

On the Confessional Uses and History of Witchcraft

Thomas Stapleton's 1594 Witchcraft Oration*

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The English Catholic exile Thomas Stapleton (1535–1598) has long been known to historians of early modern witchcraft and demonology. The early twentieth-century scholar Montague Summers, a self-professed Catholic priest and a demonologist of sorts, had adopted the final line of Stapleton's witchcraft oration—"heresy grows with magic, and magic grows with heresy"—as his personal motto.¹ The oration and, in fact, the same line also made an appearance in Hugh Trevor-Roper's well-known witch craze pamphlet of 1967.² Stapleton is also discussed in Stuart Clark's seminal *Thinking with Demons* in a chapter which surveyed the differences between Protestant and Catholic witchcraft.³ The oration, which appears here for the first time

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1. Joseph Jerome, *Montague Summers: A Memoir* (London: Cecil & Amelia Woolf, 1965), 50.

2. Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" in *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Centuries* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001 [original ed. 1967]), 83–178, at 174–75.

3. Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 535, 537.

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in English translation, is indeed of especial importance to historians interested in the confessional dimension of the early modern witch hunt. It offers no fewer than twelve reasons why the rise of witchcraft and heresy were linked: a record number.⁴

Witch-hunting reached its zenith during the age of the Reformations. Yet, the extent to which religious reform contributed to (or even played a role in) this development remains a matter of debate. This situation may be surprising (were witches not meant to be the Devil's allies?) and it certainly is ironic. After all, many early historians of the witch hunt, Trevor-Roper included, had made witch-hunting the exclusive product of religious zealotry and clerical narrow-mindedness.⁵ The picture now looks considerably more complex. It is true that late medieval witchcraft treatises, often authored by Dominican inquisitors, tended to treat witchcraft as yet another heresy and witches as yet another hidden sect to be rooted out by the Church.⁶ Yet, the onset of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations saw a noticeable decline in witch-hunting. Only from the 1570s and 1580s onwards did the number of trials and demonological treatises pick up pace again, affecting areas such as the Spanish Netherlands (Stapleton's place of exile) for the first time. Still, the connection may seem inevitable. Reformation polemics offer master classes in the us-versus-them politics of "othering," while witch-hunting by its very nature literally demonized its victims as allies of the Devil. Yet, even during this heyday period of c.1570–1620, the impact of new confessional identities and regimes on witch-hunting was by no means clear-cut. Similarly, witchcraft skepticism did not necessarily entail an embrace of a proto-scientific or empirical mindset, skepticism could in fact be the product of a certain theological conservatism (as Stapleton acknowledges below, witchcraft *was* a novelty), and leniency in witchcraft cases did not translate into support for religious toleration.⁷

4. The Jesuits Juan de Maldonado and Martin Delrio were only able to list four: Jan Machielsen, *Martin Delrio: Demonology and Scholarship in the Counter-Reformation* (Oxford: British Academy/Oxford University Press, 2015), 214.

5. See Christa Tuczay, "The Nineteenth Century: Medievalism and Witchcraft" and Raisa Maria Toivo, "The Witch-Craze as Holocaust: The Rise of Persecuting Societies," in *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, eds. Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 52–68, 90–107.

6. Michael Bailey, *Battling Demons: Witchcraft, Heresy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003). See also the contributions assembled in Martine Ostorero and Julien Véronèse, eds., *Penser avec les démons: Démonologues et démonologies (XIIIe-XVIIe siècles)* (Florence: SISMELE—Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2015).

7. See Walter Stephens, "The Sceptical Tradition" and Gary K. Waite, "Sixteenth-Century Religious Reform and the Witch-Hunts" in *The Oxford Hand-*

For those interested in the confessional uses of witchcraft, Thomas Stapleton's 1594 oration, entitled "Why Has Magic Grown Today Together with Heresy?" offers an invaluable source: an attempt to map the history of witchcraft by a contemporary, who was a seasoned and highly partisan polemicist. The Catholic exile situated the rise of the supposedly twin forces of witchcraft and Protestantism within the context of the impending apocalypse in preparation for which the Devil had been unleashed on the world. The text deserves attention for the way that it integrates these two contemporary threats within a longer history of demonic assaults on mankind from the birth of Christ to the end of time.⁸

Thomas Stapleton was born at Henfield, Sussex, in July 1535. That same month had witnessed (since 1935, Saint) Thomas More's execution by the Henrician regime, and Stapleton's first name was likely an act of rebellion and piety on the part of his Catholic parents.⁹ Stapleton himself would later publish a devotional treatise, the *Tres Thomae* (1588), in honor of Thomas the Apostle, Thomas Becket, and More.¹⁰ After studying at Winchester College during Edward VI's reign and at New College, Oxford, under Mary, Stapleton became one of many English Catholics to relocate to the University of Leuven (or Louvain) in the Spanish Netherlands at the start of Elizabeth's reign. He would spend the remainder of his life at the two institutions, Leuven and Douai, that made up Netherlandish academia at the time, rising to the position of Regius Professor of Scriptures at Leuven in 1590. It was to an audience of Leuven theologians that the oration below was addressed. An attempt to lure Stapleton to Rome was prevented only by his death in 1598.¹¹

Stapleton's oration is of some value to historians of English Catholicism. In 1592, Stapleton had pseudonymously published the most vicious *ad feminam* attack on Queen Elizabeth by any English Catholic exile, depicting her

book of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America, ed. Brian P. Levack, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

8. Note the relatively muted apocalyptic Scriptural reference on lines 454–66.

9. Marvin R. O'Connell, "Stapleton, Thomas (1535–1598), Roman Catholic theologian," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

10. William Sheils, "Polemic as Piety: Thomas Stapleton's *Tres Thomae* and Catholic Controversy in the 1580s," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60, no. 1 (2009): 74–94.

11. The correspondence between the cardinal-nephew and the papal nuncio in Brussels makes for interesting and possibly amusing reading. Clement VIII was worried about handing over the funds for Stapleton's journey in case the latter decided to keep them but not come. See Léon van der Essen, ed., *Correspondance d'Ottavio Mirto Frangipani, premier nonce de Flandre, 1596–1606*, vol. 1: 1596–1598 (Rome: Institut historique belge, 1924), esp. 64–65.

as an evil genius, a Jezebel, and a frankly witch-like figure. England's destruction by heresy and the dangers of being ruled by a witch-prince are touched on in passing in the oration as well (see lines 354–55, 511–13).¹² The text is also of interest to historians of early modern Catholicism more widely, as an example of practical or pastoral theology, reminiscent of the sort of spiritual advice frequently proffered by the *arbitristas* of Spain.¹³ Stapleton laid out a concrete set of actions (though we might not consider them all that practical) as a response to societal problems.

Yet, as already indicated, the oration should be of particular interest to historians of witchcraft and demonology. The remainder of this introduction is confined to three notable features whose significance might not immediately stand out to readers of the translation. We should first of all note the perceived novelty of witchcraft, evident from the oration's title ("today") but also from the lingering uncertainty that members of Stapleton's elite audience may still have had about its reality (note the allusion on lines 43–45). This sense of novelty was real, both within a local, Netherlandish context and within an academic one. The first execution for witchcraft in Brabant, the duchy in which Leuven was located, had taken place as late as 1589.¹⁴ Leuven's more prominent demonologist, the Flemish-Spanish Jesuit Martin Delrio, made a similar comment about the perceived rise of witchcraft around roughly the same time.¹⁵ Stapleton's own reading of demonology also highlights the way the discipline emerged onto the academic scene during the

12. Jan Machielsen, "The Lion, the Witch, and the King: Thomas Stapleton's *Apologia pro Rege Catholico Philippo II* (1592)," *English Historical Review* 129, no. 536 (2014): 19–46; Peter Lake, *Bad Queen Bess? Libels, Secret Histories, and the Politics of Publicity in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), chap. 14–15.

