteen days, she had fits three or four times a day, was unable to eat, and was sufficiently ill for her parents to have the church bell rung for her. Elizabeth Jackson rejoiced publicly in her impending death.

Mary became increasingly ill, progressively showing all the symptoms of possession – immobility of her body, foul breath, the extension of her neck, a gaping and distorted mouth, swellings which moved from her stomach to her throat, violent movements, and so on. Mary had 'ordinary fits' every second day until the time of her dispossession, and 'extraordinary fits' in the presence of Elizabeth Jackson. These latter were characterised by ventriloquism: 'the mouth being fast shut, and her lips closed, there came a voice through her nostrils, that sounded very like (especially sometimes) "Henge her", or "Honge her." The repetition of this never ceased

⁵ Swan, 1603, p. 4 (see below, p. 294). This is probably the manuscript "Mary Glover's Late Woeful Case" (MS Sloane 831) in the British Library by the physician Stephen Bradwell. Michael MacDonald conjectures that the second author may have been William Scott, a barrister of the Inner Temple, who wrote a narrative of the case used by Bradwell. See MacDonald, 1991, p. xxvi.

⁶ See Swan, 1603, pp. 3–4, 63 (see below, pp. 293–4, 326). See also Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (London, 1603), in MacDonald, 1991.

⁷ See Swan, 1603, p. 59 (see below, p. 324). ⁸ Bradwell, in MacDonald, 1991, p. 29.

⁹ Bradwell, in MacDonald 1991, p. 3. The account of Mary is based on Bradwell, the main source of our knowledge of Mary's possession up until her deliverance. It needs to be read as an account committed to the genuine bewitchment of Mary by Elizabeth, and constructed with this end in mind.

so long as that Elizabeth Jackson was to be found within the compass of that roof; and she no sooner departed the house, but the voice ceased presently.¹⁰

These extraordinary fits became public spectacles. They occurred on all those occasions when Mary and Elizabeth were brought together: at the house of Mary's Uncle William Glover, a former Sheriff; in front of Sir John Harte, a former Lord Mayor; before Lady Bruckard and many divines and physicians; at the Inner Temple, in the chambers of the Recorder John Croke who staged a whole series of activities to test the authenticity of Mary's possession; and finally, on the first day of the trial of Elizabeth Jackson on 1 December 1602.

On that day, Mary was brought to the Sessions house to give evidence against Elizabeth who had been indicted on a charge of witchcraft. Although unaware of Elizabeth's presence, Mary fell into a fit and was carried out of the chamber by three strong men who affirmed that 'they never carried a heavier burden'.¹¹ Later, Lord Anderson, the Recorder, Sir William Cornwallis, Sir Jerome Bowes, and other judges paid her a visit. After considering the stiffness of her body, the Recorder burned her hand with lighted paper until it blistered, without Mary returning to normal consciousness. Upon Elizabeth Jackson's entry to the room, the voice in Mary could again be heard saying 'Hang her.' Upon Elizabeth being forced to touch Mary, her body was thrown around violently. Jackson was unable to say parts of the Lord's Prayer, and struggled with the Creed.

The trial continued with the medical evidence divided. Doctors Hering and Spencer testified to her illness being supernatural, 'having stranger effects, than either the mother [i.e. hysteria], or any other natural disease has ever been observed to bring forth'.¹² Doctors Argent and Jorden, and a Divine Doctor Meadowes, argued that she suffered from a merely natural disease, more specifically incurable hysteria. Judge Anderson, convinced the land was about to be overwhelmed by witches, was not persuaded by Argent, Meadowes, and Jorden, the agents of Bishop Bancroft, and Elizabeth Jackson was found guilty.

Fifteen days later, on 16 December, John Swan, five other preachers, and eighteen others¹³ met at Mistress Ratcliffe's in Shoreditch. The deliverance ritual began around 7.30 in the morning, with the preachers taking it in turns to preach and pray. It was a day in which Mary was expected to have her ordinary fits. This day the pains began four or five hours earlier, at

¹⁰ Bradwell, in MacDonald, 1991, p. 19.

¹¹ Bradwell, in MacDonald 1991, p. 23.

¹² Bradwell, in MacDonald 1991, p. 27.

¹³ They are listed at the beginning of the text.

nine in the morning. Mary remained comfortable however until after two in the afternoon, when her fits began, different in sequence, length, and intensity to those of other days. Mary's fits have an apocalyptic resonance. Satan's expected increase in wrath before the end of the world (Rev.12.12) and before his ultimate cosmic defeat is replicated in the body of Mary. 'I imagine', declared John Swan, 'that his malice was rather grown greater towards the end of his kingdom. And so it fell out.'¹⁴ The preacher Bridger invokes the eschatological imagery of Christ's overcoming Leviathan, the lion and the adder, and the dragon.¹⁵

Mary's body is thus the site of an apocalyptic struggle between God and Satan. The rhetoric of warfare predominates. 'The battle seemed to be more fearfully renewed', wrote Swan.¹⁶ Evans was again called upon to buckle on his harness 'as the heat of the battle increased'.¹⁷ Swan spoke of his falling back 'into the rear of the battle', and noted fear and trembling, tears and sobbing 'in the more ancient, expert, and experienced soldiers and Captains that were there'.¹⁸

Throughout the process of her dispossession, Mary's demonic fits alternated with her prayers and singing, the former the sign of Satan's power, the latter the sign of God's presence. Mary is a site of conflict, but also an active participant in her own deliverance. Hers was a good possession: 'many a hearty Amen was yielded to many points of her prayer'.¹⁹ She sees herself as an exemplar of pious resistance against the wiles of the Devil: 'give me victory against this my enemy', she prays, 'that I and others may rejoice and tell to others the great things that you have done for me.'²⁰ At the end of her day of deliverance, she is the ideal Puritan daughter. And this is how, Swan concludes, she remains: an example to the pious, an inspiration to the godly, and a warning to the sceptical.

Mary Glover and her supporters seem to have remained free from the immediate attentions of Harsnett and Bancroft. But their victory was short-lived. The new Church Canons of 1604 ruled that, without the special permission of his Bishop, no minister was to attempt 'upon any pretence whatsoever whether of possession or obsession, by fasting and prayer, to cast out any devil or devils, under pain of the imputation of imposture or cozenage and deposition from the ministry'.²¹ Officially, at least, possession and dispossession were now in the control of the established Church.

¹⁴ Swan, 1603, p. 21 (see below, p. 306).

¹⁶ Swan, 1603, p. 29 (see below, p. 310).

¹⁸ Swan, 1603, p. 34 (see below, p. 312).

²⁰ Swan, 1603, p. 38 (see below, p. 314).

¹⁵ See Swan, 1603, p. 43 (see below, p. 316).

¹⁷ Swan, 1603, p. 30 (see below, p. 310).

¹⁹ Swan, 1603, p. 24 (see below, p. 307).

²¹ Thomas, 1973, p. 579.

A true and brief report, of Mary Glovers
 vexation, and of her deliverance by the means of fasting
 and prayer. Performed by those whose names are
 set down, in the next page.

By John Swan student in Divinity

Psalm 34.6

This poor man cried, and the Lord heard Him,
 and saved him out of all his troubles.

Imprinted: 1603

These six were employed in preaching and prayer.

M {	Barber	M {	Skelton
	Evans		Bridger
	Lewes		Swan

These others were inhabitants, men and women, in and about London.

Rob.	Oliver	Hen.	Hale
Joh.	Badger	Joh.	Palmer
Joh.	Bradshaw	Pet.	Barnslee
Rob.	Midnall	Tim.	Glover
Joh.	Leigh		the maid's
Joh.	Gawthren		father
	Barber		Bradshaw
Mistress {	Ratcliff	Mistress {	Bird
	Moore		Gawthren
	Hill		Glover, with

Her afflicted daughter Mary Glover.

Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

Acts 24.13.

I will hear you (said he) when your accusers come.

Acts 23.35.

To the King's most excellent Majesty,
my gracious Sovereign Lord.²²

It was far from my meaning, most dear and dread Sovereign, to have penned anything of this argument that ever might be presented to your Majesty's sight. But being herein ruled, or rather over-ruled by others, I am forced to offer it to your Highness, as it was intended and addressed for the common view of all. For neither would time permit me to cast it, as it were, into a new mould. Neither if it did, could I frame it in such a form as might abide your Highness's censure.

Notwithstanding, most gracious King, howsoever the manner of my indicting may be defective, yet the matter is such as is not unworthy a Prince's knowledge and protection. For the cause which is controverted concerns even the glory of Christ Jesus, of late manifested, and who can be a fitter judge in such a cause than a Prince, whose book, of the like case, proclaims his knowledge,²³ and whose princely disposition and resolution is to find out and maintain all truth.

Prostrating myself therefore on my bended knees, most wise and righteous Sovereign, I do, in the name of many others also, most humbly beseech your Highness to take knowledge hereof, and accordingly to take into your Majesty's protection both it and us who, having been employed therein, have been and are likely to be exposed to manifold molestations. For the cause has been blasphemed, our persons pursued, and our names

²² James VI. ²³ The reference is to King James's *Daemonologie* (Edinburgh, 1597).

traduced, and that openly in print by one S. H.,²⁴ a chaplain, as I take it, to the Bishop of London, whose evil dealings I think not fit to lay open to your Princely self, but have been bold, in hope of your Majesty's leave and favour, to deal with him and his book in another treatise. For I could not in silence let pass his speech wherein he terms the holy practice of prayer, used on the behalf of poor distressed creatures, Devil-puffing, and Devil-praying, as also that wherein he counts witches to be but Bull-beggars,²⁵ and the opinions of witchery to be brainless imaginations.

And herein, I am as it were enforced to fly to your Highness and appeal for protection, because, as I understand, they have not forborne to offer that immodest book to your Majesty's own hands, notwithstanding the same, in the twenty first chapter, page one hundred and thirty seven, line eight, gives a most dishonourable counterbuff to your Highness's treatise which handles that argument. But if they had been willing to have the truth of their controversy to appear, viz., whether there be any witches, or whether there may be any possessions and dispossessions in these days, they would have done better in my poor opinion, and more like Christian scholars, to have accepted an offer which was tendered to them by a worthy preacher.²⁶ Namely, to have the question handled by a set and solemn conference or disputation in either of the Universities rather than, with a heavy hand, a partial pen, and arguments of violence, to strive to overbear both the men and the cause, insomuch as it has been much marvelled at what the matter might be that has stirred them to this vehement and ill opposition in this and such other cases, whereby they have, as it were, even shaken the land. Yet, as I hear, they have now given over their first charge of this Mary Glover touching any counterfeiting. And now they maintain, and that especially by the means of a physician, that her affliction proceeded only from a natural cause, who has also written and published to that effect,²⁷ notwithstanding he could not be ignorant that two physicians of his acquaintance and College, as great scholars as himself, did try their utmost skill on her with their physical

²⁴ Samuel Harsnett.

²⁵ Imaginary terrors.

²⁶ [Master John Ireton].

²⁷ Edward Jordan, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (London, 1603).

remedies, yea, with some practices beyond good art, for the space of nine or ten weeks in the time of her deepest distress and, in the end, pronounced that her affliction did both exceed art and nature.

But the weakness of this man's opinion is ready to be laid open by the labours of two other learned and Christian professors likewise of physick, who have also taken twenty times more pains, care, and diligence about the afflicted party in time of her vexation to find out the truth than this man has done. This book of theirs, handling the means of her first being taken, the manner of her strange and fearful fits during the space of almost eight months, the proceeding in judgement against the witch, the evidence brought in against her, the grievous affliction of the maid even in the presence of the Court, and sentence of the Recorder, not yet fully executed, I know not on what cause, will, I hope, fully give information and content to any indifferent reader, notwithstanding I am not ignorant that one, very lately at Paul's Cross, spoke much to the taxing of the Judge, jury, and witnesses, and clearing or acquitting the witch.

Thus, while these and other more weighty controversies continued undecided amongst us, God has been provoked at last to begin a controversy with us, by sending a contagious sickness, that has turned our triumph into days of heaviness, the which, when and where it will cease, he only knows. The Lord makes us all wise-hearted, by redressing what is amiss in public and private, to meet him soon, especially such as those whose arms he has strengthened to that end, and that in the meantime, leave and liberty may be had for the inferiors to meet together without fear of men, in choice companies, either publicly or, if that be not thought meet in this so infectious a time, in private families according to their desires to humble themselves by prayer and fasting, so that God may be pleased to call back his Angel, whom he has sent out to smite us.

The God of Heaven and earth, who has most happily blessed England in thus bringing your Majesty to sit upon the Royal throne, grant to the same the happiness of David, the wisdom of Solomon, the zeal of Josiah, that your Highness and your Majesty's posterity may live and reign for

ever, high and honourable instruments, for the great things of God's glory, both in Church and Commonwealth, to your endless renown and eternal happiness.

Your Majesty's humble and
loyal subject

John Swan.

A true and brief report, of the grievous vexation by Satan, of Mary Glover of Thames Street in London: and of her deliverance from the same, by the power of the Lord Jesus, blessing his own ordinance of prayer and fasting.

I must bend myself to brevity in this discourse. For if I should dilate of all actions, prayers, accidents, circumstances, with the effects, issues, or events of that work which I intend to lay a little open, I would rather write a volume than be answerable to the title of this treatise, which presently I have prefixed. For the action being begun about eight o'clock in the morning and not ended until after seven at night, the time between was wholly and carefully bestowed, most of the company not moving out of the room the whole time, in such a way that not one quarter of an hour was free from employment in some action of the ministers, who were continually either the mouth of God to us in delivering sweet and apt meditations fitting the time and present occasion, raised out of the blessed and comfortable word of God, or else were the mouth of us to send up our prayers and supplications, our sighs and groans, to God. It may easily be conjectured to what a great bulk a book would rise if a man would strive to set down the sum of each sermon, the contents of each prayer, the actions and affections of the party afflicted and most of all interested in this work. All these, as they are great in importance, divers in variety, and comfortable in the issue, so it may be rightly conjectured that the just report of them all cannot fall within the compass of the memory of anyone present, much less of him to whom the task was committed. Notwithstanding being encouraged by the exhortations of the reverend brethren, and strengthened by their promises of adding their helping hands when this my first draft would be offered to their view, he has

undertaken to write of the matter, as God will enable and his blessed Spirit give direction, which I humbly crave to be granted for Christ's sake.

And seeing I am purposed to handle this matter in the best way I can to the end you might be the more fully made acquainted with all that was done therein, it is not unfitting, and good order requires it, that I should also let you know what the ministers did to prepare and sanctify themselves to so great and holy a work the day before. Myself, I confess, was not at this their meeting. I knew not then of their purpose. But hearing overnight of the next day's action, I so fitted myself to it that, that morning, I was the third person that arrived in the room where the work was performed, yet with the purpose, as God knows, to be but a beholder, and to join in the affections of my heart with the prayers of the rest, and to be partaker of their preaching. And so I would have sat still, had I not been drawn out of my place, as I am sure many there present can testify.

But touching their preparation, which I am now ready to report although I was not, as I said, present at it, yet I had it from one of them that could best tell. And having read it before the others, I find it confirmed by their testimonies.

By consent of the godly ministers, at the pressing request of the parents of Mary Glover, it was decided that there should be one day set apart, and that presently for good reasons, for prayer and fasting, so that by humble supplication God might be entreated to have mercy on them and on his distressed servants of that family, especially on the maid herself who was the occasion of the others' grief. After that, it was agreed that the ministers who were to be employed in the action should meet together on Tuesday the fourteenth of December to advise of the order that, among themselves, they would observe both in prayer and preaching. This being accomplished, it was thought good that one should be appointed who would, the night before the exercise, prepare the company that would be partakers with the ministers in that needful and holy action.

At the time appointed for this preparation, with much ado, they met, some ten or twelve, at Master Glover's house in Thames Street. There

they continued for a time, and then the preacher²⁸ that was appointed first prayed God to direct him to speak and the people to hear, and all to prepare themselves that they might be fitted to come before the God of Heaven. That done, he framed some words of exhortation to repentance, and especially to an earnest humiliation of their souls and bodies before the Lord, that he, seeing them, especially those that were most interested in the distressed, truly humbled, might in mercy and goodness lift them up, by giving deliverance and granting comfort in his good time, in what manner and measure it pleased him, and that not for any other sake but that of his own truth and promise.

The ground of his exhortation was the tenth verse of the fourth chapter of Saint James: 'Cast down yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up,' which consists of a commandment, 'Cast down,' and of a promise, 'To exalt.'

He showed the necessity of the former, if we mean to enjoy the latter, first by the commandment of God, and secondly in regard of ourselves, who could not otherwise be cured, being naturally too much advanced in some vain conceits of our own goodness. He described the nature and property of this grace and work. He noted the way to come by it, namely, first by serious meditation in the law of God that lays open our sins and God's judgements, secondly by observing the judgments of God on others and on ourselves, thirdly by prayer and other outward means sanctified for that purpose. Fourthly, he showed that, if a man will be truly humbled, he must cast his eyes on God's mercies. For fear may astonish and judgements may terrify, but they cannot work true humility unless God in favour do work it by his Spirit and the ministry of grace. And therefore the said preacher joined this grace to true conversion, as a fruit to his own tree. And this was the sum of the first part, namely, of humbling or casting down, saving that somewhat was added for the sincerity and continuance in this grace of God, because the Apostle says, 'In the sight of God.'

Touching the second part, he observed the verity and constant truth of this promise, and so the excellency of it, by considering the nature and will

²⁸ [Master Skelton].

of the promiser, secondly by the gracious effects and works of mercy and truth shown to all his Saints, Abraham, David, Joseph, and our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of our salvation. Here he thought it needful to exhort that, having this promise of help and of honour, we should not abuse it, neither prescribing to God the time when to perform it since he has said it will be in due time, 1 Peter 5.6, nor the means, since his wisdom is unsearchable and knows how to do it with means or without means; or else by fainting in ourselves by the consideration of our unworthiness and sin, forasmuch as God respects his own glory, his truth and promise in this work, and not our worthiness or the measure of our faith and repentance. For we have in us the worthiness of Christ. And so he concluded with prayer agreeable to this speech as near as he could.

The time when this exercise began was about six o'clock at night. They continued in prayer, in hearing and speaking for somewhat more than an hour, none using either prayer or speech at this time, but only the minister who was the mouth of God to the rest, and of the rest to God, joining with him in prayer, and reverently attending the actions in hand. The maid and her Mother sat near the preacher, religiously hearkening to both in the time of exhortation and prayer. The Father in the time of prayer did send forth many hearty sighs which so concurred with the words then uttered to that purpose, that it might be thought by others that the preacher purposely pointed at him in his speech and prayer. The action being ended, the maid and her Mother came and, with sober countenance and gesture, gave thanks to the preacher. This done, they departed with mutual consents to meet the next morning at the time and place appointed which was not in the same house of Master Glover, but in another place far distant, for the more quiet and security to perform that good work of prayer and supplication which now I am presently to go in hand withal.

On Thursday the sixteenth of December 1602, there met together in a certain place²⁹ a company of such as feared God to the number of about twenty four, whereof six were preachers, besides the party afflicted. They humbled themselves by fasting and prayer all the day long before the presence

²⁹ [Mistress Ratcliff's in Shoreditch].

of our great, glorious, and most gracious God. In the end they were sent away not empty but most joyful, in that their desires were heard, mercy obtained, and their hopes and longings satisfied. Thus of the whole action in general, now of the same in a more particular way.

About seven o'clock in the morning, before it was full daylight, there were some few of us come to the place where, having stayed some half hour, more were assembled and, amongst others, the parents of the afflicted maiden. Having brought her to the house, they presented her in the chamber, causing her as I remember to come first into the room. The maiden came into the place, not led or supported by any, with very sober countenance, yet such as revealed affliction of mind and torment of body formerly sustained. And performing very seemly and proper reverence to such as were present, she went and took her place on a low stool at a bedside, close to the fire. And so she sat down, having a Bible in her hand which she either brought with her or was then and there given to her, whereof she made use as long as she could by turning to such chapters as were handled or such quotations as were cited. In so doing, if she at any time failed, either by grief of body, or infirmity of mind or concentration, or by failing of sight, which seemed sometimes so to be by the rubbing of her eyes with her hand, then a woman sitting by was always ready in that behalf to help her, especially at the instance of the preachers who, directing their speeches many times to her by name, would call on her to turn to the place alleged and so would stop till she had found it.

In the meanwhile, namely, after her coming into the chamber until it was fully eight o'clock, for so long we waited expecting the coming of an ancient humble-hearted preacher whose presence we much longed for, one of the preachers³⁰ made motion to spend a little time till all were come in reading some parts and portions of the word of God by meditation, whereof each one might privately make such observations and raise up such thoughts that by their means we might be the better fitted to the work following. And so, having first prayed, he did to this end read the fourth and fifth chapters of James, and after them he read the fifty first Psalm throughout. Having done

³⁰ [Master Skelton].

this, to help us, he pointed to some principal or special points therein that seemed to him most meet to be observed for the present purpose, and so again concluded with prayer agreeable. This being finished, the hour of eight was come, and the company was such as gave comfort and encouragement to begin.

Then the first preacher³¹ did set hand on the work and, preparing himself to it, framed his speech for the addressing of us to the more dutiful and religious carriage of ourselves in the action, humbling us by prayer, confessing our sins, our weakness and unworthiness, begging pardon, craving gracious assistance, and a happy issue of our enterprise, for Christ Jesus's sake, who is blessed for ever, Amen.

The prayer being finished, he took for his text Psalm 50.15, 'Call on me in the day of trouble, so will I deliver you, and you will glorify me,' wherein the parts observed were: 1. a precept to call; 2. the party on whom; 3. the time when; 4. The promise of deliverance; 5. A duty thereupon to be yielded.

For the first, we are not only allowed, or exhorted to call if we wish, but commanded to do it, as a part of God's worship. For the second, he noted in the party to be called on, wisdom in seeing all things, willingness to hear, and power to help. And in the first point of his wisdom, he urged his all-seeing eye. And pressing the same point on the parents and on the poor maid by name, to rip up the secrets of their lives touching their lives already spent, the poor soul the daughter began to weep. Yet, composing herself, she endured all his speech, even to the end of his morning sermon, whereof let it suffice to have reported thus much, saving that he further added this, that God did see our wants before we ask, he prepares our hearts to beg and then bends his ear to hear. His sermon being done, he ended with an effectual and suitable prayer to the purpose, having spent in prayers and preaching some hour and a half. And truly, touching the man, and so of the rest, I speak not to flatter. I write in the fear of God to gain glory to his Majesty, and not praise to men, to whom belongs nothing but shame. I knew him long before, but I knew him not so, having never heard him

³¹ [Master Lewes].

before. And here, I appeal to his heart and so to the others that succeeded in prayers and preaching, whether they did not that day find in themselves an extraordinary presence and supply of God, his gracious and powerful Spirit in them, in the performance of these most holy and reverent actions.

After this action of preaching and prayer ended, the poor creature being pale and wan-coloured was asked by her Mother and others how it fared with her. She acknowledged that she felt pain in her body. And she wept and prayed to God to be merciful to her and to help her, and said withal that she could and would endure further proceeding in the former exercise. And so she sat for a while rubbing hard, or stroking down with her hand, her left side and flank.

Then succeeded the second preacher,³² who would have begun the exercise himself if he had come on time. But he came a little after the action was entered into by the first preacher. This man did happily second the first, and that presently without intermission, beginning with a most sweet, mild, according to his disposition, long, earnest, and powerful prayer. Having done this, he took for his text Matthew 11.28, 'Come to me all you that are weary and laden, and I will ease you.' Having read this, he observed in it first, an allurement to come, secondly, the party to whom, thirdly, the parties that should come, and lastly, a promise of ease. Of all these parts, I could report somewhat. But as I said, I must apply myself to be brief. Only this, as I remember, he pressed most, at least it made most impression on me, the third part, viz. of the parties that should come. These were such as, in time of their wantonness, could not or would not intend it, but being pressed with afflictions purposely sent are ready to come to the hand that gave the wound, whose drift was also herein, to get occasion to make show of his skill and good will to heal. Further, he noted that there be a great many that are laden with sin but not wearied with the burden thereof. So, ending again with prayer containing points agreeable to his text and fitting the present occasion, he made an end of that his talk.

Then he himself, in the mildness of his charitably disposed mind, asked the maid how she did. And perceiving her to wax pale-coloured, weeping,

³² [Master Evans].

and answering faintly, he made motion that there might be a little pause that everyone that wished might walk down a while and refresh themselves. Divers went, but more remained behind, and amongst them myself, who came on purpose to mark as precisely as possibly I could all the actions and circumstances of that day's work. In this meantime, I observed her sitting, weeping bitterly, wringing her hands extremely, complaining of unaccustomed pain, yea casting out words of fear that God would not hear us in calling on him for her, so wretched a creature. This circumstance I do the more willingly retain and insist on, to meet with a project of the opposite Doctor of physick,³³ who lays it down for a ground, that many are cured of strange diseases, even of the Mother,³⁴ with a very bare conceit or apprehension that prayer and fasting will do them good. For this poor creature, as hereby you see, was so far from having embraced any such strong imagination that she uttered words of doubt, distrust, yea of dreadful despair. But to return, I will observe this withal, that all this pause was not above the space of less than a quarter of an hour.

Here it is fit that this also should not be omitted, namely, that she felt pains this day before the accustomed hour. For now they came about nine o'clock, which was four or five hours before the usual time of her fits, which were wont to keep their returns as due as the tide. And again, when the vehemency of the fit began to seize on her this day which was also her fit day, being every second day, it began somewhat after the ordinary time, which was wont to be two o'clock in the afternoon. And again, the said vehemency of the fit, when this day it was come, kept not the like course as usually before it had done. For first, in former fits, blindness invaded her. And so also it was this day when the fit came after two o'clock. And this blindness was accompanied with a pale dead colour of face and eyes closed, yet so as you might perceive the whites of them to be turned up. Secondly followed dumbness which also was so now. But herein they differed, that the former blindness and dumbness having once seized on her, she never came to have freedom of speech till the whole fit was ended which was about eleven o'clock at night. But now they gave place by turns. Thirdly

³³ That is, Edward Jorden. ³⁴ Hysteria.

succeeded a heaving or swelling in the belly, breast, and throat. Fourthly, on this day, followed the wagging of her cape, which stirred much up and down, not with over hasty motions but with some leisure. Fifthly, deadness of the left side, with inflexible stiffness of leg, arm, hand, and fingers. These were also now. But they made not the like coming and going, neither did they follow each other in their ordinary kind of sequence. So that, as one³⁵ sets down in his notes, there was no coherence to this day's affliction with her former fits or passions. And thus much, as it were by the way, of the disparity of this day's vexation from the perturbations or torments which she had sustained before.

Hitherto, she had sat on a stool by the bedside when, at her first arriving, she had taken her place. But now, she was advised to change her place and to sit in the middle of the chamber in a low wicker chair, with her face towards the fire and her left side towards the preacher. Then the aforesaid ancient preacher called for a new supply of a third man³⁶ who in much modesty began to pray. And having fruitfully finished the same, he read a large text, namely, Daniel the ninth, from the first to the end of Daniel's prayer, verse 19. Pointing to points going before and running over that which he had read, he delivered very good and pertinent observations, which the very context of the chapter does plainly offer, and a man exercised in the scriptures may raise in his own meditations, if he will advisedly and with reverence read over the same. And therefore, as I also will be brief I pass it over. Thus, ending again with a comfortable prayer agreeable to his humbled spirit, in which prayer he remembered, amongst other things, the power of David's sling in overthrowing Goliath who defied the heart of Israel, he ceased for that time.

By this time, as I remember, it was past twelve o'clock. And now divers of the company called on the preachers still to be doing, and not to give the Lord any rest until he had heard us, much less to give Satan any rest to harbour where he did. And in this behalf, one of them, I know not who, put us in remembrance that 'When Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed, but when he held them down, Amalek prevailed,' Exodus 17.12.³⁷

³⁵ [Robert Midnall].

