

WOMEN AND RELIGION

~ *The Original Sourcebook
of Women in Christian Thought*

NEW REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION

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~ Woman as Witch: Witchcraft Persecutions in the Old and New Worlds

One of the most disturbing periods in the history of Western Christianity, particularly with respect to issues of women and sexuality, was the widespread witchcraft persecution of the early modern era. Between 1450 and 1750 in various parts of Europe and European colonies, religious and secular authorities undertook a sustained effort to identify and eliminate practitioners of witchcraft. While scholars debate the extent of witch-hunting in the two hundred years before 1450,¹ from 1450 to 1750 tens (and perhaps hundreds) of thousands were accused and executed for witchcraft.²

Until recently, most historians offered only the shallowest acknowledgment of the gendered nature of the witchcraft persecutions,³ but the vast majority of those charged with witchcraft were women. While there were important regional differences,⁴ women appear to have constituted approximately 80 percent of those accused and approximately 85 percent of those executed for witchcraft during the period of the major European

witch-hunts.⁵ As particularly egregious examples, in 1585 two German villages were left with only one female inhabitant each.⁶ The early modern witch craze stands as perhaps the most massive and explicit demonstration of misogyny and fear of women in the history of the European Christianity.

EUROPEAN WITCHCRAFT PERSECUTIONS

During the early medieval period, simple sorcery or natural magic were treated with relative leniency, and Christian theologians and bishops explicitly taught that witchcraft was only illusion, fantasy, or hallucination, a form of pagan superstition.⁷ Sorcery was often ignored, and if it was detected, it often brought nothing more than a stiff penance. Indeed, elements of simple sorcery were sometimes incorporated into Christian religious practice, and popular magic and superstitious practices appear to have pervaded many layers of European society.

Historians struggle to account for the dramatic shift from the relatively benign early medieval views of sorcery as misguided illusion to the virulent beliefs that were to sweep Europe concerning the reality of witches and their evil powers. The historian Hugh Trevor-Roper has proposed that the primary causes for this shift are to be found in the major social upheavals of the early modern period, including such factors as the rise of new concerns about various heretical groups and religious orthodoxy, the Black Death, the Hundred Years War, and the later religious wars and social turmoil arising from the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.⁸ Surely the early modern era was a period of profound social change throughout the Western world, and Trevor-Roper's argument has exerted an important influence on subsequent historiography.

More recent studies have highlighted further important changing social and political conditions that made the witch craze possible, including broad changes in legal administration and procedure (including the rise of torture as a prominent legal

tool), demographic fluctuation, food scarcity, changes in family and kinship patterns, and the development and spread of new capitalist economic systems (which, in turn, increased economic tension and dislocation).⁹ Witchcraft accusations and trials could serve important social and psychological functions in a period of such social turmoil.¹⁰ Further, the witchcraft persecutions also vividly reflect the profound tensions that accompanied the extension of centralized social power, control, and acculturation into the countryside by increasingly efficient and centralized nation-states and bureaucratic elites.¹¹ These new mechanisms of social control required new forms of individual identity and agency in which gender norms were rigidly policed. Not only do the witchcraft persecutions demonstrate an obsessive concern with the regulation of bodies, gender roles, and sexual practices, but they also coincided with increased social and legal concern with other behaviors related to procreation, gender, and sexuality (such as abortion, infanticide, prostitution, and sodomy).¹²

In this confluence of social and economic factors, religious and political concern with nonconformity and heresy increased dramatically at the end of the medieval period, particularly with the rise of various groups that challenged religious orthodoxy and hierarchy (including the Cathars, the Waldensians, and the Lollards, and extending to the Templars and Jews).¹³ Scholastic theologians developed elaborate theories of the devil and the devil's kingdom, in which sorcerers were considered to be heretical servants of Satan. In keeping with this heightened concern over heresy, the Vatican authorized new religious orders to teach and promote religious orthodoxy. Between 1227 and 1235, Pope Gregory IX launched a series of papal condemnations of heresy, then a series of commissions of inquisition given most notably to Dominican friars. The inquisition consisted of formal inquests aimed against Jews, Muslims, and other suspected heretics, and in 1252 Pope Innocent IV authorized the use of torture in cases of heresy, a potent means of obtaining confessions. Over time, almost all sorcery and folk magic came to be included under the rubric of heresy.¹⁴

Despite its reputation, the inquisition appears to have been far less brutal and more concerned with procedural safeguards in its persecution of witchcraft than were the secular and other ecclesiastical authorities.¹⁵ Indeed, after around 1530, the inquisition conducted witch trials only in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and their colonies; elsewhere in Europe, secular or ecclesiastical courts assumed almost exclusive jurisdiction over charges of witchcraft.¹⁶ But the inquisition did provide one ingredient of major significance to the broad witchcraft persecutions: the inquisitors' manuals. These manuals directed investigators concerning the nature of witchcraft and the most effective means of interrogation. Obtaining evidence of witchcraft through the use (or threat) of torture, inquisitors would enter formal reports concerning the phenomenon and thus add to the body of evidence concerning the presence of witches and their evil powers.