13. For a good example of such spiritual advice, see D. Scott Hendrickson, SJ, *Jesuit Polymath of Madrid: The Literary Enterprise of Juan Eusebio Nieremberg, 1595–1658* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

14. Witch-hunting in the Spanish Netherlands still requires further study. Good starting points are: Vrajabhūmi Vanderheyden, "Betoverend Lie: De beleving van het bovennatuurlijke op het einde van de zestiende en het begin van de zeventiende eeuw," *Trajecta* 18, no. 4 (2009): 320–44; Hans de Waardt, "Verlöschen und Entfachen der Scheiterhaufen: Holland und Brabant in den 1590er Jahren" in *Hexenprozesse und Gerichtspraxis*, eds. Herbert Eiden and Rita Voltmer (Trier: Paulinus, 2002), 315–29.

15. For Delrio's passing comment about witchcraft in his edition of Senecan tragedy, substantially completed in 1589 but published in 1594, see Machielsen, *Martin Delrio*, 105.

1580s with renewed vigor. The English Catholic cites authors such as Jean Bodin, Leonardo Vairo, Pierre Le Loyer, Petrus Binsfeld, and Petrus Thyraeus, whose writings all appeared during this decade. He gained access to the *Malleus maleficarum* and the older works by Bernard Basin and Jean Gerson through the 1582 Frankfurt edition that included them (lines 47–53 and footnotes 40 and 41). Although witchcraft—like heresy—possessed a long pedigree and was clearly not new in any absolute sense (see the reference to Zoroaster, lines 249–50), Stapleton’s oration highlights the newfound urgency with which Europe’s intellectuals approached the subject throughout the 1580s and 1590s.

Secondly and relatedly, careful study also reveals the intellectual resources and the reading that went into the text’s construction. Its relative brevity allows for its references to be followed up. Although fact-checking a demonology might seem a particularly foolhardy act, it shows that Stapleton’s reading of the demonological corpus was fairly narrow. References to Johann Wier, Johann Gödelmann, and others were lifted from Binsfeld, while many of the references to the *Malleus* came from only a single *quaestio*.¹⁶ Stapleton’s demonological reading may, in fact, be limited to only four volumes: Bodin, Binsfeld, the 1582 *Malleus* edition, and Le Loyer. The fact that he considered the Italians Leonardo Vairo and Paolo Grillandi to hail from Spain and the Baltic respectively suggests limited familiarity with their writings,¹⁷ while knowledge of Olaus Magnus’s work may have been mediated by Le Loyer.¹⁸ Stapleton’s rather passing acquaintance with demonology must be set against his deep knowledge of the Bible and the Church Fathers. His quotations of the Fathers, in particular, are often inexact and apparently from memory. Also prominent are references to canon law in the form of the *Decretum Gratiani*, a new authorized Roman version of which had appeared in 1582.¹⁹

The fortuitous discovery of Stapleton’s copy of Pierre Le Loyer’s *Quatre*

16. For plagiarism from Binsfeld, see note 77 below; for Stapleton’s reliance on the *Malleus*, part II, *quaestio* I, see notes 54, 66, 67, and 74.

17. See note 41 below.

18. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France [BnF], shelf mark R7829–30. A remark by Magnus about Scandinavian fairies drew a comment from Stapleton “et en Angleterre du temps passé” in the margin: Pierre Le Loyer, *III. Livres des spectres ou apparitions et visions d’esprits, anges et démons se montrans sensiblement aux hommes*, 2 vols. (Angers, 1586), vol. 1, 63. The BnF provided the two separately paginated volumes with subsequent shelf marks, but they are bound together.

19. On this version, see Mary E. Sommar, *The Correctores Romani: Gratian’s Decretum and the Counter-Reformation Humanists* (Zürich: LIT, 2009).

Livres des spectres (1586) in the Bibliothèque nationale de France provides further evidence of how the English Catholic read his demonology. Ostensibly, the margins offer slim pickings. Stapleton was not given to lengthy marginal expositions, and he apparently did not study his *Le Loyer* “for action.”²⁰ No date or place is given on the title page which carries Stapleton’s name that would help us date either his purchase or his reading, and it cannot be ascertained whether he (re-)read *Le Loyer* in preparation of his 1594 oration.²¹ Written in Latin and French, many of Stapleton’s comments were clearly no more than *aides-mémoire*, serving to highlight the structure of *Le Loyer*’s book and summarize its arguments.²²

A story taken from the ancient Greek geographer Pausanias concerning the battlefields of Marathon prompts the English Catholic’s most personal response. The clamor of arms which could still be heard by visitors for centuries after its famous battle led Stapleton to observe that “an excellent musical sound” could still be heard in the (presumably silent) cathedral church of Winchester in the years 1560–1563 following the Reformation. This is the closest we come to a private recollection.²³ As the anecdote shows, however, Stapleton read *Le Loyer*, who reported gossip on Catholics and Protestants dabbling in magic with apparently equal relish, through decidedly confessional lenses.²⁴ Whether Philipp Melanchthon’s professed encounters with spirits were works of magic, *Le Loyer* had left “to those more clairvoyant,” but in the margin Stapleton was more decisive in his judgment of Luther’s famous collaborator: “Melanchthon suspected of witchcraft.”²⁵ The Frenchman’s comment that “the most famous [of the heretics] feigned false visions” drew an approving comment: “the false revelations of the heretics.”²⁶ By contrast, the lawyer’s comment about “some witch-popes” is diligently crossed out in the theologian’s copy.²⁷

20. Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey read His Livy,” *Past & Present* 129 (1990): 30–78.

21. BnF, R7829–30. The title page of R7829 does indicate that the book later came into the possession of the Jesuits, an order Stapleton had once sought to join.

22. See, for instance, the headings that Stapleton added to *Le Loyer*’s opening chapter: BnF, R7829. *Le Loyer, III. Livres des spectres*, vol. 1, 1–3.

23. BnF, R7829. *Le Loyer, III. Livres des spectres*, vol. 1, 558. Stapleton visited England for the last time in 1562–1563, so he may have perceived this sound himself.

24. I agree with Timothy Chesters that *Le Loyer* was no mere Catholic apologist: Timothy Chesters, *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France: Walking by Night* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 143.

25. BnF, R7829. *Le Loyer, III. Livres des spectres*, vol. 1, 429. The theologian also referenced the passage in the oration below (lines 434–37).

26. BnF, R7830. *Le Loyer, III. Livres des spectres*, vol. 2, 195.

27. BnF, R7829. *Le Loyer, III. Livres des spectres*, vol. 1, 488.

Notes and underlining show that the English Catholic read at least the first three books of Le Loyer's *Quatre Livres des spectres* closely. In addition to the explicit references to *Des spectres* in the oration (lines 52, 395–97, 434–37), we may also perceive Le Loyer's influence in some indirect ways as well. Stapleton seems rather struck by Le Loyer's discussions of artificial magic—a fascination that is equally evident in Stapleton's text, and an interest for which Le Loyer was well known.²⁸ Other marginal notes by Stapleton's hand—for instance, “demons [as] teachers of poetry and philosophy” and “the Devil adapts his deceptions to the humors of those he deceives”—also leave unacknowledged traces in the oration.²⁹

Stapleton's comments also show greater familiarity with Bodin's *De La Démonomanie* (1580) than the single anecdote employed in the oration (lines 148–50) might have led us to expect. Le Loyer's refutation of belief in lycanthropy and other forms of human shapeshifting did not mention Jean Bodin (who controversially accepted the reality of such bodily transformations) by name, but it repeatedly solicited the comment “Bodin refuté” from Stapleton in the margin.³⁰ Similarly, the Englishman identified Le Loyer's account of an anonymous person “who had prayed with all his heart that it would please God to send his good angel” as taken from the political theorist: “this vision is recounted by Bodin in *De La Démonomanie* book 1, chapter 2.”³¹ Neither man identifies the visionary as Bodin himself (as historians now do), although Le Loyer does represent the man as a Protestant deceived by the Devil.³² Bodin's heterodoxy may well explain Stapleton's reluctance to be seen using him.

Stapleton's reading of Le Loyer and Bodin, as well as the overall thrust of his oration, thus leads to a third and final observation: Stapleton was *using*

28. See e.g. the marginal comments on BnF, R7829. Le Loyer, *III. Livres des spectres*, vol. 1, 136–37, 155. Chesters emphasizes the entertainment value of Le Loyer's work: Chesters, *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France*, 164. Artificial magic seems to play a still more prominent role in the contemporary English translation: Pierre Le Loyer, *A Treatise of Specters or Straunge Sights, Visions and Apparitions Appearing Sensibly unto Men* (London, 1605).