³⁶ [Master Bridger].

³⁷ It should read Exodus 17.11.

Hereupon, there was a little straining of courtesy whose turn should be next, either to pray or to preach. Then a fourth preacher³⁸ succeeded in prayer, who besides the special points of the other prayers fitting the present occasion, as namely that it would please God to cast a mouzell,³⁹ that was his word, on the jaws of that raging lion that goes about seeking to devour. He also complained that, amongst all the miseries that poor men are plunged into by means of sin, they should be subject to such a judgement as this was. Yet he raised comfort in that there was a victorious lion of the tribe of Judah, stronger than he, &c. I say, besides the ordinary points of the prayers, he complained that we might not, but in fear of men, meet together to perform such duties, and such means as God has sanctified, and the Church heretofore practised in such cases, for relief and recovery of poor creatures distressed in this kind. And so much for his prayer.

Then he that preached the first sermon⁴⁰ at eight o'clock in the morning returned to his text, taken out of Psalm 50.15 as before is said. But first he prayed effectually for graces necessary for himself, the afflicted party, and for the benefit of us all there present, yea and for all the servants of God wheresoever. That done, he repeated not much of that which in the morning he delivered but proceeded to handle the rest. And especially, as I thought, he bent his force to that point, namely, of the time when we should call on God, and that was, 'The needful time of trouble.' This he handled after this manner. Many are the troubles of the righteous, but sent of God that we might call more earnestly. And so, by him being delivered from them all, he might receive the thanks of all and for all favours. Here he noted also that the wicked had their share of troubles. But the troubles of the one and of the other differ greatly. For the one proceeds from a Judge, the other from a Father. The one is light and momentary, the other durable and the beginnings of greater woe. The one to correct, to purge, and to refine, the other to confound, to make more obstinate and inexcusable. Thus with prayer he also ended, as with prayer he began.

Now it was, as I remember and others in their notes observe, past two o'clock. Until this time, the maiden having remained in reasonably good

³⁸ [Master Barber]. ³⁹ muzzle. ⁴⁰ [Master Lewes].

peace and ease, I asked one what he thought of the matter. He answered that his hope was that we should have a calm still, nothing but fair weather, and that Satan would steal away like a thief. Whereunto I replied nothing, as one that could have been glad it might be so. But I doubted it, considering that his malice, who heretofore had raged in her, would not be so gentle as to be gone without a parting blow, but especially calling to mind the manner of his departing in those days when the power of doing miracles was given to the sons of men, which is now ceased, namely, that he used to rent, and tear, and leave for dead. And I imagined that his malice was rather grown greater towards the end of his kingdom. And so it fell out. For even a little after that time, the poor soul began to be senseless on one side, to be blinded, dead-coloured, and eye turned up, to be stiff in the left leg and arm &c. But these were not in such manner as in former times, both for their sequence and continuance, as I told you a little before. At which time, the good old preacher,⁴¹ even without entreaty, fell to prayer. And having continued therein a good while, the Mother who held the leg, and another who held the hand, acknowledged that natural liberties and motion began to come again, the preacher still continuing in his prayer. And anon, the poor creature began to gasp and to strive to speak. And within a while, she spoke somewhat. But I could not then perceive what, it was so softly uttered. And I, being further off, saw many laying their ears to her head to hear. But anon, her speech began to be louder and louder, so that I did very well hear a great deal more than I can remember. Yet that which I do remember, I will faithfully report, referring myself again to my brethren herein to be helped with their additions. The first word that she delivered when she began to labour to utter anything that was like speech was, 'Almost, almost', the accent being on the syllable 'Al'.

But first, before I begin to set down her prayer, let me observe a circumstance or two. Drops of tears did steal down the cheeks of many, oftentimes in the time of the sermons and prayers before mentioned, both from women and men, yea, the preachers themselves. But now, at the prayer of the damsel herself, they did abound. The preacher continued a while praying as he began,

⁴¹ [Master Evans].

and ceased not, although the maid's words were now waxing loud, for he likely thought she would presently have ceased. But she continued. This was thought to be confusing, and therefore he ceased and gave us leave to hearken to her. This we were very willing and glad to do, he or another saying further, 'Let her alone, you will see that she will do it herself. She will procure her own deliverance.'

I will come to report her prayer by and by, but first one thing more. I heard a gracious young gentleman⁴² (I knew him not, I had no acquaintance with him, they say he is one of the Inns of Court) who, having first heard her low voice and discerning what she said, hastened from her with blubbing cheeks, his tongue being scarcely able to be the messenger of his heart, overwhelmed with joy. But at last he broke out with the matter thus. 'I have seen her often heretofore in her fearful fits, but I never saw or heard that, being once entered into a first fit, she ever recovered free liberty of speech again until the last fit was ended,' which was also usually the most terrible, but remained both blind and dumb till then. This lasted commonly from before two o'clock in the afternoon until eleven or twelve at night. Well, her prayer goes on, and we give joyful attendance and silence to the same, saving that many a hearty Amen was yielded to many points of her prayer. This lasted about half an hour, she sitting all this while in her said chair and leaning backward, her face ruddy-coloured and directed upward, her eyelids a little opened, her hands both at once continually lifted up but not joined together, and presently falling down at the end of every period or perfect petition. She laboured so in it, and that with tears, that a little froth wrought out at the corners of her lips. And so she continued until, I think partly weariness of her weak body caused her to cease. So she rested. But as the event showed, she was then growing to a sharper fit which, being perceived, there then was one who very unwillingly was drawn to prayer. But before I speak of his prayer, I will discharge my promise concerning the report of hers, wherein I know I will fail in remembrance of many points, as also for the time when and in which of her prayers each request was made. For she used four prayers as you will hear afterwards. But that which I will set down

⁴² [Master Oliver].

will be such as I can safely bear testimony to, both for the matter and, I think, not much missing the words. And herein I will be the more plentiful, because in reporting her next succeeding prayers, I will peradventure refer to this, as containing many points which she afterwards did iterate and so ease myself of labour in writing, and the reader in perusing.⁴³

'O Lord, I beseech you, look on me your poor handmaid with the eyes of mercy. Have mercy on me for Jesus Christ's sake. Be merciful to me and pardon all my sins. Let them not stand up as a wall to stop and hinder your favours from me, but wash them all away in the death and bloodshed of Jesus Christ, your only, true, and dear Son. I have been a vile wretch and sinful creature, but deal not with me as I have deserved. Remember your own promise that, at whatsoever time a sinner does repent of his sins from the bottom of his heart, you will put all his wickedness out of your remembrance. O Lord, I repent of all my sins. I believe, help my unbelief. Grant comfort, Lord, comfort. You who are the God of all comfort and consolation, add strength Lord to my strength, rebuke Satan and help me.⁴⁴ O Lord, in mercy behold me and grant me deliverance, O Lord, deliverance, and that even now O Lord, if it be your blessed will. Nevertheless, not my will but your will be done. Give me patience O Lord, and strength to bear, and lay on no more, then I will be able to bear. And confirm my hope to be delivered when you will see it good. Give me grace to say as Job said, 'Though you kill me, yet will I put my trust in you,' and to say with your servant David, 'If you have no pleasure in me, behold here I am, do with me as pleases you.' Yet, O Lord, though you would let Satan kill my body, let him have no power over my soul. Let the same be precious before you. Nevertheless, grant if it be your will that I may one day rejoice with your servant David and say 'It is happy for me that I was in trouble.' And, O Lord, be merciful to her by whose means this trouble was brought on me. I forgive her with all my heart, even for all that has been done to me from the beginning. And I pray you, O Lord, to forgive her, to give her grace to see her sin and to repent, and to believe, that so she may be saved. Satan was herein your rod, O Lord, on me, and she but the instrument. And as for the rod,

⁴³ [Her first prayer]. ⁴⁴ [Her words were so].

when you have done with it, it will be cast into the fire. But the instrument that has been by that serpent abused, O Lord, have mercy on her and forgive her all her sins, even as I forgive her with all my heart. You know, Lord, that that which has been done against her has not been done of malice or desire of revenge on my part, but that the truth might be known, and so you to have the glory, and that I might be delivered from the slander of men. Hear me, O Lord, from Heaven and grant me these requests for Jesus Christ's sake, in whose name I further call on you as he has taught me saying, 'Our Father which is in Heaven,' &c. throughout to the end. After The Lord's Prayer, she added some few other short petitions, and so made an end. And let this suffice for report of the chief contents of her first prayer, which lasted about the space of half an hour. For, striving to proceed, she fell into another fit.

And then immediately, there was calling both by the preachers and people for a new man to the helm. And then there was drawn forth one,⁴⁵ being greatly urged thereunto, to pray. He yielded to that only, for indeed he meant not to be employed at all, but only to join in prayer with the rest of the company, and to be partaker with them of the word there taught and applied, as appeared by his keeping himself aloof. But being, as is said, urged by the preachers and company, he began his prayer with a meditation out of the speech of Jacob, Genesis 28. 16,17: 'Surely God is in this place, and I was not aware. How fearful is this place,' &c., applying the same thus, that this fear came on us, because the place being holy by the presence of God, we were unholy in the inclinations of our hearts continually. And so he pleaded for mercy by the mediation of him who in the days of his humiliation, being taught obedience by the things he suffered, did send up mighty cries and was heard in the things he feared. And therefore he, being a faithful High Priest and touched with our infirmities, could tell how to have mercy and help, Hebrews 4.15 and 5.7, &c. And in the process of his prayer, he began a little to alter the tune of the former doleful ditties, and began to thank God for mercies presently vouchsafed on the preachers in their sermons and prayers, yea, and on the poor maid whose tongue, being by his goodness let loose, had so spoken as before you heard. And

⁴⁵ [Swan].

therefore, he began to be bolder and to encroach on further favour saying that we would take this at God's hands as an earnest penny of further help. And therefore he prayed God to make perfect the good work which he had most graciously begun, that with comfort we might depart in the end, every man to his home. But behold, this proved but a triumph before victory. For even then the maid entered again into another fit, and the battle seemed to be more fearfully renewed. He therefore, rising from the cushion at the table, another took his place, namely, he⁴⁶ that read to us the fourth and fifth of James in the morning, the sum of whose prayer was, first, a confession of our unworthiness to appear before the God of Heaven to obtain mercy, secondly, an acknowledgement of the justice of God in punishing the world with bodily and spiritual chastisements, and therewithall he confessed that God for sins, even since our meeting, might justly withdraw his helping hand. Thirdly, he prayed for pardon, for favour and grace to us, to the distressed, present or elsewhere, in hearing our prayers, and the prayers of others and that, not for our humiliation's sake, for that was sinful as it came from us but for Christ's sake, to the glory of his own name, the profit and comfort of us all there assembled and the afflicted party, and to the stopping of all mouths opened against the truth of God. And lastly, he prayed for the comfort of all distressed souls who, hearing of God's goodness to his children, should see that it is not in vain to go to him in trouble and to cast our cares on him. Then was the old preacher⁴⁷ again called on to fight. He, buckling on his harness, began to cry for help, not because, he said, trouble was at hand, but because he saw it present and pressing on us. And so he proceeded with fervent vehemency as the heat of the battle increased. But now, alas, his free meditations were interrupted, being forced to cast his eyes oftentimes on the poor maid diversly distressed, as also being troubled with the confused outcries of the company. But still he continued, though now by snatches, as it were, and with imperfect periods. Yet, see God's good mercy who did not let this heaviness to lie long on us. For behold, even herewithal, the maid began again to gasp and strive for recovery, which caused the old man to say, 'Let everyone of us help her in our private prayers,

⁴⁶ [Master Skelton]. ⁴⁷ [Master Evans].

seeing a set order cannot be observed.' But in the time of his prayer, though she were deaf as we thought, yea, dumb and blind, yet she turned her body from him with all violence, and gaping, as if she could not abide him. So after a while she spoke. And the first word she uttered was as before with a weak, hollow and, as it were hoarse voice, yet reasonably loud, 'Once more, once more,' making her accent on the word once. And so she immediately proceeded to her second prayer, the matter and words whereof were, as I bear witness, for the most part like the former. But some things were added, both in this second prayer, and also in the third and fourth following whereof I will call to mind some points as well as I can. This second prayer also continued as long as the first, her voice waxing stronger, and she sitting still in the same chair, with the same position of body, countenance of face, and gesture of hands.⁴⁸

'O Lord, you have begun to be gracious to me. You have done more for me than I looked for. I beseech you, O Lord, perfect the work which you have begun, that you may have the praise, and these your children may be comforted. Let my prayers ascend up to your presence, and the prayers of these your servants, and all the prayers that this day are made for me in any other place. You have commanded us to call on you in the time of trouble, and have promised that you then will hear and so have the praise. Hear us therefore, O Lord, now calling on you in the needful time of trouble, so that hereafter I may praise you and magnify your name. Give me a heart to submit to your will and to wait on you. You know, O Lord, my affliction, and you can help me, for you are stronger than Satan. O Lord, now show your strength, and let us see your saving help. Put your power to my power, and⁴⁹ your will to my will. Fight for me, confound his malice, destroy his work, and darken the power of Satan, O Lord, and let him be trodden under feet like dirt (this was her very word). Let not my sins, O Lord, nor the sins of my parents come to remembrance, which have been the cause of this heavy chastisement laid on us. But, O Lord, give us true repentance, and blot out all our sins, that they rise not up in judgement against us, nor hinder your

⁴⁸ [Her second prayer].

⁴⁹ [Her words were so, and are well thus interpreted: Add more of your power to the power you have already given me, and your full will to accomplish that right desire which you have formed in me].

mercies at this time towards us. Comfort them, O Lord, and comfort me now after the time wherein you have smitten us that I, being strengthened, may strengthen others and that I, being delivered, may comfort others, with that comfort wherewith you have comforted me, so that you may have from many glory, praise, and thanksgiving, forever and forever, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, our only Lord and Saviour, Amen.'

This prayer, as I bear witness, was rather longer than the other which, being interrupted by the former infirmity coming on, she presently entered into a third fit, which also grew more grievous than the former. Then again, both preachers and people called for prayer. And then the unworthiest and weakest⁵⁰ was put to it again, who began with the speech of the prophet, that the fruit was come to the birth but there was no power to be delivered, &c.

And so bemoaning our weakness and calling for strength from the author of all power, he went on, stumbling and stuttering by means of the perplexity that he and the company and the poor creature were then in, rather powering out short requests than a set prayer, just as present trouble enforced. This done, he fell back into the rear of the battle, with purpose to strike no more strokes nor do any other service than by giving encouragement to those that fought, applause to their well doings, and to mark the variable inclinings of the combat. But yet, even then, he was thinking of a weapon or two, which he would have used if he had again been summoned to appear before the General. And true it is, there was some fearfulness noted in that party. But I hope it was not much offensive to God or to them that observed it. For I am sure that I also saw fear and trembling, yea tears and sobbing in the more ancient, expert, and experienced soldiers and Captains that were there. And again, let it be thought on what it is for dust and ashes to come before the high possessor of Heaven and earth, for sinners to come before him whose eyes cannot abide imperfections, yea, for sinners to be importunate, and that at such a time when terror seems to compass about on every side, and in such a series as seems exceedingly difficult to be obtained. To this purpose may be remembered that which was raised out of Daniel, of his consternation of mind and feebleness of body at such a presence. To conclude, I think that

⁵⁰ [Swan].

fear and trembling does better fit such business, than to be senseless, or without feeling of any such passions. Well, this feeble-spirited fellow being thus caused to retire, an old experienced soldier steps into the forefront.⁵¹ And he begins his prayer by calling to mind a saying of one of the prophets, namely, that 'Those that are the Lord's remembrancers, should not give him rest until he be moved to remember his people,' &c. Yet notwithstanding his courage in the process of his prayer, he disclosed a fear and a doubt of his own, namely, that if the Lord were not pleased to hear us at this time, that he would yet remember his own cause, his own glory, and the cries of his people, and pity and relieve and release the distressed estate of his poor creature when and where he will see fit to make more for the best, at the intercessions of himself and of other brethren. And yet this was the man who, a little after he was risen up, did give out the first victorious cry, 'He flies, he flies.' But on what occasion he so did, I cannot now call to mind. He pressed also the more to be heard, because Elias and such of God's people prevailed by prayers, who yet were men compassed with infirmities, as we were.

After him, immediately succeeded the aforesaid ancient preacher⁵² who, I must remember and I think he will acknowledge to be true, seemed to faint in his mourning. For, beginning his prayer, he bemoaned that the darkness of the night now coming on did much abate the comfort and courage of our minds and that, being not all this while heard, resulted from the weakness of our faith and coldness of our prayers, or from sins not repented of. And thereupon he prayed that if there were any present that came with unsanctified affections, or kept any such corruption secretly hid as Achan did, whose concealed sin injured the Lord's host,⁵³ he might be humbled, brought to repentance, and pardon obtained. And thus, all impediments removed, we might the better be heard and prevail. He also urged the Lord to hear us the rather, because we took no indirect course or unlawful means for remedy, but went directly to him who has all power in his hand to help and is ready to hear, yielding herein obedience to his ordinance, and relying on his promises, according also to the practice of his Church and children from time to time in such cases.

⁵¹ [Master Barber].

⁵² [Master Badger].

⁵³ See Joshua, ch.22.

About the time of his prayer, the afflicted patient began to revive, having in the time of this fit shown much torment by her arms distorted or writhed the outside inward, the left side of her body benumbed, both leg and arm, her fingers stretched out, and standing stiffly upright as inflexible as iron, as one that tested her presently reported, and called others to try, and since has delivered to me a note thereof under his hand. Her jaws were opening and closing very often without uttering any word. And thereupon a preacher called it a dumb spirit. Her eyes were shut, her belly greatly swollen and after that, her breast swelling up, her throat swelling, &c. And at last, after some striving to utter, she began again to speak as she did, even with those very words again repeated, 'Once more, once more,' not hastily pronounced, but with good pause and deliberation making, as I said, her accent on the word once. And then, sitting as before in her chair, she fell to her third prayer, which continued as long as the former and contained such requests for the most part, and that in such words, as are before mentioned. And yet, in this prayer, she had some points not touched before, as namely.⁵⁴

'O Lord, your mercies have been exceedingly comfortable to me. You have begun to be gracious. O Lord, be merciful to me still, and leave me not until you have set me free. Let your glory appear in my deliverance, and let Satan be confounded. Strengthen me, O Lord, against that Goliath. Your grace is sufficient for me. Give me power, and patience to attend at your leisure. Give me faith to believe your promises. Give me victory against this my enemy, that I and others may rejoice and tell to others the great things that you have done for me. I believe. Help my unbelief. You have taught me that if Satan is resisted he will fly. Now, Lord, give me strength to resist, so that he may fly and I, being delivered, may praise you, and others that hear of it may also magnify you and may always say, "The Lord be blessed who has done such things for the sons of men," and so learn to fear you and call on you and put their trust in your mercy,' &c.

This prayer, as I said, was drawn out much more in length, partly by way of repeating things formerly mentioned, and partly by supplying other petitions, which neither I nor the others can now call to mind. And here,

⁵⁴ [Her third prayer].

by the way, if in all her prayers she had beaten still on the same matters, and that even with the same words, she had had a good pattern of one who, being in anguish, went again and prayed and spoke the same words, Mark 14.39. And truly the preachers, if they had done so too, would have agreed with this that I have just said. And further, if it be a profitable thing to preach one thing often, it cannot be unprofitable to pray one thing often, the occasion thereof still remaining. But, to say the truth, the preachers had much variety of matter in all their prayers, neither can I call to mind many repetitions, except in the time of her extremities when set or continued prayers could not be admitted.

And now it was the time of about six o'clock at night. And now was come the hardest of all the day's labours, both in respect of the party's sufferings, the preachers' prayers with vehemency therein, the people's perturbation, her deliverance, her thanksgiving and our rejoicing. And now I perceive is come the heaviest part of my task, to marshal each matter in its due place, and to pen it accordingly. But hoping for the like assistance as has directed me hitherto, I thus begin afresh to set on the work.

Now, as I said, was she entered into her sharpest conflict. Now had Satan appalled her senses, especially benumbed the left side of her body. Now were her eyes fearfully turned upward, her tongue black and curled inward, her countenance ugly and distorted, her mouth excessively wide, gaping sometimes more in length upwards and sometimes again more stretched out in breadth. Her face was fierce, sometimes as if it were scornfully disdainful, sometimes terribly threatening, and so nodding her head and gaping at the women that stood or kneeled before her as if she would devour them. Then her head tossed from one shoulder to another, often, and severely and that with swiftness, and was sometime so far writhed to the one side, and stayed there so long that I feared it would have so remained.

Here, when the ancient preacher prayed God to rebuke this 'foul malicious Devil,' she suddenly turned to him, though blind and dumb and deaf, and did spew out froth at him. With her head, she sometimes bounced backward on the pillow which a preacher called for a little after the beginning of this fit. And so laying it on the top of the chair, he stood, and sometimes kneeled behind her with his arms under hers supporting her body. Then

she, with her foot and leg that was at liberty, stamped vehemently on the floor and, getting some hold or stay with her foot, she raised her body aloft, and forced backward both the chair and him that stood behind her, notwithstanding that he and others resisted strongly, while certain of the women were busily employed in holding her down from beneath to keep decorum, lest any unseemliness should occur. Her voice at this time was loud, fearful and very strange, proceeding from the throat like a hoarse dog that barks, casting from thence with opened mouth abundance of froth or foam, whereof some did light on the face of one that kneeled by, in such a way that his wife was moved to cast him her handkerchief to wipe it off. The noise and sound of her voice one expresses in his notes of observation by the word 'chch chch', or 'keck keck,' another by 'twish twish', or the hissing of a violent firework, another to a hen that has the squack. Another compares it to the loathsome noise that a cat makes striving to vomit her gorge.⁵⁵ And indeed she did very often and vehemently strain to vomit.

In the time of this turmoil, another of the preachers,⁵⁶ kneeling down a little on the one side of the chair, with a mild spirit and low voice, began and continued a sweet prayer, whereunto there was much attention given. In this prayer, I remember some passages of the Scripture, whereof he aptly made good use, as namely, mentioning the seed of the woman that would break the serpent's head who, notwithstanding, would turn back and be nibbling at our heels. Again, he remembered the victorious lion of the tribe of Judah, that would daunt the roaring lion who seeks to devour us. And again, he repeated the prophecy concerning Christ, that he would overcome the great Leviathan and put a hook in his nostrils, and that he would walk on the lion and adder and tread the young dragon under his feet, &c., praying that we might see the present performance hereof. And so gathering courage and making application to raise up in us a comfortable hope and expectation of deliverance, he ceased.

The afflicted party continued still in fits, whereof some were grotesque such as tossing her head, and heaving her shoulders, turning her body from side to side. And some again were more fearful such as her hip bone

⁵⁵ The contents of her stomach. ⁵⁶ [Master Bridger].

standing up in her belly at the place of her navel, accompanied with the former disfigurings of eye, mouth, hands, arms, fingers, throat, &c. And hereupon, there were many crying out amongst the company saying, 'Jesus help. Lord, show mercy. Lord, strengthen. Lord, confound Satan. Lord send deliverance.' In the meanwhile, the preachers were forced to forbear set prayer because of the people's confused cries. Yet one of the preachers rebuking Satan and calling him a foul spirit, she turned her face towards him, though her eyes were shut, and did belch out spittle at him disdainfully, as also at others that kneeled on each side of her, holding her arms, insomuch that one of them in his large observations says that he had much ado to forbear spitting again in his foul face. 'I say "his"', says he, 'for that I thought I saw his ugly countenance in her then deformed visage.'

At this time the Father of the maid roared right out with abundance of tears in the disquietness of his mind and anguish of his heart. And withal I came to him from the place where I stood which was somewhat in front of the party's face noting how things went. And taking him by the hand, I said that now I conceived more hope than before. 'For if your daughter,' I said, 'were not thus rent and torn, I would not look for deliverance.'

After this the preacher⁵⁷ that kneeled behind her, thought to himself, as he has since informed me, that the pride and rage of Satan was but a token of his ruin not far of. And he called to mind the manifest tokens of favour that God had showed to us all the day till then, and also the promise of God, Ps.50.15, whereof he had entreated. And grounding himself on the truth of that promise, he suddenly lifted up his voice and prayed loudly and vehemently, urging the parable of the unrighteous judge, who by mere importunity of a poor woman, was forced to hear her. So he urged the Lord now to show his power and to give check to Satan and command him to be gone, whom he often defied. And he called him a proud spirit and yet cowardly, loath to let loose his hold, and often times with tears, yet smilingly, he cried out, 'He flies, he flies.' At this, as also before, she turned towards him a direful menacing and sometimes mocking countenance. And with an open mouth she did cast out foam upward into his throat as he spoke.

⁵⁷ [Master Lewes].

And the louder and more earnest that he was in his prayer, the more she raged in his arms, attempting to rise. And with her strength she lifted him up with her, striving to turn her breast and face towards him. Notwithstanding this, her eyes were shut like a dead body's, except that she lifted up her eyebrows, which made her look the more ghastly.

While he was thus contending with her to keep her from turning fully round towards him, she labouring, as I said, with often tossing the head from shoulder to shoulder to get her face opposite to his, another preacher⁵⁸ began to pray. And having a little while continued the same, the maid fell down suddenly into the chair. There she remained without motion, her head hanging downward, somewhat inclining towards the shoulder, her face and colour deadly, her mouth and eyes shut, her body stiff and senseless, so that there were those that thought, and I think we all might have said, 'Behold, she is dead.' There were some that then observed and afterwards constantly affirmed, as also one of the men of good credit who stood near amongst the women and in his notes sets it down, that there was a thing creeping under one of her eyelids, of the bigness of a pea. But because it was not generally seen and noted by us, it was thought good I should not much insist on it.

After she had continued a while in this deadly state, in a moment life suddenly came into her whole ody Her mouth and eyes opened. And then, lifting up her hands and stretching them wide asunder as high as she could reach, the first word she uttered was, 'He is come, he is come,' looking backward with a very comfortable countenance on some of the preachers, and then on such as stood on each side of her, 'The comforter is come. O Lord, you have delivered me.'

As soon as her Father who stood not very near heard her so cry, he also cried out as much as his weeping would allow him and said, 'This was the cry of her Grandfather going to be burned.' And verily, now there was heard amongst us, a plain outcry or shouting, even like the victorious cry or shout of a conquering arm And yet, the same was intermixed with abundance of most joyful tears. And even there withal, the poor party still crying, 'He is come' did struggle and strive with all the strength she had to be let loose.

⁵⁸ [Master Skelton].

They that held her perceived this and yielded to see what she would do. And then she presently and suddenly slid down out of the chair and, very speedily recovering herself on her knees, with a countenance truly to my seeming exceedingly sober and full of a kind of majesty and reverence, with hands held up equally high, her eyes very broadly open, said to one, 'He is come,' pronouncing it distinctly and somewhat loudly with a little motion of her face and hands upward, and making the accent on the word 'come.' And again, turning around to another, she said, 'He is come,' and so to another and another, I think six or seven times. Then, from that, she fell to a most sweet prayer of thanksgiving, wherein she continued long, even to fainting through feebleness. Of this prayer, I will set down as much as I can remember, referring myself herein to be further helped with the memories of others.⁵⁹

'O Lord God and gracious Father, I humbly thank you for your mercies towards me a vile creature. I am unworthy of the least of them all, much more of this so great a mercy vouchsafed to me at this present. In giving me health, strength, and comfortable deliverance, Lord, make me truly thankful for it. Let me never forget it. Let me and all of us here present, and all that will hear of it, make true use of it, namely, to praise you for your mercies kept in store, and to trust to your promises, and to depend on your Providence, who does such things for your poor servants. And now Lord, grant that beginning, as it were, anew, it would please you to take me, even like a newborn babe, to your good grace that so I may become a new creature, make me to hate sin with a perfect hatred, and detest Satan and his works and tread him under my feet as dirt. Fill my heart with thankfulness, fill it with the graces of your blessed spirit, working in me sanctification and newness of life, to walk worthy of so great a mercy, that so glorifying you in this life, I may see and enjoy your glory in the life to come,' &c. And so continuing on, iterating, and multiplying these and such like points, till we perceived her to be weary, she was interrupted and asked to favour herself, and to commit that duty of thanksgiving to another, who would immediately take it on him, which was done accordingly. But before that,

⁵⁹ [Her thanksgiving].

even in the time of her prayer, one of the preachers said with a loud voice, 'Oh, what a sweet smelling evening sacrifice is this to the Lord?' Well, another preacher⁶⁰ addressed himself to prayer, she being placed again in her chair, all the company falling down on their knees, and the preacher kneeling somewhat behind her.

