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Abstract

The controversy that led to the conviction of the Puritan exorcist John Darrel for fraud in 1599 has mainly been viewed by historians in the context of the struggle between Puritans and the Church of England. Darrel's activities have been seen as Puritan propaganda, whilst the authorities' reaction has been seen as part of their campaign against Puritanism. Their clamp down on Darrel's activities has also been seen as contributing towards increasing scepticism towards demonic possession in early modern England, especially in cases involving witchcraft.

This thesis argues that the Darrel controversy cannot be read solely as a manifestation of the Puritan/establishment conflict, as it will demonstrate how the controversy was actually part of the broader re-assessment of the role of the supernatural in the contemporary world following the Reformation, and that anti-Catholicism, in particular hostility towards the Catholic rite of exorcism, played a significant role in informing sceptical attitudes towards demonic possession.

Focussing upon the work of the Puritan preachers John Deacon and John Walker, it will also challenge the Puritan/establishment dichotomy over possession. Their work denied the possibility of possession in their own time by drawing on and elaborating existing medical, natural philosophical and theological arguments, particularly the doctrine of the cessation of miracles. Their work was significant because it was the first work that systematically explored the intricacies of the phenomenon of possession, and it offered an alternative way of thinking about demonic affliction, namely the category of obsession. Writings that appeared following the Darrel controversy demonstrate an awareness of Deacon and Walker's arguments, and also reveal how the idea of obsession was absorbed into broader demonological thought, thus highlighting how Deacon and Walker's work was much more significant than has previously been thought.

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List of abbrevations

BL	British Library
EEBO	Early English Books Online
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
SHC	Surrey History Centre

Introduction

In November 1597, a group of about 150 people gathered in Nottingham to witness the dispossession of a young man named William Sommers at the hands of the Puritan minister, John Darrel. Sommers' symptoms of possession included extreme fits and contortions of the body, obscene and blasphemous behaviour, and a lump running up and down his body.[1] Darrel had been called in because of his involvement in previous well-publicised cases of possession.[2] Following the words of Jesus in Mark 9:29, where he instructed that 'This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting', Darrel attempted dispossession by these means. However, the Sommers' case would prove to be deeply controversial.

During the course of his possession, Sommers had accused one Alice Freeman of bewitching him. The Freeman family in turn accused Sommers of bewitching an individual called Sterland and in January 1598, Sommers was arrested. During the investigation, Sommers confessed to faking his possession. However, a few months later, he withdrew this confession only to reassert it a few days later. At this point, the central authorities decided to step in. Darrel was summoned to Lambeth by John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, and imprisoned pending investigations of fraud; in May 1599 he was convicted of the same. The controversy has often been seen as a

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[1] Details of the case can be found in John Darrel, *An apologie, or defence of the possession of William Sommers, a yong man of the towne of Nottingham: wherein this worke of God is cleared from the evil name of counterfaytinge, and therevpon also it is shewed that in these dayes men may be possessed with devils, and that being so, by prayer and fasting the vncleane spirit may be cast out* (Amsterdam [?], 1598). This book was reprinted in 1641 as *A true relation of the grievous handling of William Sommers of Nottingham being possessed with a devill: shewing how he was first taken and how lamentable from time to time he was tormented and afflicted* (London: Thomas Harper, 1641)

[2] For details on John Darrel's cases, see Chapter Two

turning point in the perception of possession in early modern England: the authorities' hostility towards dispossessions manifested itself in Canon 72, approved in 1604, which forbade the conducting of dispossession by prayer and fasting without an episcopalian licence. The fact that no such licences were ever issued indicates the official aversion to the phenomenon.[3]

The authorities' reaction can be explained with reference to the conflict between the establishment and the Puritans. This is evident in the literature generated by the controversy. In his book *A Discovery of the Fraudulent Practises of John Darrel,* Samuel Harsnett, chaplain to the Bishop of London, clearly expressed concern at the propagandist potential of dispossessions. An unregulated practice, dispossession could be used to promote the exorcists' Puritan agenda. Harsnett stated that if Darrel's dispossessions had continued, 'we should have had many other pretended signes of possession: one Devill would have beene mad at the name of the Presbyter: another at the sight of a minister that will not subscribe: another to have seene men sit or stand at the Communion.'[4] On the other hand, the works produced by Darrel and his supporters protest against the apparent unfair execution of the trial, and express a sense of victimisation of the godly.[5]

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[3] Thomas Freeman, 'Demons, Deviance and Defiance: John Darrel and the Politics of Exorcism in Late Elizabethan England' in Peter Lake and Michael Questier (eds.), *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560-1660* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000), p. 60

[4] Samuel Harsnett, *A discouery of the fraudulent practises of Iohn Darrel Bacheler of Artes in his proceedings concerning the pretended possession and dispossession of William Somers at Nottingham: of Thomas Darling, the boy of Burton at Caldwall: and of Katherine Wright at Mansfield, & Whittington: and of his dealings with one Mary Couper at Nottingham, detecting in some sort the deceitfull trade in these latter dayes of casting out deuils.* (London: [John Windet for] Iohn Wolfe, 1599), p. 35

[5] In his response to Harsnett's work, Darrel protested against the authorities' 'manner of proceeding against me contrarie to the ordinarie course of iustice and equitie'. He argued that they suppressed testimony that supported his case and that they attempted to prejudice the case against him by presenting his previous dispossessions as frauds. See 'The Epistle to the Reader' in John Darrel, *A*

Historians have produced many general accounts of demonic possession in early modern England. These mainly concentrate on the political aspect of the Darrel controversy and the way in which it encapsulated the authorities' broader anti-Puritan campaign. Keith Thomas briefly discusses the topic in his *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971), where he raises a number of issues that continue to preoccupy scholars today. Firstly he is concerned with what possession really was, secondly with the use of exorcism as propaganda, and thirdly with the attacks upon it.[6] D.P. Walker, in his *Unclean Spirits* (1981), deals with cases in both England and France, and aims to approach these by looking at three major themes: 'exorcisms used as propaganda, attempts to have a good possession, [and] connexions with witchcraft.'[7] By Walker's own admission, this study only 'scratched the surface' of the issues, and there is a fair degree of overlap between Thomas' and Walker's studies.[8] Stephen Greenblatt's essay 'Shakespeare and the Exorcists' (1988) offers an analysis of Samuel Harsnett's tactics in attacking possession and exorcism, demonstrating how Harsnett aimed to undermine them by presenting them as an elaborate and orchestrated theatrical display.[9] Michael MacDonald's *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan England* (1991) approaches the

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Detection of that Sinnful, Shamful, Lying, and Ridiculous Discours, of Samuel Harshnet. Entituled: A Discouerie of the Frawdulent Practises of Iohn Darrell. Wherein is manifestly and apparantly shewed in the eyes of the world. not only the vnlikelihoode, but the flate impossibilitie of the pretended counterfayting of William Somers, Thomas Darling, Kath. Wright, and Mary Couper, togeather with the other 7. in Lancashire, and the supposed teaching of them by the saide Iohn Darrell ([England?], s.n., 1600), pp. [2-3]

[6] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1971, reprinted London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 569-588

[7] D. P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and exorcism in France and England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries* (London: Scolar Press, 1981), p. 75

[8] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 84

[9] Stephen Greenblatt, 'Shakespeare and the Exorcists' in *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation and Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 94-128

topic by investigating the link between ideas and power. By focussing his attention on the role of Dr. Edward Jorden in the Mary Glover case, he aims to explain how and why Jorden's ideas contributed to the decline in witchcraft beliefs. MacDonald's view of events places emphasis on the political circumstances of the time, and demonstrates how these fuelled the debates surrounding possession.[10] In contrast to this, Stuart Clark's *Thinking With Demons* (1997) seeks to place concerns about possession within broader contemporary religious concerns, namely eschatological beliefs.[11] I will return to these texts that have provided the main approaches in dealing with possession generally, which subsequent studies have built upon, later on in this introduction. First, however, I will deal with the works that have concentrated more specifically on the Darrel case, notably Thomas Freeman's essay 'Demons, Deviance and Defiance: John Darrel and the Politics of Exorcism in late Elizabethan England' (2000) and Marion Gibson's recent *Possession, Puritanism and Print: Darrel, Harsnett, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan exorcism controversy* (2006).

Thomas Freeman's essay focuses on the political aspects of the Darrel controversy. He argues that whilst the ecclesiastical authorities had political motives for pursuing Darrel, Darrel also had political motivations for undertaking dispossessions. He argues that 'Darrel was not opposed by Whitgift and [Bishop of London Richard] Bancroft because he was an exorcist, but because his exorcisms sanctioned, even sanctified, crucial Puritan practices and dogmas.'[12] This suggests that the authorities opposed exorcism only because it involved Puritans, and not because of

[10] Michael MacDonald (edited and with an introduction by), *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case* (London: Routledge, 1991)
[11] Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 389-434
[12] Freeman, 'Demons', p. 35

any fundamental objection to the practice per se. Freeman sees evidence of a Puritan agenda in Darrel's activities in several regards. Firstly, he argues that Darrel was well connected to leading Puritan figures such as John Ireton, rector of Kegworth, Leicestershire and Arthur Hildersham, minister of Ashby-de-la-Zouch whom he most likely met through Isabel Foljambe, after his exorcism of Katherine Wright in 1586. After this dispossession, Darrel settled at Ashby-de-la-Zouch where he was an active participant in local godly exercises. Hildersham advised Darrel in the dispossessions of both Thomas Darling and Sommers. John Ireton, a close friend of Hildersham, recommended Darrel to the mayor of Nottingham in the case of Sommers and he advised Darrel throughout the Sommers' dispossession. Freeman also points to the fact that Darrel embarked on each dispossession after consulting with the godly congregation of Ashby-de-la-Zouch.[13] Secondly, Freeman sees Darrel's exorcisms as 'powerful instruments of propaganda for the godly' because they were used to promote a specifically Puritan agenda.[14] For example, George More's claim that spontaneous prayers were more effective during the dispossessions than those of the Book of Common Prayer could be used to justify Puritan objections to the prayer book, whilst the Devil in the William Sommers account wearing a '"four forked cap on his head"' promoted the idea that episcopacy is a diabolical form of ecclesiastical governance.[15] Finally, Freeman argues that the popular appeal of exorcism was 'one way in which Puritan ministers tried to bridge the gap between godly culture and popular culture' in order to promote a Puritan agenda. After the dispossession of Sommers, Darrel seemed

[13] Freeman, 'Demons', pp. 36-37
[14] Freeman, 'Demons', p. 37
[15] Freeman, 'Demons', p. 38

to garner public support, becoming the preacher at St Mary's.[16] Darrel used this position to urge the moral reform of the town and Freeman believes this demonstrates 'the effectiveness of exorcism as an instrument of Puritan propaganda and proselytization'.[17]

Freeman also points to the incorporation into dispossession of the particularly 'Puritan' practice of prayer and fasting. Freeman points out that John Parkhurst, bishop of Norwich, ordered prayer and fasting in the city to exorcise the son of an alderman in 1574 and so seems to be the first Protestant figure to utilise fasting in this way. Darrel did not use fasting in his dispossession of Katherine Wright, but he advocated prayer and fasting as the necessary method of dispossession in every case afterwards. Freeman argues that this reflects the importance of fasting in Puritan devotion more generally, pointing to Patrick Collinson's observation that fasts were an alternative expression of the communal participation that characterised the prophesyings and exercises that had been banned under Elizabeth I. Dispossession was a unique means of reaching beyond the godly and encouraging participation in spiritual exercises from those who would not normally get involved. For this reason, Freeman believes that 'exorcism was a weapon of unparalleled power in the Puritan propaganda arsenal.'[18]

Freeman raises valid points regarding the propaganda potential of Darrel's activities, but it seems that he essentially accepts as true the authorities' fears regarding dispossession, stating that these fears were 'not without ground' for the reasons highlighted above. However, it seems a bit of an exaggeration to see Darrel's activities

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[16] Gibson, *Possession, Puritianism and Print: Darrell, Harsnett, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Exorcism Controversy* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), p. 93
[17] Freeman, 'Demons', p. 42
[18] Freeman, 'Demons', pp. 41, 43

as an orchestrated propaganda campaign, or even a movement on par with, for example, the Classis movement. If an essential part of Puritan culture was this sense of a godly community, then Darrel's association with leading Puritan figures should not really surprise us and therefore nor should his use of Puritan practices such as prayer and fasting. Freeman is right to state that it is these aspects that raised the suspicion of the establishment and gave them cause for concern, but it is important to distinguish between the authorities' interpretation of the events and what was actually happening, or at least what Darrel's intentions were. Indeed, the references to a Puritan agenda being promoted by More and the demoniac during the exorcisms actually comes from Harsnett's account, not Darrel's.[19] This serves to highlight the fact that, although the authorities saw exorcisms as a political threat, in reality that may not have been their conscious aim.

Furthermore, whilst Freeman sees the dispossessions as gaining Darrel popular support, it is worth considering that Darrel's campaign for moral reform was decidedly unpopular. Robert Aldridge, the vicar of St Mary's, stated how 'the people were cloyed with his often repeating of one thing, and much offended, in that as they said, they could heare of nothing in his sermons, but of the Devill.'[20] Aldridge had his own reasons for opposing Darrel due to the latter's belief that Sommers had been possessed as a result of the sinful nature of the town, which suggested that the people had not

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[19] Freeman cites Samuel Harsnett, *A declaration of egregious popish impostures to with-draw the harts of his Maiesties subiects from their allegeance, and from the truth of Christian religion professed in England, vnder the pretence of casting out of deuils. Practised by Edmunds, alias VVeston a Iesuit, & diuers Romish priestes his vvicked associates. Where-vnto are annexed the copies of the confessions, and examinations of the parties themselues, which were pretended to be possessed, and dispossessed: taken vppon oath, before the high commissioners, for causes ecclesiasticall* (London: Iames Roberts, 1604), p. 35 and Harsnett, *Discouery*, p. 133

[20] Harsnett, *Discouery*, p. 146 (quoted in Gibson, *Possession*, p. 95)

received proper religious instruction from Aldridge. Yet we need not dismiss the idea that people were intolerant of the Puritan emphasis on the sinful nature of man. Indeed, Darrel ignored objections to the topics of his preaching and requests 'to preach of love and charity' because he felt that those who advised such were 'not favoring of the spirit'.[21] This apparent disregard for popular opinion puts a rather different slant on the dispossessions. It seems that Darrel was not just appealing to the masses for the sake of gaining popularity; rather his aim was to urge the townspeople to repent of their sinful ways. The propaganda potential of possession should not be seen as outweighing genuine pastoral motives that Darrel may have had for becoming involved in such cases, and certainly should not be seen as the primary aim of dispossessions.

In contrast to Freeman's essay, which concentrates on the political concerns of the central authorities, Marion Gibson's study aims to demonstrate how the local political circumstances in Nottingham played a key role in the escalation of the Darrel crisis and argues that it was local concerns that initially created the climate in which Darrel's activities proved problematic, and this was the main reason the controversy came to the attention of the central authorities. She wants to paint a more contextualised portrait of the Darrel affair, as she believes that previous studies have not made use of all the available evidence regarding Darrel's life and the exorcism cases. She also wishes to demonstrate that Darrel did not actively seek out publicity, but rather avoided the limelight for fear that others would suspect him of seeking personal glory, as demonstrated by the fact that he excused himself from Darling's final dispossession.[22] Her argument is that Darrel's godly impulses led him to become

[21] Darrel, *Detection*, p. 113 (quoted in Gibson, *Possession*, p. 96)
[22] Gibson, *Possession*, p. 37

involved in these cases, but that he deliberately tried to avoid overt publicity. Gibson points out that Darrel only became involved in the Sommers case after he was personally invited by the Mayor of Nottingham, and argues that Aldridge may have been persuaded to allow Darrel to visit Sommers by his stepfather, Robert Cowper, who was a clerk at St Mary's. The circumstances of Darrel's involvement in the case therefore challenge the extent to which his actions can be read as consciously propagandist.

Gibson demonstrates how local factors led to the Sommers case becoming controversial. She describes Nottingham Corporation as 'genuinely conservative in religion, apt to suspect that the godly were plotting sedition.'[23] There is also some suggestion that some of the aldermen, such as John Gregory, William Freeman and William Gregory and one Morey were Catholics, or at least harboured Catholic tendencies.[24] This perhaps helps to explain the degree of hostility that arose against Darrel later on. Gibson suggests that it was the accusation of witchcraft against Alice Freeman, cousin of the alderman William Freeman, which drew the lines of conflict, where 'the story of the possession became a direct instead of an implied threat to the Corporation.' Darrel's insistence that the possession signified the town's sinfulness also contributed to the backlash. Gibson states that 'Slanderous political intention was read into the possession story and it was linked with other attacks on the vicar, as well as on the Freemans and the Corporation.'[25] Gibson wishes to demonstrate that Darrel's actions only became problematic once they were seen as threatening the political stability and religious status quo of the town. For the central authorities, Gibson

[23] Gibson, *Possession,* p. 82
[24] Gibson, *Possession,* p. 82
[25] Gibson, *Possession*, pp. 94, 96

believes that, following the defeat of the Classis movement, Darrel became the new 'other' against which the authorities could define themselves.[26]

Much of Gibson's work concentrates on the language and imagery used in the pamphlets by Darrel and his opponents, and she focuses primarily on how possession, which can be seen as a form of expression for the normally voiceless in society (predominantly children), reflects the position of the marginalised godly. She suggests that Darrel's involvement in dispossessions was akin to the rebellion demonstrated by demoniacs.[27] These are interesting parallels to make, but it depends on one accepting that possession was primarily a form of rebellion, and it also overlooks the fact that dispossession was about restoring normality. Therefore a sense of identification between the demoniac and the godly is perhaps not much more than a literary conceit.

These studies have provided an interesting insight into the Darrel controversy, and it seems that the particulars of the Darrel case have been dealt with thoroughly. Therefore, this thesis will largely take this for granted. I am more concerned with the broader implications of the controversy, and how attitudes towards possession were altered as a result. It is this aspect that concerned the general studies mentioned earlier, so I will now summarise them.

Keith Thomas' study of possession is placed within the broader context of his attempt to explain the place of belief in the supernatural in early modern England. Thomas examines possession in relation to witchcraft, specifically the belief in bewitchment, where it was believed that a witch could send demons into an individual. He acknowledges that belief in possession was distinct from the belief in witchcraft, but

[26] Gibson, *Possession*, p. 14
[27] Gibson, *Possession*, pp. 106-109

he states that because bewitchment was suspected in many possession cases, this meant that 'the notions were in practice intertwined'.[28] One of the results of Thomas' study was the conclusion that as time went on, belief in the supernatural diminished. Therefore, rather than just providing a survey of magical phenomena, Thomas also attempts to explain why the role of such phenomena lessened. This explains his desire to try to explain what was 'really' happening in possession cases. He believes that possession was essentially a substitute explanation for 'natural' affliction: supernatural explanations of bewitchment and possession had to suffice until the necessary medical knowledge became available. Thomas states that whilst 'the true nature of these supposed examples of possession is difficult for us to establish without clinical evidence', possession cases were actually manifestations of 'a hysterical reaction against the religious discipline and repression to which [the demoniac] had been subjected',[29] noting how many cases of possession were marked by a revulsion towards religious objects, especially the Bible, or practices, particularly prayer. Therefore, possession provided a cloak for the alleged demoniac to act in ways that would not otherwise be tolerated. The diagnosis of possession was both an explanation and an excuse for the extreme and unconventional behaviour of the possessed.[30]

D.P. Walker is also concerned with what 'really' happened in possession cases, but sees them as attributable to disease or fraud, or a combination of both.[31] By his own admission, Walker does not feel qualified to analyse the cases from a psycho-pathological point of view and so his interpretation differs in certain respects from that

[28] Thomas, p. 570
[29] Thomas, p. 572
[30] Thomas, pp. 573-574
[31] Walker, *Unclean Spirits,* p. 15

of Thomas'. Thomas' reading suggests that the demoniacs' symptoms of possession originated from psychological stress whereas in Walker's interpretation, the sick person became a demoniac by default, absorbing the crowd's suggestions and behaving in a manner they felt was expected of them. In the process the demoniac 'becomes convinced that she really is possessed'.[32] These two readings give a different perspective on possession, with Thomas' interpretation placing emphasis on rebellion and the repressive nature of early modern religious demands, and Walker's interpretation suggesting an over-eagerness to attribute natural disease to supernatural causes. Yet in both these interpretations, demonic possession becomes a label used in the absence of the 'true' explanation; it is a substitute diagnosis for those who did not know any better, whilst the afflicted, perhaps subconsciously, conformed to a recognised pattern of behaviour that could be interpreted as possession.

This is further evident in Thomas' treatment of obsession. He states that 'Obsession by the Devil was a well-known stage preceding the conversion of many Puritan saints',[33] but he again explains this as a manifestation of rebellion, rather than recognising it as a phenomenon in its own right. He uses the case of Robert Brigges, a lawyer whose symptoms appeared after mishearing a sermon which led him to believe that he had sinned against the Holy Spirit, the unforgivable sin.[34] This case was significant because it involved the martyrologist John Foxe and was widely circulated amongst Puritans. Thomas states that it 'helped to influence the language and style of many later cases' and in this regard he sees possession cases as conforming to a set

[32] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 16
[33] Thomas, p. 570
[34] See below, pp. 72-74

formula rather than denoting a genuine spiritual experience.[35] Walker seems to suggest this in his discussion of what he labels 'good possessions', where he believes demoniacs attempted to prove their godly position by demonstrating their resistance to the Devil, and imparting holy visions and messages during their possessions. He refers particularly to Thomas Darling, whom he assesses, somewhat cynically perhaps, as having 'serious ambitions of becoming a Puritan saint.' Indeed, Darling maintained his Puritan convictions, and in 1602 was convicted of libelling John Howson, the anti-Puritan Vice-Chancellor of Oxford and was sentenced to be whipped and have his ears cut off. In these cases then, possession becomes a showcase for the aspiring godly, an opportunity for them to prove their status as God's elect through their successful defeat of the Devil.[36]

Thomas recognises the political aspect of exorcism, discussing how both Catholics and Puritans used it as propaganda. The notorious Denham exorcisms (1585-86) certainly seem to fit this interpretation. They involved the exorcism of six alleged demoniacs by twelve Catholic priests, led by the Jesuit William Weston. Most of the exorcisms took place at the home of Sir George Peckham and were deliberately aimed at converting Protestants to Catholicism. However, the exorcisms had a more overt political agenda as evidenced in the Devil's support for Queen Elizabeth and her policies. Furthermore, two of the exorcists, John Ballard and Anthony Tyrell, were also involved in the Babington Plot, which aimed to overthrow Queen Elizabeth and replace her with the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots. Thomas states that the main aim of these exorcisms 'was to demonstrate that only the representatives of the true faith had the

[35] Thomas, p. 574
[36] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 48, 54-55

power to cast out the devil.'[37] By demonstrating the power to expel demons, the priests wanted to prove that theirs was the one true Church, and at the same time foster support for their intended regime change. On the other hand, Walker also points to the political aspect of exorcisms, but he additionally states that 'the [Catholic and anti-Protestant] propaganda was more varied and less strong, and the publicity, at least during the exorcisms, less massive' in England when compared to cases in France.[38] He argues that Catholic exorcisms carried out in England were necessarily restricted in scope.[39] This suggests that in the plans to reclaim England for the Catholic faith the exorcisms were in fact a secondary concern, perhaps even an act of opportunity, rather than the 'systematic campaign' argued by Thomas.[40] The circumstances in which the Denham exorcisms were carried out were highly risky, and the fact that the priests still chose to perform them suggests both their genuine faith in their actions, but also their confidence that the Babington plot would successfully restore a Catholic monarchy.

Sarah Ferber's recent study of demonic possession in early modern France reveals the importance of propaganda in French Catholic exorcisms. She argues that 'Each exorcism was a proving ground for faith, legitimising the authority of the individual who performed it and the church they claimed to represent.'[41] She seeks to explain the marked increase in cases of possession and exorcism in this period, stating that the uncertainty created by religious conflict and the fear created by witchcraft trials all demanded an assertive demonstration of the power of God and the defeat of the

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[37] Thomas, p. 582
[38] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 4
[39] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 4-5, 44-45
[40] Thomas, p. 582
[41] Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 3

Devil through exorcism. She also claims that possession was increasingly seen as 'a kind of praiseworthy suffering, an opportunity to display the martyrdom to which many female devotees aspired in this era'.[42] However, she also outlines hostile attitudes towards possession and exorcism. These cases could be seen as exacerbating fear of the Devil by bringing his activities to the fore. There was also doubt over the source and purpose of those who claimed to have a 'positive possession'. The involvement of possession in politics also created divisions, as demonstrated by the Marthe Brossier case. Brossier was a 26-year-old woman from Romorantin who claimed to be possessed in 1598. Catholics who opposed the Edict of Nantes (1598), which granted a degree of religious liberty to the Huguenots, effectively commandeered her exorcisms and used these to promote anti-Huguenot propaganda. In response, after having Brossier examined by theologians and physicians, Henri IV commissioned the physician Michel Marescot to pen a refutation of the authenticity of her case. Eventually Brossier was ordered to leave Paris and the four Capuchin monks who were involved in her exorcism were called before Parlement and duly punished.[43] This indicates how there was not a united Catholic approach to possession, and that it was in fact the concern of the parties involved that dictated how it was perceived and utilised.

Thomas discusses how possession was used as a tool of Puritan propaganda, 'perhaps as an alternative tactic after the failure of their attempts to set up a new system of church government in the 1580s'.[44] He believes that 'Darrel's well-publicized

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[42] Ferber, pp. 5-8, quote from p. 8

[43] Ferber, pp. 40-60. Marescot's work, *Discours véritable sur le faict de Marthe Brossier de Romorantin prétendue démoniaque* ([Paris?], s.n., 1599) was translated into English by Abraham Hartwel, *A True Discourse, vpon the matter of Martha Brossier of Romorantin, pretended to be possessed by a Deuill* (London: Iohn Wolfe, 1599).

[44] Thomas, p. 577

activities' were intended to portray Puritans as having the ability to work miracles. He sees evidence of Puritan propaganda in the fact that the Devil did not agree with Puritan reservations about such excesses as long hair and this confirmed that Puritans were right to condemn them. He also points out that Darrel's dispossessions could be used to counter the validity of Catholic exorcisms. George More, one of Darrel's defenders, argued that 'if the Church of England have this power to cast out devils, then the Church of Rome is a false church; for there can be but one true church, the principal mark whereof (as they say) is to work miracles, and of them this is the greatest, namely to cast out devils.'[45] It was important for the Church of England to prove its status as the one true church by demonstrating the power of dispossession and in the process render Catholic exorcisms false. Walker also recognises this desire to claim dispossession power for the Protestant church, pointing Jesse Bee's account of Thomas Darling's possession, which states that

> I thinke there can scarcely be any instance shewed (the Holy Scriptures excepted) whereby both the peevish opinion, that there are no wiches, and the Popish assertion that only their priests can dispossesse, may be better controlled than by this.[46]

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[45] George More, *A true discourse concerning the certaine possession and dispossessio[n] of 7 persons in one familie in Lancashire which also may serve as part of an answere to a fayned and false discouerie which speaketh very much evill, aswell of this, as of the rest of those great and mightie workes of God which be of the like excellent nature. By George More, minister and preacher of the worde of God, and now (for bearing witnesse vnto this, and for iustifying the rest) a prisoner in the Clinke, where he hath co[n]tinued almost for the space of two yeares* (Middelburg: Richard Schilders, 1600), p. 5 (quoted in Thomas, p. 577)

[46] I.D., *The most wonderfull and true storie, of a certaine witch named Alse Gooderige of Stapen hill, who was arraigned and conuicted at Darbie at the Assises there as also a true report of the strange torments of Thomas Darling, a boy of thirteene yeres of age, that was possessed by the deuill, with his horrible fittes and apparitions by him vttered at Burton vpon Trent in the countie of Stafford, and of his maruellous deliuerance* (London: For I.O., 1597), sig. A2[v] (quoted in Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 53). The preface of this work is written by one 'I.D.', probably John Darrel, but

For Bee, the case counters both Catholic claims for the exclusivity of exorcism but also those who deny the possibility of witchcraft. Furthermore, those who supported possession believed that each dispossession emphatically demonstrated the ultimate power of God over the Devil. To deny possession was to therefore rob God of this power, and ultimately, challenge the very existence of God. As a supporter of Darrel succinctly put it 'If no Divells, no God.'[47]

Thomas does discuss the non-political attacks on possession. He mentions the physician Edward Jorden's assessment of the Mary Glover case, which sought to attribute Glover's symptoms to natural causes, namely 'the mother' (female hysteria), and points to the arguments of sceptics like Reginald Scot and Thomas Hobbes, who asserted that the demoniacs in the Bible were actually suffering from a natural affliction, and states how this interpretation was taken up increasingly by the end of the seventeenth century.[48] This suggests something like a linear progression between Jorden's assertion and the development of medical sciences, which offered a scientific explanation for symptoms previously interpreted as possession, thus making the use of possession as a valid diagnosis obsolete.

Both Thomas and Walker point to 'doctrine of the cessation of miracles' as an explanation for the authorities hostile reaction to Darrel's activities. This claimed that miracles had ceased soon after the Apostolic Age, and in doing so aimed to undermine

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the account was written by a Jesse Bee, who observed Darling's ordeal, and edited by a John Denison (hereafter *Most wonderful storie*).

[47] Anon, *The triall of Maist. Dorrell, or A collection of defences against allegations not yet suffered to receiue convenient answere Tending to cleare him from the imputation of teaching Sommers and others to counterfeit possession of divells. That the mist of pretended counterfetting being dispelled, the glory of Christ his royall power in casting out divels (at the prayer and fasting of his people) may evidently appeare* (Middelburg: R. Schilders, 1599), p. 8 (quoted in Walker, *Unclean Spirits,* p. 72)

[48] Thomas, pp. 584-585

apparent Catholic miracles and the claim that these miracles were the mark of the true church.[49] Thomas mentions Bishop Jewel's claim that the power of exorcism was a gift to the early church to help them establish the faith and so was no longer required in the age when Christianity was established.[50] Jewel argued that 'the exorcist's office was, by a special gift of God, serving only for that time, to call forth foul spirits out of the bodies of them that were possessed.'[51] However, it is important to note that this statement is from Jewel's *Apology*, which sought to justify the structure and validity of the Church of England. Therefore this comment seems to refer specifically to the Catholic office of the exorcist, an office the Church of England lacked, rather than expressing a broad doctrinal statement concerning possession and exorcism.

Walker demonstrates how this doctrine had implications for the use of dispossession as Puritan propaganda. Puritans had to maintain the effectiveness of prayer and fasting as a cure for possession whilst denying it a miraculous status and so 'They could not, and did not, make the positive claim that their dispossessions showed God's approval of Puritanism.'[52] Unlike the use of the Eucharist and relics in Catholic exorcisms, which served to validate these sacraments and the Catholic faith itself, there was nothing inherently Puritan about praying and fasting, and so it could not be used to support Puritianism. The Puritans saw possession as a normal spiritual experience that still occurred, but the authorities believed it was a phenomenon that was restricted to the past. This demonstrates the emergence of two different mentalities, which differed in how they viewed their interaction with the spiritual world. Walker states that the

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[49] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 67
[50] Thomas, p. 570
[51] John Jewel (edited by John Ayre), *The Works of John Jewel*, Vol. 3 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1848), p. 273
[52] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 68-69

cessationist doctrine created a world that was 'favourable to the development of early modern science [and] a world that [was] unfavourable to witch-hunting and demoniacs.'[53] But it is important to note that the doctrine was not stringently applied to possession until the Darrel controversy. Prior to this, possession cases occurred largely without opposition. This highlights the importance of the creation of a climate where alternative explanations for bizarre behaviour could emerge. However, as Walker's book is an introductory study, it does not develop these ideas further.

Harsnett's *Declaration* (1603), which is an exposé of the Denham exorcisms, has received attention from English literature scholars because Shakespeare borrowed extensively from Harsnett's work for his play, *King Lear*. Brownlow, in his *Shakespeare, Harsnett, and the Devils of Denham*, aims to provide historical context to the production of *King Lear* and he demonstrates the influence of the *Declaration* on the play in an annotated transcript of Harsnett's *Declaration*.[54] He also argues that although it was written against the Denham exorcisms, the *Declaration* was also an extension of the attack on Darrel—and the final word on the matter on the part of the authorities—because the language is vague and the attack on exorcism broad enough to include the more recent Puritan dispossessions.[55]

Stephen Greenblatt's essay, 'Shakespeare and the Exorcists' also examines Harsnett's work, but instead of focussing on the connection between the *Declaration* and *King Lear*, Greenblatt offers an insight into another tactic used by Harsnett to

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[53] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 73

[54] F. W. Brownlow, *Shakespeare, Harsnett and the Devils of Denham* (London: Associated University Press, 1993). For example, Shakespeare used the same names for his demons in *King Lear* as those at the Denham exorcisms as identified by Harsnett. There are also several expressions and words peculiar to the *Declaration* that appear in *King Lear*.

[55] Brownlow, pp. 73-75

undermine the truth of possession. He states that Harsnett, whose 'principal purpose is to expose a nexus of chicanery and delusion in the practice of exorcism', aimed to expose possession and exorcism as an elaborate piece of theatre.[56] Greenblatt argues that 'To demystify exorcism definitively, Harsnett must demonstrate not only why the ritual was so empty but why it was so effective […] He needs an explanatory model, at once metaphor and analytical tool, by which all beholders will see fraud where once they saw God. Harsnett finds that explanatory model in *theatre.*'[57] Harsnett believed that exorcisms were a carefully rehearsed drama, tailored to affect the minds and emotions of spectators. He accused the exorcists of conditioning the audience, building up their expectations for a supernatural occurrence and thereby shaping what they saw and experienced.[58] Harsnett wanted to remove any element of wonder from possession, which allowed people to be susceptible to the performance, and to remove any credibility from the practise of exorcism by presenting it as a performance as false as a play on stage.

Greenblatt discusses how this notion of possession as theatre was particularly apparent in the case of Sommers. After his arrest in January 1598 Sommers was kept in an institution and examined by the mayor and three aldermen where he confessed to fraud and gave a demonstration of simulated fits. Matthew Hutton, Archbishop of York set up a Commission in March to examine the case, and on 20th March, Sommers retracted his confession and fell into fits which convinced the Commissioners that he was indeed possessed. However, on 31st March, Sommers reasserted his confession of fraud before the mayor and two Justices, and then again a few days later before an

[56] Greenblatt, p. 99
[57] Greenblatt, p. 106
[58] Greenblatt, pp. 100-101

Assize Judge, again exhibiting his fits, and this was enough to secure Darrel's conviction as a fraud.[59] Greenblatt points to these displays, stating that 'Performance kills belief; or rather acknowledging theatricality kills the credibility of the supernatural.'[60] By exhibiting his fits on demand, Sommers was seen as 'someone playing a demoniac' rather than a genuinely possessed person. However, the credulity of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners indicates that performance did not always kill belief, but rather could be seen as genuine.

Greenblatt's argument demonstrates how the dramatic nature inherent in possession and exorcism could lay them open to accusations of fraud. His main point is not that exorcism was theatrical in that it had elements of performance, or because of its spectacular nature: rather he wishes to emphasise that Harsnett viewed exorcism as an actual form of theatre–it was an orchestrated performance just like a scripted play. This attack was particularly poignant considering the general clerical, and particularly Puritan, hostility towards the theatre.[61] For example, the clergyman Henry Holland condemned playhouses as 'the diuellish theaters, the nurceries of whoredome and uncleannesse: they are Cupids and Venus temples, they are Bacchus and Sathans pallaces, they corrupt the youth of your citie intolerably.'[62] But more than the seeming

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[59] Greenblatt, pp. 110-111; Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 63

[60] Greenblatt, p. 110

[61] In his essay on the closure of Paul's Playhouse, Enno Ruge describes how 'The scene at [...] the playhouse in particular epitomized every sin the preachers so relentlessly condemned in their homilies: fashionable clothing, make-up, gluttony and drunkenness, mocking, swearing and blasphemy, usury, adultery, and murder.' See Enno Ruge, 'Preaching and Playing at Paul's: The Puritan, *The Puritane*, and the Closure of Paul's Playhouse' in Beate Müller (ed.), *Critical Studies: Censorship & Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age*, Vol. 22 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 33-61

[62] Henry Holland, *Spirituall preseruatiues against the pestilence: Or A treatise containing sundrie questions both concerning the causes of the pestilence, (where is shewed, that the plague is a mixt euill of knowne and secret causes, and therefore so hardly healed by naturall curatiues only) and*

glorification of debauchery, theatre was regarded with suspicion because of its whole function, which was to create a false world, where pretence was glorified and nothing was quite as it seemed. For example, in the Puritan clergyman John Northbrooke's *Spiritus est vicarius Christi in terra* (1577), the voice of 'Age' advises 'Youth' that 'I am persuaded that Satan hath not a more speedie way and fitter schoole to work and teach his desire, to bring men and women into his snare of concupiscence and filthie tastes of wicked whoredome, than those places and playes, and theatres are: And therefore necessarie that those places and Players shoulde be forbidden and dissolued and put downe by authoritie, as the Brothell houses and Stewes are.'[63] It was, as Greenblatt states, 'the indelible mark of falsity, tawdriness, and rhetorical manipulation'.[64] Exorcism, like theatre, tried to make the false and the illusory, real.

For Puritans, the power of the stage to shape attitudes was particularly relevant. As Patrick Collinson has argued, the theatre was a key weapon in creating the negative stereotype of the 'Puritan'–the term itself being a derogatory insult aimed at the 'hotter sort of Protestant'.[65] He argues that the Marprelate controversy, and the counterattack waged on the stage by playwrights likely enlisted by Richard Bancroft, helped to solidify the term 'Puritan' in popular imagination, whilst at the same time encouraging an increasing hostility towards the theatre amongst those 'Puritans' who were targeted

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the most pretious preseruatiues against the same and many other euils. Chiefely collected out of the 91 psalme (London: R. F[ield and T. Scarlet] for Thomas Man, 1593), pp. [6-7]

[63] John Northbrooke, *Spiritus est vicarius Christi in terra. A treatise wherein dicing, dauncing, vaine playes or enterluds with other idle pastimes [et]c. commonly vsed on the Sabboth day, are reproued by the authoritie of the word of God and auntient writers. Made dialoguewise by Iohn Northbrooke minister and preacher of the word of God* (London: H. Bynneman, for George Byshop, 1577), pp. 59-60

[64] Greenblatt, p. 112

[65] It was Robert Parsons who first used the term 'hotter sort of Protestant' to describe Puritans in 1580 (see Brownlow, p.36), and the term is referenced in Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967, reprinted Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks, 1990), p. 27

by the theatrical ridicule. This helps to explain why associating exorcism with theatre could be seen as a potent attack (even though not all Puritans were critical of theatre, and indeed many of the most vocal critics of the theatre were not Puritans[66]) since Puritans would have been aware of the power of theatre in shaping popular opinion. If exorcism was a form of theatre, then it too could be seen as a powerful tool of propaganda and manipulation that could be easily abused. Certainly this was true of the Catholic rite of exorcism, which seemed to epitomise the erroneous superstition and dependency upon ritual that was seen as characteristic of Catholicism. By reminding his readers of this power, Harsnett aimed to undermine the use of exorcism in any context. It is this association of exorcism with something the Puritans already regarded with suspicion that may have prevented it from becoming a defining feature of Puritanism, thus impeding a unified Puritan support for the cause. Greenblatt's work therefore highlights the way in which Harsnett's attack on exorcism sought to strip it of its authenticity and aimed to present exorcism as just as shallow and false as a play on the stage, where every move was scripted and intended to deceive.

Michael MacDonald's book examines the undermining of belief in possession by focussing upon the role of Edward Jorden in promoting a 'rational' explanation of possession. Jorden's diagnosis of hysteria was not accepted and Elizabeth Jackson was convicted of bewitching Glover, but Jorden went on to publish *A Briefe Discourse of a disease called the suffocation of the mother* in 1603, which reiterated his belief that

[66] Huston Diehl, 'Disciplining Puritans and Players: Early Modern English Comedy and the Culture of Reform', *Religion & Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2000), pp. 81-104 (pp. 81-82); Patrick Collinson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of popular religious culture' in Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (New York, NY: St Martins Press, 1996), p. 34

those who appeared to be possessed were actually suffering from hysteria.[67] MacDonald states that Jorden is therefore viewed as 'a key figure in medical opposition to superstition and in the development of the concept of hysteria' but he points out that his work was 'never reprinted and cannot have been very widely read, even in its own time, much less in subsequent decades'.[68] He aims therefore to investigate the circumstances that led to the publication of the work, and the reasons why Jorden was able to advance such seemingly revolutionary theories at this time.

MacDonald's main argument is that Jorden's work is primarily 'a work of religious propaganda.'[69] He does not doubt Jorden's sincerity of belief in his theories, but he wishes to place the work within the context of the controversy over possession and witchcraft. He agrees with Walker's argument that the climate created by the controversy was 'favourable to the development of early modern science' and 'unfavourable to witch-hunting and demoniacs'.[70] Therefore he argues that Jorden's view was only able to gain expression because the political circumstances allowed it thereby revealing 'the importance of power politics in shaping beliefs and opinions'.[71] In this way, he is essentially transferring the prime mover of change in ideas from objective 'science' to politics.

Drawing on Michel Foucault's link between knowledge and power, MacDonald argues that 'The arguments for and against possession were adopted explicitly to

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[67] J.F. Payne, rev. Michael Bevan, 'Edward Jorden' in *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15125> [accessed November 21 2007]
[68] MacDonald, p. vii
[69] MacDonald, p. viii
[70] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 73. Referenced in MacDonald, p. ix
[71] MacDonald, p. ix

vindicate the claims to religious authority of both sides.'[72] He argues that Jorden's views found expression because they served a political function by providing a scientific argument that supported Harsnett's arguments against possession.[73] He believes that Jorden's ideas would have had lain dormant but for the fact that they were utilised by those in power and that is the only reason Jorden's influence is apparent. His association with, and apparent influence on King James is where the effects of his ideas can be seen most obviously.[74]

However MacDonald also argues that 'it would be a mistake to try to reduce the conflict to a confrontation between Puritans and Anglican sceptics whose outcome was determined by their relative power.'[75] The forced suppression of dispossessions and the exposure of various demoniacs as frauds in the courts did not exterminate belief in it. The diffusion of ideas did not simply occur between the church authorities and the people, but rather through '"local centres" of power' and so those who maintained the truth of possession could still transmit this view within their own circles. Drawing upon Foucault again, he argues that 'no real transformation of knowledge is possible unless the strategies at work in the interaction of local centres of power are reinforced by an overall strategy.'[76] He sees this strategy emerging in the authorities' determination to uncover fraud in possession cases, arguing that each exposure of fraud 'helped to increase the burden of proof and in doing so to redefine the debate in terms

[72] MacDonald, p. xliv
[73] MacDonald, p. xxviii
[74] MacDonald, p. lv
[75] MacDonald, p. xlv
[76] MacDonald, p. xlvii

that made it harder and harder to resolve individual cases decisively in favour of the supernatural'.[77]

This extends the arguments found in both Thomas' and Walker's works. Thomas argues that it may have been the involvement of witchcraft accusations that led to Darrel's eventual downfall, mentioning Reginald Scot's influence on Harsnett and Bancroft's apparent scepticism concerning witchcraft.[78] This suggests that Darrel came under attack because his practices came into direct conflict with the beliefs of the authorities. This is a theme that Walker expands when he emphasises the importance of the attitude and actions of those in political power. He argues that it was difficult for the church authorities to express outright disbelief in witchcraft since it was officially a crime and this would mean that judges and juries had convicted and condemned innocent people, 'But there was one person who could easily have this courage: a monarch who believed in the divine right of Kings.'[79] James I was involved in the investigation and exposure of fraud in the Anne Gunter case in 1605, the Smythe case in 1616, and the Katherine Malpas case of 1622. Alongside these cases, William Perry was found to be a fraud in 1620, as were the daughters of Edward Fairfax in 1622. Walker believes that James' personal campaign to expose fraudulent demoniacs led to a more cautious attitude, prompting judges thoroughly to examine the charges and so find the witches innocent.

Walker argues that 'It is obvious, if you think about it, that a trial for witchcraft in which the witch is accused by a demoniac of causing possession is likely to lead to investigations that may invalidate the charge.' If the demoniac failed to demonstrate

[77] MacDonald, p. li
[78] Thomas, pp. 583-584
[79] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 81

convincingly the power of the witch then there would be no tangible evidence of diabolic activity and the witch would be found innocent, uncovering the demoniac as a fraud and weakening belief in both possession and witchcraft.[80] He therefore sees the connection of possession with witchcraft as one of the contributing factors to the decline of witchcraft trials and acquittals. Similarly, MacDonald argues that repeated exposures of fraud 'eroded the confidence of the bench in the evidence that was presented to convict witches'.[81] The attack on the belief in witchcraft can therefore be seen as one of attrition, but the attack on the belief in possession was much more immediate, as demonstrated by the canon laws of 1604.

Although MacDonald maintains that the triumph of a sceptical attitude towards possession and witchcraft was not determined by political hegemony, the overall picture that he gives seems to indicate just that. He argues that it was Jorden's 'association with Bancroft and King James', that is those with political power, that meant that his ideas 'had repercussions far greater and for far longer than anyone could have predicted'.[82] Jorden's significance is not in the fact that later sceptics of possession adopted his ideas, but in the fact that he was able to influence the King's attitudes towards the issue, which dictated the King's sceptical approach. In this interpretation, it is the beliefs of those in political power that determined the advancement of Jorden's view over any other.

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[80] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 79. One could argue that this is a rather Whiggish conclusion, which suggests that all that was needed to undermine belief in the supernatural was a failure to prove it. Moreover, if one takes Walker's own view that there was never any supernatural activity in any case, then this fails to explain why there was any belief in the first place. The persistence in belief amongst the populace suggests that people's own empirical experience demonstrated to them the reality, not the absence of, spiritual influence.
[81] MacDonald, p. li
[82] MacDonald, p. lv

It is clear that belief in possession did not die out among the populace either under James or later. It seems that the main effect of the 1604 law was to cause people to seek relief from possession elsewhere. Thomas describes how 'every year the reports of the Jesuit Mission in England recorded successful exorcisms of bewitched persons and dispossessions of those attacked by evil spirits.' He also points to the use of 'wizards and charmers' or dispossession by family members, folk remedies, amulets and charms.[83] It is clear then, that although the authorities attempted to undermine belief in possession by denying a cure of it, people still continued to hold onto this belief. This demonstrates that the dissemination of ideas from the top down was far more difficult than suggested by MacDonald. The Glover case and subsequent exposures of fraud did not necessarily shift the burden of proof decisively in favour of scepticism.

Stuart Clark's *Thinking With Demons* is in stark contrast to MacDonald's constructionist approach. Clark aims to demonstrate the integral place of possession in early modern society by placing it in the context of contemporary religious ideas. He is not concerned with what 'really' happened in cases of possession. He believes that this attempt is not only fruitless but misleading, because it dismisses the significance of these events as they were understood by contemporaries by subsuming them within an anachronistic framework. He argues that the psycho-pathological approach is unhelpful because in early modern society, 'demons were said to be the cause of madness and not madness the cause of demons.'[84] In other words, demons occupied such a central part in early modern thought that an attempt to remove them from the 'real' experience of

[83] Thomas, p. 586, 583
[84] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, p. 393

the demoniac is a false exercise. He also criticises the tendency to see possession cases primarily as 'vehicles for propaganda', as this necessarily implies that the defence of (or even attacks on) possession were not wholly genuine, but were aimed at serving partisan concerns.[85]

Clark also attacks the 'social functionalist explanation' that attempts to link possession to social tensions. He states that 'Here, possession has been credited with a variety of latent functions, including the cathartic resolution of conflict, the absorption of innovative forces or deviant persons into familiar frameworks, and especially, the enhancement of the status of deprived or marginal groups.' But he argues that this approach does not offer any further insight into the events, 'For it was the classic aim of functionalism to go behind forms of belief to those unperceived operations in terms of which social stasis is regulated.'[86] Again, he believes that because contemporaries would not have perceived these elements, they are not really relevant in understanding the significance of possession.

He sees the contemporary experience of possession as being concerned with three aspects: 'first, the treatment of the individual demoniacs; secondly, the status of the true church as a repository of the exorcistic powers proffered in the gospels as a legitimate sign; and thirdly, the idea that history was, from first to last, a demonomachy.'[87] He believes that the relationship between the first two themes have been dealt with 'insensitively' by previous scholars, 'as if it were merely a matter of propaganda' whilst the third aspect has received no attention at all. Having rejected the psycho-pathological and social-functionalist approach, Clark believes the

[85] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, p. 392
[86] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, pp. 397-398
[87] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, p. 418

anthropological approach is valuable, as it highlights how 'what possession "actually " is evidently varies in meaning according to the different symbolic schemes that make it possible.'[88] Anthropology uses 'structural linguistics' as its analytical tool, which makes it possible to read possession as a text: not just in the words used but also in the gestures and ritual, which convey certain meanings to those involved. Anything outside the language of that society, for example psychopathology, would not have been understood by them and therefore is not relevant. It is the cultural circumstances and religious beliefs that define what is really happening in possession cases in the minds of contemporaries.

Clark argues that 'Eschatology […] was one possible symbolic framework for possession and exorcism-a kind of cultural model for interpreting the behaviour of demoniacs and their priestly healers.'[89] Possession cases were seen as a sign of the end times and evidence of this belief can be found in Darrel who maintained that the reason for the increase in possession cases was because the Devil was 'in regard of the shortnes of his tyme moreadie [*sic*] then ever to doe his service and best endevor'.[90] Drawing upon scriptural authority, Darrel believed that possession was part of the plagues to be visited upon mankind in the final days. Clark maintains that the sincerity of this belief should not be doubted just because Darrel's work was polemical.[91]

This eschatological aspect of possession is also evident in the fact that cases were often accompanied by other wondrous incidents associated with the end times. For example, the possession of Margaret Cooper in 1584 coincided with sightings of

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[88] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, p. 399
[89] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, p. 419
[90] Darrel, *Apologie*, fol. 12[v] (quoted in Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, p. 403)
[91] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, pp. 403-404

monsters and comets, and earthquakes.[92] In addition possession cases could be seen as a 'kind of microcosmic reflection of, and commentary on, the historical process as a whole.' The torment of the demoniac represented the Devil's operations in the world, whilst his expulsion reflected his final defeat at the end of time.[93]

Clark's approach is valuable because it opens up an area of investigation that had not been considered before. By placing possession in the wider framework of early modern Christian understanding, he highlights how possession and dispossession were not just political tools, but rather sprang from a genuine understanding of how the spiritual world functioned. This needs to be emphasised in order to shed light on the true reasons behind the Darrel controversy. If we accept that the beliefs on both sides were genuine, then we are presented with a picture that conveys the emergence of two opposing mentalities and modes of thought, not just of two opposing political forces.

The texts discussed above were important in introducing different approaches to the subject of demonic possession. However, some of the conclusions reached can be challenged and reassessed, and some areas have been neglected that need attention. This thesis is therefore not about the Darrel case per se, as this has already been dealt with extensively as described above, especially the way in which it encapsulates the broader religious conflicts of the time. I am more interested in the way in which the Darrel controversy affected the way in which people *thought* about possession. In order to achieve this, I resolve to look at the previously neglected works of John Deacon and John Walker, as these promise to reveal more about the theological and intellectual reasons for opposition towards the possibility of possession and exorcism than the

[92] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, p. 409
[93] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, p. 413

sources that have been investigated so far. Indeed, D. P. Walker states how their main work, *Dialogicall discourses of spirits and diuels* (1601), 'is prolix and logically weak; but it is very erudite and deserves more space than I can give it'.[94] Deacon and Walker have very much been overlooked by historians who have written on the subject of demonic possession.[95] Brownlow identifies them as 'a pair of sober, well-educated, intensely loyal, conforming ministers with Puritan tendencies who did not agree with Bancroft about everything.' In particular, they did not believe Darrel had deliberately conspired with Sommers but stipulated that he was deceived by Sommers' trickery himself. He touches upon Deacon and Walker's cessationist argument, which I will explore more fully later on, but his treatment is very much a brief summary.[96] The main subject of Brownlow's book is Harsnett's *Detection,* which has received much more attention and admiration than Deacon and Walker's work because of its literary quality. However, whilst not as eloquently expressed, Deacon and Walker's ideas did make a significant impact. This thesis will demonstrate that their work was important in leading to a reassessment of the place of possession in early modern England, firstly by challenging its contemporary occurrence by arguing against it on medical, natural philosophical and theological grounds, and secondly by offering a different category, that of 'obsession', to explain spiritual torment in their own time.

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[94] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 66

[95] Deacon and Walker only receive a cursory mention from Thomas, who identifies them as 'the most prominent figures' in the Darrel controversy, along with Samuel Harsnett, but he does not proceed to deal with them in any depth (Thomas, p. 578). Gibson wishes to show how the conflict between Deacon and Walker and Darrel highlights the inherent tension in the idea of brotherhood, where strivings for unity are undermined by antagonism caused by ideas of spiritual correction and accountability. However, perhaps because Gibson's background is in English literature, she concentrates primarily on the language and imagery of the work, and whilst this is an interesting approach, it fails to consider the contemporary intention and impact of the work because it does not focus upon the arguments themselves (Gibson, *Possession*, pp. 145-150).

[96] Brownlow, pp. 70-74

This poses a challenge to historians because they do not fit neatly into the Puritan vs. establishment model that has been built up around the issue because although opposed to possession, they are identifiable as Puritans.[97] The work, although touching on the propaganda potential of possession, is more concerned with laying out the mechanics of possession and presenting a comprehensive account of what it is, how it works, and why, in the light of the cessationist doctrine, it no longer occurs. This requires a reassessment of the general association of Puritanism with belief in possession. There have been many attempts to define the term 'Puritan' mostly with reference to its antagonistic relationship with 'Anglicanism', where Puritanism is understood primarily as an opposition group. These studies suffer from the use of the anachronistic categories of 'Puritan' and 'Anglican' because although contemporaries deployed the term Puritan, the term 'Anglican' was not used at the time, and it is questionable whether the dichotomy would have been as apparent to contemporaries as it is to historians who attempt to define the boundaries between the two.[98]

Patrick Collinson recognises this problem in his study *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (1967), asserting that his aim is to define 'Puritanism' with regards to

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[97] Ronald A. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts in the Diocese of York, 1560-1642* (Aberdeen: The University Press, 1960), pp. 144–145, 301 & 315. John Deacon was curate of Scrooby and preacher at Bawtry. Both areas were notable for their strongly Puritan congregations. He was presented to church court in Nottinghamshire in November 1594 for preaching in Bawtry without admission to the cure. He was excommunicated following his non-appearance at court, but was absolved in January when he presented his letters of orders and preacher's licences. There is less information available about John Walker: he could be one of two John Walkers who matriculated at Oxford, one B.A. 1574 or another B.A. 1584, M.A. 1587. In any case, he seems to have been based in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire (Brampton), which would be in the same locality as Deacon. (See below pp. 158-159; 184-187)

[98] See for example Charles H. and Katherine George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation, 1570-1640* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961); J.F.H. New, *Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of their Opposition, 1558-1640* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1964); Basil Hall, 'Puritanism: the Problem of Definition', in G.J. Cuming (ed.), *Studies in Church History,* Vol. 2 (London: Nelson, 1965), pp. 283-296

Puritans, rather than in contrast to 'Anglicans'. He argues that the Puritans were a distinct group with a shared identity who had a desire for the 'further reformation' of the church, but they were also united by their belief that this should be strictly within the confines of the established church. It was this belief that drove Presbyterianism, both as an ideology and a movement.[99] Peter Lake, in his *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (1982), expands upon this by emphasising that there was a more fundamental, evangelical basis for the belief that Presbyterianism was the only legitimate form of church government. He argues that Puritans stood against certain practices and fought for Presbyterianism not for the sake of opposition but because they believed that this was the best expression of church identity (that was completely rid of any resemblance to popish practices). His study demonstrates how those Puritans, such as Laurence Chaderton, who chose to remain within the Church of England after the defeat of Presbyterianism, managed to maintain a Puritan identity and principles, and how the alternative to Puritanism was therefore sectarianism. He believes that Puritanism should be defined primarily 'in terms of spiritual dynamic'.[100] Therefore, the term 'Puritan' as used by historians denotes a level of spiritual temperament—where Puritans are understood to be the 'hotter sort of Protestant', with their 'Puritanism' being evident in their expressions of piety, rigorous devotional life or eagerness to preach—as well as encompassing those who were involved in a very definite political campaign aimed at the implementation of Presbyterianism. 'Puritanism' can also be used to describe the belief that the Church of England was not

[99] Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 21-55
[100] Peter Lake, *Moderate puritans and the Elizabethan church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 282

fully reformed and these sentiments were expressed in objections to vestments, images or any other such things that were seen as remnants of the Catholic Church.

However, the issue of possession highlights the fact that the term 'Puritan' is fluid. In his study of the confrontation between the Puritan minister Stephen Denison and the box-maker, John Etherington, Peter Lake states that

> the social, political and ideological valence or impact of "puritanism" varied according to the social political, ideological and, indeed, personal circumstances with which the ideology and its carriers were, at any given moment, interacting. In any given circumstance, the past history and current disposition and trajectory of the power relations and political narrative/s in question did as much to determine what the Puritanism of any of the major players meant or was doing as anything inherent in the complex and ambivalent ideological synthesis deemed Puritan.[101]

The definition and boundaries of Puritanism could shift and change in response to specific controversies, and this is applicable not only to contemporary perceptions but also to our use of the term as historians. This is not to say that Puritanism was an entirely subjective term. I would agree with Lake's assessment that Puritanism can be recognised when certain elements were combined together, such as

> experimental predestinarianism and its attendant intensely introspective style of piety; [a] vision of the Christian community as radically split between the godly and the ungodly, with the community of the godly called together and sustained by the word preached and with the sacraments in a prominent position; […] rabid sabbatarianism

[101] Peter Lake, *The boxmaker's revenge: 'Orthodoxy', 'heterodoxy' and the politics of the parish in early Stuart London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 392

> [and a] drive to construct the resulting vision of true religion against an overtly Antichristian popery.[102]

Therefore, Puritanism is a recognisable ideology, but it is important to recognise that it did not entail cohesion over every issue, and possession was one of these areas that did not determine one's 'Puritanism'.

This thesis will demonstrate that the issue of possession is not a defining feature of Puritanism: it is not sufficient to argue that those who supported the idea of possession were Puritans whilst those who opposed it were not. It is not until it became a controversial topic that possession came under intense scrutiny and people were confronted with having to make a choice about where they stood on the issue. Although historians such as Keith Thomas have seen the cause of possession as an alternative campaign following the collapse of the Classis movement, in reality a direct comparison between Darrel's participation in dispossessions and the Classis movement is rather misleading. Darrel's exorcisms may have contained some pro-Puritan sentiments, but these are not at the forefront of the published accounts of them. Certainly in the Sommers case, Darrel's main concern seemed to be the moral reform of the community, since he interpreted the possession as a sign of God's displeasure at the town's sinful ways. It is important, therefore, to distinguish between the Puritans' moral agenda and their political campaign. In addition, it must be recognised that not all Puritans were unequivocally adamant about the efficacy of exorcism. Arthur Hildersham demonstrated caution, asserting that he had no miraculous power to cast out demons, and although he could attempt to do so through prayer and fasting, there was

[102] Lake, *The boxmaker's revenge*, p. 389

no certainty that it would be successful,[103] whilst Deacon and Walker demonstrated outright opposition. This demonstrates how the dispossessions did not constitute a calculated, unified Puritan campaign comparable to the Presbyterian movement.