29. BnF, R7829. Le Loyer, *III. Livres des spectres*, vol. 1, 479; BnF, R7830. Le Loyer, *III. Livres des spectres*, vol. 2, 216.

30. BnF, R7829. Le Loyer, *III. Livres des spectres*, vol. 1, 267 [= 277], 278. See also 275, where Stapleton had provided references to the chapter in the *De La Démonomanie*, where the political thinker had argued the opposite of Le Loyer's position later.

31. BnF, R7830. Le Loyer, *III. Livres des spectres*, vol. 2, 196.

32. See, most recently, Howell A. Lloyd, *Jean Bodin: “This Pre-Eminent Man of France”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 177n.

witchcraft to make a point about heresy. The threat posed by Protestantism was a constant theme in Stapleton's other academic orations. This should not surprise us given that the English Catholic had not only lost his homeland to heresy but nearly his Netherlandish refuge as well. By 1594, it had only been five years since the last Protestants left Antwerp for exile in the fledgling Dutch Republic.³³ Essentially, Stapleton's gambit in his 1594 oration was to prove the similarity between witchcraft and heresy in order to emphasize that the latter should be treated more harshly than it generally was. If his audience was less certain about the reality of witchcraft, it still seemed more obvious that witches rather than heretics deserved death. The lumping together of rather different types of witchcraft and (learned) magic also has the effect of further foregrounding heresy, both as the Devil's most important prong of attack and as the most significant manifestation of a more widespread spiritual malaise.³⁴ The oration's concluding rhetorical questions urged the listener to treat Protestants, who once had been tolerated under the Pacification of Ghent of 1576, no differently from demon worshippers. By representing the virtues of Protestants as mere deceits and their skills as Satanic gifts for which they deserved no credit, Stapleton's oration "Why Has Magic Grown Today Together with Heresy?" offers a fine case study in the arts of demonization.

NOTE ON TRANSLATION

No autograph or other manuscript copy of Stapleton's oration has survived. First published posthumously in 1600 as part of a collection of Stapleton's occasional writings, the text was also included in the 1620 *Opera omnia* edition of his works.³⁵ Aside from minor typographical errors, no differences between the two versions have been found. Stapleton's Latin is colloquial and, on the whole, straightforward: this clearly was a text meant to be delivered and it is unfortunate that no contemporary response has survived. The translation offered here started life as a teaching aid. The aim of the text and the notes therefore has been to make a text addressed to elite theologians

33. On the resurgence of a confident Catholic identity in the southern Netherlands during this period, see in particular Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520–1635* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 5; and Geert H. Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt and Catholic Exile in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chap. 6.

34. On this point, see also Francis Young, *English Catholics and the Supernatural, 1553–1829* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 131.

35. Thomas Stapleton, "Cur cum haeresi creverit magia," in *Orationes academicae miscellaneae triginta quatuor* (Antwerp, 1600), 1–24; Thomas Stapleton, "Cur cum haeresi creverit magia," in *Opera omnia*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1620), vol. 2, 502–7.

accessible to as wide an audience as possible, while also benefitting scholars. Whenever possible, lengthy in-line bibliographical references have been relegated to the footnotes, while Stapleton's marginal headings have been used to structure the main body of the text (in capital letters). Paragraphs have been added to further enhance the text's legibility.

While fully aware of the anachronism, I have opted to translate the Latin word "Belgium" as Belgium, as an area roughly coterminous with the modern kingdom was meant and the alternatives were either confusing or a mouthful. Aside from Greek texts, the titles of works cited are given in the language in which they first appeared (rather than Stapleton's Latin version). Scriptural references have been taken from the Catholic Douay-Rheims version of the Bible—its translator, Gregory Martin, had been Stapleton's direct contemporary at the English College in Douai.

Why Has Magic Grown Today Together with Heresy?

An Oration Given before the Academic Assembly of Leuven

On August 30, 1594

This well-known statement by the Philosopher [Aristotle] that "man naturally desires knowledge" follows on from another axiom by him, that "all things seek the good" because the knowledge by which the human intellect (by which man in great part distinguishes himself from the beasts) is purified, is one great good for mankind.³⁶ But when "knowledge is to understand things in terms of causes," that is, knowledge of the causes of each thing, this one good seems both delightful and illustrious as well.³⁷ Moreover, to explore and learn the causes of those things which concern either the public or the private good is not only delightful and illustrious but also an exceedingly useful and fruitful good. Since nothing is more important to either the public or the private good than warding off those evils which oppress us either communally or individually, learning the causes and reasons of these communal and private evils and calamities certainly appears to be not only delightful and useful but even a most necessary good. For while remedies can be learned from the discovered causes of evils, surely no remedies can be learned from causes that are unknown.

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36. Stapleton began by quoting the opening lines of two of Aristotle's most famous works: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980a; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a.

37. On the knowledge of causes as the essence of wisdom, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982a.

20 Therefore, when I am about to speak today in the faculty of this supreme and sacred science [theology] on a subject within the sacred science which should convey delight, utility, or both, I thought it was worth my while to say something about the causes of the common and public evils. However, as the common and public ills are varied and complex, I shall touch only on those which have some connection to the science of sacred things which we profess, as a cobbler should stick to his last.³⁸ However, there are two especially great evils at this time, two scourges of the people of Christ, two destructive and horrendous crimes against the worship of God, the peace of the Church, and the piety of the faithful, which have arisen together at the same time. To discover their causes is neither unpleasant, nor unprofitable. 30 Indeed, it is necessary.

One evil is heresy, the other is magic. Everyone here present knows about the herds of heretics, their power and strength, how much they have been growing for more or less eighty years, how many of our noble European provinces the heretics now occupy and either dominate or freely prowl around in. Likewise, how widely magic has spread; how magicians, witches, and sorcerers³⁹ abound in almost all Christian places in Germany, France, Spain, Italy, England, and our Belgium; how they have inflicted innumerable evils and inflict them daily, not only against private persons but also against 40 villages everywhere and against entire towns; how many ways they have to harm; how great the damage and havoc they have caused to the faith and the worship of God; how countless people, having abandoned God, through this single magical art have dedicated themselves to the worship of devils; all of this is perhaps not as well-known and ascertained to each of you here, but it cannot escape the notice of any learned person in this commonwealth.

AUTHORS FROM VARIOUS NATIONS AGAINST THE MAGICIANS

Clearly many in our time have zealously written against this plague: in Germany and Italy, the inquisitor Jacobus Sprever collected them into a single work divided into two volumes which he called the *Malleus maleficarum*, followed by Petrus Binsfeld on the confessions of witches and Petrus Thyraeus 50 on the apparition of spirits;⁴⁰ in Spain, the doctor in theology Leonardo Vairo

38. This is the English version of the Latin proverb—"sutor, ne ultra crepidam" (shoemaker, not beyond the shoe)—used by Stapleton. See Erasmus, *Adages*, I vi 16. Stapleton meant that he will only speak on subjects within his field, theology.

39. Stapleton spoke of *magi*, *sagae*, and *malefici*.

40. Stapleton here referred to late-sixteenth-century editions of the *Malleus maleficarum* which included other early demonological works by Johannes Nider, Ulrich Molitor, Jean Gerson, and Bartolomeo Spina. As the dedicatory epistle of the 1582 edition makes clear, the task of collecting and correcting these texts was under-

[wrote] his book *De fascino*; in France, Pierre Le Loyer [wrote] *Des spectres* and [Jean] Bodin *De La Démonomanie*; and several others [wrote] in Sweden and Livonia, such as Paulus Grillandus and Olaus and Johannes Magnus.⁴¹

Even our almost daily experience, the frequency of judgements against magicians and the punishments exacted, indeed the schools in the magical arts that have secretly been erected in some places and the many people who have taken up its study, speak in a very clear voice how widespread this evil is and how it assaults almost all the provinces, even of our Belgium.

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THE PROPOSED QUESTION

It pleases me therefore to say a few things at this place and time (for time does not permit that I speak much) about why and for what reason, when the heresies of these times are [already] so varied, so atrocious and so widespread, magic is also growing and spreading widely. [We will discuss] why God would permit such great powers to the Devil in our age, so that in addition to the most atrocious heresies through which the Church and the body of Christ⁴² are already torn to pieces, the worship and fear of God is shaken off and even His name and the sacraments are blasphemed against, there should also exist a multitude of bewitching magicians, wise-women, bloodsucking witches, and sorceresses⁴³ who have tied themselves to the Devil and have completely renounced God, Christ, and His sacraments.

