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## *Introduction*

### THE ENGLISH REFORMATION AND THE PROTESTANT DEVIL

Baudelaire's famous comment – that the Devil's best trick was to convince mankind that he did not exist – was written in the hindsight of the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment that were believed to have rendered Satan a rather unworthy hangover from a more primitive age.<sup>1</sup> Yet for all its contemporary novelty and wit, it gave expression to a far older concern over Satan's effective agency. Take away the connotations of his non-existence (made possible by the late seventeenth-century fashion for scepticism) and the same concern can be found underlining much of the religious and moral polemic produced during the English Reformation and its aftermath. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestants in particular were afraid, not that the Devil might convince man that he did not exist, but that he would persuade them that he was absent from their everyday lives.

In England the concept of the Devil underwent a very subtle process of cultural change in the hands of the Protestant reforming clergy. They were convinced that Satan offered an intimate threat to every Christian, especially when his agency was hidden from perception by the physical senses. This conviction was driven equally by a sense of personal danger in the face of demonic power, and by a belief that diabolism lay concealed behind the superficial piety of the Catholic church. The reformers did not wish to overturn traditional belief in the Devil as they did more high-profile aspects of Catholic religion such as eucharistic piety or the doctrine of good works, and hence there was no explicit reform of demonological theology. Instead a characteristically Protestant demonism emerged from a subtle realignment of

<sup>1</sup> 'Mes chers frères, n'oubliez jamais, quand vous entendrez vanter le progrès des lumières, que la plus belle ruse du diable est de vous persuader qu'il n'existe pas' ('My dear brothers never forget, when you hear the progress of the Enlightenment praised, that the Devil's cleverest ploy is to persuade you that he does not exist'): 'Le joueur généreux', in *Le Spleen de Paris*, quoted in J. B. Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca and London, 1986), p. 206.

Cambridge University Press

0521802369 - The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England

Nathan Johnstone

Excerpt

[More information](#)2 *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England*

emphasis rather than an open attack upon tradition. The central focus of this change was to emphasise the Devil's power of temptation, especially his ability to enter directly into the mind and plant thoughts within it that led people to sin. As a result of the fall of Adam, everyone was born spiritually corrupted. This stock of inbred evil was supremely malleable under the Devil's influence, and the effect of temptation was akin, in the words of the Cambridge theologian William Perkins, to putting a match to gunpowder.<sup>2</sup> Such power had long been part of the Devil's remit,<sup>3</sup> but Protestant theologians now elevated internal temptation into the most important and dangerous aspect of his agency. Subversion was now the Devil's greatest threat – of the pious aspirations of the individual Christian, and of the godly nation as a whole.

This change of emphasis had profound consequences for reformed liturgical and devotional practice. Most striking was the reform of the baptism ceremony that took place between 1549 and 1552.<sup>4</sup> By the publication of the second Edwardian prayer book the rite had been stripped of the exorcism that had assumed that all children were born possessed by Satan. Christian initiation, which in the Sarum rite had been assumed to involve a tangible victory over the Devil, was now understood to draw the individual into a life of perpetual struggle with the demonic.<sup>5</sup> Liturgical reform did not seek to deprive Satan of his power by implying that clerical mediation was unnecessary; rather it was informed by a belief that Catholic ceremonial diverted attention from the real site of conflict with the diabolic. The Sarum baptism, and ceremonies such as Candlemas and Rogationtide, concentrated on the external protection offered by the priest's mediation of divine power, and by holy artefacts and saintly intercession.<sup>6</sup> Protestants instead advocated a personal engagement with the demonic within the conscience, and they stressed that every individual was ultimately responsible for resisting Satan's influence.

<sup>2</sup> William Perkins, *The Combat between Christ and the Divell displayed*, in *The Works of ... William Perkins* (London, 3 vols., 1616–18) vol. III, p. 376.