There has been a suggestion that Deacon and Walker were working for the authorities. Brownlow suggests that they were part of an elaborate anti-Puritan campaign orchestrated by Bancroft. He accepts that the pair may have begun writing independently but were 'encouraged' by Bancroft because they enhanced his attack.[104] Michael MacDonald labels them as 'hired pens' and sees their work as part of the government's 'noisy barrage of propaganda against [Darrel]', whilst Stephen Greenblatt refers to them as 'Harsnett's allies'.[105] However, there is no evidence to support this position. The authorities may very well have welcomed their views insofar as they helped to undermine Darrel's position, and this on a theoretical, theological and intellectual level that went beyond Harsnett's overtly political attacks, but it is important to recognise them as an independent element in this dispute, which highlights the complexities of Puritanism and its definition. Though some historians have succumbed to the temptation to place Deacon and Walker in the same camp as Bancroft and Harsnett by suggesting that they must have all worked together, this ignores the possibility of independent thought regarding the matter, not least since, even within Puritan circles, it was an issue that was not clear-cut. Puritanism was not always defined in terms of opposition to the authorities. Deacon and Walker demonstrate how those harbouring godly tendencies could come to a position of agreement with the authorities over extraneous issues such as possession, whilst still retaining other

[103] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 78
[104] Brownlow, pp. 73-74
[105] MacDonald, p. xxii; Greenblatt, p. 205

characteristics of Puritanism. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, Deacon and Walker's opposition to belief in contemporary possession was underpinned by a characteristically Puritan concern with piety and spiritual vigilance. Moreover, Deacon and Walker's opposition to possession was to a certain extent an extension of anti-Catholicism, something to which Puritans also adhered strongly. There is no doubting the fact that the issue of possession became politicised because of the fact that Darrel, a Puritan minister, was being prosecuted. However to see possession purely as a Puritan propagandist tool and political cause prior to this would be an oversimplification of the role of possession in early modern England; it also fails to take into account the fact that there were other, non-political and non-anti-Puritan reasons for opposing the possibility of possession. It is Deacon and Walker's work that sheds light on these reasons.

This thesis will argue that demonic possession was a largely accepted feature of early modern spiritual experience until the Darrel controversy. It was the controversy that created a climate hospitable to the criticism and denial of possession and it was Deacon and Walker's work that provided the theological and natural philosophical arguments against it. Whilst the authorities' attitude meant that carrying out dispossession laid one open to prosecution and so discouraged the practice, it is also clear that many of Deacon and Walker's ideas were absorbed into early modern demonology, thus making the idea of possession obsolete on theoretical grounds. The study of demonic possession in early modern England has focussed very much on the political aspect of the debate, but I will demonstrate how Deacon and Walker's arguments, hitherto very much overlooked, were vital in altering the way in which

possession was perceived.

This thesis will look at these themes by looking in Chapter One at the place of demonic possession in England before the Darrel controversy emerged. This is vital in order to understand how it was understood in early modern English mentality before it became an area of contention. Possession cases could be read in a variety of different contexts. There are many that occur in edification literature, where possession was portrayed quite straightforwardly as the result of the demoniac's sin. Sometimes these sins involved doctrinal issues, so possession can be seen as an expression of the anxiety caused by the Reformation and consequent doctrinal uncertainty and the need for proper tenets of faith to be established. However possession cases can also be seen as part of the process of Puritan conversion: this is most apparent in the cases of Alexander Nyndge and Robert Brigges. For example, the account of Brigges' possession seems to reflect an internal spiritual struggle as he attempted to reconcile his sinful nature with his desire to lead a holy life. It is significant that in Brigges' case, the Devil only finally departed after the demoniac himself commanded him to do so, suggesting that far from a rejection of religion, the ordeal of possession could be seen as a reaffirmation of faith.[106] When dealing with spiritual events, one has to acknowledge that their historical significance lies in the way in which they were experienced at the time. Religious and spiritual experiences are necessarily subjective, and whilst an outsider can detect unspiritual elements in any spectacle, this observation is irrelevant to those who believe in its authenticity. We have to accept the reality of this spiritual phenomenon for those involved in order to put the circumstances

[106] [Account of the possession of Robert Brigges] (1574), BL, Harley MS 590, p. 61; Thomas, pp. 574-575; Kathleen R. Sands, *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood/Praeger Publishers, 2004), p. 72

surrounding it into perspective.

Following on from this, the second chapter will look at the circumstances of Darrel's dispossessions, and why Darrel would not have seen his activity as particularly problematic but rather as following in a long line of tradition that acknowledged and served to tackle demonic assault. However, I will also highlight the features that seem unique to Darrel, or that could have been perceived to be particularly Puritan, especially the emphasis on prayer and fasting. I will then examine the authorities' response to the controversy, focussing on Harsnett's *Discovery*. It is important to underline the fact that the issue did not become so politically charged until the authorities made it so. Darrel may have used his activities to push a 'Puritan' agenda, but overt propaganda was certainly minimal and did not resemble an orchestrated campaign. This indicates that Darrel was perhaps a casualty of what was at root essentially an anti-Catholic stance towards the phenomenon and it is worth considering that the reaction against Darrel would not have been as strong had the Denham exorcisms not taken place. The authorities' reaction can be understood in the light of anti-Puritanism, but also with respect to the Denham exorcisms which highlighted the danger of possession to the establishment: the fact that the Catholic exorcisms were effectively tied together with the Puritan dispossessions in the minds of the Archbishop and his chaplain indicates their firm belief that exorcism was a powerful political weapon that could be used to further treasonous or factious causes. The Denham incident helps to explain the hostility towards Darrel, but at the same time the Darrel controversy helped to further cement anti-possession sentiments, and the publication of the *Declaration* is evidence of this. As mentioned above, Brownlow has explained this as a kind of extension of the

attack on Darrel,[107] and certainly the timing and some of the content, which takes the opportunity to attack Puritan exorcists, does bear this out. However, it may also be useful to see the Darrel controversy as an extension of the attack on exorcism that originally emerged as a result of the Denham events.

The third chapter will introduce Deacon and Walker's work and explain their motivations for writing. I will situate their methods within the existing frames of scholarship. I will lay out how they merge seemingly conflicting approaches, in this case Ramism and the Aristotelian dialogue, to show how they produce a uniquely encyclopaedic demonological treatise. Deacon and Walker used a variety of sources, from patristic authors to the contemporary Reginald Scot. I survey these sources and the way in which Deacon and Walker used them in order to demonstrate that their methods and use of sources was primarily functionalist. The methods and sources they use are tools necessary to prove their argument: they are not restricted by rigid methodology nor do they restrict themselves to certain sources but are willing to include any viewpoint that supports their position.

The fourth chapter will delve into Deacon and Walker's actual arguments against possession, specifically those rooted in natural philosophy. The crux of this argument was that the Devil could not operate outside the realms of nature, and so Deacon and Walker set out to establish why possession, when denoting the internal presence of a demon within the human body or soul, is impossible. I will also look at the influence of Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, which denied the reality of witchcraft, and assess the relationship between the two works. This will require some assessment of Scot and what he was hoping to achieve with his work. It has been

[107] Brownlow, pp. 67-75

suggested by David Wootton that Scot was possibly a Familist, which would help to explain some of his rather unorthodox positions on witchcraft and spirits.[108] As mentioned above, it is important to remember that Deacon and Walker were willing to use sources almost indiscriminately in order to support their cause, but it will be worth exploring this idea of Scot as an outsider and what it was about Deacon and Walker's work and circumstances that allowed them to utilise previously marginal opinions as authoritative.

Chapter Five will look at the relationship between Deacon and Walker's arguments and cessationism. It will establish how their work was the first categorically to place dispossession through prayer and fasting (as opposed to exorcism by a single word) in the category of the miraculous and thus deny that it is possible in their own time, and how they were therefore vital in creating the world hostile to demons that D.P. Walker alluded to. Although Harsnett hints at this in his work, he is mainly concerned with the particulars of the Darrel case, and in detailing the evidence of Darrel's deception. Canon 72 also demonstrates that whilst *de facto* the climate was hostile towards dispossession, it was not ruled out as a phenomenon *de jure*. Whilst Bancroft was prevented from banning dispossession unequivocally, most likely at the insistence of the King,[109] and therefore still had to maintain its possible contemporary occurrence, Deacon and Walker were able to build an ideological case against it. It is this ideological foundation coupled with official hostility that created an environment that effectively sidelined possession. This chapter will also show how their arguments

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[108] David Wootton, 'Reginald Scot / Abraham Fleming / The Family of Love' in Stuart Clark (ed.), *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2001), pp. 119-39

[109] Freeman, 'Demons', p. 60

helped to perpetuate and entrench cessationism in early modern religious English mentality.

The final chapter will look at the category of 'obsession' and the way in which Deacon and Walker distinguished this from possession. It will explain how they perceived the Devil as operating in the world and also show how this category of obsession was absorbed into broader demonological thought. As shown above, Michael MacDonald has demonstrated that Edward Jorden has often been seen as a significant figure in contributing to the lessening of belief in possession by providing a 'rational' explanation for it. However, MacDonald also argues that in reality it does not appear that Jorden's alternative explanation was adopted wholesale as a replacement explanation for apparent spiritual torment. However, Deacon and Walker, writing earlier, not only provided arguments that aimed to dismantle belief in possession; they also offered a category of spiritual assault that could be used instead. Many contemporaries adopted the term 'obsession' to describe spiritual torment and this is significant because it highlights how early modern society was still one in which the spiritual played a vital part: the attack on possession did not remove the possibility of spiritual assault, nor did it sideline the role of the Devil completely. Demonologists and pastors were still very much concerned with the role of the Devil but it was this role that needed to be reassessed and redefined in light of the Darrel controversy. This also helps to explain why historians seeking to show a linear progression from the Darrel controversy to 'rational' explanations for demonic behaviour have neglected Deacon and Walker. Deacon and Walker were Puritan preachers and so were concerned with the state of, and threats to, the soul. Although they attacked the possibility of

possession, they were still operating very much within a Christian framework in which the Devil was a very real enemy that needed to be guarded against. Deacon and Walker did not deny that the Devil could attack a person spiritually, but they were concerned with explaining what form such an attack takes. Their position is significant because it shows that the Devil still remained a prominent feature in early modern mentality, but their arguments succeeded in sidelining possession as a valid contemporary threat.

Chapter One:
Possession before Darrel: the Place of Possession in Post-Reformation England

Because the Darrel cases have received a lot of attention from historians in the context of the conflict between Puritans and the establishment, they are often treated as entirely separate from the other early modern English cases of demonic possession. However, it is important that Darrel's activities be placed in the context of demonic possession in England at this time more generally, and that his actions and motivations are not subsumed entirely within the controversy that ensued. Darrel's activities did not occur in isolation; rather he operated within a mental and spiritual world where demonic activity was seen as a very real force, and demonic affliction a genuine threat to the individual and a community. This chapter will look briefly at the tradition of demonic possession and how it evolved throughout the Middle Ages and the Tudor period, and then at the cases that preceded Darrel's dispossessions, in order to determine what possession meant at this time. This will demonstrate that Darrel was operating well within the established understanding of demonic possession as it related to Christian teaching and tradition.

Incidents of demonic possession are notably absent from the Old Testament. The one case that can be referred to is when King Saul is described as being troubled by an evil spirit (1 Samuel 16:14-15; 18:10-11; 19:9-10).[1] However, the expulsion of demons is an indelible aspect of Jesus' ministry, and these incidents are recorded in Matthew 9:32-33; 12:22; 17:18; Mark 5:1-20; 7:26-30; and Luke 4:33-36. As Eric

[1] Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 38

Sorenson points out, we should not be surprised that exorcism became institutionalised in early Christianity, following as it did the precedent set by Jesus and his explicit instruction to the disciples to do the same (Luke 9:1).[2] He demonstrates how the close relationship of exorcism with healing, in that it appears to be the curing of a particular malady (albeit spiritual in origin), was a unique feature of Christianity, but he also points to the way in which Greco-Roman contemporaries could have regarded the practice of exorcism as magic, and the consequent challenges this posed to its use as an evangelising tool. David Frankfurter points to the role of the demonic in helping to shape the identity of early Christianity. He argues that it was the 'other' against which Christianity could define itself. The vanquishing of demons not only allowed the Christians to assert the truth of their claims, but the authority exercised over these spiritual beings also redefined the way in which they were perceived, giving rise to a particularly Christian cosmology.[3]

The *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (215) reveals a changing attitude towards exorcism. In this text, the exorcists use oil and the laying on of hands to rid the catechumen of demonic forces. In this sense, exorcism was seen as a necessary step in the effective conversion to life as a believer. This differed from the New Testament accounts of exorcism, where the afflicted were seen as victims of a specific spiritual attack, and this view of exorcism as a rite of passage and a means of preparing the body for the divine presence of the Holy Spirit by emptying it of demonic spirits, was further

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[2] Eric Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2002), p. 3

[3] David Frankfurter, "Where the Spirits Dwell: Possession, Christianization, and Saint-Shrines in Late Antiquity," *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 103, No. 1 (2010), pp. 27-46 (pp. 28-29)

cemented by its inclusion in the infant baptism ceremony.[4] However, possession was still seen as a separate affliction that could befall an individual, and, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter Five, miracle stories associated with the saints are full of incidents of exorcism. Indeed, Michael Goodich sees exorcisms as the 'premier miracle' of a new saint, the definitive mark of true sanctity and sainthood.[5] This was also tied up with the perception that many illnesses and physical traumas were demonically induced. Laura Smoller, in her essay 'A Case of Demonic Possession in Fifteenth-Century Brittany: Perrin Hervé and the Nascent Cult of Vincent Ferrer' demonstrates the nuanced attitude that existed towards demonic possession. She demonstrates how, in the accounts given of the nature of the tormented Hervé, the diagnosis was not unequivocally that of demonic possession. Hervé described his condition as 'a certain infirmity' that came over his 'head and body' although he did see the root cause as demonic, as he also believed that he 'was vexed by a demon.' His wife did not refer to demonic influence at all, although she did mention how he invoked a demon and blasphemed the name of God, which points to a spiritual dimension to the illness. However, many others were more willing to attribute Hervé's affliction to demonic possession, and Smoller argues that this is not surprising considering that Hervé's symptoms, including frenzied behaviour coupled with blasphemy and impious actions, such as spitting on the image of Mary fell into the recognisable pattern of

[4] Sorenson, pp. 10-13
[5] Michael Goodich, 'Liturgy and the Foundation of Cults in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries' in Yitzhak Hen (ed.), *"De Sion exibit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem": Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2001), p. 146

demonic possession.[6] The point here is that bizarre behaviour was not automatically attributed to demonic possession, but the frameworks for interpreting certain patterns of behaviour as such did exist and were well-known.

Nancy Caciola also reveals a degree of ambiguity about the nature of demonic possession in the Middle Ages. The various symptoms that were routinely attributed to possession included trances, supernatural strength, deranged behaviour, marks on the skin, bloating and levitation, whilst some demoniacs also experienced visions and revelations, and the ability to speak demonic or foreign languages (particularly Latin).[7] She points to the way in which possession could be seen both as the internal physical presence of the demon within the body, as evidenced by descriptions of demons entering and exiting through the mouth, ear, eyes or other orifice, and also an external assault upon the senses and the body, where the demons would appear externally to tempt and physically torment the demoniac.[8] In both cases, the affliction was very tangible and physical. She also argues that there was a difference in learned and 'popular' concepts of possession, stating that theologians believed that possession was the result of sinfulness, whereas on a popular level, possession was seen as the result of 'bad luck': that is, inadvertently stumbling upon a demon (usually understood as a spirit of nature rather than a fallen angel) and becoming possessed.[9] So it is clear that the concept of possession was prevalent in the Middle Ages and that, even though it could be dramatic and unsettling, its occurrence was not considered unusual.

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[6] Laura Ackerman Smoller, 'A Case of Demonic Possession in Fifteenth-Century Brittany: Perrin Hervé and the Nascent Cult of Vincent Ferrer' in Michael Goodich (ed.), *Voices from the Bench: The Narratives of Lesser Folk in Medieval Trials* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 162-166
[7] Caciola, pp. 44-48
[8] Caciola, pp. 43-44
[9] Caciola, p. 50

Moshe Sluhovsky also argues for the 'banality' of demonic possession cases in medieval and early modern Europe and argues that the diagnosis of demonic possession was based upon biblical precedent and the tradition of miraculous exorcisms found in saints' stories. He states that 'Possession was an idiom that was a part of the cultural vocabulary of early modern people.'[10] He also points out that the early modern world was very aware of 'insanity, hysteria, paralysis, imbecility, or epilepsy' and utilised them, and so possession was not merely a default diagnosis, but rather that it was characterised by features that were seen as peculiar to possession.[11]

Sluhovsky states that because demonic affliction was a regular feature of medieval and early modern European life, 'Exorcism was a routine healing ritual and as such attracted only minor attention.'[12] The prevalence of demonic affliction and healing is evidenced by the proliferation of local saints' shrines, which served as local healing centres, and also by the popularity of major pilgrimage sites, such as St Peter's in Rome, as the destination for those considered demonically afflicted. He points out that both laymen and priests could carry out exorcism, and that in both cases there was no prescribed rite.[13] As Caciola points out, exorcism in the medieval period relied heavily upon improvisation. She points to tenth- and twelfth-century manuscripts that prescribed regimens of prayer and fasting for the demoniac, with the emphasis being on practical efforts by the possessed, rather than on ritual.[14] Sluhovsky argues that exorcism was understood to operate *ex opere operantis*: that is there was no built-in

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[10] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 14-15
[11] Sluhovsky, pp. 2-3
[12] Sluhovsky, p. 49
[13] Sluhovsky, p. 52, 59-60
[14] Caciola, pp. 231, 233-234

efficacy within the exorcistic act (*ex opere operato*), but rather the efficacy was determined by the disposition of the afflicted, the administrator and also the manner in which the acts were performed. These methods of exorcism were fairly unregulated, and usually consisted of short Latin invocations, based upon the exorcistic aspects of infant baptism, the use of the sign of the cross and the administration of the Eucharist. Sometime exorcists would use herbs, fumigation and suffumigation, and amulets. There was sometimes disapproval of the use of objects in exorcisms, but overall there was no policing of these rituals.[15]

Prior to the creation of the official exorcism rite in 1614, the Catholic Church did not have a coherent teaching or view of the causes, nature or characteristics of demonic possession. In addition, there was no clear instruction about how to diagnose possession, how to treat it (which liturgy should be used, and who should undertake it), or even what the cause of the possession was, especially with regards to the demoniac's culpability.[16] The mechanics of demonic possession were not clear although following Augustine, many medieval physicians and scholars argued that while a demon could attack the soul externally and he could not actually enter into it.[17] Therefore, possession was seen primarily as a physical affliction with supernatural origins.

In the thirteenth century, possession came to be seen as a more 'spiritual' affliction that affected the mind and soul, rather than a physical torment.[18] This concept of possession coincided with the emergence of new forms of lay spirituality, specifically the internalisation of spirituality towards private meditation and prayers. This in turn

[15] Sluhovsky, pp. 65-66
[16] Sluhovsky, pp. 15-16
[17] Sluhovsky, p. 28
[18] Sluhovsky, pp. 28-29

led to increased instances of (particularly) women claiming to have had divine visions and encounters. Indeed, Caciola states that 'the new notion of the divinely possessed laywoman became a familiar idiom by the mid-thirteenth century.'[19] However, these claims led to anxieties about the origins of these experiences: were they demonic or divine? The Church regarded such direct, unregulated spiritual experiences, which lay outside the control of the ecclesiastical authorities, with some suspicion. These issues became even more prominent following the Great Schism (1378–1417), and the involvement of two female visionaries, Bridget of Sweden and Catherine of Siena, in the affair. Both women favoured the return of the Gregory XI to Rome, and indeed because of this position, Catherine of Siena was examined for signs of demonic possession. Following the Schism, the women's apparent visionary gifts were either supported or dismissed as false by writers, depending upon which faction they supported.[20] Sluhovsky argues that as possession came under more scrutiny, the spiritual aspect of the phenomena became more pronounced. He states that whilst in the Middle Ages, a purely physical affliction (including illnesses of the mind) could have been seen as the result of possession, during the sixteenth century there was a more concerted effort to distinguish 'somatic and preternatural signs' that marked out the affliction as demonic. This resulted in the 'spiritualization of diabolic possession' that restricted it within specific categories to which it had hitherto not been subjected. Its parameters of operation became more defined and consequently more rigid and restrictive.[21]

In the early sixteenth century exorcistic practices became increasingly associated with superstition and more specifically with witchcraft, as exorcism could be seen as a

[19] Caciola, p. 56
[20] Caciola, pp. 275-285; Sluhovsky, p. 173
[21] Sluhovsky, p. 30, 32

form of demonic adjuration. Demonic possession was also increasingly associated with witchcraft.[22] This, coupled with the rise of new forms of lay spirituality described above, led to questions about the source of these experiences, and also a concern that such spirituality could be used to spread false and erroneous teachings.[23] This prompted the Church to train priests in discernment to handle cases of apparent possession to avoid potential misdiagnosis by untrained clerics or laypeople. Sluhovky states that 'just as the demonization of superstitious healing practices mandated a clear distinction between lay healing activities and clerical exorcisms, the spiritualization of diabolic possession encouraged the creation of a clear division between the traditional "physical" healing activities (that could be practised by both clerics and lay experts) and the new spiritual discerning activities, which were defined as a priestly monopoly.'[24] This led to the 'sacramentalisation' of exorcism, so that it became more regulated and rigid, and culminated in the Roman Rite of 1614.

Whilst these discussions were occurring amongst Catholic writers on the Continent, concepts of demonic possession were also developing in England as many cases emerged following the Reformation. We can see how the idea of demonic affliction was deeply embedded in medieval Catholic mentality, and this belief did not abate with the transition to Protestantism in England. The only detailed analysis of the cases that occurred before the Darrel controversy, is Kathleen R. Sands' *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England*. Sands argues that possession cases were ultimately expressions of the 'difficult religious climate' of the Elizabethan period that

[22] Sluhovsky, p. 62, 70
[23] Sluhovsky, pp. 98-99
[24] Sluhovsky, p. 63

'manifest[ed] a state of religious distress'.[25] However, this fails to consider what possession meant to contemporaries. Whilst possession may have served a cathartic function for both the individual and the community, this is not something they would have been consciously aware of. To remove possession from its contemporary context is to overlook the specific function it served in the spiritual and religious life of early modern England: it is therefore important to be aware of how it was interpreted by contemporaries as this will reveal the broader role possession played in early modern religious life. Those who reported the events seem more concerned with using the incidents to urge the individual towards spiritual vigilance, because they believed that possession was the result of people's failure to obey God. There is surprisingly little direct reference to the sectarian issues; however possession cases were the place to argue the need for meaningful personal devotion, and this necessarily required the rejection of erroneous Catholic practices and doctrines. The sectarian issue was therefore subsumed by the primary aim of encouraging pious living. In order to demonstrate this, we will now look at the cases chronologically.

One of the earliest reports of demonic possession in the Elizabethan period is that of Anne Mylner, the 'Maid of Chester' (1565). It begins with a short rhyme:

> O England thou behold a fact most [rare]
> Shewed forth by God in this thy natiue land
> Sithe by gods woord thou setst so lytle care.
> God. God I say, begyns to stretch his hande.
> As in this booke thou mayest wel vnderstand.

[25] Sands, *Demon Possession*, p. 1, 9

A Mayd but young, late with great ill

But now by God she is agayne re[i]est.[26]

This clearly places the case within the context of spiritual neglect and the need for vigilance. For this reason, the location of Chester may be especially pertinent, as it was an area that was noted for its rather lukewarm reception of the Protestant reforms. The Elizabethan reforms were implemented, but canons from the Marian era were still in position, and many of the churches suffered from a lack of monetary and pastoral support. In 1564, a year before Mylner's possession, Bishop Downham presented a report which questioned the religious loyalty of several aldermen, including the mayor, Richard Poole.[27] Although this report is not completely reliable, its publication would have cast doubt upon the spiritual status of the city. Mylner's suffering could therefore have been seen as result of this apparent religious apathy, and a warning to the residents of Chester to change their ways.

Mylner's symptoms began on 18th October 1564 when she went to take her father's cows into the fields outside the city. Upon her return, she 'was sodaynlye taken wyth great feare, and thoughte she saw a whyte thing campassing her round about'.[28] Once she arrived home, she was effectively bed-ridden, unable to eat, and lapsing into fits and trances nearly every hour. The letter describes how 'The maner of her disease

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[26] John Fisher, *The copy of a letter describing the wonderful woorke of God in deliuering a mayden within the city of Chester, from an horrible kinde of torment and sicknes 16. of february 1564* (London: Iohn Awdely, [1565]), title page (hereafter *Letter*). Although the title dates her dispossession as February 1564, this was when the year began on March 25th, so it is actually February 1565.

[27] C.P. Lewis and A.T. Thacker (eds.), 'Early modern Chester 1550-1762: Religion, 1550-1642', *A History of the County of Chester:* Vol. 5, Part 1: The City of Chester: General History and Topography (2003), pp. 109-112 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=19196> [accessed August 2 2009]

[28] Fisher, *Letter*, p. Aiii[v]

and sycknes was suche […] that vnto her out of al partes of the citye, repayre of verye manye was made.'[29] These included John Pierce, a Canon of Chester Cathedral and Reader of the Divinity Lecture who was so affected by Anne's condition that he offered up a prayer for her recovery at the end of one of his sermons in December. Her condition was related to John Lane, 'late fellow of Christs Colledge in the University of Ca[m]bridge, [and] now a famous and godly Preacher of the Gospell of Jesus Christ, within the County of Chester', by two men from Chester, one of whom was Anne's neighbour, who 'demaunded of Maister Lane, whether ther were not some possessed wyth spirits as in times past, and for confirmacion hereof spake of the sayd Mayden, & alledged the horryblenes of her torment to be suche, at the time of her traunce, that it could argue nothing els, but that she was possessed with some spirite.'[30] For these two men, the symptoms she displayed clearly indicated possession but it sounds as though there were some who doubted the possibility of possession, as they seemed keen to use Mylner's condition as proof that possession still occurred. Lane was seen as somebody who could not only offer Anne relief, but also prove the case for possession. The author surmises that Lane's intervention was sought either because of the 'rare and singular remedye god hath wrought by M. Lane, to some that sustained of late no smal decay of minde and memory, or els being of that religion, as in theese days seeke myracels to confirme Gods woorde.'[31] Paradoxically then, the desire to witness a dispossession could either be a product of faith in God's healing power, or a sign of a lack of it detectable in the need to see proof of God's power. In any case, Lane obviously had

[29] Fisher, *Letter*, p. Aiiii[r]
[30] Fisher, *Letter*, p. [6]
[31] Fisher, *Letter*, p. [7]

established a reputation as one with some authority on matters of mental distress that qualified him to attempt to cure Anne.

Lane visited Anne on 16th February, along with Sir William and Lady Calverley, Sir William Sneyd and others.[32] They found Anne in one of her trances, where 'she lay stil as a stone.' After a while, 'her bellye began to moue, swelling vp [and] down, somtime beneath her chest, soemtyme vp to the throte, in such vehemenry, that a man would haue thought she would haue burst.' This swelling points toward the physical presence of a demon, although this is not made explicit. This suggests that demonological concepts about the spiritual or corporeal nature of demons were not really an issue here; rather these symptoms were more important in allowing the reader to identify the phenomenon as possession. Mylner then violently lifted herself out of her bed, arching her back so that she formed the shape of a hoop.[33] At this point, John Lane attempted to hold down the girl, but 'he found such strength and vehement panges, that he was fully perswaded she was possessed.' The forceful physical suppression of Anne by the preacher was clearly alarming to some observers, for 'some thought best he should let her alone' and let the illness abate on its own. However, Lane insisted that those present should pray for her, and he himself 'secretly' prayed and recited the

[32] It appears that Sir William Calverley was Sir William Sneyd's brother-in-law, as his second wife, Elizabeth, was the daughter of Richard Sneyd, who was also the father of William. The Sneyd's were significant landowners in Staffordshire, most notably the Keele estate (John Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies of England* (London: Printed for Scott, Webster and Greary, Charterhouse Square, 1838), p. 97; John Ward, *The Borough of Stoke-Upon-Trent* (London: W. Lewis & Son, 1843), footnote on p. 81). Sir Calverley also acts as one of the witnesses to the events in the letter, along with 'Richard Hurlestone Esquier' and the author himself, 'John Fisher Gentleman'.

[33] Fisher, *Letter,* pp. [7–9] This formation of a hoop by the body is a feature found also in the cases of Margaret Cooper and Margaret Hooper. Such a spectacular physical contortion established that the affliction was indeed demonic, as the demoniac would be unable to manipulate their body in this way by themselves.

fiftieth Psalm.[34] This praying did not have the desired effect, however, and eventually Lane called for some vinegar to be brought to him. The writer describes how 'the sta[n]ders by marueiled, saying that [that] thing with muche more had bene often tymes attempted, but to no purpose.'[35] This suggests that this remedy was a well-known cure for possession, although clearly not a guaranteed one. The aim was perhaps to establish the lack of faith of those who had previously attempted this method (as indicated by their insistence that Lane leave Anne alone), which highlights that there was no automatic connection between the act *per se* and dispossession, therefore differentiating it from the ritualistic and mechanical 'magic' of Catholic exorcism, albeit somewhat tenuously.

The vinegar was taken by Lane in his mouth and blown up Anne's nostrils, 'whereat she cryed a Lady, Lady' but she was chastised by Lane for doing so.[36] Sands interprets this as a condemnation of the practice of calling upon saints, and more specifically the idea of the 'name-spell', where it was thought that the utterance of the names of saints or spirits was enough to impart healing power.[37] However, I would argue that this call upon the Virgin indicates Anne's failure to embrace Protestant doctrine, and her continuing on in Catholic superstition, which is why she was stricken with the demon. The crying out of 'Lady, Lady' exposed her true sin, and the godly Lane, there present, could offer her the solution, by urging her 'to cal vpo[n] God, and the bloud of Christ'.[38] Lane also had Anne say the Lord's Prayer and *Te deum*, and this marked her 'deliuerance'. The connection between popish practices and Anne's

[34] Fisher, *Letter,* pp. [10-11]
[35] Fisher, *Letter,* p. [12]
[36] Fisher, *Letter,* p. [14]
[37] Sands, *Demon Possession*, pp. 23-24
[38] Fisher, *Letter,* p. [13]

possession (and the exposure and correction marking her dispossession) highlights the dangers of retaining Catholic beliefs and of spiritual neglect, serving as an example and warning to readers. This is further emphasised in the fact that after her cure, Anne 'continually called vpon God', which indicates a strengthening of her faith, and a recognition of her need to rely upon God for protection against demonic spirits. Furthermore, Lane 'after talke had with her of the maner of her taking, [and] admonishing her to haue a stedfast faith in Christ, and to occupy her selfe in praier, left her'.[39] She apparently took this to heart, as she was present the next day at St Mary's church, where Lane was preaching.

It is interesting that whilst Lane condemned Anne for calling on Mary, the use of vinegar was not seen as problematic at this time. This demonstrates the transitional nature of attitudes towards the correct methods of dispossession and also highlights how the separation of acceptable Protestant from unacceptable popish or magical practices was arbitrary and changeable. There was no clear consensus on what was orthodox and effective at this time, but during the Darrel controversy it was these questions that became absolutely vital, especially for Darrel, who sought to reconcile the practice of dispossession with cessationism, partly by removing from it all elements of ritual. However, these issues were clearly not a concern for those involved in this case, and they were able to reconcile the use of vinegar with Protestant principles with no real conflict in their own minds, especially because the cure was only effective when the demoniac faithfully entreated God, thereby indicating that He was the ultimate source of deliverance.

[39] Fisher, *Letter,* p. [14]

Fisher specifically requested that the letter be put in print, 'least the same should be misreported, or the wicked suffred to wrest[40] thinges, to abuse Gods Preachers, [and] for that the thyng is so rare [and] notable that it shoulde not be kept from the posteritye.'[41] Maybe Fisher was concerned about Lane's physical handling of Anne being misreported, which could undermine his reputation. Certainly a similar encounter between Darrel and one of his female demoniacs became the target of insinuation during his trial.[42] Alternatively, he could be referring to the possibility that Anne's affliction could be rendered as a natural illness rather than as a spiritual assault, which could lead to the abuse of preachers in the sense that their testimony regarding her possession would be labelled false. In addition, he believed that the case served 'the auancement of Gods glory', not only because it demonstrated God's power, but also because it would edify those who read it and encourage stronger devotion and faith.[43]

This case clearly generated publicity, as Fisher mentions how 'great talke was had in eche company within the City' about the case, so much so that Anne was taken to see the Queen's High Justice, John Throgmorton, who made a record of the events. Robert Rogers, the Archdeacon of Chester,[44] also mentioned Anne's case in his sermon of 3rd March in front a congregation including the mayor, William Downham, the

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[40] In this case meaning 'twist' rather than 'get by force'.
[41] Fisher, *Letter*, sigs. Aii[r]-Aii[v]
[42] In her confession, Katherine Wright described how Darrel did 'lie vppon my belly, saying that he would by so lying, presse the diuell out of me.' Harsnett referred to this as a 'strange fashion', and the inclusion of this in his work was likely aimed at tarnishing Darrel's reputation as a godly man. (Harsnett, *Discouery*, p. 300)
[43] Fisher, *Letter*, sig. Aii[r]
[44] Joyce M. Horn, David M. Smith and Patrick Mussett, 'Archdeacons: Chester', *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1541-1857*: Vol. 11: Carlisle, Chester, Durham, Manchester, Ripon, and Sodor and Man dioceses (2004), pp. 45-47 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=35846> [accessed August 4 2008]

Bishop of Chester, and the Bishop of Saint Asaph.[45] Rogers remarked that 'that what so euer was the originall cause of so great and strau[n]ge a disease, yet was the cure wonderfull, and wrought by God, either to the great commodity, or els for the great plague of the City of Chester, and the countrye adioyning.'[46] This statement reveals that the dispossession could be seen as either a blessing if it succeeded in persuading the populace to change their ways, or else a harbinger of worse punishments if they did not.

The letter was written in response to a request for further information about the case from Fisher's friend 'Maister J.D.' Fisher writes how

> Hauing receiued your letter […] concernyng the deliuery of a woma[n] here within the City of Chester, from a most monstrous and horrible kynde of torment and disease, as also howe desirous you are to learn the truth therof: I am contented in gratefieng your request, to signifye herein as is for truth knowen and accepted.[47]

Unfortunately we do not know which 'partes' J.D. resided in, but the case was clearly well enough known for him to hear about it and to be included in John Stow's historical survey of 1565, *A summarie of Englyshe chronicles*. Stow refers the reader to this letter for more details of the case, which suggests that it must have had a fairly wide circulation.[48]

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[45] This is rendered as 'Saint Assaphat' in the text. The bishop at this time was one Thomas Davies. (Robert Beatson, *A Political Index to the Histories of Great Britain & Ireland, Or, a Complete Register of the Hereditary Honours, Public Offices, and Persons in Office: From the Earliest Periods to the Present Time*, Vol. 1 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1806), p. 161)
[46] Fisher, *Letter*, sig. Bi(v)
[47] Fisher, *Letter*, p. Aiii(r)
[48] John Stow, *A summarie of Englyshe chronicles conteynyng the true accompt of yeres, wherein euery kyng of this realme of England began theyr reigne, howe long they reigned: and what notable thynges hath bene doone durynge theyr reygnes. Wyth also the names and yeares of all the baylyffes, custos, maiors, and sheriffes of the citie of London, sens the Conqueste, dyligentely collected by Iohn Stovv citisen of London, in the yere of our Lorde God 1565. Whervnto is added a table in the end, conteynyng all the principall matters of this booke. Perused and allowed accordyng to the Quenes*

The next case we will examine is that of Alexander Nyndge. This appeared in two editions. The original incident occurred on a single day, 20th January 1573 and an account was published in 1578, but in 1615 another version of the case appeared, this time claiming that the fits began on 20th January and continued until 23rd July. The name of the demoniac and those involved remain the same in the 1615 version, but it is not made clear that it is relating events of some forty-two years prior. In addition, this second work claims to be the work of the brother present at, and primarily responsible for, the dispossession, Edward Nyndge, whilst the first work is signed off by one 'I.W.' It is possible that Edward did write the additional material that appeared in the second account, but there is no acknowledgement of the authorship of I.W. for the material that remains from the first. In order to establish why the second version appeared, it would be useful firstly to examine how they differ in content.

The account of Alexander's symptoms in both editions is almost identical even though the 1615 version claims the events took place over several months as opposed to the single day of the original. The only difference that suggests a more prolonged affliction is a short summary describing symptoms that befell Alexander after Edward urged him to repent of his sins. After this 'the Spirit […] racked the said Alexander in a far more cruell manner' and in the original this is only 'for a small time'[49] but the second version adds that:

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maiesties iniunctions ([London]: Thomas Marsh, 1565), p. 247: 'This yere in the citie of Chester was a wonderfull cure wroughte by the power of god in his minister master Lane vpon a maiden named Anne Milner […] who had bene possest with an horrible kind of torment and sycknes, […] now sodeinly the .16. day of February, she was restored to her perfect healthe […] as ye may rede more at large in a letter imprinted of the same, subscribed by the handes of diuers worshypfull knyghtes and gentilmen of that citie.'

[49] I.W., *A Booke Declaringe the Fearfull Vexasion of one Alexander Nyndge. Beynge moste Horriblye tormented with and euyll Spirit. The .xx. daie of Ianuarie. In the yere of our Lorde. 1573.*

> he did vse such strange and idle kinds of gestures in laughing, dancing, and such like light behaviours, that he was suspected to be mad: sundry times he refused all kinds of meat for a long space together, insomuch as he seemed to pine away.[50]

Additional symptoms in the 1615 version include 'a strange noise, or a flapping from within his body', and Alexander's tendency to wrap himself in his bedclothes and jump high on his bed, beating his head and body upon the ground and bedstead 'that the beholders did feare that he would thereby haue spoiled himself […] and yet thereby he received no hurt at all.'[51] Interestingly, a feature that newly appeared in this version was 'a certain swelling or variable lumpe to a great bignesse swiftly vp and downe between the flesh and the skin' which is identical to the symptoms suffered by William Sommers which indicates that the later version incorporated elements of the Sommers' report.[52]

Alexander was eventually dispossessed by his brother and others around him, who 'did take vppon us to Coniure and charge the fowle Fyende as in the fyrste sorte, that was, we Coniure thee. In the name of Ihesus Christ our sauour, the sonne of the almightye God: that hee shoulde departe, and no longer torment the sayde Alexander. And within a while after the saide Alexander stoode vpp and sayde, hee is gone, hee is

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At Lyeringswell in Suffolke (London: Thomas Colwell, 1578?), p. 3 (hereafter *Fearfull Vexasion*) (Page numbers correspond to the reprint: Joseph Arnold Foster (ed.), *Reprints of English Books, 1475-1700*, No. 38 (East Lansing, MI: Ingram, 1940); Edward Nyndge, *A true and fearefull vexation of one Alexander Nyndge being most horribly tormented with the deuill, from the 20. day of Ianuary, to the 23. of Iuly. At Lyering well in Suffocke: with his prayer afer his deliuerance. Written by his owne brother Edvvard Nyndge Master of Arts, with the names of the witnesses that were at his vexation* (London: [by W. Stansby] for W. B[arrett?], 1615), sig. A3[v] (hereafter *True vexation*)

[50] Nyndge, *True vexation*, sig. A3[v]

[51] Nyndge, *True vexation,* sig. A3[v]

[52] John Darrell, *A true narration of the strange and greuous vexation by the Devil, of 7. persons in Lancashire, and VVilliam Somers of Nottingham Wherein the doctrine of possession and dispossession of demoniakes out of the word of God is particularly applyed vnto Somers, and the rest of the persons controuerted: togeather with the vse we are to make of these workes of God* (s.l., s.n., 1600) [seen on EEBO], pp. 15-16

gone.'[53] It is interesting that they use the word 'conjure', as this concept was intrinsically tied up with Catholic exorcism and so was generally condemned by Protestants. Yet this is clearly a Protestant dispossession, as earlier Edward rebuked a fellow observer for 'Ioining God and the blessed Virgin Mary together'.[54] This demonstrates the difficulty in separating 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' exorcistic practices in reality, as concepts could be merged or adapted by contemporaries, especially as there was no explicit mandate from the Church of England about how to deal with possession.

The major addition to the second version is the introduction from which one can discern the reasons why this work was published. The author states how

> The Deuill, being the principall agent and chiefe practiser in all wickedness. It is much to the purpose we haue in hand, to describe and set him forth, that we may the better be instructed to see what he is able to doe in what manner, and to what end and purpose.[55]

Compared to the first version, the second focuses more obviously on the power and nature of the Devil and the general danger he posed to every reader, rather than simply relaying the misfortunes that befell this particular individual. This is reiterated when the author describes the benefit of relating the case, 'For describing the horror and vnheard of misery that fell vpon him, we may be thereby drawne to defend into ourselues, and to looke into our soules betimes, least Heaven power the vi[a]ls of wrath vpon us.'[56] The aim was clearly to warn the reader against spiritual apathy, which could lead to the same torment suffered by Alexander.

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[53] I.W. *Fearfull Vexasion*, p. 10. Also, stating they 'tooke vpon them to Coniure' instead of 'us', Nyndge, *True vexation,* sig. B3[r]
[54] I.W. *Fearfull Vexasion*, p. 6, Nyndge, *True vexation,* p. [6]
[55] Nyndge, *True vexation*, sig. A2[r]
[56] Nyndge, *True vexation*, sig. A3[r]

The introduction also contains a brief summary of the origin and nature of the Devil, mentioning his fall from grace, his retention of his angelic powers, but how the fall did 'utterly corrupt, pervert, and deprave the same.' Whereas angels aim to uphold the truth of God, 'The Diuels bend all their force against God, against his glory, and against his truth, and people.' The author emphasises the power of the Devil, pointing out that his fierceness against man has earned him the label 'Dragon' and 'Lion', and 'the God of the World.'[57] However, the author also concedes that 'His kingdome is bound and inclosed within certain limits, for he is the Prince, but of Darknes. But yet within his said dominion (which is in ignorance of God) he exerciseth a mighty tyranny.'[58] Yet even restricted, his power is much stronger than that of humans, and his age means he is well versed in the practice of deception. Such is his power, 'that if God did not chaine him vp, his power and subtility (joyned together) would ouercome, and seduce the whole world.' One can see the tension in the author's desire to alert the reader to the powerful threat posed by the Devil, and the need to maintain God's overall supremacy. In this sense, possession was the perfect example of what the author wished to convey. The torment of the demoniac was alarming enough to persuade people of the need for pious living by demonstrating the horrific ways in which the Devil could torment the sinner, but the fact that the punishment was firstly sent by God, and then taken away by Him emphasised his ultimate sovereignty.

The introduction also outlines commonly received facts regarding demons, such as the idea that there are 'great multitudes of Infernall Spirits […] but yet they be called the Divell in the singular number.' They are all united in hatred towards God, although

[57] Nyndge, *True vexation*, sigs. A2[r]–A2[v]
[58] Nyndge, *True vexation*, sigs. A2[v]–A3[r]

they are incapable of loving each other. It mentions how 'their nature being spirituall, and not l[a]den with any heauenly matter as our bodies are, doth afford them such a nimblenesses, as we cannot conceiue. By this they fly through the world […] and spy out all aduantages, and occasions to doe euill.' This suggests that the author had a broader interest in the nature and activities of the Devil, and so had familiarised himself with basic demonological principles. The fact that he incorporated them into this case of possession reflects his desire to alert readers to the danger posed by the Devil, by emphasising their supernatural qualities that make them a more menacing threat. Some contradictory ideas are present in the 1615 version. For example, although devils are described as spiritual in nature, during the prayers said for Alexander during his first fit, both accounts describe how 'Edward then desired to to haue the window opened, for, *I trust in God […] the fowle Spirit is wearie of our company*. The windowes being opened accordingly, within two Minuts after the tormented body returned to true shape againe.'[59] This failure to see a problem with the act of opening a window for a spiritual being could just be bad editing, but it also demonstrates the contradictory ideas about the nature of demons that could co-exist. However, neither version discusses the intricacies of possession, nor do they actually use the term 'possession', utilising the terms 'vexation' and 'torment' instead. This suggests that the use of the term 'possession' was not necessary or significant until it became contentious during the Darrel controversy.

The fact that the 1615 version does not use the word 'possession' either suggests that it appeared for reasons beyond the controversy, and was not printed as a means of supporting Darrel. The reason for its appearance may therefore lie in the other additions

[59] Nyndge, *True vexation*, sig. A3[r] & sig. B[r]; I.W., *Fearfull Vexasion*, p. 7

to this version. There are two prayers that appear in the second version which are not present in the first. Alexander said the first prayer during his second fit during which he was given the Bible to read. In the first version he fell asleep at this point but in the second version, those around him proceeded to pray for him using these words:

> thou knowest, that amongst all Creatures, man is most rebellious against thee, and his offences, and transgressions against thee most manifold […] we in our liues doe shew our selues most vnkinde, and unnaturall children towards thee, daily offending the Diuine Maiestie, and euery Minute transgressing against the Lawes and Commandements, nothing regarding thy iudgementes, which might in a moment destroy vs […] Suffer vs not any longer to wallow and fumble our selues in our grieuous iniquities. Let not sinne haue so much power in vs, or increase ouer vs. Destroy Satan, and his polities.[60]

The emphasis on man's propensity for sin reveals anxieties the author may have had about his own spiritual standing, but it also serves to remind the reader of their absolute dependency on God to save them from their own sinful, destructive nature. The prayer states that 'we of ourselues haue no ability nor meanes to preuaile against him'[61] and so a failure to serve God through prayer and devotion leads to neglect of the soul and a decline into sin. This is what had befallen Alexander, for the prayer also expresses a desire that 'we may acknowledge this affliction, which now so grieuously pierceth our poore brother, to be thy Fatherly correction to put him minde of his duety towards thee', which suggests that Alexander served as an example to all who neglect their spiritual

[60] Nyndge, *True vexation*, sig. B2[r]
[61] Nyndge, *True vexation*, sig. B2[r]

duties.[62] Alexander's possession was a tangible representation of the effects of the Devil's assaults but also God's warning to him (and those around him) that he had strayed too far away from God.

The final prayer hints at why the account was republished, with the changes that were made. The plea is that Alexander may not forget the fact that the Lord delivered him, and that he does not attribute his recovery to his own actions. He states how

> such is the pride of my rebellious flesh, that I feare it wil not suffer me fully to ascribe the same to proceede of thee, and thine onely goodnesse, but will seeke out other fained causes, according to the vaine [desires] of my minde. Therefore I beseech thee […] that thou wilt so frame my heart, that I may with whole heart and mi[n]de, and with all the powers of my soule acknowledge this my release, and comfort to be thy onely worke wrought in me by thy holy Spirit, and that I may be thankfull for the same all the days of my life.[63]

Maybe this is indeed what happened. Instead of becoming a faithful, living testimony of God's grace and compassion, he succumbed to his previous sinful ways. The republication may be an expression of lament by his brother, who helped dispossess him in the first place, and perhaps a very public reminder to him in order to help him mend his ways.

The next case I would like to examine is that of Robert Brigges, a lawyer who experienced spiritual affliction in 1574. The case is notable because of the apparent involvement of John Foxe, who attempted to exorcise Brigges, and also the apparent popularity of the case amongst the godly. The details of the case were never published

[62] Nyndge, *True vexation*, sig. B2[v]
[63] Nyndge, *True vexation*, sig. B3[v]

and exist only on several manuscript accounts;[64] but it seems that the case was well-known in godly circles.[65] Brigges' symptoms are never explicitly described as possession but the case does reveal much about the understandings of the origins of demonic torment, and also places possession cases within the context of conversion narratives. Brigges' torments coincide very neatly with his fears about the state of his soul, and his subsequent affirmation of faith. His affliction began after he attended a sermon just before Christmas 1573. The sermon concerned the unforgivable sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, and after hearing it, Brigges became convinced that he was destined for damnation and he became depressed and attempted suicide several times. Initially, Brigges symptoms were treated by a physician, who prescribed purging and bleeding and these seemed to be effective until April 11th, 1574, when he drank an unnamed 'physic' which caused him to vomit and faint. The following day, he began to lose his sight, then his hearing, and finally all feeling in his body. He then began giving a speech concerning the Ten Commandments, at which point a scribe was sought to record his words. He gave the impression that he was conversing with another, unheard person, and onlookers came to the conclusion that he was in fact speaking with the Devil.[66] This continued for several days, during which time Brigges would temporarily regain his senses, only to lose them again. The Devil also tempted Brigges with a

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[64] BL, Harley MS 590, pp. 6-63; [Account of the possession of Robert Brigges] (1574), BL, Lansdowne MS 101, fols. 165-175; Anon., '"The Temptation of Mr Briggs, a gentleman of the templis." Relates the sickness and trances of Mr Briggs of the Temple, aged 30, following a sermon by Mr Lassilurus Villers, late 1573, on the nature of the sin against the Holy Ghost. Records the words spoken by Briggs during his seizures between 12 Apr and 1 May 1574.' (1574), *SHC,* Loseley MS 1852. These accounts are more or less identical. Kathleen R. Sands has covered the case in some detail in *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England*, pp. 57-72, and has included a transcript of the Harley and Landsdowne MS in *An Elizabethan Lawyer's Possession by the Devil: the Story of Robert Brigges* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002), pp. 95-142. I will be referring to this transcript for simplicity (hereafter *An Elizabethan Lawyer*).

[65] Thomas, p. 574

[66] Sands, *An Elizabethan Lawyer*, pp. 95-98

variety of sins including murder, blasphemy, idolatory and atheism, all of which Brigges resisted.[67] On April 24th, John Foxe, whom Brigges had sought out during his torments, gathered a group of people together to pray for Brigges. The group was exhorted to prepare their minds by repentance and forgiveness and by making an effort to live better lives. Brigges experienced some temporary relief, but he began experiencing symptoms again soon after. Eventually he became free of symptoms after submitting to Jesus and invoking his name repeatedly.[68] In particular, he focussed upon the redemptive work of the cross, reasserting his conviction that Christ's blood had effectively and completely dealt with all his sins. He stated how 'I se him crucified […] and his woundes sueetly bleadinge gaping wide to recuyvee and swallowe up the synnes of all them that believe in him.'[69] After May 1st, he was finally back to normal. As Thomas observes, it is interesting that in this case, it was the efforts of Brigges himself that led to his release, for he defeated the Devil with the declaration: 'I command thee in the name of Jhesus Chryste that thou departe.'[70] He was responsible for his deliverance, rather than a passive recipient of an *ex opera operato* rite.[71]

Kathleen R. Sands argues that Brigges' case can be seen as one of conversion, especially as Brigges was raised a Catholic. However, Sands also sees the case as an expression, primarily, of psychological distress. She argues that his case represents the anxiety caused by the Reformation: the challenges to existing doctrines and ecclesiastical structures, and the representation of another, apparently correct form of religion that required new understanding and commitment. She argues that Brigges'

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[67] Sands, *An Elizabethan Lawyer*, pp. 111, 114, 136
[68] Sands, *An Elizabethan Lawyer*, pp. 120-121, 123
[69] Sands, *An Elizabethan Lawyer*, p. 129
[70] Sands, *An Elizabethan Lawyer*, p. 141
[71] Thomas, p. 575

case 'dramatizes one intelligent person's response to the universal human necessity of determining truth in the midst of ambivalence and confusion'.[72] She believes that other factors, such as the pressures of being a lawyer and living in London also led to the manifestation of the symptoms and that it was this intersection of the general anxieties caused by the Reformation with Brigges' own particular stresses that led to the possessed behaviour.[73] In this interpretation, the contemporary meaning of the incident is lost. This is not to say that contemporaries would not have understood the role of anxiety. Certainly, Brigges is described as being inclined 'towards mela[n]colye'[74] but this is also significant because it was believed that the humours could be manipulated by evil spirits, and melancholics were seen as being particularly susceptible to the Devil's attacks.[75] In this sense, it was not just a mental state of mind that caused Brigges' despair, but a very real, satanic assault.

The Brigges case has to be understood primarily as spiritual because it is spiritual matters that it is explicitly concerned with. The temptation of Brigges is a reflection of the very real belief in the Devil as the tempter who wanted to draw men away from God, and the believer's resistance to the temptations can be seen as an example and confirmation of faith. Finally, the case can be seen as the rejection of the erroneous tenets of Catholicism and the reaffirmation of the truth of Protestant doctrine. Certainly, Brigges' revelation that Christ's blood had paid for all his sins, and offered

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[72] Sands, *An Elizabethan Lawyer*, p. 4
[73] Sands, *An Elizabethan Lawyer*, p. 71
[74] Sands, *An Elizabethan Lawyer*, p. 94
[75] Judith Bonzol, 'The Medical Diagnosis of Demonic Possession in an Early Modern English Community', *Parergon*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2009), pp. 115-140 (p. 121); Angus Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 85-86. See also Johann Weyer (edited by Benjamin G. Kohl and H. C. Erik Midelfort and translated by John Shea), *On Witchcraft: An Abridged Translation of Johann Weyer's "De praestigiis daemonum"* (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1998), pp. 185-186

forgiveness for all who believe is a very explicit statement of the Protestant doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith; it also emphasises the complete redemptive work of the cross in opposition to the Catholic doctrine of justification through faith and works. Contemporaries would have perceived the case as a spiritual battle in which piety and faith triumphed, with Christ as the ultimate source of victory.

The cases examined so far established the model of possession in Tudor England. Accounts of these cases seem to have circulated without causing any controversy, demonstrating that possession was an accepted occurrence at this time. However, we now come across a case that is similar to the Darrel controversy, in that it involves a group of godly men and women in conflict with the authorities over the issue of possession. This case involved two young girls, Rachel Pindar and Agnes Briggs, and occurred in July 1574. It was reported in a (now lost) pamphlet entitled *A verie wonderful straunge miracle*. The information we have about it comes from *The disclosing of a late counterfeited possession* which was published after the demoniacs had been made to confess to fraud. The pamphlet compromises of two reports by those who witnessed the events, the subsequent confessions of Briggs and Pindar, and, appended at the end, John Chrysostom's *Fifth Homily Against the Jews*. It might be that the first part of this pamphlet is in fact the original, extinct report of the case.

Agnes Briggs' confession reveals that she had been suffering from some kind of long-term illness, which involved her falling into trances and generally being 'troubled in mind'.[76] Clearly she was acquainted with John Foxe, for she was in his home when Rachel Pindar's mother, Elizabeth, arrived, seeking help for her daughter, whom she

[76] Anon., *The disclosing of a late counterfeyted possession by the deuyl in two maydens within the citie of London* (London: Richard Watkins, 1574), p. [12] (hereafter *A counterfeyted possession*)

claimed was demonically possessed. Pindar's mother described how 'when [Rachel] had any traunce, shee woulde swell, and heaue with her body marueylously, and that she dyd auoyde at her mouth, in her traunces, heare, a blacke silke threede, and a feather.'[77] Foxe does not appear to have had any further involvement in the case, and his response to the mother's claims is not known. However, it is not surprising that he was sought out for help, firstly because he had a reputation as a godly preacher, but also because he had been involved in the case of Robert Brigges. During Darrel's trial, Foxe's involvement in possession cases was seen as validating its occurrence.[78]

After this encounter, Agnes returned home, fell into a trance and expelled hair from her mouth. Over the next few days, this pattern was repeated, with the expelled items including lace, crooked pins and nails, and 'shee diuers tymes of purpose disfigured her selfe with diuers straunge countnaunces, faigning diuers straunge voyces, and noyses.'[79] If we believe Pindar's confession, it seems that she began by having trances, during which she would vomit up various objects, such as hair, feathers and silk cloth, and see visions of the Devil as 'a ma[n] with a gray bearde, sometime lyke fiue Cattes, sometimes to Rauens and Crowes.' She also spoke with the voice of the Devil, whom she named Legion, and through this voice, accused one 'Joane Thorneton' of sending the Devil into her.[80] The vomiting up of objects is something that is not found in earlier cases of possession, but its novelty did not prevent it from being recognised as

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[77] Anon., *A counterfeyted possession*, p. [12]
[78] Indeed, the author of the *Triall of Maist. Dorrell* protests that Darrel should not be prosecuted for Sommers' apparent deception, arguing 'Was that good man, or reuerend memorie (M. Fox) deceiued by Anne Briggs and Rachel Pindar, called in to question for the same? Hee was not.' Anon, *The triall of Maist. Dorrell,* p. 83. Foxe's association with a supposedly proven fraudulent case was not a basis on which to question his overall integrity, and if such a reverend man believed in the reality of possession, then it must be true.
[79] Anon., *A counterfeyted possession*, pp. [13-14]
[80] Anon., *A counterfeyted possession*, sigs Bi[v]-Bii[r]

possession by the ministers, William Long and William Turner, who attempted to dispossess the girls. This demonstrates the fact that the criteria for the diagnosis of possession were not rigidly set; rather, the definition of possession was flexible depending on the circumstances of the affliction. It is clear that although the authorities later condemned the cases as fraudulent, they were initially treated as genuine cases of possession.

The part of the dispossession that is reproduced in the pamphlet relates the apparent interrogation of the demons with the intention of uncovering their names and number, and the name of the person behind the bewitchment. The actual expulsion of the demons involved both directly commanding the demons to depart in the blood of Jesus, and also prayer: 'Then we mad a prayer to the almeightey god with earnest hartes, crauinge ayd and comfort at his almeightey handes for hur comfort and deliuerie. Then we commandid in the blowd of Jesus to depart.'[81] If one reads these sections in isolation, they cannot be seen as anything other than genuine possession narratives. In the verbal battle between the godly group and the demonic spirit, one can see the patterns of a reliance on prayer, a reaffirmation of faith and a refusal to give in to the Devil's temptations. The inclusion of the names of eyewitnesses also serves to confirm the authenticity of the events.

On the other hand, the authorities did not agree. They were clearly concerned that people claiming to be learned and godly were leading the people into gross error through their activities, as the preface states: 'that the deuyl should so possesse actually men and women, in such maner as was advouched, and to make thereof a plaine matter, so constantly reported, and spread by their printed books, not publiquely licensed, is

[81] Anon., *A counterfeyted possession*, pp. [8-9]

mere vanitie and falsehood.'[82] It is also important to note that the cases were published without licence and it was this that drew the attention of the authorities. The printers were sent to prison, and Briggs and Pindar were examined by Archbishop Parker and made to publicly confess their supposed deceit at St Paul's Cross. Pindar's mother refused to confess and so was imprisoned until the public confession of the girls. As with the Darrel case, we do not have to accept the confessions of fraud, but rather we should consider why the authorities attacked the case.