In 1484, the Dominican inquisitors Heinrich Institor (Kramer) and Jacob Sprenger obtained a bull from Pope Innocent VIII confirming papal support for the inquisition against witches and authorizing Kramer and Sprenger to combat the problems caused by witchcraft.¹⁷ In 1486–87, Kramer and Sprenger published the *Malleus Maleficarum* (the “Hammer Against Witches”), a handbook for inquisitors to use in witchcraft investigations and trials. The *Malleus* is significant not only because of its compendium of arguments supporting the persecution of witches but also because of its tremendous influence.¹⁸ It appeared in at least twenty-nine editions in its first two hundred years,¹⁹ and through translation and citation, its influence was widespread throughout Europe until the seventeenth century.

The *Malleus* cites a wide array of authorities in its circuitous arguments against witchcraft, including both pre-Christian and early Christian authors (Jerome, Chrysostom, and Origen). But it relies principally on the authority of Aristotle, the Scriptures, Augustine, and Aquinas.²⁰ In addition, Kramer and Sprenger offer various forms of evidence accumulated through their work as inquisitors.

Among the most striking aspects of the *Malleus* are its preoccupation with sexual functions and its broad and vicious attack on women.²¹ The authors argue that women are particularly susceptible to witchcraft because they are light-minded, fickle, feeble in intelligence, quick to waiver in faith, and cursed with sexual desires so insatiable that they lust for intercourse with the devil; they are “by nature” prone to such evils because Eve was originally constructed from a “bent rib.” Men are instructed to praise God for preserving them from this terrible curse; the authors claim that God’s incarnation as a member of the male sex gives men relative immunity to such evil.

Kramer and Sprenger argue that witches have special powers over sexual and reproductive functions. Moreover, they also assert that witches pose a significant threat to men’s potency, though the authors hedge on whether witches actually have the power to undermine male sexual capacity (to the point of removing male genital organs) or whether such problems are merely the result of a bewitching delusion or “glamour.” Kramer and Sprenger offer a theological rationale for their overwhelming stress on venereal functions: God permits the devil more power over sexual acts than all other human acts because “the first corruption of sin by which man became the slave of the devil came to us through the act of generation.”²² The devil assumes a feminine form to harvest semen from lustful men, and then, assuming a masculine form, the devil uses the semen to impregnate witches and thus pollute the bodies and souls of both parties.²³ Yet this evil sexuality is bridled in one notable aspect; even demons will not engage in “vices against nature” or acts “wrongfully performed outside the rightful channel.”²⁴

In sections of the treatise not included in this chapter, Kramer and Sprenger detail the procedures to be followed in witchcraft trials and warn against the wiles that witches will use to escape detection or to deceive judges. Various tortures are appropriate to induce confessions. Thus, despite their acknowledgment in

the *Malleus* that testimony induced by torture is "often fallacious and ineffective,"²⁵ Kramer and Sprenger propose an attack on witchcraft that could effectively produce its own evidence. As the authors assert, "[h]ere we are dealing with actual events; and it has never yet been known that an innocent person has been punished on suspicion of witchcraft, and there is no doubt that God will never permit such a thing to happen."²⁶

As the following excerpts will amply demonstrate, the logic of the *Malleus* is notoriously circular and fallacious.²⁷ For example, Kramer and Sprenger first argue that women are susceptible to witchcraft because of their general feeble-mindedness and weakness. But practically without pause, they proceed to argue that women pose a particular threat to men because of the insidious power and ingenuity of feminine wiles.

It is important to note that Catholics and Protestants shared in the persecution of witchcraft.²⁸ Luther and Calvin each declared that witches should be burned as heretics.²⁹ Henry VIII of England included a charge of witchcraft against his wife Anne Boleyn, and James I of England himself wrote a *Daemonologie* and encouraged new legal measures against witches.³⁰ Protestants further concurred with Catholics that women were particularly prone to witchcraft,³¹ and terror of witchcraft grew in both Catholic and Protestant regions, reaching its height between 1560 and 1660, an era of intense religious conflict.

MALLEUS MALEFICARUM*

Part I, Question 6

Concerning Witches who copulate with Devils.

Why it is that Women are chiefly addicted to Evil Superstitions.

* From Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. Montague Summers (London: The Pushkin Press, 1948), 41-48, 54-55, 117-21.

There is also, concerning witches who copulate with devils, much difficulty in considering the methods by which such abominations are consummated. On the part of the devil: first, of what element the body is made that he assumes; secondly, whether the act is always accompanied by the injection of semen received from another; thirdly, as to time and place, whether he commits this act more frequently at one time than at another; fourthly, whether the act is invisible to any who may be standing by. And on the part of the women, it has to be inquired whether only they who were themselves conceived in this filthy manner are often visited by devils; or secondly, whether it is those who were offered to devils by midwives at the time of their birth; and thirdly, whether the actual venereal delectation of such is of a weaker sort. But we cannot here reply to all these questions, both because we are only engaged in a general study, and because in the second part of this work they are all singly explained by their operations, as will appear in the fourth chapter, where mention is made of each separate method. Therefore let us now chiefly consider women; and first, why this kind of perfidy is found more in so fragile a sex than in men. And our inquiry will first be general, as to the general conditions of women; secondly, particular, as to which sort of women are found to be given to superstition and witchcraft; and thirdly, specifically with regard to midwives, who surpass all others in wickedness.