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taken by Johann Fischart, the translator of Jean Bodin's *Démonomanie* into German: *Malleorum quorundam maleficarum, tam veterum quam recentiorum auctorum, tomi duo*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1582), vol. 1, sig. 2v–3v. “Jacobus Spreuier” may be a corruption of Jacob Sprenger whose name features on the first volume's title page alongside Henricus Institoris; Petrus Binsfeld, *Tractatus de confessionibus maleficorum et sagarum* (Trier, 1589) [referred to by Stapleton as “de confessionib. maleficarum”; Stapleton likely owned the 1591 edition]; Petrus Thyraeus, *De apparitionibus spirituum disputatio theologica* (Mainz, 1582).

41. Leonardo Vairo, *De fascino libri tres* (Paris, 1583) [Vairo was, in fact, an Italian bishop; Stapleton may have been misled by the work's Spanish dedicatee]; Le Loyer, *III. Livres des spectres ou apparitions et visions d'esprits* [Le Loyer's name is misspelled as “Foerius”]; Jean Bodin, *De La Démonomanie des sorciers* (Paris, 1580); Paolo Grillandi or Paulus Grillandus (spelled “Grislandus” in 1600 and “Grissandus” in 1620) was an early-sixteenth-century Italian lawyer with no evident links to either Sweden or the Baltic.

42. Both the Church and the community of Christian believers are often described as the body of Christ. In the Catholic version of this metaphor, the pope represents the body's head.

43. Stapleton referred to a “magorum, sagarum, Strygum, lamiarum, maleficorum copia.” The comment underscores the forest of magical beliefs and appellations that demonologists sought to organize.

Clearly, Christ Our Redeemer among the other blessings conferred on mankind appears to have thoroughly removed the power of the Devil over men. For He spoke and said very truly that the redemption of the world would happen at the instant of His most beautiful death: “Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” [John 12:31]. These words do not teach us that the Devil has been deprived of his every possession (for a little later the Apostle [Paul] said about him that he
80 “worketh on the children of unbelief” [Ephesians 2:2], indeed that “he holds them captive at his will” [cf. 2 Timothy 2:26]). However, certainly [they teach] that the Devil is removed from all legitimate power, which in the absence of Christ’s grace he has over human sinners, because he cannot harm those justified through Christ in the least, except those who through their carelessness allow themselves to be hurt and vexed by him. Hence, this [comment] by James: “resist the Devil, and he will fly from you” [James 4:7] and, as John writes that “Christ appeared, that he might destroy the works of the Devil” [cf. 1 John 3:8],⁴⁴ so that he may thoroughly eradicate errors, sins, and false and impious cults from the entire world.

This indeed happened so gloriously in the first century after Christ that
90 although idolatry still ruled the entire world, even the [pagan] idols themselves fell silent and they no longer deceived with their treacherous responses [as oracles], which the pagans bewailed with great wonder.⁴⁵ At the same time, the Christians either shut up the tongues of the devils or extorted whichever truth they pleased from them. Tertullian in his *Apologeticus* elegantly addressed the idolatrous kings and princes of the world on this subject:

100 “Produce someone before your tribunals, who is clearly demon-possessed. Let any Christian you please bind him to speak, and this spirit will confess himself to truly be a demon, just as he will elsewhere falsely call himself a god. Similarly bring forward one of those who suppose themselves to be possessed by a god” (their seers and prophets) “If they do not confess that they are demons because they do not dare to lie to any Christian, then shed that most impudent Christian’s blood on the spot! Therefore divinity, as you understand it, is subject to the Christians.”⁴⁶

44. Stapleton’s quotation is again inexact. The marginal note wrongly places the line in 1 John 2.

45. In brackets, Stapleton cited Plutarch’s *The Obsolescence of Oracles*, and the *Philosophy from Oracles* by Porphyry (“a most bitter enemy of the Christians”) as preserved in Eusebius’s *The Preparation for the Gospel*. Oracles, most famously that of Delphi, played an important role in Greek and Roman religion: Anthony Ossa-Richardson, *The Devil’s Tabernacle: The Pagan Oracles in Early Modern Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013).

46. Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, XXIII.4–8. This late-second-century CE defence of

The ancient authors discuss at great length this victory of the Christians over the demons and their command over them to the great confusion of the infidels: not only during the first or second centuries AD, such as Justin Martyr in his *Oration to the Gentiles* and Athenagoras in his *Apology for the Christians*, but also during the third and fourth centuries.⁴⁷ Finally, when the Devil saw that he has been deprived of this sort of power [to pretend to be a pagan god], as the Christian religion was growing day by day and mankind no longer worshipped him through any sacred act or sacrifice in very many parts of the world, he commenced a new form of seduction. He strove to contaminate the faith in the one God, which he could not destroy, and he introduced heresies under the Christian name, so that the Apostle [Paul] called the heretics, who immediately sowed their tares amongst the earliest wheat of the Gospel, “Ministers of Satan.”⁴⁸

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While the idols of the gentiles had been abolished by the light of the Gospel, the gravest and wisest Doctors of the Christian Church diligently recorded that the heresies introduced by the Devil among the Christians were advancing, and that the Devil through this indirect route finally claimed his power over men.⁴⁹ “In fact, there exists an even worse and baser form of idolatry” (says Augustine in his book *De vera religione*) “by which men worship their own images, and with their minds disordered by arrogant and proud thoughts they worship whatever they imagine in the name of religion.”⁵⁰ Indeed, they receive this error of the intellect and this swelling of the mind from that whisperer and inciter “who worketh on the children of unbelief” [Ephesians 2:2], urging those whom he “holds captive at his will” [cf. 2 Timothy 2:26] to this point, drawing them from error into error,

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the Christians was addressed to provincial governors, rather than princes. Stapleton condensed the passage considerably. The translation is adapted from Tertullian, *Apology*, trans. T. R. Glover and Gerald H. Rendall (Loeb Classical Library 250; Cambridge, Mass., 1931), 124–27.

47. Stapleton listed Minutius Felix, *Octavius*; Cyprian, *De idolorum vanitate*; Cyprian, *Ad Donatum*; “and especially” Cyprian, *Ad Demetrianum*; Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones*, II.15; Eusebius, *The Preparation for the Gospel*, books 4, 5, and 7; Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XVIII.19.

48. This is a complicated mixed metaphor, combining two allusions to the New Testament. “Ministers of Satan” references 2 Corinthians 13:13–15, but the passage also contains an allusion to the parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matthew 13:24–30), normally (though clearly not here) used to advocate religious toleration.

49. Stapleton cites Cyprian, *De unitate Ecclesiae*; Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XVIII.15; Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, 48.

50. Augustine, *De vera religione*, 38.

“growing worse and worse: erring, and driving into error” [cf. 2 Timothy 3:13].

130 Indeed, across all the centuries after Christ, the Devil has exercised his seduction through heretics and his desire to harm with God’s permission, in order that in every age “those are made manifest who are saved” [cf. 1 Corinthians 11:19] in the House of God, in order for the husks to be distinguished and separated from the wheat, for reeds [to be separated] from solid and robust trees, indeed things built on sand from buildings on solid rock, and hypocrites from the faithful. This enemy of mankind, our adversary [the Devil], has also suggested, taught, and practiced other arts of harming through *maleficia*, through magical incantations, through divination, through spells,
 140 even in previous centuries (as the decrees of previous popes and emperors as well as the writings of our ancestors teach us). But for the past one thousand years no heresy has either extended across so many provinces and kingdoms or spread so many, most pestilential doctrines than this [Protestant] hydra of our own time; like a forest of all the foulest heresies.⁵¹ Similarly, in no century has magic grown so much as in ours. In no other century were there so many texts written against magicians and witches, or so many punishments exacted against them, or so numerous the profession of magic as in our own time.

THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND MAGICIANS IN FRANCE ALONE

In France alone, as [Jean] Bodin writes in his book *De La Démonomanie*, basing himself on the confession of the famous magician Trois-Eschelles,
 150 three hundred thousand people entered into a pact with the Devil.⁵² But what can be the cause of this twofold evil (none more atrocious against God) to have thus grown up together and increased at the same time? I will speak briefly because time permits me to say only a few things.