<sup>3</sup> Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (London, 1975), p. 73; Fernando Cervantes, 'The Devil's Encounter with America', in J. Barry, M. Hester and G. Roberts (eds.), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> *The booke of the common prayer, and administration of the sacramentes* (London, 1549), fols. 135–52v; and *The Boke of common praier, and administracion of the sacramentes* (London, 1552), sigs. P4–Q2; on the reform of baptism see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971; reprinted, 1991), pp. 62–4; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven and London, 1992), pp. 280–1, 473.

<sup>5</sup> The Sarum ritual is available in English in J. D. C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West. A Study in the Disintegration of the Primitive Rite of Initiation* (London, 1965), pp. 158–79.

<sup>6</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 280–3.

Cambridge University Press

0521802369 - The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England

Nathan Johnstone

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

3

The Protestant ministry took on a central role as adepts able to aid men in warding off the Devil. The Reformation encompassed a fundamental challenge to the spiritual power of the clergy, who were stripped of their ability to mediate between God and humanity in the Mass.<sup>7</sup> But in one sense the reformation of the clergy turned full circle as the Protestant ministry shaped a role for themselves as the mediators, not of preternatural power, but of support for the individual in his personal battle with Satan. Emphasis on struggle and resistance imbued demonic temptation with a soteriological significance. Increasingly it was understood to be an internal dialogue in which Satan sought to undermine pious instincts by appealing to man's natural corruption, and, most threateningly, by introducing doubts as to election.<sup>8</sup> Protestant divines recognised how profoundly disturbing temptation might be, and they set parameters on the experience in their sermons and conduct books. God permitted temptation as a test of faith but would never allow a godly man to be tempted beyond his endurance. In effect temptation provided an opportunity for the practice, and the display, of trust in God above normal piety. Thus, for the self-conscious godly, Satan's attention to drawing them away from their proper devotions might indicate that they were among his special targets, whilst their response could be measured for its godliness against that set out in devotional literature. Prayer, faith and a sound understanding of the meaning of temptation became the most important weapons an individual could deploy against the Devil. In ideal at least, an educated Protestant ministry was the natural repository of these assets. Their sermons and conduct books rehearsed the arguments that could be employed against the Devil when he tempted men to sin or to despair. Ministers became personally involved in mediating the correct understanding of temptation to their parishioners, encouraging them to see their doubts as a demonic intrusion within their consciousness and providing them with doctrinal tenets and scriptural authorities to counter the Devil's assaults. This ideal found wide expression in accounts of death-bed sufferings and possession, in which struggle with the demonic was increasingly presented as a literal debate over soteriological truth carried out between the Devil and an expert minister. By the later seventeenth century, when Samuel Clarke

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the spiritual power of the medieval clergy and the effect of the Reformation, see Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, chapters 2 and 3, and especially the conclusions on pp. 87–9.

<sup>8</sup> On religious despair more generally, see John Stackniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford, 1991); Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford, Calif., 1985), pp. 14–44; Michael Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 220–2.

Cambridge University Press

0521802369 - The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England

Nathan Johnstone

Excerpt

[More information](#)4 *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England*

was collecting his 'godly lives', the minister as disputant with Satan had become an important part of the imagery of the Puritan 'hero'.<sup>9</sup>