His prayer was indeed a sweet sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, containing much variety of excellent matter serving that purpose. In the end whereof, he added petitions for the continuance of God's good hand of strength, and grace on the party, and namely, that he would clad her with the complete armour, Ephesians, chapter 6, the particulars whereof he went over and so drew to an end. Then also the first preacher,⁶¹ who before stood at her back holding her, did presently take over, taking the like words of thanksgiving in his mouth and ending with prayer, desiring God to grant to us wisdom and discretion in publishing this great work of mercy to the world. This last point of his prayer, concerning our care and discretion in publishing this great work of God, the other ministers did think well off and afterwards approve, even as one⁶² of the company also in his notes of remembrance concludes the matter thus, 'For which I pray God make me unfaindly thankful, and bold with wisdom to verify the truth hereof in due time.'

Then another preacher⁶³ offered to make the like prayer of thanksgiving and that, as he said, briefly. But it was not allowed, fearing time would not suffice.

This done, one, I think a kinsman, went to the maid still sitting in her chair and said with joyful tears, 'Welcome Mary, you are now again one of us.' The Father also, in a like way, took her by the hand as not being able to speak a word. And the Mother went, and taking away the handkerchief with which her daughter sat covering her blubbering face, with like watery cheeks kissed her. Then she was asked to go near the fire. And so she went and sat on the settle, where she took her place at her first entering into the room. Thither I myself went to her and, taking her by the hand, I thanked God for her, and bade her grow in comfort and courage and strength to resist if she should again be assaulted. 'Fear not,' said I, 'the main battle is

⁶⁰ [Master Skelton].

⁶¹ [Master Lewes].

⁶² [Robert Midnal].

⁶³ [Master Bridger].

fought. The other will be but a light skirmish, if there be any at all.' So I left her with the women standing about her, whom I heard soon after to observe and make known, that her belly was fallen and become as flat as it was twelve months before. Then also they gave her to drink a kind of posset,⁶⁴ which she took and drank with ease, to their marvel and rejoicing. For one of the men says in the notes of his remembrance that the day before, which also was her good day, he and another stronger man were troubled to hold her, so violently did she resist, whilst she did eat a little broth. But now she did take twice the like quantity with bread also in it without any show of check or resistance at all.

In this meanwhile, the ministers drew themselves together in a corner of the chamber to consult on divers points meet to be considered of and agreed on. Firstly, that it was good that about six or seven days after, we should meet together again in some convenient place, there to be exercised for the space of three or four hours in a solemn manner of thanksgiving. Secondly, that the names of all that were present should be taken. Thirdly, that one should take the pains to pen the actions of the day now past. And here, sorry we were that we had not taken pen and paper at the first, that someone might orderly have set down brief notes of things as they passed. But howsoever that fell out, this task was committed to him that was not the fittest, who yet undertook it, and with help of the others has done as well as he could. Fourthly, that the company should be admonished not to publish this that was done as yet, but stay to see some continuance of her estate and, if they reported it to any concealing the place and the persons, to do it with wisdom and with a religious heart, least by foolish and vainglorious tattling, the cause might be hindered, and themselves receive hurt. Fifthly, that if any of them should fall into the hands of any to be examined, they would then be as careful as might be to keep the poor ministers out of danger, who losing peradventure hereby their liberty of preaching, should lose all the means they had of their maintenance. Sixthly, that we should conclude with a prayer general for the whole state, which the old fatherly preacher⁶⁵ very well performed, even plentifully and powerfully praying and praising God for her Majesty,

⁶⁴ Hot milk curdled with ale, wine, or other alcohol.

⁶⁵ [Master Evans].

the Counsellors, Nobles, Magistrates, Ministers, people, those that were present, and lastly the poor delivered maid. Seventhly and lastly, that to show our thankfulness we would seal it up with another sacrifice, namely, with contributing something that might be bestowed on some poor.

This done, we sang a Psalm. The thirty fourth was called for, but the sixth was chosen by that ancient preacher, which we sang with a low voice, very decently and comfortably. And now it was past seven o'clock at night, and the company began to talk of departing home. But see, the woman of the house⁶⁶ whose countenance truly I did behold before whilst the anguish was greatest. And I did imagine that she thought what a guest she had admitted into her house, not knowing how quietly she should be rid of her again. I say, the woman of the house had in the meantime, namely, whilst we were consulting, writing, and singing, bestirred herself and got together, whether all of her own or with help of her neighbours, I cannot tell, sufficient store of meat to refresh us all. Though it were not of the daintiest or most orderly served, yet I thought it was as comfortable a supper as ever I was at, putting me in mind of Acts 2.42, 'And they continued in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread and prayer.'

The giving of thanks both before and after meat was committed to him⁶⁷ who had before desired to succeed in the action of thanksgiving after our comfort received. But being then, as I said, not hearkened to because it grew late, and many things remained to be done, he now undertook this office at the table very readily. And in his grace after meat he bestowed, as I think, some of his former meditations which he would have delivered if he had been then allowed. For now in his thanksgiving after supper, he very aptly recounted the songs of Moses and Myriam after the Red Sea,⁶⁸ of Deborah and Barak after Sisera's overthrow,⁶⁹ of the women's song concerning David after his conquest of Goliath,⁷⁰ &c.

By this time it was past nine o'clock. So rising from the table, we stood a while talking one with another, especially recording that of Luke 5.26, 'And they were all amazed, and praised God, and were filled with fear saying,

⁶⁶ [Mistress Radcliffe in Shoreditch]. ⁶⁷ [Master Bridger].

⁶⁸ Exodus 15. ⁶⁹ Judges 5. ⁷⁰ 1 Samuel 18.7.

"Doubtless we have seen strange things this day." And here let me truly reveal an apprehension which I had in the time of our trouble, namely, that we were the more likely to succeed because we were such mean, base, despised, and contemptible men that were employed. For so God commonly works by foolish things to confound the wise, and by weak instruments to bring down the proud. And, as I remember in my poor prayer I noted, Satan is oftentimes overtaken in his craft. For by making his match thus to rage in and on little ones, as was this poor creature in respect of her sex and age, his foil should be the greater, when such a worm should be enabled to withstand his malice and prevail against his strength. But to return.

Thus, though we were replenished with much joy, yet we dared not depart with banners displayed for fear of men. But we crept away by two and by three in a company till we were all gone. But before I departed, I asked the maid a question or two. First, whether she did see anything depart from her when first she felt release? Whereunto she answered that she saw nothing, but she did feel something depart. And withal she felt such a freedom of all the powers and faculties of soul and body as she never felt the like before, which caused her in that way to spring out for joy.

But whether Mary Glover were possessed or dispossessed, I will not maintain. For I see that that question grows not only disputable, but dangerous to hold. It passes my skill to define when a man may be said to be possessed. For although many signs of possession, even such as the evangelists do observe, may be found in anyone, yet to say how many of them, and in what degree they must concur to make proprium quarto modo,⁷¹ appertaining to that affliction, I see it hard to say. And I understand that a great scholar of Cambridge, disputing that point not long ago, had even his hands full of that work, inasmuch as some that heard it, conceived thereby, I mean by his defence, and by the terms of obsession and circumsession which he in his sense used, not that Satan was commanded to come out of the man, but the man was commanded to come out of the devil. Here also it may be remembered, that the Heads of the University would not admit his question to be disputed of as he propounded it, namely, *Nulla est hiis diebus*

⁷¹ Appropriate to a quarter measure.

possessio ac dispossessio Dæmoniorum,⁷² but in their learned wisdom did first qualify the question, so making an abatement of his writ, *nulla est hiis deibus ordinaria possessio ac dispossessio Dæmoniorum*.⁷³ But if a man consider that the malice of Satan, the wickedness of men, and the justice of God are as great as ever they were, he will perhaps think whether he has read of any absolute revocation of any kind of punishment formerly inflicted or threatened. No, our Sovereign King is more resolute in his *Daemonologie*, p. 47, saying, 'Why may God not use any kind of extraordinary punishment when it pleases him, as well as the ordinary rods of sickness or other adversities,' &c. Again, a man would think perhaps that those words of our Saviour, 'This kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting'⁷⁴ may be extended to a further time than when miracles were wrought, especially if he do herewithal consider the practice of the Church in succeeding ages, whereunto also our King in his said book (lib.3, p. 71) gives good allowance.

But a man may say, 'Why then, you may cure palsy, gout, ague, and leprosy in a like way.' I answer, 'No, we have not the like warrant for that kind, and physicians can tell the causes and cures of such maladies.' But if they suspect witchery, not finding any natural distemperature of the body, they will not meddle. What then? Will such poor, distressed creatures be left at sixes and sevens to sink or swim at Satan's pleasure? God forbid. A man, I hope, may at least say, 'Lord have mercy on them.' Though skill of physick herein does fail, yet this skill that taught physicians theirs, can work within, without, and above means and therefore is worthy to be called on, both when the means are used and when they fail. But, as I said, I will not meddle with the question, only this, that Mary Glover was vexed by Satan, by the means of a witch. Methinks I may safely say it, since the jury has found it, and the Honourable Judges determined so of it. And therefore I cannot think but that they did a charitable and warrantable deed that prayed for her.

The next day also I asked her whether she ever did pray so before, or whether she could pray so again? To which her answer was, 'I pray God

⁷² There is, in these days, neither possession nor dispossession of demons.

⁷³ There is, in these days, usually neither possession nor dispossession of demons.

⁷⁴ Mark 9.29 in the King James versions. Modern versions generally delete 'and fasting' on the grounds of the textual evidence.

enable me to pray as I will have occasion.' Again, I asked her merrily whether she could now gape so wide as I might put in my fist. For a man that will now look on her will not think her mouth could possibly stretch as wide as it did. Whereunto, with staid countenance, she answered nothing. But to draw to an end, because it was supported that the young recovered soldier might perhaps be set on again not long after, it was thought good that she should not be carried home to her Father's house, but should lodge together with her Mother at one of the minister's houses, which was done accordingly.

The next day, there was a lecture not far off. And thither came the maid in the company of certain women, religious and matronly citizens. The preacher was he⁷⁵ that gave thanks at the table the night before. His text was 2 Thessalonians 12, 'Grace be with you and mercy, and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.' Whether he made a deliberate choice of this text or not I cannot tell. But sure I am that from the words of grace, free from God, and peace, the effect, first between God and man, then between man and man, and thirdly found and felt within man himself in his own conscience, he raised and delivered such doctrine and use as I think the poor party present made good use of. That night she, with her parents, was invited to sup with a religious citizen, who like Cornelius had called together some of his kinsfolk and special friends, Acts 10. And he gave thanks before and after meat in a very good way, beyond my expectation, to see an ordinary citizen perform it so well. But I can testify of a truth that the city is not destitute of many such as are very well qualified this way. This I do of purpose report, not only because *S. H.* jibes at his fraternity of holy, illuminate men, and at his sisternity of mymps, mops, and idle holy women, but also because this citizen of whom I speak was bitterly taken up by the Bishop of London for performing, privately in his family as became a virtuous Christian man, a religious duty of humiliation by prayer and fasting on an occasion of a heavy cross which at that time lay on one of his children. Again, I have heard jolly chaplains in their lofty vein scornfully report the practice of prayer and singing of Psalms in Londoners' houses,

⁷⁵ [Master Bridger who still yet lies in prison].

and also deride and scoff at their sober and religious behaviour in open assemblies at time of public prayer, and of the word preached.

Well, the next day, Saturday is come, when divers of the preachers and others repaired to the place where the maid had lodged, to understand how things went with her, and that the more because a voice began to be raised abroad that she was relapsed into her former estate, this being the day of her ordinary fits. But thanks be to God it was not so. But being well all that day, at night she went with other company about half a mile to supper, where appeared such a disposition in many as was sometimes in men that desired to see even Lazarus that was raised, John 12. After supper, she returned to her former lodging. And on the way homeward I noted this, that being weary in going up a street somewhat ascending, she was glad to sit down and rest on a bench, saying, 'O Lord, how is my strength abated. I could once run nimbly up and down our stairs. And being sent to market, I could lug home happily a heavy burden without weariness.' This I observe that it might appear, it was not rest and slothfulness that caused her grief, which yet the opposite Doctor insinuates in his treatise of the suffocation of the Mother.⁷⁶

The next day, being the Sabbath, she spent morning and afternoon in religious exercises, being present at two public sermons, and behaving herself there christianly. That day also, there was thanks publicly given for her by a worthy preacher in his great assembly, who also had prayed for her there by name many times before. This thanksgiving he made, though I know that one of the aforesaid preachers of our company was very careful that notice might in time be given him to forbear, because he knew that it stood not with the Bishop's liking that it should be so, even as in the time of her grievous vexations there was a notice given by means of the Bishop of London. He could never yet be gotten to 'Come and see,' although sent to and earnestly moved by certain worshipful and honourable personages to that end. There was, I say, a fear cast on such as resorted to her, whereby they were terrified either to pray themselves, or to be present at prayer for her, inasmuch as at one time, when in a terrible fit the beholders were much amazed, there was a gracious young gentleman that called for prayer. And

⁷⁶ Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother*, London, 1603.

seeing none there, either able or willing to do it, he addressed himself to perform it saying that he saw it fit, yea, necessary to do so, though he were sure to be committed the next day.

For my part, I thank God with all my heart that I was present at this work, and had a hand, though very little and simple, in it. For I find, I praise God, therein a labour of his love towards me, provoking, nay, urging me the more thereby to perform a point which I begged then in my poor prayers, namely, that that may be found in us, which Moses on an occasion which caused like humiliation prayed for in his Israelites, 'Oh that this people had such an heart in them continually.' And here I appeal to the hearts and consciences of all that were there present, whether they did not then find in themselves a great measure of a Christian disposition to good. And I pray again, as then and there I did, that God would remove that judgement far from us, that we should be like swine returning to the mire.

But to conclude, the next Wednesday she was at the lecture at the Blackfriars. And from thence returned home to her parents who are religious persons, of good credit and estimation among their neighbours. Yea, and in the city of as many as know them, he⁷⁷ being counted a man not unworthy to be the son of a worthy martyr, as Master Fox makes good and memorable report of,⁷⁸ inasmuch as they are far unworthy to be so abused as they have been by the slanderous pen of S. H.⁷⁹ But as they are not hurt in their honest name and good account by his offensive writing, so also their persons together with the daughter have hitherto well enough escaped the Bishop's prisons so often and rigorously threatened to them all, yea, and that since it has pleased God to clear their innocence, both by open trial in face of Court, and by stretching as it were his own hand from Heaven in working the daughter's so gracious deliverance as now I have reported.

And thus I will here draw to an end of this discourse touching this Mary Glover, commending her to the further strength and graces of her great good God. And I remember I did in my prayer liken her to an old

⁷⁷ Mary's Father.

⁷⁸ Mary's Father's Father was burned at Lichfield during the reign of Mary. See Foxe in Townsend, 1965, vol.7, pp. 398-9.

⁷⁹ Samuel Harsnet.

grandmother of hers, Mary Magdalene, who though she was once a gazing stock to many, yet afterwards did leave an honourable name behind her to many generations. So now, I commend to this our Mary, to be had always in her mind and mouth, the song of a more blessed Mary, the Mother of our blessed Saviour, 'My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour, who has regarded the base estate of his handmaid, and has done great things for me, by throwing out the mighty from his seat and exalting the lowly,' Luke 1. 46.

Now if this poor pamphlet, being perused, should by the allowance of my brethren chance to get wings and learn to fly abroad, I see what divers censures will pass on it. Some will gaze at it as an outlandish owl, and as a thing fitter to have kept a foreign bush. Yet some again perhaps will speak better of it. How can it be but that I should look for oppositions and contradictions now after the work is done, seeing before the same was taken in hand, men's opinions and speeches were divers, touching the party's passions, namely, in that one physician on sight of the party said, 'Nihil hic preterdolum.'⁸⁰ Another said, 'Nihil doli sed forte nil preter naturam.'⁸¹ Another more resolutely said, 'It is either diabolical or at least supernatural.' Another Doctor, but not of that faculty, said that 'she does not counterfeit, I will be her witness.' Another, a worthy Magistrate who had tried her with fire said, 'To tell men that it is counterfeit, I had rather you would tell me that my house walks,' &c. But as for this point concerning oppositions and contradictions of men, I am at a point. God knows the sincerity of my heart herein. The good have perused and censored this my doing before it came abroad. And I have learnt to be contented if I meet with that measure that my betters have met withal. For besides that the works and persons of worthy men of late have been miserably traduced, I saw also, to my exceeding grief and fear, that even the sacred book of God's blessed truth could not escape the saucy censure and audacious tongues of men, in this most mischievous age, wherein Papists began to perk up, apostates and atheists abound, and wicked blasphemous words and writings infect the air and minds of men.

⁸⁰ Nothing here but trickery.

⁸¹ Not trickery but nothing except beyond the natural.

It is notoriously known how S. H.⁸² himself has disputed and preached dangerous points, and how in his said last book he broaches a concept as if there were no witches at all. Yea, it seems by his so dallying with Modu his Devil, that he is of a mind there is no Devil at all. Even as an atheist in open court, taking advantage of some words of S. H.'s Master⁸³ said openly, 'My Lord, if any here can prove there is a God, I will believe it.' I will not speak of his immodest style and lascivious pen. But, which are matters of sequence, it is also too well known how a man of no mean place has scurrilously scanned the story of the flood, and by pregnant demonstration out of his geometrical proportions found out, that if that be true which is said of Noah's Ark, there should be allowed to the stall of a great Ox, or of the mightiest Elephant, no more room than the size of a man's thumb. As also how like a tale it is that five thousand men should be fed with five loaves, Matthew 16. Again, I myself have heard a man of no mean reckoning boldly descant on the story of Sampson's foxes (Judges 15) gallantly glancing at and wantonly applying their being tied by the tails. Again, sporting at the fact of the said Sampson who like a mad son of a whore, so were his words, should lift off the gates of the City Azzah and run away with them, and the two posts and bars, to the top of a mountain, Judges 16. But whether our true Sampson, of whom this was a type, will take this in good part, let him look to it. Also, allegorizing on the story of the fall of Jericho's walls at the sound of trumpets made of rams' horns (Joshua 6) and very prettily and pleasantly, at least as he thought, wished horns on his head that would so literally take it. Again, jibing at the fact of Jael as if women had more allowance than men to commit a heinous and perfidious act.⁸⁴ Item, that the doctrine of predestination, as now it is taught amongst us by many, is desperate, binding up the hands of God that he cannot have mercy though he wished, so that preaching may well enough cease and praying be let alone. These were the times whereinto we were falling.

If now the fresh wit of a lusty gallant would not let loose the reins of his bold and viperous tongue, I beseech you, might he not in like manner

⁸² Samuel Harsnet. ⁸³ That is, the Bishop of London.

⁸⁴ Judges 4. Jael, the wife of Heber, nails Sisera's head to the floor with a tentpeg.

call into question and so make sport with such works as were performed by the Apostles themselves, and say, 'The people were then deceived,' simple men even as poor Master Foxe was, as is commonly objected? And I pray, might not the matter be denied that the fact of Peter and John, (Acts 3) was much like the Creeples and blind man's cure at Saint Albans, the fraud whereof the good Duke Humphrey detected? If this then may befall the writings indicted by pen-men so directed that they could not err, what shall I look for who cannot write or speak as I wish I could?

Yet I cannot pass over in silence the strange works of God in these our days, who has of late raised up in divers quarters and coasts of the land, yea, and brought them home to our doors, a great many examples as prints of his presence. And namely, at Norwich, at Woolwich, at Nottingham, at Burton, at Colchester, in London, in Lancashire, and further off as I hear in Kent and in Sussex. And it may be thought he will yet come near to the dwellings of some, even as if he should say, 'Hold your peace you poor, afflicted for my name's sake. I will take the cause into my own hands, and be revenged on the violent and wilful oppositions of men, against the manifest works of my own power.'

And thus, having reported and discoursed of this matter touching Mary Glover, to the comfort I hope of the godly and such as fear God unfaindly with a resolute purpose to live thereafter. And having given a caveat or warning to others, before it is too late, to be wise and to kiss the Son before he be angry and they perish in the midst of their vainglory, I end. Now to our mighty and eternal God, our good, gracious and merciful Father in Jesus Christ, to God only wise, be yielded from all Saints in all ages, through the working of the blessed Spirit, three persons and one true and ever living God, all power, majesty, glory, wisdom, praise and thanksgiving, forever and forever, Amen.

Amen.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ The text ends with Psalm 116, and a brief poem on Mary's tribulations.

The boy of Bilson
The story of William Perry

In 1762, William Hogarth's print 'Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism' was published. Along with the Cock Lane Ghost, the Drummer of Tedworth, the Ghost of Julius Caesar and Mary Toft the woman who gave birth to live rabbits, there is pictured a small boy huddled beneath the pulpit, vomiting hob nails and iron staples. The youth pictured is the twelve or thirteen-year-old William Perry, otherwise known as the boy of Bilson, who confessed on 8 October 1620 to having counterfeited his possession.

The Boy of Bilson is a collection of texts brought together by Richard Baddeley, secretary to the inquiry which led to the apparent exposure of William Perry. It consists of seven different texts. The first of these is a discourse on the Catholic exorcising of unclean spirits in twenty-three advertisements or admonitions, the last of which is the account of the exorcism of William Perry by Master Wheeler, one of the priests involved.¹ There then follows an account of the trial of the witch accused of bewitching Perry, and of Perry's exposure as a fraud probably written by Baddeley. Two examinations and confessions of Perry before Thomas Morton, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, are followed by Perry's acknowledgement of his counterfeit. The edition concludes with the Catholic gentleman Thomas Nechils' declaration that Wheeler's written account of the case was a genuine one, personally given to him by the priest.

The treatise as a whole is meant to expose the pretence of Catholic priests 'exorcizing and expelling of devils out of bodies possessed'.² The confessions of Perry can be read as suggesting that the Catholic priests involved in his exorcism were as much the credulous dupes of Perry as many others. There is the hint that the mysterious old man called Thomas who, according to Perry had instructed him in demoniacal skills, was a Catholic plant.³ But there is no reason to think of Thomas as anything else but the product of

¹ Only the twenty third admonition is transcribed below.

² Anon., 1622, sig.A.3.r (see below, p. 335). ³ See anon., 1622, pp. 61–2 (see below, pp. 348–9).

Perry's imaginative desire to lay blame everywhere but upon himself. And we can read the account of the exorcism of Perry by the priest Wheeler as one which arose from his conviction that Perry was not a fake but was genuinely possessed, even if he took every opportunity in the exorcism itself to highlight Catholic truths and demonise Protestantism.

Be all that as it may, even if the texts themselves are various and ambiguous with respect to the involvement of the priests in any counterfeit, Perry's confession did provide Baddeley with the opportunity editorially to present the Catholic priests involved in Perry's exorcism as active fellow-conspirators in his fraud. And even if Perry did not name the priests as instigators of his pretence, he certainly says enough to suggest that, at the very least, they, along with the large crowds who came to view him, were willing participants in a play which he cleverly directed, in which he starred, and, along with the other participants was a co-writer of the script.

Around Easter 1620, William Perry was cursed by an old woman unknown to him. Within days, he fell into fits so extreme that up to four men could hardly hold him. He brought up pins, wool, thread, feathers, and so on. He could not digest food, his tongue was stiff and hard and rolled up towards the roof of his mouth so that he seldom spoke. He could discern the presence of the woman he claimed had bewitched him, and could not endure hearing the beginning of St John's Gospel. In short, he showed the symptoms of possession.

After visits by several priests, the first of whom diagnosed possession by three spirits, Wheeler arrived around Thursday before *Corpus Christi* day and began to exorcise the boy with holy water, oil, and frankincense. At various times, William attested to the truth of Catholicism. His possession was both good and bad. He exhorted his family to become Catholics, he saw the devil assault him in the form of a blackbird when Puritans were present, he acted out the fate of those who died outside of the Catholic Church, and especially Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Foxe. But he also accused the priest of killing him, and cursed him saying, 'A pox of God light on the Priest.'⁴ After the departure of the priest around mid June, Perry was as much tortured as before, a result Wheeler attributes to William's father having sought the assistance of witches and sorcerers.⁵

The accused witch, Joan Cocke, was brought before the summer Assizes on 10 August 1620. Judicial scepticism, now fostered by King James, saw the charges as the result of 'fantastical delusions'.⁶ The woman was quickly

⁴ Anon., 1622, p. 52 (see below, p. 342).

⁵ Ewen (1933), p. 236 interprets these as Protestants.

⁶ Anon., 1622, p. 61 (see below, p. 345).

found innocent, and William Perry handed over to Thomas, Lord Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry and placed in the Castle of Eccleshall.

Doubts about Perry remained, some symptoms suggestive of fraud, others of a natural disease. The Bishop was determined to test the authenticity of his possession by reading to Perry passages from St John's Gospel in Greek: 'Boy, it is either you or the Devil that abhors those words of the Gospel. And if it be the Devil, . . . he knows and understands all languages in the world. So he cannot but know when I recite the same sentence in the Gospel out of the Greek text. But if it be yourself, then you are an execrable wretch, who plays the Devil's part, in loathing that part of the Gospel of Christ'.⁷ Having fallen into a fit at the reading of the twelfth verse, and not having done so at the reading of the first verse of the first chapter, Perry was exposed.

His attempt to avoid further examination by feigning illness and colouring his urine with black ink having been discovered, Perry confessed on 8 October 1620, to his having faked possession, and having been taught demoniacal skills by the mysterious Thomas. There is no doubt he had enjoined his time as a celebrity: 'He answers, because many people did resort to him, and brought him many good things.'⁸ He was held in Eccleshall Castle until 26 July in the following year when his recovery was complete. Brought back to the Stafford Assizes, he begged for pardon from God, and from Joan Cocke, forgiveness.

The boy of Bilson was a site of conflicting interests. For Richard Baddeley, Perry's imposture was a key element of the anti-Catholicism which anchored his edition of the story of William Perry. For the priest Wheeler, he provided an (ultimately unsuccessful) occasion to demonstrate the power of the Church against Protestants. For the judiciary, he was deluded at best, a fraud at worst, but not a site of bewitchment. As for Perry, he constructed his own role opportunistically to reflect the interests of those who variously stepped onto his stage. The last we hear of William Perry is his publicly requesting 'the whole country, whom he had so notoriously and wickedly scandalized, to admit of that his so hearty confession, for their satisfaction'.⁹

⁷ Anon., 1622, pp. 58–9 (see below, p. 346).

⁸ Anon., 1622, pp. 69–70 (see below, p. 353).

⁹ Anon., 1622, p. 73 (see below, p. 356).

The boy of Bilson: or, a true discovery of the late notorious impostures of certain Romish Priests in their pretended Exorcism, or expulsion of the Devil out of a young Boy, named William Perry, son of Thomas Perry of Bilson, in the County of Stafford, Yeoman.

On which occasion, hereunto is premitted

A brief Theological Discourse, by way of Caution, for the more easy discerning of such Romish spirits, and judging of their false pretences, both in this and the like Practices.

2 Thess 2.10,11.

Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.

At London,
Imprinted by F. K. for William Barret. 1622

To the Christian Reader.