Why Superstition is chiefly found in Women.

As for the first question, why a greater number of witches is found in the fragile feminine sex than among men; it is indeed a fact that it were idle to contradict, since it is accredited by actual experience, apart from the verbal testimony of credible witnesses. And without in any way detracting from a sex in which God has always taken great glory that His might should be spread abroad, let us say that various men have assigned various reasons for this fact, which nevertheless agree in principle. Wherefore it is good, for the admonition of

women, to speak of this matter; and it has often been proved by experience that they are eager to hear of it, so long as it is set forth with discretion.

. . . [S]ince [women] are feebler both in mind and body, it is not surprising that they should come under the spell of witchcraft.

For as regards intellect, or the understanding of spiritual things, they seem to be of a different nature from men; a fact which is vouched for by the logic of the authorities, backed by various examples from the Scriptures. Terence says: Women are intellectually like children. And Lactantius (*Institutiones*, 3): No woman understood philosophy except Temeste. And *Proverbs* 11, as it were describing a woman, says: As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

But the natural reason is that she is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations. And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives. For Cato says: When a woman weeps she weaves snares. And again: When a woman weeps, she labours to deceive a man. And this is shown by Samson's wife, who coaxed him to tell her the riddle he had propounded to the Philistines, and told them the answer, and so deceived him. And it is clear in the case of the first woman that she had little faith; for when the serpent asked why they did not eat of every tree in Paradise, she answered: Of every tree, etc.—lest perchance we die. Thereby she showed that she doubted, and had little faith in the word of God. And all this is indicated by the etymology of the word; for *Femina* comes from *Fe* and *Minus*, since she is ever weaker to hold and preserve the faith. And this as regards faith is of her very nature; although both by grace and nature

faith never failed in the Blessed Virgin, even at the time of Christ's Passion, when it failed in all men.

Therefore a wicked woman is by her nature quicker to waver in her faith, and consequently quicker to adjure the faith, which is the root of witchcraft. . . .

If we inquire, we find that nearly all the kingdoms of the world have been overthrown by women. Troy, which was a prosperous kingdom, was, for the rape of one woman, Helen, destroyed, and many thousands of Greeks slain. The kingdom of the Jews suffered much misfortune and destruction through the accursed Jezebel, and her daughter Athaliah, queen of Judah, who caused her son's sons to be killed, that on their death she might reign herself; yet each of them was slain. The kingdom of the Romans endured much evil through Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, that worst of women. And so with others. Therefore it is no wonder if the world now suffers through the malice of women.

And now let us examine the carnal desires of the body itself, whence has arisen unconscionable harm to human life. Justly may we say with Cato of Utica: If the world could be rid of women, we should not be without God in our intercourse. For truly, without the wickedness of women, to say nothing of witchcraft, the world would still remain proof against innumerable dangers. Hear what Valerius said to Rufinus: You do not know that woman is the Chimaera, but it is good that you should know it; for that monster was of three forms; its face was that of a radiant and noble lion, it had the filthy belly of a goat, and it was armed with the virulent tail of a viper. And he means that a woman is beautiful to look upon, contaminating to the touch, and deadly to keep.

Let us consider another property of hers, the voice. For as she is a liar by nature, so in her speech she stings while she delights us. Wherefore her voice is like the song of the Sirens, who with their sweet melody entice the passers-by and kill

them. For they kill them by emptying their purses, consuming their strength, and causing them to forsake God. Again Valerius says to Rufinus: When she speaks it is a delight which flavours the sin; the flower of love is a rose, because under its blossom there are hidden many thorns. See *Proverbs* 5:3-4: Her mouth is smoother than oil; that is, her speech is afterwards as bitter as absinthium. (Her throat is smoother than oil. But her end is as bitter as wormwood.)

Let us consider also her gait, posture, and habit, in which is vanity of vanities. There is no man in the world who studies so hard to please the good God as even an ordinary woman studies by her vanities to please men. An example of this is to be found in the life of Pelagia, a worldly woman who was wont to go about Antioch attired and adorned most extravagantly. A holy father, named Nonnus, saw her and began to weep, saying to his companions that never in all his life had he used such diligence to please God; and much more he added to this effect, which is preserved in his orations.

It is this which is lamented in *Ecclesiastes* 7, and which the Church even now laments on account of the great multitude of witches. And I have found a woman more bitter than death, who is the hunter's snare, and her heart is a net, and her hands are bands. He that pleaseth God shall escape from her; but he that is a sinner shall be caught by her. More bitter than death, that is, than the devil: *Apocalypse* 6:8, His name was Death. For though the devil tempted Eve to sin, yet Eve seduced Adam. And as the sin of Eve would not have brought death to our soul and body unless the sin had afterwards passed on to Adam, to which he was tempted by Eve, not by the devil, therefore she is more bitter than death.