THE CAUSE WHY HERESY AND MAGIC RISE TOGETHER

The fruits of the earth possess almost a certain affinity and a secret natural kinship between them so that their abundance or want are found every year to be equal and similar. When one fruit comes forth prosperously in great quantities, the other comes forth in similar abundance. (Farmers observe this especially where fruits of the earth and acorns are concerned.) In the same way, illnesses which originate from the same causes are followed by the same
 160 effects. The same goes for these two fruits of diabolical operation and these

51. The hydra was a figure from Greek mythology, defeated by Hercules, which gained two heads for each one cut off.

52. Cf. Bodin, *De La Démonomanie des sorciers*, fol. 211v.

two illnesses of the soul. So great and so manifold are the similarity and kinship between them: whether you consider their origin, their progress, or their goal, whether intrinsically or extrinsically and taken together, whether [you consider] their injuries or their cures, or finally the just hatred and punishment of both, so that it should not be in the least surprising that they spring up at the same time, that they increase together and that they in a joint assault seize the minds of men.

EXPLICATION OF THE CAUSE

While I briefly run through the manifold similarities and the relationship between the two, I ask that you diligently take note and at the same time carefully assess from this observation just how great a plague of souls heresy is, how execrable and abominable a business it is, when every Christian immediately shudders at the sound of the magical arts and curses them as a complete cult of the Devil with their whole heart.

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1. RELATION THROUGH A SHARED ORIGIN

That Satan is the author of all the heresies assaulting the Church can already be understood from those things we have discussed. The magic we speak of here is neither some artificial kind which jugglers and rope dancers work using a form of mechanical and human industry, nor is it this natural kind which works by virtue of some natural but hidden cause,⁵³ but the kind that is properly diabolical, and which is condemned in Scripture in Leviticus 20[:27] and Deuteronomy 18[:10–12] for having the Devil as its author. Therefore, Saint Augustine very rightly teaches that he who denies this, “opposes Scripture,” in *De civitate Dei* XXI.6, where he says that “the devils seduce magicians with the shrewdest ingenuity, either instilling into their hearts a secret poison, or even putting on a false appearance of friendship.”⁵⁴ All of this is [also] proven where heretics are concerned. Therefore, [magic and heresy] in this respect possess a similar origin.

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2. THEY ARE BEGOTTEN FROM THE SAME CAUSES

In other respects, their similar origin is very clearly brought to light from the similar causes which they both possess. One cause for heresy is the carnal

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53. In a bracketed aside, Stapleton sent the reader to Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XII.8 for examples of artificial and natural magic, but XXI.8 is meant—likely a typographical error.

54. Stapleton’s quotation is inexact. Translation adapted from Augustine. *De civitate Dei*, vol. VII: Books 21–22, trans. William M. Green (Loeb Classical Library 417; Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 36–37.

life [sexual lust] and throwing off the fear of God. That is why the Apostle [Paul] says that “those who have rejected their conscience have made shipwreck concerning their faith” [cf. 1 Timothy 1:19]. When he describes those who have lost their faith he calls them “lovers of pleasures more than of God” [2 Timothy 3:4]. Modern heresies pursue pleasure to such a degree that they shudder at every mortification of the flesh, appointed days of fasting, or the vow or practice of celibacy. Another cause of heresy is hatred of the Church and Her leaders which is so sharp and bitter that [John] Wycliffe, the chief friend of today’s heretics, warned his [followers] that they direct the hatred with which they used to pursue the Devil, towards the clergy and the Church.⁵⁵ Yet another cause of heresy is a certain restless and arrogant curiosity to investigate everything according to their personal judgment, to give no consideration to the authority of our ancestors, to cast aside the simplicity of the faith, to destroy everything with cunning and audacity. For that reason, the Apostle [Paul] calls heresy “the profane novelties of words and oppositions of knowledge falsely so called” [1 Timothy 6:20]. The heretic claims nothing more repulsive for himself than to be as wise as our ancestors.

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Magic has originated and grown out of the same causes. Those utterly atrocious people have sex with incubi and succubi [demons], they are engaged in nocturnal feasts and passions, for which they were taken away to the most remote locations. A majority [of witches] are especially enticed to worship the Devil by allurements of this sort. Satan approaches others, who are provoked by a hatred of their neighbors, and showing them ready vengeance, leads witches towards his worship and veneration. Out of a certain personal hatred and desire to cause harm, they cause immense harm to crops, livestock, and even to humans. [King] Saul was corrupted by an evil spirit on account of his hatred of David in this way.⁵⁶ [In addition,] curiosity is the mother and father of magic to such a great extent that the

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55. John Wycliffe was a fourteenth-century English heretic, often seen as a precursor to the Protestant Reformation. Stapleton essentially claimed that even a heretic recognized that his followers were redirecting their hatred of the Devil towards the Catholic Church. Stapleton cited Thomas Walden, *Doctrina fidei*, book 2, chap. 16. See Thomas Netter [or Walden] (c.1370–1430), *Opus sane divinum, in tres tomos digestum* (Venice, 1571), vol. 1, 187.

56. In a marginal note, Stapleton cited 1 Samuel 16. Saul was the first King of Israel who ignored the advice of the Prophet Samuel and abandoned God. He was often held up in the early modern period as an example of someone who dared to defy God: Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 457–59.

Apostle Luke aptly calls those who practiced magic “followers of the curious arts” [cf. Acts of the Apostles 19:19], which the Syriac translation renders as “magicians.”⁵⁷ Hence, St. Augustine writes that “human curiosity is duped by demonic deceits, when [humans] impudently desire to know something which they are in no way capable of investigating.”⁵⁸ Finally, all these species of magic, necromancy, geomancy, hydromancy, aeromancy, chiromancy, augury, the drawing of lots, and scapulimancy are borne out of the same curious and vain observance.⁵⁹ Therefore, heresy and magic both have a similar origin out of similar causes.

3. THE SIMILAR ADVANCES OF BOTH

Let us now observe that both their advances converge. Looking at the matter closely, Satan plainly pursues the same roads and tracks whether he seduces men to [practice] heresy or magic. No one can be a heretic without some obstinate denial of a dogma of the faith. He who dedicates himself to magic must through sacrilegious speech deny his Catholic faith either completely or partly, which the *Malleus maleficarum* teaches is proven by experience in all cases.⁶⁰ Indeed, inquisitors have found some female witches [*maleficae*] who have denied all the articles of faith, and others who have denied only a certain number of them, as the same author relates in Part 1, Question 14.⁶¹

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57. Cf. *Biblia regia*, vol. 5 (Antwerp, 1571), 104; Immanuel Tremellius, ed., *Testamentum novum: Est autem interpretatio Syriaca Novi Testamenti* ([Geneva], 1569), 393. I am grateful to Theodor Dunkelgrün (Cambridge) for solving the riddle of Stapleton’s Syriac source for me.

58. A marginal note (“Caus. 26 q. 5. ca. fin.”) makes it clear that Stapleton cited Augustine indirectly via the *Decretum Gratiani*, which excerpted a chapter from Rabianus Maurus, who in turn “ex variis locis Augustini et Isidori . . . confecit”: Emil Friedberg and Aemilius Richter, eds., *Corpus iuris canonici*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1879), vol. 1, col. 1033 (secunda pars, causa XXVI, quaestio V, caput XIV, para. 8). I have been unable to find this passage in Augustine’s surviving works.

59. “Vain observance” was a technical term, used by Catholic theologians, for a superstitious or magical ritual or practice. It was considered a lesser offence than “actual” magic because it did not rely on an explicit pact with the Devil (though it may involve an “implicit” one): Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250–1750* (Oxford, 2010), 220–23. Scapulimancy was a form of divination which used shoulder blades.

60. Stapleton quoted verbatim from Part 1, Question 2: *Malleus maleficarum*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1582), vol. 1, 39.