The preface of the pamphlet offers some insight into this. The author expresses a desire to address what they perceive to be general ignorance in matters regarding possession. It states that

> yet to detect the wilful and indurate ignoraunce of suche as had the matter in handling, being, as they professed themselues, godly men, plentifully adorned with faith, and sent of God to disturbe the deuill of possession (as they were very Exorcistes by office, to adiure the deuil) may be thought not vaine, but necessarie, for the instruction of the people hereafter in like cases.[83]

The writer also seems to be denying that the symptoms demonstrated by the girls actually constituted possession. However, it is not clear what particular details the writer took objection to and he still upheld the idea that 'this Realme is knowen by common experience, and of late, to be troubled with Witches, Sorcerers, and other such wise men and women' which suggests that he was not entirely dismissing the possibility of bewitchment or possession.[84] It seems then that it was the method by which the

[82] Anon., *A counterfeyted possession*, sig. Aii[r]
[83] Anon., *A counterfeyted possession*, sig. Aii[r]
[84] Anon., *A counterfeyted possession*, sig. Aii[r]

demoniacs were dealt with that underlies the critique. The writer includes Chrysostom's homily because it 'also inueieth specially against Iewes and Witches, whiche seeme to doo good, and to heale suche as be hurt by others'.[85] In the view of the writer, those who attempted to help the girls were just as bad as the witches who allegedly sent demons into their bodies, and guilty of the same sin of conjuring spirits through their interaction with, and adjuration of, the demons. Chrysostom's homily also expresses the view that a person afflicted by the Devil should patiently endure their torment as the just punishment for their sinful behaviour, which suggests that the author believed that if the girls had indeed been suffering from demonic affliction, then they deserved this and therefore there should have been no intervention by the dispossessors.[86]

It is clear that Archbishop Parker displayed hostility towards possession. In his letter to Lord Burghley, he stated that 'if I had my will, I would commit some of the principal witnesses to prison, to learn them hereafter not to abuse the Queen's Majesty's people so boldly falsely and impudently.' He saw the incident as extremely damaging, stating that 'I am so grieved with such dissemblers that I cannot be quiet with myself. I do intent, because these books are so spread abroad and believed, to set out a confutation of the same falsehood. The tragedy is so large that I might spend much time to trouble your honour withal.'[87] Clearly what bothered Parker most here was the degree of publicity the incident gained. We can gather from this that Parker was, as Thomas Freeman states, 'a radical sceptic' when it came to possession, but there is also

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[85] Anon., *A counterfeyted possession*, sig. Aiii[r]
[86] 'In the fift Homelie agaynst the Iewes, by Iohn Chrysostome, sometime Archbishop of Constantinople', *A counterfeyted possession*, sigs. Ci[r]-Ci[v]
[87] Archbishop Matthew Parker, 'Letter from Archbishop Parker to Lord Burghley, dated 13th August 1574', John Bruce (ed.), *Correspondence of Matthew Parker, D. D. Archbishop of Canterbury. Comprising Letters Written By and To Him, From A.D. 1535, to His Death, A.D. 1575* (Cambridge: University Press, 1853), pp. 463-465

possibly another angle to consider. Freeman also argues that 'Ostensibly he was concerned about fraud and superstition, but was probably also alarmed by the sudden rise in the prestige of a loose cannon like Foxe, who, because he was unbeneficed, was almost immune from normal ecclesiastical discipline.'[88]

Drawing on Thomas Freeman's (apparently unpublished) work, Alexandra Walsham points out that the Archbishop's reaction 'can only be understood fully in the context of his ruthless crackdown on clergy who refused to wear 'romish' vestments'. Freeman argues that the exposure of the fraud was part of an attempt to humiliate and undermine support for Foxe, who was an opponent of the surplice and also campaigned actively to reform the Book of Common Prayer.[89] Walsham argues that 'in this sense Parker's 'scepticism' about possession looks very much like a side-effect of the Vestiarian Controversy.' Though it is possible that this was linked to the Vestiarian Controversy that had occurred eight years earlier in 1566, it can perhaps be tied more directly to the Admonition Controversy that had occurred two years earlier, with the publication of John Field and Thomas Wilcox's *An Admonition to the Parliament* in 1572. Patrick Collinson has stated that 'The negative content of the presbyterian programme, which attracted the most attention, was deceptively anti-clerical in its tendency, and never perhaps were the anti-clerical and anti-ecclesiastical instincts of the

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[88] Thomas Freeman, 'John Foxe: a biography', in Section 'Critical Apparatus': 'Essays' in *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* (HRI Online Publications, Sheffield, 2011) <http//www.johnfoxe.org> [accessed November 21 2012]

[89] Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 216-217; Thomas S. Freeman and Sarah Elizabeth Wall, 'Racking the Body, Shaping the Text: The Account of Anne Askew in Foxe's "Book of Martyrs", *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 4, Part 1 (2001), pp. 1165-1196 (p. 1188)

age so much in evidence as in 1573.'[90] In this climate, it is not surprising that Parker would have been hypersensitive to the activities of a popular but maverick preacher.

The case of Pindar and Briggs provides an interesting precursor to the Darrel controversy, but it must be distinguished from those events because it simply did not have the same impact as the Darrel controversy upon perceptions of possession. The authorities' negative reaction to the case seems to be anomalous in a period where possession was a fairly regular occurrence. The case did not affect belief in possession, and nor did it largely alter the way in which it was understood. Indeed, the account of Nyndge's possession was published in 1578, four years after the Briggs/Pindar affair, without any trouble. This was partly due to the fact that the authorities did not have an orchestrated strategy for attacking possession in the way Harsnett would during the Darrel controversy, because they did not have a clearly defined position on possession that would have led to this undertaking. The positions were not as clearly polarised between Puritans and the authorities in this case. The controversy had no significant impact on the belief in possession at the time and it took twenty-five years and the emergence of the Darrel controversy before possession became a contentious issue again. Had it not been for these events, it is likely that this case would have been completely forgotten about.

Indeed, the Pindar/Briggs case did not prevent the occurrence of further cases of possession, and the next case of which we have an account is that of Margaret Cooper. This first took place in 1584 but there is also an account of one Margaret Hooper that

[90] Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 147

appeared in 1641.[91] Whilst these reports claim to relate two separate events they are actually identical. One does not necessarily have to question the fact that something did happen to Margaret Cooper in 1584; clearly the case of Margaret Hooper is a fabrication. Therefore it is important to ask why the case reappeared in 1641, and to consider the circumstances and intentions that may have led to its publication. We know that accounts of Darrel's dispossessions in Lancashire were reprinted in 1641, which may have had significance because of the Puritan activity at that time. His prosecution may have given him status as a Puritan martyr, persecuted by the ungodly established church for promoting true doctrine. But the case of Margaret Hooper, which does not involve any named ministers, let alone any Puritan figures, may be representative of the sense of apocalyptic events directly preceding the Civil War.

This is supported by the foreword to both pieces, which describe examples of many phenomena, such as the

[91] Anon, *A true and most Dreadfull discourse of a woman possessed with the Deuill: who in the likenesses of headless Beare fetched her out of her Bedd, and in the presence of seuen persons, most straungely roulled her thorow three Chambers, and doune a high paire of staiers, on the fower and twentie of May last. 1584. At Ditchet in Somersetshire. A matter as miraculous as euer was seen in our time* (London: [J. Kingston] for Thomas Nelson, 1584) (hereafter *Dreadfull discourse*); Anon, *Most fearefull and strange nevves from the bishoppricke of Dvrham being a true relation of one Margret Hooper of Edenbyres neere the river Darwent in the said bishoppricke : who was most fearfully possessed and tormented with the devill as also in what ugley shape he first appeared unto her how lamentabley she was handled with this evill spirit and at last how wonderfully the Lord delivered her : affirmed by these cridible witnesses there present November the fifteenth 1641, Stephen Hooper, Iohn Hooper, Iohn Gley, Alexander Eglestone, Anthony Westgarth, Alice Egleston and divers others* (London: for John Thomas, 1641) (hereafter *Strange newes*). The 1584 version is reprinted in full in T.I., *A miracle, of miracles As fearefull as euer was seene or heard of in the memorie of man. Which lately happened at Dichet in Sommersetshire, and sent by diuers credible witnesses to be published in London. Also a prophesie reuealed by a poore countrey maide, who being dead the first of October last, 1613. 24. houres, reuiued againe, and lay fiue dayes weeping, and continued prophesying of strange euents to come, and so died the 5. day following. Witnessed by M. Nicholas Faber, parson of the towne, and diuers worthy gentlemen of the same countrey. 1613, withall, Lincolnshire teares. For a great deluge, in which fiue villages were lamentably drovvned this present month* (London: [G. Eld] for Iohn Trundle, 1614), sigs. A3[r]-B2[v]

> suddaine and straunge death vpon periured persons, straunge sights in the Aier, straunge birthes on the Earth: Earth quakes, commetts and fiery Impressions, and all to put vs in mynde of God, whose woorkes are wonderfull.[92]

The author therefore urges readers

> to be watchfull for the day of the Lorde which is at hand, least sodainly his wrath be kindled against vs. Let vs therefore pray to almightie God to hold backe his Rod, to be mercifull to vs, and to forgiue vs all that is past: that through the assistaunce of his Spirite, we maie with penitent hartes liue in his feare to our liues ende.[93]

The possession cases were therefore firmly contextualised within apocalyptic events. As Stuart Clark argues, 'possession was readily absorbed by the apocalyptic conceptions of past, present and future which informed early modern demonology and witchcraft as a whole.'[94] These eschatological elements mean that its republication as the Hooper case was all the more fitting considering the tensions and armed conflicts at that time. Indeed, Durham and Northumberland were taken by Scottish forces in 1640, and Hooper's supposed possession occurred near the River Darwent [Derwent], which forms the border between the counties of Durham and Northumberland. This supports the idea that Hooper's case signified the end times, with the Civil War being seen as the ultimate indication.

Possession provided the ideal means by which God could communicate his displeasure over sinful behaviour and his warnings of the end of days because it was the most palpable example of the effects of sin: the possession was seen as demonstrating

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[92] Anon, *Dreadfull discourse,* sig. Aiii[v]; Anon, *Strange newes*, pp. 1-2. The 1641 version omits the 'fiery Impressions'.
[93] Anon, *Dreadfull discourse,* sig. Aiii[v]; Anon, *Strange newes*, p. 2
[94] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, p. 403. See also p. 407.

'how redy Sathan is to take hold on vs if we fall from God neuer so little'. Most importantly, possession cases provided the opportunity to repent. The reports of these cases therefore have a clear didactic purpose, evident in the statement that these wonders were sent primarily to 'put us in remembrance of our sinnes […] wherein if we continue, let us undoubtedly looke for the reward thereof, which is everlasting distruction, both of body and soule.'[95] William Perkins also promoted this idea of possession being the direct consequence of sin in a sermon delivered at Cambridge in the 1590s. Perkins maintained that a Christian could be the victim of bewitchment, and he stated that the afflicted person 'must enter into a serious examination of themselues, and consider the cause for which it pleaseth God to suffer Satan to exercise them with that kind of crosse. And here vpon diligent enquirie, they shall finde that their owne sinnes are the true and proper causes of these euills.'[96]

The 'postscript' of the 1641 account reveals the more specific concerns of the author:

> Arminians and fryers, soe neare together dwell,
>
> There is but wall betweene both[...] One like each other well:
>
> The Protestant walkes up and downe the streete (with greefe,)
>
> And in his sad distractions to God praes for yreleife.[97]

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[95] Anon, *Dreadfull discourse,* sig. Aiii[r], Aiii[v]; Anon, *Strange newes*, p. 1, 2

[96] William Perkins, *A discourse of the damned art of witchcraft so farre forth as it is reuealed in the Scriptures, and manifest by true experience. Framed and deliuered by M. William Perkins, in his ordinarie course of preaching, and now published by Tho. Pickering Batchelour of Diuinitie, and minister of Finchingfield in Essex. Whereunto is adioyned a twofold Table; one of the order and Heades of the Treatise; another of the texts of Scripture explaned, or vindicated from the corrupt interpretation of the Aduersarie.* (Cambridge: Cantril Legge, Printer to the Vniversitie of Cambridge, 1608), p. 230 (hereafter *Damned art*)

[97] Anon, *Strange newes*, postscript

The author clearly saw the Arminians as Catholics in disguise, and the publication of the Hooper case can therefore be seen as an expression of anxiety regarding the spiritual loyalties of the English church and a stark warning to avoid the trappings of the Catholics and the Arminians. Indeed, the incident was alleged to have occurred on 15th November, and it is in November 1641 that Ireland rebelled, a tangible expression of the Catholic threat. This would conceivably heighten this sense of living in an apocalyptic age and cause enough fear to prompt the publication of the Hooper case as a warning against a failure to secure the Church against Catholic powers. The body of the individual can be seen as a microcosm of the body politic that is tormented by the Devil's evil assaults (Catholicism/Arminianism) and needs deliverance. Maybe the author advocated Puritanism as the right path; this would make the use of possession more poignant in light of the Darrel controversy, as this advocated the reality of the phenomenon in the face of previous official hostility to it. The Puritans (associated with dispossession following the prosecution of Darrel) were the only ones who recognised the threat the Devil posed, and so were the only ones willing and able to exorcise these evil spirits, both out of individuals, and out of the body politic. One could therefore argue that after the Darrel controversy, possession came to carry these particular religious-political connotations.

Yet apart from the postscript, the content is identical in both versions, except for the place and people's names. Margaret Cooper's possession occurs in Ditchet (Dicheat), near Bruton in Somerset, whilst Margaret Hooper's possession occurs in Edenbyres, near the River Darwent in Durham. Both husbands are called Stephen, and are described as 'a yeoman', 'a man of good wealth and well beloued of his

neighbours'.[98] This emphasis was important, because it established his moral qualification for later dispossessing Margaret. Margaret's affliction started when she returned from visiting one of her husband's farms out of town (in the 1584 version it is in Rockhampton/Rockington, Gloucestershire, and in the 1641 version, it is Hanstonworth, three miles away from Edenbyres). Her first symptoms do not appear to be particularly spectacular, consisting of 'much idle talk', and a desire to see an 'old groat' which her son had found a week before, and also her wedding ring.[99] This perhaps represents a love of material things and a greed for worldly wealth. In any case, this behaviour was enough to classify her as 'one bewitched, or haunted with an evill Spirit' and so the husband persuaded her to pray to God, 'which shee partly did, but the devill who alwayes doth build the Chapell, so as he may to vex gods Church, began to withdraw her from prayer' and she asked again for the groat and wedding ring. The husband refused to show these things to her, and it was at this point that Margaret's symptoms began to escalate, as she started foaming at the mouth and shaking violently. After her fit had abated, she related to them how 'she been in the [Town] to beat awaie the Beare which followed her into the Yarde when she came out of the Countrie, which to her thinking had no hed.'[100] It is notable that the response of those gathered is that

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[98] Anon, *Dreadfull discourse*, sig. Aiiii[r]; Anon, *Strange newes*, p. 2

[99] Anon, *Dreadfull discourse*, sig. Aiiii[v]-Av[r]; Anon, *Strange newes*, p. 2-3

[100] Anon, *Dreadfull discourse*, sig. Aiiii[v], Av[r]-Av [v]; Anon, *Strange newes*, p. 3. The headless bear appears in John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, where he describes the persecution of one William Webbe of West Wycombe, 'Because hee set the Image of a headlesse Beare in the Tabernacle of S. Roke' in protest against the use of images. This suggests that the image of a headless bear was widely recognisable as a representation of the Devil. (John Foxe, *Actes and monuments of matters most speciall and memorable, happenyng in the Church with an vniuersall history of the same, wherein is set forth at large the whole race and course of the Church, from the primitiue age to these latter tymes of ours, with the bloudy times, horrible troubles, and great persecutions agaynst the true martyrs of Christ, sought and wrought as well by heathen emperours, as nowe lately practised by Romish prelates, especially in this realme of England and Scotland. Newly reuised and recognised, partly also augmented, and now the fourth time agayne published and*

they 'wished her to leave those uaine imaginations, perswading her that it was nothing but the lightnesse of her braine' and they urged her to recite the Lord's Prayer as a solution to her torments.[101] So although observers accepted that the Devil was affecting Margaret's mind, they did not accept that he had actually appeared as a headless bear, which reveals the different ways in which the Devil could be understood as acting upon people.

The climax of Margaret's possession occurred at midnight the following Sunday, with the appearance of 'a thing […] much like a beare, but it had no head nor taile, halfe a yard in height, and halfe a yard in length.' The bear-like creature, 'whiche we suppose to be the Deuill', physically tormented Margaret, stroking her feet, placing her head between her legs and rolling her around the house like a hoop. The observers were prevented from reaching Margaret because of 'an horrible stinke in the Hall, and such fiery flames, that they were glad to stop their noses with cloathes, and napkines', which clearly represents hell.[102] Margaret was eventually released by the bear and came up to the bedroom, but once there she thrusted her legs out of the window. The people in the

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recommended to the studious reader, by the author (through the helpe of Christ our Lord) Iohn Foxe, which desireth thee good reader to helpe him with thy prayer, Vol 2 (London: Iohn Daye, 1583), p. 1207)

In addition, in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-6), the character of Puck describes himself thus:

"Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier:
Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, *a headless bear*, sometime a fire;
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn." (William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 3, Scene 1, lines 922-927 (my italics)
<http://shakespeare.mit.edu/midsummer/midsummer.3.1.html> [accessed August 10 2009]

He also describes himself as a 'Hobgoblin', and 'Robin Goodfellow', both of which would be identifiable as demons.

[101] Anon, *Dreadfull discourse*, p. Av[v]; Anon, *Strange newes*, p. 3-6 [4]

[102] Anon, *Dreadfull discourse*, p. [6]-[9]; Anon, *Strange newes*, p. 6[4]-4[5]

room heard something knocking at her feet, and again, there were flames around her feet as well as a terrible smell. At this point,

> the sorrowfull husband and his brother, imboldened themselves in the Lord, and did charge the Devill in the name of the Father, the Sonne, and the holy Ghost, to depart from her, and to trouble her no more, then they laid hands upon her, and cryed to the Lord, to helpe them in their [grief] and so pulled her in again.[103]

This illustrates how Margaret was delivered literally out of the mouth of hell. The fact that only prayer is used to dispossess Margaret is significant, as it does not involve any hint of ritual or superstition, which would explain why it was deemed acceptable for republishing in 1641. A heartfelt, and orthodox, entreaty to God for deliverance was enough to save her; in the same way, the country still had time to save itself if it repented of its sins and returned to the correct path.

God's intervention was represented by the appearance of 'a thing like unto a little child, with a very bright shinning countenaunce, casting a great light in the Chamber.' Those gathered fell to their knees in thanks, acknowledging that God 'had so wonderfully assisted them, and so the child vanished away.' After this, Margaret 'asked forgiuenesse at Gods hands, and of all that she had offended, acknowledging that it was for her sinnes that she was so tormented if the euill Spirite.'[104] This makes it clear that Margaret was fully culpable for the torments that befell her, and this served the purposes of the 1641 publishers, as it conveyed the idea that the country's sins were the reason for the current conflict and warfare. It was the acknowledgment of this sin, and a more pious lifestyle, that secured Margaret against any future torment, as the account ends by

[103] Anon, *Dreadfull discourse*, p. [9]-[10]; Anon, *Strange newes*, p. 6
[104] Anon, *Dreadfull discourse*, p. [10]; Anon, *Strange newes*, p. 6

mentioning that she had kept well since the incident, 'for there hath beene with her many godly learned men.'[105] It is interesting that the godly men became involved only after the actual dispossession, but their presence also suggests that Margaret was more conscientious in her spiritual duties after her possession, seeking guidance from these godly men. The 1584 version names two of these men as 'Maister Doctor Corrington, Parson of the same Towne, and Maister Nicholles, Preacher of Bruton'. The 1641 version does not name any preachers, but, as with the 1584 version, mentions that there were many 'from diuers places of the Countrey'. This interest of a significant number of godly men testifies to the truth of the matter, and also emphasises the spiritual significance of the case. It was also important for the purposes of the publisher of the 1641 version, as it emphasised the need for godly men to watch over the country.

The next significant case was that of the Throckmorton children and the 'witches of Warboys' (1589-93). In November 1589 the youngest daughter of the household, Jane, experienced convulsions and a trance. Within a period of two months, all the sisters in the house were having fits. Eventually, a number of the maid-servants also began exhibiting symptoms, and this continued for three years. During this time, repeated accusations of bewitchment were made against a neighbour Alice Samuel, her husband John and daughter Agnes. Alice was brought to live in the Throckmorton household for several weeks, during which time she was repeatedly urged to confess, and was also subjected to 'scratching'. This was a peculiarly English belief that witchcraft could be countered by scratching the witch. Eventually Alice did confess, just before Christmas, 1592. The Samuel family was tried at the Huntingdon Assizes

[105] Anon, *Dreadfull discourse*, p. [11], Anon, *Strange newes*, p. 6

before Judge Edward Fenner in April 1593, found guilty and hanged. After this, the Throckmorton children's symptoms disappeared.[106]

As mentioned in the Introduction, studies of possession in early modern England have tended to focus either on the political dimension encapsulated by the Darrel controversy, or on an attempt to explain what possession was 'really' representing. One aspect that has been stressed by J.A. Sharpe is that of rebellion and authority, which applies to the Throckmorton case because it involved children. He also examines the Starkie case (1595-93), which involved the household of Nicholas Starkie, in Cleworth, Lancashire. Starkie's children, John and Ann, began having convulsions in early 1595, and this then spread to include five other people in the household. John Darrel and George More were involved in the dispossessions.[107]

Sharpe argues that authority and age were major concerns in early modern England, with youth seen as the formative and therefore crucial stage in an individual's life. He states that many writers emphasised the importance of bringing up youth correctly, so that they became functioning members of family and society. He argues that 'historians of early modern England […] must recognise that age is one of the variables to be built into their models of social relations. If they are to do so, it is evident that issues revolving around the age hierarchy will crop up in a number of rather

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[106] Details of the case can be found in the anonymously penned *The most strange and admirable discouerie of the three witches of Warboys arraigned, conuicted and executed at the last Assises at Huntington, for the bewitching of the fiue daughters of Robert Throckmorton Esquier, and diuers other persons, with sundrie diuelish and grieuous torments. ; And also for the bewitching to death of the Lady Crumwell, the like hath not bene heard of in this age.* (London: Printed for Thomas Man and Iohn Winnington, 1593) (hereafter *Strange discouerie*). See also Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, pp. 49-52; Philip C. Almond, *The Witches of Warboys: An Extraordinary Story of Sorcery, Sadism and Satanic Possession* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2008)

[107] Details of this case can be found in Darrel, *True narration* and More, *True discourse*.

unexpected places.'[108] For Sharpe, one of these unexpected places is in cases of demonic possession, specifically in those cases that involved witchcraft accusations. He argues that possession cases allowed young people to become the centre of attention, but also to completely undermine what was seen as acceptable behaviour for young people. This could vary from minor infringements, as when one of the Throckmorton children played with her food and kept missing her mouth, to the more serious acts of blasphemy seen in the Starkie household, where the children mocked the Bible and the Lord's Prayer. Sharpe states that by highlighting what was perceived as demonically induced behaviour these cases illuminate what was seen as acceptable behaviour for children. In the Throckmorton case, this involved excessive and immodest laughter, and the children's chiding of the suspected witch, Sawyer, demonstrates how in cases of witchcraft, a young person was able to accuse and condemn an older person, thereby inverting the normal rules of interaction between adults and children.

Sharpe also points to Thomas' observation that many cases of possession occurred in godly households, stating that 'the normal emotional and spiritual rigours of a godly upbringing provided a sufficient basis for fears of demonic possession to flourish' and that therefore it is not surprising that the symptoms of possession amongst these young people involved blasphemy and irreligious behaviour.[109] However, he does recognise that some cases occurred in less godly households, and states that in these cases, they reveal 'the involvement of young people in that world of gossip and story-telling which must have played so large a part in spreading and refining ideas about

[108] J. A. Sharpe, 'Disruption in the Well-Ordered Household: Age, Authority, and Possessed Young People' in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Macmillan Presss Ltd, 1996), pp. 187-189
[109] Sharpe, 'Disruption', p. 205-206

witchcraft and in confirming the reputation for ill-doing of particular local women thought of as witches.'[110] For Sharpe then, cases of possession represented challenges to authority that were, paradoxically, permissible because they operated within the recognisable and accepted framework of possession.[111]

The cases that Sharpe looks at differ from the earlier cases of possession (except the Briggs/Pindar case) because they involve witches. In the dedication to Judge Edward Fenner, who presided over the trial, the writer of the Throckmorton report states that he wishes to provide a comprehensive account of the case 'for the furthering of the truth of this arraignment'.[112] The pamphlet therefore is concerned with reaffirming the validity of the judgement against the Samuel family. However, the message of the importance of a diligent and strong faith is still present. For example, when describing the torment of Elizabeth Throckmorton, the writer describes how 'in the time of her prayers […] shee [would] not cease vntill shee had finished them […] for though her torments increased neuer so much […] shee woulde goe forward until shee had ended them which was (no doubt) a good motion of the spirite and grace of God in the Childe.'[113] This also conveys the idea that the affliction was meant to refine and affirm the demoniac's faith. The accounts of the Starkie case were produced after Darrel's arrest, and so were necessarily more concerned with defending Darrel against the accusation of fraud, as shall be examined in more detail in Chapter Two.[114]

Sharpe's analysis is valuable in offering an insight into the dynamics of authority in the early modern household, but the reports are primarily valuable for what they

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[110] Sharpe, 'Disruption', p. 208
[111] Sharpe, 'Disruption', p. 208-209
[112] Anon., *Strange discouerie*, p. 2
[113] Anon., *Strange discouerie*, sig. D5[r]
[114] See below, pp. 113-115, 120-121

reveal about belief in demonic activity in this period because in both cases the bewitchment of the children is seen as something very real. Again, possession was still the result of sin (specifically that of the witch, but also sometimes those of the demoniac and the community) and the importance of faith and prayer in the deliverance of the demoniac is still emphasised.

These cases demonstrate what possession meant in early modern England. Firstly they reveal what combination of symptoms led to the diagnosis of possession, and secondly they indicate what possession meant to those involved in the cases, and those who reported them. The cases of possession involve vivid descriptions of the physical trauma suffered by those possessed, including a loss of senses, contortions, swellings, fits, speaking in strange voices and the apparent interaction of the demoniac with demonic spirits. It was the physical symptoms that alerted those around the demoniac to the possibility and eventual diagnosis of possession, but it was also these dramatic features that made the cases worthy of record and report. The cases were certainly used to reinforce a certain didactic message, namely the importance of pure living and a strong, resilient faith, but these messages are embedded within the narrative of the cases, rather than serving as the focal point of the reports, but this reveals that possession reports operated within the paradigm of didactic and spiritually edifying works. They served a complete spiritual function, independent of the controversy that the Darrel cases generated and were firmly entrenched within the spiritual culture of early modern England.

Chapter Two:
Denham, Darrel and the Political Problem of Exorcism

As seen in the previous chapter, possession was not without controversy. The Briggs/Pindar case indicates that by its very nature, it was subject to accusations of deliberate fraud. Belief in possession in general did not mean that every individual case was received with unconditional credulity. However, it is apparent that the case did not lead to a widespread dismissal of possession as a contemporary spiritual affliction either. It is therefore important to determine what it was about Darrel's activities that elicited such a hostile response.

As mentioned in the Introduction, historians have equated Darrel's activities with a Puritan propaganda campaign, a new tactic following the failure of the Classis movement. This belief is certainly expressed by Harsnett in his *Discovery*. He clearly saw the authorities as engaged in a battle against Darrel and his supporters, namely the Presbyterian Puritans, stating that

> many, who haue taken, M. *Darrels* cause most to hart, haue beene noted heretofore as fauorers of the ouerworne Consistorian faction. Of these premises it wold peradventure anger them, if any should collect, that in all likelihood, seeing neyther by learning, nor sufficient arguments, they could heretofore preuaile, for the setting vp of their Presbyteriall conceits, they thought to supply their wants therein, by this deuise of casting out Deuilles.[1]

This belief of a high propaganda potential in dispossession seems to have been accepted by historians, who see it in just such a light. This reading of the controversy depends

[1] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 15

upon the authorities versus Puritan paradigm that shapes our understanding of much of the ecclesiastical and religious history of this time. The authorities' reaction to Darrel's dispossessions is seen as part of their general anti-Puritan campaign, whilst the furthering of the Puritan cause is seen as Darrel's motivation. Indeed, Darrel recognised the underlying political motivations behind the whole controversy, stating that

> It may very probably be gathered, that the thinge which hath vexed the *Disc*. and made him sweate somuch about counterfeyting, is not the counterfeyting, and teaching to counterfeyt a possession: nor his hatred and abomination to sinne, and in particular to this detestable cousenage: but his hatred against the instrumentes which god vsed in these great workes of his: whome, together with also the same stamp, as from his soule he hath of long hated.[2]

He believed that the attack was based not on whether or not Sommers had faked his possession, but only Harsnett's personal opposition to the godly.

However, it is difficult to view Darrel's dispossessions as a deliberate and orchestrated campaign comparable to the Classis movement. As mentioned in the Introduction, Freeman has argued that Darrel's Puritan political agenda is apparent in three ways: firstly, they involved a network of the godly, including figures such as Arthur Hildersham and John Ireton; secondly because of some peculiarly Puritan sentiments, specifically the advocation of spontaneous prayer as more effective against the Devil than prescribed prayers; and thirdly, the dispossessions raised the popularity of Darrel, allowing him to promote his Puritan moral reforms.[3] These are certainly valid observations, but these features are not surprising considering that Darrel was a Puritan,

[2] Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 64-65
[3] Freeman, 'Demons', pp. 35-37

and do not necessarily indicate a deliberate propaganda campaign. So for example, Darrel's connection to figures such as Hildersham and Ireton reflects one of the defining characteristics of Puritanism as a community of the godly; to see this network primarily as a political faction is surely buying into the authorities' political rhetoric too literally. There is no evidence of a deliberately orchestrated plan to become involved in these cases in the first place, and then even how to handle them. The Puritan approach to dispossession was actually organic and continually negotiated during this time. It is also important to consider that it is precisely in these arenas of spiritual warfare that we would expect to see Puritan figures. The godly zeal that characterised Puritans means it makes sense that they were the ones who took an interest in, and were sought out to help in these matters. Therefore, features inherent within Puritanism meant that Puritan figures were as likely to be involved in dispossession from a spiritual, pastoral point of view, as from a cynical attempt to exploit these situations and further a Puritan agenda. The Puritan agenda was, in these cases, the deliverance of an individual from demonic attack, and the correcting of spiritual error of both the individual and those around them. This agenda needs to be distinguished from a political campaign of ecclesiastical reform.

Darrel's activities have inadvertently been viewed through the retrospective lens of the controversy that ensued following the dispossession of Sommers in 1598. However, it is worth examining the cases Darrel was involved in prior to the Sommers case in order to determine what his motivations were in undertaking these dispossessions, rather than accepting the authorities' assessment of these activities as primarily political. I am not arguing that Darrel was completely naïve and ignorant of

the political potential of dispossession, or that his motivations for seeing his activities in print were completely selfless. However, I would argue that his primary motivation was not as self-serving, or politically driven as has been portrayed by historians hitherto. I will therefore examine the Darrel cases on their own merits, removed from the controversy in order to determine the broader reasons for Darrel's involvement in dispossessions, and their subsequent publication, with reference to the way in which possession fitted into the early modern mind-set. It is important that Darrel's dispossessions are not approached in isolation, but rather read in the tradition of possession narratives that we examined in the previous chapter.

Even though the cases inevitably became politicised after Darrel's arrest, it is still possible to see what possession originally meant to those involved in the cases. The extent of the authorities' reaction also needs further explanation because in reality, the propaganda scope of Darrel's practices was not necessarily of much consequence. The political aspect of the authorities' reaction cannot be denied, but I think there is another fundamental dimension that contributed to the authorities' hostility towards Darrel's activities: anti-Catholicism. This chapter will therefore look at how the campaign against Darrel can be read in light of the post-Reformation hostility towards Catholic practices, particularly the rite of exorcism.

We will start with *The most wonderfull and true storie*, the account of the dispossession of Thomas Darling, which was published in 1597, two years before Darrel's arrest. This case certainly fits the 'traditional' possession account, incorporating conversion narrative elements, and the edification literature aspect, whilst giving some insight into the position that the phenomenon occupied in early modern

English spiritual life more broadly. Darling, a thirteen year old from Burton on Trent, began having fits in February 1596. These escalated to include vomiting, visions of green cats and green angels and partial paralysis. Initially those around him sought a natural explanation for his behaviour. Jesse Bee notes that many believed it to be 'the Falling sicknes', and Darling's aunt attempted to procure a diagnosis by taking Darling's urine to a doctor who was unable to find a natural reason for his behaviour and so 'doubted [feared] that the Childe was bewitched'. The aunt disagreed with this diagnosis, and 'imparted it to no bodie; rather imagining it to bee (though some strange, yet) a natural disease.'[4] Bee does not offer an explanation for the aunt's reluctance to accept the diagnosis of bewitchment and so it is not known if she doubted its possibility, or if she simply preferred the cause to be natural. However, this highlights the fact that possession was not the automatic diagnosis for these sorts of symptoms, and that those involved in witchcraft cases were not necessarily the naïve and unquestioning figures they are sometimes portrayed to be, and nor did they all rabidly seek to incite suspicions of witchcraft.

It is also important to note that the eventual diagnosis of Darling as possessed was a collaborative one. The suggestion of bewitchment emerged after it seemed that there was no natural explanation. Bee himself also suggested to the aunt that witchcraft could be a cause, and it was after Darling overheard this that he revealed that when he was lost in the woods, he came across 'a little old woman […] As I passed by her in the Coppice, I chanced (against my will) to let out a scape; which shee taking in anger sayd, *Gyp with a mischief, and fart with a bell: I wil goe to heauen, and thou shalt goe to*

[4] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 2

hell.'[5] The revelation of this encounter seemed to confirm the suspicions of bewitchment, and an organic process of discussion and investigation ensued–however prejudiced and primitive from our perspective. Bee reveals how once Darling reported the incident with the old woman, 'a more vehement suspition arising some iudged it to be the Witch of *Stapen-hill*: others because she was olde and went little abroad, rather thought it to be *Alice Gooderidge* her daughter, who was had in great suspition of manie to be a dooer in those diuellish practices, as afterward it proued.' The accusation gained momentum as his grandmother, a Mistress Walkeden, wife of William Walkeden, the vicar of Clifton Campville, Staffordshire, summoned Alice Gooderidge and began to question her.[6] During this questioning it emerged that Gooderidge had not received Communion for twelve months, and there followed a fairly standard examination into her culpability. She was asked to recite the Creed and the Lord's Prayer and she failed to do either. Gooderidge was examined for a witch's mark, during which the examiners discovered 'a thing much like the vdder of an ewe that giueth sucke with two teates, like vnto two great wartes'.[7] Darling's fits also increased in her presence and he was made to scratch her in an attempt to counter her bewitchment.

Significantly, the investigation into the possible witch began long before Darrel appeared on the scene, and it reveals much about local dynamics already in place. Bee states that Elizabeth Wright, the mother of Alice Gooderidge, had been brought before the Justice of Peace, Thomas Graysley, four or five times previously on suspicion of witchcraft.[8] What this witchcraft entailed is hinted at when Bee relates how Wright

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[5] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 4
[6] Gibson, *Possession,* p. 49
[7] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, pp. 8-9
[8] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 7

offered to help out with an unruly cow 'vpon condition that she might haue a peny to bestow vpon her god, and so she came to the mans house kneeled downe before the Cow, crossed her with a sticke in the forehead, and prayed to her god, since which time the Cow continued wel.'[9] The fact that she prayed to 'her god' emphasises the perception that she was praying to a being distinct from the one true God, which could be understood to be the Devil, although it is not made explicit in the text. A similar interpretation is also found in the report of the Throckmorton case. During the questioning of the accused witch, Alice Samuel, the writer describes how

> The schollers enquired about her seruice of God, and profession of her faith. But al [that] they could, was, that her God would deliuer her, her God would defend her […] alway[s] vsing the phrase of my God wil do this [and] that for me: which being noted by one of them, he asked if she had a God alone, or if she did not serue the same God that others did? She aunswered, yes she did: yet much adoe they had to bring her from the phrase my God, to say the God of heauen [and] earth.[10]

One can see how every utterance of the supposed witch was scrutinised and how a previously benign statement could contribute to the accused's condemnation under the circumstances of the interrogation. In the Gooderidge case, the marking of the cross would have been viewed as problematic, especially with its echoes of Catholic ritual, as well as the soliciting of money for such services. Sir Humphrey Ferrers, the former High Steward of Tamworth, eventually committed Gooderidge to Derby jail.[11] All of

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[9] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 10
[10] Anon, *Most strange and admirable discouerie*, sig. E3[v]-p. [33]
[11] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, pp. 9-10. For Ferrers see P.W. Hasper (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1558-1603* (1981)

this occurred before Darrel arrived on the scene, and it is worth considering that the accusations of witchcraft might very well have amounted to nothing if not for the involvement of those of political standing, who drove the matter forward.

Once bewitchment was confirmed as the cause, those around Darling began to seek out a remedy for the affliction. This process as revealed in the narrative provides an insight into the reality of dealing with this kind of affliction in early modern England. On a number of occasions, Darling was offered the option of utilising the help of a 'witch'. Bee may have used the term polemically in order to indicate that the methods of these women (presumably folk healers, probably much like Gooderidge) were akin to witchcraft. However, despite the negative connotations of the term, what is clear is that these witches were well known within the community. Onlookers seem to have had no problem in offering them as a solution, which suggests that they were able to make a distinction between malevolent and 'good' witchcraft, and that the latter was readily utilised.

However, there were those who opposed the use of such services. Bee describes the presence of an unidentified 'honest man' who warned that 'To seeke helpe at a Witch, is wicked and dangerous.'[12] This figure represents the voice of orthodoxy within the narrative, but also reveals the variety of beliefs that existed regarding the definition and acceptability of witchcraft. Later on, Bee relates how two more offers were made to assist Darling, one from the 'widdow *Worthington* the good Witch of Hoppers' and the other from 'a Witch about *Couentry*'. These offers were steadfastly refused by 'the mother of the Childe [who] (detesting the diuells helpe) thanked those two for their

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<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/constituencies/tamworth> [accessed November 4 2012]

[12] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 22

kindnes towards hir, but sharply reprooued them for attempting a thing so vnlawfull.'[13] However, the family did retain the services of a 'cunning man', who attempted to elicit a confession from Alice Gooderidge. His involvement was seen as acceptable because he 'hated al Coniuration and Inchauntment, so it should bee manifest what course hee tooke for effecting those matters.' This course consisted of the cunning man's 'ridiculous practise' of putting new shoes on Gooderidge's feet, then placing her close to the fire so that her feet burned.[14] This attempt to extract a confession through physical duress was unsuccessful and as Darling's symptoms continued to intensify, Arthur Hildersham and other godly ministers visited him.

D.P. Walker has argued that Hildersham expressed doubt about the possibility of the contemporary possession and also a reluctance to utilise dispossession as a propaganda tool. It is worth quoting Hildersham's opinion in its entirety:

> M. Hildersham after that by certaine questions, hee had made trial of the boys faith, said openly, that howsoeuer the Papists boasted much of the power their priests had to cast out diuells, and the simple euerie where noted it as great discredit to the Ministers of the Gospel, that they do want this power, yet did he professe there was no such gift in them, that thogh the Lord oft in these daies, by the praiers of the faithful casts out diuells, yet could he not assure them to cure him. To holde this faith of myracles to remaine still in the church, is an opinion dangerous. That seeing to be p[o]ssessed is but a temporall correction, & such as whereby both the glorie of God and the saluation of the partie may be furthered, it can not without sinne be absolutely prayed against: al which notwithstanding, that there is a good vse of praier in such a case, and of fasting also, to procure that the iudgement may be sanctified to the beholders, and the possessed

[13] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 18
[14] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, pp. 23-25

himself; yea to obtain that he may be deliuered from it, if the Lord see it be best for his owne glorie.[15]

It is evident that Hildersham shows a recognition of the propaganda aspect, and the fact that Catholic exorcisms were seen as powerful validations of their faith, but he resisted the urge to fight back in kind, maintaining a difference between the seemingly miraculous exorcisms of the Catholics and the permissible method of humble supplication by prayer that should be adopted by the faithful. However, although prayer could result in the deliverance of demoniacs, Hildersham did emphasise that there could be no guarantee of the result, as this was wholly up to God's will. This distinction is important because it distinguished non-miraculous prayer from the automatic, ritualistic aspects of Catholic exorcism. He was also worried that because possession was an affliction visited upon a person by the express permission of God, as a judgement for some sin, praying against it would be an attempt to undermine God's will in punishing the individual (or the community) and hence interfering with God's message. Therefore, on closer inspection, Hildersham's hesitation about dispossession is based not so much on scepticism as suggested by Walker, but more on a concern about the correct way to deal with it in light of what it meant in relation to God's judgement and will.

This concern with the spiritual significance of Darling's affliction dominates the report. The main thrust of the narrative is to illustrate the ongoing battle between Darling and the Devil, and, within this battle, to convey the means by which the Devil can be defeated. Bee is careful to establish Darling's solid grounding in spiritual

[15] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, pp. 26-27. Cf. Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 77-78

matters, by stating that he 'shewed the frutes of his education, which was religious and godly' through discussion with those around him, and through his desire 'that (if God had so been pleased) hee might haue liued to be a preacher to thunder out the threatenings of Gods word, against sinne and all abhominations, wherewith these dayes doo abound.'[16] This places his possession within a broader context: Darling, who represented the godly, suffered for the sins of those around him, in order to bring them to repentance. His desire to become a preacher can be seen as a precursor to, and the reason for, his possession. Instead of affecting people through his words, he instead affected them in his display of godly resistance to the Devil's assaults.

Edifying lessons are conveyed throughout the narrative. For example, Darling resisted the temptation to worship the Devil even though he promised a kingdom, a palace and freedom from his torments, by asserting: 'I shall worship the Lord God onely.'[17] Darling certainly serves as the exemplar of faith and resistance, declaring that 'if thou torment me 3000 times more, my faith is so strong, that I will worship none but the liuing God.'[18] The lesson here is clearly that one must endure in faith regardless of whatever suffering the Devil inflicted. Indeed, it is clear that faith was Darling's main form of defence as he contended with the Devil, as he boldly declared: 'doost thou say my faith is but weake? Sathan, it is too strong for thee to ouerthrowe.'[19] His effectiveness in resisting the Devil was therefore an affirmation of the strength of his faith, and an exhortation to the witnesses and readers to cultivate a similar one.

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[16] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 2
[17] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 10
[18] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 12
[19] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 15

Despite these displays of resistance, Darling's affliction continued and Darrel was eventually sent for by Darling's grandfather, who had heard of his role in Katherine Wright's dispossession.[20] Darrel's role in the narrative is very small: indeed, he was not even present in the final dispossession but he did confirm that Darling was indeed possessed, advising that 'the onely way for his deliuerance was to resist sathan; in which if he failed, he shuld sin against God: because it was a breach of the Commandement, *Resist the deuill &c*. That for his further incouragement, he had a promise of victorie, in that it is said, *he will or shall flee*.'[21] This demonstrates that Darrel understood possession to be a test of faith and that it highlighted the need for every Christian to actively resist the Devil. Darrel also clearly saw faith as being fundamental in defeating the Devil.

This requirement of faithfulness also extended to those around Darling as Darrel urged them to pray and fast for Darling, referring directly to Matthew 17:21 and Mark 9:29, where Jesus stated that the demons in question could only come out through prayer and fasting. Notably, Bee stated that he quoted the verses in order 'to put by all doubts' by emphasising the scriptural affirmation of prayer and fasting.[22] This suggests that there were those who questioned the validity of prayer and fasting, but whether this was because they doubted the affliction in the first place or preferred a Catholic exorcism is unclear. Darrel declined participation in this 'to auoide note of vainglorie' but also

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[20] Darrel, *Detection*, p. 173; Gibson, *Possession*, p. 49. Katherine Wright, a seventeen year old girl from Derbyshire, was dispossessed by Darrel in 1586. The first dispossession was unsuccessful so Darrel was called back and identified and expelled eight separate demons from Wright. There was no published account of this case, so the details we have are from the confession recounted in Harsnett, *Discovery* (pp. 299-314) and Anon, *The trial of Maist. Dorrell*, pp. 17-22. For a concise narrative account, see Sands, *Demon Possession*, pp. 109-127

[21] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 33

[22] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 33

because 'he saw no such necessitie by reason of the Childes firme faith.' This emphasises the idea that dispossession was the result of the individual's display of faith rather than external ritual. At the same time, the incident also conveys the idea of a communal responsibility for the deliverance of a demoniac. Bee describes how the demons were directly affected by the prayers of those surrounding Darling, as they cried out from within Darling: '*we cannot preuaile, his faith is so strong, and they fast and pray, and a Preacher prayeth as fast as they*.'[23] Darrel's appearance was a catalyst for this, as he urged the onlookers to pray, but he was not the sole figure who actively dispossessed Darling; in fact the deliverance was very much the result of a collective undertaking by the demoniac and those around him under the guidance of a godly pastor. The overriding factor is the demonstration of faith: of the demoniac, of the community and of the preacher, to resist the Devil and pray for deliverance.

Darrel appears once again after Darling's initial dispossession to warn him about the possibility of repossession, and it does appear that Darling was again visited by demons.[24] In this second assault, he lost feeling in his legs and experienced trances where he battled with the Devil once more. Bee makes a distinction between this assault and his prior torments, stating that 'how euer sathan greeuously assaulted him, yet he not once torment him, because he was not as before in him which also some of the Boyes words confirmed.'[25] It seems that the first possession was understood as the physical presence of the demons within the body but during the second vexation the attacks were purely external in nature. It is also possible that the torment was seen to continue because the witch continued to live. Bee ends his narrative by stating that 'the

[23] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 34
[24] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 38
[25] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 39

Witch is dead, had she liued, she should haue bin executed.'[26] This demonstrates how witchcraft added another dimension to the case. Whilst Darling's possession was a test of faith, it was also the result of an external source of evil, the witch, and that problem also had to be dealt with. Therefore possession, when tied with witchcraft, was not just a spiritual matter, but also a concern for the courts.

The ultimate aim of these cases, however, was the glorification of God as the ultimate deliverer of the demoniac. After Darling's initial dispossession, Bee describes how 'Being thus fully recouered, he went presently into the towne, that it might appeare what Iesus had done for him, to the praise of his glorie.'[27] This emphasises how possession and dispossession was by nature a public thing: it was seen as something that needed to be shared and reported and appropriately celebrated, in order to give God thanks and praise. Bee concludes the report by stating that Darling 'hath remained [well] euer since, which the Lord continue to his owne glorie, the ioy of the godly, and the childes comforte' and so God was praised for his 'gracious assistance in this myraculous worke'.[28] The dispossession of Darling was therefore seen as positive in three respects: it displayed God's glory and power; it confirmed the convictions of the godly by demonstrating the efficacy of faith and prayer; and it delivered the individual from distress, whilst also edifying those around.

The Darling narrative does confront the issue of the suspicion of 'dissembling' on Darling's part. Bee relates how Darling was visited by one 'whose name Ile passe ouer in silence' who instructed Darling to stop faking his possession because there were

[26] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 43
[27] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 38
[28] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 43

no witches and also asked Darling if he 'thought there were a god?'[29] Here is presented a clear connection between the denial of witchcraft and demonic activity and atheism. Bee also relates how 'his Frendes at *Caldwall* stood in doubt of' Darling's possession, which demonstrates that before possession became a politically charged issue, there was no uniform belief in the phenomenon. Attitudes towards it were certainly more nuanced and complex and surely varied within each individual circumstance. We do not know why these friends doubted, nor do we know the extent of their doubt: whether it was a disbelief in demonic possession generally, or just Darling's affliction in particular. However, the rest of the narrative conveys a sense of people willing to believe in the possibility of possession enough to undertake an investigation and to offer assistance with the deliverance.

The tendency of historians, mentioned in the Introduction, to subsume interpretations of possession cases within a rather Whiggish analysis, certainly applies to the Darrel cases. For example, D. P. Walker sees Darling's possession as 'an easy short-cut to sanctity' rather than a genuine religious experience.[30] Darling does convey a sense that to be possessed was a special sign of favour, as he compared his afflictions to the sufferings of the apostles and martyrs, declaring 'I rejoice that [God] hast accounted me woorthie to suffer these cruell torments.'[31] Walker states that 'As a demoniac Darling gets high marks; he was both imaginative and original. The wish to have a good possession took the form of being simultaneously both divinely inspired and diabolically possessed.'[32] The same tone is adopted with regards to Richard

[29] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 15
[30] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 78
[31] I.D., *Most wonderfull storie*, p. 28
[32] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 54

Mainey, a demoniac in the Denham exorcisms. Walker claims that 'He is the only one of the four who, as a demoniac, shows any real talent and imagination.'[33] Walker's reading of the events is therefore coloured by his belief that these were deliberately orchestrated events contrived to demonstrate the demoniac's holy status. He argues that 'the example of such heresiarchs as [Anabaptist leader] David Joris, [Christian Cabbalist] Guillaume Postel, or [founder of the Family of Love] Hendrik Niklaes would not encourage anyone to *pretend* to possession by a good, divine spirit' and so they disguised their good possession under the veil of demonic possession.[34] This cynical approach sees possession cases as calculated attempts by individuals in quests to gain spiritual notoriety but fails to consider that these may have been expressions of genuine spiritual battles. Indeed, if we accept that Darling 'had serious ambitions of becoming Puritan saint'[35] then we can also see his possession as a genuine manifestation of his godly impulses. We should also not rule out the possibility that people like Darling and Mainey may genuinely have believed that they were serving as a conduit for God's voice.

Marion Gibson also explains Darling's possession with reference to external factors, particularly local political and religious circumstances in Burton. She argues that local economic tensions relating to the mills, coupled with the town's transitional status towards a self-governing borough and the uncertainty this created amongst tradespeople in the town 'made it desirable for a boy in Burton to pretend to a possession by Satan.' Gibson also describes how there was a significant godly community in Burton that met regularly at Ashby, Appleby, Packington and Repton, and

[33] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 46
[34] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 17 (my italic)
[35] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 54

so 'It suited Darling personally to assert intense godliness, because it placed him at the centre of his community's concerns, and it suited them to believe him […] By laying claim to an extraordinary event, at once a chastisement and a blessing the godly of Burton were claiming not only that they were favoured religiously, but that in political terms they were God's chosen people too.'[36] It is unclear the extent to which Gibson sees these as deliberate and conscious motivations for the occurrence and publication of Darling's torments. However, this argument essentially shifts the interpretation of the incident from being an expression of religious angst (or ambition) and a manifestation of confessional politics, into the expression of local political and religious anxieties instead. Yet the links Gibson draws are tenuous at best, and the conclusions purely speculative. The text itself does not really convey any of these threads, and even with the broader context made apparent, the text still reads primarily as one of religious edification.

The Darling narrative also fits within the eschatological framework proposed by Stuart Clark.[37] The Darling account is prefaced by Darrel, where he refers to Revelations 12:12, where it is stated that 'The Diuel […] hath great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.' Darrel saw this prophecy as being fulfilled not only in the Devil persecuting and tempting the saints, but also 'in tyrannizing […] them by torments.'[38] Darrel saw possession as a valid and expected affliction, in light of the coming apocalypse. Clark points to Darrel's later accounts, *An apologie* and *A true narration*, both of which were written after his arrest, where Darrel again refers to the

[36] Gibson, *Possession*, p. 55
[37] See above, pp. 35-36, 83-85
[38] John Darrel (?), 'To the Reader', *Most wonderfull storie*, sig. A2[r]

idea of possession as a sign of the end times.[39] Referring to the biblical references that indicate an increase of demonic activity in the end times (1 Timothy 4, 2 Timothy 3, 2 Peter 3 and Jude), Darrel maintained that 'in these last dais there shall be perilous and sinfull times, wherein iniquity shall abound, soe as the sonne of man when he commeth, shall scarcely find "any fayth vpon the earth."'[40] Clark astutely argues that 'the polemical circumstances in which he made this remark ought not to be allowed to obscure its cogency.'[41] I think the cogency is even more apparent from the fact that the same thinking appears in the Darling account, thus demonstrating how this factor informed the understanding of possession cases independent of the later political controversy.

The most wonderfull and true storie is valuable as it is the only surviving record of Darrel's activities before his arrest and, as has been demonstrated, what is notable about this report is the fact that it is primarily *not* about Darrel. At the end of this text, Bee promises a report of the dispossessions that had taken place in the Starkie household. An account of the case appeared in 1597, written by John Dickens, a minister who had taken part in the exorcisms, but unfortunately no copies of this book survive. Therefore the only accounts we have of these dispossessions, and that of William Sommers, were produced in the context of Darrel's arrest, trial and conviction and so necessarily lean towards attempting to vindicate Darrel from all charges. The works in question include the anonymously penned *A breife narration of the possession, dispossession, and, repossession of William Sommers* (1598) and *The triall of Maist. Dorrell* (1599); Darrel's *A brief apologie prouing the possession of William Sommers*

[39] Darrel, *Apologie*, fol. 12 [v]
[40] Darrel, *True narration*, p. 27
[41] Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 403

(1599), his *Apologie* (1599), *A true narration* (1600) and his reply to Harsnett's *Discovery*, *A Detection of that Sinnful, Shamful, Lying and Ridiculous Discours of Samuel Harshnet* (1600); and More's *A true discourse* (1600).

The Starkie case began in 1595 when the son and daughter of Nicholas Starkie began having fits. Starkie attempted to cure his children first through medicinal means, then by appealing to a Catholic priest, and finally by turning to a local 'cunning man' called Edmund Hartley, a 'coniuerer' who used 'popish charmes and hearbs' to cure the children. Soon after Hartley's appearance, three other girls in the Starkie home began having fits as well. At this point, Hartley was accused of bewitching the children, a maid, Jane Ashton, and a relative of the family, Margret Byrom. Starkie consulted Dr John Dee who was at this time residing in Manchester (Dee had been involved in the case of Ann Frank, whom he tried to dispossess in 1590 by anointing her breast with oil. However, a month later she committed suicide by slitting her throat.).[42] Dee advised Starkie to seek out some godly ministers who would pray and fast for the demoniacs and recommended Darrel, whom he had heard of through the Darling case. Darrel was also apparently recommended by a Justice of the Peace, which established his credibility. Starkie therefore sought out Darrel and George More. Darrel, More and the Starkie's pastor, a M. Dickens, as well as about thirty others gathered together for a day of prayer and fasting until, after much escalation in their physical torment, six of the demoniacs were delivered. The remaining demoniac, Jane Ashton, eventually became a Catholic, which for Darrel meant that she had become fully the property of the Devil.

Darrel relates how evil spirits visited the demoniacs again after their initial dispossession but that this time the spirits sought consent to re-enter into their bodies.

[42] Sands, *Demon Possession*, p. 37

As in the Darling case, there seems to be a distinction here between the first possessions, which are seen as internal, and the second afflictions, which, although almost equally traumatic, were inflicted externally upon the body. Darrel states that the Devil could only re-enter with the individuals' permission, thereby emphasising the importance of steadfast faith and resistance. Having succeeded in withstanding these assaults, the six were freed from the Devil. In the meantime, Hartley was tried and convicted of conjuring in March 1597 and hanged as a result.[43]

The Starkie possessions were the only case not attacked by the authorities during Darrel's trial. Therefore, Darrel's *True narration* sought to establish his integrity by highlighting his involvement in an untarnished case. He likely wanted to demonstrate the continuity and similarities between the Starkie and Sommers cases, and that it was therefore unjust that that should be questioned when the Starkie dispossessions were unchallenged. Because it was intended to defend Darrel against charges of fraud, the *True narration* reads much more like a deposition, lacking the edification subtext detectable in the Darling account. The narrative is removed from the context of spiritual edification and placed within the confines of political rhetoric. Darrel wanted to emphasise the fact that he only became involved in the Lancashire case after he was actively sought out by a desperate Nicholas Starkie, who, 'according to the counsel before giuen to him, procured first one preacher then an other to them: but they knew not well what to say to their affliction.'[44] Darrel therefore conveys the idea that his 'fame' was necessary and valuable precisely because it was this fame that led Starkie to him, and eventually to the dispossessions.

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[43] The main accounts for the Starkie case are found in More, *True discourse* and Darrel, *True narration*, pp. 1-14
[44] Darrel, *True narration*, p. 8

Upon receiving the request Darrel sought 'first the aduice of many of [his] brethren in the ministery' with whom he 'met together at an exercise', after which he proceeded to visit the Starkie household. This emphasises the fact that Darrel did not blindly pursue the case out of selfish ambition, but only proceeded to get involved after receiving the counsel and blessing of other godly ministers. With regards to Sommers, Darrel again wished to emphasise that he did not force himself into the situation but rather that he was actively sought out, stating that 'I was importined in his behalfe, first by two letteres, after by another from the *Maior*, and therein I went vnto hym.'[45] Because the authorities had accused him of being motivated by a quest for personal glory, it was important for Darrel to establish that he had acted correctly and for the right reasons in these cases.

Darrel recognised the predicament he had been placed in: any attempt to defend himself was seen as further contemptuous behaviour, and also as factious and destabilising to the unity and authority of the Church of England. Therefore, Darrel took pains to explain his attempts to defend himself in print. *A Brief Apologie* was addressed to Sir Thomas Egerton, the Lord Keeper, Sir John Popham, the Lord Chief Justice and Sir William Periam, Chief Baron of the Exchequer, in the hope of persuading them to overturn his conviction by alerting them to the apparent injustices of the trial. He argues that witnesses in his favour were 'reiected [and] sharplie censured' whilst 'all partiall persons that could be thought vppon, were presently called.' Furthermore, a petition to appoint new 'indifferent' Commissioners was ignored. Darrel argues that this denial of a fair trial had forced him to seek justice elsewhere. Darrel was aware that he could be accused of writing in order to 'goe about raising mutinies

[45] Darrel, *True narration*, p. 17

among [the] Queenes subiectes, or to discredit the Ecclesiasticall statute, or hir Maiesties commission for ecclesiasticall causes' but he argued that he was not doing anything wrong in seeking a review from the chief lawmakers as 'if one ecclesiasticall person among the Commissioners be challenged before your LL. who are his betters, and equall in commission, and haue authoritie to redresse his abuses, what is this to the Ecclesiasticall estate?' As Darrel was being condemned under the law, he felt he had the right to entreat the chief lawmakers to redress his grievances.[46]

In *A true narration,* Darrel justifies himself by appealing to the overarching importance of truth. Darrel was adamant that the authorities should not be allowed to have the final word on the matter, and he was determined to defend his reputation against the Church's false accusations. Darrel argued that people should have the opportunity

> to examine thoroughly what is saide of both sides: and then I doubt not but whosoeuer he be it shall be as easie vnto him to perceiue on which side the truth is, as opening his eyes to discerne betwixt light and darknes. And to the end the truth might appeare, [and] not always lye hid, and the falsehood be conuinced which hath hitherto prevailed, I haue presumed to publish these followinge lynes: wherein I could not be wanting […] seeing the truth so vniversally suppressed and troden as it were vnder the feete of men as mire in the streetes: and the falshod raigne as a queene what christian hart or louer of truth could endure to behold this.[47]

[46] John Darrel, *A Brief Apologie prouing the Possession of William Sommers. Written by Iohn Dorrell, a faithful Minister of the Gospell: but published without his knowledge, with a dedicatorie epistle, disclosing some disordered procedings against the saide Iohn Dorrell* ([Middelburg: R. Schilders], 1599), p. 8

[47]Darrel, *True narration*, pp. [1-2]

Darrel argued that 'at all times we are to contend for the truth' and that was the chief reason for the publication of the work. Darrel consciously portrayed himself as God's humble servant defending the work of God against those who would mock it. He stated that 'if I should haue abstayned from the publishing theirof I see not but that theirin I should haue failed in the performance of a necessarie dewtie, and so sinned against god: [and] preferred my owne quiet before the glorie of god, and the good of his people.'[48] With regards to his specific role in the dispossessions, Darrel points to the will of God as his defence, arguing that 'I ran not to any of my selfe […] the Lord seemeth to me to haue singled me out though most vnworthy, and more vnfite than many others, to this special worke. It stoode me then vpon to performe theis service whervnto god hath called [and] appointed me.' He saw his role as an act of obedience to God's calling on him, and argued that to ignore this would have been wrong, especially as he saw 'many erring exceedinglye herein, and greatlie mistaking this matter, both in the genreall and particular.' He believed that he had a responsibility to correct these abuses and misconceptions and to help the individuals in distress. There is a sense of bafflement on Darrel's part, that he should have to defend his hitherto unquestioned role as a pastor and that his actions should come under attack when they were meant to be positive expressions of spiritual care.