More bitter than death, again, because that is natural and destroys only the body; but the sin which rose from woman destroys the soul by depriving it of grace, and delivers the body up to the punishment for sin.

More bitter than death, again, because bodily death is an open and terrible enemy, but woman is a wheedling and secret enemy.

And that she is more perilous than a snare does not speak of the snare of hunters, but of devils. For men are caught not only through their carnal desires, when they see and hear women: for S. Bernard says: Their face is a burning wind, and their voice the hissing of serpents: but they also cast wicked spells on countless men and animals. And when it is said that her heart is a net, it speaks of the inscrutable malice which reigns in their hearts. And her hands are as bands for binding; for when they place their hands on a creature to bewitch it, then with the help of the devil they perform their design.

To conclude. All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable. See *Proverbs* 30: There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, a fourth thing which says not, It is enough; that is, the mouth of the womb. Wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort even with devils. More such reasons could be brought forward, but to the understanding it is sufficiently clear that it is no matter for wonder that there are more women than men found infected with the heresy of witchcraft. And in consequence of this, it is better called the heresy of witches than of wizards, since the name is taken from the more powerful party. And blessed be the Highest Who has so far preserved the male sex from so great a crime: for since He was willing to be born and to suffer for us, therefore He has granted to men this privilege.

What sort of Women are found to be above all Others Superstitious and Witches?

As to our second inquiry, what sort of women more than others are found to be superstitious and infected with witchcraft; it must be said, as was shown in the preceding inquiry,

that three general vices appear to have special dominion over wicked women, namely, infidelity, ambition, and lust. Therefore they are more than others inclined towards witchcraft, who more than others are given to these vices. Again, since of these three vices the last chiefly predominates, women being insatiable etc., it follows that those among ambitious women are more deeply infected who are more hot to satisfy their filthy lusts; and such are adulteresses, fornicatrices, and the concubines of the Great.

Now there are, as it is said in the Papal Bull, seven methods by which they infect with witchcraft the venereal act and the conception of the womb: First, by inclining the minds of men to inordinate passion; second, by obstructing their generative force; third, by removing the members accommodated to that act; fourth, by changing men into beasts by their magic art; fifth, by destroying the generative force in women; sixth, by procuring abortion; seventh, by offering children to devils, besides other animals and fruits of the earth with which they work much harm. And all these will be considered later; but for the present let us give our minds to the injuries towards men.

And first concerning those who are bewitched into an inordinate love or hatred, this is a matter of a sort that it is difficult to discuss before the general intelligence. Yet it must be granted that it is a fact. For S. Thomas (IV, 34), treating of obstructions caused by witches, shows that God allows the devil greater power against men's venereal acts than against their other actions; and gives this reason, that this is likely to be so, since those women are chiefly apt to be witches who are most disposed to such acts.

For he says that, since the first corruption of sin by which man became the slave of the devil came to us through the act of generation, therefore greater power is allowed by God to the devil in this act than in all others. Also the power of witches is more apparent in serpents, as it is said, than in

other animals, because through the means of a serpent the devil tempted woman. For this reason also, as is shown afterwards, although matrimony is a work of God, as being instituted by Him, yet it is sometimes wrecked by the work of the devil: not indeed through main force, since then he might be thought stronger than God, but with the permission of God, by causing some temporary or permanent impediment in the conjugal act.

And touching this we may say what is known by experience; that these women satisfy their filthy lusts not only in themselves, but even in the mighty ones of the age, of whatever state and condition; causing by all sorts of witchcraft the death of their souls through the excessive infatuation of carnal love, in such a way that for no shame or persuasion can they desist from such acts. And through such men, since the witches will not permit any harm to come to them either from themselves or from others once they have them in their power, there arises the great danger of the time, namely, the extermination of the Faith. And in this way do witches every day increase.

And would that this were not true according to experience. But indeed such hatred is aroused by witchcraft between those joined in the sacrament of matrimony, and such freezing up of the generative forces, that men are unable to perform the necessary action for begetting offspring. . . .

Question 8

Whether Witches can hebetate the Powers of Generation or obstruct the Venereal Act.

. . . And as to this, Peter of Palude (III, 34) notes five methods. For he says that the devil, being a spirit, has power over a corporeal creature to cause or prevent a local motion. Therefore he can prevent bodies from approaching each other, either directly or indirectly, by interposing himself in some bodily shape. In this way it happened to the young

man who was betrothed to an idol and nevertheless married a young maiden, and was consequently unable to copulate with her. Secondly, he can excite a man to that act, or freeze his desire for it, by the virtue of secret things of which he best knows the power. Thirdly, he can so disturb a man's perception and imagination as to make the woman appear loathsome to him: since he can, as has been said, influence the imagination. Fourthly, he can directly prevent the erection of that member which is adapted to fructification, just as he can prevent a local motion. Fifthly, he can prevent the flow of the vital essence to the members in which lies the motive power; by closing as it were the seminary ducts, so that it does not descend to the generative channels, or falls back from them, or does not project from them, or in any of many ways fails in its function. . . .