61. This is another almost verbatim quotation: *Malleus maleficarum*, vol. 1, 178.

NOTE

Again, just as every magical act insults the faith, because what should have been looked for from God alone is expected from a demon, the faith is injured in the same way by all heretical doctrine and preaching, because truth is sought from the Devil and his minister, which should have been sought from Christ and His Church alone. Even now, as the heretics of every sect agree among themselves to fight only the one true Catholic faith and seduce only Catholics, in the same ways demons collude between themselves to seduce a stronger man and allow themselves to be driven away from him in turn, “because Satan does not so much leave [the body]” (says Augustine) “but enters man’s innermost part, because even if he spares the body or the bodily senses, he spared them so that he could rule in much greater triumph over the same person’s will through the error of their impiety.”⁶²

Furthermore, just as heresy starts with trivial things in order to entice one to more serious ones; from ceremonies to the sacraments, from sacraments to the major articles of the faith, and finally from there to the mutilation of the Creed (for [heresy] expressly denies Christ’s descent into Hell),⁶³ in the same way [so does] magic. Having incurred a considerable loss in livestock or crops, a peasant consults a suspected female witch [*maleficam*]. A quick remedy is promised if he is willing to promise something to one spirit. When the female witch is asked what this would be, she replies that it is a very minor thing, as long as he is willing to submit to her master’s advice concerning certain observances during the Mass in Church: namely that as the priest is standing at the altar he lightly taunts him, or at the end of confession he mentions something ridiculous. When he is persuaded by this, he is little by little induced to more serious [errors] until he denies the entire faith. This is the story told in the *Malleus maleficarum*, Part 2, Question 1, Chapter 1.⁶⁴

4. THE SAME TEACHINGS BY MAGICIANS AND HERETICS

In order to elucidate this Satanic advance a bit more clearly, we should draw our attention to the fact that the precepts of magicians and heretics are exceedingly the same so that poor mortals are led either to heresy or to

62. Compare Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus octaginta tribus*, quaestio 79, para. 2.

63. Christ’s descent into Hell is one of the articles of the Apostles’ Creed, a common summary of the Christian faith recited by believers.

64. Stapleton paraphrased *Malleus maleficarum*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1582), vol. 1, 229. The story neatly illustrates not only why witchcraft mattered to theologians such as Stapleton, but perhaps also their unworldliness. Only a theologian would imagine a white witch asking such favors of a villager.

magic. These are the first lessons of the Devil for [the witches] who have dedicated themselves to him: to never arm oneself with the sign of the Cross; to never adore the Venerable Eucharist, but where it is shown to turn one's head; to trample on the Cross when one secretly can; to fast on Sundays but to enjoy meat on Fridays; and to hide certain crimes in Confession.⁶⁵ The *Malleus maleficarum* relates these things about witches based on experience in Part 2, Question 1, Chapter 2.⁶⁶ Everyone knows that the principal teachings of today's heretics are exactly the same. Indeed, from these beginnings both heresy and magic pull one towards greater and more horrible things, as it were from staggering to [utter] downfall. 280

On this matter, the following should not be omitted: just as all the heretics without exception believe that the Blessed Virgin Mother of God deserves no honor, accuse her of many things, and press her into the rank of ordinary womenfolk; in the same way one lesson of the Devil for his novices is that "they in no way venerate this wide woman" (for that is the way the Devil calls the Blessed Virgin because he even abhors the name of the Blessed Mary no less than the name of Jesus), according to the author and reference already cited.⁶⁷ Certainly, so great are the advances of both [magic and heresy] which agree in many other places as well but they cannot all be discussed here. 290

I will add this one. In order to prevail more strongly, the magical art ties itself to medicine and astrology, helping itself to the teachings of the physicians and astrologers, professing to be an art and a science, so that the very first magician Zoroaster likewise stands out as the greatest astrologer and physician and obtained under this twofold reputation the greatest praise amongst men, which Pliny [the Elder] teaches at length in Book 30 of his *Naturalis historia*.⁶⁸ For the same reason, modern heretics associate themselves with [humanist] polite letters and knowledge of the Scriptural languages, with which they obtain great favor and influence amongst the unlearned and the rough, in order to be very effective in seducing the people. 300

65. Catholics believe the Eucharist, the consecrated bread used during Mass, to be the real body of Christ. Friday (especially Good Friday) is the traditional day of fasting, not Sunday.

66. Compare *Malleus maleficarum*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1582), vol. 1, 243, which similarly declared fasting on Sunday "diabolical."

67. See *Malleus maleficarum*, vol. 1, 238. For a discussion of Mary as the "wide woman" or *extensa mulier*, see Michael Ostling, "The Wide Woman: A Neglected Epithet in the *Malleus Maleficarum*," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 8, no. 2 (2013): 162–70.

68. Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, XXX.ii.

5. THE SAME GOAL OF BOTH

Truly, only a single phrase is needed to observe that heresy and magic strive towards the same goal. The most notable outcomes of both are apostasy and faithlessness. Magic rejects Christ and his baptism with eloquent words. In just as clear a fashion, heresy renounces as much in deeds as in doctrine the body of Christ which is the Church and the communion of the sacraments. Both lead to the same abyss of perdition [Hell]. In both cases, Satan establishes a similar pact with his followers of the sort Nahash, the King of the Ammonites, whose name means serpent [in Hebrew], made with the men of Jabesh: “On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may pluck out all your right eyes” [1 Samuel 11:2], which properly signifies man’s faith.

6. INTRINSIC FEATURES COMMON TO MAGIC AND HERESY

Certain common intrinsic and extrinsic features, however, also belong to both pests. What is intrinsic to them both is the following: in the magical arts, their marvelous effects should not be attributed to the intellect of the magicians themselves, nor to the artificial things they use, such as figures, images, and incantations, but they are accomplished by a separate intellect, namely the Devil himself. The Devil alone works everything (which Bernard Basin shows using good arguments in his *Tractatus de artibus magicis*, Proposition 5).⁶⁹ In the exact same way, the great seduction of today’s populace by the heretics, happens neither through the erudition, nor eloquence, nor the cleverness, nor the wickedness of the heretics themselves, but through Satan himself whose ministers they are, and who works in them. To better observe this, we must understand that magic and heresy only attract men who are either carnal lovers of desire, or unstable in their faith and eager for novelty, or completely seized by envy and hatred, all those whom the Apostle [Paul] calls in a single phrase “the children of unbelief” [Ephesians 2:2]. For all of them have lost confidence in God, and as the Apostle later adds, “who despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness” [Ephesians 4:19] or impudence or obstinacy. Having lost all reverence and fear of God and completely indulging in their passions, they are very easily ruined, drawn either to heresy and false doctrines about God, or to magic and the worship of the

69. Bernard Basin’s *Opusculum de artibus magicis ac magorum maleficiis* is included in the second volume of the 1582 edition of the *Malleus maleficarum*: Bernard Basin, “Opusculum de artibus magicis ac magorum maleficiis,” in *Malleus maleficarum*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1582), vol. 2, 8–9.

Devil. In each case the Devil does what he desires, holding them captive to his will. This is the evil, intrinsic to each pest.

7. EXTRINSIC FEATURES COMMON TO MAGIC AND HERESY

In addition, they share this extrinsic and external feature. It is characteristic for both to hide their arts and evil deeds [*maleficia*] in order for both “to use divine things against the divine,” as Dionysius the Areopagite gravely observes against the philosopher and unbeliever Apollophanes.⁷⁰ “Heretics fight the law using the words of the law,” said Saint Ambrose in his Commentary on Paul’s Epistle to Titus 3[:10–11], “and when they do not well understand good Scriptures they make the doctrine of truth the material for error.”⁷¹ In addition, the magical art, especially that part which engages in incantations and necromancy, abuses the divine ceremonies and religious words, indeed “even the name of Christ Himself” (as Saint Augustine relates in his Seventh Treatise on John) to reach those things which it desires to know or achieve.⁷²

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Heretics “by pleasing speeches and good words seduce the hearts of the innocent” [Romans 16:18]. They first use flattery and later force and weapons. They first raise their voice that “faith is free to which no one can be forced.”⁷³ Afterwards, they either obtain the favor of the prince or take the helm of the ship of state for themselves, and they very harshly compel everyone to their heresies. (Our unhappy England has already taught us this exceedingly clearly and Holland begins to teach [the same thing].) In the same way, magicians, enchanters, and necromancers first invoke the Devil whose help they wish to use with humble words, but when the invoked [demon] arrives, they order him to do whatever they wish, as is demonstrated by the books of this [magical] art. The Devil also very charmingly speaks to his novices, promising them all manners of riches and license. Afterwards, he

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70. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Letter VII to Polycarp*, sec. 2.