Being acquainted with the mind and purpose of the author of this ensuing treatise, and having thereto added those other pieces, to which I am no stranger, to make the narration concerning the Boy of Bilson complete, I thought it my duty, after much solicitation, to communicate the whole in print, and so to make it *iuris publici*. And this, as I thought, these very times did exact. For now the Popish Priests have so cauterized their consciences

and rubbed their foreheads that they take delight and blush not daily to forge and coin most monstrous¹⁰ untruths, all to support their drooping and dropping cause. Since therefore, their appetites are so well whetted and set on edge, by what¹¹ stone we may easily guess, it being their due reward, that they make no bones of whatsoever is set before them to stay their stomachs a while, let them be chewing this bit which otherwise they will not now eschew, 'Ut quam falsa dicendo et sorthendo voluptatem ceperint, eandem vera legendo et audiendo amittant.'¹²

Here then, good Reader, in the first place, you have a treatise professedly written for a discovery of and a caution against the inveigling projects of Romish Priests, chiefly in that one particular, viz., their pretended priestly exorcizing and expelling of devils out of bodies possessed. By this you may judge whether these mirabularies¹³ deserve not the reputation of the rarest mountebanks of these times. Next follows a faithful relation, for so they name it, made by these Priests, touching their proceedings with the Boy 'which they did purposely write and disperse,' to the 'end (as they profess) that all impartial minds may magnify and praise Almighty God, that has left such power to men,'¹⁴ &c., such proceedings as they truly had in exorcizing and conjuring the Devil within that boy, being their supposed desperate demoniac. When these Roman Aruspices¹⁵ recognize this glorious work of theirs at their next interview, 'Mirabor si non riserint.'¹⁶ And that so much the rather, after they have perused the remainder of this book, in which the event and success of the whole business is truly related, and their formidable Mormo¹⁷ proved no other than an apish Cobalus.¹⁸ Whereby it will also come to pass that these Catholic Gentlemen, for so they style themselves, although by their¹⁹ outward garb one would rather suspect them

¹⁰ [Witness (among many others) their fresh master-lie, touching the supposed apostasy of the late Lord Bishop of London].

¹¹ [Perhaps the same that one of them hanged about the boy's neck. Vid. p. 63].

¹² 'That the pleasure they have got by speaking and sharing false things, they may lose the same by reading and hearing true things.'

¹³ Wonder workers. ¹⁴ [Vide p. 45].

¹⁵ Roman soothsayers, of Etruscan origin, who performed divination by inspection of the entrails of victims.

¹⁶ [Cit.]. I will be amazed if they do not ridicule (it). ¹⁷ Bugbear. ¹⁸ Hobgoblin.

¹⁹ [See their descriptions in this book, pp. 63, 64, &c.].

for serving men and attendants on such persons, nè quid gravius, will be so clearly convicted of palpable quacksalving that a very mean herald, knowing the house they come from, may blazon their arms and so expose them to shame and laughter.

But I will not entertain you, gentle Reader, with any longer discussion in the entrance after I have put you in mind of that sound advice which a heathen philosopher²⁰ long since prescribed, but never as necessary as now when Popish impostures are so rife, viz., ΝΗΦΕ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΜΝΕΣΩ ἘΠΙΣΤΕΙΝ, which may be thus Englished, 'be wise, and be not hasty to believe', which precious amulet I commend to you, and all of us to the rich mercy of our most gracious God.

The general heads of this Book

- I. A discourse, by way of caution, concerning Popish exorcizing of unclean spirits.²¹
- II. A relation made by certain Romish Priests, and by one of them dispersed, wherein they magnify the power of their exorcism over the Devil, in the Boy of Bilson.
- III. A description of the admirable guile and cunning of that boy in counterfeiting himself possessed of the Devil.
- IV. The means and manner used by the Right Reverend Father in God Thomas, Lord Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, for discovering his dissimulation.
- V. The two examinations of the boy, taken before the said Reverend Father, together with his plain and direct confession of the whole plot and practice.
- VI. The success and event of all, shown in the boy's first private and afterwards public acknowledgement made before the whole county, in the Summer Assizes held at Stafford this present year 1621.²²

²⁰ [Epicharmus]. Greek dramatist and philosopher, c.540–450 B.C. For the text, see Epicharmus et Pseudepicharmea, *Fragmenta Pseudepicharmea (Kaibel)*, Fragment 250, line 1.

²¹ I here omit page numbers which referred to those within the original text.

²² I have omitted here a brief list of errata.

A discourse concerning Popish Exorcizing

A miracle is, as Divine learning does teach, a work of Omnipotence, far exceeding all natural power of any creature, the broad seal of Almighty God for the confirmation of truth, which whosoever shall dare to counterfeit must needs be guilty of no less than high treason against the supreme Majesty. Necessarily therefore, it will concern especially those that take on them the office of working miracles in these times to fear and tremble at such dangerous impiety, as also in general, every Christian and religious soul will beware that he be not circumvented by any forgery in this matter and thereby drawn to admire and esteem, as the finger of God, the lewd and ridiculous jugglings of wretched men. For which end, I have adventured to set down certain advertisements, whereby others may be reasonably directed how to discover and avoid such kinds of Popish delusions . . .²³

The Twenty third and last Advertisement

Is to demonstrate the Romish falsehood in exorcizing by the events, which is particularly exemplified in a discovery of their impostures around the Boy of Bilson, not inferior to any of the rest of their pranks of this kind.

But before we come to lay down the naked truth of the matter touching that boy and how things stood de facto, let us first allow the Romish Priests to boast themselves for a while of their miraculous power in exorcizing this child whom, for a while, you must imagine to be really bewitched and possessed of the Devil so that afterwards, by the event, may be verified of these miraculists that Scripture which says, 'Whose glory is in their shame.'²⁴

Hear we then the Priests speak.²⁵

First then to show how the child grew thus to be tormented, as I have understood it of his parents, and have heard the child confirm it himself. The

²³ Being essentially anti-Catholic propaganda not directly relevant to the story of the boy of Bilson, I have omitted the first twenty two Advertisements comprising pp. 2–46 of the original text.

²⁴ [Philippians 3.19].

²⁵ The pagination in the text is not consistent at this point nor is the text coherent. I have omitted the following at this point: 'helpe the child was, if they had fought medicine still in Israel, and not at Endor, and of Belzebub.' The account by Wheeler, one of the exorcising priests now begins.

boy, returning homewards from school to Bilson in Staffordshire where he dwelt, an old woman, unknown, met him and taxed him, in that he did not give her good time of the day, saying that he was a foul thing, and that it had been better for him if he had saluted²⁶ her. At which words the boy felt a thing to prick him to the very heart. In fine, the boy came home, languished some days, and at length developed fits so extreme that two or three, though he was a child of twelve years of age, could hardly hold him. The parents of the child, seeing the extremity of the fits and the misery and imminent danger of death the child did lie in every hour and moved with tender compassion, sought help of Catholics and, with cap and knee, by the means of some friends, did solicit a zealous gentleman. Overcome by their earnest suit, he did use some prayers and lawful exorcisms allowed by the Catholic Church, by whose prayers the child was eased somewhat, and the force of the spiritual enemy abated. The gentleman, demanding to know how many were in him, to his thinking, he said, 'Three'. He, good Gentleman, called away partly by the danger of the place as also by his urgent business, they sought and sent for a zealous gentleman, whose zeal and virtues are²⁷ sufficiently known, yea and acknowledged by God's enemies themselves. He, moved with compassion, came thither, used his best prayers and means that at that time he thought convenient. He very much weakened the Devil's force, and quelled the extreme fierceness of the fits. Yet he, within a day or so, withdrew himself for the same cause. Yet though absent in person, he was most mindful of his misery insomuch as he did negotiate with me, in that I had been present many times on the like occasions, that I would see him and make trial whether he were possessed or obsessed.²⁸ I was very unwilling. Yet overcome by his entreaty and the former motives, I promised him to do my best, and to see him within the space of one month. Yet I so disposed of my business, that I came thither in the space of a week, about Thursday before Corpus Christi day, where I did find the gentleman that requested me to come. And finding that they had used sorceries of witches

²⁶ [How the boy came first to be possessed]. ²⁷ [Two others meddled with him ere I came].

²⁸ The distinction between obsession and possession was one seldom made in cases of Protestant texts on exorcism, although common within Catholic demonology. The latter is distinguished from the former by the actual 'physical' presence of the Devil within the body of the possessed.

which made the child offer violence to himself, we would not meddle with him till they had burned those sorceries applied to him, which they forthwith did fulfil. Whereupon we, using the reading of the Litanies and the Holy Gospels, together with the exorcism of Saint Ambrose, when I came to those words that showed the power that Saint Peter had over Simon Magus, and Saint Paul over the Magician Bariesus, the child would be so²⁹ tormented that three or four could hardly hold him. These words had this effect as often as they were used. The other gentleman called away, I was left alone till it pleased God that the gentleman that had first meddled with him by great chance came thither. He and I both did our best, till Saturday about two o'clock, at which time, urgent occasions, though divers ways, called us away. Yet we left holy water, also³⁰ water properly against witchcraft and holy oil. The first has that power that it would make him speak, though dumb and his tongue turned into his throat. And the second has the force that, being applied in a little quantity to his legs and arms, most grievously contracted such that a strong man could hardly unfold them, only with the force of the holy oil they would be stretched forth as they were wont. We entreated them in our absence to use the holy waters and oil on his extremities, and that we, although absent, would assist him the best that we could in our prayers. They continued this on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. With extreme fits and heavings, he brought up pins, wool, knotted thread, tufts of thread, rosemary, walnut leaves, feathers, &c. All³¹ these he brought up, still drinking of the blessed water. And when he could not speak, he would make signs for that water, with the going down of which, he presently recovered his speech. Well, on Thursday, being Corpus Christi day, about three or four o'clock I came again, and found the child in great extremities, continually heaving up. And in this time, he had brought up eleven pins and a knitting needle, folded up in divers folds. On Friday next, he brought up the last pin. I told them that I was glad that he brought up most of those things in my absence, so that they might well see that really they came from him, and that it was no collusion of us.

²⁹ [The devil could not seduce Saint Peter and Saint Paul].

³⁰ [The virtue of holy water, and of holy oil]. ³¹ [Strange things voided].

On Saturday night, finding the boy to my thinking somewhat obstinate I, in front of the parents, wished him not to be deluded by the enemy, but that if he spoke anything within him, he would impart it to us that we might counsel him for the best. For a great while, the child would not hear us. Yet at length, he said that he would not tell us before all the company. I then asked to whom he would tell it. He answered, to yourself, if the others would leave you. Afterwards, he gave me leave to inform his parents, sisters, and brothers thus much. First, that the spirit bade him not to³² hearken to me in any case. Secondly, that the witch said that she would make an end of him, and that she would bring different things into him, if it were not for me, whom she called a roguish P. Thirdly, she said that I destroyed all her good things. Fourthly, she said that though I would help him, yet she would have something to say to his brothers and sisters. Fifthly, he desired me to tarry with him until Monday, for when I would leave him, he said that he would be torn in pieces. Whereupon I, according to the prescript of the *Thesaurus Exorcismorum*,³³ blessed fire, and burned those maleficialia, sorceries, those filthy things that came from him, at the smoke of which, the fire thereof being temperate only and in a chafing-dish,³⁴ and the smoke only of frankincense, he would vehemently cry out that he was killed, burned, and choked, though myself and divers others were nearer to all than himself. At length, he seemed greatly to rejoice, and with great eagerness drank up the smoke, saying that he saw his enemies tormented. I wished him then to pray for the witch and for her conversion from that wicked life, which he did. Then the child did declare that now he was³⁵ perfectly himself, and desired that his books, pens, ink, clothes, yea, that everything he had might be blessed. And he wished his parents, sisters, and brothers to bless themselves and to become Catholics, out of which faith, by God's grace, he said he would never live or die. On Sunday also, I exorcised him. But divers Puritans resorting to him, I could not have opportunity to come till towards night. All this day, he had many fits. And I, coming to him, learned

³² [The boy tells what the Devil and witch say in him].

³³ The *Thesaurus Exorcismorum*, first published in 1608, was the richest collection of exorcism manuals.

³⁴ A vessel to hold burning charcoal or other fuel. ³⁵ [The remarkable devotion of the child].

from him that while the Puritans were still in³⁶ place on Saturday, as also at other times, he saw the Devil assault him in the form of a blackbird. Well, I persisted in exorcising him. I left him speaking very well and merry, and retired myself, having seen his meat and drink blessed. Then, after they gave him a syllibub,³⁷ the sugar whereof not being blessed, at the taste thereof he presently began grievously to be tormented. Yea, though he loved flowers, yet if unblest, he³⁸ would tear them in pieces, and distinguish them from others. And unblest raisins he would say were too big for his mouth. I was sent for, and I had not charged him long, but at each charge I did find the Devil very much to tremble. Hoping for God's special assistance at that time, I made the Devil to swell in his mouth, as a sign of his presence, and to express first by sign, how many were in him. This he did, holding up three fingers. I caused them then, one by one, to descend into the big toe of the right foot, and at the entering thereof to shake it, and to stir the leg, all which they did higher and higher, to signify how one was greater than another. Then I caused the boy to speak. He acknowledged that he would live and die a Catholic, wishing Father, Mother, and all his friends to serve God. Then I called up the chief fiend, and demanded him to show himself. He presently put forth the child's tongue and swelled the end thereof. Then, all being Protestants, except one Catholic,³⁹ I commanded the Devil to show by the sheet before him, how he would use one dying out of the Roman Catholic Church? He, very unwillingly, yet eventually obeyed, tossing, plucking, dragging, and biting the sheet, so that it did make many to weep and cry out. Then I commanded him to show how he did use Luther, John Calvin, and John Foxe, which unwillingly he did perform after the same manner, but in a fiercer way. Then I commanded him to show what power he had over a good Catholic that died out of mortal sin? He thrust down his arms, trembled, holding down his head, and did no more. Hereupon the parents pressed, presently and quickly to help the child. I told them that I did not doubt that, but by the power of God's Church on which only I did rely and not on any personal virtue of my own, to cast them out presently.

³⁶ [The force of ill company].

³⁷ A milk drink, curdled by the addition of wine, cider, or other acid.

³⁸ [The power of blessed things]. ³⁹ [A remarkable thing].

But I said that I feared that the innocent child was punished for the sins of his⁴⁰ parents, which might be for their lack of belief, a sin great enough since, without faith, it is impossible to please God. Yet hereupon I said to his mother, 'Good woman, will you promise me that you will become a Catholic, if in your sight I cast out these devils in form of fire?' She answered that she must consider that. Then said I, 'I am afraid this child will not have help.' For, fearing the child was punished for her lack of belief, I doubted that the cause remaining, the effect also would remain. Hereupon the child gave a great shriek, and began to be vehemently tormented. He grew obstinate, inasmuch as I feared another Devil had entered. I exorcized him also a long time. But the Devil with the child's voice cried, 'The Lord in Heaven, the Lord in Heaven.' I exorcized him for a long time, but he was still obstinate, crying out, 'Father, Mother, help me, help me,' saying that I killed him. And when I gently struck him on the head with a blessed, soft ribbon, he yelled out that I killed him. He cursed me saying, 'A pox of God light on the Priest.' Moreover, he said, 'I will never be converted. To these words, a Protestant there that had seen all replied, 'You will then do worse.' Here I commanded the Devil that spoke to show himself in the tongue. Coming⁴¹ as if out of a trance, I asked him gently whether he had uttered any of these words? He utterly denied having spoken them, asking forgiveness, saying that it was not he that spoke them. And he affirmed that, by God's grace, he would be constant in the Roman Catholic faith till death. Then I called up the wicked spirit. I took his oath that, with trembling, he intended to be obedient in all to lawful exorcists, and not to hinder the eating, drinking, or sleeping of the child. Then, it being almost three o'clock in the morning, I retired to bed. The next day, being Monday, I came and told the parents that I had tarried there as long as I had promised, and as long as I well dared because of danger, and as my promise to others would permit. But I promised them to come again as soon as I could. The Father then offered me the child to manage as I would. I told him I had no convenient place for that purpose. But I said that if he would not deal with witches and

⁴⁰ [A conjecture why the child might be possessed].

⁴¹ [The child, being himself, denies all the Devil had uttered by his tongue].

sorcerers, I would come as often as I could. The Father⁴² said that he would seek witches or any other for help. I, being sorry to hear his bad resolution, told him that I would not mingle God and the Devil together. And then I got his promise that he would not use holy water and blessed oil if they meddled with witches. Yet I hear that he has not complied with his promise in the extremities of the boy's fits, having recourse to blessed things, saying that he will beat him with them. Well, the substance of all this that I have here written, at my coming away, I declared before three Protestants and the child's parents, desiring them that, if I did not speak truth in all things, they would challenge me therein. Then the child being in a sounding fit, and anointing him with holy oil, I brought him to himself, inasmuch as he walked up and down with a staff. And since then, he did eat, drink, sleep, and walk, having only short fits, as I am faithfully informed, yea, till shortly after they entertained many witches and sorcerers. Notwithstanding the help of these, sought in vain, he is more grievously tormented than ever before. Here, before my departure, the parents of the child offered me money and gold. I refused it. And thanking them, I said that if they would give me twenty pounds, I would not have one penny, charging them that they should not endanger their own souls and the soul of the poor boy in seeking unlawful means. And thus, Monday was a fortnight since I left him. And the truth of this, I must say with St Paul, that God knows that in all this I do not lie.

Thus, desiring that all may succeed to God's glory, the good of the child, and the confusion of all sorceries and charms which in my heart and soul I detest, I leave the parents, child, and you, Christian reader, to the mercy of God.

July the first, 1620.

*Non nobis Domine, non nobis, sed Nomini tuo da Gloriam.*⁴³

Yours in charity, love, or
in any good office,
J. W.

⁴² [The reason why I left to come any more].

⁴³ Not to us Lord, not to us, but to your name give the glory.

This relation was published by the Priests themselves and delivered by one of them, called Master Wheeler, into the hands of Master Thomas Nechils, Gentleman, a recusant dwelling near the aforementioned town of Bilson, as appears by his own confession on oath, taken before the Lord Bishop of Coventry and Litchfield, and added in the end of this book.

The egregious cunning of the boy of Bilson, in counterfeiting himself to be bewitched, and possessed of the Devil.

This boy, being about thirteen years old, but for wit and subtlety far exceeding his age, was thought by divers to be possessed of the Devil and bewitched, by reason of many strange fits and much distemper, wherewith he seemed to have been extremely affected. In those fits, he appeared both deaf and blind, writhing his mouth aside, continually groaning and panting and, although often pinched with men's fingers, pricked with needles, tickled also on his sides, and once whipped with a rod, besides other like extremities, yet could he not be discerned, by either shrieking or shrinking, to show the least passion or feeling. Out of his fits, he took, as might be thought, no sustenance which he could digest but, together with it, did void and cast out of his mouth, rags, thread, straw, crooked pins, &c. Both in and out of his fits, his belly, by wilful and continual abstinence deceiving his own guts, was almost as flat as his back. Besides this, his throat was swollen and hard, his tongue stiff and rolled up towards the roof of his mouth, inasmuch as he seemed always dumb, save that he would speak once in a fortnight or three weeks, and that but in very few words.

Two things there were which gave most just reason for the presumption that he was possessed and bewitched. One was that he would still discern when that woman⁴⁴ who was supposed to have bewitched him was brought into any room where he was, although she were very secretly conveyed thither, as was one time tried before the Grand Jury at Stafford. The second was that, though he would abide other passages of Scripture, yet he could not endure the repeating of that text, viz., 'In the beginning was the Word,'

⁴⁴ [Joan Cocke].

ſc., John 1. 1. But instantly rolling his eyes and shaking⁴⁵ his head like one distracted, he would fall into his usual fits of groaning, panting, distraction, ſc. In this plight, he continued many months to the great wonder and astonishment of thousands, who from divers parts came to see him. Thus much of his cunning.

The means of discovering his dissimulation.

At the summer Assizes held at Stafford, the tenth of August, Anno Domini 1620, the⁴⁶ aforementioned woman, supposed to have been the witch, was brought to her trial before the Right Worshipful Sir Peter Warburton, and Sir John Davies, Knights, then his Majesty's Justices of Assize for that County. Before them, there appeared some slender circumstances which were vulgarly esteemed strong proofs of witchcraft. But after some speech manifesting the idleness of such fantastical delusions, the woman was freed by the Inquest. At this time, the Judges were pleased to commit the care and, if it might so be, the cure of the boy to the Lord Bishop of Coventry and Litchfield, then and there present. He had been with him at the Castle of Eccleshall about a month, much of which time his Lordship was necessarily absent from home. There were divers symptoms though which gave just cause to suspect that he did but counterfeit, namely, the easy and equal beating of his pulse in his strongest fits, his quiet rest and sleep, commonly the whole night long, his clear complexion, his swallowing of whole morsels of bread without chewing which plainly tells every beholder that his tongue lied in saying nothing, his spitting forth from him as naturally and perfectly as ever he could do in his best health, neither of which could possibly be done with a tongue turned upwards and doubled towards his throat, as he would seem to have it. Besides these, there was his usual coming forth from his fits always with one kind of loud and large tuneful groan. Notwithstanding these, his usual vomiting up of his meat, his much fasting and lank belly, his patience or as it might rather seem senseless stupidity in enduring those many prickings and violent extremities without any sign of feeling did yet argue some bodily disease and infirmity.

⁴⁵ [John 1.1]. ⁴⁶ [Summer Assizes held at Stafford, xviii. Jacobi R., 1620].

Therefore it was that no experiment was used on him until the judgement of some well approved Physician might be had to determine in what state his body then was. Nevertheless, after a long expectation of such a one, an occasion offered itself which required and exacted a more speedy and present trial.

The Father of the boy, an honest husbandman of sufficient ability, innocent and ignorant of any practice in his child, came with an aunt of his to see him. When he was out of his fit, the Father earnestly demanded what might be thought of his son's case, and whether he were possessed or not. Whereto it was purposely answered that nothing seemed so marvellous or so much to betoken such a thing as that, at the hearing of those words of the Holy Gospel of Saint John, 'In the beginning was the Word,'⁴⁷ &c., he still used to fall into his fits. For further proof whereof then, presently, in the Father's hearing, those words were repeated. And accordingly, on the repetition thereof, the boy fell instantly into his fit. 'Lo,' his Father then said, 'do you see? What think you of this?' 'This,' said the Bishop, 'I like very well. For on this I must begin to work.'

The same day in the afternoon, when word was brought that the boy did speak, divers resorted to him. The Bishop, calling for a Greek Testament, said to him, 'Boy, it is either you or the Devil that abhors those words of the Gospel. And if it be the Devil, being so ancient a scholar of almost six thousand years' standing, he knows and understands all languages in the world. So he cannot but know when I recite the same sentence in the Gospel out of the Greek text. But if it be yourself, then you are an execrable wretch who plays the Devil's part, in loathing that part of the Gospel of Christ which, above all other Scriptures, expresses the admirable union of the God-head and manhood in one Christ and Saviour, which union is the arch-pillar of man's salvation. Wherefore, look to yourself, for now you are to be put to trial. And mark diligently whether it be that same Scripture which will be read to you, at the reading whereof you do seem to be so much troubled and tormented.'

⁴⁷ [John 1.1].

Then was read to him in Greek the twelfth verse of the first chapter of Saint John's Gospel (ὅσοι δεῖλαβον αὐτον, &c.)⁴⁸ which he, supposing it to be the first verse, accordingly fell into the passion of a trance, as he was formerly wont.

This fit being quickly passed over, next was read to him in Greek the first verse, being indeed the aforesaid text, *Εν' ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λογος, και &c.*⁴⁹ Yet he, suspecting that it was not the same text, was not any whit troubled therewith.

By this means was his notable fraud, in a manner, fully discovered, inasmuch as he seemed to be greatly confounded herewith. Notwithstanding, staring with his eyes and casting his head on both sides of the bed whereon he lay that he might dissemble his dissimulation the better, he told the company that he was troubled at the sight of two mice.

After this discovery, to the end that he might be freed from further trial and be sent home again to his Father, he complained of extreme sickness and, by writing as well as he could, did signify that he had a great pain in his belly. And the morning following, making water in a urinal, his water was as black as ink. For there were some people that wrote very legibly therewith. And in the like manner, two days following, he seemed to make water of the same colour. In the making of this, so that he might the more cunningly dissemble, he vehemently groaned. And thereupon, one came into the room to him. The boy showed him his manner of making water, whereof a little trace then came from him of the same black tincture, which he purposely had reserved within the skin to make it appear that it so came immediately from him.

But the third day following, which was the Lord's day, by diligent watchfulness and other means which were used to observe him, he was espied mixing ink with his urine, and nimbly conveying the ink-horn into a private place. When he was suddenly caught in this his stealth, after an earnest but loving exhortation made to him, this deaf began to hear and dumb to speak. And at the sight of his ungracious and godless practices, he broke out into plentiful tears, confessing all to his own shame and God's glory. Before he

⁴⁸ 'But to those who received him.'

⁴⁹ 'In the beginning was the Word, and,'

had heard of the aforesaid relation of the Priest, he made this confession the same day in the following manner.

The First Examination, and Confession of the Boy of
Bilson, Named William Perry, taken before the Reverend Father in
God, Thomas Lord Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, at
Eccleshall Castle, 8 October 1620 touching his
counterfeit practices, &c.

Being examined how long since and from whom he had learned such tricks and fraudulent devices, the boy, recollecting himself, answered as follows. 'In Lent last,' said he, 'there met me, not far from my Father's house, an old man who called himself Thomas. But I cannot remember his surname. He had a gray beard, russet apparel, and carried a cradle of glasses or pots on his back. He spoke to me in this manner. "Now, pretty boy, where do you dwell? Do you go to school? If you will do as I will teach you, you will not need to go to school. For," said he, "I can teach you such tricks and feats that the people that see you will believe that you are bewitched, and so will lament and pity you." Whereupon I, being willing not to go to school for fear of whipping, desired to learn such tricks. By and by, this old man began to teach me first, how to groan and moan. Next, how to roll and cast up my eyes, so that nothing but the white of the eye would be seen. After that, he taught me to twist and turn my neck and head both ways towards my back, then to gape hideously with my mouth and grate with my teeth, to cling and draw in my belly and guts, to stretch out my legs and clutch my hands. After that, he taught me to put crooked pins, rags, and such like baggage into my mouth, that I might seem to vomit them up. And "although," said he, "some folk will put you to pain by pricking and pinching you, yet you must endure all patiently." In this way, he taught and learned me some six several times privately in a close, where none could see us.

And further, that old man made me believe that a body possessed could not endure to hear the first verse of the first chapter of St John's Gospel, viz., "In the beginning was the Word," &c.,⁵⁰ and that therefore whensoever

⁵⁰ [John 1.1].

I heard it, then I should fall into my fits. Besides, he willed me that I should begin to do these feats when it next happened that I was sick, and that then I should accuse somebody or other, whom I had heard to be accounted a witch, to have bewitched me. And thereupon afterwards, of myself, I did accuse one Joan Cocke. And I was once minded to have made my picture in clay and to have conveyed it into her house, for the better proof of her bewitching me.'

Being examined how long after it was that he began to put these things into practice and on what occasion, he answered, 'Not long after, which was about the Easter following, I began to be sick, and my Father sought help for me in divers places. And then some Papists did persuade him to seek for help at the hands of some Catholic Priests. But my Mother desired rather to have some learned scholar or Divine that was no Papist. Yet at length, by their persuasions, there was first brought to me a Priest, of a fairly tall stature, with long black hair, in a greenish suit, his doublet⁵¹ opened under the armpits with ribbons.

As soon as he came to me, he drew a stone out of his pocket and hung it about my neck. He said some Latin prayers over me, also putting his finger into my mouth. Whereupon I seemed to come out of my fit. After that, he made holy-water and witch-water, saying certain prayers over them, and putting salt into the witch-water. Then he gave me a bottle full of one of those waters. But of which I do not remember. He willed me now and then to cast some of it over my bed. And he himself, with a little hyssop, did sprinkle me therewith also. Before he went away, he said certain other Latin words or prayers over those waters which to my remembrance did sound thus, "Eggse eggse atque famulo Dei Gulihelmo ante damnando," and more thereof I cannot remember.