Part 2, Question 1, Chapters 6 and 7

How Witches Impede and Prevent the Power of Procreation.

Concerning the method by which they obstruct the procreant function both in men and animals, and in both sexes, the reader may consult that which has been written already on the questions, Whether devils can through witches turn the minds of men to love or hatred. There, after the solutions of the arguments, a specific declaration is made relating to the method by which, with God's permission, they can obstruct the procreant function.

But it must be noted that such obstruction is caused both intrinsically and extrinsically. Intrinsically they cause it in two ways. First, when they directly prevent the erection of the member which is accommodated to fructification. And this need not seem impossible, when it is considered that they are able to vitiate the natural use of any member. Secondly, when they prevent the flow of the vital essences to the

members in which resides the motive force, closing up the seminal ducts so that it does not reach the generative vessels, or so that it cannot be ejaculated, or is fruitlessly spilled.

Extrinsically they cause it at times by means of images, or by the eating of herbs; sometimes by other external means, such as cocks' testicles. But it must not be thought that it is by the virtue of these things that a man is made impotent, but by the occult power of devils' illusions witches by this means procure such impotence, namely, that they cause a man to be unable to copulate, or a woman to conceive.

And the reason for this is that God allows them more power over this act, by which the first sin was disseminated, than over other human actions. Similarly they have more power over serpents, which are the most subject to the influence of incantations, than over other animals. Wherefore it has often been found by us and other Inquisitors that they have caused this obstruction by means of serpents or some such things.

For a certain wizard who had been arrested confessed that for many years he had by witchcraft brought sterility upon all the men and animals which inhabited a certain house. Moreover, Nider tells of a wizard named Stadlin who was taken in the diocese of Lausanne, and confessed that in a certain house where a man and his wife were living, he had by his witchcraft successively killed in the woman's womb seven children, so that for many years the woman always miscarried. And that, in the same way, he had caused that all the pregnant cattle and animals of the house were during those years unable to give birth to any live issue. And when he was questioned as to how he had done this, and what manner of charge should be preferred against him, he discovered his crime, saying: I put a serpent under the threshold of the outer door of the house; and if this is removed, fecundity will be restored to the inhabitants. And it was as he said; for though

the serpent was not found, having been reduced to dust, the whole piece of ground was removed, and in the same year fecundity was restored to the wife and to all the animals.

Another instance occurred hardly four years ago in Reichshofen. There was a most notorious witch, who could at all times and by a mere touch bewitch women and cause an abortion. Now the wife of a certain nobleman in that place had become pregnant and had engaged a midwife to take care of her, and had been warned by the midwife not to go out of the castle, and above all to be careful not to hold any speech or conversation with that witch. After some weeks, unmindful of that warning, she went out of the castle to visit some women who were met together on some festive occasion; and when she had sat down for a little, the witch came, and, as if for the purpose of saluting her, placed both her hands on her stomach; and suddenly she felt the child moving in pain. Frightened by this, she returned home and told the midwife what had happened. Then the midwife exclaimed: "Alas! you have already lost your child." And so it proved when her time came; for she gave birth, not to an entire abortion, but little by little to separate fragments of its head and feet and hands. And this great affliction was permitted by God to punish her husband, whose duty it was to bring witches to justice and avenge their injuries to the Creator.

And there was in the town of Mersburg in the diocese of Constance a certain young man who was bewitched in such a way that he could never perform the carnal act with any woman except one. And many have heard him tell that he had often wished to refuse that woman, and take flight to other lands; but that hitherto he had been compelled to rise up in the night and to come very quickly back, sometimes over land, and sometimes through the air as if he were flying. . . .

And what, then, is to be thought of those witches who in this way sometimes collect male organs in great numbers, as many as twenty or thirty members together, and put them in

a bird's nest, or shut them up in a box, where they move themselves like living members, and eat oats and corn, as has been seen by many and is a matter of common report? It is to be said that it is all done by devil's work and illusion, for the senses of those who see them are deluded in the way we have said. For a certain man tells that, when he had lost his member, he approached a known witch to ask her to restore it to him. She told the afflicted man to climb a tree, and that he might take which he liked out of a nest in which there were several members. And when he tried to take a big one, the witch said: You must not take that one; adding, because it belonged to a parish priest.

All these things are caused by devils through an illusion or glamour, in the manner we have said, by confusing the organ of vision by transmuting the mental images in the imaginative faculty. And it must not be said that these members which are shown are devils in assumed members, just as they sometimes appear to witches and men in assumed aerial bodies, and converse with them. And the reason is that they effect this thing by an easier method, namely, by drawing out an inner mental image from the repository of the memory, and impressing it on the imagination.