71. Pseudo-Ambrose or Ambrosiaster, *In epistolam ad D. Pauli ad Titum*, chap. 3. Only the first part of this quotation is correct, further evidence that Stapleton was likely working from memory.

72. I have not been able to locate this quotation in Augustine’s *In Epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos tractatus decem*, or in his *In Evangelium Ioannis tractatus centum viginti quatuor*, or in the marginal reference to *De Genesi ad Litteram libri duodecim* VII.ix.

73. Stapleton did not offer a reference but appears to allude to a well-known comment by Martin Luther: Martin Luther, “Von weltlicher Oberkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig sei,” in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, ed. Paul Pietsch (Weimar, 1900), vol. 11, 264. “Denn es ist eyn frey werck umb den glawben, datzu man niemant kan zwingen.” His audience of theologians will have recognized it.

punishes them most severely for the smallest failure in the ordered observances and holds them confined under the strictest yoke of discipline of a certain little master, for which the *Malleus maleficarum* offers examples.⁷⁴

8. BOTH ARE EQUALLY DIFFICULT TO DISCERN

370 Just as magicians deceive even the senses of the eyes so that male and female witches appear as wolves and cats, heretics similarly deceive the mind and soul with probable arguments and a fake piety so that they who are “ministers of Satan” could appear as “angels of light,”⁷⁵ and they who only teach the words of Satan are believed to preach the Word of God. They both share this pestilential evil: both are difficult to recognize and similarly difficult to determine. Artificial and natural magic is often difficult to separate from the diabolical, as men exceedingly erroneously attribute either to an art or to the secret workings of nature what really are the actions of the Devil. In the same way, it is a difficult business, which belongs to the select few, to discern and distinguish between heretical dogmas and pure, sound, and orthodox doctrine because of a certain affinity between the false and the true in very many places. Men perniciously and erroneously embrace as the Word of God what is not the Word of God, but a perversion of the Divine Word by Luther, Calvin, or some other person.

380 Here, surely, another similarity between the two can be observed. Heresy has grown because it was scorned and neglected when it first reared its head, either [1] because it did not appear as heresy but as the slightest deviation of things, or [2] because it did not appear to be so great a pest that it would be harmful on its own or could not be tolerated in fellow-citizens and friends, or [3] because it appeared to not be a true heresy but a reformation of certain superstitions. Clearly, magic has grown to a vast size in the same way, either [1] because the crimes committed by witches were not believed to be real, or [2] because men believed that the magical art should be scorned as containing the delusions of the most worthless people, or [3] finally because they completely persuaded themselves that magical incantations and this commerce with the Devil were merely vain imaginations, and not truly the workings of Satan. Indeed, it is true that there are many men at present otherwise celebrated for their wisdom who believe that the [Roman] law of the Twelve

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74. Stapleton did not provide chapter and verse, but see the *magisterulus* in the *Malleus* taken from Johannes Nider: *Malleus maleficarum*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1582), vol. 1, 242.

75. Note the allusion to 2 Corinthians 11:13–15, where Paul warned of false apostles and Satan’s transformation into an Angel of Light.

Tables—“Who has enchanted crops should be punished, etc.”⁷⁶—must completely be rejected as a mere pagan superstition, which Petrus Binsfeld diligently refutes.⁷⁷ Avicenna and other naturalists, who have labored under the same error, have been refuted by Pierre Le Loyer in Book 1, Chapter 2 of his book *Des Spectres*.⁷⁸

9. A SINGLE RULE FOR THE GENERAL PROOF OF BOTH

Nevertheless, in order to discern diabolical magic from natural magic (for artificial magic can easily be discerned, when the art itself and its rules and principles are demonstrated) this one, single rule is usually observed: if no ceremonies or observances are used at all to create some wonderful effect, but only the application of natural things, then the effect is without doubt a natural one. If on the contrary, certain ceremonies and observances need to be used, then the business is exceedingly suspected to have some pact with a devil concealed within, at least an implicit one. Similarly, we must discern a single rule to discern heresies in some way from orthodox doctrine: if no novelty in dogma and no singularity in teaching are observed, then it will be correct and publicly accepted doctrine. If, on the other hand, the dogma is judged to be new, profane, and unheard of, or taught by someone with no legitimate authority, then the matter being taught is exceedingly suspected either to be a manifest heresy or very close to it.

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76. “Qui fruges excantasset, poenas dato”: the Twelve Tables, the origins of Roman law, included the provision that “anyone who, by means of incantations and magic arts, prevents grain or crops of any kind belonging to another from growing shall be sacrificed to Ceres.”

77. Stapleton cited Johann Wier, *De lamiis liber: item de commentitiis ieiuniis* (Basel, 1582), col. 53 (chap. 12); Johann Wier, *De praestigiis daemonum, et incantationibus ac veneficiis libri sex, aucti et recogniti* (Basel, 1568), 263 [book 3, chap. 16; Stapleton erroneously cites book 6, chap. 27]; Johann Georg Gödelmann, *De magis, veneficis et lamiis recte cognoscendis et puniendis libri tres* (Frankfurt, 1591), book 2 “De lamiis,” 67 (chap. 6, no. 17) [the pagination resets at the start of each book]. Stapleton took these references from Petrus Binsfeld, *Commentarius in titulum codicis lib. IX de maleficiis et mathematicis* (Trier, 1591), 491 (lex 4, quaestio 4, conclusio responsiva), which is appended to the 1591 expanded edition of his *Tractatus de confessionibus maleficorum et sagarum*. The erroneous reference to Wier’s *De praestigiis daemonum* is due to a misreading of Binsfeld’s text, which cited the chapter on 478 in its discussion of weather magic.

78. Stapleton was referring to book 1, chap. 12: “Qu’aux sens corrompus et phantaisie offensee le Diable se mesle quelquefois, contre les Philosophes naturalistes.” The error is the result of a misprint, which omitted X from the chapter number: Le Loyer, *III. Livres des spectres*, vol. 1, 252. Stapleton spent considerable time annotating this chapter, noting criticisms of Andrea Alciato (267, 268, 269) and Jean Bodin (267 [= 277], 278) in the margins of his copy, but he did not single out Avicenna.

10. THE CLEAR PROOF OF BOTH IS EQUALLY DIFFICULT

Otherwise, the same difficulty occurs in clearly and resolutely proving both. For when the warning against all of Satan's workings is to "try the spirits if they be of God" [1 John 4:1], the proof in both cases of heresy and of magic is threefold: [1] doctrinally, [2] experimentally, and [3] *ex officio* [by virtue of one's position]. Confronting magic requires exorcists, heresy pas-
 420 tors; proving magic requires knowledge of the magical arts, heresy knowl-
 edge of Scripture. Both crimes, however, require an experimental insight through the internal senses and innermost inspiration about which Paul said "the spiritual man judgeth all things" [1 Corinthians 2:15]. On this threefold testing where magic is concerned, see Jean Gerson's extensive discussion in his *Tractatus de probatione spirituum*.⁷⁹

11. OTHER AFFINITIES BETWEEN THE TWO

There are also other, smaller things, in which heretics and magicians exactly come together as if they are Satan's twin offspring. They are exceed-
 430 ingly similar in the way both heretics and magicians sometimes speak the truth to induce belief in false things. They affirm beliefs that are at odds and contradictory in a similar way. The arch heretics have commerce with the Devil similar to that of the common magicians and female witches and other monsters of this sort. Witnesses of our own age are Martin Luther, who boasts about this [relationship] in his book *Von der Winkelmesse [und Pfaffenweihe]* and Zwingli who also does not conceal this.⁸⁰ Melanchthon also writes in his book on the soul that various specters appeared to him, and he even had various conversations with them, as Pierre Le Loyer relates in his *Des spectres*, Book 2, Chapter 4.⁸¹

79. Jean Gerson, *Tractatus perutilis de probatione spirituum* was included in the 1582 edition of the *Malleus maleficarum*. It opened with Paul's injunction to "probare spiritus si ex Deo sunt." For Gerson's three modes of discernment, see Jean Gerson, *Tractatus perutilis de probatione spirituum*, in in *Malleus maleficarum*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1582), vol. 2, 337. My rather loose translation here has tried to clarify Stapleton's complex three-part comparison of two crimes.