The next morning, as I remember, this Priest came again. At this time, because I lay in a lower room where many people thronged in to see me, they moved me into an upper room, more private and fitter for them to pray in. There they continued. And they used the like means towards me as they had done before, betwixt a fortnight and three weeks period, during

⁵¹ [Priest].

which time I continued my wonted fits. Then at last, this Priest said that he could not help me because he lacked a book. He sent for this from London. But after the book was brought, he then said that he could not help me without the aid of another Priest whom, after that, he brought with him. He was a⁵² short, big, fat man, with blackish long curled hair, in a kind of russet-coloured suit, with a sword by his side. As soon as he saw me, he said that, by the help of God and our Lady and the holy Saints of Heaven, he would either cast the Devil out of me that night, or else it should go hard. And first, he drew out a little book of the size of a Pueriles, from which he continued praying until about eleven o'clock at night, and casting holy water on me.

Then both of these Priests went away. But they came again to me in the morning. And then they made as much holy water as a pail could hold. But in the end they confessed that they could do me no good without the help of a third Priest, whom⁵³ they did send for through a weaver of our town.

About a week after, the third Priest came, being a reasonably tall, old man in a horseman's coat, with long head-hair. Before he came to our house, he did say to the man that fetched him, as I heard, that if the spirits came to me, then I was obsessed, but if they were within me, then I was possessed. The big, fat Priest came in with this last Priest. And first, he put his finger into my mouth. And he said that I was bewitched at the tongue's end. Wherefore, he bade me drink three or four draughts of holy water, which I did. He taught me also to pray to the Virgin Mary, and to my good Angel, and to all the Saints in Heaven to help me. Then he washed my head, feet, and belly with the same water saying now and then to me, "You are now somewhat better, boy?" And I would say, "Yes, a little better."

About the same time, my Father came home one day before supper. He asked me what I had seen in my fits. And I told him that a thing came to me in the likeness of a blackbird. And now the Priest that came last to me went out of town, these three Priests having been with me about three weeks. But they could do me no good.

⁵² [Second priest]. ⁵³ [Third priest].

About a week after, the big fat Priest came again. And he held to his former course,⁵⁴ and said that by God's grace he would help me. About this time, he gave a sermon to certain Catholics who were with me. He had on a white surplice, with a stole as I remember they called it about his neck. His text was, "My flesh is bread indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." After his sermon, he prayed with me as he had used to do. And then he made another pail-full of holy-water, wishing them to boil certain herbs in water, to wash me withal, such as thyme, hyssop, and such like.

On the Sunday following, people came in so thickly to see me that the Priest dared not preach. And he intended to be gone the next day.

His fashion was to bless and cross all the meat which both themselves and I did eat, so that when my Mother once gave me some of a syllabub, which the Priest had not crossed in the same manner, he told them that there was a Puritan spirit entered into it.

These three Priests entreated me at sundry times that I should confess my sins to them. Sometimes I did this when I chose to speak. But that was but now and then. They wished me also to turn to their religion, and then I would have help.

On that Sunday night before this fat Priest was to go away, he said that, by the help of the blessed Virgin, and the angels and Saints in Heaven, he would cast the Devil out of me.

A little after, he began to ask certain questions of the Spirit within me. First, what would become of the Puritans when they died? And he told me that, if they went to Hell, then the spirit would tug and shake the bed-clothes, which I did do after the same manner he bade me. Next, he asked what would become of Roman Catholics, and if they would go to Heaven? And then, in sign thereof, he said that I should lift up my hands, which I did also.

Then the Priest said, "Come out of your fits, Will, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Whereupon I seemed to come out of a fit. And then he prayed by me, and said that he would cast three devils out of me that night. And so he hung about my neck and put

⁵⁴ [Second priest].

under my arm a fine stole, wrought with great silver letters. And with the one end thereof, being very hard, he did beat me about the head and face until, to my thinking, he made me black and blue, chafing and rubbing my neck with that stole. It was so rough that it made my neck very sore. And still he spoke to the Spirits within me thus, "Come out, you rogues, you villains. I charge you by God and the blessed Virgin, and by all the angels and Saints in Heaven, that you allow the boy to eat and sleep." And withal, he stamped with his feet as he spoke those words.

Then he told my Father that he would throw out those three Spirits one after another, so that they would plainly see them come forth. And if he should do so, he asked my Mother whether she would become a Catholic, or not. She answered him that she would consider it. "Then," said he, "I will also consider whether I will help your son or not."

But yet the Priest continued as he had begun. And he said to me, "If there be three devils in you, then give three knocks as a sign thereof." And so I did. But at the biggest devil, he willed me to give the greatest thump, which I did at the last. And still the Priest did beat me with his stole. And so he continued with me till about three o'clock in the morning, during which time certain Papists were sent to pray with me, bringing hallowed candles with them.

At the same time, the Priest took such⁵⁵ things as I had seemed to vomit. And burning them with frankincense, he took an old rusty sword and said a Latin prayer, resembling it to the sword wherewith Peter did cut off Malchus's ear. He also beat the same things with a hammer, betokening that hammer which nailed Christ to the cross.

The morning being come, the Priest was to be gone. And then my Father said to him, "Sir, I see you can do my child no good. And therefore I must seek for some other help." "Yes" said the Priest, "you will go seek for help from witches to ease his body, but you care not for damning his soul." But yet, before he went away, he hallowed more water, and then he departed.'

⁵⁵ [Viz., crooked pins, straw, &c., and such things as the boy could find and steal into his mouth, as he did once half a knitting needle].

And here the boy was allowed to pause and
repose himself, by reason of his weakness.

And was not then further
examined till the next time.

The second examination and answer of the said
William Perry, made to certain other questions, which on
just and special presumptions were propounded to him by the
Reverend Father in God, Thomas, Lord Bishop of Coventry
and Lichfield, taken at Eccleshall Castle, the thirteenth
day of October. Anno Domini 1620.

First, it was demanded of him, seeing the old man called Thomas persuaded⁵⁶ him that at length he would be cured by some Popish Priest, whether he meant not accordingly in the end to seem to be dispossessed by some or one such of them?

He answers, yes, and further, that thereupon⁵⁷ he meant to become a Papist.

Second, he was asked why then, if he did mean so after so long a time and so great pains taken about him by those Priests, would he not yield to their exorcisms and seem to be dispossessed by their means?

He answers, because many people did resort to him, and brought him many good things, and also that he was not willing to go to school again. Yet in the end, his intention was to be helped by them.

Third, he was asked whether in his grief and fear that all would come to light, after⁵⁸ he saw himself half discovered, he had not an intent to do himself some bodily mischief. He answers that he had. For, says he, 'The Devil had⁵⁹ steeled my heart, so that I cared not to hang myself, and had intended to do so one night, but that I was watched and hindered.'

Fourthly, he was asked how it could be thought that he would be moved by any Papist⁶⁰ to charge a woman for bewitching him who was herself an obstinate recusant?

⁵⁶ [First]. ⁵⁷ [Second]. ⁵⁸ [Third]. ⁵⁹ [It was his own word]. ⁶⁰ [Fourth].

He answers that he was moved by Thomas the old man to lay it on some woman so suspected, but that only by himself, without the persuasion of any other, he named this⁶¹ woman, because she was a woman ill thought of and suspected of such like things.

He was here put in mind of the desire which formerly, before his discovery, he had⁶² to be prayed for, as was accordingly then done but, as at the same time was told him, it was done not to drive the Devil out of his body, but only out of his soul, wherein the Devil had possessed him by a devilish obstinacy of his heart in faining himself to be bodily possessed of the Devil. And being further reminded how, after those prayers, he wrote on a paper that he had found much ease thereby, he was hereupon demanded whether he did not as then intend and resolve with himself to make an end of his former course and counterfeit practices, and seem to be dispossessed by such prayers.

He answers that it was indeed in his mind to do so, because he had then wearied himself with dissembling so long, and was also in fear of being discovered and found out.

And although this was easily discerned to have been his resolution, yet, as was at that time told him, it did not become the professors of truth to imitate the Popish Priests in such cases, who falsely arrogated to themselves such an Apostolical power, by exorcizing to expell devils, although it might in man's opinion much work for the glorifying of God, the edifying of Christian people in our Church, and also for the converting of Romish recusants to our true religion. Because this ought to be the profession of Christians, to seek to glorify Him only by truth, who will be worshipped in spirit and truth.

And here was an end made of examining the boy any further.

*Examinat'. coram præfat'. Rdo
Patre dictis diebus, anno, & loco;
Præsente Ryc. Baddeley, Notario
Publico.*

⁶¹ [Joan Cocke]. ⁶² [Fifth].

The Boy of Bilson, his private and public
Acknowledgement, &c.

Now after those Popish⁶³ Priests were departed and had left the boy, as before is confessed and set down, his Father sought for further help by the means of witches, but as wickedly, so all in vain until such time as he was brought from the town of Bilson aforesaid to Litchfield, before Doctor Master Chancellor of the Diocese where he continued until he was carried to the Assizes at Stafford. And there he was referred by the Judges and left to the above-named Reverend Father in God, the Lord Bishop of the Diocese who, after a very short time, sent to Bilson for him. And after his arrival, he did deal with him, as formerly in this discourse has been related.

Since this time, the boy, on laying to his charge the heinousness of his offence, being blasphemous in respect of Christ, whose words in the Gospel he feigned himself to abhor, and devilish in respect of the Devil, whose person he would seem to be possessed of, and also murderous in respect of the poor woman whom he willingly occasioned to be brought as much as in him lay to the point of death, he has earnestly bewailed these his sins and, as after his first examination, by prayer conceived by himself to such purpose, craved forgiveness at God's hand for the same.

So, having continued at Eccleshall Castle aforesaid until he was perfectly recovered of his former weakness and benumbed limbs, and his parents willing to manage him in other ways, he was finally brought again to the last Summer-Assizes held at Stafford, the twenty sixth of July, Anno 1621. There, before Sir Peter Warburton,⁶⁴ and Sir Humphrey Winch, Knights, his Majesty's Justices of Assize, and the face of the county and country there assembled, the boy craved pardon first of Almighty God. Then, he desired

⁶³ [Bilson in Staffordshire is a chapelry within the particular jurisdiction of Wolverhampton, where sacrilegious impiety has produced such effects. It is much infested with Popery, and infested with Popish priests whose ordinary rendezvous it is. No marvel therefore if they made choice thereof, as the fittest nest wherein to lay and exclude their stinking and fraudulent eggs of political impostures and godly deceptions. But this cockatrice was crushed in the shell, and their viperous design thereby defeated].

⁶⁴ [Summer Assizes held at Stafford, 19 Jacobi R. 1621].

the woman also present there to forgive him. And lastly, he requested the whole country, whom he had so notoriously and wickedly scandalized, to admit of that his so hearty confession, for their satisfaction.

And thus it pleased God to open the eyes of this boy, that I may so say, luto, with the clay of the Romish Priests' lewd impostures, and sputo, with the spittle of his own infamy, to see his errors and to glorify the God of truth.

Gloria soli Deo.

The examination and answer of Thomas Nechils of Nechils, in the County of Stafford, Gentleman, a recusant taken on oath before the Right Reverend Father in God Thomas Lord Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, at Eccleshall Castle, the seventeenth of October, Anno 1620, touching the aforementioned relation of the Priests, of their proceedings with the boy of Bilson.

Being examined whether he knew a written discourse then shown to him, touching the boy of Bilson, entitled and beginning thus, 'A faithful relation of the proceedings of,' &c., and ending in these words, 'Yours in charity, love, or any good office,' he answers that he does very well know and remember the same.

Being examined how he came first by that discourse or relation, and from whom he had it, he answers that it was delivered to him by a gentleman, whom he met journeying on the way towards Lichfield, whose name was Master Wheeler, as he told this examinant. And, being further demanded, he says that he was a man of a reasonable stature, round faced, about fifty years old, and of a blackish complexion.

Being examined what further discourse did at that time pass between them both touching the said boy called William Perry, he answers that the said Master Wheeler then told this examinant that he would acquaint him with the whole business concerning that boy. Whereupon he gave this

examinant a copy of the afore-named discourse or relation, having two copies on him at the same time. And he willed this examinant to get it copied out, and to give one copy thereof to one Philip Higgins of West Bromwich, yeoman, as he, this examinant, remembers. And further, the said Master Wheeler said to this examinant that it did not matter who saw it.

Being further examined what the said Master Wheeler did at the same time acquaint this examinant with, touching himself, he confesses that he told him how he often used to resort to the French Ambassador, that he knew the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, and, further, that he was known to the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.

Thomas

Nechils.

Examinat'. coram præfat'. Rdo

Patre dictis die, anno, & loco;

Præsente Ryc. Baddeley Notario Publ.

A pious daughter
The story of Margaret Muschamp

In *Wonderful News from the North*, Mary Moore tells the story of the bewitchment of her eleven-year-old daughter Margaret Muschamp, and of her eventual deliverance, the bewitchment of two others, her daughter Betty and son George, and the death of a fourth child, her infant daughter Sibilla. In this sense it is unique. For it is the only story of possession we have in which the authorship is attributable to a woman. It was written by Mary Moore to encourage the legal pursuit of the woman whom she believed was responsible for the misfortunes which befell her family, namely Dorothy Swinow. The story is driven by Mary's frustration at not being able to persuade anybody, including her own husband, of the guilt of Dorothy, and punctuated by Mary's 'shopping' for a sympathetic judge. It ends with the indictment of Swinow, but there is no suggestion within the text nor any evidence elsewhere that anything further came of it.¹

The authorship itself is not clear. The Preface to the Reader is signed by Mary Moore. The text speaks on occasion in the first person.² But more often Mary is written of in the third person as the mother of the afflicted.³ The fragmentary and contradictory nature of the text is best explained if we see it more as a collection of texts, written by a number of persons including Mary, and put together by her. As Diane Purkiss has remarked, 'The voice of Mary Moor[e] comes and goes like a distant radio station, now vivid, now obscured by other signals. The result inevitably is hard to follow.'⁴

The voices of Margaret and her mother are sometimes fused. Margaret speaks often in her mother's defence. She complains to her angels, for example, "No justice abroad, no peace at home. What would become of

¹ See Notestein, 1965, pp. 209–11, 363. ² See anon., 1650, pp. 6, 12 (see below, pp. 369, 375).

³ Scholars disagree about the authorship of the text. Elaine Hobby views it as written by a man, and falsely attributed to a woman. Notestein regards it as written by a friend of Mary Moore. Frances Dolan and Diane Purkiss see it as written by Mary Moore. See Hobby, 1988, pp. 240, 250; Notestein, 1965, p. 363; Dolan, 1994, p. 232, Purkiss, 1998, pp. 235, 250. The article by Purkiss is the most thorough analysis of the affliction of Margaret Muschamp.

⁴ Purkiss, 1998, p. 236.

her Mother? For that godless thief Dorothy Swinow, by the instigation of the Devil, had hardened the heart of both judges and justices against her. And now at this instant," she said, "she is using means to harden her husband's heart against her too." This she knows will be the cruellest of all to her. And she has begun withal to consume her eldest sister. And she said that she would go to the Judge this night or tomorrow morning, and beg once more for justice.⁵ Margaret worries too that the 'hardening of folks' hearts against her [Mother] will be insufferable'.⁶ Swinow and her fellow witches sought her Mother's life, 'but could not get it'.⁷

The story is further confused by the complex family relations of Mary Moore. The children who are bewitched (Margaret, her eldest brother, and her sister), along with two others, are those of Mary to her deceased husband George Muschamp. A niece, Elizabeth Muschamp, is also in residence. Mary is married to Edward Moore whose children (six sons and a daughter) from his first marriage also live in the house. During the story, a further child, Sibilla Moore, is conceived, is born, and dies. Margaret had accused Dorothy of attempting to kill this child while in the womb. It is for the post-natal death of this child that Dorothy Swinow is eventually indicted.

Unusually, for a case of witchcraft accusation by one bewitched, there is no suggestion of a direct conflict between Margaret and Dorothy Swinow. But there is a fairly evident history of bad feelings between Mary Moore and Dorothy Swinow. 'I fear her more than anyone else'⁸ declares Mary of Dorothy, before her suspicions of Dorothy's witchcraft are firm. Margaret sees her own woes as the result of Dorothy's hatred of her mother.⁹ And Dorothy Swinow was later to be accused by John Hutton, 'one of whom it was suspected that he could do more than God allowed of',¹⁰ and Margaret Muschamp of bewitching to death Mary's sister Lady Margery Hambleton, the better to gain access to an inheritance for her son.¹¹

During the course of Margaret Muschamp's illness, a variety of people is accused of having bewitched her: the cunning man John Hutton who dies in prison during the course of the story (accused by Margaret); Dorothy Swinow, the wife of Colonel Swinow (initially accused by Margaret and later by John Hutton); later two other women are accused of witchcraft, 'the Miller's and the Webster's Wives'¹² (initially accused by Hutton, and later by Margaret) – these are presumably Margaret White, who confesses in her deposition to having collaborated with Dorothy, along with her sister

⁵ Anon., 1650, p. 14 (see below, p. 378).

⁷ Anon., 1650, p. 19 (see below, p. 383).

⁹ See anon., 1650, p. 15 (see below, p. 379).

¹¹ See anon., 1650, p. 9 (see below, p. 372).

⁶ Anon., 1650, p. 16 (see below, p. 379).

⁸ Anon., 1650, p. 6 (see below, p. 369).

¹⁰ Anon., 1650, p. 7 (see below, p. 370).

¹² See anon., 1650, p. 10 (see below, p. 373).

Jane Martin, in attempting to kill Mary's children, and of having succeeded in the case of the infant Sibilla.¹³

The exact chronology of Margaret Muschamp's affliction is difficult to determine. But the whole text has a liturgical rhythm to it. Both Mary and Margaret used the old Anglican calendar. Margaret's affliction came to an end on 2 February 1648, on the feast of Candlemas. It was on Lammas, the first of August, that her sister's torments began,¹⁴ her brother's on St John's Day.¹⁵ At the time of her deliverance in February 1648, it was, according to her, exactly two years and one day since she had been first afflicted, that is, on Candlemas Eve 1646.¹⁶ But she had her first visions of angels some two months before Michaelmas and therefore around the beginning of August (Lammas) 1645.¹⁷

Her first affliction on Lammas was a divine malady, although it frightened her Mother sufficiently to call in assistance. Margaret was in a 'heavenly rapture' and continued all night receiving heavenly visions.¹⁸ She was a model of children's piety throughout her troubles. When physicians were called in 'her signs from the beginning were, "Away with these Doctors' drugs." God had laid it on her, and God would take it off her.'¹⁹ God fed her with angel food. Her angelic friends came and saved her from her enemies. She conversed for hours with her angels, which she vividly described as 'embodied like birds, as big as turkeys, and faces like Christians, but the sweetest creatures that ever eyes beheld'.²⁰ She was a visible link between heaven and earth, and crowds flocked to see her.

Her torments began on Candlemas Eve 1646. Losing the use of her limbs, unable to speak or eat, she has violent fits. She now becomes a tormented martyr. 'Privately to be "tormented" may have meant achieving at last a perfection – psychic, bodily, spiritual – which the godly child must always seek but never complacently discover in herself, a perfection that could never be acknowledged or reflected by parents, but only by an outside agency – angels, ministers of grace.'²¹

¹³ See anon., 1650, pp. 24–5 (see below, pp. 388–9). ¹⁴ See anon., 1650, p. 21 (see below, p. 385).

¹⁵ See anon., 1650, p. 4 (see below, p. 367). ¹⁶ See anon., 1650, p. 21 (see below, p. 385).

¹⁷ See anon., 1650, p. 1 (see below, p. 364). Sense can only be made of the chronology within the text if we assume that Margaret's release was on Candlemas day 1648. The chronology is then as follows. If her torments finished two years and one day before Candlemas as Margaret claims (see p. 21, below p. 385), then she fell ill on Candlemas Eve (as is suggested on p. 2, below p. 365), 1646. This would make her first visions in August 1645 (two months before Michaelmas), and her brother's illness from December 1646, in the Christmas following her Candlemas Eve torments (see p. 4, below p. 367) and some thirteen months before her eventual release (see p. 21, below p. 385). Her sister would then have fallen ill in August 1647.

¹⁸ Anon., 1650, p. 2 (see below, p. 364).

¹⁹ Anon., 1650, p. 3 (see below, p. 365).

²⁰ Anon., 1650, p. 12 (see below, p. 375).

²¹ Purkiss, 1998, p. 238.

Margaret appears to be saved by the godly prayers of the Puritans Richard Balsom and others.²² Something of a latter day John Darrell, Balsom's success with Margaret was noted in an account of his life, as was his exorcism in Berwick during the same period of the Scottish steward of Lord Granson.²³ But Balsom's success was shortlived, his prayers a failure. For Mary, Balsom had failed to diagnose correctly the cause of Margaret's afflictions. Within seven or eight weeks, Margaret's torments began again, and her brother fell ill.

The nature of the torments has now changed. Margaret is the victim of a physical assault. She has become a site of conflict between evil forces and her angels: 'as if some were striking at her, she seemed to save herself from blows with hands and bedclothes, portraying a wretched creature as we all knew after by her description. Sometimes he would fight with her in the shape of a dragon, of a bear, a horse, or cow . . . And good things, she said, fought for her and still got the better of him. The enemy's weapons were a club, a staff, a sword, and dagger.'²⁴ In a note written in code, Margaret accuses John Hutton and Dorothy Swinow of the attacks.

The text inhabits a world of magic and counter-magic. Mary becomes convinced that Margaret is bewitched. Margaret declares that drops of Dorothy's or Hutton's blood are necessary to save her life. Hutton gives his blood to Mary and her companions who visit him in Sunderland, but only after she threatened 'his heart-blood would go'²⁵ if he would not be bled. They encounter an unusually wild storm on the return journey to Berwick. The storm signifies witchcraft in the air, as do the two lambs which accompany them divine protection. Margaret celebrates the blood: 'for these two drops of blood had saved her life. Otherwise she would have been seven years in torment without any ease, or death would have come.'²⁶ Hutton is brought to Berwick to provide more blood, this time for Margaret's brother. While he is there, Margaret is quiet, but after his departure, she falls into a terrible fit.

As the drama proceeded, Mary and those around her came more and more to inhabit the world which Margaret progressively created extempore. Margaret's angels had been frightened away for three months.²⁷ At the time of their expected return, a crowd gathered. For two hours, the spectators listened to her discourse with the angels: 'With the tears running down her face, she prayed for her enemy Dorothy Swinow that if the Lord had mercy in store, to grant her it. She lamented the sad condition she had run

²² See anon., 1650, p. 4 (see below, p. 367).

²³ See Clarke, 1660, p. 216.

²⁴ Anon., 1650, p. 5 (see below, p. 368).

²⁵ Anon., 1650, p. 8 (see below, p. 371).

²⁶ Anon., 1650, p. 9 (see below, p. 372).

²⁷ See anon., 1650, p. 12 (see below, p. 375).

her soul into . . . making such a description between Hell torments and heavenly joys, that no Divine on earth could have gone beyond her.²⁸ Over a hundred people heard her cry out in her last fit for justice ‘in the name of the King of Kings, justice for Christ’s sake, justice for his mercies’ sake’ against Dorothy.²⁹

Unfortunately, the drama created by Margaret was one into which many were drawn; unfortunately, because it was a world in which innocence and guilt were blurred, and victims and persecutors often mistaken, the one for the other. Unfortunately, too, the pamphlet ends without our knowing what became of Dorothy and her co-accused, or of Mary and her two children who were still tormented. We can assume that, from the time the text concludes in February 1648 until its publication in late 1650, Margaret at least had remained free of torments.

²⁸ Anon., 1650, p. 13 (see below, p. 377). ²⁹ Anon., 1650, p. 15 (see below, p. 379).

Wonderful News from the North.

Or, a true relation of the sad and grievous torments, Inflicted on the Bodies of three Children of Mr George Muschamp, late of the County of Northumberland, by Witch-craft: and how miraculously it pleased God to strengthen them, and to deliver them. As also the prosecution of the said Witches, as by Oaths, and their own Confessions will appear, and by the Indictment found by the Jury against one of them, at the Sessions of the Peace held at Alnwick, the 24th day of April, 1650.

November 25, 1650.

Imprimatur, John Downname.

London,

Printed by T. H. and are to be sold by Richard Harper,
at his shop in Smithfield, 1650.

A Preface to the Reader.

Courteous Reader:

With a sad heart I present to you the ensuing discourse, not out of malice to the person of any, but to show the great mercy of Almighty God, and to magnify his glorious name for preservation of me and my children, and for delivering us from those extreme torments and miseries wherewith, by diabolical means, we have been afflicted. In prosecution of this sad story, I have delivered nothing but truth, as is testified by very many people of great rank and quality, as also by Divines, physicians, and numbers of other people

who have been sad spectators of our miseries. Beseeching the Almighty God to deliver you and all good Christian people from the like miseries and torments, which have happened to me and my poor, innocent children.

Yours, Mary Moore.

A brief Description of Mr George Muschamp's
Children's unnatural Trials, from the Year of our Lord 1645,
until Candlemas, 1647, the time of their Release.

First in Harvest, some two Months before Michaelmas, about four or five o'clock in the afternoon, Mistress Margaret Muschamp suddenly fell into a great trance. Her Mother, being frightened, called company, and with much ado recovered her. As soon as the child looked up, she cried out, 'Dear Mother, weep not for me. For I have seen a happy sight, and heard a blessed sound. For the Lord has so loved my poor soul that he has caused his blessed trumpet to sound in my ears, and has sent two blessed angels to receive my sinful soul. Oh, weep not for me, but rejoice that the Lord would have such respect to so sinful a wretch as I am, as to send his heavenly angels to receive my sinful soul.' Among many other divine expressions, she called, 'Good Mother, send for my dear brother and honest Master Huet. Perhaps the Lord will give me leave to see them. That faithful man may help my soul forward in praying with me, and for me. For we know the prayers of the faithful are very powerful with the Lord.' They, being three miles off in the Holy Island, were sent for and, with what speed might be, came. All this while in her heavenly rapture, she uttered such words as were admirable to the beholders. Her brother and the Minister came to her, who heard her express much joy. The Minister exhorted her. To him she gave such satisfaction, that he blessed God in showing such mercy to a child of eleven years old. All that night she continued, apprehending these heavenly visions, the Minister praying with her and for her, as she desired him. Afterwards she fell into a little rest. And when she awoke, she remembered nothing that she had said or done.

Witnesses to this, first,

Master Huet, Minister.

Mistress Kennedy, her two brothers and two sisters, with her Mother.

George Robinson, and his wife.

Katherine Graeme.

Odnel Selby, and his wife

Margaret Dickson, with divers others in the house then present.

After this she continued well till Candlemas.

On Candlemas Eve, betwixt the hours of one and two in the afternoon, being the Sabbath, her Mother with most of her servants were at Church. Only her two brothers and two sisters were with her. She was suddenly stricken with a great deal of torment. She called for a little beer. But before they could come with it, the use of her tongue was gone, with all her limbs, striving to vomit, and such torments that no eyes could look on her without compassion. Her Mother, coming home with a sad heart, beheld her child and used what means she could. But there was no ease till eleven or twelve o'clock at night when she fell into a slumber and slept till six in the morning. As soon as Berwick gates were opened, her mother sent for physicians, both of soul and body, with the Lady Selby, Colonel Fenwick's widow, and with other friends. They forthwith came to behold this sad sight, with many others. Waking out of her sleep, the child was without present torment, but had lost the use of both limbs, tongue, and stomach. She only smiled on them, and signed that we could understand she had all her other senses very perfect. But she would let nothing come within her mouth of any nourishment, for her jaws were almost closed. Physicians gave their advice, with other friends. And what could be had was gotten for her. But her signs from the beginning were, 'Away with these Doctors' drugs.' God had laid it on her, and God would take it off her.