This sense of bafflement at the controversy is also detectable in *A brief apologie*, as the tropes that held implicit assumptions in the Darling narrative now come under renewed scrutiny in order to prove possession. Darrel relates what he saw as the incontrovertible reasons for believing Sommers to be possessed. He begins with the symptoms indicated in the Bible, including crying, gnashing of the teeth, foaming from

[48] Darrel, *True narration*, pp. [2-3]

the mouth, supernatural strength, and supernatural knowledge. Darrel asserted that the symptoms exhibited by Sommers 'are impossible to be counterfeited, that is to bee done by any arte of man how cu[n]ning soeuer he be: as the extraordinarie [and] supernaturall Actions or passions of his body, strength and knowledge.'[49] For Darrel, Sommers' behaviour was beyond natural explanation, and if we accept that Darrel believed in the reality of the biblical accounts of possession then we should not cynically doubt that he genuinely believed Sommers to be possessed based on his own, scripturally based, criteria. Darrel declared that

> If these things, most straunge and admirable, can bee done by any humaine skill, I denie not but that hee may be a counterfeite: but vntill that shall appeare, I must needs subscribe them to some supernaturall power, [and] that is the Deuill: for some cause of these rare effects must be had, [and] that must be either naturall or supernaturall, but a natural cause hereof can not be giuen. Of necessitie therefore there must bee some supernaturall which was an euill spirit possessing him.[50]

For Darrel, the diagnosis of possession was the only logical explanation for Sommers' symptoms. This was echoed by More in *A true discourse,* which describes the Starkie dispossessions, where he maintained that 'I hope it will appeare to the indifferent Reader, that such great thinges were done by the[m], as be very harde & vnvsual quite beyond the nature of things, [and] such as neither by arte, nor any humaine skil could be cou[n]terfaited.'[51]

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[49] Darrel, *Brief apologie*, p. 10
[50] Darrel, *Brief apologie,* pp. 4-5
[51] More, *True discourse*, p. 24

In light of this evidence, Darrel believed that Sommers' confession of faking was irrelevant, as it could not undo the truth of what was witnessed. He emphasised that 'For such thinges were seene in him, is already deposed by many' and the things witnessed were such 'which can not possibly be cou[n]terfeited' and 'cannot possiblie bee taught or learned by any' and therefore must be interpreted as a genuine case of possession.[52] In *A true narration*, Darrel emphasised that the diagnosis of Sommers as possessed was not a rash or impulsive judgement, but rather the result of a thorough examination of his symptoms. He states that 'My speech I caried for a season doubtfullie but after a while perceiuynge how it was with hym, I dyd assure hym that he was Possessed, and had in that bodye of his a deuill, and withal did soe frame the words of my mouth, as might best serue to prepare and stir him vp to a sperituall fight against satan, or resistance of him in faith.'[53]

For Darrel, Sommers' confession was the result of the Devil's temptation, but a contribution was also made by the actions of the jailers, Couper and Shepherd, who apparently used threats of violence to extract the confession.[54] Darrel states that 'These baytes thus layd by Satan [an]d wicked men, caught him, for presently after [and] not before, he made the cursed co[n]fession of cou[n]terfeiting.' Darrel astutely observes that 'he in saying hee had dissembled, was thereby freed from all suspition (or rather that malicious [and] false accusation) of witchcraft,' thus avoiding a far worse punishment.[55] For Darrel, the case came down to Sommers' word against his (and those of multiple witnesses), and he questioned why the authorities should believe Sommers'

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[52] Darrel, *Brief apologie,* p. 23
[53] Darrel, *True narration*, pp. 17-18
[54] Darrel, *Brief apologie,* p. 18. See also Darrel, *Detection*, p. 128
[55] Darrel, *Brief apologie,* p. 19

confession when he had also retracted the same.[56] He asked 'Why should we rather belieue him affirming then denying, […] yea who that is wise will give credit to such a double and false tongue?'[57] Darrel argued that if all Sommers had confessed to was true and he had indeed faked his possession, then he was 'an infamous deceauer' and a 'horrible blasphemer'. Darrel declared: 'is it not to be wondred at, that such an open and notorious lyar, as this boy is, should prevaile so long and so farre against a Preacher of the Gospell, by so palpable a lye and false accusation as this is.'[58] Therefore the authorities' chief witness had succeeded, in his confession of fraud, in discrediting himself.

This need to commit the truth to the written record, and to address abuses and misconceptions, is also evident in *A true discourse*. More states several reasons for publishing the work, with one being to counter the discrediting of the dispossessions of Darling and Sommers. He states that 'though the trueth of both be sufficie[n]tlie cleared therin, yet there is great opposition both by worde & writing offered of set purpose to hinder the crediting of either: I thought it fit to adde to these two the storie of those in Lancashire […] that this also being published as the thirde glorious witnes of the wonderfull workes of God wrought and seene in 3 seuerall Shires of our lande, all men might be the more mooved to beleeue the trueth of these thinges'[59] He also wanted to defend against claims that Catholics had carried out the dispossessions. But he stated that 'chieflie [I] haue taken in hande this brief discourse for the better clearing both of Ma. Darrell and my selfe, from those accusations and slaunders of cosinage &

[56] Darrel, *Brief apologie,* p. 21
[57] Darrel, *Brief apologie,* p. 20
[58] Darrel, *Brief apologie,* pp. 25-26
[59] More, *True discourse*, p. 4

counterfeiting, werwithall we are charged both by word and writing.'[60] It was important to publicise the Lancashire case as a defence because it was the one case that was not attacked by the authorities. By establishing the truth of that case, Darrel and More could undermine the validity of the accusations made regarding the other cases.

Indeed, Darrel himself raised the valid question of why the Starkie dispossessions had not been investigated, even though he dealt with them in the same manner–that is through prayer and fasting–as with Darling and Sommers.[61] Referring to Harsnett's *Discovery*, More states that it 'finds great fault with some of our friendes, for that they spake so much of the dispossession of Summers in a little treatise or two, but nothing of the dispossessio[n] of these 7 in Lancashire and of some others.'[62] Later, in *A Detection*, Darrel speaks of 'theire winkinge at theire 7 *Lancashire* counterfeits, and smoth [*sic*] passing by them not punishing them'. He argues that this was because the authorities discovered that '*they are no counterfeits*, and therefor it is best to let them alone, and not to punish all these innocentes: Lest they in their innocencie denying constantlye to haue counterfeited, and exclaiming against them, should bring them to great shame.'[63] He believed it was because of Sommers' wickedness that they were able to persuade him to confess, but they were unable to do the same with the Starkie household. Their exclusion from the proceedings was therefore held up as evidence of Darrel's innocence.

Darrel was also concerned with maintaining the reality of possession as a genuine affliction because he believed that to deny this effectively denied God his

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[60] More, *True discourse*, p. 6
[61] Darrel, *Brief apologie,* pp. 27-28
[62] More, *True discourse*, p. 7
[63] Darrel, 'The Epistle to the Reader', *Detection*, pp. [4-5]

sovereign authority and freedom. Darrel argued that 'it is more then bouldnes to say of the almighty that he cannot doe this or that, except it be such as is eyther contrary to his nature, or his reuealed will: which cannot be saide of this.'[64] Indeed, Darrel laid out several reasons why possession was God's will, emphasising the purpose he believed it served. He stated that 'The vse we are to make of this extraordinarie worke either concern[e]th the glorie of God and the stirring of vs vp to magnifie his great name, or the benefit of man, and good he may receiue.' This could be actioned in several ways. Firstly, it was a way by which 'wee may *beholde the iustice of god* in punnishing or correctinge sinne' thus discouraging sinful behaviour. Secondly, possessions revealed the '*omnipotencie and power of God*' through his subduing and expulsion of the Devil, which should encourage people to 'serue the Lord in feare and trembling.' Thirdly, dispossession pointed to the '*mercye of God*'; fourthly it illustrated the '*wisdom [and] immutabilitie of God*' in that He brings the affliction upon all men alike; fifthly it demonstrates God's faithfulness, as He delivers the possessed through prayer and fasting according to His promises. In all these ways, God was glorified, and men were encouraged towards His praise and a stronger faith. Darrel also believed possession could be used to '*conuince and stope the mouthes of the papistes*'. He pointed out that Catholics had issued direct challenges regarding the Protestants' failure to dispossess, and he argued that his cases rose to this challenge and robbed the Catholics of this weapon.[65] So one can see how Darrel systemised and solidified in a comprehensive manner the trends that were implicit in earlier possession accounts.

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[64] Darrel, 'The Doctrin of the Possession and Dispossession of Deminoiakes Ovt of the Word of God. Partiuclarly Applied Vnto Somers, and the Rest of the Persons Controverted Together. With the use we are make of the same.' In *True narration*, p. 27 (hereafter 'Doctrin of Possession')
[65] Darrel, 'Doctrin of Possession', pp. 67-70

Furthermore, Darrel saw these acts, by their very nature, as public demonstrations of God's power and so by necessity they had to be publicised. He argued that 'When the Lord then doth any great worke, we must *remember and obserue* it […] yea *meditate* therein, that so we may the better behold the power, the wisdome, the Iustice, and mercy of God, and prayse and magnifie him of the same.'[66] Darrel also believed that the accusations of counterfeiting, by denying God's work, attacked God Himself. Referring to Matthew 12:30 where Jesus declares that '*He that is not with me, is against me*', Darrel argued that 'it is not [e]nough, not to slaunder or impugne the workes of God which haue bene wrought amonge vs, as some doe: but that moreover we take heede that we approue not the slaunder of *counterfeiting* giuen out against them by our silence, but open our movthes in the defence and iustification of them.'[67]

Darrel later expressed 'wonder' at the claims that possessions no longer occur, arguing that 'there is neither iot nor tytle in the scripture for them.'[68] He also argued that he had tradition and precedent on his side, stating that 'all churchs […] giue theire full consent hereto, and many examples from age to age are giuen hereof' that prove the continuance of possession. Indeed he stated that it was not even worth listing the evidence because this would be 'a needlesse thing in so plaine and euident a matter'.[69] This conveys the fact that possession was generally not a disputed topic until this point. The weight of evidence was in favour of the phenomenon, and this was the presumption that people like Darrel acted upon. Indeed, Darrel pointed out that in the Darling case, Gooderidge was tried and convicted in a court of law. For the authorities to now accuse

[66] Darrel, *True narration*, p. [5]
[67] Darrel, *True narration*, p. [5]
[68] Darrel, 'Doctrin of Possession', pp. 26-27
[69] Darrel, 'Doctrin of Possession', p. 28

Darling of faking his possession meant that they 'co[n]deme also besides the Iurie, the Iudge, if not of iniustice, yet of simplicite'.[70] The fact remained that bewitchment was a valid offence according to the statute books and so the fact that Darrel suspected it in the cases he was involved in should not have been surprising, or, in his opinion, met with such fierce opposition and scepticism.

In Darrel's opinion, the allegations brought against him rendered the written record, and the testimony of hundreds of people, valueless and thereby challenged the very foundations of truth. Darrel argued that he and the witnesses had set forth all the details and that they 'haue obserued all necessary circumstances, the persons which were thus afflicted, the time when, the place where, and hereafter sundry of the witnesses before whome these things fell out shalbe produced.' He argued that these details could all be readily verified, which is why the events were put in print: if Darrel had made everything up, it would have been foolish for him to lay himself open to such exposure. Perhaps unwittingly, Darrel shed light on the way in which truth could be denied despite apparent evidence to the contrary. He stated that if, considering all the positive factors in his favour, people still denied the authenticity of his activities then 'I see not why he may not as well deny or doubt, whither any thing be true that is written in other stories: yea much better may on call in question almost any other human story: considering that thos parties whome histories past conscerne are deade, but these are aliue.'[71]

Although not made explicit, Darrel was perhaps suggesting that this attack on the value of the written record undermined the truth of any historical document–most

[70] Darrel, *Brief apologie,* p. 30
[71] Darrel, 'Doctrin of Possession', p. 3

notably the Bible itself. This anxiety over preserving the integrity of the written record is not surprising considering the Reformation ideal of *sola scriptura*. Of course this defence could be applied to Catholic miracle stories, but this was why Darrel's scriptural defence was especially important, as his aim was to prove that he was doing nothing contrary to what is found in, and ordained by, Scripture. He again reiterated that 'these persons we speake of, were ha[n]dled or vexed iust after the same ma[n]ner' as those demoniacs described in the Bible, and therefore, 'sei[n]g the like or the same effects were fou[n]d in both, why should not the like or same cause, from whe[n]ce those stra[n]g effects […] proceded, be in both?'[72] Darrel argued that biblical possession cases were not recorded 'only as mater of fact' but they had a prescriptive purpose, 'to giue a rule and leaue a direction, to his church, whereby to discerne of possession in the time to come.'[73] As mentioned above, Darrel's criteria for judging possession were based upon the symptoms described in the Bible. He therefore argued that 'Seeing then that these thinges agree and fall out iust according to the scriptures, and that herein we se still the scriptures fulfilled: why are we not rather hereby confyrmed, then stumble thereat as a rocke of offence?'[74] For Darrel and his supporters, the support of scripture testified to the truth of their activities and rendered the authorities' reaction all the more puzzling.

However, the controversy ensued precisely because both sides wanted to lay claim to the objective 'truth'. The authorities accusations of fraud against Darrel presented another version of the 'truth' and Harsnett's *Discovery* aimed to establish that this truth was incontrovertible fact. Harsnett wanted to 'prove' that Darrel was

[72] Darrel, 'Doctrin of Possession', p. 17
[73] Darrel, 'Doctrin of Possession', p. 19
[74] Darrel, 'Doctrin of Possession', p. 39

complicit in, and actually masterminded, a deliberate campaign of deception through fraudulent displays of dispossession. He maintained that Darrel had trained Sommers at Ashby-de-la-Zouch and then continued to coach him during the events in Nottingham.[75] He stated that 'The iustice of [Darrel's] sentence will sufficiently appeare by this treatise, inforced […] to be published by the casting out of certaine Pamphlets.'[76] This reveals that *A Discovery* was a response to Darrel and More's pamphlets, and their claims of an unfair trial. Harsnett's sought to discredit Darrel by attacking the authenticity of his previous cases, in particular the Darling dispossession. This was because he recognised that 'M. Darrels credit, touching his dealing with the boy of Burton, doth relie vpon a false and foolish booke, that was published of the said boyes pretended possession and dispossession.'[77] He understood that Darrel's reputation had been built up because of the publication of the Darling case, and so he wanted to destroy this reputation by presenting that record as false and unreliable.

Harsnett believed that the Darling dispossession was part of an elaborate conspiracy aimed at promoting Darrel as a celebrity exorcist. He argued that Darrel 'pretendeth' that he wanted to avoid glory, because if he truly wanted to avoid this, he would not have mentioned his modesty in the first place. He states that 'the cogitation thereof […] could neuer haue entred into a man of a single harte, and that thereby it may be reckoned for a note of vaine-glory, for any Minister to be present in such an action.'[78] For Harsnett, the very fact of Darrel's involvement was proof of his selfish motivation

[75] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 78. The whole of the second book of the work is an account of these alleged events, and contain the depositions of the witnesses that were brought against Darrel, including Sommers, Darling and Katherine Wright.
[76] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 9
[77] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 265
[78] Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 276-277

and glory-seeking ambitions. Furthermore, Harsnett picked up on the fact that the demons in the Darling dispossession seemed particularly affected by 'the Preacher' and his prayers, declaring that Darrel was 'so greedy of some commendation, as rather than faile, he was contented to receiue it from Sathan.'[79] But, as has been stated previously, the written record of the incident does not support this accusation of Darrel using the dispossession as propaganda. Granted, Darrel may have become more prolific after the incident but this might be expected in any case, regardless of whether it was Darrel's express intention.

However, it was for this reason that Harsnett needed to deconstruct the Darling narrative. He wanted to expose the story of what 'really' happened, and to present the written record as unreliable. He did this by questioning the construction of the written account. He emphasised the number of collaborators who had had a hand in assembling and editing the material in order to show that it was not a true record but a manipulated account intended to serve Darrel's propaganda campaign. He quoted Bee's admission that much of the record was written after the events and consisted of what he remembered or was from what others reported:

> Darling hauing had many fits in my absence, sometimes I was informed of them by worde of mouth, from those two that kept them, [and] sometimes I receiued some short notes. But for the most part, such information as I had, were by word of mouth, both from the said keepers, [and] diuers others. And when I was present myselfe at his fits, I tooke the notes of his speeches and other thinges which happened, which notes (when I came home) I ioyned together, as my memory would serue me: always studying rather

[79] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 277

> to write them in better order, then the boy spake them, then in worse: [and] rather binding myselfe to the sence of the boyes words, then to the words themselues.[80]

Bee goes on to state that Darling's speeches were often too fast or confusing to be transcribed word for word and so what he wrote down was a reconstruction and even then he was 'not sure that wither they told mee the truth directly, or that I haue therefore written euery thing, as I shoulde haue done.' Harsnett saw this as proof that the entire record was unreliable and must therefore be dismissed. Previous historians have not commented too much on the accuracy of the Darling narrative, perhaps accepting Harsnett's judgement that it is of a contrived event.

Indeed, I think it fair to consider that historical approaches to the Darrel cases have been coloured by the authorities' campaign against them. For example, Walker's assertion that Darling used possession as a means of gaining recognition as a Puritan saint echoes the 'confession' of Jesse Bee, where, under questioning at Darrel's trial, he stated that '[I] verily thinketh the boies fits were meere illusions: that the boy was very willing to fall into his fittes, because thereby he shew the graces of God in himself, by resisting of Sathan, as he did in some of his Dialogues with the Deuill.'[81] However, what is necessary to understand is that although the written record emerged through the filter of godly conviction and therefore has certain messages and emphases imposed upon it, it does not make it less 'true' in terms of what it meant to those who witnessed and reported it.

John Denison conveyed the intention of the narrative when he described how what much of what was written was 'in substance true'. In his contribution to the text,

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[80] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 266
[81] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 287. Cf. Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, pp. 54-55

Denison admitted that he either altered or omitted some things 'according to the general sence, as I imagined'. Allegedly, he admitted to leaving out an assertion that the boy's fits were illusions because he judged 'those words to crosse the whole intent and meaning of the booke'. He also admitted to leaving out content that seemed 'absurd or repugnant one to another', which again seems to prove Harsnett's case for a deliberately misleading construction of what happened.[82] However, this can rather be seen as highlighting the wish for the narrative to convey a clearer message. Deliberate editing may have taken place, but it is more accurate to see this as driven by a desire effectively to transmit the writers' understanding of possession, rather than as a nefarious effort to fabricate. It may not be an accurate version of events, but it does hold within it the meaning of possession to those who reported it and what they wanted those who read about it to understand. This is expressed by Darrel, who defends himself against the seeming inconsistencies in the Darling narrative by stating that 'I doe not iustifie the booke in every circumstance, but the historie to be true in substance.'[83] The alterations were made in order to fit in with the spirit of the narrative. The dismantling of the composition process does provide valuable insight into the collaborative nature of the authorship of possession cases, and also reveals the complicated relationship between the 'truth' of the historical reality and the nature of the written record, highlighting the fact that such documents were about much more than simply relating events.

Of course, it is over this definition of 'truth' that Harsnett and those who wrote and published the account diverge. For those who saw and reported Darling's afflictions, it was true that he was possessed, as were the reasons for his possession and

[82] Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 267-268
[83] Darrel, *Detection*, p. 172

the method and nature of his deliverance. However, for Harsnett, the fundamental assertion that Darling was possessed was untrue and the fact that the written record seemed to be a fabrication only confirmed for him that the entire episode was false—in its diagnosis, in its treatment and in its report. Harsnett was determined to portray Darrel's activities as an elaborate and well-planned act of deception. He argued that Darrel suggested bewitchment as the cause of Darling's affliction a month before he visited him because 'no doubting (as it seemeth) but that (being the onely man of note in the Countrie, that had skill in casting out Deuilles,) hee should againe bee imployed, if hee could procure that the boye might bee thought to bee possessed.'[84]

Of course, this does not tie in with the written account of the Darling possession, where the suspicion of bewitchment is portrayed as a gradual and collaborative one that was reached independently of Darrel. However, for Harsnett, there was no doubt that Darrel set up these incidents with self-serving intentions. He accused Darrel of planting suggestions in Darling's mind of how he should act by relating the symptoms displayed by the previous demoniac he had helped dispossess, Katherine Wright. Harsnett maintained that 'for the better perswasion of the boyes friends, that he was possessed, and likewise that the boy might haue an example, (as it seemeth) to imitate, hee tolde them as hee was charged in his hearing of *Katherine Wright*: who hauing beene possessed, was troubled in such sort, as he the said Darling had bene troubled.'[85] Indeed, Harsnett highlighted the impossible position Darrel had been placed in when referring to Darrel's warnings to Darling about the dangers of repossession. He states that it was but 'A godly pretence to couer a sleight with. If he had put no such thing into

[84] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 270
[85] Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 272-273

the boyes head, he had neuer dreamed of any such matter.'[86] All of Darrel's activities were viewed through the lens of suspicion and so what could previously have been seen as a fairly innocent, and indeed genuine godly concern over the spiritual state of Darling was now seen as proof of Darrel's ulterior motives.

To support the authorities' position, Harsnett reproduced Sommers, Darling and Katherine Wright's confessions of fraud and also the testimony of various witnesses who believed the demoniacs to be fakes. It is difficult to determine the authenticity of the confessions and the extent to which they were extracted under a certain degree of pressure. Certainly Darling retracted his confession later on, whilst Walker points out that Wright's confession that Darrel had taught her to simulate possession does not fit with her own account of the start of her fits, or the fact that her fits continued even after Darrel left.[87] Gibson has argued that the accusation of collusion between Darrel and Sommers does not bear scrutiny.[88] However, another reading of these confessions is to consider the possibility that Darrel's activities were seen as problematic by those who witnessed the possession only after the authorities had suggested as much and that under the circumstances of the trial, earlier acceptance gave way to doubt and reconsideration. In this way, one can see how scepticism seeped down from the authorities to the people. Sowing the seed of doubt amongst those involved in the cases was a valuable tactic as it not only robbed Darrel of his support and his witnesses, but also compounded the scepticism the authorities wanted to promote. Harsnett preserved this doubt in the

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[86] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 283
[87] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 64
[88] Gibson, *Possession*, pp. 34-35. Gibson presents evidence that Darrel was not in Ashby from 1588 to teach Sommers how to simulate possession as alleged by Harsnett. This includes the fact that Darrel's son, Thomas was christened in Mansfield in 1588, that he gave a lecture at the church there in 1589, and the fact that he administered a Joyce Walby's will in 1591. Therefore, she argues, Darrel could not have been in Ashby before 1592.

written record, which again meant that it could circulate and permeate early modern thinking about demonic possession.

Darrel rightly pointed out that the Commissioners in York had already examined his case and had found in his favour but Harsnett was dismissive of their judgement because they 'were addicted to *M. Darrell*'.[89] For Harsnett, not even those who sat in authority were immune to Darrel's seductions. Others who supported Darrel were presented as disruptive and factious. Harsnett argued that now that Darrel had been convicted, 'it cannot but be thought a vere outrageous course, to continue such like their bolde and rayling lewdness.'[90] He dismissed accusations of an unfair trial and biased witnesses, claiming that most of those called to testify actually had an 'extraordinary liking' for Darrel, and if they committed any partiality, it was rather in 'concealing something that they knew, then in deuising any vntruthes against him'.[91] He states that 'it is an easie matter to speake euil, for such as are of the diuising and slaundering humor: who care not what they either say or write, so they thinke it may serue their turne.'[92]

As described above, a major part of Darrel's defence was how those he encountered exhibited the same behaviour as the demoniacs described in the Bible. However, Harsnett eagerly pounced upon the tensions inherent within the phenomenon of possession, in particular the issue of distinguishing between divine inspiration and demonic possession. For Harsnett, the sticking point was Darrel's seeming vacillation over whether or not Darling was possessed or assisted by God when he gave godly

[89] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 7
[90] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 10
[91] Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 13-14
[92] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 14

speeches during his possession. Darrel admitted that he initially believed that Darling might have been assisted by God or an angel, having been persuaded of this by those who observed Darling; however he later concluded 'that all the said speeches were vttered by Sathan transforming himself into an Angell of light.'[93] Harsnett found this claim remarkable, mockingly stating that 'If any man will take the paines to peruse those speeches […] he shal find them to be such, as will hardly be found againe in any story (that euer was written) to be ascribed to Sathan.'[94] For Harsnett, the possibility that the Devil could utter seemingly godly sentiments was truly absurd, but what Darrel's opinion reveals is the real problem of determining the source of such phenomenon.

Harsnett also saw the idea of repossession as a devious trick used by Darrel to extend his influence and a means by which he could 'procure to himself great credite, when all thinges should fall out as hee had prophecied'.[95] Harsnett insisted that Darrel's warning of possible repossession was a ruse to bolster his reputation and prolong his involvement in this and future cases arguing that even though other writers on exorcism believed repossession to be rare, 'M. Darrell is charged, that he had no sooner made an end of his sermon on the day of the fast, but that hee laide an other ground for a new cosenage, by affirming to his Auditorie, and in the hearing of Somers, that for a certainetie, Sathan would seeke to repossesse the said Somers, and preuaile against him, except he were mightily withstood by faith.'[96] This denies the sincerity of the belief that the period following dispossession was the most dangerous because it was when the

[93] The reference given by Harsnett is 'M. Darrell, ad art 12. pag. 142' (*Discovery*, p. 292). It is unclear which work this is indicating, but Darrel defends this position in the *Detection*, pp. 175-176
[94] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 292
[95] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 274
[96] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 128

newly delivered demoniac was most vulnerable to the Devil's re-entry if they did not maintain a spiritual vigilance. Harsnett maintained that this concept of repossession was actually an inbuilt tactic used by Darrel to cover up his deception. He referred to Darrel's assertion that Sommers only confessed to faking his possession because of the re-entry of the Devil, stating that

> It falleth out also oftentimes, that such as haue beene in these Exorcists handes, as they doe detect their false practises with them, so doe they also confesse their owne dissimulation, acknowledging the truth in euery thing, and that they were not at all possessed. To meet therefore with this inconuenience, they haue this rule: *[...] When the deuilles are cast out of a man, they endeuoure by all the means they can, to perswade, that hee was neuer in them: that so the partie being vnthankefull to God for his deliuerance, they might the better reenter into him.*[97]

Harsnett also criticised the idea of a 'false' dispossession, whereby the Devil deceived people into thinking he had been expelled, but in fact remained within the demoniac. This concept demonstrates the problem of deception that was inherent within the phenomenon of possession. Because it dealt with the Devil, who was the 'Father of Lies' and who could transform himself into an 'Angel of Light', uncertainty regarding the affliction was unavoidable; for those who were sceptical, it only highlighted the way in which this ambiguity could be cynically exploited to further the exorcists' agenda. Harsnett states that 'by their owne rules, they seeke to preuent detection of their cosenages' and he declared that Darrel's assertion that Sommers was still possessed was reason enough to dismiss his claims of dispossession for 'Such vnskillfull Exorcistes

[97] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 72. He is referring to Gioralmo Menghi's *Flagellum Daemonum* (see below, p. 139)

deserue no great reward.'[98] Harsnett argued that in any case, there was no sure way that a person could be deemed certainly dispossessed, as there was only one case in the Bible (Luke 9) where the dispossession of the demoniac was accompanied by the crying, the rending of the body and the lying as if dead that Darrel upheld as proof of his dispossessions. Harsnett stated that 'To make therefore such particularities in one, a generall rule for all, argueth greatly the weaknesse of his iudgements.'[99]

Harsnett also pointed out the flaws in Darrel's understanding of possession by referring to the apparent inconsistency of his assertion that possession was both a punishment for sin and the result of bewitchment. Harsnett questioned how the demoniacs' actions, such as Wright's taking bread from a handsome man, Sommer's refusal to give the witch a penny (or hatband) and Darling's passing of wind, could be perceived as sinful enough to warrant possession. He also picked up on Darrel's own apparent inconsistency in articulating the reasons for possession. For example, with regards to Sommers, Darrel stated that he was being punished both for the sins of the town and also for his own 'wanton and filthy songs'.[100] Of course, for Darrel, there would be no inconsistency here in maintaining both as the reason for possession, but for Harsnett, the attempt to convey possession in such a multi-faceted manner only highlighted its absurdities.

Harsnett also argued that Darrel used suggestion to orchestrate Sommers' pretence of bewitchment, stating that 'Wherein M. Darrel is charged with a very notable cosenage. When he had sent for the first witch to be brought to Somers: hee told in the meane time to those that were in the house, & in Somers presence, that it was an

[98] Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 282-283
[99] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 52
[100] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 41

ordinary thing, that whe[n] witches came nigh to those that were in Somers case, then they (in such case) would scritch and cry out, & be greatly troubled, and so at the VVitches departure.'[101] Again, Harsnett wanted to portray Darrel as masterminding the whole event. With regards to Sommers' vacillations before the Commissioners in Nottingham, Harsnett flips Darrel's accusation of threats against Sommers around, claiming that Sommers 'was perswaded by threatnings, & promises, to haue continued his dissimulation, after hee had beene before the Commissioners at Nottingham, vntill M. Darrell might againe dispossesse him.'[102] Here again is highlighted the subjectivity of what was claimed as truth. Without any real objective evidence, the accusations of falsifying information could be utilised by both sides. Indeed, Darrel's defence against Sommers' testimony that he coached him was that Sommers is a proven 'notorious and infamous lyar' as is evident from his various confessions and retractions.[103] Sommers' testimony was therefore devalued by both sides: firstly by allegations that any confession contrary to the desired one was extracted through coercion, and secondly by Sommers' own repeated volte-faces.

Harsnett wanted to demonstrate the ways in which Darrel attempted to prevent the exposure of his fraud. For example, he states that Darrel prevented people from questioning Sommers by arguing that to speak to him would be 'vnlawfull' because it 'was to aske the deuill a question'. However, Harsnett argues that 'when he dealt with *Katherine Wright*, he had one or two pretie Dialogues with the Deuill.' For Harsnett, this contradiction exposes the fact that Darrel prevented others from talking to Sommers

[101] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 139
[102] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 204
[103] Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 66-67

only to hide his deception.[104] Harsnett also argues that Darrel's prevention of people sticking pins into Sommers in order to validate his state of senselessness was merely an attempt to avert any proper investigation. He further argues that this symptom of senselessness was a novel one that did not bear up to scrutiny, stating that

> if Maister Darrell had well learned, he would neuer haue set the frame of all his cosening practises, vpon that moist and marish conceit, that Somers in his fits was altogether sencelesse. For besides, that none of his fellow Deuill driuers was euer so absurd, as to maintaine his position in that behalfe generally, his weake ground in this particular of Somers is shaken and ouerthrowne, by many depositions.[105]

Of course, Harsnett does not explain why Darrel would have maintained such a tenuous position and certainly does not entertain the idea that Darrel genuinely believed that Sommers was indeed senseless. Harsnett's main aim was to create doubts about the authenticity of Darrel's activities by revealing what he sees as the fundamental absurdity of Darrel's claims and to reveal the deceit and political inentions behind his actions.

As mentioned in the Introduction, historians such as Freeman and Thomas have largely accepted this view that Darrel's activities were deliberately orchestrated acts of Puritan propaganda but a strand that seems to have been overlooked in this controversy is that of anti-Catholicism: which is a thread that runs through the works on both sides. For Darrel, anti-Catholicism was a major motivating factor for his involvement in possession cases. In particular, Darrel wanted to counter Catholic claims that they had the exclusive power to free people from demonic possession. Darrel referred to the German Jesuit Peter Thyraeus' argument in his *Daemoniaci* (1598), that heretics do not

[104] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 226
[105] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 235

have the power to dispossess and that if they do so, it is by the power of the Devil, applying this especially to the exorcisms carried out by Luther. Darrel argued that 'they mighttilye freind [*sic*] the papistes, and strengthen them in this grosse error and brage of theirs, which contend for the counterfeiting of *Somers, Darling, K. Wright, [and]* confidentally deny the 7 in *Lancashire*, to haue bene eyther dispossest, or yet possest with deuils.'[106] In this way, Darrel was appealing for unity against the Catholics.

Darrel also wanted to juxtapose the erroneous, superstitious exorcisms of the Catholics with his legitimate, scripturally sanctioned dispossessions. Darrel argued that Catholic exorcisms were nothing but the 'infallible marke of the aduersarie to Christ, whom wee call Antichrist' and emphasised how the Catholics 'affirme and teach the contrarye' to what is found in Scripture regarding exorcism. Furthermore, he maintained that

> heretickes can not proue their false and erroneous doctrines by the scriptures, yet they may worke miracles to confirme the same. Wherby it is euident, that whilest [the] papistes stand and contend for the priuiedg of dispossessing of vncleane spirits, the which they arrogate to themselues as pecularly belonging vnto them, and denye to all others: they shewe themselues in the meane season to be possessed with a foule spirit of error.[107]

Darrel believed that he was standing in valid opposition to the Catholics, and he devoted much of *A true narration* to demonstrating the errors they committed. He declared that 'seeinge the *Romanists* glory so much in the dispossessing of deuils, let us a little examine the same, and see whether it be altogether with them, as they beare the world in

[106] Darrel, 'Doctrin of Possession', p. 75
[107] Darrel, 'Doctrin of Possession', pp. 74-75

hand it is.'[108] Unlike his own actions, Darrel wanted to 'affirme that there *exorcisms* are so palpable impious, vaine, foolish, and ridiculous, that it cannot be imagined that theirby, the diuils are, or cannot be compelled to goe out of men.'[109] Darrel was not necessarily denying that those whom the Catholics exorcised were genuinely possessed, but he wanted to emphasise the methods they used were ineffective. Therefore Darrel wished to subject the methods of Catholic exorcism to forensic scrutiny in much the same way as Harsnett had examined his own cases.

The main authors Darrel attacked were Thyraeus and Girolamo Menghi, the Franciscan monk who penned several works on exorcism, notably his *Flagellum daemonum* (1576), which contained instructions for exorcisms, *Fustis daemonum* (1584) and *Remedia probatissima in malignos spiritus expellendos* (1579). In addition, his *Compendio dell'arte essorcistica* (1576), written in Italian, was a collection of exorcism stories.[110] Darrel focussed upon the instructions Menghi gave, including the use of holy water and the interrogation of the spirits, condemning them as 'vnspeakable follye and vanitie'.[111] By attacking the Catholic methods of exorcism, Darrel also aimed to distance himself from popish activities by presenting himself as unequivocally opposed to their methods, and their faith. This was not just a method of defence: it was also his way of presenting dispossession by prayer and fasting as the only effective and proper means of delivery of a demoniac. Darrel was concerned with exposing what he saw as diabolical and deceptive Catholic practises, and he believed he offered a valid, and indeed true, alternative.

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[108] Darrel, *True narration*, p. 76
[109] Darrel, *True narration*, p. 77
[110] Girolamo Menghi (translated by Gaetano Paxia), *The Devil's Scourge: Exorcism During the Italian Renaissance* (Boston, MA: Weiser Books, 2002), pp. 16-17, 30-37
[111] Darrel, *True narration*, pp. 77-78

However, for the authorities, this hostility towards Catholic exorcisms expanded to include even Protestant dispossessions. As described in the Introduction, F.W. Brownlow has looked at the relationship between anti-Catholicism and the authorities' attacks on exorcism in *Shakespeare, Harsnett and the Devils of Denham*, but he sees this as an extension of the campaign against Darrel and the Puritans.[112] However, I would argue that anti-Catholicism is not as incidental as this, and nor was the attack on Catholic exorcism merely an appendage to an anti-Puritan campaign. In actuality, it is anti-Catholicism that was the driving force behind the attack on Darrel, and on the practice of exorcism as a whole. Harsnett used the Darrel controversy as an opportunity to attack the Catholic means of exorcism as well as Darrel, and intended to tar Darrel's activities by association: but I would argue that it was precisely this perception of exorcism in any of its forms as essentially Catholic in nature that led to the immense hostility of the authorities.

The incorporation of anti-Catholicism in Harsnett's attack on Darrel demonstrates the association of the phenomenon with Catholicism in the minds of the authorities, especially following the Denham exorcisms, and it is this that made Darrel's position untenable. As shall be shown, Darrel's activities were subsumed within those of the Catholics, thereby rendering the phenomenon as a whole problematic; any attempts by Darrel to distinguish between his actions and those of the Catholic priests were dismissed as mere semantics. The hostility towards possession may have been connected with its potential usage as Puritan propaganda, but I would also argue that the phenomenon itself became increasingly problematic in a climate that was anti-Catholic and increasingly hostile to the miraculous.

[112] See above, p. 24

Like Darrel, Harsnett saw the spectacle of Catholic exorcism as a means by which people were enticed into the faith. In *A Discovery* Harsnett states that

> Whereof it commeth to passe, that in their ordinarie stations, and solemne feastes in Rome, they neuer want some of those counterfeytes, who pretending themselues to be possessed, must forsoooth, by putting their heads vnder some Altars, or by touching some reliques, with stoles about their neckes, and some other trinkets, feine themselues to be dispossessed. By reason of which false miracles, with diuers others: as the Babilonians were induced to worship the Dragon, so are the bewitched Romanists, to worship those false reliques, and to embrace diuers other points of Poperie.[113]

Harsnett argued that Catholics used the excuse of glorifying God to justify all of their practices. He referred to 'A Champion of Popes' who advocated the maxim that the ends justify the means,[114] and that this was used as an excuse to gloss over all Catholic errors:

> voluntary pouerty, whippings, pilgramages, images, worshipping of reliques, and adoration of the Crosse, and the blessed Budget of all the Pope and his pedlary [and] trash, is blanched ouer with as faire a face of good intent to the glorie of God, as this iugling mistery of casting out deuils. Open but this crevise in the dore of the church, that ill may be done to any good end: you shal haue religion like a *Homers Ilias*, a faxdle of fictions, [and] a bundle of lies.[115]

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[113] Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 76-77
[114] It is not entirely clear to whom Harsnett is referring to here. This accusation was often polemically leveled against the Jesuits as a whole. See James A. Wylie, *A History of Protestantism*, Vols. 1-4 (Rapidan, VA: Hartland Publications, 2002), pp. 1114-1118
[115] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. A3[r]

Harsnett associated the Puritan exorcists with the Catholics, stating that Thyraeus is 'an especiall Author of *M. Darrels*, and his fauourers'.[116] He even turned the defence of Darrel as a good man on its head, arguing that Catholic exorcists used this same criterion to qualify themselves:

> the *Iesuites*, and popish *A[r]tizans* do tell vs in good sooth, that their Exorcistes must be men of very humble spirite, voide of all leuitie: such as are greatly inflamed with the loue of God: persons indued with hope and assurance, to cast out such spirits as they meddle with […] men also, whose consciences are not burdened with any mortall sinne, but for pietie and innocencie of life, are persons of especiall note.[117]

Harsnett alleges that one of Darrel's defenders had stated that Darrel was qualified as an exorcist because 'hee is such a man, as is qualified according to *Thyraeus* the *Iesuites* saide rules, set downe by him in his Booke, *de Daemoniack.*' This highlighted the way in which the lines between Catholic and Protestant practice could be blurred with regards to possession and exorcism. For Harsnett, this reliance upon a Jesuit work in this matter would have been alarming in itself, but it also supported the idea that exorcism was essentially a Catholic exercise and that Darrel's practise of it only perpetuated reliance upon Catholic rites and practices and therefore also Catholic beliefs. Moreover, Harsnett was highlighting a major perceived problem with exorcism: all those who undertook it claimed to have God on their side. Indeed, this was a key defence of Darrel and his supporters. However, by demonstrating that the Catholics used the same justification, Harsnett turned this defence against Darrel, and also pointed to the problematic nature of the activity. It was ultimately impossible to discern

[116] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 20
[117] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 21

between the truth of each position when exorcism was the test, and so for Harsnett and the authorities, the solution was to deny its occurrence altogether.

This was further reinforced when Harsnett questioned Darrel's criteria for determining whether one was possessed or not. He argued that the symptoms Darrel presented, including the loss of senses and memory, and the presence of a lump, were all signs that are extraneous to what is described in Scripture. He argued that 'If men were here disposed to take exceptions, it might bee demaunded, when God was pleased to giue these new demonstratiue signes of possession, and vnto whom, and how he signified the same: or whether this conceit doth not proceede from some of the popish vnwritten verities?' He again alleged that Darrel 'relyeth in this deuise vppon *Thyraeus* the Iesuite, and quoteth for it his booke *De Demoniacis*.'[118] Of course, Darrel only quoted Thyraeus in order to dispute his methods, but this did not matter to Harsnett. He maintained that even though '*M. Darrels* friends will peradventure that both he and they are as farre from these fooleries, as any that haue disliked of their proceedings. Howbeit by their leaues they may in some sorte therein bee checked.'[119] The accusation was that even though Darrel and his supporters denied any affinity with the Catholics, the reality was that they still acted like them and so their defence was useless.

Harsnett sought to establish this similarity in several ways. For example, speaking of Darrel's criteria for determining a successful dispossession, he stated 'that he blundereth out sometimes, some other signes for his assurance when Sathan departeth: and it may not be omitted, of whom he hath learned them. The popish *Exorcistes*, finding no assurance in the scriptures (as it may be thought,) touching that

[118] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 31
[119] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 33

point, haue deuised many more signes.'[120] In Harsnett's mind, there was no distinction between Darrel and the Catholics. Indeed, Darrel protested against the fact that 'this whole first booke of his semeth to match vs together, as maister and scholler: and in many places doth pretende as though I had learned I knowe not what from Thyraeus.'[121] Harsnett further emphasised the similarities of Darrel and his supporters with Catholics over the issue of bewitchment. He stated that in believing that witches could send demons into people, Darrel stood in agreement with Thyraeus once again. He declared that 'The *Iesuticall* and popish *Exorcistes*, that holde for this worke of Witcherie, haue but two ways […] whereby they know when the spirites are sent by Witches, and the one is *the Confession of the deuill*, that is cast out, and the other the *Confession of the Witches, who threw him in*.'[122] Harsnett stated that Darrel abided by these popish rules, because in the case of Katherine Wright, it was the spirit 'Middlecub' who named Margaret Roper as the witch, and in the case of Thomas Darling, it was Alice Gooderidge who confessed to being one. Harsnett argued that the question of whether or not a witch can send the Devil into a person had been heavily debated, but the 'learneder and sounder sort doe hold the negatiue'.[123] It was only Catholics, and Darrel, who believed in bewitchment. This is not an assertion that necessarily holds up to scrutiny, but this sort of statement highlights the way in which the Darrel controversy raised issues about what was 'true' with regards to demonology and attempted to redefine it, and how the debates strove to establish what position was acceptable for

[120] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 52
[121] Darrel, *Detection*, p. 40
[122] Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 37-38
[123] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 36

'learned' people to adhere to, whilst the opposing ones could be dismissed as misinformed superstition.

Harsnett further argued that both Darrel and the Catholics insisted that demoniacs 'could neither abide them, nor the word of God: which are two of *Thyraeus* infallible signes of possession.'[124] This highlights how there were common features that were essential to the possession narrative, in this case the demons' aversion to the Bible and the priest/preacher. However, for people like Harsnett, these common features did not indicate an independent phenomenon of possession that existed outside Catholicism, but only emphasised the idea that it was fundamentally a Catholic construct, with the common factors only serving to demonstrate its true origin in Catholic rite and superstition.

For Harsnett, it was not just in method and diagnosis that Darrel and his like resembled the Catholics, but more pressingly, it was in their intentions. He stated how

> By these two sleights borowed from the popish *Exorcists* they did greatly inuegle [and] seduce their beholders: the first tending to the setting out of themselues, to be had in admirations, whilest they were supposed to be such deuout men, as Sathan could not indure: [and] the other, vnder pretence of magnifying the scriptures […] they vsed a colour to ouershaddow their lewdnes, when at their pleasures, they might thereby without lesse suspition, begin and practise their fittes or pageants. Assuredly it may well be supposed, that if this their course had not beene met with in time, we should haue had many other pretended signes of possession: one Deuill would haue beene mad at the name of the *Presbyter*: an other at the sight of a minister that will not subscribe:

[124] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 33

> an other to haue seene men fit or stand at the Communion: and so as it had pleased the good Maisters the Exorcists.[125]

For Harsnett, Darrel's activities needed to be exposed as fraudulent not so much for any fundamental theological or doctrinal reasons, but in order to expose what he saw as the underlying political cunning and intentions of those involved. He saw it as especially threatening because the fundamental premise was that those who undertook dispossession were especially holy, thus demanding the support of those who beheld their activities. In this way, it was the perfect tool of manipulation and exploitation. In Harsnett's mind, the whole phenomenon of possession and exorcism was primarily a political, propagandist tool, as evidenced in More's insistence that demons were more affected by impromptu prayers than those read out from the prayer book. For Harsnett, this was incontrovertible proof of the Puritan agenda that underpinned their activities,[126] and in this sense, they were indistinguishable from the threat posed by Catholics. By associating Darrel's position and activities with those of the Catholics, Harsnett wished to portray Darrel, like Catholics, as the 'other', who perpetuated error and superstition, and stood in opposition to the true Protestant position. Ironically, the accusation levelled against Darrel was the same as that which the Puritans levelled against the Church of England: that is, of maintaining erroneous Catholic practices and failing to become truly reformed.

The connection of Darrel's activities with Catholic exorcism was further cemented as Harsnett discussed the ways in which priests (and those like Darrel)

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[125] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 35

[126] This has also been accepted by historians as proof of a Puritan agenda underpinning dispossessions. See Freeman, 'Demons', p. 38

attempted to deceive people into believing they were possessed. He stated that the exorcists sought out 'the poorer sort, either the children, or seruants of such persons, as the *Exorcistes* doe well know, to be of their owne stampe, and well affected towards them'.[127] After instructing them on how to behave, they created the drama of exorcism using their relics, candles and holy water. In other cases, they sought out 'any youth […] that is not well at ease, and whose disease is not apparent' and slowly introduced the idea of possession into the situation. Indeed, Harsnett's explanation of young people's complicity in exorcism is very similar to the explanations offered by historians like D.P. Walker.[128] He states that 'the saide youths, are the rather induced, so to apply themselues, as they may please [the priests]. For after a short time, they easily perceiue by the *Exorcistes* speeches, what they would haue them to acte or speake: and the rather because they finde themselues, not onely to be admired, and very much made of: but that likewise, the whole course of their former dissimulation, is by their meanes altogether couered.'[129] In Harsnett's mind, both the Catholics and Darrel deliberately orchestrated events to create the spectacle of possession and exorcism.

The importance of the link between the anti-exorcism stance and anti-Catholicism is further evident in Harsnett's *Declaration*. Published in 1603, it recounted the events that took place in Denham in 1585-86. The reason given for the publication of the work nearly twenty years after the related events was because of the recent discovery of a miracle-book.[130] In his preface to the 'seduced Catholiques of England', Harsnett states:

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[127] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 61
[128] See above, p. 17
[129] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 70
[130] Harsnett, 'To the Seduced Catholiques of England', *Declaration*, p. [5]

> Now if it shall appeare vnto you as cleere, as the light of the sunne, that these powers be feigned, and counterfeite in them, and that they be in truth nothing els, saue the mists, and allusions of Satan, to dimme the ey of your vnderstanding, and bewitch your affections to doate vppon theyr impious superstition, what can you, or any ingenious spirits doe lesse, then bewaile your seduced misaffection vnto vs, and to account them as the grand Impostors, and enchaunters of your soules? And that this may be cleerly manifested vnto you, I beseech you in the bowels of our blessed Sauiour, to let open your eares & eyes to this short declaration: to peruse and read it with a single ey, and impartiall affection, and if it shall not most perspicuously appeare vnto you, that the Pope, and his spirits he sendeth in here amongst you, do play Almighty God, his sonne, & Saints vpon a stage, do make a pageant of the Church, the blessed Sacraments, the rites & ceremonies of religion, do cog & coine deuils, spirits, & soules departed this life, to countenance and grace, or face out their desperate abhominations, then stand disvnited, and disaffected as you doe.[131]

Harsnett referred to the Pope as the 'Monster of Rome, the head of all vnnaturall and detestable rebellion', emphasising the fact that Rome sought to steal English citizens away from loyalty to the Queen. He wished to emphasise the foreign, 'other' nature of Catholicism, by declaring how the priests attempted to 'captiuate your wits, wils, & spirits, to a forraine Idol Gull, composed of palpable fiction, and diabolicall fascination'.[132] Harsnett described the Jesuits in the exorcisms as 'Popish […] Traytors' who were guilty of 'so many horrible & detestable treasons'.[133] This certainly makes sense in light of the apparent connection between the Denham exorcisms and the

[131] Harsnett, 'To the Seduced Catholiques of England', *Declaration*, pp. [1-2]
[132] Harsnett, 'To the Seduced Catholiques of England', *Declaration*, p. [2]
[133] Harsnett, *Declaration*, pp. 5-6

Babington plot. Harsnett believed that the exorcisms were a means of winning people's loyalty and support, as he states

> Fa: *Weston,* then the *Prouinciall* of all the Iesuits in England, deuised this hellish trick of casting out deuils: by the which they so preuailed, as they gayned in a very short space, foure or 5000 to be reconciled to the Pope. And such was at that time the zeale, or rather fury of these new gayned Proselytes, and the elder sort of Pharisaical hypocrites, so kindled, and enflamed with the admiration of the diuine power, which they supposed to be in these priests, as (besides the large contributions, which they gaue the[m]) no meruaile if they would haue followed them through thick, and thin, fire, and water, purgatorie, and hel, to assist any forraine, or domestical power against her Maiestie, and her Kingdome.[134]

This disloyalty was evident not just in the Catholic allegiance to the Pope, but also in their alliance with the Devil. Harsnett asked 'whether a man may be a coniurer, sorcerer, or Enchau[n]ter; that is, enter into league, friendship, and familiarity with the deuill, as the priestes that coniured for mony at *Denham* did, and yet be accounted a ghostly Confessor, a reuerend father, and an holy priest still?'[135] Even though he did not believe in the reality of their 'conjurations', he still saw their willingness to indulge in exorcism as evidence of the fact that they were on the side of the Devil. He stated

> that church for her whoredome being depriued of the holy spirit of Almighty God, and giuen ouer to the spirit of darknes, giddines, and iugling deceite […] doe in a desperate fury, and hellish resolution, resort vnto the Oracles of the deuil, and would coniure vp

[134] Harsnett, *Declaration*, p. 171
[135] Harsnett, *Declaration*, p. 17

> from hel the Prince, and power of darknes, to be their proloquutor, and to grace them with a wonder.[136]

Unable to prove the validity of their faith through any sound means, the Catholics resorted to utilising their master, the Devil, to deceive people into error and darkness. Harsnett referred to exorcists as 'Commissioners for the deuill' and 'the children of darknes'.[137] Their plot was not just about political disloyalty, but also about winning souls for the Devil. Harsnett describes how 'the plotters of this deuil-play, had a farther and deeper end: […] and that was […] *the gaining of soules* for his Holines, and for Hell, the bewitching of the poore people, with an admiration of the power of theyr Romish Church, and priesthood, by these cog[ged] miracles, and wonders; and thereby robbing them of theyr fayth towards God, and theyr loyaltie to theyr Prince, and reconciling them to the Pope, the Monster of Christianitie.'[138] In this statement, Harsnett was equating orthodoxy and therefore the assurance of faith with the Church of England. Therefore any act that attempted to undermine the Church was seen not just as factious, but fatal to the spiritual wellbeing of the nation. The only sure and true way to be faithful to God was through the Church of England.

Harsnett used this opportunity to associate the Protestant dispossessors with the Catholic exorcists, stating that 'if they want deuils in Italy, to exorcise, and aske Oracles of: let them come but ouer into London in England: and wee haue ready for them, *Darrells wife, Moores Minion […] Skelton, Euans, Swan,* & *Lewis;* the deuil-finders,

[136] Harsnett, *Declaration*, p. 168
[137] Harsnett, *Declaration*, p. 49, 169
[138] Harsnett, *Declaration*, pp. 150-151

and deuil-puffers, or deuil-prayers.'[139] However, the political aspect of the controversy should not detract from the fact that both parties felt that they were fighting for what was right in the eyes of God. This applies to the authorities as well: we do not need to dismiss the fear of Puritanism in this context as an exclusively political concern. The almost inextricable association of Darrel's activities with those of the Catholics in Harsnett's writings suggest that the debate over possession was also connected to a concern with preventing a slide back into Catholic ritual and superstition. Of course, both sides claimed this position, but this need not undermine the sincerity of these beliefs on each side.

The final publication in this political arena of the controversy was Darrel's response to Harsnett's *Discovery*, in his *Detection*. In this, Darrel protested against the fact that he had been labelled '*a cogger, a cousener, a Iugler, an Exorcist, a counterfeite, a deuill-flinger, a deuill-driuer, a Seducer, a deceiuer, an Impostor*', and furthermore that 'this in effect not onely the streetes and Tavernes haue ronge off, but (as I haue bene informed) the very benches and Seates of Iustice haue sounded with the noyse of this Darrell, the deuil driuer, and of the counterfeite trickes that he should teach.' Darrel clearly felt victimised and was understandably unhappy with the extent of the tarnishing of his reputation. However, he argued that such attacks were not surprising considering that such persecution 'is no new thinge: looke backe to ages past

[139] Harsnett, *Declaration*, p. 166. 'Darrells wife' and 'Moores Minion' seem to be derogatory terms for Darrel's supporters. Skelton, Evans, Swan and Lewis were four of the six ministers who were involved in the dispossession of Mary Glover in 1602. For an account of this case, see John Swan, *A true and breife report, of Mary Glouers vexation and of her deliuerance by the meanes of fastinge and prayer. Performed by those whose names are sett downe, in the next page. By Iohn Swan, student in Divinitie*, (London?: s.n., 1603) and Stephen Bradwell, 'Mary Glovers Late Woeful Case, Together with Her Joyfull Deliverance' (1603), *BL*, Sloane MS 831. Both are reproduced in MacDonald, *Witchcraft & Hysteria.*

and thou shalt find it to be an old inueterate ouerworne practise of sathan, newly furbished and set abroach againe by his instrumentes, to paint out the professors of the gospell in the most ougly deformed shape they can deuise: […] to this end, to make them more odiously enuied and malitiously hated of the world, which is the speciall marke the enimy shooteth at.'[140]

Yet it was not just the slanderous rumours and accusations that offended Darrel; it was the fact that what he perceived to be a glorious work of God was also being dishonoured. He described the actions of his opponents as 'a foule and detestable abuse of Godes church and a mocking of Gods people, with a scornefull and shameles contempt both of magistracy and ministerie'.[141] The attack on his dispossessions were, in Darrel's opinion, a demonstration of the fact that 'sathan hath euer vsed by his instruments to resist the doctrines [and] workes of god that thereby he might kepe god from his glory and prayse, and man from beleuing and profiting by them: so the principall meanes wherby he hath preuayled in all times, hath bene the slaundering of those whom the Lord hath therein vsed as instruments.'[142] In this way, the attacks were a direct undermining of his expressed intention that 'the glory of God, [and] the edification of the Christian reader, (which two thinges only I haue aymed at: in the publishing of this story) may be […] better furthered thereby.'[143]

Fundamentally, however, Darrel also demonstrated an awareness of the battle over 'truth' in the controversy, and the attempt of the authorities to win this battle through the medium of the written word. He stated that 'their very writtinge against me

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[140] Darrel, 'The Epistle to the Reader', *Detection*, pp. [2-3]
[141] Darrel, 'Epistle to the Reader', p. [2]
[142] Darrel, *Detection*, p. 4
[143] Darrel, 'Doctrin of Possession', p. 1

in this case in that manner as they haue done, is sufficient in the iudgment of the wise to discry and discouer the guiltines of their consciences this way. For what a test were it to punish treason or rebellion by Booke-writting?'[144] Furthermore he claimed that he was offered release from prison on the condition that he no longer preached about possession and dispossession, or undertook any more dispossessions. He argued that if the authorities really believed what Harsnett had written against him, then they would never have released him, but rather treated him with the severity that such crimes deserved. He argued that 'what doth this argue but that inwardly in theire owne soules, they doe not beleiue their owne lible?'[145] In other words, Darrel wished to expose their written campaign as one of propaganda and rhetoric, 'empty words' against his person, with the sole aim of discrediting and undermining him, rather than a portrayal of any real crimes.[146] This jostling for each voice to be heard in this fight to establish the truth is made explicit when Darrel states:

> I knewe the credit of the aduersarie was great, my owne little, beinge a base & contemptible person in the eyes of the world. That my selfe then and that which I contend for might be beleiued, even of this dotinge and blind generation, It was necessarie I should not onely cracke or diminish the credite of the aduersarie, even with his best frendes, which might haue bene done in a few wordes: but take all credit from him, by detectinge all his filthines: for in makinge his name to rotte and stinke, and the counterfeit cause he hath in hand, their is hope that men will giue some eare vnto me, and that I striue for, be I neuer so meane.[147]

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[144] Darrel, 'Epistle to the Reader', p. [4]
[145] Darrel, 'Epistle to the Reader', p. [2]
[146] Darrel, *Detection*, p. 5
[147] Darrel, 'Epistle to the Reader', p. [8]

Darrel also emphasised that the controversy essentially centred around the authorities' word against his. He states 'Vnlesse therfore the *Disc*. had proued that *So[mmers] in all his fits had his per fecte sences and vnderstanding,* (which he neither doth nor by any possibilitie can doe) he saith nothing at all against my assertion, but fighteth with his owne shadow, & confuteth a forgerie of his owne, which he faslye chargeth vpon me.'[148] This is further apparent in the argument used by Darrel to maintain that the symptoms exhibited by Sommers had to be supernatural in origin. Harsnett flatly denied this, and presented the opinion of several witnesses who believed that the symptoms could have been fraudulent. Harsnett again highlighted the crux of the issue when he stated 'Whether these depositions will satisfie M. Darrell & his friendes, it may be doubted, they are so strongly possessed with their owne conceites: but to anie reasonable men, they will be sufficient, to shew the vanitie of the for saide pretended impossibilities.'[149] For Darrel and those who supported the possibility of possession, the testimony of these witnesses would not mean anything, especially when they could also produce witnesses who could testify to the contrary.[150] As Darrel states in *A Detection*:

> they are not abashed to suppresse the examinations of sundry honest men, wise men and gentlemen of good place, taken by Comission [sic] from the *Arch. B. of Yorke* as thinges of no account: and instead of them to tell vs a tale […] of *Robin* the *deuill*, *alias*, *William Somers*? why alas, are they so simple or sottish to imagine, that any man that is

[148] Darrel, *Detection*, p. 162
[149] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 257
[150] See for example Darrel, *Detection*, pp. 149-154 for witnesses that testified to the strange swelling and lumps on Sommers' body.