THE SALEM WITCHCRAFT TRIALS

The records of the witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts, provide a vivid example of the dynamics of the early modern obsession with witchcraft. When earlier seventeenth-century New England women such as Anne Hutchinson and the Quakers Ann Austin and Mary Fisher were suspected of being witches, their nonconformist religious behavior apparently lay at the root of these suspicions. By the 1690s, however, no link with a suspect religion was necessary in order to bring on the charge of witchcraft. In 1692, the Puritans of Boston and Salem were convinced that the devil was active among them and in league with witches.

24. See especially Laurie A. Finke, "Mystical Bodies and the Dialogics of Vision," in *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics*, ed. Ulricke Wiethaus (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 42; and Ellen Ross's essay in the same volume (pp. 45-59), "'She Wept and Cried Right Loud for Sorrow and for Pain': Suffering, the Spiritual Journey, and Women's Experience in Late Medieval Mysticism."
25. Finke, "Mystical Bodies," 32-35.
26. Some of these writings are now conveniently translated in the Classics of Western Spirituality series published by Paulist Press.
27. Barbara Newman, "Divine Power Made Perfect in Weakness: Saint Hildegard on the Frail Sex," in *Peaceweavers*, 104. Newman here argues that Hildegard's scientific understanding of bodily humors and temperaments differed considerably from that of standard scientific writers. See also Newman's longer work, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
28. Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (+203) to Marguerite Porete (+1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 144.
29. See Theresa Coletti, "Purity and Danger: The Paradox of Mary's Body and the En-gendering of the Infancy Narrative in the English Mystery Cycles," in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, eds. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 65-95.
30. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). Such men's devotion to Mary, however, did not preclude their expression of misogyny.
31. The "Hail Mary" prayer is, in English, "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women. Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen." Several of its phrases are taken from Luke 1, in which the angel Gabriel announces to Mary her pregnancy, and Elizabeth, soon to be the mother of John the Baptist, greets the pregnant Mary.
32. A convenient summary of the history of devotion to Mary can be found in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), IX: 365-69.
33. Birgitta of Sweden, *Revelations*, Book Seven, 1-17, in *In Her Words: Women's Writings in the History of Christian Thought*, ed. Amy Oden (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 178-80.
34. For an informative introduction to Angela's life and teaching, along with an English translation of her writings, see Angela of Foligno, *Complete Works*, trans. Paul Lachance, preface by Romana Guarnieri (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1993).
35. For helpful comments on Angela's piety, see Bynum, *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*, esp. pp. 140-48, 246-48. Also see Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, "Writing the Body: Male and Female in the Writings of Marguerite d'Oingt, Angela of Foligno, and Umiltà di Faenza," in Petroff's *Body and Soul*, 204-24.
36. Angela's "companion" was probably a woman named Masazuola, about whom almost nothing is known.
37. "Brother scribe" is Angela's confessor, scribe, and advisor, the Franciscan Brother Arnaldo.
38. For further discussion of Julian and her theology, see the essays in *Peaceweavers* by Ritamary Bradley ("Julian on Prayer," 291-304) and Charles Cummings ("The Motherhood of God According to Julian of Norwich," 305-14).
39. Among the interesting recent studies of Margery and her *Book*, see Clarissa W. Atkinson, *Mystic and Pilgrim: The Book and the World of Margery Kempe* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1983); Sarah Beckwith, "A Very Material Mysticism: The Medieval Mysticism of Margery Kempe," in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology, and History*, ed. David Aers (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), 34-57; Wendy Harding, "Body into Text: The *Book of Margery Kempe*," in *Feminist Approaches to the Body*, 166-87; Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and the Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); Janel M. Mueller, "Autobiography of a New 'Creature': Female Spirituality, Selfhood, and Authorship in the *Book of Margery Kempe*," in *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 155-71; Anthony Goodman, "The Piety of John Brunham's Daughter, of Lynn," in *Medieval Women*, 347-58.
40. This aspect of Margery's behavior is discussed by Ross, "'She Wept and Cried Right Loud,'" 45-59.
41. For a discussion of women in the Lollard movement, see Margaret Aston, "Lollard Women Priests?," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31 (1980): 441-61.
42. Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe (1436): A Modern Version by W. Butler-Bowden* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936), I: 53 (p. 194).
43. "This creature" is Margery's usual, humble way of referring to herself.
44. In other words, by means of sexual intercourse.
45. In a previous communication with Jesus, he had put Margery under strict obedience to observe a meatless fast on Fridays.