80. Martin Luther, "Von der Winkelmesse und Pfaffenweihe 1533," in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, ed. Karl Drescher (Weimar: H. Böhlau Nachfolger, 1912), vol. 38, 171–256. A large part of this treatise consisted of a night-time disputation between Luther and the Devil. Stapleton used the alternative Latin title *De angulari missa*. The story was a staple of Catholic polemic. Stapleton himself discussed the allegation that "Luther had argumentes given him of the Divell against the Sacrifice of the Masse" as early as 1566: Thomas Stapleton, *A Returne of Untruthes upon M. Jewelles Replie* (Antwerp, 1566), fol. 46r.

81. Le Loyer, *III. Livres des spectres*, vol. 1, 429. Stapleton underlined Le Loyer's comment in his copy and noted in the margin: "Melanchthon suspecté de magie."

Finally, these two are so related and connected that necromancers, diviners, and witches properly speaking often labor under some form of heresy. Necromancers believe that the Devil can predict future events which depend either on free will or on chance. Diviners are often described as heretics in canon law.⁸² The witches adoring the Devil both frequently believe that some property of God is becoming to him and spew forth certain errors against the faith from their mind. They abuse holy things, believing them to have the power to cause evil effects. All of these are heretical opinions.

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12. THE SAME REMEDY FOR BOTH

Finally, the greatest similarity between both crimes: they are both punished similarly in canon law, as Petrus Binsfeld extensively proves.⁸³ Both pests are either avoided or cured by the same means. Since the Devil plays a role in each outrage, and for similar reasons, as already shown, Satan's goal and measure in each case is the same, [namely] to induce people to deny the faith, the true, valid and full remedy against each plague is to "tak[e] the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one" [Ephesians 6:16]. Hence the Apostle Peter said "stand up to him [the Devil], remain strong in what you believe" [1 Peter 5:9].⁸⁴ Because the Devil can cause nothing through heresy or magic, except in the children of unbelief.⁸⁵ We must therefore seize the advice of Saint Augustine: "Surely the greater we perceive the power of demons over this world below to be, the more tenaciously we must cling to the mediator through whom we climb from the valleys to the heights."⁸⁶

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With all these things thus explained, the question proposed—Why Has Magic Grown Today Together with Heresy?—can be answered with a single phrase: because we are not strong in faith, because these are the times in

82. Friedberg and Richter, eds, *Corpus iuris canonici*, vol. 1., col. 1030 (secunda pars, causa XXVI, quaestio V, c. XII "Canon episcopi"); vol. 1., col. 1045 (secunda pars, causa XXVI, c. XVI "Non observetis").

83. Binsfeld, *Commentarius in titulum codicis lib. IX de maleficiis et mathematicis*, 553 (lex V, quaestio I, conclusio III). Although Binsfeld emphasized the heretical nature of witchcraft, the conclusion in question solely concerned the death penalty for witches: "Iuste malefici poena ignis interficiuntur."

84. This translation is from the New International Version. The rendition offered by Douai-Rheims—"Whom resist ye, strong in faith"—is too vague.

85. This is the fourth time Stapleton alluded to Ephesians 2:2.

86. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XVIII.18. Translation from Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, vol. V: Books 16–18.35, trans. Eva M. Sanford and William M. Green (Loeb Classical Library 415; Cambridge, Mass., 1965), 423.

which “the Son of Man, when he cometh, shall hardly find faith on earth” [adapted from Luke 18:8]. We are Christians only in name. Unstable in our faith, we move around with every gust of doctrine. Weak and feeble in our faith, we are subjected to the evil deeds [*maleficia*] of demons. Not a single incantation of a magician, not a single trick can harm a person in the least, if he is strong in faith.

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Would you like to hear a famous example of this? Jean Gerson in Part One of his treatise *De erroribus circa artem magicam* tells the following story. A waxen image was brought to Philip, King of the Franks. It was said to have been cursed by some witch so that if it were to be consumed by flames the king would also die. The king said, full of faith: “We shall see if the Devil’s power to destroy me is greater than my God’s power to preserve me.”⁸⁷ While he was speaking, he threw the waxen image into the fire, and he remained healthy and unharmed. A certain [Catholic] doctor in theology in England, by the name of John Chedsey,⁸⁸ employed a similar confidence in our own time. He was asked in a London public house to examine a trickster, who among other wonders knew how to remove rings from fingers even when the hand was firmly closed, drawing only on his skill. While the folly of those who believed that the man could do this was growing alarmingly, [Chedsey] called the trickster to him and ordered, if he could, to remove the ring that he had on his finger using only his skill. While the trickster attempted every single method, the doctor full of faith, extended his finger and spoke these words in a clear voice and repeated them again and again: “without Him [God] was made nothing that was made” [John 1:3]. This single phrase,

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87. Stapleton’s quotation differs slightly from the modern critical edition: Jean Gerson, “De erroribus circa artem magicam,” in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 10, ed. Palémon Glorieux (Paris, 1973), 77–90, at 85. This treatise by Gerson is absent from the 1582 edition of the *Malleus*, though it is added to later seventeenth-century editions. Stapleton may have found the story through Binsfeld, who provides an abbreviated version: Binsfeld, *Commentarius in titulum codicis lib. IX de maleficiis et mathematicis*, 593–94 (lex VI, quaestio III). It is unclear which King Philip this story refers to.

88. No record of a John Chedsey has survived. Stapleton may have meant William Chedsey or Cheadsey (1510/11–1577?), a Catholic priest, doctor in divinity, and, for a brief time (1558–59), president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Stapleton could have known him from his student days. Chedsey spent the last years of his life living in London: Anthony A. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses: An Exact History of All the Writers and Bishops who had their Education in the University of Oxford*, 3rd ed. (London, 1813), vol. 1, cols. 322–24; Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500–1714* (Oxford, 1891), vol. 1, 265; Luke MacMahon, “Chedsey, William (1510/11–1577?),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

offered in real faith, frustrated every attempt by the trickster [to remove the ring]. The man suffered such miserable vexations from which he could not be released until he begged for pardon, confessing his magical crime and promising penitence. Thus, the absence of faith alone is the true and principal cause why magic has such immense power today. It is clear and well known that heresy prevails because of the same lack [of faith], since heresy is nothing other than the denial of some part of the ancient faith and the profession of a new perfidy. 490

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, since the affinity between the two is so great and their relationship is so diverse, we may most correctly gather that no man is a Christian who does not pursue both the disgrace of heresy and of magic with a similar hatred, and who does not shudder at them in equal detestation. Just as every Christian abhors having relations with male and female witches, making peace with them or entering into matrimony with them, the same relations with heretics must similarly be repudiated. Just as we keep magicians away from public authority, drive them out of the community, and punish them severely, we must use the same zeal and vigor against heretics. Just as Christians have never tolerated the magical arts, their profession, or their books and destroyed them with fire and sword, they must establish the same rules for heretics. Furthermore, just as magicians are disreputable in and of themselves,⁸⁹ knowledge of heresy must also be considered tied to the greatest infamy. Finally, just as no sane person would wish to be subject to a great witch-prince, subjecting oneself to the yoke of heretics must be deemed the very height of insanity. 500

Clearly, just as God most savagely punished the ancient people [of Babylon] on account of their magicians and witches, as is made clear in Isaiah 47, so the Christian provinces have been, and are, subjected to the punishment of a great many and varied calamities on account of the heretics that have advanced for many years. The victory that conquers the world was once the faith [*fides*] of the Christians [cf. 1 John 5:4]. But the immense massacres and disasters that today we suffer with the world—this is the faithlessness [*perfidia*] of the Christians. Thus, the Devil is again released in our time so that he may once more seduce the people of the world. And thus, heresy grows with magic, and magic grows with heresy. 510

89. Friedberg and Richter, eds., *Corpus iuris canonici*, vol. 1., col. 503 (secunda pars, causa II, quaestio VIII, c. III); vol. 1., col. 558 (secunda pars, causa VI, quaestio I, c. XVII “Quae personae infames habeantur”).