She begged that Master Balsom, Master Strother, and Master Huet would be her doctors in their earnest prayers to the Lord for her. For she was confident that there was no help for her, but from Heaven. Yet her Mother, to her great expense, neglected no lawful means that could be used. About twelve o'clock, she had a tormenting fit before all the company. But

it was not above an hour. But from that time till Whitsun Eve, being sixteen weeks, she slept as well in the nights as anyone. But as soon as she awoke in the morning, her torment began. First, three or four hours every day, increasing till it came to eight hours, every hour a several torment, such strong, cruel ones that cannot be expressed. As many with weeping eyes beheld it, Ministers would pray by her till the sad object would make them leave her to the Lord, expecting nothing but death. Sir William Selby, his Lady, the Countess Lendrik, the Lady Haggarston, with many others, would look, till sorrow would make them cease. Yet as soon as these torments were over, the child would instantly smile, and make signs that she felt no pain at all. So lying quietly till the next morning, we only wet her lips with a little milk and water. For she would let nothing come within her jaws. But she would smile and show her arms and breast, and say that God fed her with angels' food. For truly, all the sixteen weeks of fast did not appear to diminish her fatness or favour in any way at all.

On Whitsun Eve in the morning, she had eight hours of bitter torment. In the afternoon, her Mother, being abroad, left her husband's brother's daughter, Mistress Elizabeth Muschamp, with her. She³⁰ made signs to her to carry her into the garden in her Mother's absence. Her cousin, casting a mantle about her, gave her her desire, and sat in the garden with her on her knee. In bringing her down, she had so little strength in her neck, that her head hung down wagging. But she was not sat a quarter of an hour till, showing some signs to her cousin, she bolted off her knee, ran thrice about the garden, expressing a shrill voice, but did not speak presently. She that was brought down in this sad condition, came upstairs on her own legs in her cousin's hands. Captain Falset, his wife and his daughter, being then in the house, beheld this miraculous mercy of the Lord done to this child. Her Mother, being at Berwick three miles off, was sent for and imparted her joyfulness to the Lady Selby and good Master Balsom, whose prayers with the rest, as the child said, had prevailed with God for mercy. When her Mother came home, her daughter whom she left in so bad a condition, came down to the gate with her clothes on, calling, 'Mother, Mother, welcome

³⁰ Margaret Muschamp.

home.' Now the Mother's joy may be imagined, but not expressed. She presently desired her Mother to send many thanks to Master Balsom and Master Strother that the Lord had answered their prayers for her. The next day, being the Sabbath, she begged her Mother to return thanks to the glorious God, who never failed any that trusted in him, and she herself would ride into the Holy Island and join in thanks and prayers to the Lord, with Master Huet, Sir Thomas Tempest, Captain Shaft, and with the rest of the parish that feared God. By God's power, she did it herself the next Thursday, there being a lecture in Berwick. And with Master Balsom and Master Strother, she gave glory to the Lord for his never forgotten mercy to her. Though her flesh did not diminish, yet her strength was but weak, and her stomach by degrees came to her again. And for seven or eight weeks she was very well. Then her Mother moved to Berwick, where the Garrison was kept. The discharge of a musket would cause her to fall into very great ecstasies. Being there several times for a period of twenty four hours, she would be suddenly taken with her former torments. For a period of three weeks, she lost her stomach and all her limbs. And suddenly, she recovered all again, not remembering what she had either done or suffered. To avoid this inconvenience, her Mother moved from Berwick and carried her, in one of these sad conditions, one mile from Berwick, where she continued seven weeks more in these afflictions.

On St John's day, on the Christmas following, betwixt the hours of one and two at night, her eldest brother was taken so exceedingly ill, that it was thought that he would not live. The next morning he was a little eased of his extremity and pain. But both his stomach and the use of his legs were taken from him, so that he was forced to have help to put on his clothes, and was lifted into a chair where he sat all day long. But he could neither eat nor drink anything but a little milk or water, or sour milk. He consumed away to nothing, yet not heart-sick. But he would reason, talk, and laugh with any friend as if nothing ailed him. His Mother, now being pressed down with sorrow, sent to the doctors both at Newcastle, Durham, and Edinburgh, not doubting or suspecting any unnatural disease. The physicians all agreed that, by the course of nature, he could not live a month to an end, which was sad news to his sorrowful Mother, God knows.

After two or three weeks, she had another fit of her former torments. After she had lain three or four weeks in her extremity, she began to cry, 'The Rogue', never till then offering a word in her torments. But as if some were striking at her, she seemed to save herself from blows with her hands and bedclothes, portraying a wretched creature as we all knew after by her description. Sometimes he would fight with her in the shape of a dragon, of a bear, a horse, or cow. Many fancies she did express. And good things, she said, fought for her and still got the better of him. The enemy's weapons were a club, a staff, a sword, and dagger. Her good things got them all, as she thought, and afterwards the wretch, she thought, got the dagger again.

Now when she fixed her eyes on her objects, no action you could use would move either eyes or gesture till she came out of her fits. Then she did not remember anything that she either did or said. After a while she would make her hand go on her breast, as if she would write, with her eyes fixed on her object. They laid paper on her breast and put a pen with ink in her hand, and she, not moving her eyes, wrote, 'Jo Hu. Do. Swo. has been the death of one dear friend, consumes another, and torments me.' Whilst she was writing these words, she was blown up ready to burst, shrinking with her head, as if she feared blows. Then she would be stretched, as in convulsion fits, till she could get that writing from them that had it, and either burn it in the fire, or chew it in her mouth, till it could not be discerned. Let any one snatch the paper from her, and hide it as privately as he could, she would have gone to the party and place, still in torment, till she got it. And she either burned it or chewed it, so that none could discern one word she had written. Then immediately, she would have ease. Thus for a month or six weeks, every other day, with several torments, such like expressions continued. Her good things, as she called them came still and saved her from her enemies.

These written words, and her other expressions, caused her sad Mother to have very contradictory thoughts. Thus, one day her niece Muschamp,³¹ that had been her companion in most of these sad conditions, being troubled to think what this child's writing should mean, said to her aunt, 'There is one that I have ever feared since my cousin Margaret was first afflicted. But

³¹ Elizabeth Muschamp.

I dare not name her whom I have suspected.' Her aunt answers, 'and only one I suspect. And these letters³² make me tremble to think on it. But the Lord pardon our thoughts if we think amiss.' So we revealed our thoughts to one another, and both pitched on Dorothy Swinow. Her niece says, 'Mistress Swinow came to see the child when you were away and spoke harshly of you. And besides, the child's looking on her, which she never did on any else, makes me fear her.' Her aunt answered, 'If she could do me hurt, and not her own soul, I fear her more than anyone else. But that cannot be. So Lord pardon us, if we think amiss, and let us not speak any further of her.'

This child's Mother's business called her to Newcastle, which was not a pleasant journey, leaving so sad a house at home. And her child's writing, and her niece's thoughts and her own, made her very sad, so that her servant, wondering to see such a change, presumed to ask the cause of it. She, knowing her servant to be trusty, revealed the suspected party to him, no living soul being by. Her business being dispatched, she returned home.

But in her absence, her daughter had been quite distracted, running up and down with a staff in her hand, saying that she would kill the rogue. In this rage, she apprehended her good things, for so she called them, in the likeness of a dove, and a partridge. And she began to sing, 'Judge and revenge my cause, O Lord.' Next, 'How long will you forget me, Lord. Will I never be remembered?' And she concluded, 'Behold and have regard, you servants of the Lord.' And so she came out of her fit, not remembering anything either done or said. She never knew any of these Psalms by heart, nor any book by her, nor any voice to sing them to this day.

By her, at that time, was my niece Muschamp, Master Moore's six sons and his daughter, with my own children and servants, and divers neighbours. After my coming home, she fell into another of these strange fits. The Minister of Tweedmouth, being by, saw and heard many strange passages, half of which cannot be remembered. But part of her discourse was that if she had two drops of his blood³³ or hers³⁴ within ten days, it would save her life. If not, death would be long coming but torment perpetual.

³² That is, 'Jo. Ho. Do. Swo.'

³³ That is, John Hutton's.

³⁴ That is, Dorothy Swinow's.

She had divers of these fits. In every one, she said that their blood would save her life. from ten days to six, from six to three, which was on a Saturday, being heavily tormented, her tongue was taken from her. With her eyes fixed on her objects, she wrote thus again, 'Jo. Hu. Do. Swi. has been the death of one dear friend, consumes another dear friend, and torments me. For three days, they have no power. But the fourth they will torment me. Two drops of his or her blood would save my life. If I do not have it, I am undone, to be tormented for seven years before death comes.' Whilst she was writing the tears came down her face, still saving herself in this bitter agony, as it were, from her enemies' blows.

As soon as her Mother came from Newcastle, she sent that servant to whom she revealed her mind at Newcastle to one John Hutton. He was one of whom it was suspected that he could do more than God allowed of.³⁵ She bade him to confess who had wronged her child, or she would apprehend him, her child in her extremity having written the first two letters of his name, with another's.

So when this servant told him his message, another was present to witness his answer, which was thus. 'William Hall, your Mistress knows as well as I who has wronged her child. For the party that, with a troubled mind, your Mistress had concealed all this time, and told you of at Newcastle in her chamber all alone, is she that has done her all this wrong.' The servant answered, 'God bless me, how could he tell what his Mistress said to him, no other living soul being present, bidding him reveal the party?' the rogue said, 'A great stone is not easily lifted, and he had one foot in the grave already,' repeating many old sayings. But he said that Dorothy Swinow, wife then to Colonel Swinow, was the party that had done all the mischief to her child, and was the cause of all her further crosses.

This answer was brought. And for the three days since the child's last writing, they had no power. On the fourth, she was tormented. and the Sabbath being one of the three, on the Monday following, her Mother, her niece Muschamp, her son-in-law Edward Moore, George Armorer,

³⁵ That is, a cunning man.

William Hall, and William Bard rode to Etherston, thinking Master Walton to have been a Justice of the Peace. But he was not. Then she, with her company, went directly to Sunderland where John Hutton dwelt. And they sent for him. He came forthwith and, though they had never seen him but by the child's description, nor he them, he knew them all, naming their names. And he fell down on his knees to pray for the child. But her Mother, bidding him rise, wanted none of his prayers. She desired him to tell her how he came to know so far off what she spoke to her servants all alone. He repeated before all the company what he had formerly spoken.

She said that her eldest son was very ill too, the Lord bless him, not thinking that he was wronged. But the rogue answered that one was the cause of both. Bewildered, she said, 'I had a sister that died in a restless sickness. God grant that she was not wronged too.' The rogue said, 'Mistress, Mistress, one is the cause of all, envy nothing will satisfy, but death.' Said she, 'Is this possible?' 'Mistress,' said he, 'My life is in your hand. But I'll maintain that Dorothy Swinow was the death of the Lady Margaret Hambleton, the consuming of your son, the tormentor of your daughter, and the cause of all your evil. And if you would have my heart's blood, take it, for my life is in your power,' though none had spoken of blood to him. She told him that the child had written that two drops of his or her blood would save her life and, if the Devil had left as much in him, that she would, if it pleased the Lord, have it before they departed. The wretch, still using godly words and his prayers, desired to take his blood privately, so that none should see. So the child nicked him half a dozen times in the forehead. But no blood appeared. Then he put forth his right arm. But that was not until her Mother threatened him that his heart-blood would go before she would go without it. Then he laid his thumb on his arm and two drops appeared, which she wiped off with the paper on which she had written the word. And she bade him farewell. He bade them to ride softly. They had both tide and time enough, it being a fine, quiet day. Suddenly, as soon as they were on horseback, it grew very boisterous. They had much ado to sit on their horses. Riding fast, at Sunderland Town's end, two white lambs came to them, and kept close to their horses for two long miles till

they came to Bamborough, neither sheep nor lambs near them. The water was very deep. Yet being adventurous, they rode over.

On Monday night, she fell into a heavenly rapture, rejoicing that ever she was born, for these two drops of blood had saved her life. Otherwise she would have been seven years in torment without any ease, or death would have come. Behold her two angels, which she was bold to call them, on her right hand, and her tormenters on her left. She seated herself with a majestic carriage, her words so punctual and discreet, that it was admirable to the beholders.

Saying that her angels bade her now be bold to speak out, she looked at her left hand, saying, 'Your name is John Hutton, and hers is Dorothy Swinow. She has been the death of my Aunt Hambleton, the consumer of my brother, and the tormenter of me. She knew that my aunt's estate was but for life. And her only son had married Fauset's daughter who, to enjoy the estate, he having but one son, was the cause of young James Fauset's unnatural fits. But she thought that Master Fauset would come after her more vigilantly there than we could do here. So she left him alone, to be the more vehement with us, every fit promising me ease, if I would consent to lay it on my Mother. But I will never consent, but if it were possible endure more torment, since she is all that the Lord of his goodness has left to take care of us five fatherless children, except our Father in Heaven who protects her for our sakes.'

Thus for two hours together she continued in a very heavenly, religious discourse with these angels, rejoicing that she had got two drops of blood. She said that, if her brother had as much, it would save his life also. Witness to these words were Master Moore of Spittle, his six sons and a daughter, Miss Elizabeth Muschamp, Mistress Margaret Selby, Anne Selby, and George Lee, who was almost cast away coming into Barwick Harbour in a ship by that fearful tempest which Hutton raised. George Armorer, William Hall, William Beard, Henry Orde, with divers neighbours were also witnesses. All admired the Lord's great power expressed in that afflicted child. Her Mother, desiring to have some small quantity of Hutton's blood, rode to him the next day with two servants. They brought him to her son, he not being able to go to him. He acknowledged that his life was still in her

hands. And he came, riding behind one of her servants home to the Spittle where she dwelt. And being brought before Master Moore, he confirmed all that he had formerly confessed, and withal said, 'Mistress Swinow had two bad women about her, the Miller's and the Webster's wives, who had been the death of John Custerd and his wife,' with many other things about their wickedness. That night he desired to go to rest, and when he³⁶ pleased to call him, he would confess further to him alone. The next day came Master William Orde, Master Broad, minister, with Master Heberin, and Edward Saufield, who heard all this confirmed. And so the Mother took her son in her arms to the place where the wretch was, and got his blood.

He stayed there seven or eight days. And yet Master Moore never had power to examine him any more, the wretch still desiring to be gone. The Mother, in the presence of Margaret Selby, Margaret Orde, and William Beard, charged him, although he had long been the Devil's servant, to be at last but a bridge for God's creatures to go over, in confessing the truth. He answered, 'Mistress, Mistress, if I were a young man able to endure all the torments that would be laid on me, I would take my death that Mistress Dorothy Swinow was the death of the Lady Hambleton, the consumer of your son, the tormentor of your daughter, and the cause of all your other troubles.'

Now whilst he was there, the girl was never troubled. But he was not past the town's end when she fell into a terrible fit, saying that Dorothy Swinow with two more witches were come to torment her worse than ever Hutton did. And the one was a young woman, and the other an old. She said that, till they had justice from Dorothy Swinow, her Mother and they should never be at peace. On this, her Mother rode to Justice Foster of Nutham, and gave information on oath against both Hutton and Mistress Swinow to apprehend them. He, after delays, apprehended him and sent him to Newcastle Gaol. But he did not apprehend her, though it will appear she was three several times in his company after he had the information on oath, whereof he gave her a copy, with the copy of Hutton's examination.

³⁶ Presumably, Master Moore.

But he would never let Mistress Muschamp see it. Seeing that delay, she spoke with a Durham Justice at Belford, which is not in the county. And he could not speedily grant her a warrant to apprehend the said Mistress Swinow, but bade Master Foster do justice, which is not yet done.

The girl had many tormenting fits, in the midst of which her angels always appeared to her, and banished the witches which she apprehended. The girl would cry out and relate to her angels how she had been tormented by the two witches, forcing her to get the information, whereof her Mother kept a copy. So that let her Mother give the paper to whom she would, or lay it anywhere. The child would go to either place or party most strangely. As soon as her angels departed, her torments leaving her, she told them that her enemies would have killed her. But justly might she sing the thirty fifth Psalm, 'Plead my cause, O Lord,' &c., repeating the first part thereof so sensibly and distinctly that the Ministers there present admired to hear it. Likewise, she declared the death of the rogue Hutton in prison before it was known there, saying that, if he had been urged, he would have divulged the other two witches. Foretelling many strange truths, appointing divers meetings with her angels, such a day and such an hour, to consult with them what would become of her brother and what punishment her enemies would have, she bade everyone that they should not so much as look after her. For if they did, it would anger her angels and undo her. For there were some strange angels besides her own to meet her. This being the fourth meeting with them, they would declare all. She said that she must have all clean clothes about her; for this day or tomorrow she must meet them under such a tree in the garden. After coming out of her fit, she remembered nothing of what was done or said.

Her Mother, observing her words which hitherto had been so remarkable, clothed her child all in white, and freely commended her to the Lord, watching his glorious time. In the afternoon, being on a walk under a tree with her brothers and sisters, she suddenly gave a great shriek, and skipped over a double ditch and another, and ran to the garden door. Her eldest sister came to her Mother saying, 'Margaret is gone to her angels' meeting.' She hastily ran with the key of the garden door, where the child was standing,

beating at it, saying, 'I come, I come.' She opened the door and left her to her protector, and hastily went to the other side of the house to secure that part of the garden. But alas, before she came, a wicked creature set on by the enemy's instigation had been looking after her. And her child was wringing her hands and weeping bitterly, as if she could have torn her flesh from the bones, or hair from off her head, asking, 'Who was here' and what wicked creature had kept her blessed angels from her? And for three hours together, she took on grievously. Her Mother wept with her, begging the Lord not to punish the innocent for the wicked's fault. After some time, the child went into the garden again where, finding one of her angels, she said, 'Lord, it was not my fault. But it is well that you will come to me! But, alas, where are the rest?' Her Mother being within, heard these words, 'A quarter of a year. A long time to be without comfort, still weeping.' Then she had this answer from her angels, that for twelve weeks they would not visibly appear to her. She remembered this for three days. And she related to her brothers and sisters and the rest of the household the shape of those angels. They were embodied like birds, as big as turkeys, and faces like Christians, but the sweetest creatures that ever eyes beheld. One of the strange ones came flying over the trees with a sweet voice, and gave her notice that the rest were come. This she found most true. Two or three lighted on the ground, and the rest with the most heavenly voices that ever were heard, with a resolution to declare all the truth. And if the justices and judges at the Assizes would not do justice, her own two angels, who were always to her like a dove and a partridge, would visibly, to the admiration of all the beholders, appear like a man and a woman, and justify the truth, if the wicked wretch had not scared them away. But now, one of her angels bade her to have a care that she was neither frightened nor angered for twelve weeks. In this time they would not come to her. But in the meantime, her enemy would make every third fit a terrible one. This was most true.

In the meantime, Colonel Swinow died, and she³⁷ comes into the country. And because Foster would do no justice, I got her apprehended in Berwick.

³⁷ Dorothy Swinow.

She made such friends that it was a greater freedom to her than she had formerly from all other laws, and came and went at pleasure. One Sabbath day, the girl was with her Mother at Berwick Church. Coming along the bridge with her husband's son and daughter, Dorothy Swinow was at the farther end thereof. The girl, never having seen her but in her fits, knew her. And she was ready to fall down in her Mother's hand crying, 'Yonder is the woeful thief.' Her Mother, knowing it was true, now said to the girl, 'It is not she.' She answered, 'I have seen her a hundred times to my hurt. It is she.' Her Mother too was much troubled at the sight. She would have had the girl back, but her desire was to be at home. She was no sooner come in, but she fell into a terrible fit two hours long. Sometimes her tongue was drawn in within her throat. Other times it hung over her chin on her breast. Sad and heavy sights were seen in her afflictions. She still bade all that were by her, 'See the wicked wretch Dorothy Swinow with the two witches at her back,' saying she would not let her go back to Berwick, lest the justices would have been witnesses themselves. But let her come home, where she knew all their hearts were hardened. 'For alas,' she said, 'I have two weeks and two days yet before my comforters come,' which made her enemies so cruel. If it were in her power to take their lives she would. But the Lord's persevering power would never leave them who suffered these torments for his own glory and their soul's health saying, 'Ours were but the corrections of a loving Father to show his great power in his weakest children.' She rejoiced exceedingly that he thought her, a sinful creature, worthy of so much happiness. And accounting it more joy to see her blessed angels than all the world could afford, she thanked God especially for making her a sentinel over her Mother, brothers, and sisters, and would foretell strange things before they happened.

When her twelve weeks were past, divers came to see the event at the very day and hour, and waited with patience her appointed time. The very minute of the hour of the day twelve weeks, they were scared from her. Master Broad, Minister, Master Stevens, Physician, Mistress Muschamp, and Mistress Haggarston, besides their own neighbours, were witnesses, hearing her express much joy to meet with those long absent dear friends.

relating the intention some had to look after them again. So apprehending them in the chamber, the spectators heard her discourse with them most divine and heavenly for two hours. She answered and replied to that religious discourse. With the tears running down her face, she prayed for her enemy Dorothy Swinow that if the Lord had mercy in store, to grant her it. She lamented the sad condition she had run her soul into for satisfying her malice, to lessen her hope of eternity, making such a description between Hell torments and heavenly joys, that no Divine on earth could have gone beyond her. Crying out for justice, she said that if she³⁸ were in prison as a felon ought to be, her power would be gone, and their torments eased. But now, with much joy, she blessed God that her angels would never leave her again, whilst they were in affliction, saying that she would go to the judges and beg for justice, desiring to carry her brother there too. If she got it, her brother would come home as well as ever he was, and she no more tormented. And there would be no more hard heartedness against her Mother, which the Lord knows was such without any just cause, and that her passion is, by God's power, beyond imagination. She spoke to this effect in every fit till the Assizes came. In her fit, her brother asked her if it were possible that he could ride, not being able to walk or stand. She answered that the Lord would enable him. Therefore he should go. And her angels would go along with them, and bring them safe back again.

So their Mother, not daring to disobey such divine commands, whose confidence does wholly depend upon God's Providence from Heaven, rode behind her son. And she came to the judge and related her sad condition. He heard her, but being falsely informed, did not accept it. She went to the justices to move Dorothy Swinow's body to the county where the act was committed. They pretended ignorance. The children's Mother went with them to an advocate to instruct him. His answer was that he would not meddle in it. Yet these rejections did not drive her from an undoubted confidence in an all sufficient God. The next day, between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, the girl suddenly had a fit. And after her torment,

³⁸ Dorothy Swinow.

her angels appeared to her. To them she complained, saying, 'No justice abroad, no peace at home. What would become of her Mother? For that godless thief Dorothy Swinow, by the instigation of the Devil, had hardened the heart of both judges and justices against her. And now, at this instant,' she said, 'she is using means to harden her husband's heart against her too.' This she knows will be cruellest of all to her. And she has begun withal to consume her eldest sister. And she said that she would go to the Judge this night or tomorrow morning, and beg once more for justice. If she got it, her brother with the rest would be well, if not, worse than ever. She said that if the judge denied her it, it would not be well with him. This was part of her two hours discourse.

Witnesses the chamber full, amongst which were
 Colonel Siphthorp and his Wife,
 Colonel Roddam,
 Captain Thompson, his brother and two sisters,
 Master Anderson and Master Swadwell,
 Mistress Clether,
 Mistress Allgood,
 Doctor Genison.

Before she was out of her fit, Doctor Genison came. He invited the Mother with her children to his house, being the next house to the judge's chamber, in regard to the girl's first appointment being always kept. So after her supper, she sent to see if it were more convenient to wait on the judge that night, or the next morning. The answer was returned that that night was fittest. So Doctor Clether and his wife, with Doctor Genison and his, went along with the Mother and their children thither. There were a great many spectators to see the event.

Thus, being sat down in the chamber, her Mother began her former suit in begging justice. His answer was that that which belonged to the County Palatine of Durham belonged not to him. So she requested him on his return back, either to do it, or else give order to the justices in the County to apprehend her. Suddenly, the girl fell into a fit, relating before them all Dorothy Swinow's malice from the beginning, the cause of the troubles

that broke Sir Robert Hambleton's heart, the death of his Lady, and how she sought still by evil means to take away her Mother's life, and how, when the Lord would not permit that, she got leave first to torment her, then to consume her brother, and now has begun to consume her eldest sister, and harden her Father-in-law's³⁹ heart, to make her Mother's life more sorrowful. With her hands up, and eyes fixed on her objects, she begged justice for the Lord's sake, for Jesus Christ's sake, saying, 'I ought to demand justice by the Laws of the Realm, in the name of our Sovereign Lord the King. But I beg not in the name of any mortal man, but in the name of the King of Kings, justice for Christ's sake, justice for his mercies' sake. If we have but ordinary justice, which ought not to be denied to the poorest creature who demands it, my brother that sits there will go home as well as ever, I no more tormented, my Mother no more afflicted, and my sister's torments at an end. If we have no justice, my torments will be doubled, my brother worse than ever he was, my sister whom she has begun to torment this day worse than any of us, and Mother's afflictions, by the hardening of folks' hearts against her, will be insufferable. But the Lord's preserving mercy will never leave them who depend upon his Providence. But it will be worse for them who deny us justice than for us.' The judge thought that she feigned these words with many more significant expressions. But as soon as she was out of her fit, she did not know what had passed. All the beholders only saw an innocent bashful girl, without any confidence at all when she was out of her fits. So her mother returned home with them, where she found her other girl having begun to consume.

The night she came home, the girl⁴⁰ fell into a fit, trying to vomit. But nothing came up but a piece of fir-stick full of crooked pins. After her angels came, she cried out against the judge's injustice, saying that now the enemy, when she sees she can have no justice, strived to choke her with these things, being stones, coals, brick, lead, straw, quills full of pins, with straw full of pins, rope, and virginal wire,⁴¹ all full of pins. One great stone, for three weeks together, came always to her throat and went back again, till at the

³⁹ That is, her step-Father's.

⁴⁰ Margaret.

⁴¹ Virginal or Harpsichord wire.

last the Lord brought it up. She bade to watch her brother for three weeks. For they would, if they could, either cut his throat in the night or else burn him with fire. Therefore let the watchers be very wakeful and careful. So, blessed be God, they were. And they did hear, as it were, knives sharpening on the stairs. And three several times, fire was found in the room one night, likely to have burnt them. But by God's mercies, they were saved. She now said that Dorothy Swinow was seeking a new way to take away her Mother's life. For she was consuming the child within her. And withal she bade them watch with her brother and sister that night twelve month's from when they began to torment him, which was Saint John's Day at night, betwixt the hours of one and two in the morning. And that very moment of the hour, they would seek to take his life and the use of his sister's legs, if Christians' prayers and diligent watching did not prevent them. So it pleased the Lord to move the hearts of good friends to watch with them till the hour came.

The girl then had her fit and cried out, 'The Grand Witch Meg is come to the door with a lighted candle in each hand. Pray on one half hour longer, and their power will be gone.' They observed her request. There was a sudden smell of brimstone, but nothing was seen by anyone. But here are some of their names that were witnesses to most of her trials. And first, those who prayed by her.

Master Broad,

Master Edward Ord,

Master George Atherlony,

Master Edward Moore's six sons and one daughter, with divers others which were too tedious to relate.