More widely, temptation provided a dynamic by which to define the character, motivations and mentality of identifiable groups of satanic agents who were believed to act out of a shared interest with the Devil and his aims. Satan's kingdom was more a demographic than a physical reality, and every individual who allowed temptation to conflate his own natural corruption was considered to be one of its components. The term 'synagogue of Satan' – derived from the denunciation of the Jewish church in the Book of Revelation – was applied to the Catholic church by generations of Protestant polemicists. It expressed the insidious subversion Protestants believed to lie behind Catholic false doctrine and empty piety – a church that appeared Christian was in fact its opposite. More loosely the term was applied to other demonic agencies that were assumed to act in the same way. For instance, corrupting popular pastimes, such as the theatre or dancing, were believed to proffer seemingly harmless entertainment as a cover for the demonic idolatry they in fact encouraged.<sup>10</sup> The notion that a fragile subjectivity might be prey to demonic invasion pervaded the depiction of sin and violent crime in both the pulp press and on the stage. Criminals were believed to fall progressively under the sway of the Devil as he tempted them into ever greater evils. Narratives of murder and violent crime drove home the message that the difference between the temptation to mundane sins such as laziness or greed, and the temptation to criminality, was a difference in scale only. A universal vulnerability to demonic temptation imbued all men with the potential to descend into the most terrible sin, and so to themselves become components of the Devil's kingdom.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the threat posed by temptation to the individual could be extended to the commonwealth as a whole. A concept of the temptation of the body politic developed in parallel to that of the human body. The Devil's human servants were commonly represented as a de facto demonic potential within the commonwealth, analogous with the inherent spiritual corruption which

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, the biographies of Richard Rothwell and Robert Balsom in Samuel Clarke, *The Lives of Thirty-two English Divines, famous in their generations for Learning and Piety, and most of them suffered in the cause of Christ* (London, 1677), pp. 72–3, 181–2.

<sup>10</sup> John Northbrooke, *A Treatise wherein Dicing, Dauncing, Vaine playes or Enterludes . . . are reprov'd* (London, 1577); Stephen Gosson, *Playes confuted in five Actions, Prouing that they are not to be suffred in a Christian common weale* (London, 1584); William Prynne, *Histriomastix. The Players Scourge* (London, 1633).

<sup>11</sup> For only a handful of examples, see Anthony Munday, *Sundry Strange and Inhumaine Murthers* (London, 1591); Gilbert Dugdale, *A True Discourse of the Practices of Elizabeth Caldwell* (London, 1604); John Reynolds, *The Triumphs of Gods Revenge against the crying and Execrable sinne of (willing and premeditated) Murther* (London, 1657; first edn, 1621); William Rowley, Thomas Dekker and John Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton: A known true Story Composed into a Tragi-comedy* (1621), in Thomas Dekker, *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. F. Bowers (Cambridge, 4 vols., 1953–61), vol. III.

Cambridge University Press

0521802369 - The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England

Nathan Johnstone

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

5

man inherited as a legacy of the fall of Adam, and which was so susceptible to the Devil's influence. This emerged most forcefully out of a dissatisfaction with the Elizabethan religious settlement which saw elements such as the episcopacy, or Catholic recusancy, as diabolic intrusions into the commonwealth. Their very existence constituted a potential for diabolic activity which might be activated, again as a spark might be put to gunpowder. Indeed the Catholic plot to blow up parliament in 1605 was widely understood to be just such an activation of demonic potential. The split loyalties recusants were understood to experience between their duties to the monarch and to the Pope constituted a catalyst for potentially lethal Catholic militancy.

This provocative political analogy undermined the Elizabethan and Stuart rhetoric of consensus that emphasised unity under theocratic rule.<sup>12</sup> For many the ideal of consensus could not be allowed to overshadow the importance of establishing and maintaining the purity of the Christian commonwealth. The language of 2 Corinthians 6: 14–15 – ‘What concord hath Christ with Belial?’ – was widely used to denounce tolerance and compromise, be it of crypto-Catholicism, or religious radicalism. The phrase in 2 Corinthians 11: 14 – ‘for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light’ – emphasised the need for constant vigilance lest the Devil hide himself in the most seemingly benign political and religious activities. The possibility of the temptation of the body politic stressed the importance of identifying those diabolic triggers that Satan had introduced into the nation to activate its corrupt potential and seduce it into apostasy. Where those triggers might lie was a heavily contested issue. It was defined by an individual sense of tangibility rather than an allegiance to an abstract ideal. Thus conformists and nonconformists, Puritans and Arminians, royalists and parliamentarians employed the language of diabolic subversion in turn against each other.