> well in his wittes, will beleeue this or that because *Somers* saith it, that infamous and notorious lyer, counterfeit, blasphemer, and forsworne wretch?[151]

Harsnett's assertion that a 'reasonable' person would conclude in the authorities' favour is also more rhetorical than based on any solid weight of evidence. In a society that did accept the reality of demons and the possibility of demonic possession, dismissing Darrel's claims would not necessarily be as simple as accepting the word of one man (or those of the witnesses), even if the man was the Bishop of London's chaplain. Harsnett did not present any solid argument for doubting Darrel's dispossessions in particular, for all the evidence was essentially based on questionable testimony and depositions. Moreover Darrel was certainly not silent but actively defended himself against the allegations, insisting that evidence given against him was 'generally vaine & friuolous, so most of them manifestly false, & the depone[n]ts plainly periured'.[152] More importantly, Harsnett certainly did not present any reasoned argument for doubting the occurrence of possession more generally. On the basis of this case alone, the possibility of the contemporary occurrence of demonic possession was not destroyed, or even necessarily particularly damaged. Indeed, one could argue that the authorities weakened their position by not decisively and unequivocally declaring the impossibility of possession in their own day. Harsnett did suggest that this might be the case, but it did not really amount to anything more than this: a suggestion, which was lost in his intricate campaign of defamation against the person of Darrel.[153] Darrel astutely observed: 'It is to be remembred that howsoeuer in plaine and express wordes

[151] Darrel, 'Epistle to the Reader', p. [4]
[152] Darrel, *Detection*, p. 168
[153] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 18-19

the Disc. doth not affirme, that none can in these dayes be dispossessed.' However, he also argues that Harsnett's position amounts to just such a denial, and this implicit denial of possession could only lead to Sadduceeism:

> So albeit he doe not saye that none can be now possessed with diuels […], not once grantinge […] in all his greate volume any such thing , and that he will haue all the possessed persons among vs and the Papistes also counterfeits, as appeareth by this his first bookes who can co[n]iecture any other, but that he holdeth, that none can be as this day possessed? In like-sorte I say, be doth here by witches, not plainly denyinge any such to be, but secretly insinuatinge as much to the reader[.] Thus wee see he doth deny (but couertly) dispossession of diuels. 2. possession with diuels. 3 all compact with diuels to the hurt of others if he proceede but one stepe further, it wil be couertly to the deniel of diuels. VVell this I dare be boulde to say of the *Disc*. […] that howsoeuer he professe that he beleueth in god, and that there are diuells, yet by this very worke of his (this Discouerie I meane) he denyeth both.[154]

The battle between Darrel and Harsnett demonstrates how the debate over demonic possession in primarily political terms did not settle the issue, but only presented two contentious viewpoints that could both be equally valid on the basis of the actual evidence brought to bear. As stated above, both sides could produce witnesses to support their case and both sides were able to accuse the other of acting dishonestly and with political intent. It is true that the authorities' accusations may have raised doubts about possession, but whether these would have extended beyond the activities of Darrel in particular to apply to possession as a whole is debatable. This is why it was so important for the debate to develop another angle, an angle based not on rhetoric and

[154] Darrel, *Detection*, p. 37-38

confrontation but on (seemingly) objective theological, medical and natural arguments. It was this requirement that the work of Deacon and Walker fulfilled, as shall be demonstrated in the following chapters.

Chapter Three:
Introducing Deacon and Walker: Sources and Methodology

Our reading of the Darrel controversy has questioned the adequacy of the traditional interpretation of historians such as Keith Thomas and D.P. Walker, who see the prosecution of Darrel 'as part of Whitgift's and Bancroft's anti-Puritan campaign.'[1] There is no doubt that the affair had a partisan aspect to it, and that politics played a part in the escalation of the controversy. However, this traditional reading fails to take into account the altruistic, spiritual activities of Darrel and the shared anti-Catholicism of Puritans and the authorities and the fact that the objections towards demonic possession were not just restricted to the authorities, and nor were the criticisms of Darrel's actions purely political. John Deacon and John Walker's *Dialogicall discourses of spirits and divels* is evidence of the fact that there could be genuine theological and philosophical reasons for objecting to the contemporary occurrence of possession.

The *Dialogicall discourses* seems to transcend partisan concerns, written as it was by two Puritan preachers.[2] However, it seems that Deacon and Walker were not adherents of Presbyterianism. They believed that Darrel's presumption that he could involve himself in the Sommers' case, even though Sommers was under somebody else's pastoral care, was because of the attitude fostered by Presbyterianism. They ask

> Is this the approoued practise of that wel-ordered discipline, whereof your selfe, and some others so highly esteeme? Or, must we (in any case) account that a wel-ordered ecclesiasticall gouernement, which mannageth such an vnwarrantable foisting in of

[1] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 65. Thomas believes that 'The initiative in hounding down Darrel seems to have been taken by the leaders of the Arminian party, newly emerging within the Church of England, and it was they who made the issue of possession a political shibboleth.' Thomas, p. 57
[2] See above, p. 38

> monstrous disorders into the church of Christ? And, which more is, doth set open a doore to such shamefull confusion, and dareth priuiledge any (how irregular soeuer) after such peremptorie and popelike manner to intrude himselfe into another mans ordinary charge: without some ordinary allowance at least, to any so waightie a worke?[3]

For Deacon and Walker, Darrel's actions point to the dangers of Presbyterianism where the denial of Episcopalian hierarchy meant ministers like Darrel felt they could act as they wish, with no sense of accountability. Darrel's unilateral and unregulated actions transcended any formal channels, encapsulating the dangers of Presbyterianism, with its apparent disregard for authority.

As mentioned in the Introduction, we cannot presume that Deacon and Walker were working with the authorities just because they propose an 'anti-possession' viewpoint especially because the pair did not concur with the authorities' fundamental accusation of fraud against Darrel.[4] They believed that the although the Darrel cases were not incidents of possession, Darrel's preceding reputation makes it hard to believe that he would have partaken in deliberate deception, and assert rather that he fell victim to Sommers' fakery stating that his participation in the whole affair was 'simply [an] errour of iudgement, but no purposed errour in […] practize [sic] at all.'[5] The work is therefore not an attack on the person of Darrel, but rather an attempt to address (what

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[3] Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall discourses of spirits and divels declaring their proper essence, natures, dispositions, and operations, their possessions and dispossessions : with other the appendantes, peculiarly appertaining to those speciall points, verie conducent, and pertinent to the timely procuring of some Christian conformitie in iudgement, for the peaceable compounding of the late sprong controuersies concerning all such intricate and difficult doubts* (London: George Bishop, 1601), p. 270

[4] See above, p. 37, 42

[5] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 352-353

they see as) the fundamental misunderstanding about possession that led Darrel into his erroneous actions.

The authors claim that the work was the result of an independent investigation into the phenomenon, prompted by the furore over Darrel's activities. Closer examination of the text seems to vindicate this claim. Unlike Harsnett's work, it is not primarily a polemical, political piece, but an in-depth examination of demonic possession and as such can be regarded a genuine work of demonology. Deacon and Walker express how, in the course of their investigation, they came across 'many strange and vnwoonted matters, which haue not hetherto beene vsually heard of concerning the question it selfe.'[6] They therefore understood their work as dealing with previously neglected aspects of possession and they aimed to address these issues in a definitive and comprehensive way.

They claim that although they wrote the book almost three years earlier, they decided 'to burie our precedent labours in the graue of forgetfulnes: then (by any their needlesse publishing) to procure a present disturbance, or to hatch a subsequent broyle in the Church'. However, the escalation of the controversy prompted them to publish the work, as they felt that to withhold it would be

> deemed too too [*sic*] irreligious towards the Lord: disloyall to her Maiesties Princely prerogatiue: ouer-much carelesse of publike peace: exceeding remisse concerning the positiue Lawes of our land: most derogatorious to the definitiue sentence of iustice: monstrous inhumane towards the persons of men: yea, altogither carelesse of our honest reputations: if that light, which the Lord in mercie (we hope) hath reuealed vnto vs, should now any longer Lie buried vnder a bushell, and not rather be set on a

[6] Deacon and Walker, 'To the Reader', *Dialogicall discourses*, p. [2]

> candlesticke, for the better enlightning of all in the house concerning these intricate and hidden mysteries. More especially now at this present, when the fearefull infection of those their factious proceedings, so vniuersally, and so dangerously ouer spreadeth it selfe: not vnlike to the fretting Gangrena, or incurable Canker.[7]

After witnessing the stubborn refusal of Darrel and his supporters to accept the error of their ways, and clearly outraged by the content of Darrel's pamphlets, Deacon and Walker followed up the *Dialogicall discourses* with *A Summarie answere* in 1601.[8] Darrel responded to both of these works in 1602, in his *A suruey of certaine dialogical discourses* and *The replie of Iohn Darrell*. Deacon and Walker were not ignorant of the political implications of the events, and they express that the instability and friction caused by the controversy was an important factor in the production of their book. Indeed, one of their chief desires was 'to procure from some others of better ability, a more absolute censure, or iudiciall determination concerning these so intricate and doubtfull occurrents'.[9] They felt that an unequivocal ruling about the nature and possibility of contemporary possession would avoid future conflict, as it was the absence of this that had led to confusion over possession and consequent erroneous practices and deception. In this way, we can see how the Darrel controversy placed the issue of possession under a level of scrutiny which it had not been subjected to before.

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[7] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. A2[v]-A3[r]

[8] See *A summarie ansvvere to al the material points in any of Master Darel his bookes More especiallie to that one booke of his, intituled, the Doctrine of the possession and dispossession of demoniaks out of the word of God.* (London: George Bishop, 1601), pp. 6-16. I will be focussing mainly on the *Dialogicall discourses* because *A summerie answere* essentially repeats the same arguments.

[9] 'To the Reader', p. [7]

Deacon and Walker explicitly state this, as they claim that they initially disagreed over the issue and were prompted to investigate the matter further when the Darrel controversy brought the issue to the fore:

> For the verie first newes of this newly supposed rare accident […] did so diuersly affect our mindes with a diuerse and contrarie iudgement (the one verie constantly auouching, the other no lesse confidently impugning that falsely pretended action) as we both became resolute […] to trie forth the certaine truth or vntruth at the least, of our sundrie conceits concerning the matter in question [and] we so deepely deuoted our selues to the timely support of those our seuerall opinions.[10]

Their aim was to write a learned book against Darrel, a fellow Puritan. The extensive selection of sources demonstrates their desire to present their work as knowledgeable and erudite. These sources range from Patristic authors, such as Augustine and Chrysostom, through to medieval Catholic writers like Thomas Aquinas and Michael Psellus, to contemporary demonologists and physicians, including Reginald Scot, Otto Casmann and Johann Weyer, as well as contemporary theologians like Theodore Beza, William Fulke, William Perkins and Thomas Cooper.[11] This appears to be an impressively broad array of references but it is apparent that Deacon and Walker utilise all the authors they could find who support their arguments. This also means, as we shall see, that they sometimes use these authors selectively, often omitting contradictory opinions they may have held. Deacon and Walker's work has been accused of being 'prolix and logically weak'[12] and it certainly is a hefty tome that employs a variety of

[10] 'To the Reader', pp. [1-2]
[11] See 'The names of seuerall Authors', *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. [23-26]
[12] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 66

approaches. However, their method of writing becomes rather less perplexing when we consider the state of education at Tudor universities where the curriculum was impacted by the rise of humanism, the Reformation and challenges to traditional Aristotelianism such as Platonism, Stoicism and Ramism.

The impact of humanism on the English universities at this time has been much debated but there were some changes. Charles B. Schmitt describes how intellectual innovation stagnated and even declined at Oxford and Cambridge during the fifteenth century. It was only in the sixteenth, with the impact of humanism and the Reformation that changes began to emerge, with a rapid decline in emphasis on late-medieval logic, whilst Scotist metaphysics and theology also fell out of favour. On the other hand although these traditional philosophical and scientific studies were discarded, English universities produced very little original material to replace them, in contrast to the continent, where there was a steady output of humanistically inspired commentaries on Aristotle.[13]

Natural philosophy was still very much Aristotelian and derived mainly from *De Anima.* Aristotle maintained that every living thing must possess a soul because 'The soul is the cause or source of the living body […] the soul is the cause of its body alike in all three senses which we explicitly recognize. It is (a) the source or origin of movement, it is (b) the end, it is (c) the essence of the whole living body.'[14] He defined 'living' as 'thinking or perception or local movement and rest, or movement in the sense

[13] Charles B. Schmitt, *John Case and Aristotelianism in Renaissance England* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983), pp. 14; 17-26
[14] Aristotle (translated by J. A. Smith), *De Anima* (350 B.C.), Book 2, Part 4 <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.mb.txt> [accessed March 19 2011]

of nutrition, decay and growth.'[15] Underlying these teachings was the Aristotelian distinction between form and matter. 'Matter' is the thing of which something is made and all matter consisted of the four elements: earth, air, fire and water. Motion and mixture were seen as the efficient causes for change, and all motion was seen as linear because it was thought to have an end point. The only exception was celestial matter, which was made up of the fifth element and was thought to move in a circular motion.[16] 'Form' is distinct from matter as it is the quality or shape that a thing has that makes it a particular type of thing. The example Aristotle gives is that of the imprint a ring makes in wax. The impression made in the wax is the form of the ring, but not the ring (matter) itself.[17] Embedded in these concepts are the ideas of actuality and potentiality. He explains them thus: 'We are in the habit of recognizing, as one determinate kind of what is, substance, and that in several senses, (a) in the sense of matter or that which in itself is not 'a this', and (b) in the sense of form or essence, which is that precisely in virtue of which a thing is called 'a this', and thirdly (c) in the sense of that which is compounded of both (a) and (b). Now matter is potentiality, form actuality.'[18]

From these concepts arises Aristotle's idea of how body and soul relate to each other. He states that 'the word substance has three meanings, form, matter, and the complex of both, and of these three what is called matter is potentiality, what is called form actuality. Since then the complex here is the living thing, the body cannot be the actuality of the soul; it is the soul which is the actuality of a certain kind of body.'[19] In

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[15] Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book 2, Part 2
[16] Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination: From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 39-40
[17] Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book 2, Part 12
[18] Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book 2, Part 1
[19] Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book 2, Part 2

this way, the soul was dependent upon the body for perception.

For Aristotle, all living things possessed certain psychic faculties. These included 'the nutritive, the appetitive, the sensory, the locomotive, and the power of thinking.'[20] The faculty of nutrition is the realisation of purpose and is distinct from physical growth and regeneration. Aristotle states that a thing can only be moved in two ways: either 'indirectly', that is, owing to something other than itself, or 'directly', that is, owing only to itself. For Aristotle it is 'sensible things' that move the soul, and the process of thinking that causes movement. Therefore, the senses respond to stimuli and allow the soul to move within its environment. Aristotle also expounded the existence of *phantasia* or imagination, which allowed things that were not in reality present to be presented as images to the mind. However, the creation of these images was still dependent upon sense perception.[21]

Aristotle maintained that the intellect was independent from the body and of a different category. Distinguishing it from the soul, he stated that 'The case of mind is different; it seems to be an independent substance implanted within the soul.'[22] Furthermore, he maintained that 'We have no evidence as yet about mind or the power to think; it seems to be a widely different kind of soul, differing as what is eternal from what is perishable; it alone is capable of existence in isolation from all other psychic powers. All the other parts of soul [are] incapable of separate existence though, of course, distinguishable by definition.'[23] Drawing upon the idea of potentiality and actuality, Aristotle stated that 'the body cannot be the actuality of the soul; it is the soul

[20] Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book 2, Part 3
[21] Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book 1, Part 3
[22] Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book 1, Part 4
[23] Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book 2, Part 2

which is the actuality of a certain kind of body. Hence […] the soul cannot be without a body, while it cannot be a body; it is not a body but something relative to a body. That is why it is in a body, and a body of a definite kind.'[24] However, the mind cannot function without external, sensory stimulation and is incapable of forming its own information without having first received that information through sensory means. The sensitive faculty was understood to acquire impressions (*species*), which were then turned into *phantasmata,* and it is these that were passed onto the intellective faculty, through the *phantasia*.[25] So one can see how Aristotle's understanding of sense and perception was dependent upon notions of matter and form, and potentiality and actuality, and also upon how the soul and body were understood in relation to each other. These concepts were fundamental to Deacon and Walker's arguments against possession, as shall be demonstrated in Chapter Four.

The fundamental content of natural philosophy did not change radically during the Tudor period. However, the means of learning did undergo some changes. Despite pointing to the persistence of scholastic texts, Schmitt does recognise that the 'new philological method, with its declaration of a deep and proficient knowledge of the classical languages and cultures, rooted in a devotion to the study of classical source materials, became established in England and stabilized itself at court, in the schools, and in the universities.'[26] In England therefore, the humanistic impulse manifested itself in form and method, rather than in innovative output. For example, Walter J. Ong

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[24] Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book 2, Part 2

[25] Lawrence D. Green, 'Aristotelian *Lexis* and Renaissance *Elocutio*' in Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer (eds.), *Rereading Aristotle's 'Rhetoric'* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), p. 159; Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 10-11

[26] Schmitt, p. 26

points to the rise of rhetoric in Tudor education as the result of the influence of humanism and anti-scholasticism. He argues that the study of disputations, although technically logical, increasingly used rhetoric.[27] He argues that this training inevitably meant that Tudor writing was predominantly concerned with disputation and persuasion: neutrality or objectivity of position was not something that was taught.[28] The focus was on language and how it could be used to communicate arguments effectively.

This is reflected in the curriculum for the four-year B.A. course, which focussed upon the disciplines of logic, rhetoric and philosophy. James McConica points to a shift in the *trivium*—the part of the course that encompassed grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic or logic—to an emphasis on 'a humanistic dialectic directed no longer to technical achievements, but to pedagogical simplicity and to training for public debate on public issues.'[29] Lisa Jardine further illustrates this by pointing to the *trivium* texts studied at Cambridge, stating that 'the categories "grammar", "dialectic", "rhetoric" as defined by the set texts in the statutes all have a distinctly dialectical flavor in their common emphasis on disputation.' The reason for this was to accommodate students who needed to 'acquire a facility with language and the techniques of rational argument' required for professional careers.[30] Dialectic became less concerned with specialist aspects, but more about form and method of argumentation.

However, it is evident that the use of scholastic logical treatises persisted in this period, as demonstrated by their continued presence in the inventories of libraries both

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[27] Walter J. Ong, 'Tudor Writings on Rhetoric', *Studies in the Renaissance*, Vol. 15 (1968), pp. 39-69

[28] Ong, 'Tudor Writings on Rhetoric', p. 50

[29] James McConica 'Humanism and Aristotle in Tudor Oxford', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 94, No. 371 (1979), pp. 291-317 (p. 294)

[30] Lisa Jardine, 'The Place of Dialectic Teaching in Sixteenth-Century Cambridge', *Studies in the Renaissance*, Vol. 21 (1974), pp. 31-62 (p. 44, 50)

of the universities and of private individuals.[31] Schmitt argues that Aristotelian tradition continued, with some modification, throughout the Renaissance period, and was not wholly displaced by the emerging Platonism, Stoicism and scepticism associated with humanism.[32] He uses the example of John Case to demonstrate the continuing trend of Aristotelianism that emerged towards the end of the sixteenth century. Whilst Case was almost wholly dependent upon Aristotle and scholastic texts, he still incorporated elements of Stoicism and Platonism and also demonstrated an awareness of new alchemical knowledge.[33] It appears then, that humanism and the Reformation did affect education in Tudor England, but there was also some continuity from the tradition of medieval universities. This eclectic education, which combined elements of scholasticism, Aristotelian logic and humanism helps to explain much about Deacon and Walker's own style of writing and approach to the subject matter, as does the newly emerging Ramism.

Ramist influence was particularly felt in Oxford and Cambridge in the 1580s but it was already in evidence before that and it is not unlikely that Deacon and Walker encountered the method whilst students. Petrus Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée) (1515-1572) was Regius Professor in eloquence and philosophy at the Sorbonne. He was a vocal opponent of scholasticism and developed a reputation for anti-Aristotelianism. In the 1560s, Ramus converted to Protestantism and he was murdered during the St. Bartholomew Day Massacre in August 1574, which gained him the status as a Protestant martyr. Ong argues that Ramism 'attests not a respectable theory, but a set of mental

[31] McConica, p. 297
[32] Schmitt, p. 5
[33] Schmitt, p. 219

habits.'[34] Ramus' desire was to reform the curriculum of the universities, and to combine philosophy and eloquence so that what was learnt could be applied practically to post-university life.[35] He believed 'The *art* of dialectic is the *teaching* of how to discourse.'[36] In this way, he seemed to understand logic and discourse as means by which knowledge was communicated, rather than the way in which it was acquired. Ramism was therefore a visual or diagrammatic presentation of knowledge that eschewed any form of discussion or dialogue. There was no exposition in the visual presentation about how the facts were concluded, only a presentation of them as the truth of the matter.

Ong demonstrates the influence of Ramism on the works of English Puritans, suggesting that its hostility to the scholastic method—a method particularly associated with the Catholic Church—appealed particularly to Puritans. Unlike scholasticism, which was seen as speculation that went beyond the authority and limits of the Bible, the Ramist method was viewed as a pure systemisation of knowledge. Certainly Deacon and Walker would have come across the Ramist method in notable Puritan works, such as William Perkins' *Golden chaine* and Dudley Fenner's *Sacra theologia*.[37]

John Rainolds, the Puritan scholar and reader in Greek at Corpus Christi College, Oxford (1572-1578) has been seen as Ramist by historians such as Mark Curtis, who points to Rainolds' critique of Aristotle in his seminal lectures on the latter's *Rhetoric*,

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[34] Walter J. Ong, *Ramus: Method, and the Decay of Dialogue. From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958, reprinted 1983), p. 7
[35] Ong, *Ramus,* p. 167
[36] 'Ars dialectica doctrina est dissrendi' in Ramus, *Dialecticae partitiones* (1543) and 'ars dialiectica est doctrina dissrendi' in Ramus, *Dialecticae institutions* (1543). Quoted in Ong, *Ramus*, p. 160
[37] Ong, *Ramus*, pp. 134-148.

which cites Ramus' works extensively.[38] Rainolds was also influenced by the humanist emphasis on the importance and power of the Greek language.[39] However, Rainolds, like most humanists, was aware of the problem of relying heavily upon pre-Christian, pagan writers. It is in this regard that Ramus was influential on scholars like Rainolds. McConica argues that Ramus was absorbed 'less for his methodological critique than for his Christian understanding'.[40] Rainolds approved of Ramus' stand against the Sorbonne's Aristotelians who upheld Aristotle's teachings to the detriment of Christian doctrine. He also saw value in Ramus' division of rhetoric over that of Aristotle, and so regarded the Ramist method as a valuable tool. However, he was less keen on the bitter manner in which Ramus attacked Aristotle, which he felt violated the rules of decorum. Therefore Ramus' actual critique of Aristotle was condemned because of its immoderate nature.[41]

Ramism's value, therefore, was more in the way in which it sought to organise knowledge, than in Ramus' actual arguments against Aristotle and his works. As Curtis puts it, Ramus 'emphasized […] the process of making arguments and not the formal abstract rules for marshalling them in the course of a dialectical exercise […] he also reduced the number of predicaments or categories of the Aristotelian system and discarded some of them as unreal or irrelevant.'[42] It was Ramism's simplification of the process of conveying knowledge that appealed, but, as Curtis points out, even as late as

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[38] Mark Curtis, *Oxford and Cambridge in Transition, 1558-1642: An Essay on Changing Relations between the English Universities and English Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 119, 252; McConica, p. 304
[39] McConica, p. 306; Lawrence D. Green (ed. & translator), *John Rainolds's Oxford Lectures on Aristotle's Rhetoric* (London: Associated University Presses, 1986), p. 11
[40] McConica, p. 306
[41] McConica, p. 307
[42] Curtis, p. 254

1636, the Laudian statutes of Oxford called for all bachelor of arts students to argue their propositions in logic, rhetoric, politics, and moral philosophy 'according to Aristotle, whose authority is paramount'.[43] Ong argues that 'Ramism […] never became academically respectable in a large scale within the [English] universities.' He states that its simplistic form was adopted especially by those who sought careers outside the universities, such as the 'commercial class' and lawyers.[44] Therefore, the influence of Ramism as a complete system does need to be qualified because it is apparent that it was not adopted wholesale and nor did it categorically displace all previous methodology. Schmitt argues that in reality, humanism and Ramism did not lead to a 'withering away' of Aristotelian logic, but that the latter actually gained stature in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.[45] What seems apparent then, is that those educated in the universities in the late sixteenth century would have been aware of Ramism, but this was not taught exclusively of all other methods.

However, Ramism clearly had an impact upon Deacon and Walker, as is evident in both the form and intention of the *Dialogicall discourses*. In terms of form, the Ramist influence is apparent in the 'contents' page,[46] where Deacon and Walker adopt the Ramist 'method of teaching', which is 'the arrangement of various things brought down from universal and general principles to the underlying singular parts, by which arrangement the whole matter can be more easily taught and apprehended.'[47]

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[43] G.R.M. Ward (trans.), Title VI, Section 2, Chapter 9, *Oxford University Statutes:* Vol. 1: The Caroline Code, or Laudian Statutes, promulgated A.D. 1636 (London: William Pickering, 1845), p. 44; Curtis, p. 229
[44] Walter J. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Itacha, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971, reprinted 1990), p. 86
[45] Schmitt, p. 37
[46] See Figure 1
[47] Ong, *Ramus*, p. 245

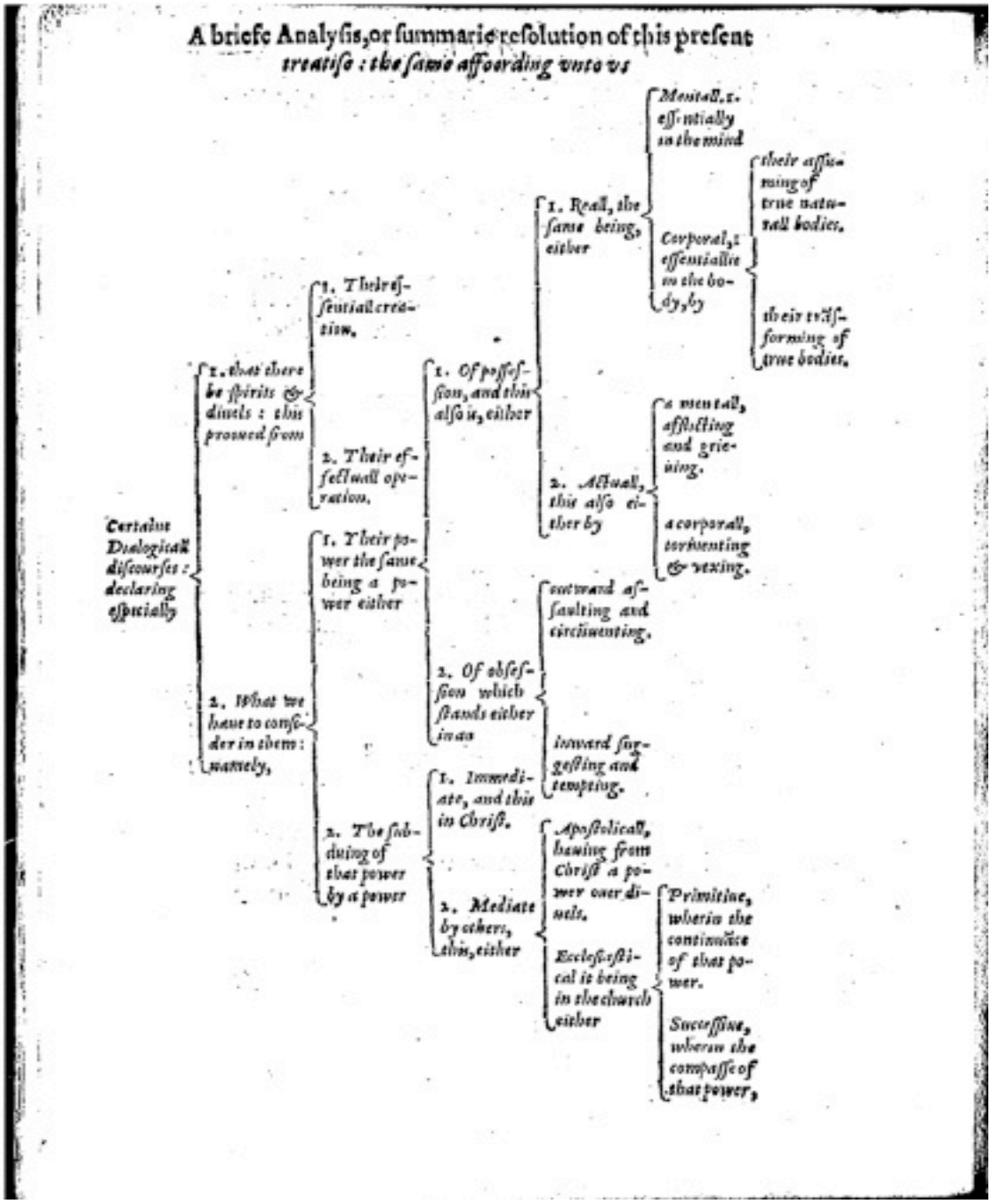

Figure 1: Title page of the *Dialogicall discourse*

In fact, this seems to be one of the most striking examples of Ramist method in Elizabethan literature. The way in which Deacon and Walker lay out the topic and its various components is much more systematic than the purely dialogical methods of other writers. On the other hand, Ramus' method was to eschew the dialogue form, yet Deacon and Walker's work makes full use of this. One can see an almost contradictory amalgamation of methodological forms in their work. However, this merging seems less surprising when one considers the revival of dialogue during the Renaissance and its persistence into the later sixteenth century.

Dialogue emerged as a form of discourse in ancient Athens, and was epitomised in the works of Plato. Simon Goldhill argues that dialogue was 'integrally related to its genesis in the fifth- and fourth-century BCE culture of democratic Athens'. He states that dialogue and democracy are fundamentally linked, as dialogue allowed the expression of varying points of view and debate between them; the consequent need for analysis and self-reflection led to the development of theory in various spheres, be it medical theory or political theory. Dialogue also led to the interaction between the elite and the masses in the city's institutions. It is therefore ironic that Plato is most closely associated with the dialogue form, because he opposed the democratic system. There is also an inherent tension in Plato's aim to formulate and convey a single authoritative 'truth', and the essentially multi-faceted, open nature of dialogical discourse.[48]

Greek dialogue was developed by Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle; later, in the first century BCE, Cicero produced a number of Latin dialogues in order to introduce

[48] Simon Goldhill, 'Introduction: Why don't Christians do dialogue?' in Simon Goldhill (ed.), *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 2-3

Greek philosophical ideas to the Romans.[49] Virginia Cox argues that there is a difference between the Platonic and Ciceronian dialogues, primarily because Cicero rooted his dialogues in a concrete historical setting with identifiable figures in order to give them a documentary feel, whereas the Athens in which Plato set his dialogues was more otherwordly.[50] Of course, the reader was not expected to believe that the dialogue was a word-for-word transcription of an actual conversation; rather the 'realness' of the dialogue leant a degree of authority to what was being said.

The use of dialogue seemed to decline with the rise of Christianity. David Marsh connects this with the fall of Roman civilisation and the subsequent collapse of classical education that concentrated on rhetoric and oratory. He points to Augustine as 'decisive for the history of Latin dialogue' because he rejected rhetoric in favour of scriptural exegesis. Augustine's dialogues, with their criticism of Cicero, seem to mark a departure from the open inquiry of classical dialogues, to 'an introspective search for God.' Marsh argues that for Augustine, 'the authority of Scripture obviated the necessity of discussion, and revealed truth clearly forbade as pernicious the ambiguous practice of arguing two sides of a question.' Classical dialogue became incompatible with the quest for homogenous orthodoxy. He states that Augustine's approach, along with Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (522) set the pattern for the form of dialogue produced in the Middle Ages.[51] The aim of medieval Christian dialogue was to promote a singular truth and discourage curious speculation. It was not a free discussion, but

[49] David Marsh, *The Quattrocento Dialogue: Classical Tradition and Humanist Innovation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 2
[50] Virginia Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary dialogue in its social and political contexts, Castiglione to Galileo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 12-13
[51] Marsh, p. 4

rather the dismissal of contrary opinions and the reassertion of one orthodox viewpoint.[52]

The next significant breakthrough in the development of dialogue was Petrarch's *Secretum* (1347-1353). This work is concerned with Petrarch's desire to overcome his carnal desires and pursue a more spiritual path. The voices in the dialogue are his own, that speaks for the weakness of the flesh, conversing with the figure of St. Augustine, which speaks for the importance of pursuing spiritual things. It is therefore an introspective piece that can be regarded as a soliloquy because it deals with the concerns of the individual, Petrarch. The voices of both protagonists represent his own considerations, but the presentation of both voices demonstrates a humanist determination to consider all that contributes to human personality.[53] However, Marsh believes that this dialogue lacks the social and historical specificity that characterises true humanist dialogue. He argues that whilst Petrarch revived the spirit of free discussion of the Ciceronian dialogue, in content it still resembled medieval dialogue.[54] He sees Leonardo Bruni's *Dialogi ad Petrum Histrum* (1401) as the first humanist dialogue. It restores Ciceronian tropes by using the figure of chancellor Salutati in Florence to initiate a free discussion as opposed to scholastic dispute (which was intended to defend the truth of dogma and dismiss any challenges brought against it). The second volume of the work imitates Cicero's *De oratore*, thus further reviving the Ciceronian form, and this form was further expanded by the humanists Gian Francesco Poggio Bracciolini, Lorenzo Valla and Leon Battista Alberti in the first half of the

[52] Goldhill, 'Introduction', pp. 7-8
[53] Eva Kushner, 'Renaissance Dialogue and Subjectivity' in Dorothea Heitsch and Jean-François Vallée (eds.), *Printed Voices: The Renaissance Culture of Dialogue* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 230
[54] Marsh, pp. 16-23

fifteenth century, and Bartolomeo Platina, Gionvani Antonio Campano and Cristoforo Landino in the latter half.[55]

Marsh describes how the Ciceronian model became the dominant form of dialogue during the Renaissance. However, this also incorporated elements of Plato's Socratic inquiry, the symposia dialogue of Xenophon, and also the Latin comic dialogue of Lucian. He states that the 'most significant feature of the Quattrocento humanist dialogue is its revival of the Ciceronian principles of Academic argument and rhetorical freedom which are essential to an unbiased inquiry.'[56] The point of these dialogues was to lead to moral edification through open discussion. They were not intended to be dogmatic or objective, but rather to lead to a conclusion through skilled persuasion. Cox argues that one of the reasons for the continuing dominance of the Ciceronian dialogue in sixteenth century Italy was because of the exclusion of variant forms, particularly the fictional and satirical Lucianic dialogue which were increasingly seen as subversive because of political factors fostered by the Reformation.[57]

Erasmus' dialogues also failed to gain traction in Italy because of his criticisms of the Church. Indeed, his works were eventually censored, and he was placed on Paul IV's Index in 1559.[58] However, Erasmus' dialogues were highly influential in England. Margo Todd has shown how Erasmus' writings featured heavily in Elizabethan university learning, as evidenced by his frequent appearance in a number of personal notebooks, including that of Arthur Hildersham. More formally, at least one work of Erasmus features on sixty-eight of the eighty-one surviving book inventories from

[55] Marsh, pp. 1-2, 24-37
[56] Marsh, pp. 4-5
[57] Cox, p. 27
[58] Cox, pp. 27-28

Oxford from 1558–1603, and fifty-six of the eighty-five surviving inventories from Cambridge in the same period.[59] Gregory D. Dodds argues that much of the appeal of Erasmus' work lay in the fact that it promoted 'the theological language of peace, unity, and consensus'. This was particularly appealing in England where the Reformation was still being negotiated amongst competing groups and Erasmus' style and language 'became intrinsic components of English religious polemic and helped shape the vocabulary of English Protestantism.'[60] Gary Remer argues that

> The expression of opposing opinions, for Erasmus, allows the listener to compare viewpoints and to decide which is the most probable […] Although the interlocutors have their own opinions and argue for them, each speaker must entertain the possibility that he may be mistaken and, consequently, that he may ultimately adopt another position. Lacking certainty, the speakers in the Erasmian dialogue must tolerate other views.[61]

This is not to say that English Protestant writers did not have a concept of ultimate doctrinal truth. Rather, it was this concept of toleration for the sake of unity that could be used to counter those who were thought to be factious. This is the issue around which the concept of adiaphora, or things indifferent, revolved. In the Church of England, adiaphora came to denote those things that were not necessary for salvation and not specifically addressed in scripture. The development of the concept owed much to Erasmus' philosophical consideration of adiaphora, where he asserted that ultimately

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[59] Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, reprinted 2002), p. 67
[60] Gregory D. Dodds, *Exploiting Erasmus: The Erasmian Legacy and Religious Change in Early Modern England* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. xvii
[61] Gary Remer, 'Dialogues of Toleration: Erasmus and Bodin', *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (1994), pp. 305-336 (p. 307)

it was charity that was the mark of a true Christian. Therefore ceremonies were not an end in themselves but merely a means of attaining and expressing charity.[62] Defenders of the Church of England used the concept of adiaphora firstly to justify the exclusion of certain rites and doctrines (most importantly the infallibility of the Pope) against the Catholics and later, to argue for the retention of such features as the wearing of vestments against the Puritans. This allowed the Church of England to present itself as a *via media*, a bastion of moderation, and in the process, identify those who disagreed with the Church as extremists. Ethan H. Shagan points to the necessity of 'state power and coercive restraint' in maintaining this position of moderation, and the ironic implementation of the concept of adiaphora: although these were things indifferent, the Church still demanded agreement on those things, and any dissenting opinion was not tolerated.[63] This was why the authorities could accuse the Puritans of being divisive and damaging to the unity of the Church of England over things that were adiaphorous. In this manner, they could counter Puritan demands for further reform by adopting the position of tolerance and moderation and portraying the Puritans as extremists by implication. This accusation certainly arises in Harsnett's writings and in the work of Deacon and Walker, as demonstrated above.

Erasmus' Catholic theology was not strictly compatible with the emerging Calvinism of the English church but this did not stop Edward IV and Elizabeth I from decreeing that his *Paraphrases* be present in every parish along with the Bible. Dodds argues that it was the English introductions to the *Paraphrases*, by editors like Nicholas

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[62] Bernard J. Verkamp. *The Indifferent Mean: Adiaphorism in the English Reformation to 1554* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977), pp. 29, 36-38; 160-161

[63] Ethan H. Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 109, 112, 83

Udall and Miles Coverdale, which were important in 'Englishing' and Protestantising Erasmus. This demonstrates that Erasmus was perhaps more influential in the way in which he was interpreted, rather than through what he was actually advocating. However, the learned of early modern England would have been more than familiar with his works, including his dialogues, especially as his *Colloquies* and *Adages* served as standard Latin school texts.[64]

The emergence of humanism and the particular access to Erasmus in England helps to explain why the dialogue form was not unusual in this period. Indeed, a number of demonological works, including Henry Holland's *A treatise against witchcraft* (1590), George Gifford's *Dialogue concerning witches and witchcrafts* (1593) and James I's *Daemonologie* (1597) were composed in dialogue form. J. Christopher Warner states that English dialogical works were 'nearly always artefacts of specific political and religious controversies, and that they tended to appear in clusters, in response to specific crises.'[65] This is certainly true of Deacon and Walker's works, but the demonological works cited are also concerned with dealing with a controversy of sorts; that is proving the reality of the threat of witchcraft against sceptical challenges. Dialogue seemed to be an appropriate way of dealing with controversial subjects because, as Cox states, 'The dialogue is unique among the familiar genres of arguments and exposition in that, at the same time as presenting a body of information or opinion, it also represents the process by which that information or opinion is transmitted.'[66] In

[64] Dodds, p. xii; Todd, p. 31
[65] J. Christopher Warner, 'Thomas More's *Utopia* and the Problem of Writing a Literary History of English Renaissance Dialogue' in Heitsch and Vallée, p. 66
[66] Cox, pp. 4-6, 11

this way, it becomes a dynamic exposition of the topic at hand. It is not merely a static presentation of 'truth', but also demonstrates the thinking behind it.

This is especially pertinent for Deacon and Walker because the form of their work reflects the circumstances that gave rise to the production of the book. The fact that the two disagreed over the issue at the beginning and discussed the matter with each other and other ministers means it is fitting that they adopted the dialogue form. Although not a word-for-word transcription of these discussions, the work can be seen as representing the issues that were dealt with during the formulation of the work. The exchange between the characters covers all the possible angles and objections that they had apparently wrestled with in their path to the 'truth'. Deacon and Walker introduce their characters:

> For first, Philologus signifieth a Louer of talke: and representeth such persons as trudge to and fro; tatling these newes without any regard or due search into the soundnes thereof.
>
> Then next Pneumatomachus, signifieth a fighter or contender against the essentiall being of Spirits: and representeth those Swinish Saduces of old, and those godles Atheistes now in our daies, who hold there are neither Spirits nor Diuels.
>
> Then thirdly, Lycanthropus, signifieth a man essentially transformed to a wolfe: and representeth such persons as do hold (with tooth and naile) the transformation of diuels.
>
> Then fourthly, Exorcistes signifieth a coniurour or caster foorth of spirits and diuels: and representeth those persons that doe hold (in these daies of the Gospel) a real, or actual possession of diuels at the least.
>
> Then fiftly, Physiologus signifieth a discourser of natures secretes, or a naturall philosopher: and representeth such persons as (by the onely light of reason) are able to

> discouer the grose and palpable absurdities, ensuing such phantastical & absurd opinio[n]s.
>
> Then lastly, Orthodoxus signifieth one of an approoued or vpright iudgement: and representeth all such illumined diuines and others, as are able by the sway of reason, the authority of writers, and plaine euidence of scripture to censure the obiections, and very soundly to set downe the infallible truth.[67]

The advantage of the dialogue form is that Deacon and Walker could anticipate and deal with readers' objections within the text itself through these idealised voices. In this way the text becomes a dynamic exposition rather than a monologic text. The dialogue format allows them to 'interact' with the reader by dealing with possible objections rather than ignoring other viewpoints. On the other hand, paradoxically, although the dialogue form gives the impression of open discussion, Deacon and Walker's work it is not truly neutral but is aimed at establishing the truth of their position and is intended to be the last word on the matter. As Cox points out, one can distinguish between 'true' dialogue, which is dialectical in nature, and 'false' dialogue, which is monological in nature.[68] Cox points to this trend of dialogue becoming less a means of discussion and more a means of teaching that emerged during the early modern period. This is especially relevant to Deacon and Walker when one considers her assessment that dialogue was seen as a way of correcting error.[69] Deacon and Walker's main aim was to instruct readers in the correct knowledge regarding demons. Therefore, the work is didactic in nature, and the dialogue is not intended to present different opinions that the reader can select between, but rather to dismantle opposing

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[67] *Dialogicall discourses*, sigs. B4[r]-B4[v]
[68] Cox, pp. 2-4
[69] Cox, pp. 48-49

views in order to establish the truth. In this way their work resembles the medieval dialogue form, rather than the classical or humanist dialogues.

It is therefore fitting that the voices they choose are not historical, identifiable figures as used in Ciceronian and humanist dialogue, but rather indicative of broad modes of thought. The setting of the dialogue also is vague and outside of historical reality. Although there are allusions to the current circumstances, as indicated by the place names of Maghnitton (Nottingham) and Eirtab (Bawtry), and references to Darrel's activities, the main aim is to establish an objective, eternal truth that exists beyond these particular circumstances.

This desire to establish orthodoxy about demonic possession was especially important in light of the Darrel controversy, for the furore demonstrated to Deacon and Walker that there was actually no room for contending opinions. Their aim was to deal with, and decisively dismiss, those competing voices represented by Philologus, Pneumatomachus, Lycanthropus, Exorcistes and Physiologus and replace them with the one authoritative voice of Orthodoxus. In this way, they fit the Ramist model, insofar as 'in the characteristic outlook fostered by the Ramist rhetoric, the speaking is directed to a world where even persons respond only as object–that is, say nothing back.'[70] Although their work is clearly dialogic in form, in spirit and intent it is Ramist.

The very fact that demonic possession had become a politically charged issue meant that people were forced to examine the issues at hand and reach a conclusion about the place of possession in their own minds. Deacon and Walker were active participants in this process, but they also felt the need to instruct others and correct false

[70] Ong, *Ramus,* p. 287

perceptions of possession, because they believed it was their duty to protect the ignorant from deception. They explain how

> our harty true zeale to the glory of God, the same also entermingled eftsoones with some christian care for many poore ignorant soules […] doe, euen peremptorily prouoke vs both, to proceede recto pectore [directly], with all integrity and vprightnesse of hart, in the now publishing of this our entended enterprise.[71]

They were particularly perturbed by the conflict the controversy had created, and the fact that ambiguity about demonic possession had allowed Darrel to become somewhat of a celebrity:

> For had not these preposterous practises with a prouident circumspection beene warily preuented in time: surely, the vulgar sort […] would […] vno ore, with one mouth […] haue cried foorth thus, M. Darel, M. Darell, he is, the onely Diuiner of signes and of woonders: his ministerie shall haue my onely applause […] And thus the whole countrey they would (in continuance of time) verie fearfully haue fallen vnto the Corinthian factions, some holding of Paul, and some of Apollos: where as it is the Lord alone who giues the encrease.[72]

They refer here to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, where he addresses the issue of divisions in the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 3), with some following Paul and others following Paul's disciple, Apollos. This reference highlights their perception that Darrel's activities were causing similar divisions and drawing attention away from God,

[71] 'To the Reader', *Dialogicall discourses*, p. [5]
[72] 'To the Reader', *Dialogicall discourses*, p. [6]

who should be the focus. Here is also expressed a sense of relief that the issue has been dealt with, and implicitly an approval of the authorities' handling of the situation.

The prominence of Darrel as an individual is evidently something that offended Deacon and Walker's pastoral sensibilities. They accuse Darrel of being 'a busie bodie in other mens matters' by dealing with Sommers in Nottingham, rather than allowing the local religious leaders to sort it out. Deacon may have felt particularly territorial because he had been a minister in Nottingham in 1586.[73] They chastise Darrel for presuming himself able to solve a problem where he really has no business: 'how durst you so boldly aduenture, to thrust your sickle into another mans haruest? […] How could you so desperately vndertake such an extraordinary work in another mans charge, you beeing not so much as an ordinary minister, nor hauing obtained before, some ordinary allowance thereunto at the least?'[74] They believed that Darrel had no authority or sanction to carry out the dispossessions, but also that by claiming this power, it was the person of Darrel that became important, rather than the work of God. It was this sense of pride and self-importance that they particularly objected to, stating that it was 'a vaineglorious conceit' that led Darrel to maintain the possibility of possession, rather than any theological truth or pastoral concern.[75]

This anxiety over Darrel's actions can also be explained by Deacon and Walker's Puritan tendencies. Already damaged by the Classis controversy and the Marprelate tracts, moderate Puritans would have been keen to avoid any further damage to their 'cause', which could be identified not so much as a political or ecclesiastical campaign, but rather a focus on rigorous spiritual observance and care. The essentially

[73] Marchant, p. 301
[74] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 268 & 270
[75] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 338

libellous *Admonition to Parliament* (1572) written by John Field and Thomas Wilcox had helped to undermine the Classis movement because of its extreme assertions that the offices of bishop and archibishop were popish concepts, and that episcopacy was antichristian and devilish.[76] This not only provoked a negative reaction from the authorities, with both authors being imprisoned, but it also drew criticism from Puritan figures such as Laurence Humphrey and Thomas Norton, John Foxe and Theodore Beza.[77] Seventeen years later, the Marprelate tracts again undermined the integrity of the Presbyterian cause because of their scandalous nature. The investigation into these led the authorities to uncover evidence of Presbyterian conferences, and also the draft texts of the 'Book of Discipline', a blueprint for a Presbyterian church in England.[78] This resulted in the trial and imprisonment of the leading Presbyterian figure Thomas Cartwright and eight other ministers. As Collinson states, this ordeal 'had worn down and all but defeated the nine ministers and the movement for which they stood as representative figures'.[79] Therefore, rather than supporting Darrel through a mutual sense of Puritan brotherhood, Deacon and Walker were actually concerned with the negative impact of Darrel's actions on Puritanism more broadly. In this respect, the issue seems to represent another fracture point whereby the 'Puritan' cause redefined itself.

The pattern of a few extreme individuals damaging the Puritan cause was clearly a cause for concern. Deacon and Walker allude to William Hacket, whose antics, they

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[76] Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 119
[77] Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 120-121
[78] The insulting humour towards ecclesiastical figures contained within the tracts led to leading Presbyterian figures, including Cartwright and Josias Nichols, roundly to condemn them and insist that they did not approve of them. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 393; 403-404
[79] Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement,* p. 431

state, 'disgraced (in the iudgement of some) the entended church discipline'.[80] Hacket began to experience apparent supernatural revelations in the 1580s, and came to believe that he was a prophet who was to herald of the second coming of Christ. Following the collapse of the Classis movement, Hacket, along with two Puritan gentlemen, Edmund Coppinger and Henry Arthington, sought unsuccessfully to free the ministers from prison and overthrow the government of Elizabeth I. Consequently, Hacket was tried and executed in July 1591. The authorities used the incident to discredit Presbyterianism further by exaggerating the links between Hacket and the leaders of the cause.[81]

Deacon and Walker argue that just as Hacket had undermined the Presbyterian cause, in the same way the exorcists' actions 'deepely discredit the holy ordinance of praier and fasting'.[82] This direct parallel between Hacket and the exorcists insinuates that exorcists are of a mentally dubious state, but moreover, it highlights the damaging association of godly causes (Presbyterianism/prayer and fasting) with controversial figures. Deacon and Walker no doubt recognised the godly zeal of Darrel, but they objected to the legitimate spiritual practice of prayer and fasting being tarnished by the authorities as subversive because of its association with exorcism and the dissension this activity caused. Parallels could be seen in the way in which the Classis movement was undermined by extremists like Hacket and Marprelate. Deacon and Walker were fearful that like the practice of prophesying, prayer and fasting could also become a restricted exercise.

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[80] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 348
[81] Alexandra Walsham, '"Frantick Hacket": Prophecy, Sorcery, Insanity, and the Elizabethan Puritan Movement', *The Historical Journal,* Vol. 41, Issue 1 (1998), pp. 27-66
[82] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 348

Deacon and Walker's Puritanism seems to lie not so much in their stance on ecclesiastical government, but rather in their peculiarly Puritan concern with proper spiritual conduct. They objected to the focus paid to demonic possession because they believed it detracted individuals from the proper spiritual care of their souls. They argued that exorcists lulled people into a false sense of security because they were led to believe that they did not have to fear the Devil unless he possessed them:

> this your obstinate auouching of actuall possession, it [is] the verie high way vnto Atheisme, to an irreligious behauiour, and all carnall securitie. For, by making men verie idlely to gaze […] at an imagined actuall possession of diuels, when no such matter (in deed and in truth) may soundly be prooued: what doe you else (in effect) but lull the whole world fast a sleepe in the cradell of carnall securitie?[83]

This complacency left people vulnerable to the Devil's more subtle temptations and therefore those who promoted belief in possession were actually helping the Devil to draw souls away from God.

According to Deacon and Walker, the *Dialogicall discourses* was produced as a direct result of discussions prompted by the Darrel controversy. It is therefore worth emphasising the importance of *circumstances* in the production of Deacon and Walker's work. The Darrel controversy created an environment that, in the words of D.P. Walker, was 'unfavourable to witch-hunting and demoniacs'.[84] Deacon and Walker's work was very much a product and response to these circumstances; it also meant their work had a more interested audience who would be more than normally receptive to discussions

[83] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 230
[84] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 73

about the nature and mechanics of demonic possession: essentially, the work was 'topical' which meant it had currency and traction. Borrowing from Michael MacDonald's application of Foucault's idea of local centres of power to the Edward Jorden case, we can see Deacon and Walker's work as one of these centres of power that contributed to the transformation of knowledge about demonic possession as a discrete factor adding to the existing hostile literature and actions of the authorities.[85] Their intellectual discussion aligned with the political realities and so amplified the anti-possession vein that was emerging at this time.

[85] MacDonald, p. xlvii

Chapter Four:
Possession Made Incompatible with Natural Philosophy

The primary aim of the *Dialogicall discourses* was to establish exactly what biblical possession was, and why it no longer occurred. Deacon and Walker wanted categorically to lay out the intricacies of possession and to challenge assumptions about the phenomenon that had hitherto not come under scrutiny. They sought to clarify a number of (what they saw as) misapprehensions regarding the nature of demons, proving specifically that demons could not physically enter into a person's body. This they term 'real' possession and define as an 'essentiall, substantiall, or personall entrance of the Diuell into man, for a more effectuall executing of that his tyrannicall force and violence vpon him'.[1] In order to demonstrate the impossibility of real possession, Deacon and Walker had to first confront the issue of the corporeality or non-corporeality of demons.

Nancy Caciola describes how in medieval descriptions of possession, 'the possessed body was viewed literally as having incorporated a foreign spirit inside itself.' She points to the fact that demons were often described as exiting via a bodily orifice, usually the mouth, and appeared as solid physical objects, such as a toad, a stone, a worm and so on. She also points to Gregory the Great's oft-referenced tale of the nun who became possessed after eating a piece of unblessed cabbage, upon which the demon was sitting.[2] This idea of an ingestion and expulsion of a demon relied on some sense of its corporeality. This sense is also detectable in Tudor cases of possession. For example, in the case of Anne Mylner, the beginning of her possession is marked with

[1] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 41
[2] Caciola, pp. 41-42

her being surrounded by 'a whyte thynge'[3] and as Anne's possession continued, her body swelled up, which suggests the internal physical presence of the demon.[4] Alexander Nyndge's symptoms included the swelling of belly and chest and contortions of the body similar to Mylner's. The later edition which appeared in 1615 describes additional symptoms, including 'a strange noise, or a flapping from within his body' and 'a certain swelling or variable lumpe to a great bignesse swiftly vp and downe between the flesh and the skin.'[5] These new symptoms are identical to those described by Darrel with reference to William Sommers, which proves that the later edition was influenced by the account of Sommers' case.[6]

However, Tudor reports of possession did not enter into discussions of the intricacies of possession and in some cases, the term 'possession' was not used at all. For example, in the case of Robert Brigges, who did not exhibit any type of lumps or swellings that could indicate the internal physical presence of a demon, the accounts do not use the terms possession. Kathleen R. Sands argues that contemporaries may have been reluctant to use the terms possession and exorcism because of their Catholic connotations,[7] but this did not prevent those involved in Mylner's case from diagnosing her case as such. Sands also considers that the case was not actually seen as possession, and that later definitions became more inclusive of symptoms similar to Brigges'. However, Brigges' was clearly suffering from more than routine temptation, as

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[3] Fisher, *Letter*, sig. Aiii[v]
[4] Fisher, *Letter,* pp. [7-9]
[5] Nyndge, *True vexation*, sig. A3[v]
[6] Darrel, *True narration*, pp. 15-16. It is not unreasonable to speculate that these symptoms that emphasised the internal presence of a demon were included as a direct refutation of Deacon and Walker's argument that demons do not physically enter a body.
[7] Kathleen R. Sands, 'Word and Sign in Elizabethan Conflicts with the Devil', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies,* Vol. 31, No. 2 (1999), pp. 238-256 (pp. 241-242)

indicated by his loss of physical senses and his conversations with the Devil. The lack of the specific term 'possession' does not mean that the case was not *understood* as possession and this is certainly true for later readers of the account.[8] More convincing, then, is Sands' proposal that the technical term was not as important as conveying the event itself, and a considered usage of the term only became important during and after the Darrel controversy. Certainly all of the accounts of Darrel's cases use the term 'possession' to describe the afflictions, which suggests a gradual solidification of the concept of possession, and a systemisation of certain symptoms that indicated the affliction less equivocally than the earlier cases.

Prior to the controversy, there was an unelaborated assumption of what possession was. The reports created a body of works from which inferences of what possession involved could be made. Contemporaries also had biblical affirmation that extreme physical torment coupled with spiritual angst indicated possession. This created a culture of ideas in which possession could be recognised and diagnosed according to the things empirically examined, without the need for it to be explicitly explained. It is only when the idea of possession itself came under fire that a more lucid definition was needed, both for those that defended it and for those that attacked it.

Indeed, Darrel produced 'The doctrin of the possession and dispossession of demoniakes ovt of the word of God' (included in the *True narration*), which attempted to define what exactly possession was. He wanted to prove that possession must still occur because no natural explanation could sufficiently explain the symptoms he

[8] Darrel argues that '*M. Foxe* [...] with sundry other Diuines liuing in *D. Fulk.* his time were of the opinion there were possessions, as appeared by their practise, and some of their writings.' Darrel, *Replie*, p. 78. Keith Thomas suggests that it served as a kind of blueprint for the diagnosis and treatment of possession. (Thomas, p. 574)

observed. Darrel did recognise that demons could torment an individual externally, resulting in 'sightes and visions, yea even in his body, as he did *Iob*.'[9] But he distinguished this type of attack from possession, which he believed was characterised by a number of additional features including senselessness, violent and blasphemous behaviour, superhuman strength and extraordinary knowledge. Darrel argued that these symptoms of internal possession could all be found in the Bible.[10] Crucially, he argued that these could only be effected by the internal presence of demons because 'satan being without man, can not cause or send forth those effects (which are indeed signes of possession).'[11]

This suggestion that demons could adopt some form of corporeality and physically enter a person seems to underpin the understanding of what was going on in possession cases. This was made explicit by Darrel, which demonstrates how these concepts became solidified during the controversy. Therefore, this was one of the first things Deacon and Walker wished to tackle, by establishing that demons were in fact incorporeal beings; they could then challenge this understanding of the internal physical presence of demons.

However, although Deacon and Walker seem justified in claiming novelty in clarifying the nature of possession, they were also building upon existing discussions regarding the existence and nature of spiritual beings. For example, Tertullian (160-

[9] Darrel, 'Doctrin of possession', pp. 2-3
[10] Darrel cites nineteen signs of possession. Unfortunately, the remaining copy of the *True narration*, which is held in the Huntington Library, is missing pages 4-9 of the 'Doctrin of possession' and so we only have signs fourteen to nineteen (pp. 10-15). See also above, pp. 117-118
[11] Darrel, 'Doctrin of possession', p 2

220), in his *Apology*, 'affirm[s] indeed the existence of certain spiritual essences'.[12] He understood demons as those whose 'great business is the ruin of mankind', which they carried out in two ways: 'they inflict [...] upon our bodies diseases and other grievous calamities, while by grievous assaults they hurry the soul into sudden and extraordinary excesses.' He attributed their ability to do these things to their 'marvelous subtleness and tenuity', which allowed them to act upon both the human body and spirit. Their spiritual assaults were 'invisible and intangible', and allowed demons to 'breathe into the soul, and rouse up its corruptions with furious passions and wild excesses'. He also described how their nature allowed them to create the illusion of divinity. For example, 'Their swiftness of motion is taken as divinity, because their nature is unknown.'[13] By exploiting their superior natural abilities, demons could appear to possess supernatural powers.

Tertullian maintained that spiritual beings were possessed of corporeity, like all things except for empty space, place, time and thought, which reflects a particularly Stoic concept of corporeality. In his *De Carne Christi*, he stated that 'Everything which exists is a bodily existence *sui generis*. Nothing lacks bodily existence but that which does not exist', whilst in his *De Anima*, he expressed the view that the soul is 'nothing […] if it is not a bodily substance'.[14] Tertullian did not discuss in detail what these spiritual bodies were made of, although they were of a different nature to the flesh-and-bone bodies of humans and were invisible. However, referring to the angels who

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[12] Tertullian (translated by Rev. S. Thelwall), *Apology and De Spectaculis. Minucius Felix: Octavia*, Loeb Classical Library, No. 250 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), p. 63
[13] Tertullian, *Apology*, pp. 64-65
[14] R.E. Roberts, *The Theology of Tertullian* (London: Epworth Press, 1924), pp. 66-67 <http://www.tertullian.org/articles/roberts_theology/roberts_00_index.htm > [accessed March 16 2011]

appeared to Abraham (Genesis 18), he did believe that spirits could have visible and tangible bodies made for them by God, but these were not an inherent part of their nature.[15]

Augustine's (354-430) discussion of spirits was rather cursory. He also maintained that angels were created beings[16] but was hesitant to state categorically the exact nature of angels, for although they did not possess fleshly bodies like humans, as created beings they had to be comprised of some kind of substance. He proposed that they possessed 'spiritual bodies' that were of an ethereal nature.[17] However, Augustine referred to cases where 'they appeared in visible and tangible form' and argued that these were not simply illusions which suggests that, for Augustine, angels could assume real, physical bodies if required to do so in the course of their ministry.[18] These early Christian writers, then, convey an understanding of spirits as possessing a corporeal nature that was distinct from that of humans although what this corporeality consists of is unclear. They also seemed to accept the possibility of spirits assuming natural bodies.