After this, her brother and sister continued still wasting and she every other day falling into her fits. And after torment, her angels always appeared to her. She still declared that Dorothy Swinow hardened the hearts of all that her Mother had to deal with. And she said that it would be worse and worse, till of an instant the Lord would make her greatest enemies her greatest friends. She declared that if she⁴² were in prison her pain would be gone, as well as Hutton's was for foretelling her own release a quarter of a year

⁴² Dorothy Swinow.

before it came. She said that it was neither for her own desires nor her own ease that the Lord released her, but to help her Mother when she could not help herself. This was most true, to her great grief and sorrow, but much joy to think that the Lord should not only foretell it, but enable her own to help her. She,⁴³ still expecting justice, sent these strange things which the girl brought up from her stomach to Durham, which could scarcely be believed. Yet by chance, there was one present at the bringing of them up who got a warrant to apprehend Dorothy Swinow and served it into her own hands, with much opposition before it was done. When Dorothy Swinow came into a chamber in the Constable's house, which she afterwards confessed was for fear of her blood being taken, which was never in the other's thoughts, she yet obeyed not that warrant, till a second was issued. Then she went but only put in a bail, as though it had been for an ordinary fault. About which the girl, in her fits, cried out, saying that that still gave her further power to work her wickedness. Still, all this quarter, the girl in her fits desired them to watch with her on Candlemas Eve, and they should not think their labour lost. And betwixt the hours of one and two the next day, the glory of God would appear. Her Mother, being confident of the Lord's mercy, gave notice to all that came near her. So some that feared God came to see the event. This release, being written from her own mouth, will confirm these warnings of her former trials, which have all with much patience been gone through. The preserving mercies of the most glorious God, who never fails those that depend upon his most first promises, were never more declared on earth than in the weakest of his creatures, preserved by a gracious God. To him, let all that read and hear these unexpected mercies, give all glory, honour, laud, and praises.

The Expressions of Margaret Muschamp
when she was in her last extreme fit, on the second
day of February, 1647.

They thought, because their time was but short, to have tormented me worse than ever, but I defy them.

⁴³ Mary Moore.

I have reason to bless God more for his mercies to me than I think ever sinful creature had.

Both my torments are at an end, and those fearful sights I do not now see. Though it has pleased God to allow and let them have power to torment me, yet I was never without comfort.

My time was sad when I had no comfort, but I thank God who has given me patience.

I bless God who never suffered the Devil to have so much power, as to cause me to blaspheme his name, or to speak words to offend him.

It is a great mercy that he granted me patience to endure my pain. If it had pleased God, I would have been content as well with torment as release.'

To her angels.

'Because I will have no more torment, will I see your faces again? That's sad to me. That's more grief to me. I would rather endure my pain. That's ten thousand times more grief. But since it is Gods will, I am as well content with the one as the other. I still trust in God that he will send you to protect and watch over us.

I have endured my pains a great while. It is two years ago yesterday. Yet I bless God for it, always with much patience. My pain has been very vehement for the time. Yet I bless God that I did never speak words to offend him. I confess that I do not deserve it. I deserve no such thing, rather judgement, not such Godly chastisement. Since he granted them power, he never left me to myself.

Is this the last farewell? If it had been God's will, I would rather have endured all the torments that could be put to a creature.

But since it has pleased God that it should be so, I am content. The thing is that it is his will. The Lord grant that it never be sorrowful to me, but make his will my will, that we may never repine.

He knows the secrets of all hearts.

As for that wicked woman, if she had any fear of God, she would have thought that though she had done it never so secretly, yet God would find it out. She should have thought no such thing. But where the Devil gets entrance, his temptations are very strong.

These torments are more welcome to me than if I had been in my perfect health. If I had not known what torments had been, what pain had been, I should never have seen such joyful sights. These are more joyful to me than all the pain.

Our pain. What's all our pain? what's all the pain on earth? God's mercy is above the Devil's power.

Their time is limited.

They sought my Mother's life, but could not get it.

Oh! To think of Hell's torments which she has run her soul into. That's more torment than all ours. It's comfort for me, joy for me, that God has shown his power, that God has given the Devil power to torment. I care not what the Devil can do. I defy all the devils in Hell. For where the Devil has any power, he triumphs as much as he can. Though he triumph and we are weak, God is strong. His power is not lessened.

That wicked woman Dorothy Swinow was the cause of the death of my Aunt Margery Hambleton. She was the cause of those troubles, which she thought would have broken my Aunt's heart. But they broke Sir Robert's, that the estate might fall to her son. She was the cause of James Faucet's unnatural fits. But she let him alone, because she knew that if he came to London he would come after her more severely than we can here.

She set two witches more to torment us. John Hutton who died in prison was my great tormenter. These witches have begun my sister's torment, though our torments have been more long. Yet her time has been most sad, because she lacked comfort. Though I have had my pains, I never lacked comfort.

She⁴⁴ has entered into the Devil's service. Ought she not to think of the torment of her soul?

If it had not been thus with us, we would have despised the mercies of God. Our comfort is for joy in Heaven. That's more comfort for us, that's more happiness to think of, than all our pains and torments. If our bodies were torn at horses' heels, and dragged with wild bears, yet all were nothing to Heaven's joys.

⁴⁴ Dorothy Swinow.

Our souls are a precious jewel. We ought all to look after them. Our bodies are but dust and ashes. If our bodies were tortured with all torments, one blink of Heaven's joys will sweeten all.

Now my torments are at an end. I care not though they were longer. The torment of my body is nothing. But to think that the torment she has hazarded her soul into is the torment of Hell fire.

We confess that we all deserve that. But not by the means that she has.

None will believe it. She sets such a fair face on it. Where the Devil tempts, delusions are strong.

The Devil has got power to harden all hearts.

Those that are to do us justice, will not. Though they deny us justice, yet God can and will, in his due time, grant us justice over them all.

Though God has allowed the Devil to have power to torment us, they now have their times. Certainly our times are in a better life. We have no pleasure here. All our pleasure is in the world to come.

I have cause to bless God, who sends these blessed angels to watch over me. My pains were always joy, never sorrowful. And when I had no comfort, yet I had hopes that God who laid them on me would take them off me in his due time.

Have not I reason to bless God? None has more reason. The Lord grant that I never forget his mercies. He has been very merciful to us in granting us patience to endure more than we could expect at his hands.

What is this that they have run their souls into? The Lord grant them hearts to repent them of their sins. The Lord grant us penitent hearts to repent us of our sins. We have all done as much as deserves Hell, where there is gnashing of teeth, pains, fire and brimstone for ever.

We have cause to bless God that he has not allowed us to go either to witches or any of the Devil's servants, but to look to God.

No creature thought that we could have endured. What can we endure of ourselves? No, without God we can do nothing. What cannot God enable us to endure? There is nothing that can be done, but we can do it by God's assistance. We cannot say we can do anything of ourselves, no, not the least thing in the world. Seeing our help is in an able God, we can do anything.

I know the Lord will never suffer the Devil to have any further power over our bodies. Though they hurt our bodies, they will not hurt our souls. They will not come near our souls.

Our souls are all the comfort we can expect. What are our bodies? Our bodies are nothing. I bless God that would have his glory tried on our weak bodies, which no creature thought could have endured such torment.

We have reason, my brother, sister, and all of us, to bless God. Yes, all creatures that behold it have reason to bless God. And to think that he is a merciful God to us. It is his mercy we know. It is his promise that all those that repent with penitent hearts, he is still ready to forgive them. We acknowledge that it is God's mercy, not our deserts. They have tormented my brother for a year gone St John's Day at night. And they have tormented me two years gone yesterday. My sister is pined away. They began with her since Lammas.⁴⁵ She has less comfort than we have had.

From the beginning, she has had great pain without comfort. And though my pain has been sorest, yet I have had great comfort.

Since God has granted this day to be my release, have I not reason to bless this God? My brother and sister are still under their burden. Let them not think it a burden, but rather beg patience to endure it.

If ever God give them health, we have every reason to have thoughts of eternity, and never to forget the word of God.

My sister is worse than my brother, or than ever I was. My torments were vehement, sometimes a day, sometimes eight hours, sometimes shorter, sometimes longer. And though my time was sore and vehement, yet still I had ease after it. But my sister has no ease.

Now when I am released, what shall become of my brother and sister. If it please God to give them so much power as to torment them? If God makes me a sentinel over them so that I may declare their grief, it is a great mercy.

They thought to have choked me. Once, they made me cast up pins and stones, and things that creatures would not think possible would have come

⁴⁵ August first or sixth, the end of summer.

out of my mouth. Yet God enabled me to endure what no creature thought I could.

They thought to have done the like to my brother. But God did not allow the Devil to have so much power. But they have striven so to do.

My brother George had need to take care of himself. He, by the sight of me, I saw consumed. We have reason to bless God that he is away.

If you love my sister Betty's life, do not bring her home. You may as well take a knife and cut her throat as be the cause of her torments.

If they love my sister's and brother's life, bring them not in sight one minute. Looking on them does them more hurt than we think of.

If my sister had gone away too, and not looked so much on my brother as she has done, it would have been better for her.

She⁴⁶ has done herself more wrong than us in setting these two more against us. Though it has pleased God to let them have so much power over our bodies, yet they never had power over our souls.

They are trying all ways in the world to have power to torment my Mother. They are seeking to torment her by an unnatural way, if we do not take care of ourselves and of one another by God's mercies.

Will they never have more power to torment?

They thought this last night to have made me more passionate than I ever was. I bless God. Though they made me somewhat passionate, yet still God enabled me, with patience, not to be much extravagant after their desires. Those justices, all of them, have denied us justice. Let them take heed of themselves. Let them take heed of a heavy burden that may fall on themselves. Though our Mother be loving to us, yet let them take heed lest a heavy burden may fall on them. I wish to God it be not so, that the innocent do not suffer. The Lord grant they may have an awareness of the wrong they have done us, and not allow the innocent to endure for them.

Now after this, when they cannot get power to torment me, will they ever be more vehement with my brothers and sisters?

⁴⁶ Dorothy Swinow.

Whenever she is put in prison, till she come to her trial, she should not have her liberty. For if she come abroad amongst her company, she will be as cruel as ever.

If these two witches were caught and in prison, she would go to death to the utmost to make them more vehement than ever. Though they torment the rest, yet they shall never have power to torment me.

It is said in the word of God, 'You will not allow a witch to live.'⁴⁷ Yet she consults with witches and with their ways, which by the law of God deserves death.

Will I never behold your⁴⁸ faces again? If it were so, it would be more sad to me than all my pain. Though you be not in my sight, yet I trust in God's mercy so much that you will still watch over us and protect us.

God grant that we never forget God's mercies, to be impatient, seeing we have rest in torment.

What mercies can be shown to a creature, but it has pleased God to show to me? It has pleased him to grant me so much patience, though of myself I was not sensible of my torments. That was a mercy and much comfort to my soul that, though they tormented my body, they never had power to cause me speak unbecoming words to hazard my soul.

But had it not pleased God to have sent you to me that time, what would have become of me? I would have been distracted and like a mad body.

When the Devil was strong and had most power, God still thwarted him of his opportunity.

Seldom anything satisfies the minds of those that are so malicious, save this extravagant way. That is a sore thing. Many times, malice is never satisfied without life. Will I never see you with my eyes here? Yet you will reveal this, either by me or by some other means.

It will be more strange before it is all declared. Now, after this time, I will never have more torment by any witch, nor none I hope. Will I meet you in such a place, at such a time? I will.

⁴⁷ Exodus 22.18.

⁴⁸ Her angels.

Seeing you have set me that time of appointment, I hope you will put me in mind of it. I will, if it be God's will to make me do it.

Master Francis Broad and Master George Atherlony, two Ministers, with Doctor Stephens, a physician, were with her in divers of her last tormenting fits.

These words were spoken in the hearing of two Ministers, and at least a hundred others.

And taken down by Master Edward Ord.

Margaret White of Chatton, her own Confession of herself.

Confesses and says that she has been the Devil's servant these five years last past, and that the Devil came to her in the likeness of a man in blue clothes in her own house. And he gripped her firmly by the hand, and told her that she should never want. And he gave her a nip on the shoulder, and another on her back. And she confesses that her familiar came to her in the likeness of a black gray-hound, and that the Devil had carnal knowledge of her in her own house two several times.

Likewise the said Margaret White's confession on Oath of others, as follows, viz., Mistress Dorothy Swinow of Chatton, and Jane Martin of the same, and sister to the said Margaret White of Chatton, aforesaid,

Confesses on oath that Mistress Swinow and her sister Jane and herself were in the Devil's company in her sister Jane's house, where they did eat and drink together, as by her conceived, and made merry.

And Mistress Swinow and the said Margaret, her sister, came purposely to the house of Master Edward Moore of Spittle, to take away the life of Margaret Muschamp and Mary. And they were the cause of the children's tormenting. And she confesses that they tried three several times to have taken away their lives, and especially on St John's Day at night, gone twelve months. And she says that God was above the Devil. For they could not get their desires completed. And she says that Mistress Swinow would have consumed the child that Mistress Moore had last in her womb, but the Lord would not allow it. And after the child was born, Mistress Swinow was the occasion of its death. And Mistress Swinow came riding in a riding

coat on a little black nag to the Spittle. And she and her sister were also the occasion and had a hand in the death of the said child. And further, she confesses that she and her said sister were the death of Thomas Young of Chatton, because a kiln full of oats watched against her sister's mind. And further, she says that the Devil called her sister Jane 'Besse.' She confesses that her sister Jane had much troubled Richard Stanley of Chatton, and that she was the occasion of his sore leg.

This is acknowledged and confessed to be true, before John Sleigh, Justice of the Peace, and Robert Scot, Town Clerk of Berwick.

Margaret White, her mark

This was confirmed after, in the presence of Master Ogle of Eglington, Master Walton of Etherstone, Master Foster of Newham, Justices of the Peace, being present a multitude of people at Kimmerston. The same was afterwards taken on oath at Morpeth, in the presence of Master Delavall, High Sheriff of Northumberland, Master Ogle, Master Fenwick, Master Delavall, Master Shaft, Master Kilinworth, Master Hall, six Justices of the Peace. Warrants were issued out after her indictment was found, for the apprehending of her, but as yet she is not taken . . .⁴⁹

Whereas Dorothy Swinow, widow of Chatton, does stand indicted at this Sessions of divers witchcrafts, enchantments, charms, and sorceries, and especially for using and practising the said diabolical arts upon Sibilla Moore, an infant and child of Mistress Mary Moore, widow. It is therefore ordered by the Court and the High Sheriff of the said county, that his bayliffs and officers, and all others whom it may concern, are hereby required forthwith to apprehend the body of the said Dorothy Swinow, and to carry and convey her to the gaol of the said County, there to remain until will be thence delivered by due course of law.

Crow, Cl. Pac.

To the High Sheriff of the said county, and to all constables and officers whom it may concern.

⁴⁹ I here omit a section on pp. 26–7 giving in Latin legal details surrounding the above, and a warrant for the arrest of Dorothy Swinow on charges of witchcraft and infanticide.

Northumber.

Ralph Delavall esquire, High Sheriff of the said county, to all bailiffs of liberties, sheriffs, bailiffs, constables, and whomsoever else it may concern, greeting. By virtue of an order from the Sessions of the Peace to me directed, these are to charge and command you, and every of you, that immediately on sight hereof, you attach and apprehend the body of Dorothy Swinow, widow of Chatton, and convey her safely to the Common Gaol at Morpeth, there to remain until she will be from thence delivered by due course of law. Hereof fail not, as you will answer the contrary at your utmost peril. Given under the Seal of my Office this twenty sixth day of April, Anno Domini, 1650.

Per eundem Vic.

FINIS

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Index

- Abbott, George 39
acrobatics 35
age and possession 22–3, 71
Aire, Nicholas 282
Aldred, William 267, 271, 277
Aldridge, Robert 241, 248, 254, 256, 265, 267, 271, 280
Alexander, Goodman 7, 20
Allen, George 59, 67
Allgood, Mistress 378
Alsop, John 185
Anderson, Edmund, judge 3, 156, 289
Anderson, Master 378
Andley, Mistress 81, 82, 84
animality 34–5, 204
anorexia 33
Argent, Doctor 3, 289
Armorer, George 370, 372
Ashton, Jane 16, 21, 22, 42, 192, 193, 194, 195–6, 201, 205, 207, 224, 229, 238, 261
Atherlony, George 380, 388
Atkinson, Master 265

Baddeley, Richard 331, 332, 333
Bainbridge, Master 247
Balsom, Richard 361, 365, 366, 367
Bancroft, Richard 4, 8, 10, 243, 287, 289, 290
Bard, William 371
Barkers, Margaret 66
Barrow, Doctor 2, 72, 78–9
Barrow, James 17, 25, 26
Barrow, John 3, 20
Barton, Elizabeth 19
Baxter, Richard 5, 6
Beard, William 372
Bedell, Robert 11
Bee, Jesse, and battle with Satan 25, 37–8, 152–3, 159, 166, 167, 169–71; and diagnosis of Thomas Darling 3, 16, 153, 159; and Eucharist 170; and Thomas Graysley 161; as cunning man 3, 151; as witchcraft specialist 151, 159
belly 52, 55, 77, 80, 82, 83, 86, 87, 108, 109, 117, 121, 158, 213, 224, 314, 344, 348
Bencham, Peter 45, 51
Bernard, Richard 8, 12, 27
Bible, and devil 11; and dispossession 37–8, 55, 59, 300, 316; and laughter 224; and multiple possession 21; and running lump 255; and signs of possession 27–8, 36, 260, 268; and witchcraft 15; as aid for easing symptoms 48
Blagrave, Joseph 7
blasphemy 24, 30, 31, 219, 224, 253, 355
blindness 32, 80, 83, 86, 95, 100, 119, 219, 288, 303, 307, 311, 315, 344
blood, and John Starkie 203; as cure 16, 361, 369–70, 371, 372, 373; inability of demoniacs to bleed 32, 251; nose bleed 106, 120, 138; used by witches to feed demons 63–7, 102, 116, 117, 186
body contortions 5, 6, 27, 43, 48
Bonavent, Edward 29
Booth, John 65, 66
Bowes, Sir Jerome 289
Bradwell, Stephen 4, 29
breath, bad 213; loss of 87, 121, 134, 280, 289
Briggs, Agnes 34, 38, 40, 58, 59, 60–1, 63, 67, 68, 72
Briggs, William 67
Broad, Francis 373, 376, 380, 388
Brossier, Marthe 10–11
Browne, Thomas 6
Brownlow, F.W. 8
Bruckard, Lady 289
Burder, Cicely 82, 85
Burghey, Lord 59
Burton, Robert 6
Butler, Master 2, 79

- Byrom, Margaret 192, 193, 196, 201, 224; age of 22; and anorexia / binge eating 33; and devil's place of exit 21; and dispossession 194; and Edmond Hartley 193, 205, 206; and loss of senses 32; and running lump 29; and visions 17, 194, 207, 211
- Caldwell, Mistress 176
- Calvin, John 332, 341
- Candish, Charles 265
- Chalk, Katherine 66
- Chamberlain, Doctor 147, 148
- Chrysostom, St John 58, 59, 63
- clairvoyance 5, 28, 30, 94, 101, 104
- Clarke, Cooper 274
- Clerk, John 280
- Clether, Doctor 378
- Clether, Mistress 378
- Cocke, Joan 15, 332, 333, 349
- Cockin, Edward 173
- Cole, George 14, 240
- comatose 27
- confessions, of counterfeit possession 39; and Anne Briggs 67; and William Perry 332; and Rachel Pinder 69; and William Sommers 241–2, 251
- of witchcraft 39; and Alice Gooderidge 150, 176; and Edmond Hartley 193, 207; and Alice Samuel 110, 111–15, 118, 145, 146, 147–9; and Margaret White 388
- Cooper, John 241, 276, 277, 282–3
- Cooper, Mary 17, 241
- Cooper, Robert 248, 275
- Cornwallis, William 289
- Cotta, John 12, 30, 33
- counterfeit demoniacs, Agnes Briggs 34, 38, 58, 60, 63–7, 69; and Thomas Darling 154, 242, 248; and Susanna Fowles 5; and Mary Glover 289, 328; and Anne Gunter 4, 34, 38; and Lancashire seven 193, 208; and Richard Mainy; and Katherine Malpas 2; and William Perry 34, 38, 331, 333, 336, 345; and Rachel Pinder 38, 58, 69; and William Sommers 38, 240, 241, 242, 250–64, 267, 272, 276, 282, 283; and Throckmorton children 72
- counterfeit exorcists, John Darrell 170, 193, 240, 248, 258; and George More 199, 240; and Katherine Wright 242
- counterfeits 8, 12, 13, 27, 28, 34, 39
- exposed 333, 347
- Cox, Master 178
- Cranmer, Thomas 19, 31
- creatures under covers / inside bodies 28, 29, 256, 266, 271
- Croke, John 289
- Cromwell, Frances 145
- Cromwell, Lady 71, 73; and possession of 89; and Agnes Samuel 124, 129, 141, 142; and John Samuel 39, 132, 138, 139, 142, 143, 144, 148; and Mother Samuel 88, 89, 142, 147–8; and Throckmortons 88
- Cromwell, Master Henry 132
- Cromwell, Mistress 89
- Cromwell, Oliver 89
- Cromwell, Sir Henry 71, 88, 89, 124, 132, 142
- crowds 19, 24, 25
- Crummel, Francis 117
- Crump, Hannah 36
- crying 1, 27, 50, 161, 186, 224, 285
- cunning men 3, 16, 17, 151, 175, 193, 359
- cures 16
- Custerd, John 373
- Dalton, Master 258
- dancing 49
- Darling, Robert 243
- Darling, Thomas 150; and acrobatics 35; and authenticity of possession 151; and battle with Satan 25, 151, 170–1; and Jesse Bee 3, 15, 25, 37, 151, 154, 170–1; and beginning of possession 150; and conversations with the Devil 18; and counterfeiting 154, 248; and John Darrell 150, 151, 153, 195, 233, 242, 247, 248; and demoniacs as martyrs 153; and epilepsy 5; and eschatology 13, 152–3; and Alice Gooderidge 15, 16, 150, 176; and Samuel Harsnett 195; and horror of sacred objects 37–8; and imprisonment of 242, 252; and in hiding 240; and Lancashire seven 198, 221, 229, 233, 234; and length of possession 26; and multiple possession 21; and natural disease 2; and piety 18, 19, 152, 153; and scepticism 38, 195; and scratching 16; and signs of possession 40; and William Sommers 242, 247, 248; and Nicholas Starkie 192; and Robert Toone 157; and visions 13, 18, 152
- Darrell, John 1, 243; and *A brief Narration* 240, 243; and animality 34; and Jane Ashton 195, 229, 231; and Richard Balsom 361; and clairvoyance 30; and connection between witchcraft and possession 15; and counterfeiting 12; and Thomas Darling 19, 38, 40–1, 150, 151, 153–4, 183, 187, 215, 233, 242, 247, 248; and doctrine of the sovereignty of God 14; and Millicent Dorselie 271; and eschatology 13; and Anne Gunter 40; and Samuel Harsnett 38, 193, 195, 199, 242, 243, 287; and Lancashire

- Darrell, John (*cont.*)
 seven 194–5, 228–35, 258; and miraculous power 262; and George More 9, 192, 193–5, 233, 240, 242, 246, 287; and piety 19; and possession caused by sin 14; and prayer and fasting 151, 152, 183, 249, 250, 252, 255, 267, 268; and running lump 28, 267; and signs of possession 27, 40–1, 268; and William Sommers 24, 27, 240–1, 242, 243, 250, 252, 256, 270–85; and Anne Starkie 224; and John Starkie 224; and Nicholas Starkie 192, 221–2; and strategic value of exorcism 9–10; and testimony of William Aldred 268; and testimony of John Cooper 283; and testimony of Elizabeth Milward 279–80; and testimony of John Pare 280; and testimony of John Pepper 282; and testimony of Joan Pie 269–71; and testimony of William Power 84, 282; and testimony of John Strellie 277; and Throckmortons 40; and trial of 252; and Master Walton Archdeacon of Derby 251; and Katherine Wright 23, 40–1, 242; as fraud 38, 41, 193–4, 195, 199, 208, 240, 242, 243, 248, 252–3, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 279; as gullible 242; as innocent 245–9; as preacher 240, 250; as victim 24, 242, 243; as witchcraft specialist 240, 249
- Davers, Sarah 59, 66, 67
- Davies, Sir John 345
- Day, Elizabeth 20, 35
- Deacon, John 7, 8, 20
- deafness 27, 32, 80, 86, 95, 100, 119, 219, 311, 315, 344
- Dee, John 2, 6, 192–3, 204, 221
- Delavall, Ralph 389, 390
- demons and Margaret Byrom 150, 211, 212–13; and Thomas Darling 152, 157, 161, 168, 173, 174, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 188, 190, 206–7; and descriptions of 17, 20; and Alice Gooderidge 150, 177; and the Lancashire seven 236–7; and Margaret Muschamp 361, 368; and Alexander Nyndge 48; and William Perry 332, 341, 350; and Mother Samuel 116, 117, 118; and William Sommers 250, 251, 261; and the Throckmorton children 92, 101; *see also* Devils
- Denison, John 13, 151, 152, 153
- Dethicke, Mistress 167, 176
- Devil, and Margaret Byrom 213; and Thomas Darling 184, 186; and Alice Gooderidge 150, 177; and the Lancashire seven 218; and names and numbers of 20, 21–2; and William Perry 341, 351–2; and Mother Samuel 118, 147, 148; and William Sommers 244; and Jane Throckmorton 137; and Joan Throckmorton 120–1, 122, 123; and Mary Throckmorton 126; *see also* Demons
- Dickson, Margaret 365
- Digby, Sir Kenelm 5
- dispossession, signs of 195, 202, 235, 268
- Dorington, John 147; and prayer 23, 37, 85, 134, 137; and Agnes Samuel 119, 138, 141; and John Samuel 130, 131, 144; and Mother Samuel 112–13, 115, 117; and the Samuels 113, 142; and Elizabeth Throckmorton 130; and Jane Throckmorton 137; and Robert Throckmorton 112–13, 114, 115, 117, 130, 137; and Throckmortons 85; as contributor to text 72; Dorselie, Millicent 271
- Dovey, Joyce 17, 31
- Drage, William 33
- Drake, Francis 6
- Dugdale, Richard 17, 21, 22, 29, 30, 35, 36
- Dugdale, William 35
- dumbness 27; and Thomas Darling 160, 184; and Mary Glover 288, 303, 307, 311, 314, 315; and Lancashire seven 207, 215, 219; and Margaret Muschamp 360; and William Perry 339, 344; and William Sommers 270, 280; and Elizabeth Throckmorton 86, 107, 126; and Grace Throckmorton 132; and Jane Throckmorton 95; and Throckmorton children 100, 117
- Dynham, Edward 29
- Eating, and binge 212; and refusal / inability to 49, 107, 108, 214, 220, 288, 332, 344, 360, 366, 367
- Ebbings, Master 265
- Eccarshall, the Pastor of Burton 153, 169, 176
- Edwards, William 59, 66, 67
- entry/exit, places of devils 20–1, 341
- epilepsy 5, 7, 8, 78, 157
- eschatology 12–14, 290
- exorcism(s) 8–9, 10, 16, 37, 41; and Jane Ashton 196; and Ann Frank 192; and Lancashire seven 195; and Alexander Nyndge 45; and William Perry 331, 332, 335, 336, 338, 340, 342; and Rachel Pinder 58
- aids 41, 332, 339, 340, 349, 350, 351, 352
- ritual of 289
- exorcists 1, 34, 45, 195, 361
- Fairfax, Edward 5, 24
- Fairfax, Elizabeth 5, 15
- Fairfax, Helen 20
- Falset, Captain 366