But, perhaps most significantly, the concept of the diabolic temptation of the body politic helped to strengthen and reinforce resistance theory in England. The notion that the government might, wittingly or unwittingly, be tolerating de facto demonic subversion equated resistance with exorcism. Throughout the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I the notion was (with one notable exception) kept well away from the person of the monarch.<sup>13</sup> But

<sup>12</sup> On consensual politics see J. P. Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution* (second edn, Cambridge, 1986), p. 9; Glenn Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to English Political Thought, 1603–1642* (University Park, Penn., 1992), chapters 5–7; for a challenge see Johann Sommerville, *Politics and Ideology in England 1603–1640* (London, 1986), pp. 3–4; Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London, 1990), pp. 185–221.

<sup>13</sup> The exception was Peter Wentworth who, in 1576, made a speech in parliament in which he accused Elizabeth of turning a blind eye to the use of diabolic tactics to enforce her prerogative over the discussion of religion and the succession. See *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I*, ed. T. E. Hartley (Leicester, 3 vols., 1981–95), vol. I, pp. 426–7.

Cambridge University Press

0521802369 - The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England

Nathan Johnstone

Excerpt

[More information](#)6 *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England*

increasingly in Charles I's reign disaffection with 'new counsels' and the influence at court of perceived crypto-papists encouraged the regime's critics to see diabolic subversion closer to the throne. The Puritan lawyer William Prynne, for instance, accused Charles of encouraging diabolic apostasy in his promotion of the theatre, a charge that was quite accurately highlighted by his prosecutors in Star Chamber in 1634.<sup>14</sup> In 1639 John Lilburne, imprisoned for his involvement in clandestine Puritan publishing, had visions of proving in the presence of the king that Archbishop Laud was a servant of Satan. Lilburne's belief in the diabolism of his adversaries was the organising principle of his resistance to his prosecutors.<sup>15</sup> In many respects the printed propaganda of the Civil War and its aftermath represented the zenith of the political use of the concept of diabolic subversion. As the war progressed, accusations of diabolism became increasingly sharply focused on Charles, firstly as a victim enveloped in a web of diabolic temptation woven by Laud, the Earl of Strafford and Henrietta Maria, and finally, to justify his execution, as a witting agent of Satan, whose inflated claims to divine right focused idolatry upon himself. Historians have argued that resistance theory was only adopted in retrospect after 1642 to explain actions already taken.<sup>16</sup> But the perception of Arminianism as crypto-Catholicism in the minds of its enemies associated criticism of the regime's religious policies with an identified source of de facto satanic subversion with a very long pedigree. The polemical manoeuvring of 1640–2 may not immediately have called for parliament to take up arms against the king, but it certainly argued that the government was rife with diabolic subversion and this implied that the body politic was in need of exorcism.<sup>17</sup>

Whilst this theologically driven picture of the Devil's invisible subversive agency was increasingly dominant in shaping cultural expressions of demonism in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, popular ideas of the Devil persisted alongside it. Satan was still widely believed to appear in physical

<sup>14</sup> *Documents relating to the proceedings against William Prynne, in 1634 and 1637*, ed. S. R. Gardiner, Camden Society, new series, 18 (1877), pp. 5, 11–13, 19, 20, 23.

<sup>15</sup> John Lilburne, *Come out of her my people: or An Answer to the questions of a Gentleman (a professor in the Antichristian Church of England) about Hearing the Publicke Ministers* (London, 1639), pp. 13, 25.

<sup>16</sup> John Morrill, 'Introduction', in J. Morrill (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War, 1642–1649* (Houndmills, 1982), pp. 5–7; Conrad Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War: The Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford 1987–1988* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 23–4, 132–6; for a challenge to the argument see Sommerville, *Politics and Ideology in England*, pp. 71–7.