The Middle Ages saw the spiritual realm subjected to scholastic treatment. As Harm Goris points out, discussions about the nature of spirits, in particular angels, were deemed necessary in order to establish why angels, although purely spiritual like God, were not therefore divine.[19] Thomas Aquinas is a good representative of the medieval

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[15] Roberts, pp. 144-145
[16] Augustine (translated by Henry Bettenson), *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans* (London: Penguin Books, 1972, republished 2003), Book XI, Chapter 9, p. 439
[17] Allan Fitzgerald (general ed.) and John C. Cavadini, *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopaedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), p. 22; Augustine (translated by John Hammond Taylor), *The Literal Meaning of Genesis,* Vol. 1 (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982), pp. 200-205
[18] Augustine, *City of God*, Book 13, Chapter 22, pp. 535-536
[19] Harm Goris, 'The Angelic Doctor and Angelic Speech: The Development of Thomas Aquinas's Thought on How Angels Communicate', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, Vol. 11, Issue 1 (2003), pp. 87-105

scholastic approach. In his *Summa Theologica,* Aquinas explicitly argued against the concept that what separates the divine and non-divine is the nature of pure spirit (divine) and the possession of bodies (non-divine), and that therefore angels must possess bodies, as argued by patristic authors such as Augustine. Aquinas denied that angels possessed bodies, arguing that 'The angels have not bodies naturally united to them.'[20] Utilising Aristotelian concepts of matter and form, Aquinas denied that firstly, spiritual creatures were made of the same matter as corporeal beings because they were distinct forms, and secondly that they were made of any matter whatsoever because as intellectual substances, angels did not require a material body to perform their immaterial intellectual functions.[21] Similarly, demons were 'an intellect or mind', of the same nature as angels, and also with the same natural knowledge as angels, although they lacked knowledge of love and charity.[22] However, like Augustine he believed that biblical references to angels appearing in bodily form were not visions, but actual physical manifestations. He therefore stated that 'Consequently, since the angels are not bodies, nor have they bodies naturally united with them […] it follows that they sometimes assume bodies.'[23] The main point however, was that bodies were not a natural or essential feature of angels and they only assumed bodies when their ministry required it.

The reformers did not radically challenge these fundamental principles. Luther asserted that 'An angel is a spiritual creature created by God without a body, for the

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[20] Thomas Aquinas, (translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province), *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Second and Revised Edition, 1920, Online Edition Copyright © 2008 by Kevin Knight), First Part, Question 51 <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/index.htm> [accessed between March 16-April 15 2011]
[21] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 50
[22] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 64
[23] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 51

service of Christendom and of the church.' He believed that demons existed but he was primarily concerned with the way in which the Devil manifested himself spiritually, stating:

> Whoso would see the true picture, shape, or image of the devil, and know how he is qualified and disposed, let him mark well all the commandments of God, one after another, and then let him place before his eyes an offensive, shameless, lying, despairing, ungodly, insolent, and blasphemous man or woman, whose mind and conceptions are directed in every way against God, and who takes delight in doing people hurt and mischief; there thou seest the right devil, carnal and corporal.[24]

Therefore, for Luther, the Devil was 'visible' in sinful people. However he did not rule out the possibility of demons physically manifesting themselves as he asserted that the appearance of Samuel before Saul (1 Samuel 28) was a 'spectre, an evil spirit, assuming his form'.[25]

Calvin also confirmed that angels 'are real beings possessed of spiritual essence', which was a direct refutation of the Sadduceean position 'that by angels nothing more was meant than the movements which God impresses on men, or manifestations which he gives of his own power.'[26] He saw angels as 'ministering spirits' who were used to protect God's people, and execute his favour and justice. But his main concern was to prevent a preoccupation with angels and to emphasise God as the sole object of devotion

[24] Martin Luther (translated by William Hazlitt, Esq.), *The Table Talk or Familiar Discourse of Martin Luther* (London: David Bogue, 1848), p. 247
[25] Luther, *Table Talk*, p. 250
[26] John Calvin (translated by Henry Beveridge), *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, reprinted 2001), pp. 147-148

and he explicitly warned against being led away from God by fixating on angels.[27] He also attacked 'that Platonic philosophy of seeking access to God by means of angels and courting them with the view of making God more propitious (Plat. in Epinomide et Cratylo),—a philosophy which presumptuous and superstitious men attempted at first to introduce into our religion, and which they persist in even to this day.'[28] By this, it appears he meant the angelic, or natural magic expounded by neo-Platonic philosophers like Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499).

Ficino played a pivotal role in the revival of Platonism in Western Europe through his Latin translations of Plato's complete works, and his accompanying commentaries that attempted to reconcile Platonic concepts with Christianity. The aspect of Ficino's philosophy that Calvin appears to disapprove of is his belief that astrological effects could be drawn on to influence earthly occurrences, based on the Stoic idea of a cosmic spirit that acted as a channel of influence between celestial bodies and the world. He believed that each planet had a corresponding angel (or demon), who could influence planetary effects and advocated the practice of trying to harness these astrological forces through talismans and Orphic hymns, so that they could optimally affect the human spirit (which was distinct from the mind and soul, and consisted of the fifth element).[29] The problem arose in distinguishing whether one was utilising the impersonal planetary influences, or appealing to the associated angel or demon. It was the latter that Calvin considered heretical as it involved appealing to powers other than God.

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[27] Calvin, *Institutes*, pp. 147, 149-150
[28] Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 150
[29] D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic From Ficino To Campanella* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1958, reprinted Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1975), pp. 12-13; 36-53

Calvin further warned against seeking too much knowledge about angels, believing that certain things could not be known by humans: 'in regard both to the ranks and numbers of angels, let us class them among those mysterious subjects, the full revelation of which is deferred to the last day, and accordingly refrain from inquiring too curiously, or talking presumptuously.'[30] He refrained from an extended discussion of the creation of angels, stating that 'My care, however, must be to keep within the bounds which piety prescribes, lest by indulging in speculations beyond my reach, I bewilder the reader, and lead him away from the simplicity of the faith.'[31] This aversion towards speculation about extra-biblical things can be seen as hostility towards scholasticism.

Similarly, Calvin warned against 'dwelling on superfluous matters […] with regard to the nature of devils' but he maintained the standard principles, stating that 'they are not motions or affections of the mind, but […] minds or spirits endued with sense and intellect.' Their main aim was 'assailing the glory of God and the salvation of man' but at the same time, 'Satan cannot possibly do anything against the will and consent of God.'[32] So one can see Calvin's prime aim in dealing with spiritual creatures was to express the role they played in God's overall scheme of salvation, and he explicitly discouraged and refrained from any superfluous investigation into their nature.

In early modern England, beliefs about the nature and capabilities of spirits were spread throughout texts including sermons and popular literature. These all maintained the fundamental principle that spirits could only operate within the bounds of nature.

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[30] Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 147
[31] Calvin, *Institutes*, pp. 143-144
[32] Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 152

This was the important distinction between miracles, which were acts beyond the possibilities of nature that were enacted only by God, and what we can term 'wonders'– those things which *seemed* miraculous but in fact were carried out only by natural means. It was the latter that angels and demons were capable of carrying out. As Stuart Clark points out, this concept was conveyed by Aquinas, and it was a point 'to be endlessly elaborated in the demonology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries […] that Satan worked not miracles (*miracula*) but wonders (*mira*). What he did was different in kind from what God could do but different only in degree from the action of mortals.'[33] For example, Henry Holland, in his *Treatise against witchcraft* (1590), reiterated the views of the Huguenot pastor Lambert Danaeu, stating that 'as for witches miracles […] they may more properly be called, Sathanicall wonders (Mira non miracula.), which the deuill can with greater facility effect […] then the cunningest man, because he excelleth in nature, in swiftnes of motion, and in knowledge. […] Sathans wonders are produced of natural causes, & not supernatural, as Christ's were.'[34] As King James pointed out, Satan 'is farre cunningner then man in the knowledge of all the occult proprieties of nature' and he could use this superior knowledge to deceive

[33] Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 153

[34] Henry Holland, *A Treatise against vvitchcraft: or A dialogue, wherein the greatest doubts concerning that sinne, are briefly answered a Sathanicall operation in the witchcraft of all times is truly prooued: the moste precious preseruatiues against such euils are shewed: very needful to be knowen of all men, but chiefly of the masters and fathers of families, that they may learn the best meanes to purge their houses of all vnclean spirits, and wisely to auoide the dreadfull impieties and greate daungers which come by such abhominations. Hereunto is also added a short discourse, containing the most certen meanes ordained of God, to discouer, expell, and to confound all the Sathanicall inuentions of witchcraft and sorcerie* (Cambridge: Iohn Legatt, printer to the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, 1590), sig. C2[v]

humans, but his abilities were always restricted by natural laws.[35]

Sixteenth-century writers also maintained that the Devil could only operate with God's permission. King James placed the Devil's power firmly within the scope of God's purpose and will, stating that God was 'the first cause' and the Devil was 'his instrument and second cause', who carried out God's judgements.[36] Restricted by nature and subservient to God, demons were unable to transgress certain fundamental laws: they had no power over the universal order; they could not interfere with the motions of the heavens; they could not cause two or more bodies to exist in the same place at the same time, or one body to exist in more than one place at one time, or move an object from one place to another without travelling through the spaces between; and they were unable to create anything; either from nothing, or from another thing, or transform something onto another thing, or effect a cause from anything except that which naturally leads to it.[37]

How this translated into demonic activity in the world is something that is effectively conveyed by King James' *Daemonologie*. Deacon and Walker may not have been aware of this text when they wrote the *Dialogicall discourses* as it was written in 1597, which is around the time they were writing. However, it is still useful to refer to as it is a comprehensive exposition of witchcraft and is a good example of the perception of demonic capabilities. The fact that it was written nearly simultaneously with Deacon and Walker's work highlights the ideas that they were contending with. In

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[35] James I, *Daemonologie in forme of a dialogue, diuided into three bookes* (Edinburgh: Robert Walde-graue, 1597), p. 44

[36] James I, 'To the Reader', *Daemonologie*, p. [5]

[37] These laws were summed up by Otto Casmann in his *Angelographie*. As Stuart Clark points out, these views were typical of demonologists, both Catholic and Protestant. See Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 165

James' view, there were four ways in which demons could afflict humans: 'The first is, where spirites trouble some houses or solitarie places: The second, where spirites followe vpon certaine persones, and at diuers houres troubles them: The thirde, when they enter within them and possesse them: The fourth is these kinde of spirites that are called vulgarlie the Fayrie.'[38] He believed that demons were capable of any number of feats, from entering and assuming dead bodies, to copulating with humans as incubi or succubae.[39] He seemed to understand possession as the physical entrance of the spirit within the body, as he argues that '[Satan] is permitted to enter in their liuing bodies, euen when they are ioyned with the soule.'[40] Although James adhered to orthodox demonology in maintaining that the Devil was restricted by nature and the will of God, he does not delve into the mechanics of the phenomena alluded to, or the intricate nature of demons.

There is one English text that preceded Deacon and Walker's work that discusses the nature of spirits and devils in depth. In 1584, Reginald Scot (d. 1599), a Kent landowner who was elected as MP for New Romney in 1589, published his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, which aimed to demonstrate the falsity of witchcraft accusations. The *Discoverie* has been handled by only a few historians, the first notable work being Sydney Anglo's essay, 'Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*: Scepticism and Sadduceeism'. Anglo states that although Scot is recognised by historians as one of the best-known writers of witchcraft, he has unfairly been categorised as 'an amateur dabbler' and his work 'a rambling collection of miscellaneous and often irrelevant information.' Anglo's aim therefore is to rehabilitate Scot's book as 'a serious and

[38] James I, *Daemonologie*, p. 57
[39] James I, *Daemonologie*, pp. 66-70
[40] James I, *Daemonologie*, p. 73

sustained work' that deals intelligently with the nature of spirits and spiritual magic.[41] Scot was clearly influenced by the work of the Dutch physician and demonologist, Johann Weyer (1515-1588), specifically his *De Praestigiis Daemonum* (On the Illusions of the Demons, 1563). Weyer believed that many of those accused of witchcraft were in fact suffering from melancholy, which made them susceptible to the Devil's tricks, leading them to believe that they were capable of performing acts of witchcraft.[42] Scot agreed with this but also went further and denied the possibility of all spiritual or demonic magic, allowing only for natural magic, which, being rooted in nature is not really magic at all. Scot also denied the possibility of miracles, arguing that only those performed by Jesus were truly miraculous–all other seemingly supernatural occurrences in the Bible actually had natural explanations.[43]

Anglo demonstrates how Weyer's concentration on the original Hebrew terms regarding magical activities in the Bible influenced Scot. Weyer consulted the renowned Hebrew scholar Andreas Masius, in order to show that translators had ignored important distinctions in the biblical treatment of magic by overlooking the differences in the terms used. Indeed, he identified eight different terms in the original Hebrew used to describe magical activity, which could feasibly indicate eight different types of activity. He criticised the Germans in particular, for using the term 'Zauberer' as a unitary translation for 'the magician who is a professional deceiver and illusionist and often well educated, for the "wise woman" or witch who is deluded by the Devil

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[41] Sydney Anglo, 'Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*: Scepticism and Sadduceism' in Sydney Anglo (ed.), *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 106

[42] See Weyer, *On Witchcraft,* Book 3, Chapters 1-11, pp. 81-107, especially Chapter 7. See also Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, pp. 198-199; Thomas, p. 693

[43] Anglo, 'Scot's *Discoverie*', pp. 109-110

because of her feeble-mindedness and corrupted imagination, and for the poisoner who makes studied use of his drugs or poisons.' He sees this 'ambiguous German term' as deceptive, causing those who wrote on witchcraft to 'stumble badly […] even if they appear to have adduced the evidence of Sacred Scripture.'[44]

Scot similarly used this investigation of the original Hebrew to attack the primary justification for the persecution of witches, Exodus 22:18, which was translated as 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.' The word translated as 'witch' was *kashaph* (incorrectly transcribed as *chasaph* in the text), which Scot argued did not mean 'witch' at all, but rather meant 'poisoners' and did not denote any supernatural activity.[45] Scot pointed out that 'witches', as understood in contemporary terms as those who 'danse with the fairies', are not mentioned in the Bible at all.[46] For Scot, there was neither biblical basis, nor empirical evidence, to believe in the phenomenon of witchcraft.

Anglo categorises Scot as the archetypal rationalist, who based his views upon 'common-sense' and empirical evidence, as demonstrated by his interviewing of those involved in apparent witchcraft cases. Scot also challenged those who believed in witchcraft to reproduce the diabolical magic that was said to have occurred. Anglo sees this demand for evidence to be produced in 'controlled circumstances' as evidence of

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[44] Weyer, *On Witchcraft*, pp. 44-49, quote from p 49; see also, Anglo, 'Scot's *Discoverie*', pp. 112-113

[45] Reginald Scot, *The discouerie of witchcraft vvherein the lewde dealing of witches and witchmongers is notablie detected, the knauerie of coniurors, the impietie of inchantors, the follie of soothsaiers, the impudent falshood of cousenors, the infidelitie of atheists, the pestilent practises of pythonists, the curiositie of figurecasters, the vanitie of dreamers, the beggerlie art of alcumystrie, the abhomination of idolatrie, the horrible art of poisoning, the vertue and power of naturall magike, and all the conueiances of legierdemaine and iuggling are deciphered: and many other things opened, which have long lien hidden, howbeit verie necessarie to be knowne. Heerevnto is added a treatise vpon the nature and substance of spirits and diuels, &c: all latelie written by Reginald Scot Esquire.* (London: [Henry Denham for] W. Brome, 1584), pp. 111-113. See also Anglo, 'Scot's *Discoverie*', p. 118; Philip C. Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot and 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'* (London: I.B. Taurus & Co, 2011), pp. 19-21

[46] Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 109; Anglo, 'Scot's *Discoverie*', p. 113

Scot's scientific approach to the subject.[47] Anglo sees further evidence of this rationalism in Scot's interpretation of apparent metamorphosis (for example, Nebuchadnezzar becoming a beast) as a psychological degeneration. Anglo draws links with the view of Pico della Mirandola and Pietro Pomponazzi in this respect, whilst Scot also agrees with Weyer that lycanthropy is a mental disease.[48] Anglo points to Scot's further dependence upon Pomponazzi, particularly the latter's desire to seek naturalistic explanations for seemingly supernatural phenomenon. Pomponazzi denied demonic agency in nature, and argued that all actions in the world could be attributed to the occult laws of nature. This refusal of the role of demons in the world could be seen as a denial of their existence, and so his views were widely condemned in orthodox demonology.[49] For Pomponazzi, miracles were either fables aimed at instructing the ignorant or deliberate acts of deceit, although unlike Scot he was not willing to categorise every miracle as such. However, Anglo points to the shared 'empirical spirit' between Scot and Pomponazzi that is evident in their natural explanations for alleged miracles.[50] Anglo argues it was the lack of reproducible evidence that convinced Scot of the absurdity of the claims of witchcraft and he argues that 'were it not for his leap of faith in proclaiming an unshakeable acceptance of the Word of God in the very basis of the miracles contained therein, his philosophical position might aptly, if anachronistically, be described as thoroughly positivist.'[51]

Leland L. Estes challenges Anglo's portrayal of Scot as a rationalist, arguing that Scot was not the scientific pioneer that Anglo (and other historians such as Wallace

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[47] Anglo, 'Scot's *Discoverie*', p. 119
[48] Anglo, 'Scot's *Discoverie*', p. 117
[49] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, p. 243
[50] Anglo, 'Scot's *Discoverie*', pp. 132-133
[51] Anglo, 'Scot's *Discoverie'*, pp. 134-135

Notestein and Keith Thomas) would claim.[52] He states that contrary to a scientific approach, Scot was not particularly interested in experimentation or testing theories, but rather was happy to accept written authority (notably Greek scientific sources) as foundational truths upon which he builds his case.[53] Estes argues that though 'there was much of the scientific spirit in Reginald Scot […] by any moderately strict sense of the term, he was no scientist.' He argues that Scot's work was not a scientific endeavor but rather a theological work.[54] Estes believes that his work is rooted in a specific religious (rather than scientific) understanding of spirits, specifically that spirits were incapable of corporeal activity and argues that Scot believed he was being faithful to biblical principles in maintaining this position.[55]

However, Anglo argues that this denial of the corporeality of spirits actually amounts to 'Scot denying all spiritual agency – good and bad – in human affairs'.[56] Anglo believes that unlike Weyer, whose argument against witchcraft was severely undermined by his maintenance of the reality of demons and their agency in the world, Scot remained consistent in his denial of demonic activity by denying their existence altogether.[57] Indeed, Christopher Baxter points out that Weyer still believed in the existence and efficacy of demonic magic, but as practised by sorcerers rather than

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[52] Leland L. Estes, 'Reginald Scot and His "Discoverie of Witchcraft": Religion and Science in the Opposition to the European Witch Craze', *Church History*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (1983), pp. 444-456. See also Wallace Notestein, *History of Witchcraft in England from 1558-1718* (originally published Baltimore, Maryland: The Lord Baltimore Press, 1911, reprinted Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), pp. 57-72; Thomas, pp. 684-685
[53] Estes, 'Scot and His "Discoverie", p. 455
[54] Estes, 'Scot and His "Discoverie", p. 446, 454-455
[55] Estes, 'Scot and His "Discoverie", p. 446
[56] Anglo, 'Scot's *Discoverie'*, p. 126
[57] Anglo, 'Scot's *Discoverie'*, pp. 110-112

witches.[58] In contrast, Anglo argues that 'Scot no more accepted the reality of spirits and demons than he accepted the reality of witches.' He argues that, by denying spirits any active role in the world, Scot had effectively 'defined [them] out of existence'. Therefore Scot was 'indeed the Sadducee his enemies have always considered him to be'.[59]

David Wootton affirms this view of Scot as a Sadducee, and suggests that Scot's arguments actually point towards Familist beliefs.[60] Wootton states that Scot wrote his *Discoverie* as a reply to the French Catholic demonologist Jean Bodin's *Démonomanie* (*Of the Demon-mania of the Sorcerors*, 1580), in which Bodin elaborated on the idea of the witch's pact with the Devil, and called for more rigorous procedures for prosecuting witches.[61] He sees Scot as an outsider who promoted unorthodox views, including anti-Trinitarianism and a denial of the Devil. Wootton refers to Scot's statement that 'In summe, this word [Spirit] doth signifie a secret force and power, wherewith our minds are moued and directed; if vnto holie things, then it is the motion of the holie spirit, of the spirit of Christ and of God: if vnto euill things, then is it the suggestion of the wicked spirit, of the deuill, and of Satan.'[62] This seems to advocate a Sadducean denial of the reality of spirits.

However, this statement is made in the context of a 'confutation of the Pneumatomachi' – a fourth century heretical group that denied the divinity of the Holy

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[58] Christopher Baxter, 'Johann Weyer's *De Praestigiis Daemonum:* Unsystematic Psychopathology' in Anglo, *The Damned Art*, pp. 53-75. For Weyer's attack upon sorcerers, see *On Witchcraft*, Book 6, pp. 256-301
[59] Anglo, 'Scot's *Discoverie'*, p. 129
[60] Wootton, 'Reginald Scot/Abraham Fleming', pp. 119-139
[61] David Wootton, 'Reginald Scot (d.1599)' in *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24905> [accessed May 11 2011]
[62] Scot, 'Discourse', *Discoverie*, p. 547. In the 1665 edition, the word 'summe' is misprinted as 'some'. Quoted in Wooton, 'Reginald Scot/Abraham Fleming', p. 123

Spirit. Scot was therefore defending the concept of the Trinity and in this context it is difficult to see how he could view the Holy Spirit as simply an impulse rather than a distinct person in the Godhead. The idea of a force or power seems to indicate the way in which spirits operate, rather than defining their nature. Scot understood the Holy Spirit to be the one whose power revealed the truth of the gospel; he therefore saw those who believed in witchcraft as lacking the presence of the Holy Spirit, and being seduced by the evil spirit of 'blindness and error'.[63]

However, Wootton sees further evidence for Scot's Familism in his statement 'But in truth we never have so much cause to be afraid of the Devil, as when he flatteringly insinuateth himself into our hearts, to satisfie, please, and serve our humours, enticing us to prosecute our own appetites and pleasures, without any of these external terrours.'[64] Wootton sees this as indicating that Scot believed the 'devil' refers to our fallen nature and the evil tendencies, rather than a distinct being.[65] However, I think both Anglo and Wootton's depiction of Scot as a denier of spirits is overstated. Clark points out that Scot did not deny that the Devil had been created as a separate being, but rather emphasised that he was a purely spiritual being, possessed of a nature that was not entirely knowable by humans.[66] Scot clearly maintained that spirits existed, stating: 'I deny not therefore that there are spirits and divels, of such substance as it hath pleased God to create them.'[67] Furthermore, he explicitly stated that he was not

[63] Scot, 'Discourse', pp. 547-548
[64] Scot, 'Discourse', p. 507
[65] Wooton, 'Reginald Scot/Abraham Fleming', p. 123
[66] Stuart Clark, 'King James's *Daemonologie*: Witchcraft and Kingship' in Anglo, *The Damned Art*, p. 172
[67] Scot, 'Discourse', p. 510

convinced by 'the vngodly and prophane sects and doctrines of the *Sadduces* [*sic*] and *Peripatetiks* [*sic*], who denie that there are any deuils or spirits at last'.[68]

I would further argue that Scot's comments regarding the Devil quoted by Wootton do not indicate a denial of his existence; rather, they emphasise the subtle way in which he operates. Scot believed demons did not need to act through witches, or manifest themselves in fantastical ways in order to carry out their aim of corrupting people with sin. Scot therefore emphasised the fact 'That the Devils assaults are Spiritual and not Temporal.'[69] He argued that this is why Paul exhorted believers to arm themselves with spiritual armour: to guard against spiritual assaults. He asked: 'Why then should we think that a Devil, which is a Spirit, can be known, or made tame and familiar unto a natural man; or contrary to nature, can be by a Witch made corporal, being by God ordained to a spiritual proportion.'[70] For Scot, the Devil was a spiritual creature with a spiritual function: therefore there was no way he could be discerned materially by bodily senses. He still maintained that spirits existed, but he asserted that 'a spirit or diuell is to be vnderstood spirituallie, and is neither a corporall nor a visible thing.'[71] However, many contemporaries refused to see a distinction between this position and a complete denial of the existence of spirits, and, as Estes states, such a position was 'considered tantamount to atheism'.[72] But it is important to recognise that

[68] Scot, 'Discourse', p. 491
[69] Scot, 'Discourse', p. 508
[70] Clark, 'James's *Daemonologie*', p. 11
[71] Scot, 'Discourse', p. 510
[72] Estes, 'Scot and His "Discoverie"', p. 455

Scot's position was actually more nuanced than this, and not to accept the polemical judgement of Sadduceeism placed against him by his contemporaries.[73]

Scot believed that demons had a specific function and they could not transcend this, stating:

> the spirits themselues haue their lawes and limits prescribed, beyond the which they cannot passe one haires breadth [The Devil] hath none other power, but that which God from the beginning hath appointed vnto him, consonant to his nature and substance […] which is, that he being a spirit, may with Gods leaue and ordinance viciat [pollute] and corrupt the spirit and will of man; werein he is verie diligent.[74]

Scot was intent on conveying that the Devil, by his very nature, was *not* capable of carrying out such feats associated with witchcraft, as manifestation in bodily form or the assuming of bodies. He argued that witchcraft was not a real phenomenon, but rather the result of superstition and fear because in actuality feats attributed to witches were impossible. Any afflictions attributed to witchcraft or demonic activity could be explained with reference to natural disease. So for example, the incubus

> is a bodily disease […] although it extend vnto the trouble of the mind, which of some is called The mare, oppressing manie in their sleepe so sore, as they are not able to call for helpe, or stir themselues vnder the burthen of that heavy humor; which is ingendred of a thicke vapor proceeding from the cruditie and rawnesse in the stomach: which

[73] Authors who reacted against Scot's assertions include George Gifford in his *A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerors* (1587), William Perkins in *The damned art of witchcraft* and John Cotta in *The Triall of Witchcraft* (1616). See Almond, *England's First Demonologist*, pp. 3-4

[74] Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 100

> ascending up into the head, oppresseth the braine, in so much as manie are infeebled therebie, as being nightlie haunted therewith.[75]

Any confessions of witchcraft could be attributed to melancholy, which corrupted their 'phantasies' and was 'the cause of all their strange, impossible and incredible confessions'.[76]

For Scot, the claims of witchcraft were so fantastic and absurd as to threaten the very stability and structure of existence:

> If it were true that witches confesse, or that all writers write, or that witchmongers report, or that fooles belieue, we should neuer haue butter in the chearne, nor cow in the close, nor corne in the field, nor faire weather abroad, nor health within doors. Or if that which is contained in *M. Mal. Bodin* &c: or in the pamphlets late set foorth in English, of Witches executions, shuld be true in those things that witches are said to confesse, what creature could liue in securitie?[77]

This touches upon the contemporary concern of limiting demonic operations in light of God's superior power and sovereignty. As we have seen, contemporaries dealt with this problem by asserting that demons could not act beyond the bounds of nature. This caveat still left room for the possibility of witchcraft, as witches could utilise the extraordinary power of devils to enact seemingly marvellous, but still natural acts.

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[75] Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 86
[76] Scot, *Discoverie*, pp. 57-58
[77] Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 63. The 'pamphlets late set foorth' are those of the witchcraft trials which took place in St. Osyth, Essex in 1582, in which thirteen women were accused of witchcraft, and two, Ursula Kemp and Elizabeth Bennett, were executed. See W.W., *A true and iust recorde, of the information, examination and confession of all the witches, taken at S. Ofes in the countie of Essex whereof some were executed, and other some entreated according to the determination of lawe. Wherein all men may see what a pestilent people witches are, and how vnworthy to lyue in a Christian Commonwealth. Written orderly, as the cases were tryed by euidence* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1582)

However Scot went one step further, arguing that the omnipotence of God necessarily meant that witches had no real power. Indeed, he claimed that even the biblical condemnation of witchcraft expressed no real concern about their power, but rather concerned the offence of claiming God's power:

> the prohibition of diuinations by augurie, and of soothsaiengs, &c. who are witches, and can indeed do nothing but lie and cousen the people, the lawe of God condemneth them not, for that they can worke miracles, but bicause they saie they can do that which perteineth to God, and for cosenage, &c.[78]

Scot maintained that spirits were wholly non-corporeal. For Scot, irrefutable proof of this was to be found in the fact that the resurrected Jesus convinced Thomas that He was not a spirit precisely because He was made of flesh and bone. He proved His bodily existence by entreating Thomas to look at Him and touch Him. Therefore, it was sensory perception that distinguished the resurrected Christ from spirits and which testified to the truth of the resurrection.[79] Scot believed that Jesus' emphasis upon seeing and believing meant 'that our corporal eyes may discern betwixt Spirit and a natural body.'[80]

However, when it comes to the actual composition of spirits, Scot was surprisingly vague. As mentioned above, he maintained that spirits were spiritual and non-corporeal[81] and emphasised that any scriptural reference to the corporeality of spirits was metaphorical:

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[78] Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 115
[79] Scot, *Discoverie*, pp. 134-135
[80] Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 135
[81] Scot, 'Discourse', p. 510

> we ought to content and frame our selves faithfully to believe the words and sense there delivered unto us by [the Holy Ghost]; alwayes considering, that evermore spirits are spoken of in Scripture, as of things spiritual, though for the help of our capacities they are sometime more grossly and corporally expressed, either in Parables or by Metephors, than indeed they are.[82]

He argued that though spirits may be referred to as corporeal in Scripture this was merely a way to convey their operation to us who 'could not otherwise conceiue of spirituall things, than by such corporall demonstrations'.[83] Scot traversed various theories about the nature of spirits, from Plato to Psellus, but ultimately asserted that: 'I For my part doo also thinke this argument, about the nature [and] substance of deuils and spirits, to be difficult, as I am persuaded that no one author hath in anie certeine or perfect sort hitherto written thereof.'[84] Scot clearly believed in the existence of spirits as distinct beings but was uncertain as to their precise nature.

It is hard to gauge how much impact Scot's work had at the time it was written. Stuart Clark argues that 'Scot's arguments were far too subversive of prevailing intellectual patterns and habits of mind [and] Scot's very extremism blunted his impact.'[85] It is perhaps noteworthy that the work was printed without licence, and it certainly bucks the trend of other demonological works, such as Holland's *A Treatise against Witchcraft* and Gifford's *A Dialogue concerning witches* (1593), that sought to emphasise the threat of witchcraft. Perkin's *Discourse on the damned art of witchcraft* (1608), published posthumously, demonstrates the Puritan divine's stringent belief in

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[82] Scot, 'Discourse', p. 514
[83] Scot, 'Discourse', p. 515
[84] Scot, 'Discourse', p. 491
[85] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, p. 212

the dangers of witchcraft. These works can be seen, in part, as a reaction against the 'sceptical' attitudes of people like Weyer and Scot. However, even if they can be seen as a conservative reaction to the 'progressive' or 'radical' attitudes of the sceptics, it is important to note that these conservative views were not made obsolete by the sceptical arguments and that they were actually more common than the sceptical challenges that were being proposed. What is apparent, however, is that Scot did become interesting to those opposing Darrel. Deacon and Walker were clearly influenced by Scot's arguments about the nature and abilities of demons. By utilising these arguments in the wake of the Darrel controversy, when people would have been more aware of the issue of demonic possession and consequently more receptive to the various opinions about it, Deacon and Walker were able to introduce these ideas to a broader audience than perhaps Scot had been able to sixteen years earlier. This highlights how the controversy created a receptive climate to the 'sceptical' arguments of Scot, and their use by Harsnett and Deacon and Walker helped to cement them more firmly in the intellectual firmament.

Like Scot's argument about the misapprehension of witchcraft, Deacon and Walker wanted to establish that possession had been fundamentally misunderstood by concentrating on the original biblical meaning of the word. They argued that the original Hebrew and Greek words, such as *achaz, Scheo* and *ctemo* now translated in the Bible as 'possession', actually meant 'to apprehend, to hold, to containe, to detaine, to retaine, or keepe fast' indicating that the demon only possessed the body in the same way that a person holds an object, and so did *not* denote the internal presence of the

demon within the human body or soul.[86] They believed that the translator, whilst not intending to imply the internal presence of demons, used the word *possession* 'careleslie' which had led to a fundamental misunderstanding of the true nature of possession.[87] They also argued that the biblical term used to describe those who were possessed, '*Daemonizoméno*', and translated as 'Demoniakes', meant 'men Diuillished, I meane actually afflicted, tormented, or vexed with Diuels. But no one of them all did euer translate it thus; namely, men essentially possessed with Diuels inherently in them.'[88] They believed that hitherto there had been no dissection of the matter and so it was their work that sought to clarify the true meaning of possession in Scripture.

This concern with the correct translation of words is not surprising considering the centrality of Scripture in the Protestantism and the consequent translation of the Bible into English. The Hebraist Hugh Broughton emphasised the importance of grasping the Hebrew language in order to study rabbinic texts, which he regarded as instrumental in translating the Bible more accurately; he repeatedly attempted to procure official sanction to produce a new translation to replace the Bishop's Bible, which he believed to be inadequate because of the lack of Hebrew learning amongst the translators of that version. It is clear that Deacon and Walker were influenced by this trend. Indeed, Broughton taught at Christ's College from 1572 to 1578, which coincides with the time that Deacon was at Cambridge.[89]

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[86] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 34-35
[87] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 39
[88] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 38
[89] Perhaps because of his cantankerous character, Broughton was actually excluded from the group of fifty-four scholars that were appointed in 1604 as translators for a new English version of the Bible. This group went on to produce the Authorised Version, or King James Bible, in 1611. See G. Lloyd Jones, 'Hugh Broughton (1549-1612)' in *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3585> [accessed April 10 2011]

Deacon and Walker began with basic principles about spirits, asserting categorically that they did indeed exist. This was evident from two things: 'from their essential creation: and then next, from their effectuall operation.'[90] The fact that God created them meant that the existence of spirits was tied up intrinsically with belief in God. They explicitly refuted those who regarded '*spirits* for none other matters at all, but the good or euill *motions* and *affections* arising in men [or] *sensible signes* or *tokens* of Gods vnspeakeable *power.*'[91] This was most likely a reaction against the teachings of Pomponazzi described above. As Clark points out, it was a standard position that Sadduceeism led to atheism. To question the existence of spirits was to question the very existence of God, who is Himself a spirit.[92] Deacon and Walker dealt also with the idea that spirits were not beings in themselves, but only indicated 'those extraordinarie iudgements of God which demonstrate vnto vs, the incomprehensible maiestie and might of his power'.[93] They argued that incidents such as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by angels demonstrated that they were separate creatures who acted in these cases as 'the extraordinarie executioners of those sensible signes or tokens of the extraordinarie power of God'.[94] Deacon and Walker stated that a denial of spirits could only result from 'the natural corruption of your proper mind' because it was the mind's function to perceive 'intelligible things', that is spirits.[95]

Deacon and Walker were intent on establishing that demons were purely spiritual beings that did not possess bodies of any kind. They used Aristotle's idea of

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[90] *Dialogicall discourses,* p. 9
[91] *Dialogicall discourses,* p. 10
[92] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, p. 137 & 303
[93] *Dialogicall discourses,* p. 20
[94] *Dialogicall discourses,* p. 21
[95] *Dialogicall discourses,* pp. 13-14

the perfect world to deny the corporeality of spirits and argued that demons 'worke [in a] inuisible, insensible, and spirituall manner'.[96] Following Scot they also asserted that spirits were 'inuisible, impalpable, insensible' and so could not be perceived by the senses.[97] They also reiterated Scot's argument that spirits were not made of earthly elements, as proposed by Byzantine philosopher Michael Psellus (1018-1078), but rather of a spiritual substance.[98] They argued that if demons possessed bodies, then these would consist of the celestial fifth element that was distinct from elemental bodies, because, following Aristotelian theory of causes and motion, celestial bodies follow the circular motion; whilst elemental bodies follow the motion of the element it is primarily composed of.[99]

These arguments against the corporeality of spirits were important in order to combat physical 'proofs' of internal possession, such as swelling and lumps and strange foreign voices emitting from the apparently possessed. Following Scot, Deacon and Walker argued that biblical descriptions of spirits possessing physical attributes were to be understood '*metaphorically,* and *spiritually*'. The physical descriptions were used in order to convey to our imperfect and limited capacity the true nature of things spiritual.[100] Like Scot, they referred to Luke 24:39 where Christ states that spirits do not have flesh and bones as He had, indicating that spirits and humans are comprised of different substances. They also argued that the demoniac tormented by six thousand

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[96] According to Aristotle, the world consists of the visible, which are the heavens and the elements, the partly visible and partly invisible, which are human beings, and the invisible, which are the spirits. *Dialogicall discourses,* pp. 27-28, 58

[97] *Dialogicall discourses,* p. 78, 129. Scot stated that 'no carnall man can discerne the things of the spirit. Why then should we thinke that a diuell, which is a spirit, can be knowne, or made tame and familiar vnto a natural man; or contrarie ot nature, can be by a witch made corporall, being by God ordeined [sic.] to a spirituall proportion?' See Scot, 'Discourse', p. 508

[98] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 83-84; Scot, 'Discourse', pp. 492-494

[99] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 80-82

[100] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 17, 69

demons (Luke 8:26-39) showed that they were incorporeal and did not possess internally, because that many corporeal spirits could not inhabit a person.[101]

Having argued that demons were spiritual, incorporeal beings, Deacon and Walker then sought to disprove the idea that demons could assume true natural bodies. They argued that it was impossible for a demon to assume a living body because the Devil had no power to remove the soul from a body because they were inseparable and it is this union that was essential in a living person. The only being that could separate the two is God, at the appointed time. In addition, a demon could not inhabit a body already occupied by a soul because two substances cannot be in the same place together. It must therefore be impossible for a demon to assume a living person's body. Deacon and Walker also dismissed the idea that a demon could assume a dead body, arguing that this body would be too decomposed to be of use. Alternatively, if the person had only recently died, then this would mean that the demon should always appear in human form, which was inconsistent with normal reports of the Devil's appearance, which described him as 'griesly and blacke'.[102] Moreover, if the Devil were able to assume control of a dead body, this would be akin to resurrection, which was not possible because this power was reserved only for God.

A case that could be held up to contradict Deacon and Walker's view of spirits assuming bodies was that of Samuel appearing to Saul after being conjured up by the Witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28). However, Deacon and Walker pointed to a number of

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[101] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 94

[102] This argument contradicts their assertion that demons are purely spiritual beings that cannot be perceived by the senses, but this argument is a good example of the weaknesses of logic in the work that D.P. Walker was alluding to (see above, p. 37, 162). The fact that Deacon and Walker were intent on demolishing so many arguments simultaneously means that inconsistencies inevitably appear.

authors who proposed that the incident was actually an illusion created by the Devil.[103] Many of Deacon and Walker's contemporaries believed the appearance of Samuel was actually a case of the Devil appearing in the form of the prophet. William Perkins stated that 'the deuill by the Witch of Endor deceiued Saul in the appearance of Samuel […] making him beleeue that it had beene Samuel indeed, whereas it was but a mere counerfeit of him' and furthermore the witch of Endor, by virtue of her covenant with the Devil, 'commanded [Satan] to appeare in the likenes of Samuel'.[104] King James stated that 'it was not the spirit of Samuel, I grant: In the proving whereof ye neede not to insist, since all Christians of whatso-ever Religion agrees vpon that […] And that the Diuel is permitted at som-times to put himself in the liknes of the Saintes, it is plaine in the Scriptures, where it is said, that Sathan can transforme himselfe into an Angell of light.'[105] George Gifford also maintained that 'It was not the true, but a false and counterfeit Samuel, euen a wicked Deuill.'[106] Scot proposed that the appearance of

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[103] Authors cited include Justin Martyr: this doesn't actually seem to be what he is saying. He actually refers to the incident to highlight how the soul is vulnerable to the Devil's schemes even after death. He warns that 'souls survive, I have shown to you from the fact that the soul of Samuel was called up by the witch, as Saul demanded.' He therefore pointed to the need to 'strive earnestly, and at death to pray that our souls may not fall into the hands of any such power.' See Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter CV in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1 (New York, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885) <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.iv.cv.html> [accessed March 12 2011]. Another is Tertullian. Tertullian believed that the appearance of Samuel was indeed an diabolic illusion, stating that the Devil 'easily pretended an apparition of that which it had already prepared them to believe as real'. See Tertullian, *A treatise on the soul*, Chapter LVII, in Allan Menzies (ed.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3 (New York, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885) <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.iv.xi.lvii.html > [accessed March 12 2011]. Augustine argued that 'we do not believe that the actual spirit of Samuel was aroused from its repose, but that some phantasm and some imaginary illusion occurred which Scripture therefore calls by the names of those things of which they are the images.' Augustine, *The Eight Questions of Dulcitius* in Mary S. Muldowney (translator), *St. Augustine: Treatises on various subjects,* Fathers of the Church, Vol. 16 (Washington, D.C., CUA Press, 2002), p. 454

[104] Perkins, *Damned art*, pp. 23-24 & 45

[105] James I, *Daemonologie*, p. 4

[106] George Gifford, *A discourse of the subtill practises of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers. By which men are and haue bin greatly deluded: the antiquitie of them: their diuers sorts and names.*

Samuel was nothing more than a trick performed by the witch, with no supernatural elements at all.[107]

Deacon and Walker did not definitively subscribe to any one of these opinions, but rather were more concerned with how they all undermined the idea of the Devil's essential possession of Samuel's body. Yet interestingly they did favour Scot's opinion, stating that 'As for the last, howsoeuer it be new, and therefore may haply seeme strange vnto some, yet if your selues (without preiudice, and with a single respect to the truth) would but deliberately peruse that priuileged discourse to the full: you might happily perceiue it a verie probable opinion, how pregnant soeuer in proofe.'[108] This demonstrates that Scot's work had a significant impact upon Deacon and Walker.

Deacon and Walker also denied the possibility that God would create new bodies for demons to assume, because although God had the power and freedom to do so there was no reason why He would because it was unnecessary and the idea that God would do anything for the service of the Devil was preposterous. Furthermore, the purpose of creation was to bring glory to God, yet bodies created for the Devil would not do this. The idea that the Devil could create bodies was also blasphemous, as God alone was the creator of all things. Referring to Scot, they argued that if demons could create their own bodies then the whole world would be full of corporeal devils and their power to destroy men would be limitless.[109]

With an aunswer vnto diuers friuolous reasons which some doe make to prooue that the deuils did not make those aperations in any bodily shape (London: [By T. Orwin] for Toby Cooke, 1587), sig. C1[v]

[107] Scot, *Discoverie*, pp. 139-140

[108] *Dialogicall discourses,* p. 125

[109] Scot states that 'When (if their assertions were true) concerning the deuels vsuall taking of shapes, and walking, talking, conferring, hurting, and all maner of dealing with mortall creatures […] all the whole world might be inhabited by diuels.' Scot, *Discoverie*, Book 16, Chapter 5, p. 480. Deacon

Deacon and Walker did not attempt to explain away instances in the Bible where good angels appeared to assume bodies; rather they argued that this ability of good angels did not apply to evil angels, for 'neither haue the infernall diuels those heauenly priuiledges which the celestiall Angels enioy: neither yet are they equall with them in knowledge and power.' For Deacon and Walker, the argument did not logically follow and was based on a 'deceauable Elench, from a may be, to the being indeed'.[110] This distinction between the capabilities of good and evil angels seems to follow in the tradition of Augustine. For example, Augustine maintained that demons have superior powers, stating that 'however great was the fall of sinful angels […], they are nevertheless by nature superior to all the beasts because of the excellence of reason in them.'[111] However, when comparing the incident of the serpent (the Devil) speaking to Eve and the ass (an angel) speaking to Balaam, he maintained that 'Good and bad angels perform certain actions that are similar […] But in these wondrous works the good angels are more powerful, and the bad angels are unable to do any of even these acts except for what God permits through the good angels.'[112]

However Deacon and Walker needed to confront what was apparently one of the most obvious examples of the Devil being able to assume a body: that of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Previous writers had dealt with this issue with the aim of proving that the serpent was the Devil in order to explain the origin of evil. This was especially important for Augustine who wanted to counter the Manichean belief of two opposing—

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and Walker's reference—'Reginald Skot, in his discouerie of witchcraft, lib. 16. cap. 2. pag. 377' (*Dialogicall discourses*, p. 104)—appears to be an error.

[110] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 106. An 'elench', in Logic, is the part of an argument on which its conclusiveness depends.

[111] Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis,* Vol. 2, p. 136

[112] Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Vol. 2, p. 161

but equal—forces of good and evil. Augustine argued that the Devil was only able to use the serpent to tempt Eve because this was the method permitted by God. He described how the Devil used the serpent 'as an instrument, moving it as he was able to move it and as it was capable of being moved, to produce the sounds of words and bodily signs by which the woman would understand the will of the tempter.' He denied that the essential nature of the serpent was altered in any way, stating that 'we cannot suppose that its soul was changed into a rational soul.'[113] Therefore it was not the serpent itself who deceived, but rather the thinking agent behind the serpent, the Devil. Augustine wished to highlight this point in order specifically to refute any belief in the 'transmigration' of human souls into animals, or animal souls into humans.[114] So for Augustine, a real serpent was used by the Devil to deceive Eve. Aquinas concurred with Augustine that the serpent was merely an instrument used by the Devil to tempt Eve.[115] The reformers also maintained this interpretation. For example, Calvin stated that Satan 'clothed himself with the person of an animal' and that it was not the serpent who spoke to Eve; rather 'the serpent was not eloquent by nature, but when Satan, by divine permission, procured it as a fit instrument for his use, he uttered words also by its tongue, which God himself permitted.'[116]

For Deacon and Walker, the main point was that the Devil did not appear in the form of a serpent to Eve. They argued that if this were the case, then the Devil would

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[113] Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Vol. 2, pp. 159-160
[114] Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Vol. 2, pp. 160-161
[115] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 165. Aquinas quotes Augustine extensively here, basically restating his views as the final word in the matter.
[116] John Calvin (translated by Rev. John King), *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847, reprinted Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), p. 140, 145 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom01.ix.i.html> [accessed March 15 2011]

have completely become the serpent, or the serpent completely the Devil but this was impossible, for the Devil did not have the power to alter his essential being, or that of any other creature. This maintained the widely held belief of the Devil's inability to achieve transmutation, a feat that was seen as beyond the ordinary course of nature and therefore beyond the power of the Devil. For example, Perkins stated that 'it is not in the power of the deuill, thus to change substa[n]ces into other substa[n]ces.' He maintained that any such instances recorded in history were not real, but only illusions created by the Devil.[117] Deacon and Walker maintained that the Devil could not transform into any other form or shape (corporeal or otherwise). Crucially, they argued that to maintain that a demon could essentially transform into another form was to give credence to the doctrine of transubstantiation. They stated that the Devil could transform his being

> Euen as readily (I warrant you) as the priest can transubstantiate bread and wine into the very naturall bodie and bloud of Christ. If you be able throughly to prooue this transformation of diuels, you may pleasure the papists with an vnanswerable argument for their popish transubstantiations: and surely, they should therein be highly beholding vnto you.[118]

Deacon and Walker do propose the idea that the serpent was a metaphor for the real presence of the Devil, referring to Scot who stated that 'although I abhorre that lewd interpretation of the familie of loue, and such other heretikes, as would reduce the whole Bible into allegories: yet (me thinks) the creeping there is rather metaphoricallie […] spoken, than literallie […] Wherein the diuell is resembled to an odious creature, who as

[117] Perkins, *Damned art*, p. 27. See also p. 33
[118] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 137

he creepeth upon vs to annoie our bodies; so doth the diuell there creepe into the conscience of Eve.'[119] They refer also to Immanuel Tremellius (1510–1580), an Italian Jewish convert to Christianity, who, in his commentary on Genesis, similarly argued that the term 'serpent' conveyed how the Devil crept into the senses, and affected the mind with his venomous influence. However, despite toying with this metaphorical reading, they ultimately follow the orthodox reading of the incident, asserting that it was the Devil and the serpent together who deceived Eve. Yet they argue that this was not through any essential possession of the serpent by the Devil, but only by the Devil externally influencing the serpent.[120]

Having established that demons are purely spiritual and wholly incorporeal, Deacon and Walker then sought to establish why they could not occupy a person internally. They argued that demons could not possess either a person's mind (what they term 'real' mental possession), or their body ('real' corporeal possession).[121] The fundamental reasoning behind this argument was the principle that two substances cannot exist in the same place at the same time. This is an Aristotelian principle, found in his *Physics*, where it is stated that 'There is no necessity that […] two bodies would be in the same place.'[122] This was absorbed into medieval scholasticism, as demonstrated by Aquinas who, when discussing whether or not light is a body, stated that 'Two bodies cannot occupy the same place simultaneously. But this is the case with

[119] Scot, 'Discourse', p. 539
[120] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 115
[121] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 41. Deacon and Walker seem to use the term 'mind' to also indicate the human spirit.
[122] Aristotle (translated by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye), *Physics*, Book 4 (350 B.C.) <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/physics.4.iv.html> [accessed March 15 2011]

light and air. Therefore light is not a body.'[123] When discussing the nature of the resurrected body, Aquinas repeatedly referred to the principle that two bodies cannot exist in the same place at the same time, without them ceasing to exist as two separate beings. He did state that 'it is possible by a miracle for two bodies to be together in the same place' but within the confines of nature, it is impossible.[124] As demons could not perform miracles and were restricted by nature, they could not cause two bodies (whether themselves or others) to exist together in one place.

This principle was also upheld by early modern demonologists. For example, Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, when discussing whether or not witches can change men into beasts (Part 1, Question 10), stated the objection that 'if a demon sets the internal power of recognition in motion, he does this either by showing himself to the virtue of recognition or by changing it. He does not do so by showing himself because it would be necessary either to assume a body, in which case he would not be able to enter into the organ of imagination, since *two bodies cannot exist at the same time in the same place*, or by assuming a fantastical image, which likewise cannot be the case because a fantastical image cannot exist without mass and a demon lacks any mass.'[125] They resolve the issue by arguing that any case of a person being changed into a beast must be attributed either to 'an appearance caused by conjuring or the Devil performing in front of people in an assumed body'. They argued that although sorcerers and demons could not create new beings as God can, they could,

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[123] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question 67
[124] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* Supplement, Question 83
[125] Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger (translated by Christopher S. Mackay), *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the 'Malleus Maleficarum'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 202-203 (my italics)

by special permission of God, manipulate the occult qualities in a thing to make it into another thing (that was hidden in that thing all along).[126]

However, Perkins stated that 'by [the Devil's] spirituall nature he is able, if God permit, to conuey himself into the substance of the creature, without any penetration of dimensions, and beeing in the creature, although it be neuer so solide, he can worke therein, not onely according to the principles of the nature thereof, but as farre as the strength and abilitie of those principles will possibly reach and extend themselues.'[127] One can see here the tension of trying to reconcile the idea of the Devil entering a person with the principle that two things cannot exist together in one place. Perkins stated that no dimensions are penetrated, which seems to deny an actual physical entrance, but still understands the Devil as being within a person in some degree.

It is Deacon and Walker who confront this contradiction by arguing that a demon cannot enter an individual's mind because both are spiritual in nature, but 'Neither is the one by nature, more subtile, more slender, or more thinne then the other: neither yet, of more capabilitie, or more apt to containe then the other.'[128] If a demon did enter a person, 'there must be, either a confusion of substances, which to hold were absurd, or else a rending and separation of substances at least, called properly a vacuum, which were follie to imagine, but madnes for any to auouch.'[129] This denial of a confusion of substances touches upon the Aristotelian concept of teleology, where everything in nature is created for a specific purpose and contains within it a certain drive to fulfil that purpose. It cannot deviate from this purpose, and it also assumes a certain form in order

[126] Kramer and Sprenger, *Malleus Malificarum*, pp. 206-207
[127] Perkins, *Damned art*, p. 22
[128] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 49
[129] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 46

to fulfil this purpose, which also distinguishes it from all other matter.[130] If substances were to merge they would no longer be the substance originally intended and this is not possible. This would also apply if the substances were somehow separated. The rejection of a vacuum is also an Aristotelian concept.[131]

Deacon and Walker also referred to how things occupy space in order to prove that a demonic spirit cannot exist within a human body. They point out that corporeal beings exist in a place 'circumscriptiuely, commensuratiuely, dimensiuely, or locally' and the place is able fully to contain the complete being. Spiritual beings, on the other hand, exist 'imaginarily, determinately, or definitiuely'. They do not have dimensions like corporeal beings, but they are finite and limited and so can only exist in one place at one time. Only the omniscient God can occupy a place 'indefinitiuely, repletiuely, or replenishingly', that is being everywhere, fully, at once.[132] They expanded upon this point by stating that there are only a limited number of ways in which a demon may be said to possess a person: 'either as the part in the whole: or as the whole in the part: or as the special in the general; or as the general, in the special: or as the accident in the subiect: and forme in the matter: or, as the efficient, in the effect: or, as the intention in the end: or as the thing placed, in the place at the least.'[133] If a demon were within a human, then it would have to exist as a part of that person. However, the mind was a complete substance in itself, as were demons, and neither could be added to or adjusted to include the other. Because the mind and body were actual substances and demons

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[130] Lawrence William Rosenfield, *Aristotle and Information Theory: A Comparison of the Influence of Causal Assumptions on Two Theories of Communication* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1971), p. 24
[131] Aristotle, *Physics*, Book 3 <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/physics.3.iii.html > [accessed March 15 2011]
[132] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 56-57
[133] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 78

were also actual substances, to combine the two actual substances (demon and body or demon and mind) was a sheer impossibility. Therefore, they argued that the demons could not occupy the body in any of these aforementioned ways, and so they could not possess humans at all. The only way the Devil could have possession of a man was through an imaginary possession, that is, affecting the thoughts of the mind, not existing within the mind itself.[134]

Deacon and Walker also tackled the idea that a demon could possess a person by 'not putting any other qualitie in the bodie which it had not before, but only mouing and stirring the said bodie (with the seueral partes) to such extraordinarie operations, as (by the prouident disposing of God) are permitted them to accomplish thereby.' (What they term 'autoprosopos', or personal possession.) They argued that in order to do this, the demon would have to be united with the person's essence hypostatically, which is a union possible only in Christ, where the fully human and the fully divine natures exist within one person. This process would also mean that those operations were given an essential form, which would lead again to two essential forms (demonic and human) being present in the same place at once, which is impossible by nature. They also argued that only the Holy Spirit could enter into the human spirit and so to assert that the Devil could do so was to 'deifie the Diuel, & make him matchable with God himselfe in diuine essence, operation, & knowledge'.[135]

Deacon and Walker argued against the idea of corporeal possession, where the demon was thought to enter into the physical body, 'whereby the diuell is supposed of some, euen really and essentially to enter into, and substantially, and inherently to dwell

[134] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 60-61
[135] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 49

in the possessed mans bodie.'[136] They recognised that the basis for believing in a real corporeal possession was that Jesus used the term 'come out' when he dispossessed various demoniacs (Matthew 12:45, Mark 9:25). However, Deacon and Walker believed that this did not indicate the presence of the demon within the body because a spiritual substance, the soul, already occupies the body. Deacon and Walker therefore questioned what happened to the soul during this supposed occupation of the body by the demon. They denied that the soul remained within the body but was kept bound, arguing that the soul was essential for the life of the body and so could not be bound up without the body dying. Furthermore, they argued that it was not possible for the soul (which they here equate with the mind) to lie dormant within a body at any time, as it is, by nature, always in perpetual motion.[137]

The soul was also responsible for the proper operation of the body, and had two operations, the animal (the Aristotelian faculty of reason) and the organical. The organical operations were those connected directly to the body and included 'the nutritiue, augmentatiue, and generatiue operations', the senses and also 'the imaginatiue, the memoratiue, the concupiscible, irascible, and motiue faculties',[138] which were all connected to the senses (the sensitive appetite). The mind could only effect these operations within its own body, but could not do so if that body were possessed by the

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[136] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 65

[137] In this respect, they adhered to the Thomist concept of the mind as a spiritual place as opposed to the recent theory of Pomponazzi, who viewed the mind more as a natural entity. See Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 243

[138] In Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, irascibility is the excess of anger. (Aristotle (translated by J. A. K. Thomson), *The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nichomachean Ethics* (350 B.C.) (London: Allen & Unwin, 1953, reprinted London: Penguin Books, 1976), Book Two, Part vi, p. 105). The concept of these faculties was more fully developed by Aquinas, who saw the sensitive appetite as being divided into two parts, the irascible and the concupiscible. The concupiscible appetite is the soul's ability to seek out what is beneficial and avoid that which is harmful using the senses, whilst the irascible appetite allows the soul to actively resist that which is harmful. (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Question 81)

Devil. The animal operations, 'those three essential powers of the reasonable soule, called the vnderstanding, affection, and will', could operate independently of the body, as they were the 'intellective appetite'. But if the Devil controlled the body, the mind would be unable to carry out its organical operations in order to prevent the body from sinning. The mind (soul) could therefore not be held accountable for these actions and so the Devil's actions would not have any effect upon the soul. Possession therefore served no spiritual function for Deacon and Walker, and so there was no basis for believing in it.[139]

Deacon and Walker denied the possibility of real corporeal possession, arguing that where the Bible refers to the entering in or coming out of demons, it is referring only to the 'effectual operation' of the Devil–that is, the suggestion of the Devil. They use a number of authors to support their position,[140] for example Chrysostom's commentary on the temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:6). Chrysostom used this incident to warn against 'the deadly counsel' of those 'whom [the Devil] hath entered into'.[141] In this context, the Devil is understood as influencing those around us for the purposes of causing us to sin, rather than actually being inside any of these persons. Deacon and Walker saw this as proof that the 'entering in' of the Devil was to be understood as an external influence, not an internal possession. They also point to Gregory the Great's commentary on Job, where Gregory gives an allegorical interpretation of Job 1:7, where Satan speaks of roaming the earth. Gregory interpreted this not as a literal roaming, but rather as conveying the way in which he seeks to impose his sinful urgings upon the

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[139] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 72
[140] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 127-128
[141] Chrysostom, 'Homilies on the Gospel of St Matthew' in Philip Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 10, (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), pp. 554-555 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf110.iii.XIII.html> [accessed April 6 2011]

whole world.[142] This apparent evidence was important for Deacon and Walker as it emphasised how they were not creating new teachings, but rather reiterating existing and established ones. It was also important to demonstrate that a non-literal reading of the texts was a legitimate hermeneutical method. After all, it was their perception that it was a literal reading of cases of possession that had led to the misunderstandings they were now dealing with. By demonstrating that there were other (and in their view, more legitimate) ways of interpreting Scripture, they could justify their own reading of the text. By appealing to existing hermeneutic traditions, they could maintain that 'this Distinction was not newly coyned by [us], but concluded of old: and that also [we] auouch no more in this matter, then others haue affirmed before [us].'[143]

Like Weyer and Scot, Deacon and Walker also argued that in some cases of possession, demoniacs were actually suffering from a natural disease such as melancholy, epilepsy, mania, lunacy, lycanthropy, the mother (hysteria), or menstrual obstructions and convulsions. They stated that these illnesses could cause the mind to be troubled with 'noysome fumes, blacke and grosse', which could lead the individual into truly believing that they are being afflicted by the Devil.[144]

Having established that demons could not physically enter into a person's mind or body, 'that the *diuels* neuer had anie such *reall* possession in men',[145] Deacon and Walker sought to explain what was happening in biblical cases of possession. This they termed 'actual' possession, which is 'some such extraordinarie actual affliction,

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[142] Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job, by S. Gregory the Great, the First Pope of that Name, translated, with notes and indices* (Oxford, John Henry Parker; F & J Rivington, London, 1844) <http://www.lectionarycentral.com/GregoryMoralia/Book02.html> [accessed April 6 2011]
[143] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 128
[144] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 206-207
[145] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 65

vexation, or torment, as Satan himselfe (by the speciall appointment of God) doth effectiuely inflict vpon men for a time.'[146] Their use of the term 'actual' seems to relate to Aristotelian natural philosophy, where actuality was the term used to describe a substance as whole and complete (where substance is understood as 'being').[147] In this context, its use to denote their understanding of possession is appropriate, as they wished to maintain the separation and actuality of the bodies involved in possession (the body and mind of the demoniac and that of the demon). Each was complete in itself and there was no merging of the two, or entering of one into the other. Actual possession was to be understood in five ways: 'the primarie efficient cause: namely, the speciall purpose and iudgement of God. Then next, the secondary efficient cause: I meane, the effectuall working power of the diuell. Thirdly the materiall cause: that is to say, the affliction, the torment, and vexation it selfe. Fourthly, the formall cause: namely, an extraordinarie manner of working. And lastly, the finall cause: I meane, some speciall purpose of God, best knowen to his wisedome.'[148]

Actual possession could be both mental and corporeal. Deacon and Walker explained how the Devil was able to affect the mind in actual mental possession. This was due to the 'concupiscible faculty' of the mind, which was the part of the mind responsible for desire. Because this was linked to the 'the phantasie, or interiour sensitiue power' which was in turn dependent upon the sensitive faculty, the Devil could assault the senses in order to deceive or mislead a person into sin, 'by offring some

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[146] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 38-39
[147] S. Marc Cohen, "Aristotle's Metaphysics" from Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2012 Edition) <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/> [accessed October 15 2012]
[148] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 166

deceaueable obiect vnto the exteriour senses'.[149] However, it was not enough simply to introduce into the concupiscible faculty a temptation, rather the 'intellectiue facultie' must also be persuaded to the temptation, as it was 'the principall power of the mind'. The intellective faculty was the possessor of the ultimate truths, that is God's truths, which should prevent the mind from succumbing to the temptations presented by the concupiscible faculty. However, the Devil sought to undermine this truth, by presenting lies that contradict it. The last faculty the Devil had to overcome was the irascible faculty, which he did by introducing resentment towards God.[150] In this way, the Devil could affect the mind through external influence which helped turn it towards sin without actually having to enter into it.