7. WOMAN AS WITCH: WITCHCRAFT PERSECUTIONS IN THE OLD AND NEW WORLDS

1. See Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1969), 24-28; and Joseph Klaitz, *Servants of Satan: The Age of the Witch Hunts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 48.
2. For an overview of debates among historians concerning the number of victims of the witchcraft persecutions, see Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco/Pandora, 1994), 20-23; and Brian Levack, *The Witch-hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London: Longman, 1987), 19-22. Estimates range from relatively conservative views (120,000 charged, 60,000 executed) to unsubstantiated estimates of many millions executed. For an overview of the diffusion of the witch persecutions from their origins in northern Italy through central Europe to its peripheries, see Bengt Ahkharloo and Gustav Henningsen, eds., *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

3. See in this regard Barstow, *Witchcraze*, 2-10.
4. In regions on the European periphery, such as Iceland, Finland, and Estonia, the majority of those associated with witchcraft were men. See Ankarloo and Henningsen, *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 13.
5. Barstow, *Witchcraze*, 23-25.
6. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze*, 76.
7. Indeed, Charlemagne had decreed the death penalty for anyone who burned supposed witches. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze*, 12-14; see also Ioan P. Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, trans. Margaret Cook (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 152-53; and Julio Caro Baroja, "Witchcraft and Catholic Theology," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 19-43.
8. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze*, 24-39, 112-22.
9. See, for example, Ankarloo and Henningsen, *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 9-15, and the works cited therein; and see Nachman Ben-Yehuda, "Problems Inherent in Socio-Historical Approaches to the European Witch Craze," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20 (1981): 326-38.
10. Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribners, 1971); and Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
11. The period of the witchcraft persecutions appears to coincide with the period of the final Christianization of Europe. See Robert Muchembled, "Satanic Myths and Cultural Reality," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 139-60.
12. See E. William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands During the Reformation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976), 118-24, 136-41; Christina Lerner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-hunt in Scotland* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1981), 51; Barstow, *Witchcraze*, 4, 41; and Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 22-26, 47, 137-38, 149, 171-98.
13. See Christopher Baxter, "Jean Bodin's *De la Démonomanie des Sorciers*: The Logic of Persecution," in *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, ed. Sydney Anglo (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 81.
14. See Henry Kamen, "Notes on Witchcraft, Sexuality, and the Inquisition," in *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind*, ed. Angel Alcalá (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1987), 237-47.
15. See John Tedeschi, "Inquisitorial Law and the Witch," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 83-118; Kamen, "Notes on Witchcraft," 237-47; and Barstow, *Witchcraze*, 49.
16. See Ankarloo and Henningsen, *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 5.
17. See "The Bull of Innocent VIII," in *Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. Montague Summers (London: Pushkin Press, 1948), xix-xxi; and Couliano, *Eros and Magic*, 184-91.
18. See Sydney Anglo, "Evident Authority and Authoritative Evidence: The *Malleus Maleficarum*," in *The Damned Art*, 14.
19. See Anglo, "Evident Authority," 14-15; Barstow, *Witchcraze*, 171, 196 n. 16.
20. Anglo, "Evident Authority," 18.

21. The link between women and witchcraft has, of course, deep roots in Greek and Latin culture. See Julio Caro Baroja, "Witchcraft and Catholic Theology," 22-23. On the view of women in the *Malleus*, see Eliane Camerlynck, "Féminité et sorcellerie chez les théoriciens de la démonologie à la fin du Moyen Age: Etude du *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 7 (new series) (February 1983): 13-25.
22. *Malleus Maleficarum*, 48.
23. *Malleus Maleficarum*, 21-28.
24. *Malleus Maleficarum*, 30.
25. *Malleus Maleficarum*, 243.
26. *Malleus Maleficarum*, 136.
27. See Anglo, "Evident Authority," 20-24.
28. See Stuart Clark, "Protestant Demonology: Sin, Superstition, and Society (c. 1520-c. 1630)," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 45-81; and Robert Scribner, "Witchcraft and Judgement in Reformation Germany," *History Today* 40 (April 1990): 12-19.
29. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze*, 64-65.
30. See Stuart Clark, "King James's *Daemonologie*: Witchcraft and Kingship," in *The Damned Art*, 174-77; Christina Lerner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 3-22; and Retha M. Warnicke, "Sexual Heresy at the Court of Henry VIII," *The Historical Journal* 30 (1987): 247-68.
31. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 192.
32. The Reverend Mr. Parris had dropped out of Harvard and had tried his hand (and failed) as a trader in Barbados. He returned to Salem Village as minister to a community that had had difficulty in deciding on a spiritual leader. Tituba was acquired (along with her husband, John) by Mr. Parris in Barbados.
33. In addition, two women (including Sarah Osborne) died in prison and one man died from torture. Of the accused, 141 (76 percent) were women; of those tried, fifty-two (88 percent) were women; of those convicted, twenty-six (84 percent) were women, and of those executed, fourteen (74 percent) were women. Carol F. Karslen, *Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 51.
34. It is possible that if Tituba and the girls had not accused others, the entire craze might have been averted. It is possible that Tituba was confused (her English was not very good); it is also possible that the whippings she had received at the hands of her master, the Rev. Mr. Parris, had convinced her that her only salvation was in telling her tormentors what they wanted to hear. That seemed to work in subsequent cases; it was primarily those who *denied* that they were witches who were executed.
35. Quoted in David C. Brown, *A Guide to the Salem Witchcraft Hysteria of 1692* (Pittsburgh: D. C. Brown, 1984), 95. Mather alludes to Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 (referring to the "false apostles" who are damaging Paul's mission and authority): "Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness."