<sup>17</sup> *News from Hell, Rome, and the Innes of Court, wherein is set forth the copy of a letter written from the Devil to the Pope* (London, 1641); W. F. X. B., *Camilton's Discovery of the Devilish Designs, and Killing Projects, Of the Society of Jesuits . . . intended, but graciously prevented, in England. Translated out of the Latin Copy. Dedicated to the High-court of Parliament* (London, 1641), in *The Harleian Miscellany* (London, 12 vols., 1810), vol. V, pp. 103–17.

Cambridge University Press

0521802369 - The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England

Nathan Johnstone

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Introduction

7

shape to trick or tempt men out of their souls, or to exercise God's providential judgements. The physical Satan retained an absolute hold in narratives of witchcraft, in which he appeared in a variety of human and animal guises to enter into a formal pact with the witch.<sup>18</sup> In many ballads, pamphlets and stage-plays the Devil appeared as a physical entity.<sup>19</sup> In some cases the invisible tempting Devil of the Protestant reformers and the physical popular Devil were antagonistic concepts. One Puritan minister was moved to complain that the populace were so conditioned by the grotesque of the traditional mystery plays that they feared no harm from Satan until he appeared before them with the requisite horns and cloven feet.<sup>20</sup> But Protestant demonism never denied that Satan had the power to appear in physical form; it only asserted that his practice of internal temptation was more common and more dangerous. 'God's hangman' – the physical manifestation of the Devil in which he punished sinners on behalf of God – was as comfortable in Protestant culture as he had been in Catholic. He took pride of place as the dispenser of poetic justice in the Puritan Thomas Beard's hugely successful *The Theatre of God's Iudgements*, published in 1597.<sup>21</sup> In September 1621 the Puritan lawyer and future member of the Long Parliament, Sir Simonds D'Ewes, recorded in his diary that all the ships docked at Plymouth had been destroyed by a storm that followed the appearance of the Devil in the form of a black dog.<sup>22</sup> Indeed the Protestant emphasis on internal temptation was quite capable of interacting with more

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, *The Examination and Confession of certaine Wytches at Chensforde in the Countie of Essex* (London, 1566); *The Apprehension and confession of three notorious Witches. Arreigned and by Justice condemned at Chelmes-forde in the Countie of Essex* (London, 1589); Thomas Potts, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* (London, 1613); Henry Goodcole, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer* (London, 1621).

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the ballads, *A Pleasant new Ballad you may here behold, how the Deuill, though subtle, was guld by a Scold* (no date), in *Ancient Songs and ballads ... Chiefly collected by Robert Earl of Oxford* (London, 4 vols., arranged and bound 1774, hereafter Roxburghe Collection), vol. 1, pp. 286–7, 340–1; *The Wretched Miser: or, A brief Account of a covetous Farmer, who bringing a Load of Corn to market, swore the Devil should have it before he should take the honest market price; which accordingly came to pass* (no date); *Dirty Dolls Farewel. Being an account of a certain Woman ... who was in her Life-time so notorious for several misdemeanours, that it is said, the Devil about the 17th, or 18th of August 1684, appeared to her, between whom there hapened a terrible Combat* (1684?), in *The Pepys Ballads: Facsimile*, ed. W. G. Day (Cambridge, 5 vols., 1987), vol. IV, p. 331; vol. V, p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> The opinion was that of Thomas Pierson, the rector of Brampton Bryan, and editor of some of William Perkins' works. See his preface to Perkins', *The Combat between Christ and the Divell displayed*, sigs. Kkk6–Kkk6v.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Beard, *The Theatre of God's Iudgements: reuised and augmented* (London, 1631; first edn, 1597).

<sup>22</sup> Simonds D'Ewes, *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes 1622–1624*, ed. Elizabeth Bourcier (Paris, 1977), pp. 95–6.