This was an important objection to the belief in internal possession because if it could be established that the Devil could perform his major function of tempter without the need for internal possession, then the necessity of that and hence belief in it could be questioned. As Deacon and Walker stated:

> It fully concludes the point for which especially the same was propounded: namely, that Satan he needeth not first to enter essentially into the possessed mans minde, before he can possiblie bring the bodie it selfe vnto his slauish subiection. And in verie deed, I see not to what purpose we should yeeld him any mentall possession at all?[151]

In Deacon and Walker's view, demons attempted to corrupt the soul by introducing sinful ideas into the mind through external suggestion, or by affecting the physical body (as in the case of Job) in order to drive people to despair and sin. The fact that demons

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[149] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 43-44, 50-51
[150] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 44-45
[151] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 45

did not *need* to enter into the body in order to carry out their prime purpose necessarily meant that they *could* not enter into the body.

Deacon and Walker also argued that the Devil could affect the mind through false miracles and bodily torment. He could cause sickness and disease in order to weaken faith whilst a more direct mental assault through actual mental possession could cause a person to lose all reason and perform senseless and dangerous acts such as running into fire or water. Deacon and Walker were keen to emphasise that the Devil could only perform these things *naturally*, but his age, experience and heightened knowledge meant he was more powerful than men, and this relative power over men meant that, again, he did not need to enter into men's minds at all.[152]

Deacon and Walker also referred to actual corporeal possession, which they defined as the Devil affecting the body directly resulting in the deprivation of the senses. It could also lead to superhuman strength, violent actions, fits, stupor, and unnatural acts such as living amongst the dead (Matthew 8:28).[153] They argued therefore, that 'real' possession was impossible and had never occurred; rather biblical cases of possession had to be understood as cases of 'actual' possession. However, they also argued that actual possession no longer occurred but, as we shall see in Chapter 6, they still believed in the possibility of spiritual torment, what they termed *obsession* rather possession.

Deacon and Walker formulated their case against possession by building upon existing natural philosophical thought and creating their arguments within that framework, but they also extended the application of those principles, in particular what the limits were for the Devil if he was restricted by nature. It was an appeal to this

[152] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 60-62; 167-168
[153] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 168

fundamental tenet that shaped their arguments. Deacon and Walker's arguments against the idea of the physical presence of demons within the body meant that they concurred with the authorities that Sommers faked his possession. They maintained that his symptoms were 'strang and impossible *actions*' and they stated: 'how should there possibly be found in him any aptnesse or inclination at all, to any such supernaturall matters, he himselfe being but a meere naturall creature: consisting naturally of body and soule: endued onely with meere naturall faculties and circumscribed no dout with meere naturall bonds?'[154] For Deacon and Walker, the symptoms violated the natural laws within which demons operated and therefore it could not be anything but fraudulent. But furthermore, the apparent supernatural nature of his afflictions meant it could be dismissed on the basis of cessationism, which we will proceed to look at further in the next chapter.

[154] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 211

Chapter Five:
Deacon and Walker and the Cessation of Miracles

A crucial part of Deacon and Walker's argument against possession is the doctrine of the cessation of miracles. This doctrine has been recognised as a major part of Protestant thinking: Keith Thomas refers to it as a means of explaining increasingly sceptical attitudes towards supernatural phenomena like healing, folk remedies, and exorcism, whilst Stuart Clark states that 'the cessation of miracles was a Protestant commonplace.'[1] However, relatively little attention has been paid to the actual development of the doctrine, except for some brief works by D.P. Walker. He investigates the topic in a short article entitled 'The Cessation of Miracles', which is essentially an introduction to what is an extensive and complicated topic. He also refers to it in *Unclean Spirits*, but he admits that the topic is a large one and 'deserves further investigation'.[2] Walker's death in 1985, only four years after publication of *Unclean Spirits*, unfortunately interrupted any further study of the topic on his part.

More recently, Alexandra Walsham, Jane Shaw and Jean-Louis Quantin have addressed cessationism in the context of post-reformation attitudes towards the supernatural.[3] All agree that the Darrel controversy utilised cessationism but there has

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[1] Thomas, pp. 146-147; 304-305; 571-572; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 211

[2] D.P. Walker, 'The Cessation of Miracles' in Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus (eds.), *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe* (London: Associated University Presses, 1988), pp. 111-125; Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 73

[3] Walsham, *Providence*, pp. 225-232; Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightened England* (New Haven, MA: Yale University Press, 2006), pp.21-51; Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 130-139. Walsham and Shaw are particularly concerned with demonstrating how the concept of 'Providence', expressed through wondrous signs, came to replace that of miracles. They also wish to demonstrate how at popular level, miracles continued to feature in Early Modern spirituality.

been no sustained investigation into how or why this is the case.[4] This chapter will demonstrate how it was the *Dialogicall discourses* that employed the cessationist doctrine to create a theological case against contemporary possession. Deacon and Walker's application was unique because they argued specifically that dispossession through prayer and fasting had to be categorised as miraculous and therefore impossible in the present age. They therefore built upon the existing concept of cessationism whilst also expanding its parameters to include dispossession by prayer and fasting. In the process, they helped to entrench cessationism more solidly within early modern theological thought.

The cessationist doctrine was a significant feature of post-Reformation English learned theological thought, but it is important to examine how it emerged because there is no scriptural basis for this belief. In fact, in Mark 16:17, miracles are promised to those who believe. As Walsham points out, most works dealing with the doctrine were primarily polemical attacks on the Catholic Church. Therefore, they must be read in this context rather than as purely doctrinal texts expounding fundamental theological truths and the reader must be aware of a degree of hyperbole and exaggeration present in these writings.[5] This is not to say that the writers did not believe in what they were conveying; rather that they were not written with the aim of intricately examining every aspect of the doctrine. Yet Deacon and Walker's work, although borne out of the Darrel controversy, was not primarily a polemical work; rather it was a theological work aimed at establishing the truth of the nature of possession. They therefore drew upon existing cessationist thinking, but also expanded the scope of the doctrine to include the issue of

[4] Walsham, *Providence*, pp. 226-229; Shaw, pp. 27-28; Quantin, pp. 132-137
[5] Walsham, *Providence*, p. 229

possession.

Miracles are an integral part of the Christian faith, and their significance in the early Church is evident in a number of commentaries and homilies on the Gospels. A theme that runs throughout discussions of miracles is the issue of faith, in particular the issue of whether faith is a precursor to or a result of miracles. Hilary of Poitiers (315-367), in his commentary on Matthew, seemed inclined towards the idea that faith is an important requirement for understanding the significance of miracles and that it is a necessary prerequisite for miracles. He refers to Matthew 9:27 where the blind men are healed only after they affirm that they believe. Similarly Jerome (347–420), in his commentary on Matthew, states that miracles do not produce faith, pointing to Christ's unwillingness to give signs and wonders at demand to unbelievers and to the refusal of unbelievers to accept the proof of the resurrection.

If miracles are actually a product of faith then it seems that their purpose is not to convert unbelievers. The commentators therefore considered what other function they perform—other than demonstrating Jesus' power and identity as the Son of God—by looking not just at the immediate narrative meaning of the text but also what Rowan A. Greer calls the 'interior sense' or spiritual meaning of the miracles. For example, Hilary saw miracles as a microcosm of redemption: the physical healing represented the healing of the soul that occurred when one was saved, whilst the Gadarene demoniacs (Matthew 8:28-34) represented the extension of God's covenant of grace to the Gentiles. This does not mean that Hilary saw the biblical miracles as solely allegorical or metaphorical. He did not question that they were true historical events but rather he also saw them as containing meaning beyond the mere occurrence.[6] Like Hilary, Jerome saw

[6] Rowan A. Greer, *The Fear of Freedom: A Study of Miracles in the Roman Imperial Church*

the 'spiritual' aspect of miracles. He believed the healing of the lunatic boy (Matthew 17:17-20) represented the believers' Christ-given ability to triumph over Satan. He also points to the prophetic element within the miracle. For example, the clearing of the Temple is seen as the greatest miracle because it points towards the New Covenant.[7]

It is clear then that biblical accounts of miracles were understood as literal historical events, that pointed towards the broader redemptive plan. However, early Church figures also seemed willing to accept the possibility of contemporary miracles. For example, Justin Martyr (110-165) numbered healing and prophecy among the gifts of the Holy Spirit that were freely available to believers. Interestingly, he singled out exorcism, stating 'For some [believers] do certainly cast out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits do frequently both believe and join the church.'[8] Records of miracles occur amongst writers throughout the early church, including Hilary, Tertullian (160-225), Eusebius (263-339) and Cyril of Jerusalem (315-387), and many associated the reception of miraculous gifts with the conversion and baptism experience. Nigel Scotland argues that it was not until the Christian faith became the religion of the Roman Empire, and consequently more centralised and regulated, that these gifts also became more restricted. He points to Jerome, who related that the laying on of hands, through which the gifts of the Holy Spirit were imparted, was restricted to the episcopacy.[9] As this activity became more specialised, it makes sense that the expectation of the miraculous amongst ordinary believers also diminished,

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(University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1989), pp. 10-16

[7] Greer, pp. 18-19

[8] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, quoted in Nigel Scotland, 'Signs and Wonders in the Early Catholic Church 90-451 and their implications for the Twenty-First Century' in *European Journal of Theology*, Vol. 10, No.2 (2001), pp. 155-167 (p. 157)

[9] Scotland, pp. 166-167

thus relegating the performance of the miraculous to the Church hierarchy, or the cloistered communities.

This restriction of the performance of miracles seems to have bred a degree of uncertainty over their contemporary application. Later writers seem more cautious about the possibility of miracles in their own time. It is difficult to garner any explicit statements regarding this issue, because they mostly approached the subject of miracles in the context of other concerns. For example, with regard to Augustine (354-430), Chris Gousmett points out that he 'did not develop a systematic and extensive account of his concept of miracles, but instead dealt with the subject incidentally, in a variety of contexts throughout his writings.'[10] Augustine saw miracles as a means by which people could be reminded of the power of God. Therefore, miracles were rare; for if they were common, they would cease to amaze. However, he condemned the desire to seek visible signs, stating that 'we put God to the test when we demand signs and wonders from him, not in the hope of salvation, but simply for the love of the experience.'[11] Augustine was wary of people seeing miracles as ends in themselves, as he believed that they should only serve to glorify God and lead people to salvation. Yet in *City of God*, he maintained that miracles did still occur.[12] Augustine believed that it was dangerous to deny contemporary miracles, as this would essentially negate the truth

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[10] Chris Gousmett, 'Creation Order and Miracle According to Augustine', *Evangelical Quarterly* Vol. 60, No. 3 (1988), pp. 217-240 (p. 217). One of these contexts was that of trying to explain the occurrence of miracles in a world ordered by nature and its immutable laws.

[11] Augustine (translated with an Introduction by R.S. Pine-Coffin), *Confessions* (London: Clays, 1961), Book 10, Chapter 35, p. 242

[12] He argues that 'even now miracles are being performed in Christ's name [...] but they do not enjoy the blaze of publicity which would spread their fame with a glory to equal that of those earlier marvels.' (Augustine, *City of God*, Book 22, Chapter 8, p. 1034) One can see the contradictory elements in his approach to the topic (miracles should not be sought, miracles can be sought, they are rare, they merely are not as well publicised), but this only serves to highlight the point made earlier, that Augustine's approach was not systematic but incidental.

of biblical miracles. It did not make sense to deny the possibility of miracles whilst claiming the truth of those in the Bible. He then recounts some examples of miracles that he had witnessed. For Augustine, these miracles were edifying experiences; indeed, he sees in the reactions to the miracles 'the same faith in Christ for which Stephen shed his blood.'[13]

Chrysostom (347-407) on the other hand seemed to be more emphatic about the cessation of miracles. In his homily on Matthew 9, he stated that 'this is the great indication of your high birth, and of your love, that you should believe God without pledges. And in fact this, and one other thing, were the reasons why God made miracles to cease.'[14] In his Homily 46 on Matthew, he also downplayed the importance of miracles, arguing that a virtuous life that reflects God's glory is more important than simply working miracles.[15] Indeed, for Chrysostom, a virtuous life was a miracle, as he stated 'But if you would work miracles also, be rid of transgressions, and you have quite accomplished it.' (Homily 32) Like Augustine, he seemed concerned with tying miracles to a genuine, grounded faith. The danger lay in the fact that miracles could become the focus of faith. They were by nature awesome demonstrations of God's power, but if they served no edifying purpose, they were merely a form of entertainment.

However with no scriptural basis for such a position, the idea that miracles had ceased failed to gain widespread acceptance within the church, and this is evidenced in the centrality of miracles within the medieval Catholic Church, as demonstrated by the

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[13] Augustine, *City of God*, Book Xxii, Chapter 8, p. 1047

[14] Chrysostom, 'Homily 32 on Matthew 9' in Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 10, p. 213 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf110.iii.XXXII.html> [accessed May 25 2011]

[15] Chrysostom, 'Homily 46 on Matthew' in Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 10, pp. 280-284 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf110.iii.XLVI.html> [accessed May 25 2011]

cult of saints, the veneration of icons and relics and pilgrimages to various holy sites. The laity, whilst not carrying out miracles themselves, became willing and eager consumers of the miraculous.

Around the eleventh century, the concept of the miracle began to be re-evaluated in the face of the challenges posed by Jewish deniers of the miracles of Christ, by the rise of Islam, and by the discovery of Aristotle's work on physics.[16] Michael Goodich argues that these factors led the learned to attempt to shift the focus of faith away from miracles, and instead to emphasise the importance of the virtuous lives of the saints who were credited with those miracles.[17] They distinguished between *miracula*, true miracles that were the result of the direct intervention of God, and *mirabilia*, wonders that were marvellous but natural in origin. This distinction can be attributed to Albertus Magnus (d.1280), but it was utilised by many other figures, such as the encyclopaedist Thomas of Cantimpré (1201-1272) and the natural philosopher, Roger Bacon (1214-1294).[18] It was a distinction that would be elaborated by Thomas Aquinas and would prove to be important in the development of the cessationist doctrine, as shall be discussed below. However, even whilst these discussions were occurring amongst the learned, it is clear that the miraculous pervaded medieval European life.

Benedicta Ward points to the prevalence of miracles in the Middle Ages. She refers to miracle books, such as the twelfth-century *Exordium Magnum Cisterciense*, which collected together the miracles of the Cistercians, and the books of *exempla* that were given to preachers, which contained numerous stories of miracles that were to be

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[16] Michael Goodich, *Miracles and wonders: the development of the concept of miracle, 1150-1350* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 15; Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1982, republished 1987), p. 6
[17] Goodich, *Miracles*, p. 18
[18] Goodich, *Miracles,* p. 21

read out to congregations, that became popular in the early thirteenth century.[19] These collections were to be used for the conversion of unbelievers, and for the increase of faith amongst Christian hearers. Ward points particularly to the *expectation* of the miraculous, especially at saints' shrine, where miracles were seen as normal occurrences.[20] She argues that 'Miracles were the rule rather than the exception, and the concept of the hand of God at work in the whole of life coloured the perception of miracles and their records.'[21]

Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars* details the rich devotional life of later medieval England, and demonstrates how the miraculous was an integral part of the religious life of the pre-Reformation faithful. Many miracles involved the Host and were explicitly aimed at serving as warnings against disbelief, encouraging repentance and affirming the doctrine of the Real Presence.[22] Other miracles were mostly associated with the cult of saints. The ability to perform miracles was seen as a mark of sanctity and a sign of God's special favour. Indeed, miracles were seen as a necessary part of canonisation.[23] Duffy demonstrates how saints were a prominent feature of late medieval religious life, pointing to Émile Mâle's assessment that the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were a golden age for the veneration of the saints. The cult of the

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[19] Ward, *Miracles*, pp. 26-27
[20] Ward, *Miracles*, p. 30-32
[21] Ward, *Miracles*, p. 32. See also pp. 214-216
[22] Duffy points out that the theme of the appearance of Christ in the sacrament and subsequent repentance is the most common one found in late medieval Eucharistic miracle stories. This was not just aimed at tackling heretical beliefs of the Lollards, but also at encouraging unity of doctrine amongst the community of believers. See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (Haven, MA: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 102-107.
[23] Ward, *Miracles*, pp. 184-185. For an example of how a prospective saint's activities were investigated by the Church, see Goodich, *Miracles*, pp. 90-91. Areas that were looked at included the number of miraculous events, the nature of the events (above or beyond nature), the sources attesting to the miraculous occurrence and whether or not any unorthodox or heretical practices were involved.

saints manifested itself in the abundance of their images, the proliferation of individual saints' altars or chapels, and the daily celebration of masses at the altars of popular saints like Peter, Paul and Thomas Becket.[24] This devotion to the saints can be understood with reference to their perceived role as intercessors and protectors. Duffy states that 'the English laity looked to the saints […] as powerful helpers and healers in time of need, whether bodily need or the last spiritual extremity of death and the pains of Purgatory.'[25] The power of the saints was often demonstrated through exorcisms conducted at their shrines. As Goodich points out, 'The public exorcisms of an incubus or succubus (implanted by the Devil in a believer), witnessed at the saint's shrine by many spectators, is often the first miracle that cements the establishment of a new cult.'[26] Exorcism was seen as a tangible demonstration of the saint's power and validated their veneration.

This devotion to saints is also evident in the use of relics, and Ward shows the way in which relics were seen both as sources of miraculous cures and as conduits for heavenly intervention in everyday life. For example, the statue of the reliquary of St Faith, kept at the Cluniac monastery in Conques, was physically present at civil courts to assist with disputes over land, and was also carried to points of disaster and conflict in order to bless the area and those involved. In this sense, the relics were seen as the real, living presence of the saint.[27] Amongst the miracles attributed to St Faith through her relics was the curing of sick people and animals, the punishment of those who doubted

[24] Duffy, pp. 155-156
[25] Duffy, p. 178
[26] Goodich, *Miracles*, p. 23
[27] Ward, *Miracles*, p. 37

her power, and a controlling of the weather, plagues and warfare.[28] Such miracle accounts were repeated at shrines across medieval Europe and were intended to demonstrate the power of the saint, which in turn helped with the establishment of the shrine and the continued veneration of the saint.[29]

Duffy points to the way in which allegiance to a particular saint could have political connotations: for example, the anti-Lancastrian cult of Archbishop Scrope of York, who was executed by Henry IV for treason, and the anti-Yorkist cult of Henry VI.[30] However, Duffy argues that political concerns were not the driving force behind devotion to the saints; rather, it was a genuine and intrinsic part of late medieval lay spirituality. Furthermore, saints were seen as a legitimate 'sources of power' for healing as evidenced by the number of saints' shrines dedicated to healing, in notes and prayers in personal Books of Hours, and in the association of particular saints with specific afflictions (for example, Roche and Sebastian against the plague).[31] There was a sense of transacted power: coins and pilgrimages were often offered to saints in return for healing. As Duffy states, 'the saints were perceived as part of the economy of grace. They were dispensers of gifts and miracles, and the essence of their cult lay in its assurance of the possibility of rescue from the iron laws of cause and effect, the painful constrictions of poverty, disease and the sometimes harsh ordering of society which burdened men and women.'[32] In this 'economy of grace', miracles were hard currency: the expected and just commodity received in return for piety paid, often quite literally,

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[28] Ward, *Miracles*, pp. 41-42
[29] Ward surveys the miracle accounts of St. Benedict, St Cuthbert, St William, St Godric, St Frideswide and St Thomas of Canterbury, whose collection of miracles is the largest of the Middle Ages. Ward, *Miracles*, pp. 42-127
[30] Duffy, p. 164
[31] Duffy, p. 178
[32] Duffy, p. 186

in devotional acts and rites.

Medieval Christians did not just rely on saints to deliver them from affliction; they also directly battled the Devil through prayers and incantations, which are found in abundance in Books of Hours and private devotional collections. However, as Duffy points out, many of these prayers 'come very close to litany or invocation, at times indeed closer to spells or charms than anything else'. For example, a rubric before the "Crux Christi" devotional states that the believer will be protected from "sodden deeth" as long as he recites the prayer once a day.[33] Furthermore, anyone carrying the prayer or reciting it would be able to overcome enemies and be protected from death in battle, robbers, disease, the dangers of fire and water and attacks of epilepsy. The prayer written on a piece of parchment and worn around the belly of pregnant women would ensure the survival of a child until baptism.[34] Many other prayers were seen to work in the same way, with the act of reciting the prayer in the prescribed manner being seen as producing the desired result.

Duffy argues that this form of piety was not exclusively a form of 'popular' religion; rather, he points to the fact that many invocations and 'magical' prayers can be found in the prayer books of the elite and in clerical compilations of devotional works. He further argues that such practices are not surprising when viewed in light of the orthodox rituals of the Catholic Church, which emphasised the objective power of holy words, gestures and objects. For example, the rite of infant baptism included the blessing of salt and water, the invocation of angels and the expulsion of the Devil from the child through prayer. Similarly, salt and water was blessed before every Mass and

[33] These devotions were associated with a letter—sent either by an angel or Pope Leo III—that was supposedly sent to Charlemagne on the eve of his battle with Saracen.
[34] Duffy, p. 273

the cleansing power was thought to be in the invocation of the name of God and signing of the Cross. The perceived transference of power into objects is evident in the use of 'sacramentals', where holy water was used to fend off evil or promote fertility, blessed salt and water was given to sick animals and blessed candles were burned to drive away the Devil during thunderstorms, childbirth and death.[35]

There were those who were wary of the appetite for miracles and the popularity of saints. Ronald C. Finucane points to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* as an example of vernacular criticism of popular religious culture. The Pardoner is an example of those who used false relics to fool trusting peasants, whilst the hypocritical recourse to relics is exposed in their invocation by the adulterous Miller's Wife, and by the gamblers calling on the 'blode of Crist' to assist them in their games.[36] Goodich points out that Pope Innocent III (1160-1216) actually had reservations about the efficacy of relics, whilst Thomas Aquinas was amongst those who explicitly denied the possibility of any Christ-related relics because Christ had ascended bodily to heaven.[37] We have already seen in Chapter Three the impact of Erasmus' dialogues in Protestant England, and it is evident that his critique of miracles in the Catholic Church served as a precursor to, and influenced the formulation of cessationism. Erasmus' *Paraklesis* contains a criticism of pilgrimages and relics, as Erasmus questions how Christ's relics can possibly be more valuable than the word of God as revealed in Scripture.[38] His *Colloquies* point to an essentially cessationist attitude. In a fictional discussion between a monk and an

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[35] Duffy, pp. 281-282
[36] Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and pilgrims: popular beliefs in medieval England* (London: J.M. Dent, 1977, reprinted New York, NY: St Martin's Press, 1995), p. 200
[37] Goodich, *Miracles*, p. 2
[38] Douglas Parker (ed.), *William Roye's 'An exhortation to the diligent studye of scripture' and 'An exposition in to the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Corinthians'* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2000), p. 11

innkeeper, where Erasmus wishes to demonstrate the ordinary nature of habits worn by monks, the innkeeper asks for clarity as to what a monk's role is. He contends:

> The Apostles were famous for Miracles; they heal'd the Sick, so that it is no Wonder how they liv'd every where, but you can do no such Thing.

To which the monk replies:

> We could, if we were like the Apostles, and if the Matter requir'd a Miracle. But Miracles were only given for a Time for the Conviction of the Unbelieving; there is no Need of any Thing now, but a religious Life. And it is oftentimes a greater Happiness to be sick than to be well, and more happy to die than to live.[39]

This idea that miracles were not a vital part of contemporary spiritual experience and should not be expected, that their primary purpose had been to convince people of the truth of the Gospel, but now those who believe should be content to live a religious life, is a pure expression of the cessationist attitude. It demonstrates how the criticism of perceived abuses of the miraculous could lead to an outright denial of their contemporary occurrence, as this was seen as a sure means of ensuring against their exploitation.

In England, there were those who challenged the Church more directly over its dependence on saints. John Wyclif undermined the whole of idea of church-sanctioned sainthood by denying the Pope the right to declare anyone a saint. Consequently, those with Lollard tendencies condemned the use of images and relics of these saints and

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[39] Desiderius Erasmus, *The Colloquies of Erasmus. Translated by Nathan Bailey. Edited with Notes, by the Rev. E. Johnson, M.A.*, Vol. 1 (London: Reeves and Turner, 1878) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/549> [accessed May 10 2010]

urged a dependence upon the Bible instead.[40] For early reformers, the dependence of the Catholic Church upon miracles had led to corruption, both of individuals and doctrine. They were suspicious of miracles, as they believed they were merely schemes devised by the Church to deceive the faithful into giving money and valuable gifts. A typical example was the exposure during the Henrician Reformation of the Rood of Grace that was kept at Boxley Abbey in Kent. The rood was known for its Christ who would 'nod with his head, wink with his eyes, wag his beard, bend his body to reject and to receive the prayers of those who came to him'.[41] The deception was exposed when the brother of one Nicholas Partridge removed the rood from the wall to reveal a series of mechanisms that caused the figure to move. Those who reported the deception clearly associated such miracles with schemes for financial gain. In a letter to Heinrich Bullinger, John Hoker expressed how '[the rood] was found in their temple, surrounded with a multitude of offerings, and enriched with gifts of linen, wax candle &c.'[42] The rood was publicly exposed at St Pauls Cross during a sermon by John Hilsey, Bishop of Rochester, on 24th February 1538 and the case was used to discredit the monasteries and help justify their dissolution.[43]

Hostility towards Catholic miracles is evident throughout the Reformation, and as D.P. Walker points out, the seeds of cessationism can be traced to the works of Luther and Calvin. Luther clearly wished to downplay the importance of miracles, for

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[40] Finucane, *Miracles*, pp. 199 - 200

[41] John Hoker to Henrich Bullinger (1538) quoted in James Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation in England: An Historical Survey*, Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1908, reprinted Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 125

[42] *Op. cit.*

[43] Scot refers to the case several times in his *Discoverie,* in order to highlight the false and deceptive nature of Catholic miracles. See Scot, *Discoverie*, pp. 137-138; 'Discourse ', pp. 529-530. See also Anglo, 'Scot's *Discoverie*', p. 119

he argued that all of Creation could be regarded as miracles. Extraordinary miracles found in the Bible were not greater than God's daily work in sustaining the world because all of these things were products of His hand and are of equal wonderment.[44] In a sermon on Matthew 8:1-13 concerning the healings of the leper and the centurion's daughter, Luther emphasised that it was the justifying work of God, through faith alone, and the consequent salvation of the soul, that was the greatest miracle.[45] This was emphasised in Luther's defence against the accusation that the Protestant church performed no miracles, for he argued that 'It is miracle enough that people learn by our preaching to know Christ and obtain a joyful conscience.'[46]

The English reformers also expressed the idea that revelation of true doctrine through the Protestant faith was a miracle in itself. Thomas Lupton adamantly proclaimed that:

> why should not you thinke, that the spiritual burning and enflaming (with such a little sparke of the gospell at the first) of such a number of peoples hartes, consuming and wasting the idolatrie, false religion, and Papisticall superstition of Kingdomes, Dukedomes, Prouinces, and such a great number of countries, Cities and Townes, and

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[44] Martin Luther, 'Sermon on Mark 8:1-9 (1525)' in Martin Luther (edited and translated by John Nicholas Lenker), *Sermons of Martin Luther*, Vol. 3: Sermons on Gospel Texts for Pentecost (Minneapolis, MN: Lutherans of All Lands, 1907) <http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/129luther_d16.htm> [accessed May 21 2010]

[45] Walker, 'The Cessation of Miracles', pp. 111-112

[46] Martin Luther, *A sermon on the ninth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew; The Kingdom of Christ, which consists in the forgiveness of sins; the trying of the spirits; the efficacy of the faith of others; The twofold power on earth to forgive sins. Martin Luther, Wittenberg, 1525* from Martin Luther (edited and translated by John Nicholas Lenker), *Sermons of Martin Luther,* Vol. 5: Sermons on Gospel texts for the 13th to 26th Sundays after Trinity (Minneapolis, MN: Lutherans in All Lands, 1905) <http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/129luther_e12.htm> [accessed May 21 2010]

> the mightie encreasing of this spirituall fire (the gospell) and that within so shorte a time, is a maruellous myracle?[47]

Luther appears to suggest that miracles were no longer to be expected, stating: 'For he gave the word, how we are to believe and live, and besides confirmed it with miracles enough. He means to let that be enough, and stop there, and do nothing else.'[48] However, elsewhere Luther's position on the possibility of miracles in his own time is more ambiguous. He stated that 'good and honest' miracles were still possible but that

> we are always to judge according to this sure test […] whether the miracles have the tendency to praise Christ and to strengthen your faith. But if you discover that they are pointing you in a different direction, as to go upon pilgrimages, pray to saints, deliver souls from purgatory, and in short, to rely upon your works and establish a righteousness of your own; then say: If you would perform all miracles for me, so that I could see and make sure of them, I would still not believe you; for Christ has sufficiently warned me against that.[49]

Luther was concerned with condemning miraculous acts that served to uphold Catholic practices and teachings, but he does seem to be suggesting that 'true' miracles are still possible. The acid test for miracles was whether or not they conformed to the Word, and a better understanding of the faith. Luther argued that Catholic miracles involved

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[47] Thomas Lupton, *A persuasion from papistrie vvrytten chiefely to the obstinate, determined, and dysobedient English papists, who are herein named & proued English enimies and extreme enimies to Englande. Which persuasion, all the Queenes Maiesties subiectes, fauoring the Pope or his religion, will reade or heare aduisedlye* (London: Henrie Bynneman, 1581), p. 273
[48] Martin Luther (translated by Charles A. Hay), *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia, PA: Lutheran Publication Society, 1892) <http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/37luther1.htm> [accessed May 22 2010]
[49] Luther, *Commentary*

'rosaries, pilgrimages, worship of saints, masses, monkery and other peculiar self-chosen works. There is nothing about Christ, nor faith, baptism, sacrament, obedience, and good works which I am to do […] as Christ teaches me; but just the contrary. Therefore they cannot be true miracles, but both the doctrine and the miracles are a delusion of the devil.'[50] Luther also refers to the possibility of deception by the Devil through false miracles. He states that 'all that can be deceptive: but God's word does not deceive me. For the devil can readily befool and bewitch the people, so that he holds a man awhile as dead and then lets him come to himself again, as if he were awaked from the dead; or he can ruin one's eye or other member and then restore it again, so that one should think it was done by a miracle.'[51] This ability of the Devil to work false miracles meant that the status of miracles was somewhat ambiguous which led Luther to treat all miraculous works with a high degree of caution and to emphasise a dependence upon the Bible as a more solid foundation for faith. However, it seems that Luther was denying Catholic miracles in particular, rather than miracles per se.

Luther did single out exorcism as having a particular popular appeal, stating that 'Christ and his apostles and others have performed miracles, that one does not see and regard; but that any one drives out a devil, that beats all.' On the other hand, he states that 'For that is a small matter for the devil, to let himself be driven out, if he chooses, by a bad fellow, and yet remain unexorcised; for by that very performance he more completely possesses and ensnares the people with the shameful deception.'[52] It seems then that Luther saw the whole spectacle of possession and exorcism as an elaborate ruse by the Devil to lure people into false doctrine. This particular focus on exorcism

[50] Luther, *Commentary*
[51] Luther, *Commentary*
[52] Luther, *Commentary*

was possibly due to the association between exorcism and saints pointed out above. Article XXI of the Augsburg Confession demonstrates the Protestant objection to the worship of saints, stating: 'the Scripture teaches not the invocation of saints or to ask help of saints, since it sets before us the one Christ as the Mediator, Propitiation, High Priest, and Intercessor.'[53] The cult of saints was seen as detracting from Christ's role as the sole intercessor. Therefore it is not surprising that the act of exorcism, which could be used to perpetuate the misguided worship of saints, would be treated with particular caution.

However, it appears that Luther was not opposed to the possibility of possession in his own age. Indeed, he stated that

> Men are possessed by the devil in two ways; corporally and spiritually. Those whom he possesses corporally, as mad people, he has permission from God to vex and agitate, but he has no power over their souls. The impious, who persecute the divine doctrine, and treat the truth as a lie, and who, unhappily, are very numerous in our time, these the devil possesses spiritually.[54]

Those possessed 'corporeally' were those who suffered from physical torments like the demoniacs of the Bible. The 'spiritually' possessed were essentially the reprobates. In a number of letters and works, Luther advised those who came across cases of possession to 'Pray fervently and oppose Satan with your faith',[55] but he explicitly warned against

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[53] Philip Melanchthon (trans. by Richard D. McCormack), *The Augsburg Confession: The confession of faith: which was submitted to His Imperial Majesty Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg in the year 1530 by Philip Melanchthon* (Fort Worth, TX: RDMc Publishing, 2006), p. 25

[54] Luther, *Table Talk*, pp. 267-268

[55] Martin Luther, Letter to Bernard Wurzelmann [Nov. 2, 1535] in Martin Luther (translated by Theodore G. Tappert), *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1960), pp. 42-43. See also Luther, Letter to Severin Schulze [June 1, 1545], *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, p. 52

the use of the Catholic rite of exorcism. In response to a letter from Andrew Ebert, a preacher from Frankfurt who believed that a girl in his parish was possessed, Luther advised Ebert to 'pray earnestly for the girl [...] but [the Devil] must not be attacked with any exorcisms or serious measures, for he laughs at all these things with diabolical scorn.'[56] Luther asserted:

> We cannot expel demons with certain ceremonies and words, as Jesus Christ, the prophets, and the apostles did. All we can do is, in the name of Jesus Christ, to pray the Lord God, of his infinite mercy, to deliver the possessed persons. And if our prayer is offered up in full faith, we are assured by Christ himself (St John xvi.23) that it will be efficacious, and overcome all the devil's resistance […] But we cannot of ourselves expel the evil spirits, nor must we even attempt it.[57]

Dispossession through prayer was clearly tied to faith, and it was distinguished from the exorcisms performed by Jesus and the Apostles. Luther's reservations towards exorcism did not lead him to dismiss possession as a contemporary phenomenon. However, he was certainly opposed to the Catholic rite of exorcism, and this was an extension of his general critique of the seeming Catholic exploitation of the miraculous.

Like Luther, Calvin was concerned about the power of miracle as a spectacle. He stated that 'Satan has his miracles, which, though they are deceitful tricks rather than true powers, are such a sort as to mislead the simple-minded and untutored.'[58] But in contrast to Luther's ambiguity, Calvin was more explicit in restricting miracles to the

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[56] Luther, Letter to Andrew Ebert [August 5, 1536], *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, pp. 44-45.
[57] Luther, *Table Talk*, p. 267
[58] Calvin, "Prefatory Address", *Institutes*, McNeill-Battles edition, quoted in Carlos M.N. Eire, '"True piety begets true confession": Calvin's attack on idolatry' in Timothy George, *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Know Press, 1990), p. 259

past. With regards to the laying on of hands, he argued that it served no contemporary purpose because

> those miraculous powers and manifest operations, which were distributed by the laying on of hands, have ceased. They were only for a time. For it was right that the new preaching of the gospel, the new kingdom of Christ, should be signalised and magnified by unwonted and unheard-of miracles. When the Lord ceased from these, he did not forthwith abandon his Church but intimated that the magnificence of his kingdom, and the dignity of his word, had been sufficiently manifested.[59]

However, although Calvin seems more adamant in his assertion that miracles of all kinds have ceased, D.P. Walker points out that his opinion on miracles was very much that: a 'recommended opinion, not, as it later became, a dogmatically asserted principle'.[60] Indeed, in a commentary of Mark 16:15-20, where Jesus speaks of signs that will accompany believers, Calvin states that 'it is however more *probable* that miracles, which were to make famous the new and still obscure gospel, were promised only for a certain time.'[61]

However, this cessationist opinion was certainly adopted by English Protestants. Bishop John Hooper stated that

> I believe […] the gospel in the very time by God appointed was confirmed and approved by heavenly miracles, as well as by Jesus Christ himself, […] and that after such a sort, that for the confirming thereof there is no more need of new miracles; but rather we must content ourselves with that is done, and simply and plainly believe only

[59] Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 627
[60] Walker, 'The Cessation of Miracles', p. 112
[61] Calvin, *In Novum Testamentum commentarii* quoted in Walker, 'The Cessation of Miracles', p. 112 (my italics)

> the holy scriptures […]; watching and still taking heed to ourselves, that we be not beguiled and deceived with the false miracles of Antichrist, wherewith the world at this day is stuffed.[62]

This statement not only promotes the cessationist doctrine; it also dismisses all Catholic miracles as the deceptive acts of the Antichrist. This explanation of Catholic miracles as tricks and illusions permeates the writings of Tudor critics of the Catholic Church, such as William Tyndale and John Frith, who identified Catholic miracles with the false signs and wonders warned about in Matthew 24.[63] John Foxe treated alleged miracles performed by the Catholic saints like Becket with caution, asserting that these were either completely fabricated by those wishing to promote the saint's cult, or they did occur but were in fact actioned by 'a co[n]trary spirit', and so they were not true miracles, but rather the 'lyenge signes & wonders' of Matthew 24. Foxe saw the miraculous stories of the saints as pure inventions by monks, aimed at increasing the value of relics and the status of their own orders that preserved these relics.[64]

Any appeal to the miraculous was seen as a demonstration of a lack of faith. For example, William Perkins argued that

> God is tempted when men require a signe at his hands […] And thus doe all those tempt God, which refuse to embrace the doctrine of the Gospel, because they cannot see the ministers therof to confirme the same by miracles. Thus do many Papists plead against our religion, embracing rather the mysterie of iniquity, because it is confirmed vnto

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[62] John Hooper, *A briefe and clear confession of the Christian faith, conteining an hudreth articles, according to the order of the Creede of the Apostles* (1581), quoted in Robert Bruce Mullin, 'Horace Bushnell and the Question of Miracles', *Church History*, Vol. 58, (1989), pp. 460-473 (p. 461)
[63] Helen L. Parish, *Monks, miracles and magic: Reformation representations of the medieval church* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 49
[64] John R. Knott, 'John Foxe and the Joy of Suffering', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1996), pp. 721-734 (p. 725)

> them by lying wonders; not considering that the truth which wee professe was once sufficiently confirmed to bee the truth of God, by his owne testimony thereunto in signes & wonders through the hands of his Apostles.[65]

The physician William Bullein stated that 'it is rather a tempting of GOD, then a beleeuinge in GOD, to looke or wyshe for Myracles, for faythfull Men neede none.'[66] The reformers also wished to tackle the idea that faith produced miracles. For example, Thomas Bell maintained that the faith referred to in 1 Corinthians 13:2, which is capable of moving mountains, is the 'miraculous faith onelie, which is often in the verie wicked', which he distinguishes from 'the iustifying faith'.[67] This distinction between miraculous faith and justifying faith allowed the reformers to create a situation whereby one could be saved and not perform miracles, and this allowed them to maintain the truth of their doctrine without the need to perform miracles as proof of its validity. This was an important distinction to make because it maintained that even reprobates could possess miraculous faith, but it was justifying faith (which does not entail the performance of miracles) that leads to salvation. Therefore, the ability to perform miracles was not a mark of salvation, and so neither of the true church.[68] The aim was

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[65] William Perkins, *The combat betvveene Christ and the Diuell displayed: or A commentarie vpon the temptations of Christ: preached in Cambridge by that reuerend and iudicious diuine M. William Perkins* (London: Melchisedech Bradwood for E. E[dgar], 1606), p. 34

[66] William Bullein, *Bulleins bulwarke of defence against all sicknesse, soarenesse, and vvoundes that doe dayly assaulte mankinde: which bulwarke is kept with Hilarius the gardener, [and] Health the phisicion, with the chirurgian, to helpe the wounded soldiours. Gathered and practised from the most worthy learned, both olde and new: to the great comfort of mankinde* (London: Ihon Kyngston, 1562), fol. 8[v]

[67] Thomas Bell, *Thomas Bels motiues concerning Romish faith and religion* ([Cambridge]: Iohn Legate, printer to the Vniversitie of Cambridge, 1593), p. 130

[68] Further examples of a distinction between the historical, miraculous and justifying faith can be found in Zacharias Ursinus, *A collection of certaine learned discourses, written by that famous man of memory Zachary Ursine; doctor and professor of divinitie in the noble and flourishing schools of Neustad. For explication of divers difficult points, laide downe by that author in his catechisme. Lately put in print in Latin by the last labour of D. David Parry: and now newlie translated into*

to minimise the power of miracles, and to emphasise the value of salvation over any external supernatural spectacle and in the process to render Catholic miracles false and meaningless. Salvation by faith alone was stressed as the end of religion. Those who possessed the justifying faith needed no proof or reinforcement from miracles.

Early Protestant writers often claimed that it was in fact the absence of miracles that marked the Protestant church as the one true church. Calvin argued that because miracles were only needed at the beginning when the faith was new, they were not needed to establish the truth of the Protestant doctrine, as this was merely a restoration of the original faith. Therefore, those miracles found in the Bible and early church also validated the truth of the Protestant faith: new miracles were unnecessary as it was not a new faith.[69] In an English context, William Fulke defended the Protestant church's lack of miracles, arguing that 'our doctrine being the same which we haue receiued of [the

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English, by I.H. for the benefit and behoofe of our Christian country-man (Oxford: Ioseph Barnes, 1600), pp. 234-239; Robert Rollock, *A treatise of Gods effectual calling: written first in the Latine tongue, by the reuerend and faithfull seruant of Christ, Maister Robert Rollock, preacher of Gods word in Edenburgh. And now faithfully translated for the benefite of the vnlearned, into the English tongue, by Henry Holland, preacher in London* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1603), pp. [187]-[176]; Thomas Adams, *The happines of the church, or, A description of those spirituall prerogatiues vvherewith Christ hath endowed her considered in some contemplations vpon part of the 12. chapter of the Hebrewes : together with certain other meditations and discourses vpon other portions of Holy Scriptures, the titles wherof immediately precede the booke: being the summe of diuerse sermons preached in S. Gregories London* (London: G.P. for Iohn Grismand, 1619), pp. 427-428; Thomas Cooper, *Sathan transformed into an angell of light expressing his dangerous impostures vnder glorious shewes. Emplified [sic] specially in the doctrine of witchcraft, and such sleights of Satan, as are incident thereunto. Very necessary to discerne the speciplague raging in these dayes, and so to hide our selues from the snare thereof* (London: Barnard Alsop, 1622), pp. 354-355; William Harrison, *A plaine and profitable exposition, of the parable of the sower and the seede wherein is plainly set forth, the difference of hearers, both good and bad. To which is added a learned answer to the Papists, in diuers points of controuersie betweene vs and them, the heads whereof are set downe in the pages following* (London: for William Bladen, 1625), pp. 56–58;

[69] Carlos M.N. Eire, '"True piety begets true confession": Calvin's attack on idolatry' in Timothy George (ed.), *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Know Press, 1990), p. 259

apostles'] writings, needeth no other confirmation of miracles, to be wrought by vs.'[70] This argument was crucial, because it refuted the challenge by the Catholic church that reformers needed to confirm the truth of their teachings through a demonstration of miracles. Fulke further argued that 'Luther and some other hauing an extraordinary calling from God, to teach and reforme the Church, need not to confirme their calling by miracles, when they teach nothing but that is confirmed by manifest authoritie of holy Scriptures.'[71] He wished to emphasise that the teachings of the Protestant church were true to Scripture, which was the foundation of the faith, and this was proof enough of its validity. They were not seeking to establish a new faith, but only to teach the truth of the gospel. Therefore they did not need the evangelical tool of miracle working.

These implicit cessationist arguments were explicitly summarised by Reginald Scot. He stated categorically that 'the working of miracles is ceased' whilst book eight of his *Discoverie* is dedicated to proving this point.[72] He argued that miracles occurred in the Bible and 'times past' because 'it pleased God, extraordinarily to shew Miracles amongst his people, for the strengthening of their faith in the Messias; and again, at his coming to confirm their faith by his wonderful doings, and his special graces and gifts bestowed by him upon the Apostles, &c. yet we ordinarily read in the Scriptures, That it is the Lord that worketh great wonders.' Scot wished to emphasise that miracles were only performed in order to demonstrate God's power and the true identity of Jesus as the

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[70] William Fulke, *T. Stapleton and Martiall (two popish heretikes) confuted, and of their particular heresies detected. By D. Fulke, Master of Pembrooke hall in Cambridge. Done and directed to all those that loue the truth, and hate superstitious vanities. Seene and allowed* (London: Henrie Middleton for George Bishop, 1580), p. 1. This work was a response to the Catholic theologian Thomas Stapleton's *The Fortresse of the Faith* (1565) and the English Catholic exile John Martiall's *A treatyse of the crosse gathred out of the scriptures, councelles, and auncient fathers of the primitive church* (1564) (hereafter *Popish heretickes confuted*)
[71] Fulke, *Popish heretickes confuted*, p. 72
[72] Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 50

Messiah but now Christians were to rely on Scripture rather than miracles. For Scot, the only true contemporary miracle was that of salvation.[73]

This was important for challenging the reality of witchcraft, because in Scot's opinion, acts attributed to witches were too fantastic to be anything other than miraculous. This categorisation helped him to refute the possibility of witchcraft on two fronts: firstly, witches could not perform miracles because they were said to act with the assistance of the Devil who was incapable of performing true miracles. Secondly, as miracles no longer occurred, anything resembling them must in fact be either false deceptions, or misunderstood natural phenomena: 'But such things […] as seem miraculous, are chiefly done by Deceipt, Legierdemain, or Confederacy; or else, they may be done, and yet seem unpossible; or else, things are said to be done, and never were nor can be done.'[74] Scot's treatment of miracles was not in conflict with any of the reformers' opinions that we have looked at above but he appears to be the first author to concentrate on the issue in such a concise manner. He was essentially drawing together threads that had been apparent in other writings and laying them out categorically and with specific reference to witchcraft.

As we have seen in Chapter Four, it is difficult to assess how much impact Scot's work made at the time of writing. It is possible that the ideas he was proposing were so extreme that they were not absorbed wholesale, but the Darrel controversy evidently brought the whole area of the miraculous under fresh scrutiny, and this meant that Scot's opinions received renewed attention. Harsnett wanted to undermine Darrel by portraying his dispossessions, and indeed all previous cases of possession as

[73] Scot, *Discoverie*, pp. 156-157
[74] Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 158

fraudulent. Therefore, as well as labelling these cases (including those of Margaret Cooper and Briggs/Pindar) as 'counterfeite and lewde practises', he also points readers to Scot's work for details of the false exorcism of Mildred Norrington in 1574.[75] Therefore one can see how a work that may previously have been marginally influential could gain currency due to its value in supporting a particular position. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, anti-Catholicism was a major feature of Harsnett's work. He believed that the Catholic Church had deceived people through miracles, stating that 'The great Imposter of Rome […] hath so led the world on a string, by this Legerdemaine: bewitching by his counterfeyte miracles, the mindes of the ignorant'. Harsnett saw these false miracles as serving two purposes, firstly the 'gracing of false religion by this graceless feate' and secondly 'the raysing of their own greatnes in the opinion of the people.'[76] For Harsnett, the performance of miracles had no noble use, leading only to the propagation of erroneous doctrine and the shameless self-promotion of the miracle-worker.

Like earlier writers, he saw exorcism as a particularly powerful tool used by the Catholics to confirm false doctrines, stating that

> the Papistes are driuen to the Deuill, to seeke after his testimonies for the confirmation of many things: As to winne a better estimation, & greater liking of their Sacrament of the Altar: their praying to Saintes: their […] reliques: their coniured holy water: their *Agnus Dei* […] and hypocriticall Exorcists, they beare the world in hand, that the Deuill

[75] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 16-17
[76] Harsnett, *Discovery*, sigs. A2[r]-A2[v]

> cannot indure any of them, […] that he is not able for their holines (indeed) to abide them.[77]

In Harsnett's opinion, Darrel was just as bad as the Catholic priests who used exorcism for their own purposes. He described Darrel as 'one especially aboue the rest, [who] hath played his publike prize in this iugling science, casting out more deuils by prayer and fasting after a good dinner, perhappes at after nooone, then we reade that euer any of the Apostles at so full a season did.'[78] For Harsnett, it was ridiculous that Darrel should claim for himself more power over demons than what the apostles had.

He dismissed the idea that Darrel's dispossessions could be used to prove the validity of the Protestant church against Catholic miracles, asking

> What the casting out of Deuils amongst other miracles in the scripture can effect, that hath beene long since wrought, through the expelling of them by *Christ* himself, and by his *Apostles*: and their miraculous working therein continueth still the like force for the confirmation of our faith, whilest the same is daily offred vnto our consideratio[n] by the *holy Ghost* in the word of God.[79]

He believed that nothing needed to be added to the initial miracles of Christ and the apostles, and that the believer was directed by the Bible, faith and the Holy Ghost, not miracles. Therefore dispossessions were not necessary to 'conuince and stope the mouthes of the papistes' as Darrel and his supporters claimed.[80]

However, it is important to note that Darrel did not see his actions as miraculous and he attempted to reconcile contemporary dispossession with the cessationist doctrine.

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[77] Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 18-19
[78] Harsnett, *Discovery*, sigs. A2[v]-A3[r]
[79] Harsnett, *Discovery*, pp. 18-19
[80] Darrel, *True narration*, p. 69

He argued that the act of commanding demons out with a single word, as performed by Jesus and the early church, was a miracle (miraculum). However prayer and fasting is not a supernatural act and so the result (dispossession) cannot be classed as a miracle, but rather a wonder with no supernatural element (mirandum).[81] The distinction between the wondrous and the miraculous using this precise use of the terms of miraculum and mirandum seems to be peculiar to Darrel, but he seemed to be drawing upon the existing, if somewhat hazy, categories of the preternatural and the supernatural mentioned in Chapter Four.[82] As Lorraine Daston points out, early Christian writers, such as Augustine, did not distinguish between these categories. In Augustine's view, nothing was contrary to nature because nature reflected the will of God, and in that sense, all creation was miraculous.[83] However, in medieval and early modern thought, a category emerged of things that *appeared* to be beyond nature because of their wondrous characteristics, but were still in fact natural.

This distinction between the supernatural, preternatural and natural is a feature of medieval writings. Stuart Clark points out that the 'demands of mediaeval Christianity itself were that the devil should be strong in relation to men and weak in relation to God.' This necessitated a differentiation of power, which is epitomised in the writings of Aquinas, particularly his discussion of 'Whether angels can work miracles.' Aquinas conceived of a category of the supernatural, which was distinct from, and indeed in contradiction to the natural. According to Aquinas, miracles were the result of God's direct intervention in nature, and so were above nature. Only God was capable of

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[81] Darrel, *Brief Apologie*, p. 33
[82] See above, pp. 199-200
[83] Lorraine Daston, 'The Nature of Nature in Early Modern Europe, *Configurations*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1998), pp. 149-172 (p. 154)

performing true miracles. Marvels were distinct from miracles in that they were preternatural: that is, although rare and unusual, they were still natural–hence demons, angels and even human magicians could perform marvels by utilising the hidden qualities within nature.[84]

Clark demonstrates how this general distinction between the truly supernatural and miraculous acts of God and the wondrous, but wholly natural acts of the Devil, was upheld by early modern demonologists, who maintained that 'devils [...] not merely existed in nature but acted according to its laws.'[85] He details how those who defended the possibility of demonic activity in the natural world used the concept of the preternatural to define such activity. It was purely natural in that it did not break any of the laws of nature, but it was effected by spiritual, that is demonic, agents. This had to be distinguished from purely natural causes that were not effected by demonic (or angelic) beings.[86] Darrel could well have been drawing on these categories when he maintained that possession was like a natural disease.[87] It was an affliction brought about through purely natural means but through demonic agency, and hence beyond the means of humans. In the same way, the cure could be seen as natural but beyond the ordinary capabilities of medicine and for this reason Darrrel described prayer and fasting 'as meanes (and that *ordinarye*) to cast out the diuell of the bodyes of men when he is in them'.[88]

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[84] Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 153
[85] Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 152
[86] Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 271-272
[87] See Darrel, *True narration*, pp. 53-54
[88] Darrel, *True narration*, p. 54 (my italics). Darrel also referred to possession as a 'supernaturall disease' and dispossession through prayer and fasting as a 'supernaturall meadycyne', which muddies the conceptual waters somewhat. However, it is important to note that Darrel does not mean for 'supernatural' here to be synonymous with 'miraculous'. Rather, it appears that he is using

Harsnett argued that any distinction between mirandum and miraculum was 'as silly as this is sinfull'. He argued that to maintain that dispossession was not miraculous was to 'depraue the miracles of our sauiour Christ, and to tell the people there was no iust cause they should belieue, that our Sauiour was the Sonne of God, in such mightie miracles among them: the chiefe one whereof was casting out Deuilles'. Furthermore he argued that if the exorcists wanted to defend their actions by appealing to Mark 16:17, then as well as casting out demons they should be able to perform the other feats listed there such as curing lunatics, restoring sight and causing limbs to grow.[89] However, he avoided a detailed discussion of the relationship between cessationism and possession, stating that 'It is not here meant to discusse, what we ought to thinke touching the continuance of the power of casting out Deuils' but he alluded to the Lutheran theologian Martin Chemnitz, who argued that the gift of exorcism ceased after the time of the Church fathers. He states that 'If M. Darrell haue againe obtained it, let him make much of it: & when he can bring vs one, whom we may know to be in deed possessed, both hee and his friendes may haue herein a fuller resolution.'[90] We can see here an essentially unwinnable proposition for the supporters of dispossession. Harsnett suggests that he would be willing to accept the possibility of possession if an authentic case could be presented to him. However, at the same time he was intent on demonstrating how every case was fraudulent. Harsnett's attitude towards possession cases, then, was based less on doctrinal grounds than on his pre-existent suspicion of them.

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the term to denote a spiritual affliction as opposed to a corporeal one. See Darrel, *True narration*, p. 25

[89] Harsnett, *Discovery*, sigs. A3[v]-A4[r]

[90] Harsnett, *Discovery*, p. 19

It is for this reason that Deacon and Walker's work was so important. They created the ideological basis for denying the possibility of contemporary possession, based on the cessationist doctrine. By attempting to 'prove' that dispossession was a miracle, they gave full expression to ideas only hinted at in Harsnett's work and they were less compromising in this position and more explicit in their certainty that possession no longer occurred because the cure, dispossession, was miraculous, and miracles had ceased. Certainly Deacon and Walker drew upon this deep-seated mistrust of miracles and in doing so reinforced and gave fuller expression to cessationism. The understanding of miracles as only necessary to reveal the divinity of Christ and the truth of the gospel was fundamental to Deacon and Walker's argument. They stated that miracles were necessary

> For first, our sauiour Christ being both God and man, but yet vtterly vnknowne to the world: it was therfore vndoubtedly meete, that he especially, and only he himselfe (by some such extraordinarie and miraculous workes as none other might possible do) shoulde apparantly make knowne to the worlde, the admirable power of his Deitie. As also, his owne disciples, they being extraordinarily and specially appointed to preach and to plant the Gospel of Christ throughout the whole world: it was likewise vndoubtedly necessarie, that, the infallible truth of such heauenly doctrine so extraordinarily deliuered from them, should […] euen by those their extraordinarie actions also (as by the supernaturall seales of the Almightie himself) be perpetually established to the ende of the world.[91]

This argument was used to accept the reality of miracles in the Bible whilst also maintaining the absence of such within the Protestant church, where the Word and the

[91] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 170-171

Holy Spirit were sufficient for the instruction of believers. Drawing upon the fundamental Protestant emphasis on faith alone, they wished to reinforce the idea that miracles were an unnecessary and defunct feature of the Christian faith. Indeed, Deacon and Walker condemned those who 'foist in new miracles, [and] shew themselues wicked, and such curious braines, as (not contenting themselues with eternall saluation) doe desire to leape beyond the limits and bounds of the kingdome of heauen'.[92]

Deacon and Walker wished to demonstrate that their view was not a novel one, but rather a well-established position. They did this by referring to the Patristic authors, such as Augustine who they claim expressed the view that God wanted to raise up the minds of believers to a stronger faith, so that they did not desire any visible signs (*Confessions*, lib. 10. cap. 35). They also quote him as saying that miracles are no longer permitted as if they were, eventually these would become so common as to lose their wonder and effectiveness (*De vera religione*, lib. 11. cap. 25). Chrysostom too, is quoted as saying that miracles are only given to those who do not believe. Those who truly love God do not need to see miracles (in John 2. hom. 22). In addition, he is quoted as saying that those who perform miracles are agents of the Antichrist (in Matthew 24 hom. 29) and that miracles are no longer necessary (1 Corinthians 2 homil 6).[93] We have already seen that the attitude of Augustine and Chrysostom was often not this clear-cut but rather somewhat ambiguous and affected by the context in which they were writing. However, Deacon and Walker were able to cite selective quotes that reinforced their position, thereby using the ambiguity to their advantage. In a similar way, Augustine's objections against miracles were later used by George Abbott to argue

[92] *Dialogicall discourses*, p 334
[93] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 333-337

that if miracles were rare and problematic in ancient times, then there was even more reason to deny their contemporary occurrence.[94]

Deacon and Walker insisted that anything resembling miracles in the current age were in fact '*lying signes and woonders*', specifically the mark of the Antichrist.[95] This aimed to undermine all Catholic miracles by rendering them fraudulent, but it also served to highlight the demarcation between the true Protestant church, which was characterised by faith alone and had no reliance upon miracles, and the false Catholic Church that was riddled with false miracles. This association of miracles with the Antichrist meant that miracles could not be used as proof of the true church; rather they were seen as just the opposite, the mark of Satan. This need unambiguously to tar all miracles as marks of the Devil also explains why Deacon and Walker felt compelled to argue so vigorously against dispossession. They argued that

> Besides that, if the working of miracles be stil continued with the churches of Christ in these daies of the Gospel, then, one principall marke, for discerning the Antichristian churches from the true churches of Christ, would be mightely obscured, yea, euen vtterly extinguished.[96]

Therefore, it was the *absence* of miracles that became the mark of the true church. A sure way to guarantee against any possibility of deception by false miracles was to conclude that miracles, including dispossession, were no longer part of the Christian experience, which should be characterised by faith alone. Deacon and Walker believed

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[94] George Abbot, *The reasons vvhich Doctour Hill hath brought, for the vpholding of papistry, which is falselie termed the Catholike religion: vnmasked and shewed to be very weake, and vpon examination most insufficient for that purpose... The first part* (Oxford: Ioseph Barnes, 1604), pp. 268-269 (hereafter *Reasons*)
[95] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. [10-11]; 327; 333
[96] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 331

that Darrel's attempts to dispossess were blurring this distinction between the true non-miraculous Protestant church, and the false church of the Antichrist, with its lying signs and wonders.