36. Bridget Bishop ran an alehouse in Salem Town and had, prior to 1692, been examined as a witch (1680). Tavern keepers were suspect because their products might do damage to a man (ale or cider might lead to a drunken stupor; cheese had green mold and might poison). She was examined on April 19 with Mary Warren and Giles Corey, tried on June 2, and, on June 10, was the first witch to be executed.
37. Sarah Osborne, for example, was handling land in trust for her children but was supervised by John Putnam and his brother Thomas (Ann's father), with whom Osborne came into conflict. The Putnams associated Rebecca Nurse and her sisters with the deaths of a number of children, including their own; the women's family had been long engaged in a land dispute with the Putnams. George Burroughs, during his tenure as minister in Salem Village, had angered the Putnams.
38. Borders between townships, and therefore land ownership of the lands contained therein, was very uncertain. Salem Village, Salem Town, and Topsfield (not to mention the individual landowners involved) all laid claim to various landholdings. All of those accused of witchcraft between February 29 and April 21, 1692, were members of families who held contested lands. Martha and Giles Corey, for example, owned one hundred acres of very valuable land along the Ipswich River. Selma R. Williams and Pamela Williams Adelman, *Riding the Nightmare: Women and Witchcraft from the Old World to Colonial Salem* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1978), 149, 165, 171ff.
39. Carol Karlsen examines the inheritance laws in effect in the late seventeenth century, relates them to the various women accused of witchcraft, and concludes, "However varied their backgrounds and economic positions, as women without brothers or women without sons, they stood in the way of the orderly transmission of property from one generation of males to another" (Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 116). Karlsen's analysis simply adds another layer of complexity to the "land dispute" theory; Martha Corey, for example, stood to inherit valuable land from her eighty-one-year-old husband.
40. Spectral evidence had been controversial for months. Many notable New England clergymen spoke out against it as open to abuse, including Increase Mather, Cotton Mather's father. Cotton Mather, on the other hand, argued that spectral evidence should be admissible; he was absolutely certain of a diabolical plot.
41. Ankarloo and Henningsen, *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 3.
42. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze, 97-111*.

8. THE PROTESTANT REFORMATIONS AND THE CATHOLIC RESPONSE

1. Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1971), 9.
2. And for rather dubious reasons: that it would please his father, spite his enemies and the devil, and convince people that he had practiced what he preached. See *Letters* 154, 157, and 158 in *Luther's Works*, vol. 49 (vol. 2 of *Letters*), ed. and trans. Gottfried G. Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), III, 117, 123.
3. The puzzle is resolved by noting Luther's concept of a sacrament—and why marriage does not qualify. See *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, in

- Luther's Works*, vol. 36, ed. and trans. A. R. Wentz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 92-106.
4. The Catholic church undertook its own reformation in the sixteenth century, particularly through its implementation of the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-63).
5. See *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 80-81, 102-3.
6. For a statement of the conflicts, see Merry Wiesner, "Luther and Women: The Death of Two Marys," in *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics, and Patriarchy*, eds. Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, and Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 295-97.
7. For a study of Luther's treatment of Eve, see Kristen E. Kvam, *Luther, Eve, and Theological Anthropology: Reassessing the Reformer's Response to the "Frauenfrage"*, Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1992.
8. *Table Talk* 1658, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 54, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 160-61.
9. Luther's allowance for bigamy in difficult marital cases led to problems for the Protestant cause when one of the German Protestant princes, Philip of Hesse, undertook a bigamous marriage, contrary to imperial law, with Luther's blessing. The result was the division of the Schmalkaldic League (the Protestant military league) when the Emperor Charles V applied sanctions to Philip.
10. *Table Talk* 505, 89; 3178A, 191.
11. See, for example, Wiesner, "Luther and Women," 303-4; Thomas A. Brady Jr., "'You Hate Us Priests': Anticlericalism, Communalism, and the Control of Women at Strasbourg in the Age of the Reformation," in *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden/New York/Köln: E. J. Brill, 1993), 191-92, 205; Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1-5, 203, 237.
12. Roper, *Holy Household*, 5; also see 3, 15, 31, 47, 55.
13. A discussion of her life and work can be found in Roland H. Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 55-76.
14. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.8.43; 4.13.3.
15. Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis* 1 (English trans.: *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, ed. and trans. John King [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948], 1: 128-30).
16. Calvin, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 7:6 (*Ioannis Calvinis Opera* 49 = *Corpus Reformatorum* 77, eds. W. Baum, E. Cunitz, E. Reuss [Brunswick, 1892]), 405-6. (English trans. in *Calvin's Commentaries: The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John W. Fraser, eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance [Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960], 140-42.) Calvin cites Augustine's treatise *On the Good of Marriage*.
17. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.8.43.
18. Calvin, *Sermon 137 on Deuteronomy* 24:5 (*Ioannis Calvinis Opera* 28 = *Corpus Reformatorum* 56 [1885]), 156-57. Calvin comments on verses from the Mosaic law that command the newly married man not to go out with the army or