Cambridge University Press

0521802369 - The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England

Nathan Johnstone

Excerpt

[More information](#)8 *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England*

popular notions of the physical Devil. In ballads and on the stage, physical appearances by the Devil could be used to provide a tangible demonstration of his ability to conflate man's natural corruption. In *A new Ballad, shewing the great misery sustained by a poore man in essex*, conversation with the Devil in human guise is sufficient to drive the pauper into a violent rage without the subject of murder being openly mentioned. In the play *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) a single touch from the Devil in the shape of a dog drives a bigamous husband to murder.<sup>23</sup>

Thus the concepts of an internal (invasive) and external Devil were in no way mutually exclusive, within or outside Protestant culture. But the emphasis on internal temptation was increasingly dominant. Devotional, literary and even visual culture either presented the Devil as an entirely spiritual presence, or blurred the dynamic of temptation when he was presented physically. Only witchcraft narratives continued to maintain a purely physical conception of diabolic temptation, and it must be recognised that this made them increasingly unusual in early modern English demonism.

## THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE DEVIL

This is a significantly different picture of the Devil to that which has emerged in early modern social and cultural history, in which Satan tends to be presented stereotypically as a functionalist symbol of evil and a tool of persecution. There are remarkably few historical studies of the Devil (given his importance to western culture), and they have tended to be informed by the perception of continuities in belief which span vast periods of western history. The basic concept of the Devil has remained fundamentally unchanged since its establishment in Christian orthodoxy, around the fifth century AD, and historians have generally passed over what can appear to be a generalised demonism in a culture dominated by religious language.

Other continuities have been more explicitly constructed. Evil, argued to be one of the most fundamental of human experiences, has been particularly problematised in Christian theodicy.<sup>24</sup> According to J. B. Russell, the author of the only dedicated treatment of the Devil's entire history, Satan has

<sup>23</sup> *A new Ballad, shewing the great misery sustained by a poore man in essex, his wife and children, with other strange things done by the Devill*, in Roxburghe Collection, vol. II, pp. 222–8; Rowley, Dekker and Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton*, Act III, scene iii, 7–40.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Cavendish, *The Powers of Evil in Western Religion, Magic and Folk Belief* (London, 1975); Hans Schwarz, *Evil: An Historical and Theological Perspective* (Minneapolis, 1995), p. 1; Paul Ricoeur, 'Evil, a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 53 (3) (1985); Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (eds.), *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford, 1990), p. 1; Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Evil* (London, 1963), p. 13.



Cambridge University Press

0521802369 - The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England

Nathan Johnstone

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Introduction

9

consistently been used by theologians to divert responsibility for evil away from God. Correspondingly he judges the Devil's significance largely on the basis of how much theoretical coherence figures such as Origen or St Augustine were able to enforce upon the concept in this role. The result is largely a history of abstract theology which sees theodicy in essentialist terms, influenced by, but largely separate from, social and cultural change.<sup>25</sup>

A history of the Devil's role in persecution has developed in the light of the twentieth-century phenomenon of genocide, as historians have sought to trace the origins of society's willingness to scapegoat minorities. There is argued to have emerged in medieval Europe a persecutory mentality which actively classified minorities and produced convoluted myths of anti-human activity to justify their persecution.<sup>26</sup> In its earliest stages it was aimed at Jews, heretics and lepers, and imagined them to be diabolic servants working to destroy Christendom.<sup>27</sup> A stereotype of the Devil's servant developed into a complex and lethal mythology of a clandestine society marked out by pacts with Satan and diabolic rituals carried out at witches' Sabbats.<sup>28</sup> Once established, the persecutory mentality pervaded the history of western Europe, and eventually became secularised. Yet popular stereotypes, most notably those of demonic Jews, retained the essential characteristics that the medieval world had given them. The persecution of Jews as servants of Satan in medieval Europe and the genocidal anti-Semitism of the twentieth-century, are taken to be variants of

<sup>25</sup> The term theodicy was coined in 1697 by Gottfried Leibniz, but has been applied retrospectively to the whole history of Christian theology's problem with evil. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (Ithaca and London, 1977); *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca and London, 1981); *Lucifer: the Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London, 1984); *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca and London, 1986); Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, N.J., 1987). Henry Angsar Kelly is more polemical, tracing a series of interpretative mistakes he claims have allowed the Devil to occupy a place within Christian orthodoxy that he never deserved; see *The Devil, Demonology and Witchcraft* (Garden City, N.Y., 1974).