- fasting, and Thomas Darling 151, 152, 177, 180, 183; and dispossession 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 37; and Mary Glover 290, 297, 299; and Lancashire seven 192, 198, 204, 223, 224, 225, 226, 232, 233, 238; and William Sommers 240, 249, 250, 252, 259, 261, 262, 263, 264, 280
- feeling, loss of / numb 80, 119, 315
- Fenner, Edward 72, 75, 103, 140
- Fenwick, Master 389
- Ferrers, Humphrey 162
- Fisher, John 27
- fits 5; and Jane Ashton 205, 229; and Margaret Byrom 205, 211; and Lady Cromwell 90; and Thomas Darling 150; and Ellen Holland 205, 214; and Ellinor Hurdman 205, 214; and Margaret Hurdman 205, 210; and Margaret Muschamp 360, 365, 368, 370, 373, 374, 377, 381; and William Perry 339, 340, 343, 344; and servants 80; and Anne Starkie 203, 204; and John Starkie 203, 204, 209; and Elizabeth Throckmorton 86, 87, 107, 122, 126, 134; and Grace Throckmorton 119, 132; and Jane Throckmorton 86–95, 96, 109, 123, 133, 135–40, 143–4; and Joan Throckmorton 80, 88, 91, 119, 120–4, 132, 140–2; and Mary Throckmorton 119, 124, 125; and Throckmorton household 71, 80, 97
- Fleetwood, William 70
- foaming 1, 5, 27, 28, 34, 43, 49, 257, 260, 266, 268, 272, 278, 279, 284, 315, 316, 380
- Forster, Master 276, 277
- Foster, Master 374, 389
- Fowles, Susanna 5, 22, 31
- Fox, John 30, 31, 34, 60
- Foxe, John 68, 153, 262, 332, 341
- Frank, Ann 6, 192
- Freeman, Alderman of Nottingham 250, 283
- Freeman, Doll 241, 250
- Freeman, Mr 241
- Garland, Edward 281
- gender and possession 22–3
- Genison, Doctor 378
- Gesner, Konrad 7
- Gibbes, Judith 29
- Gifford, George 12
- Glover, Mary 287, 327, 328; and animality 34; and authenticity of her possession 288, 289; and beginning of possession 288; and crowds 24, 25; and demoniac as martyr 17; and dispossession of 289–90, 320; and eschatology 13, 290; and 'extraordinary' fits 288, 289; and Robert Glover 287; and hysteria 3, 287, 288; and inability to eat 33; and Elizabeth Jackson 15, 16, 288, 289; and Edward Jordan 3, 4, 38, 287, 288; and length of possession 26; and loss of senses 32; and possession as learned behaviour 40; and prayer and fasting 290, 297; and running lump 29; and scepticism 38, 39, 293, 323; and signs of possession 288; and John Swan 13, 287, 288, 290; and ventriloquism 31; and violence 36
- Glover, Robert 17, 287, 318
- Glover, Timothy 287, 297, 299
- Glover, William 289
- Goldsmith, Thomas 51
- good possession 19, 26, 290, 332
- Gooderidge, Alice 15, 16, 150, 151, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 167, 178
- Gooderidge, Oliver 164
- Graeme, Katherine 365
- Granson, Lord 361
- Gray, Thomas 256, 273, 274
- Graysley, Thomas 161, 162–3, 167
- Greenblatt, Stephen 12, 41
- Greenham, Master 262
- Gregory, William 178, 283
- groaning 80, 83, 108, 109, 121, 132, 158, 162, 167, 170, 172, 178, 344, 348
- Gunter, Anne 3, 4, 25, 26, 32, 34, 35, 38, 39, 40
- Haggartson, Lady 366, 376
- hair 60, 68, 69, 89
- Hall, Mary 23, 38
- Hall, Master Doctor 89
- Hall, William 370, 371, 372
- Hambleton, Lady Margery/Margaret 359, 371, 383
- Hambleton, Robert 379, 383
- Hardman, Margaret 227
- Harris, Rose 66
- Harrison, John 37
- Harsnett, Samuel and Richard Bancroft 243; and John Darrell 38, 193, 195, 199, 242, 243; and eschatology 13; and exorcism 4; and exorcism as theatre 41; and Mary Glover 290, 327, 329; and Anne Gunter 4, 40; and hysteria 4; and melancholy 7; and George More 193; and scepticism 7, 30; and strategic value of dispossession 10, 11, 21; and William Sommers 30, 247; and John Swan 287, 293
- Harte, John 289

- Hartley, Edmond and Jane Ashton 16, 205, 207; and Margaret Byrom 17, 205, 206, 207; and confession; and conviction 207; and cunning man 3, 15, 193; death of 15, 194, 207, 208, 222, 223; and John Dee 192, 193; devil appearing in the likeness of 17, 21; and imprisonment of 221; and kissing 20, 193, 205, 361; and George More 193, 194; and Nicholas Starkie 3, 192, 193, 203, 204, 207; and Starkie children 203; and testimony against 207
- Hartwell, Abraham 10
- Harvey, Joan 24, 35, 36, 37
- Hays, Thomas 264
- Hayward, Sir Rolan 70
- heavings in body 60, 68, 80, 82, 83, 87, 95, 146, 219, 224, 268, 304, 339
- Height of demoniac 36
- Herberin, Master 373
- Hering, Doctor 3, 289
- Higgins, Philip 357
- Hildersham, Arthur 9, 151, 152, 177, 180–2, 189, 190
- Hind, William 267
- Hinton, Thomas 24
- Hobbes, Thomas 20
- Hodgson, Robert 58, 69
- Hogarth, William 331
- Holland, Ellen 23, 192, 194, 196, 201, 205, 214, 215
- Hooper, Margaret 17
- Hopwood, Master 207
- Horabin, Jerome 176
- Horseler, Millicent 256
- Howling 205, 207, 218, 224
- Howson, John 150
- Huet, Master 364, 365, 367
- Humphrey, Sir 163–4
- Hunt, W. 281
- Hurdman, Ellinor 23, 192, 194, 196, 201, 205, 214, 215
- Hurdman, Margaret 25, 192, 194, 196, 201, 205, 210
- Hurt, Master 283
- Hutton, John 16, 359, 361, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 380, 383
- hysteria 3–5, 7, 8, 288, 289
- Ireton, John 259
- Jackson, Elizabeth 3, 15, 16, 288–9
- Jackson, Master 283
- James I, King 4, 13, 27, 32, 38, 39, 287, 332
- Jerome 259
- Jorden, Edward 3–4, 37, 38, 288, 289
- Kamensky, Jane 15
- Kennedy, Mistress 365
- Kent, John 69
- Kilinworth, Master 389
- kissing 193, 205
- knockings 28, 266, 271, 285
- knowledge, preternatural / supernatural 27, 28, 30, 71, 80, 194, 209, 220, 256, 260
- Knowles, Mother 145
- Lameness 119
- Lancashire seven 13, 21, 24, 26, 27, 30, 42, 246, 258
- Langford, William 254, 257, 272
- languages 5, 6, 27, 28, 30, 31, 69, 194, 217
- Laughter 1, 49, 51, 224, 269, 279
- Lawrence, John 102
- Lee, George 372
- Lemnius, Levinas 14
- Lendrik, Countess 366
- length of time possessed 26
- Long, Elisabeth 66
- Long, William 58, 59, 60, 63, 65, 66–7
- Luther, Martin 332, 341
- MacDonald, Michael 29, 39
- madness 7
- Mainy, Richard 2, 4, 11, 18, 40
- Malpas, Katherine 2
- marks 149, 163, 164
- Martin, Jane 360, 388, 389
- martyrs, demoniacs as 17, 60, 153, 360
- Marwood, Nicholas 40
- Mason, James 30
- Mather, Cotton 6
- Matthew, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury 70
- Meadowes, Doctor 289
- Mee, Richard 254, 278, 284
- melancholy 6–8
- Melancthon, Phillip 261
- memory, loss of 71, 80, 86, 125, 209, 211, 261, 264, 270, 276, 368, 374
- Miles, William 51
- Milward, Elizabeth 279
- miracles 8–10, 199, 259, 337
- Moes, Henry 196
- Moore, Edward 359, 369, 370, 372, 373, 380, 388
- Moore, Mary 24, 358–62, 388, 389
- Moore, Sibilla 167, 358, 359, 360
- More, George 247, 262; and Jane Ashton 195; and Margaret Byrom 32; and counterfeiting 240; and John Darrell 9, 192, 193–4, 195, 240, 242, 246, 287; and death of 240; and dispossession of the Lancashire seven 194, 195; and Samuel Harsnett 287; and

- Edmond Hartley 193–4; and imprisonment of 193–4, 242; and Lancashire seven 27, 193–4; and scepticism 194; and signs of possession 27, 194; and Nicholas Starkie 192; and story of William Sommers 246; and strategic value of exorcism 9; and John Swan 287; as author of *A true Discourse* 193; as exorcist 195
- More, Henry 20
- More, Margaret 24
- Morton, Thomas 331, 333
- mouth / face awry 1, 35, 49, 60, 178, 179, 182, 186, 217, 219, 268, 283, 288, 315, 317, 344, 348
- Muschamp, Elizabeth 359, 366, 368, 369, 370, 372, 376
- Muschamp, George 358, 359, 367, 371, 386
- Muschamp, Margaret 358, 362; and Richard Balsom 361; and beginning of possession 17, 360, 364; and blood 16, 361; and chronology of possession 360; and conversations with angels 19, 25, 361, 374; and crowds 25; and demonic anorexia 33; and diagnosis 2, 361; and dispossession 362; and fits 381; and good possession 19; and length of possession 26; and Mary Moore 358–60, 361; and Elizabeth Muschamp 368; and piety 19; and possession as physical assault 361; and rebellion against parents 23; and Dorothy Swinow 15, 359–60, 361, 374, 388; and visions 17, 360; and witch accusations 359, 361
- Mylner, Anne 24, 27, 35, 61
- Napier, Richard 1, 2, 29
- natural disease 3, 4, 5–6, 8, 10, 13, 27, 28, 78, 157, 194, 288, 289, 293, 333
- natural explanations 2, 3–4, 7, 8, 28, 72, 265
- Nechils, Thomas 331, 344
- Newton, Richard 31, 257, 271
- noises, strange 49, 60, 68
- Nuffie, Henrie 272
- Nut, Thomas 143
- Nyndge, Alexander and authenticity of possession 44; and beginning of possession 48; and diagnosis 1, 43; and dispossession of 42, 44–5, 56; and length of possession 26, 44, 48; and madness 43; and Edward Nyndge 1, 43, 45, 48; and Rachel Pinder 61; and running lump 29; and signs of possession 1, 49, 52; and sin 14, 44; Nyndge, Edward and demonological discourse 45, 50, 51; and exorcism 45, 55; and Alexander Nyndge's diagnosis 1, 43–4, 48; and Alexander Nyndge's symptoms 1, 51; as author 44
- Nyndge, Thomas 42, 51
- Nyndge, William 51
- Obyr, Nicole 21
- Ogle, Master 389
- Ord, Edward 380, 388
- Orde, Henry 372
- Orde, Margaret 373
- Orde, William 373
- Osborne, Katherine 66
- Otto, Rudolf 25
- pains 1, 32, 90, 98, 108, 109, 121, 122, 161, 180, 224, 251, 289, 302, 303, 382
- Pare, John 280
- parents' reactions 24
- Parker, Archbishop 58, 59
- Parkins, Master 271
- Pearson, Mary 29
- Pepper, John 282
- Perry, William; and Richard Baddeley 333; and catholic priests 331–2; and catholicism 332; and Joan Cocke 15, 332, 333; and confessions of 331–2; and connection between witchcraft and possession 16; and crowds 25; and exorcism of 331–2; and exposure of 331, 333; and William Hogarth 331; and influence of 22; and length of possession 26; and loss of senses 32; and scepticism 333; and signs of possession 332; and strength 36; and supernatural knowledge 30; and 'Thomas' 331–2; and urine trick 39, 333; and Master Wheeler 332, 356; as counterfeit 34, 38, 331; as opportunist 333
- Pickering, Aunt 133
- Pickering, Edward
- Pickering, Elizabeth 74
- Pickering, Gilbert and Cicely Burder 85; and diagnosis of possession 73; and Alice Samuel 81–2, 83–4, 102; and scratching 81, 83–5; and Elizabeth Throckmorton 73, 85, 86, 87, 88, 95; and Jane Throckmorton 83–5; and Throckmorton children 81; and trial of Samuels 143; as author 72
- Pickering, Henry 72, 90, 102, 129, 139, 143, 147
- Pickering, John 129, 143
- Pickering, Mistress 142
- Pie, Joan 254, 269, 284
- Pie, Robert 269
- piety 17, 18, 19, 26, 290
- Pinder, Anne 66
- Pinder, Elizabeth 59, 60, 66, 72
- Pinder, Peter 66

- Pinder, Rachel age of 60; and authenticity of possession 59; and multiple possession 21; and Agnes Briggs 40, 58, 60, 61, 68; and Elizabeth Pinder 60; and possession as learned behaviour 40, 61; and signs of possession 60; and beginning of possession 60; and confession of 34, 38, 58, 59, 63, 69; and examination of by Archbishop Parker 58, 59; and exorcism of 58, 59; as counterfeit 34, 38, 58; as martyr 60
- Pinder, Susan 58, 66
- Pinder, William 66, 67
- pins 32, 34, 251, 257
- Porter, Thomas 269, 273, 281
- possession, and society 1, 2
 - as cultural construct 15; as form of rebellion against parents 23–4, 26; as learned behaviour 40, 61; signs/symptoms of 26, 27, 30, 40–1, 71, 194, 208, 220–1, 249, 268, 288, 323, 332
- Poulter, Robert 145
- Power, William 282
- prayer, and Thomas Darling 151, 152, 158, 160, 162, 177, 178, 180, 183, 184, 185, 186, 188; and dispossession 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 37, 60; and Mary Glover 290, 297, 299, 301, 302, 304, 305, 306, 307, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321; and Alice Gooderidge 161, 163, 175; and Edmond Hartley 206; and Elizabeth Jackson 289; and Lancashire seven 5, 192, 194, 195, 198, 204, 211, 223, 224, 226, 230, 232, 233, 238; and Margaret Muschamp 361, 380; and Alexander Nyndge 50, 51, 52, 53–5, 56; and the Throckmorton children 85, 109, 133, 140, 141, 144; and William Sommers 240, 249, 250, 252, 259, 261, 262, 263, 264, 267, 279
- propaganda 9, 60
- prophesying 6, 374
- Purkiss, Diane 23, 358
- Ratcliffe, Mistress 289
- Reave, Maryanne 66
- Ringe, William 2
- Rivers, Sir John 58, 69
- Robinson, George 365
- Roddam, Colonel 378
- running lump 1, 28–9, 34; and Alexander Nyndge 43, 49; and William Sommers 242, 255–6, 265, 267, 271, 273, 274, 278, 280, 281, 284
- sacred objects, and Bible 5, 36, 87, 152, 159, 162, 166, 167, 169, 171, 173, 194, 216, 332, 339, 344, 346, 348; and horror of 36
- Sale, Master 14, 246
- Samuel, Agnes 122, 125, 126, 133, 136; and accusation of witchcraft 71; and execution of 15, 71; and outline of text 73; and Gilbert Pickering 82; and portrayal of 74; and Alice Samuel 119; and scratching 123, 124, 126; and tests for witchcraft 72, 103–4; and Elizabeth Throckmorton 126; and Jane Throckmorton 136, 140; and Joan Throckmorton 123, 140–2; and Mary Throckmorton 126; and Robert Throckmorton 103–4, 120, 123, 131; and Throckmorton children 120, 123, 141; and Throckmortons as counterfeit 72; and trial of 142, 147
- Samuel, Alice 15, 19, 21, 71, 72, 73–4, 77, 116, 117, 147, 149; *see also* Samuel, Mother
- Samuel, Father 146–7; *also* John Samuel
- Samuel, John, and accusation of witchcraft 74; and examination of 76; and execution of 15, 74; and Alice Samuel's confession 113; and scepticism 39; and scratching 129; and tests for bewitchment 72; and Elizabeth Throckmorton 130; and Jane Throckmorton 39, 138, 143–4; and Robert Throckmorton 98, 99, 103–4, 115, 131; and trial of 142; *see also* Father Samuel; Samuel, Mother and chin bleeding 102; and confessions of 73, 111–16, 145; and fasting 108; and her spirits 92–3, 97–8, 100–1; and imprisonment of 118; and Lady Cromwell 88–90, 147, 148; and execution of 71; and Gilbert Pickering 81–2, 83–5, 90; and Agnes Samuel 82; and scratching 84; and Elizabeth Throckmorton 17, 20; and Jane Throckmorton 78, 109, 134; and Joan Throckmorton 91–2; and Robert Throckmorton 82, 92, 101–3, 107, 110, 111–16; and Robert Throckmorton of Brampton 145–6; and Throckmorton children 80, 82, 93–4, 95–6, 97–8, 100–1, 104, 110; and witch accusations 71, 73, 78, 79; as stereotypical witch 73; herself possessed 108; trial of 142, 145–6, 147; *see also* Samuel, Alice
- Safield, Edward 373
- Saunders, Master 182
- Saunders, Elizabeth 2
- Saunders, Mistress 160
- scepticism 8, 11, 20, 21, 38, 59, 194, 241, 287, 293
- scholarly interpretation 23
- Scot, Reginald 7, 8
- scratching 16; and Alice Gooderidge 150, 151, 160, 163; and Agnes Samuel 123, 125, 126,

- 127–8, 132–3, 134, 136–8; and John Samuel 129–30; and Mother Samuel 81, 83, 119, 146
screaching 80
Selby, Anne 372
Selby, Lady 365, 366
Selby, Margaret 372, 373
Selby, Odel 365
Selby, William 366
senses, loss of 5, 32; and Thomas Darling 162, 165, 167, 180, 186; and Mary Glover 315, 318; and Lancashire seven 212, 214, 215, 218, 219, 223, 230; and William Sommers 251, 261, 270, 279; and Elizabeth Throckmorton 87; and Jane Throckmorton 96, 143; and Joan Throckmorton 121; and Throckmorton children 80
Shaft, Captain 367
Shaft, Master 389
Shakespeare, William 41
shaking 43, 49, 77
Sharpe, James 2, 23, 26–7
Shaw, Christian 32, 34, 35, 36
Shepherd, Nicholas 241, 276, 282, 283
shrieking 50, 204, 205, 218, 224, 268, 272, 278, 279, 342, 344, 374
Sin/guilt 14–15, 44, 49, 50, 342
Sithorp, Colonel 378
Sleigh, John 389
smells, strange 28, 263, 285
Smith, Anne 4, 11
Smith, Henrie 15
Smith, Joan 193, 205
Smith or Smythe, boy named 39
sneezing 77, 80, 85, 86, 109, 142
Sommers, William, accused as witch 241, 250; age of 22; and Jane Ashton 232; and *A brief Narration* 240; and acrobatics 35; and animality 24, 34, 35; and beginning of possession 15, 240, 241, 249; and blasphemy 31–2, 253; and clairvoyance 30; and George Cole 248; and confession as false 241–2, 263; and Mary Cooper 17; and crowds 24; and John Darrell 12, 195, 233, 234, 240–3, 249, 252, 255, 258; and depositions concerning 240; and devil 12, 251, 261; and devil's place of entry 20; and dispossession of; and Samuel Harsnett 195; and height of demoniacs 36; and imprisonment of 241, 250; and influence of 22, 29; and killings 256; and languages 30, 31–2; and length of possession 26; and loss of memory 253; and loss of senses 32; and possession as learned behaviour 40, 242, 243; and prayer and fasting 250; and problems reconstructing story of 240; and repossession of 241, 251; and running lump 28–9, 242, 255–6; and signs of possession 27, 40, 255; and sin 14–15; and speeches 19; and suicidal impulses 7; and the Lancashire seven 198, 200; and 'Lucy' 244; and sovereignty of God, doctrine of 14; and testimony of William Aldred 267, 269; and testimony of Robert Aldridge 265; and testimony of John Clerk 281; and testimony of John Cooper 282–3; and testimony of Thomas Gray 274; and testimony of Thomas Hays 265; and testimony of William Hind 267; and testimony of W. Hunt 281; and testimony of William Langford 272–4; and testimony of Richard Mee 278–9; and testimony of Elizabeth Milward 279; and testimony of Richard Newton 271–2; and testimony of John Pare 280; and testimony of Joan Pie 269–71; and testimony of William Power 282; and testimony of John Strellie 277–8; and testimony of Thomas Westfield 267; and testimony of John Wood 275–7; and Throckmorton children 243; and ventriloquism 31–2; and violence 36; and weight of demoniac 36; and witch accusations 15, 250; and witchcraft 15; as counterfeit 38, 240–2, 243, 250, 252–3, 258; as genuinely possessed 240, 241, 243, 252, 253, 258
Spatchet, Thomas 35
Spencer, Doctor 3, 289
Stanley, Richard 389
staring 1, 5, 160, 163, 284
Starkie, Anne 23, 172, 192, 194, 196, 201, 204, 215, 222, 224
Starkie, John 23, 24, 36, 192, 194, 196, 201, 203, 204, 205, 209, 215, 222, 224
Starkie, Mrs/Mistress 202, 205, 222, 224
Starkie, Nicholas 202; and Jane Ashton 224; and John Darrell 192, 198, 221, 222, 223, 229; and John Dee 2, 192; and Master Dickoms 223; and Edmond Hartley 3, 192, 193, 203–4, 207; and Ellen Holland 204; and Ellinor Hurdman 204, 215; and Margaret Hurdman 204, 224; and George More 192, 198, 221, 222, 223; and Lancashire seven 221; and Anne Starkie 204; and John Starkie 209, 222, 224
Stephens, Doctor 388
Sterland of Swenton 241
Stevens, Master 376
stiffness 27, 83, 121, 158, 165, 212, 220, 223, 230, 289, 304, 314, 318
Strellie, John 254, 277

- strength 1, 5, 27, 36; and Thomas Darling 158, 170; and Mary Glover 289, 321; and Lancashire seven 194, 204, 217, 219, 229; and Alexander Nyndge 43, 50; and William Perry 332, 338, 339; and William Sommers 254, 260, 266, 269, 272, 273, 277, 279, 284; and Throckmorton children 83, 93, 146
- Strother, Master 365, 367
- Style, James 69
- suicidal impulses 6–7
- Swadwell, Master 378
- Swan, John 13, 287–8, 289, 290
- swelling 1, 5, 43, 48, 49, 52, 55, 60, 68, 77, 87, 95, 109, 219, 255, 265, 288, 304, 314
- Sweetson, Richard 35
- Swinow, Colonel 359, 375
- Swinow, Dorothy, accused of witchcraft 359, 372; and blood of 361; and capture of 381, 389, 390; and fate of 362; and Margery Hambleton 383; and John Hutton 359, 370, 371, 373; and indictment of 15, 358, 359; and Mary Moore 359, 373–4, 377–8; and Sibilla Moore 359, 388–9; and Elizabeth Muschamp 369; and Margaret Muschamp 359, 361–2, 373, 376, 377, 378, 380; and Margaret White 359, 388–9
- Taylor, John 69
- Teate, Richard 176, 189
- teeth, grinding/gnashing 1, 5, 27, 28, 43, 49, 217, 260, 266, 268, 278, 279, 284, 348
- Tempest, Sir Thomas 367
- temptations resisted / or not 18
- Tertullian 259
- tests for bewitchment 72
- theatre 25
- Thomas, old man called 331, 333, 348, 353, 354
- Thomas, Keith 35
- Thompson, Captain 378
- Thornton, Joan 60, 66, 70, 133
- throat / neck 36, 87, 175, 204, 270, 284, 288, 344
- Throckmorton children 16, 19, 23, 26, 30, 35, 37, 39, 40, 71, 74, 117, 118, 148, 151, 243
- Throckmorton, Elizabeth, and demonic anorexia 33, 107; and description of devils 20; and devil's entrance 20; and outline of the text 73; and Gilbert Pickering 86; and John Samuel 71, 74, 132; and Master Throckmorton of Brampton 122; and Agnes Samuel 127, 134; and signs of possession 87, 88, 126; and visions 17
- Throckmorton, Grace 73, 119, 127, 132
- Throckmorton, Jane, and beginning of possession 73, 77; and diagnosis of 2, 72; and outline of text 73; and Agnes Samuel 123, 133; and John Samuel 39, 143–4; and Mother Samuel 110–11, 134; and scratching 135–8; and siblings 119; and signs of possession 71, 77; and strength 36, 83; and Robert Throckmorton 110–11; and trial of Samuels 142
- Throckmorton, John, and accusations of witchcraft 88; and Master Henry Cromwell 132; and crowds 25; and Edward Fenner 140–2; and her devils 21; and outline of text 73; and predictions of 71, 80; and Agnes Samuel 124, 133–4, 140, 141–2; and scratching 133, 134; and senseless fit 119; and siblings 135; and signs of possession 80; and trial of Samuels 142; and Elizabeth Throckmorton 134; and Jane Throckmorton 137, 139; and Mary Throckmorton 126, 127, 128; and Robert Throckmorton 141
- Throckmorton, Mary 73, 119, 124–6
- Throckmorton, Mistress (grandmother) 111
- Throckmorton, Mistress (mother) 81, 89, 100, 107, 108, 111–12, 116
- Throckmorton, Robert (of Brampton) 122, 143, 145
- Throckmorton, Robert 71, 72, 73; and children's fits 98, 99, 100, 119; and Lady Cromwell 88; and the Cromwells 88; and dispersal of children 93; and Gilbert Pickering 90–2, 102; Agnes Samuel 103–4, 119, 120, 141; and Alice Samuel 77, 82, 88, 90, 93, 98–102, 104, 106, 107, 108–9; and Alice Samuel's confession 110–13, 114–16; and John Samuels 98–2, 115, 130–2; and Elizabeth Throckmorton 122; and Jane Throckmorton 2, 73, 77, 79, 134, 137, 139; and trial of Alice Samuel 116–18; and trial of Samuels 143; and withdrawal of Alice Samuel's confession 113, 114; as author 72; as editor 72
- Throckmorton, Robert Junior 119
- Thwaites, Edward 28
- tongue swallowed / extended / blackened etc 32, 87, 178, 212, 217, 219, 264, 268, 272, 279, 315, 332, 339, 344, 365, 376
- Tonken, John 17, 35
- Toone, Robert 157, 161, 162, 167, 174, 175, 176, 187
- Trayford, William 11, 21
- Tryce, Richard 145
- Turner, Jane 66
- Turner, William 58, 59, 60, 63–5, 66, 67
- Vallees, Marie des 26
- ventriloquism 20, 28, 31–2, 60, 272, 281, 285, 288

- violence of demoniac 36, 49, 195; as reaction to sacred objects 36; to others 27, 219; to self 1, 5, 27, 28, 43, 49, 219
 visions 16–17, 18–19; and the Lancashire seven 194, 207, 211, 218; and Margaret Muschamp 360, 364, 369, 372, 375, 378, 379, 380; and Rachel Pinder 60
 voices 218
 vomiting 5; of blood 219; of devils 151; of needles and pins and other objects 4, 28, 33–4, 60, 68, 69, 331, 332, 339, 344, 348, 352, 379
 Waddington, Nathaniel 29
 Wakefield, Thomas 49, 51
 Waldron, Katherine 32
 Walkeden, Master 187
 Walkeden, Mr 151
 Walkeden, Mistress 160–1
 Walker, Daniel 1
 Walker, John 7, 8, 20
 Walmsly, John 36
 Walton, Archdeacon 251, 259
 Walton, Mary 251
 Walton, Master 371
 Warburton, Peter 345, 355
 weight of demoniac 36, 277
 Weightman, Edward 176
 Wentworth, Anne 30
 Westfield, Thomas 267, 278
 Weston, William 18
 Wheeler, Master 331, 332, 333, 344, 356–7
 White, Margaret 359, 388–9
 Whitgift, John 242
 Withers, William 19
 Whittle, Master 81, 82, 83, 84
 Wigan, John 272
 William, Bishop of Lincoln 116, 117, 145
 Williams, Friswood 11, 40
 Williams, Sara 4, 7, 11, 16, 20, 40
 Winch, Sir Humphrey 355
 witch accusations 15; and Joan Cocke 331, 332, 349, 353; and Millicent Dorselie 271; and Alice Gooderidge 151–2; and Edmond Hartley 206; and John Hutton 359; and Elizabeth Jackson 289; and Mother Knowles 145; and Margaret Muschamp 359; and Agnes Samuel 127, 129; and John Samuel 74, 129, 131; and Mother Samuel 77, 79, 80, 81, 88, 134, 146; and the Samuels 129; and William Sommers 250; and Dorothy Swinow 359, 383
 Wood, John 254, 274, 277
 Worthington, Widow 151, 170, 174
 Wright, Elizabeth 150, 161, 162–3, 164, 166
 Wright, Katherine 23, 40, 233, 234, 242, 243
 Young, Thomas 389