<sup>26</sup> R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 35, 64–5, 89–91, 123.

<sup>27</sup> Joshua Trachtenburg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (Philadelphia and Jerusalem, 1943; reprinted 1993); Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, trans. R. Rosenthal (London, 1991); Elaine Pagels has also found similar processes prevalent in the development of early Christian identity. See *The Origin of Satan* (London, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*; Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*; Robert Muchembled, 'Satanic Myths and Cultural Reality'; Robert Rowland, 'Fantastical and Devilish Persons': European Witch-Beliefs in Comparative Perspective'; Gustav Henningsen, "'The Ladies from Outside': An Archaic Pattern of the Witches' Sabbath', all in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, ed. B. Ankarloo and G. Henningsen (Oxford, 1990), pp. 139–215; Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (London, 1996), pp. 25–59; Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 80–93, 161–78, 321–34.

Cambridge University Press

0521802369 - The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England

Nathan Johnstone

Excerpt

[More information](#)10 *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England*

the same process.<sup>29</sup> Thus, as an interpretative model, willingness to act on a belief in the Devil has to a large extent been equated with persecuting zeal and fanaticism, unchanged in nature for nearly a thousand years.

These continuities are bisected by one enormous cultural change. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries Europe underwent what Max Weber termed ‘disenchantment’.<sup>30</sup> A traditional world view which saw man at the centre of an ordered cosmos in which macrocosm and microcosm constantly interacted was increasingly challenged. The Protestant rejection of magic favoured belief in human agency under subjection to God. Whilst the existence of preternature was not denied, it was increasingly considered a sphere of activity reserved only for the deity.<sup>31</sup> In the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the scientific revolution undermined the basic rationale of magic, as mechanical philosophy emphasised the orderly and regular functioning of the universe, upon which spirits and demons were incapable of acting.<sup>32</sup> As Robin Briggs has noted, the reason for this ‘conceptual revolution’ has defied adequate historical explanation.<sup>33</sup> But it had profound consequences for the educated perception of the Devil. The question of evil was central to the thinking of *philosophes* such as Leibniz, Hume and Voltaire. But they found the Devil to be little more than a telling example of the absurdity of traditional Christian belief. Natural disasters and other evils were to be attributed instead to the inevitable action of the laws of nature. Similarly, liberal Christians who sought to reconcile their faith with rationalism found the Devil to be cumbersome baggage. In response, alternative theodicies gained prevalence, for example the belief that evil had no existence and was merely a relative declension from good. In eighteenth-century England, so J. B. Russell argues, only the theology of John Wesley continued to be influenced by a profound sense of the demonic.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> This continuity has been relied on in works dealing with the holocaust. Recent examples include Richard L. Rubenstein and John K. Roth, *Approaches to Auschwitz: The Holocaust and its Legacy* (Atlanta, 1987), chapter 2; Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London, 1996), pp. 39–43, 52–3; Joel Carmichael, *The Satanizing of the Jews: Origin and Development of Mystical Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1992). But this view has been convincingly challenged by David Nirenburg, who argues that in all periods persecution, and anti-Semitism in particular, must be understood in its immediate context, and that assumptions about the long-term continuity of anti-Semitism are ahistorical. See *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J., 1996), pp. 3–17.

<sup>30</sup> Alan Macfarlane, ‘The Root of All Evil’, in D. Parkin (ed.), *The Anthropology of Evil* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 57–76; R.W. Scribner, ‘The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the “Disenchantment of the World”’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23 (3) (Winter, 1993), pp. 475–94.

<sup>31</sup> Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*, pp. 378–81.

<sup>32</sup> Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1987), pp. 217–24.

<sup>33</sup> Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*, p. 377. <sup>34</sup> Russell, *Mephistopheles*, pp. 130–2.