Deacon and Walker believed that miracles made the populace vulnerable to deception because they

> doth open a wide gap to all manner of iuggling knaueries, and crafty legerdemaines. For, if (vpon euery such insinuation) the working of miracles be once freely permitted: then, euery cogging companion (vnder an holy pretence of miracles) may foist into the church at his pleasure, whatsoeuer best pleaseth his phantasie, and so, the certeine truth of our hoped saluation, should neuer be certeine vnto vs.[97]

They suggested that this was the very reason why miracles had now ceased, so that individuals could not claim power and authority for themselves, and use this to misguide others. The only figures trusted with these powers were the apostles and early church leaders; those who followed were perceived as unworthy of possessing such gifts.[98]

Alexandra Walsham has observed that emphasising the Catholic thaumaturgic capabilites was a major weapon in the Counter-Reformation and a means by which the Catholic Church sought to re-establish and strengthen its position amongst the laity. Exorcisms were a powerful facet of said Counter-Reformation miracles,[99] and this was recognised by those who advocated the cessationist doctrine. For Deacon and Walker, the association between exorcism and propaganda was abundantly clear, not just for Catholics but also for potentially divisive factions within the Church of England. They

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[97] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 326
[98] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 169-170
[99] Alexandra Walsham, 'Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (2003), pp. 779-815 (p. 781)

argued that the only way to counter the potential exploitation of exorcism was to stop the practice completely,

> For had not these preposterous practises with a prouident circumspection beene warily preuented in time: surely, the vulgar sort [...] with one mouth (as it were) haue cried foorth thus, M. Darel, M. Darell, he is […] the onely Diuiner of signes and of woonders: his ministerie shall haue my onely applause.[100]

The power of the public appeal of dispossession had the potential to cause a fissure within the Church of England that could destabilise it and leave it vulnerable to Catholic resurgence. By denying the possibility of possession in their own time, Deacon and Walker sought to rob it of its power to entice the faithful away from the Protestant faith. There was no ambiguity in their position because they believed that it was this approach that most effectively guarded against the development of confusion and factions. Maintaining a united stance that stood in direct opposition to the Catholic practice of exorcism was seen as essential at a time when the Church of England needed to maintain homogeneity against the Counter-Reformation.

Deacon and Walker expanded upon the point that dispossession was not a feature of contemporary faith by tackling the scriptural reference (Mark 16:17) that specifies it as a sign that will accompany all believers. Their response is to argue that the ability to drink deadly poison without harm is also amongst the gifts promised, and yet no-one would claim to have this. Indeed, they challenge the advocates of dispossession to an 'experimentall demonstration of [the ability to drink poison without harm] first: and we

[100] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. [12]

wil the rather beleeue you in all the rest'.[101] Drawing upon the aspect of cessationism that restricts all miraculous undertakings to the past, they argue that the instructions given in this passage were not a perpetual instruction intended for future generations, but rather that they were relevant only to that particular case at that particular time. They state that

> The extraordinarie power of casting out diuels, was peculiarly appropriated to Christ himselfe, and his owne disciples: therefore, the said extraordinarie power doth not ordinarily appertaine to any ordinarie ministerie succeeding that primitiue age. And, if no extraordinarie power for expelling the actuall possession of diuels remayneth perpetuall: then, neither the actuall possession it selfe remaineth perpetuall.[102]

However, Darrel argued that there is no record of the apostles using such means to dispossess later in the Bible: therefore the words of Jesus must not have been meant for them but rather must have been directed at those who followed.[103]

Indeed, Darrel used the apparent continuance of possession into post-Biblical times, as related by Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, to support the

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[101] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 169

[102] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 170. See also p. 179: 'I prooue it directly, from a proportionable respect of the two maine endes of such a possession, namely, the declaration of Christs Deitie, & the confirmation of his glorious Gospell: both which two endes are determined long since, and therefore, the extraordinarie possession of diuels which were especially for those two ends, it also is vndoubtedly ceased.'

[103] 'Beesides, if neither we are to haue any vse of fasting and prayer in these actions, nor the *Apostles* ever vsed them in casting out diuels (at least we neuer reade that they did) how might the Church reape profit of this instruction? Did our Saviour giue precepts that were vaine and superfluous? Or was this instruction proper to that one action and neuer to come in vse afterwards?' John Darrel, *A Suruey of Certaine Dialogical Discourses: written by Iohn Deacon, and Iohn Walker, concerning the Doctrine of Possession and Dispossession of Diuels. Wherein is manifested the palpable ignorance and dangerous errors of the discoursers, and what according to proportion of God his truth, every christian is to hold in these poyntes*. ([England?], s.n., 1602), p. 60

possibility of contemporary cases.[104] However, Deacon and Walker argued that even if miracles had occurred in the times referred to, that period need not be extended to their own age. This argument echoes that of Fulke, who argued that whilst one could accept the truth of some of the miracles reported by Augustine and others, this did not then mean all those reported in 'Popishe Legendes' were true as well. He also stated that the miracles recorded by the Church Fathers were merely reports, and were not intended to validate any extraneous doctrines, and so did not pose the same threat that Catholic miracles do.[105] Deacon and Walker expand upon this, arguing that whilst these writers report instances of possession, none of them claimed to have carried out exorcisms themselves, and therefore it is more than possible that they were 'deceiued by some false supposall of an actuall possession pretended by others'. They also argued that some of these alleged cases of possession might have actually been due to 'sundrie sorts of diseases'. Therefore these accounts were basically unreliable.[106] In this way, Deacon and Walker built upon the existing foundations of cessationism, calling into question all extra-Biblical cases of possession, and essentially restricting it to the pages of Scripture.

However, the issue in the Darrel controversy was not whether or not miracles had ceased. As mentioned above, Darrel also subscribed to the cessationist doctrine, but he denied that dispossession by prayer and fasting was a miraculous act. He maintained that just as blindness, deafness and other sicknesses still occurred as in biblical times, so too did possession. Jesus and the disciples were able to cure these natural afflictions

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[104] John Darrel, *The Replie of Iohn Darrell, to the Answer of Iohn Deacon, and Iohn Walker, concerning the Doctrine of the Possession and Dispossession of Demoniakes [i.e. to their "Summarie Answere to al the Material Points in any of Master Darel his bookes"]* ([England?], s.n., 1602), pp. 168-169

[105] Fulke, *Popish heretickes confuted*, p. 194

[106] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 171-172

through miraculous means; in the post-apostolic era they were cured through natural, medicinal means. In the same way, whilst Jesus and the disciples cured possession through an extraordinary miraculous act, that is, 'by a word, or commaunde to caste the diuell out',[107] now it could be cured through the 'ordinary' means of prayer and fasting.[108] He argued that although biblical exorcism was miraculous, possession itself is not miraculous; therefore it still occurred, and a cure must still exist. He maintained that 'the expulsion of Sathan by praier, or fasting and praier is no miracle, because it is brought to passe by meanes ordained to that ende, euen the instant praiers of the seruantes of God, somtime long continued in humiliation of fasting, for what soeuer is brought to pass by meanes appoynted is no miracle.'[109] Deacon and Walker refuted this position, arguing that:

> the actuall possession of diuels neuer was, nor is now any ordinarie or natural infirmitie, but an extraordinarie torment, actually inflicted vpon some, by the extraordinarie power of the diuel, and therefore neuer yet was nor is now anie waies curable by ordinarie or naturall meanes, but, by an extraordinarie and supernaturall worke of God. So then, howsoeuer your selfe would seeme to make the actuall possession of diuels (in these daies of the Gospel) but an ordinarie, or naturall disease, and the supposed cure thereof by fasting and praier, to be now but an ordinarie and naturall remedie, perpetually establisht by God in his Church: yet in verie deed and in truth, the disease it selfe, and the cure also thereof by such meanes effected, are both of them extraordinarie and

[107] Darrel, *True narration*, p. 29
[108] Darrel, *Breife Narration*, sigs. Biiij[v]-C[v]; *Brief Apologie*, p. 32ff; *Apologie*, fol. 14; 'Doctrin of Possession', p. 29
[109] Darrel, *True narration*, p. 60

> supernaturall matters, and so by consequence, a miracle surmounting the compasse of all ordinarie and naturall causes.[110]

Deacon and Walker argued that the only means by which demons were dispossessed was by the supernatural power of God, and so dispossession must, in every case, be classed as a miracle.[111] They denied the distinction between 'miraculum' and 'mirandum', arguing that this was merely a 'new-coyned Logicke' and 'lying distinctions' devised to provide a solution to the tension between cessationism and the alleged continued incidents of possession and dispossession.[112] But Darrel's dispossessions could not be referred to by the term 'mirandum' because the dispossessing of demons could only be seen as a miracle:

> this your supposed action wrought at Mahgnitton [Nottingham], if it were in such sort effected, as you beare vs in hand: then surely (howsoeuer you would cunningly suppresse the appearance thereof by your new coyned distinction of mirandum and miraculum) the same vndoubtedly it was a true miracle. And that therefore, either you must vtterly disclaime the whole action it selfe, as a meere sophisticall practize of some: or acknowledge (at least) that you effected a miracle. Which (we told you) you might in no wise auouch: because the working of miracles was long since determined.[113]

Deacon and Walker therefore wished to make the act of dispossession undisputedly incompatible with the cessationist doctrine, making it impossible to adhere to both at the same time.

Deacon and Walker's treatment of the issue of 'miraculum' versus 'mirandum'

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[110] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 175
[111] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 311
[112] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 312, 314
[113] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 345

is distinguishable from that of Harsnett's in his *Discovery*, in that Harsnett was less concerned with the supposed difference between the two, and more with the effect they had upon observers. He states that 'both terms spring from one root of wonder or marvel: an effect which a thing strangely done doth procure in the minds of the beholders, as being above the reach of nature and reason.'[114] For Harsnett, it was less important to determine the precise category exorcism fit into; rather, it was important to ensure that it was tightly controlled because of its potentially powerful hold over an audience. However, for Deacon and Walker, it was important categorically to clear up any misconceptions about the supernatural and by denying the category of 'mirandum', distinct from 'miraculum', they essentially restricted the role of the supernatural in the early modern world.

Interestingly, it seems that the use of the term 'mirandum' to describe a wonder, versus an actual miracle, did gain some currency following the controversy. For example, in his work refuting the Jesuit priest Robert Bellarmine's argument that miracles had continued throughout the ages following the apostles, Samuel Collins, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, stated that one could question the examples Bellarmine gives (in this case, the report of Christian soldiers under Marcus Aurelius successfully appealing for rain) because 'some would doubt, whether to call [the incident] a miracle or no, (a mirandum rather).'[115] In a sermon on Galatians, Anthony

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[114] Harsnet, *Discovery*, sigs. A4(r-v)

[115] Samuel Collins, *Epphata to F.T., or, The defence of the Right Reuerend Father in God, the Lord Bishop of Elie, Lord High-Almoner and Priuie Counsellour to the Kings Most Excellent Maiestie concerning his answer to Cardinall Bellarmines apologie, against the slaunderous cauills of a namelesse adioyner, entitling his booke in euery page of it, A discouerie of many fowle absurdities, falsities, lyes, &c. : wherein these things cheifely are discussed, (besides many other incident), 1. The popes false primacie, clayming by Peter, 2. Invocation of saints, with worship of creatures, and faith in them, 3. The supremacie of kings both in temporall and ecclesiasticall matters and causes, ouer all states and persons, &c. within their realmes and dominions* ([Cambridge]: Cantrell Legge, printer

Burgess, a Puritan minister who was active in the Cromwellian ecclesiastical commission, talks of God's saving power and states that 'although we do not use to call it a Miracle, yet it is Mirandum, a wonderfull thing.'[116] Peter Sterry, another preacher close to Cromwell, stated in a sermon that 'Divines distinguish between Mirandum, and Miraculum, a thing to be admired, and a Miracle. That is to be admired, which is unusuall, or unknowne; which proceeds from some unwonted, or undiscovered cause in nature. That onely is a Miracle, which is above Nature, which transcends the course, and power of Nature; which hath the Divine Nature putting forth it selfe in the vigour of its abstracted Being.'[117] Finally, when discussing the mystery of the Incarnation, Thomas Watson (d. 1686), a Puritan minister who was ejected as a result of the 1662 Act of Uniformity, stated that 'it was not only mirandum, but miraculum. There was nothing within the sphere of natural causes to produce it.'[118] Although none of these texts deal with the issue of possession, they all utilise the terms 'miraculum' and

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to the Vniversitie of Cambridge, 1617), p. 442. For Collins, see Nicholas W.S. Cranfield, 'Samuel Collins (1576-1651) in *ODNB* < http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5950?docPos=1> [accessed April 21 2011]

[116] Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual refining: or A treatise of grace and assurance Wherein are handled, the doctrine of assurance. The use of signs in self-examination. How true graces may be distinguished from counterfeit. Several true signs of grace, and many false ones. The nature of grace under divers Scripture notions or titles, as regeneration, the new-creature, the heart of flesh, vocation, sanctification, &c. Many chief questions (occasionally) controverted between the orthodox and the Arminians. As also many cases of conscience. Tending to comfort and confirm saints. Undeceive and convert sinners. Being CXX sermons preached and now published by Anthony Burgess sometime fellow of Emanuel Colledge in Cambridge, and now pastor of the church of Sutton-Coldfield in Warwickshire* (London: A. Miller for Thomas Underhill, 1652), p. 255. For Burgess, see E.C. Vernon, 'Anthony Burgess (d. 1664)' in *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3973?docPos=1> [accessed April 21 2011]

[117] Peter Sterry, *The teachings of Christ in the soule. Opened in a sermon before the Right Honble House of Peers, in Covent-garden-Church, upon the solemne day of their monthly fast, March 29. 1648. / By Peter Sterry, M.A. sometimes fellow of Emanuel Colledge in Cambridge: and now preacher of the Gospel in London. Published by order of that House* (London: R. Dawlman, 1648), p. 29. For Sterry see Nabil Matar, 'Peter Sterry (1613–1672)' in *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26416> [accessed April 20 2011]

[118] Thomas Watson, *The Christian's charter shewing the priviledges of a believer* (London: T.R. & E.M. for Ralph Smith, 1654), p. 156. For Watson see Barry Till, 'Thomas Watson (d. 1686)' in *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28867?docPos=3> [accessed April 23 2011]

'mirandum' in the way that Darrel proposed. It is also notable that all of these ministers, with the exception of Collins, were Puritans, which suggests that Darrel's writings were familiar and influential amongst Puritans long after the controversy.

Deacon and Walker not only attacked Darrel's terminology: they also attacked the position that prayer and fasting was a legitimate, non-miraculous means by which a demoniac could be delivered. In their view, advocating prayer and fasting as a 'cure' for possession was the same as endorsing any other superstition because it promoted the idea of the mechanical and automatic nature of ritual, where efficacy was attributed to the act per se, rather than to the sovereign will of God. They particularly took issue with the idea that fasting was seen as a necessary addition to prayer, attacking the idea that

> the whole efficacy of that selfesame action (as your speech doth import) it depended especially, and onely vpon the extraordinary exercize of your fasting alone: […] your extraordinarie exercise of fasting, it made your prayer more powerfull, and your spirit more apt for that selfesame dispossessing of Satan: therefore, your said extraordinarie exercise of fasting, it was the onely efficient cause of that selfesame dispossessing of Satan.[119]

They saw fasting as a base, bodily exercise that had no connection to spiritual faith, making it a mechanical act, incapable of effecting dispossession.[120] In addition, they argued that possession must be seen as a supernatural affliction because there was no ordinary, human or natural cause for it.[121] Picking up on Darrel's own understanding of

[119] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 257-258
[120] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 257-258; *Summarie answere*, p. 213
[121] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 259

possession as a supernatural affliction,[122] they argued that prayer, as a natural act, could not be used to cure it:

> Yea, but the effect which folowed of that your saide naturall action, I meane, that extraordinarie dispossession of satan, it was vndoubtedly (if any at all) a supernaturall effect: and so, you absurdly conclude, that, an onely created, or meere naturall cause, it may eftsoones effect some supernaturall actions.[123]

They argued that the act of prayer itself was not sufficient for the cure of possession, because without the supernatural element, they were just words with no inherent power.[124] To therefore claim that the words were effective in an age when supernatural activity had ceased was to attribute to them some kind of inherent mechanical efficacy that was akin to magic. It was 'As if forsooth there had been secretlie inclosed within the very frame of the Exorcists words: such a magicall force or enchauntment, as tended directlie (by the onlie pronountiation thereof) to the powerfull afflicting, and fearefull tormenting of diuels.'[125]

It is clear here that Deacon and Walker were concerned about any association with the Catholic rite of exorcism, or indeed anything that could be construed as a superstitious rite. This stemmed from their belief that faith was a vital element in all the miracles recorded in the Bible. They believed that the insistence on the use of prayer and fasting actually undermined this association, because it reintroduced the idea of *ex opere operato*, whereby the act of prayer and fasting guaranteed a successful dispossession without any regard for the faith of the parties involved. They insisted that

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[122] See above, p. 118
[123] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 259
[124] *Summarie Answere*, pp. 63-64
[125] *Summarie Answere*, pp. 210-211

'no scriptures generall or special [...] teach men, that sole prayer and fasting haue any power of themselues (ex opere operato) to remoue supernaturall iudgements of God.'[126]

Drawng on the categories of faith described above,[127] they maintained that there were three types of faith: the historical faith, which was understood to be belief in the historical record of the Bible, 'without any apprehension at all of the power of God.' The second type was the miraculous faith, which led to the miracles recorded in the Bible but which had now ceased. The final type of faith was justifying faith, through which an individual obtained salvation.[128] Deacon and Walker found support for this categorisation of faith in Chrysostom's commentary on Matthew 17:20, where he states that 'these miraculous signes are not now wrought by the Church in our daies: shall we therefore conclude, that so many of the Christians as cannot possibly doe the like miracles, they are vtterly destitute of faith: God forbid we should so hardly censure the deere children of God. The iustifying faith is now present among vs: but, that faith which was called the miraculous faith, is ceased long since.'[129] Deacon and Walker argued that Darrel could not claim the efficacy of prayer and fasting without faith. However, it could not be miraculous faith, as this had ceased: this left only justifying faith. But they denied that it could be this, for this would mean that one's justification would be indicated by their ability to dispossess.[130] However, justification was not based on the ability to perform dispossession (or any miracles), but only on faith itself.

Their dismissal of prayer and fasting as a means of dispossession also relied on their understanding of prayer and what it could be legitimately used for. They argued

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[126] *Summarie Answere*, p. 188. See also, pp. 91, 157, 167, 211-212
[127] See above, pp. 256-257
[128] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 292
[129] Chrysostom on Matthew 17:20, quoted in *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 300
[130] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 296

that it could be used for two things only: 'that which onely appertaines to the glorie of his name and kingdome alone: or else, that thing especially, which (for our speciall good) we hope to obtain at the hands of our God, through the gratious prerogative of Christ his name.'[131] The first type included things like Elijah calling down fire from heaven, or the apostle's prayers for miracles. The second type referred to requests for spiritual understanding and growth of believers. Dispossession did not fall into the first category as the glory of God had already been established and people now believed by faith, not miracles; nor did it fall within the second, because possession did not occur and so people did not need to be released from it, and neither did it contribute to spiritual growth. In Deacon and Walker's view, it did not serve any valid spiritual function and so was not part of the contemporary spiritual experience.

Darrel also adhered to the idea of a miraculous faith, and he stated that the miraculous gifts promised in the Bible were intended only for those 'indewed with the miraculous faith'.[132] But he differed from Deacon and Walker as he believed that dispossession by prayer and fasting was not miraculous. Rather he saw prayer and fasting as a means of worshipping God and humbling the soul in the face of affliction and judgement. He viewed possession as a form of judgement, and therefore the act of prayer and fasting as the suitable, ordained remedy.[133] He argued that 'ther is neither scriptur nor sounde reason, which appropriateth the vse of this meaines vnto that age, or to the persons of the Apostls & others indeued with the myraculous gift, as shall be shewed heare after. I can not see whye the same meanes shoulde not stand and remaine at this day, & why fasting & praier should not be held the effectuall ordinance of christ

[131] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 290
[132] Darrel, *True narration*, p. 73
[133] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 25-26, 89-90

for the castinge out of Diuils.'[134] In Darrel's understanding, prayer and fasting served to effect the expulsion of demons, not through miraculous means, but only through humble supplication and dependence upon God.[135]

However, Deacon and Walker's dissection of prayer and its effects did present its own problems. Certainly Darrel decried the treatment of actions ordained by God in this manner, protesting that Deacon and Walker's insistence on separating prayer and fasting, and demanding an identification of which is the efficient cause of the dispossession was 'vnaswerable reason', and he was clearly outraged at the attempt to reduce prayer to its bare mechanics. For Darrel, prayer was not a natural action that could be explained with reference to its words; rather, because it consisted of the worship of God, it was beyond complete human comprehension. He could not accept the complete separation of the supernatural from prayer and the seeming conclusion that prayer was simply words that have no actual effect:

> Can you not be content to reproach me, but you must needes open your movthes against the holy worship of God? Can you finde no other cause wherefore prayer shoulde be effectuall, but onely for a noyse that is made, or for my distinct voice, or else for certain charming words? In which of these respects co[n]sisteth the power of ordinarie prayer? You must nedes answer. It consisteth in none of them. Conclude then, that ordinary praier is but lip labour.[136]

Darrel also protested against the perception of prayer and fasting as a mechanical means to an end, arguing that they were in fact a valid and 'effectuall ordinaunce of God to

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[134] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 43
[135] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 55, 60, 64-65
[136] Darrel, *Survey*, p. 58

quicken faith by, which is our onely apprehender of God his mercies'.[137] He denied that he viewed them as mere 'Opus operatum', and argued that prayer and fasting without faith was of no effect because faith made the actions effectual. Darrel's apparent bafflement regarding Deacon and Walker's treatment of prayer and fasting indicates the extent to which they had expanded on the cessationist doctrine, again highlighting how the Darrel controversy acted as a catalyst in the development of new aspects to the manner in which demonic possession was regarded. Issues such as the efficient causes of dispossession had not been placed under such scrutiny before.

Deacon and Walker also denied the Devil his power to possess, because they believed that the resurrection of Christ actually put an end to this ability of the Devil. They refer to Genesis 3:15, where God promises the serpent that 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.' This they specifically interpret as 'the actual subduing of his actual dominion', that is the power of possession.[138] They further argued, with reference to Hebrews 2:14, that Jesus' death destroyed the power of the Devil, but, as it is clear that the Devil still exists and afflicts man, it must refer to a specific type of destruction:

> Now then, howsoeuer Christ may truely be said to haue destroied the diuell: yet, this word (destruction) hath not properly any reference to the essence of satan, for, therein he liueth, and liue must for euer […] therefore, it must necessarily, and more especially be appropriated to his power of possession, which was not onely much maimed, but vtterly destroied by the death of our Sauiour: although yet we denie not, but that this

[137] Darrel, *Survey*, p. 58
[138] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 182

> vtter destruction, both may be, and is also (in some sort) vnderstood of the whole dominion and power of the diuell whatsoeuer.[139]

This argument is a somewhat novel interpretation, as previous commentators interpreted the crushing of the serpent as referring to the final victory of Christ, and subsequently his followers, over Satan, as epitomised in Jesus' triumph over death.[140] However, Deacon and Walker found further scriptural validation for their position in the fact that Paul does not explicitly refer to possession as something that Christians must guard against. For example, in Ephesians 6, where Paul urges believers to prepare for spiritual warfare by donning the armour of God, he does not mention possession as one of the tools used by the Devil to attack the faithful. For this reason, Deacon and Walker believed that it must not be a perpetual affliction.[141] However, Darrel argued that prayer was one of the instructions given by Paul in resisting the Devil, and as dispossession is conducted through prayer, it would seem that there is in fact no exclusion of possession as an affliction for future Christians.[142] This disagreement over scriptural evidence therefore highlights how vital the link to the cessationist doctrine was. By building upon a doctrine that was widely accepted, not least by the dispossessor himself, Deacon

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[139] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 185

[140] See for example Thomas Cooper, *A briefe exposition of such chapters of the olde testament as vsually are redde in the church at common praier on the Sondayes set forth for the better helpe and instruction of the vnlearned. By Thomas Cooper Bishop of Lincolne* (London: H[enrie] D[enham] for Rafe Newbery, [1573]): 'This kinde of Punishment, as it is literally vnderstanded of the Seede of the woman, and of the naturall Serpent, so mistically, and in waye of prophesie, is it to be vnderstanded of the great Serpent Satan, and the true and blessed seede of woman Christ Iesu, who in deede crushed the head of Satan and brake all the power of his kingdome. And yet is it permitted to the same Serpent, that he shall Treade vpon the heele of the seede of woman, that is, that He in the world should Persecute and trouble the professors of the name of Christ, and so much as he coulde work them Sorow, but yet not so, that he can preuayle against them, for that they haue obteyned victorie ouer him in Christ Iesu.' (p. 97). Reginald Scot also concurred with this more traditional view that the crushing of the serpent refers to the redemption of man through the death and resurrection of Christ, rather than a specific power of devil. See Scot, *Discoverie*, pp. 57-58

[141] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 224

[142] Darrel, *Survey*, pp. 53-54

and Walker made it very difficult for one to hold to the possibility of possession.

Cessationism was born out of anti-Catholicism, and its reactionary nature meant that it bred a spiritual environment that was suspicious of and hostile towards miracles as a whole. As Walsham points out, 'carrying the logic of anti-popery through to its natural conclusions thus significantly reduced the scope of spiritual agency in the physical world.'[143] However, this very association with anti-Catholicism, and the fact that the doctrine was advocated so prominently in polemical works, meant that it was necessarily hyperbolic because of the reformers' aim of discrediting Catholic miracles wholesale. On closer inspection, the perception of miracles and the role of the supernatural had been slightly more varied and nuanced prior to the Darrel controversy. So for example, writing in 1580, Fulke's main concern was to disprove Catholic miracles, not miracles wholesale. He urges the reader 'to examine all miracles, and miracle workers, by the doctrine they teache.'[144] This would inevitably render all Catholic miracles false, as the doctrines of that Church were held to be untrue, but it also left open the possibility that genuine miracles could still occur.

However, there is a noticeable increase in hostility towards miracles, and a more adamant denial of them, following the trial. The suspicion of miracles, and the concern over their potential to destabilise the Church and to lead people astray is certainly apparent.[145] In his 1603 polemical work against the Catholic Church, George Downame maintained that 'the truth of the gospell which we professe hath bin sufficiently

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[143] Walsham, *Providence*, p. 229
[144] Fulke, *Popish heretickes confuted*, p. 195
[145] The works presented here are merely a sample of references to cessationism. There are many more which I have not included that make only a passing reference to cessationism, or in which it is more of a implicit vein of thought than an explicit statement.

confirmed by the miracles of our Sauiour Christ, & of his Apostles and Disciples.'[146] He dedicated a chapter to arguing that the alleged miracles of the Catholic Church were in fact 'lying signes and wonders of Antichrist'. He argued that

> al their miracles are nothing worth: First, because they serue to confirme vntruths as shalbe shewed, & therefore are not to be regarded. Secondly, because the vaine brag of manifold miracles amo[n]g those that professe the name of Christ in these later times (wherein miracles need not for the confirmatio[n] of Gods truth, which heretofore hath bin sufficie[n]tly co[n]firmed) is so farre fro[m] being a note of the true church, as that rather it is a plaine signe of false teachers, & an euident marke of the Synagogue of Antichrist.[147]

Similarly, George Abbot, in his 1604 reply to Thomas Hill's defence of the Catholic faith, *A Quatron of Reasons*, stated: 'And if it should be excepted, that diverse of these already specified, may bee saide not to be true, because they are done to an evil end, that is, to deceive & beguile, your late Popish miracles are liable to the same exception, being whe[n] they are at their best, to winne me[n] not to Christ but to Antichrist.'[148] Again, the miracles of the Catholic church could be nothing but false because miracles 'gaue evidence to the first preaching of the Gospell, & were wrought by Christ and his disciples [...] Yet this addeth no credit to your forgeries & illusions, neither convinceth that now we are to depe[n]d on miracles. That we do not take on vs to be able to work

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[146] George Downame, *A treatise concerning Antichrist divided into two bookes, the former, proving that the Pope is Antichrist, the latter, maintaining the same assertion, against all the obiections of Robert Bellarmine, Iesuit and cardinall of the church of Rome* (London: for Cuthbert Burbie, 1603), p. 107

[147] Downame, *Treatise concerning Antichrist,* p. 107

[148] Abbot, *Reasons,* p. 245

any, we do most willingly acknowledg. We know that those daies are past'.[149] Utilising the same reasoning, Arthur Dent, when warning against being deceived by charms and spells, stated that one should never be taken in by these performances because 'the Lord doth not now vse such meanes to reueale his will vnto men: thou art therefore alway to suspect it to be of Sathan.'[150] Apparent miracles were to be regarded as marks of the Devil, not as marks of the true church because true miracles no longer occurred.[151]

Critically, the argument was also used to undermine the idea of transubstantiation. William Attersoll argued that

> Againe, after the Gospell was plentifully confirmed and had taken roote, and the Apostles were dead, such Myracles ceased, as experience teacheth. Besides, the holy supper is an ordinary Sacrament of the Church: but euery miracle is extraordinary, or else it is no Myracle: so that vnlesse we will turne ordinary into extraordinary, and make miracles as common as Sacramentes, we must remoue miracles from the supper. Furthermore, if the real presence were wrought by a miracle, euery priest should be a worker of miracles and wonders, and an ordinary calling shold alwaies be accompanied with extraordinary gifts. But their office of priesthood hath not this gift […] generally giuen vnto it. Wherefore, miracles being now ceased, are not found in the supper.[152]

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[149] Abbot, *Reasons*, pp. 261-262
[150] Arthur Dent, *Christes miracles deliuered in a sermon. By Arthvr Dent, preacher of the word of God, at South-Shoobery in Essex* (London: G.E. for John Wright, 1608), p. [26]
[151] Quantin, pp. 136-137
[152] William Attersoll, *The badges of Christianity. Or, A treatise of the sacraments fully declared out of the word of God Wherein the truth it selfe is proued, the doctrine of the reformed churches maintained, and the errors of the churches of Rome are euidently conuinced: by pervsing wherof the discreet reader may easily perceiue, the weak and vnstable grounds of the Roman religion, and the iust causes of our lawfull separation. Diuided into three bookes: 1. Of the sacraments in generall. 2. Of Baptisme. 3. Of the Lords Supper. Hereunto is annexed a corollarie or necessary aduertisement, shewing the intention of this present worke, opening the differences among vs about the question of the supper, discouering the idolatry and diuisions of the popish clergy* ([London]: W. Iaggard, 1606), p. 316

A feat such as transubstantiation could only be classified as a miracle, but as these had ceased, transubstantiation was also impossible.

It seems that prior to the Darrel controversy, references made to exorcism in the light of the cessationist doctrine were aimed primarily at the superstitious nature of the Catholic rite of exorcism. As stated above, Bishop Jewel's statement concerning the expulsion of demons was aimed specifically at the Catholic office of exorcist. Certainly Foxe had no qualms about attempting dispossession through prayer and fasting, as demonstrated in the Robert Brigges case.[153] With regard to Fulke's assertion that 'Neither is there any such ordinary function in the Church of God: that men should have power to cast out devils',[154] Darrel argues that he was 'speaking against an ordinary function in the Church to cast forth deuils, [and] mea[n]eth a peculyar office of Exorcists, as it is in the popish Church'.[155] This is a possible reading, as Fulke does specify that 'Popish Exorcists, neither have they authority of God, nor power to cast out devils.' Moreover, Fulke seems to take particular issue with the use of the sign of the cross in exorcisms, rather than with the possibility of dispossession per se, which he in fact seems to suggest is possible through prayer and fasting: 'For the name of Christ is sufficient, and needeth none assistance of the signe of the crosse to cast out deuils, where Christe hath giuen that power and faith.' He argues that the failure of the disciples to cure the demon-possessed boy in Matthew 17 was not 'for want of the signe of the crosse, but for want of faith, which must be obteyned at the handes of God by

[153] For Jewel, see above, p. 23; for Brigges see, p. 74
[154] William Fulke, *Confutation of the Rhemish Testament* (1617, written 1589) (New York, NY: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1834), p. 66 (referenced in *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 335)
[155] Darrel, *Survey*, p. 74

prayer and fasting'.[156] Interestingly, Fulke defends the dispossession of Anne Mylner by John Lane, stating that it 'is as good as the best done by Augustine, and yet for mine owne parte, I thinke it was no miracle, but a naturall worke, the mayde perhaps being affected with the mother or some such like disease.'[157] In other words, he personally did not regard the incident as a miracle, but what is significant is the fact that he presented this as his personal opinion, and did not make reference to a doctrinal principle that would make it undoubtedly the case. Similarly, William Charke, when defending Luther and Calvin against allegations that they attempted miracles through exorcism states that 'If M. Luther or Caluine through fayth, and the earnest prayers of the Churche, haue brought reliefe to any that haue beene either possessed or assaulted, they did it not as miracle workers, but through Gods assistance, without taking vpon them any such power.'[158] So it seems that prior to the Darrel controversy, the primary target of cessationist thinking was Catholic miracles: with regard to possession, it was the rite of exorcism that was the target for criticism. However, after the Darrel controversy, there seems to be a more categorical denial of both miracles in general, and the phenomenon of possession.

After the Darrel controversy, the assertion that exorcism was just a propaganda tool was easier to maintain because of the essential ban on dispossession that resulted from the trial, embodied in Canon 72, which forbade the performance of dispossession

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[156] Fulke, *Popish heretickes confuted*, p. 144
[157] Fulke, *Popish heretickes confuted*, p. 75. For Anne Mylner, see above, pp. 58-65
[158] William Charke, *An answeare for the time, vnto that foule, and wicked Defence of the censure, that was giuen vpon M. Charkes booke, and Meredith Hanmers Contayning a maintenance of the credite and persons of all those woorthie men: namely, of M. Luther, Caluin, Bucer, Beza, and the rest of those godlie ministers of Gods worde, whom he, with a shamelesse penne most slanderously hath sought to deface: finished sometime sithence: and now published for the stay of the Christian reader till Maister Charkes booke come foorth* (London: Thomas Dawson and Tobie Smith, 1583), p. 92[v]

without a license. For example, Abbott asserted that possession and exorcism only seemed to occur at the convenience of Catholics. He wrote how

> You mutter much of an holy annointed Priest, that he by exorcizing can cast out Devils: but we wonder that these Devils in Engla[n]d can no where truly be found, but in Papists[...] Such artificers can haue counterfeits of their owne choosing, and taught for the purpose. These keepe in use the olde order of stage-playes, to have a Devill and a foole in them alwaies. But it is no marveile if our Priestes familiars, being put in by one sleight into their abused patients, can be plucked out by another. [159]

This emphasises such authors' belief that the whole phenomenon was merely a tool of propaganda used deceitfully by the Catholic Church falsely to win converts. The ability to dispossess was therefore seen not as a mark of the true church, but rather as evidence of deception; therefore, the absence of dispossessions in the Protestant church meant that it was free from such fraudulent activities, because it was in fact the true church.

In any case, for cessationists, one important caveat remained: the freedom and sovereignty of God to perform miracles whenever he chooses. Darrel, who asserted that any miracle 'done by the ministery of men are now ceased, for that the miraculous faith by which they were done neither is at this present, nor hath bene these many ages imparted to any', nevertheless reserved the right of God to perform miracles directly, without the use of man. He states that 'the Lord hath reserued this liberty to himselfe, by extraordinary power to reueale his iudgements to the world, when and where it shall seeme best vnto him.'[160] So although there seems to be widespread acceptance of the cessationist doctrine, it must be noted that there was an important exception. Those who

[159] Abbot, *Reasons,* pp. 262-263
[160] Darrel, *Survey*, pp. 68-69

espoused the doctrine could not state that miracles were impossible, because God always had the freedom to do as he wished, including performing miracles in a time when they were exceedingly rare.

Darrel's purpose in appealing to this caveat was to maintain the possibility of possession, which was a supernatural manifestation of God's judgement. He wanted to argue that God could still inflict this upon believers even though miracles have generally ceased. Writing after the Darrel controversy, Abbott also refers to God's freedom to perform miracles, stating that

> We know that those daies are past: although God do not so restraine himselfe, but that (the praiers of his servants interceding) he sometimes suffereth strange things to be done. But we ca[n]not presume vpo[n] it; since we haue no warrant for it, out of the word of God.[161]

So he could not deny that God could act miraculously if he chose: but he wished to emphasise that miracles should not be expected. The emphasis is different to that of earlier writers such as Fulke who urge discernment and assessment of miracles; for Abbot the inclination is towards dismissal, thus demonstrating how the cessationist doctrine had become the default lens through which the supernatural was viewed. Deacon and Walker's work must be seen as a key contribution to this shift because it built upon existing cessationist thought and its relation to possession whilst also extending its scope to include the issue of dispossession by prayer and fasting by maintaining that this was a miraculous act, and so disproving its contemporary occurrence.

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[161] Abbot, *Reasons,* pp. 261-262

In summary, Deacon and Walker's work aimed to undermine the possibility of dispossession based even on apparently non-superstitious and biblically appointed means of prayer and fasting, by maintaining that any attempts to dispossess must be miraculous. This unequivocal association between dispossession and the miraculous meant that dispossession in their own age was made incompatible with the cessationist doctrine and therefore impossible. The Darrel controversy provided a forum in which the cessationist doctrine could be promoted, with even Darrel subscribing to its fundamental principles. As a result, post-Darrel writings seem much more straightforwardly dismissive of miracles than those that preceded the trial. Whilst Canon 72 did not explicitly deny the possibility of possession on doctrinal grounds, it did build upon this suspicion of the phenomenon and at the same time shifted the bias towards scepticism regarding its contemporary occurrence. This was aptly conveyed by Harsnett, the establishment's spokesperson on the matter, as demonstrated above. Although he avoided detailed discussion of the intricacies of cessationism and its relation to possession, he did hint at a link between the two, and it was this that Deacon and Walker to built upon.

By promoting a view that miracles were essentially impossible, or at least exceedingly rare, the cessationist doctrine created a spiritual environment where miracles were not to be expected in everyday spiritual life. In this way, they became increasingly marginalised as a feature of early modern spirituality. In the same way, Deacon and Walker's argument associating dispossession through prayer and fasting with a miraculous act created an atmosphere of reservation towards the practice. Through arguing against possession on the basis of the cessationist doctrine, they also

expanded on this doctrine itself, laying out a more detailed exposition of concepts such as categories of faith, the place of agency and the role of the supernatural. At the same time, their work also leant credence and gravitas to the doctrine, thus further cementing its role as a fundamental facet of English Protestantism. Theirs is not primarily a polemical work; although it was borne out of the Darrel controversy, it must also be seen as an expository work of demonology that added to the existing body of demonological thought. By creating a case that fitted plausibly into the accepted doctrine of the cessation of miracles, Deacon and Walker made disbelief in contemporary possession not just politically expedient, but also theologically persuasive. They thus made scepticism towards possession a feasible position for early modern English thinkers.

Chapter Six:
Possession or Obsession?

My investigation into Deacon and Walker's work has so far demonstrated how they were able to utilise and extend existing natural philosophical, medical and theological arguments to build a case against belief firstly, in possession as understood as the internal presence of a demon within the soul or body, and secondly, in contemporary demonic possession. However, their redefinition of biblical possession and denial of contemporary possession was not the only way in which they affected the way in which demonic affliction was understood. As mentioned in Chapter Four, they proposed the new category of 'obsession' as a valid form of spiritual assault. It is this term 'obsession' that can be used to track the impact that Deacon and Walker's arguments had on demonological thought in early modern England. The concept of obsession was a vital part of Deacon and Walker's exposition of contemporary demonic assault, and the fact that the term appears repeatedly in works following the Darrel controversy indicates that the concept did find traction amongst those concerned with such matters.[1] This chapter will demonstrate the way in which the concept of

[1] A search on *EEBO* reveals only two usages of the term 'obsession' before the Darrel controversy, and neither of these relates to demonic torment. In the first case it is used in *The precepts of the excellent clerke [and] graue philosopher Plutarche for the preseruation of good healthe* (London: Richard Grafton, 1543) to describe a symptom of physical illness, particularly as a result of overeating. [p. 48]. In the second case, it is used by Edward Hall to mean 'siege' in *The vnion of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke, beeyng long in continual discension for the croune of this noble realme with all the actes done in bothe the tymes of the princes, bothe of the one linage and of the other, beginnyng at the tyme of kyng Henry the fowerth, the first aucthor of this deuision, and so successiuely proceadyng to the reigne of the high and prudent prince kyng Henry the eight, the vndubitate flower and very heire of both the sayd linages.* ([London: Richard Grafton, 1548]), fol. xlix[v] The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the earliest usage of the term 'obsession' to the late fifteenth century, when it meant the act of besieging a place, or a siege. The word derives from the Latin *obsession* (a siege), from the verb *obsidere* (to surround in a hostile way). <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/129901?redirectedFrom=obsession&> [accessed March 15 2013]

'obsession' entered into early modern English demonological thought more broadly, and how it affected the way in which demonic affliction was perceived following the Darrel affair.[2]

Deacon and Walker defined 'obsession' as

> some certeine predeterminate abilitie, facultie, inclination of [the Devil's] spirituall nature, for the more powerfull enabling of his restlesse endeuours, and insatiable desires to worke our daily destruction: wherein he eftsoones assaulteth, circumuenteth, encloseth, inuironeth & besiegeth the seruants of God a fresh, with a purposed mind to deuoure them quite, were they not very mightilie protected by an inuincible power of the Lord. And this his said power of obsession, consisteth especially, either in an outward assaulting and vexing: or in an inward suggesting and tempting at least.[3]

'Outward assaulting' was defined as

> all those their externall allurements, incumbrances, molestations, and griefes whatsoeuer; wherewith the whole nature of man is wonderfully distressed, disquieted, and vexed. Partly by worldly auctoritie, examples, promises, compulsions, profites, pleasures, and so foorth: and partlie by fleshly affections, inclinations, dispositions, delights, attempts, and carnall practises whatsoeuer they be.[4]

It therefore makes sense that Deacon and Walker would use the term to convey their concept of demonic affliction because they believed the demons outwardly attacked, or besieged, the person.

[2] William Barlow, in his disputation at his commencement from Cambridge in 1599 (about two years after the *Dialogicall discourses* was written) argued that 'In these dayes there is no Ordinary possession' and it seems he attempted to make some distinction between the concepts of 'possession' and 'obsession': 'he would haue no possessio[n] (but obsession) in Christes time.' (Anon, *The trial of Maist. Dorrell*, p. 82). However, his exact definition of these terms is not known. I think the fact that Deacon and Walker clearly defined their concept of obsession in print, and the fact that it is this definition that can be found in later works demonstrates that it was indeed their concept of obsession that was influential.

[3] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 226

[4] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 227

The biblical examples given of this were Jesus' hunger whilst in the desert and of the Devil tempting him with the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8); the torments that befell Job; David tempted by Bathsheba; and the Israelites indulging in idolatry. These were external because they were situations created by the Devil that affected the body and mind.

Internal affliction (that was experienced within the mind and soul) was understood to be 'all those the internall allurements of satan whatsoeuer, wherewith he endeuoureth to drawe mens mindes from their dutifull obedience to God: by daring or thrusting into them, all trecherous and diuelish deuises, yea, and by kindling within them, all vngodly motions, affections, lustes, and desires.'[5] They referenced James 1:14 -15, which states that 'each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin: and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death.' Therefore, inward obsession was extreme temptation that could irrevocably corrupt the soul. Demons could also use false miracles and lying prophets to lure men away from the truth of God and also used the affliction to make men doubt their own salvation. In this sense, one can see how 'obsession' was very much a spiritual affliction that tested one's faith.

Deacon and Walker saw obsession as the direct result of 'the ignorance of God' and that men were led 'through their own ignorance, and hardnes of hart […] to worke all manner of vncleannes, yea, euen with insatiable, and greedie affections'.[6] A protection from and solution for this affliction was 'the affectuall working power of the

[5] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 227
[6] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 228

word, being preached powerfully among them'.[7] Therefore, Deacon and Walker saw obsession as resulting from sinfulness, lack of spiritual vigilance, and an ignorance of the Word and true doctrine. In this way, they shifted the focus away from the dramatic physical torments witnessed in previous cases of possession, instead focussing upon the way in which the Devil targeted the mind and the soul.

David Harley is really the only scholar who has dealt with the use of the terms 'obsession' and 'possession' and the distinction between them, in this case with reference to the Salem witch trials.[8] In his study, he emphasises the need to distinguish between different types of affliction as understood by contemporaries. The understanding of possession he outlines is that of Nathanael Homes, who argued that those who were wholly wicked suffered from possession, which affected both body and soul.[9] Those who were slightly less wicked would suffer from obsession, where the Devil tormented only the body. Obsession often led to suicide attempts. Last, and more commonplace, was temptation, where sinful images were presented to the imagination.[10] Harley also demonstrates how the terms 'bewitchment' and 'possession' were not

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[7] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 228

[8] Brian P. Levack does recognise that there was a distinction between internal and external demonic assault, but he does not clarify that the specific term of 'obsession' to denote external assault was formulated by Deacon and Walker and was only used in this sense after the Darrel controversy. He therefore applies the categories somewhat anachronistically to medieval and pre-Darrel cases. See Brian P. Levack, *The Devil Within: Possession & Exorcism in the Christian West* (New Haven, MA: Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 16-17

[9] Nathanael Homes, *Plain dealing or the cause and cure of the present evils of the times. Wherein you have set forth, 1 The dreadful decension of the Devill. 2 His direfull wrath. 3 The woeful woe to the wicked world. 4 The mystery of all. 5 The history and computation of times devolving all upon this age, and downward. 6 The art of resisting temptations, in this house of temptation. In a sermon before John Kendrick Lord Mayor of London, upon the Lords day after the great eclipse (as the astrologers would have had it.) Upon occasion whereof, something was spoken touching astrology* (London: for R.I., 1652), pp. 78-82

[10] David Harley, 'Explaining Salem: Calvinist Psychology and the Diagnosis of Possession', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (1996), pp. 307-330 (p. 311). Harley notes that this 'tripartite' understanding of the Devil's operations was maintained by nonconformists such as Richard Gilpin after the Restoration.

synonymous, and actually became mutually exclusive terms, incompatible with each other. Harley argues that the association of possession with witchcraft helped undermine the case for proving the validity of witchcraft. If the person claiming to be enchanted was actually possessed and their testimony could not be relied upon, then there really was no evidence with which to convict a witch. Increasingly, possession, rather than bewitchment, became the preferred diagnosis for unusual behaviour. In this way, the possibility of possession was strengthened.[11]

This conclusion contrasts with the assessment of what happened in early modern England by D.P. Walker, who sees the association of possession with witchcraft as actually undermining the possibility of both. He argues that because witchcraft trials required proof of the witch's activity, and insofar as the only proof was the behaviour of the demoniac, 'sooner or later some expert, medical, legal, ecclesiastical […] will examine the demoniac and conclude either that he or she is suffering from a natural disease, or is counterfeiting.'[12] Walker's view depends upon an anachronistic understanding of possession: as historians, we 'know' that the demoniac was not really possessed, and so at some point contemporaries would also realise this 'fact.' However, Harley's assessment is more convincing because it maintains the integrity of demonic torment, whether as possession or obsession, as a valid category of understanding bizarre behaviour, whilst also considering the complexities and problems it posed when associated with witchcraft. This association did not lead to a wholesale rejection of possession or witchcraft, but rather had the effect of separating the two and defining the lines between them more clearly. The category of 'obsession' offered by Deacon and

[11] Harley, pp. 324-327.
[12] Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, p. 79

Walker did just this: it presented a concept of demonic affliction that had nothing to do with witchcraft but could be understood purely within the framework of individual piety and spirituality.

Several examples may be given of how the term and the concept were absorbed into broader early modern English demonological thought. There is some evidence of a direct adoption of Deacon and Walker's arguments. For example, in February and March 1603, Henoch Clapham and Dr Giles Thompson (Dean of Windsor) both preached sermons in which they expressed doubt that possession occurred 'nowe adayes'.[13] In a sermon published in 1612, Thomas Taylor, the Puritan preacher and former Cambridge fellow, described those who were possessed in the Bible as being 'most miserably captiuated, tormented, and vexed by the deuil', and stated that they were 'oppressed by the deuill'.[14] This suggests an external assault by the Devil, rather than his internal presence within the demoniac as it echoes Deacon and Walker's assertion that possession only indicated that demons 'exercise in [demoniacs], the force and effect of their malice by oppressing and vexing them, or by haling them headlong into sinne at their pleasures'.[15]

There is also evidence of the influence of the idea of 'obsession' even amongst writers who believed in the possibility of contemporary possession. The Puritan clergyman Thomas Draxe discussed the threat posed by the Devil and the way he

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[13] MacDonald, p. xxiii.
[14] Thomas Taylor, *Iaphets first publique perswasion into Sems tents, or, Peters sermon which was the first generall calling of the gentiles preached before Cornelius / expounded in Cambridge by Thomas Taylor, and now published for the further use of the Church of God.* (Cambridge: Cantrell Legge, Printer to the University of Cambridge, 1612), pp. 97 & 101
[15] *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 127

affected believers in *The Christian armorie*.[16] He included obsession amongst these afflictions, and he described this condition as being 'outwardly tormented by Satan'.[17] However, he also maintained that possession still occurred, and that those who were possessed had a 'substantiall inherence of him in their bodies'.[18] However, it is also interesting that he was explicitly addressing the objection that 'the miraculous and extraordinary gift of eiecting euill spirits out of the possessed, is now altogether ceased, Ergo, there is now no reall and bodily possession.'[19] This suggests that this argument, formulated by Deacon and Walker, had found some favour amongst the learned.

Yet for Draxe, possession was the only feasible explanation for bizarre symptoms such as the speaking of foreign or unknown languages and the ability to 'giue notice of secrets, and of things done farre off.'[20] He also maintained that although 'the miraculous gift of casting [demons] out (by miracle) be ceased', prayer and fasting were sufficient remedies for internal possession.[21] The distinction was with regard to the mechanics: obsession was when the demons afflicted the individual without entering into the body, and possession was when they physically entered into it and assumed control of its faculties. However, he also stated that 'possession by satan onely annoieth the body, which is as it were the outward wall or the circumference; but he can neuer

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[16] Draxe's Puritan sensibilities are evident in the fact that he translated the works of William Perkins, so that they could be published in Geneva. See Stephen Wright, 'Thomas Draxe (d. 1618/19)' in *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8040> [accessed November 9 2008]
[17] Thomas Draxe, *The Christian armorie wherein is contained all manner of spirituall munition, fit for secure Christians to arme themselues withall against Satans assaults, and all other kind of crosses, temptations, troubles, and afflictions: contrived in two bookes, and handled pithily and plainly by way of questions and answers... ; hereunto is adioined a table of all the principall heads and branches comprised in each chapter of the whole treatise.* (London: William Hall, for Iohn Stepneth, 1611), p. 177
[18] Draxe, *Christian armorie*, pp. 178-179
[19] Draxe, *Christian armorie*, p. 176
[20] Draxe, *Christian armorie*, p. 175
[21] Draxe, *Christian armorie*, pp. 176-177

win or ouercome the castles of our hearts, nor attaine vnto the center of our conscience.'[22] So whilst the Devil was within the body and had control of it, he could not enter or control the soul.

Draxe believed that 'sinne [was] the meritorious cause of [possession]' and that it was 'the demonstration and execution of Gods iustice'.[23] This illustrates why possession would be of particular relevance to Puritan spirituality. Possession was seen as God's punishment for sin, and as such served as a potent illustration of the effects of sin, and as an effective didactic instrument. This is further evident in the fact that this exposition regarding possession occurs in a treatise aimed at advising Christians on how to withstand the assaults of the Devil. Draxe's recommendations for strengthening oneself against diabolical attacks, including possession, are all aimed at encouraging a more pious life. Christians are called to:

> attend vnto, and consult the Scriptures, […] make vse of the treatises and volumes of godly learned men [and] wée must in our afflictions and distresses, find out, confesse and bewaile, our particular sinnes, and earnestly entreat God, for Christ his sake to pardon them; for they are the meritorious causes of all our miseries.[24]

In particular, he urged those suffering from possession to pray to God for deliverance whilst seeking solace from the Bible, and 'ioyne practises of good works and newnes of life, and then all things will goe well with them in the end.'[25] In other words, a conscious effort to lead a more religious life would protect them from the affliction in the future; *ergo* the affliction was a result of deficiencies in their spiritual life.

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[22] Draxe, *Christian armorie*, p. 180
[23] Draxe, *Christian armorie*, p. 175-176
[24] Draxe, *Christian armorie*, p. 163-164
[25] Draxe, *Christian armorie*, p. 181

It is evident that the work of Deacon and Walker had an impact on Draxe's thinking about demonic assaults. Firstly, even though he did not accept that possession no longer occurred and did believe that demons were present within the body during possession, he was still willing to adopt the concept of obsession as a valid category of demonic torment. In interpreting it as the external workings of the demons, as opposed to the demons' internal presence in the body during possession, Draxe accepts the first part of Deacon and Walker's definition of obsession as an 'outward assaulting'. However, by also maintaining the possibility of possession as an affliction caused by the internal presence of demons, he anticipates the categories expounded by Nathanael Homes four decades later. Yet in cases where demons were seen as the source of a torment, the actual distinction may not have been apparent and by accepting the category of obsession, Draxe was showing how cases that might previously have been thought to be possession could now be understood as obsession instead.

Draxe's understanding of the origins of, and solution for, demonic affliction echoes that of Deacon and Walker. The emphasis is upon the individual's spiritual state, and the need to repent of sin and live a pious, sanctified life. This removes the communal aspect of possession, both as a reason for it and also in the remedy for it. Rather than urging others to pray and fast, Draxe exhorts the demoniac himself to enact the cure through repentance and sanctification.

The clergyman Thomas Adams (1583-1652) discusses possession in his work on apostasy, in *The Blacke Devil* (1615). In this work, Adams seems to distinguish between biblical and contemporary possession, which he seems to reserve exclusively for the reprobate. Adams states that the demons that possessed people in the Bible 'had

locall and substantiall possession'.[26] It appears that Adams believed that in these cases, the Devil assumed a corporeal form and physically entered into the demoniac's body: if we refer back to Deacon and Walker, they stated that only corporeal beings could exist in a space 'locally' and therefore because a spirit could not exist in a space in this way they could not internally possess a person.[27] Deacon and Walker also used the term 'substantiall' to describe corporeal real possession, the possibility of which they denied, but which Adams clearly had no trouble applying to biblical cases of possession.[28]

However, when describing the way in which the Devil possessed the apostate, Adams states:

> The Deuil dwelleth in a Man, not tanquàm corpus locatum in loco, as a bodye seated in a certaine place: for spirits are not contained in any place. Incorporeall created substances doe not dwell in a place locally or circumscriptiuely, as bodies doe; but definitiuely. Nor dwell these in him, tanquam forma in materia, as the forme in a substance, as the soule in the body. For the Deuill is a simple substance of himselfe, not compounded of any aliene or second matter. But they dwell in him by a secret and spirituall power; darkning their mindes. 2. Cor. 4. that the light of the glorious gospel of christ shold not shine vnto t[hem]. Poysoning their affections; that being past feeling, they might giue themselues ouer to lasciuiousnesse, to worke all vncleannesse with greedinesse. Hardening their hearts, Rom. 2. til they treasure vp to themselues wrath against the day of wrath, and reuelation of the righteous Iudgement of God. All which

[26] Thomas Adams, *The blacke devil or the apostate Together with the wolfe worrying the lambes. And the spiritual navigator, bound for the Holy Land. In three sermons* (London: William Iaggard, 1615), p. 14
[27] *Dialogicall discourses*, pp. 56-57
[28] When describing 'real' possession, Deacon and Walker describe how 'It is that whereby the diuell is supposed of some, euen really and essentially to enter into, and *substantially*, and inherently to dwell in the possessed mans bodie: during the whole terme of that his tyrannicall dominion ouer the man, whom he, so really, and personally possesseth.' *Dialogicall discourses*, p. 65 (my italics)

> is no other in effect; but damming vp the lights and windores of this Fort, ramming vp the gates, and fortifying the walles. Thus they dwell in him, like witches in an inchanted Castle.[29]

This statement echoes the arguments used by Deacon and Walker to disprove physical internal possession. Adams therefore seems to be distinguishing between 'the *corporally* or *spiritually possessed.*'[30] The 'corporally' possessed were those demoniacs in the Bible, but the 'spiritually' possessed are apostates, in whom the Devil does not physically dwell; rather he affects mind and soul in order to draw the individual away from God. This perception seems to reflect what Deacon and Walker mean by the term 'obsession' and it certainly incorporates their argument against the internal physical presence of demons. Adams uses the term obsession, and he gives a sense that he understood obsession to be the result of the external attacks of the Devil. When describing the Devil's assaults, he compares man to a besieged fort, and the Devil to a captain attempting forcibly to enter this fort. In this instance, the Devil is described as 'viole[n]t in inuasion, tyrannous in obsession: a rampant Lyon, that scornes either competition, or superiority.'[31]

Adams links freedom from possession with rigorous religious observance, stating that 'Christ throwes Satan out […] by his Word, by his Sword: the power and operation of his Spirit in the Preaching of the Gospell […] The Word casts him out, the Sacraments hold him out: that driues him forth, and these keepe him from co[m]ming in.'[32] This echoes Deacon and Walker's prescribed cure for obsession.

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[29] Adams, *Blacke devil*, p. 69-70
[30] Adams, *Blacke devil*, p. 16
[31] Adams, *Blacke devil*, p. 7
[32] Adams, *Blacke devil*, p. 17

Another relevant case is that of John Cotta, the Puritan physician, who touches upon the concept of possession in *The triall of witch-craft* (1616). This book aimed to prove the validity of witchcraft in light of objections against it, and to lay out the means by which a true witch could be detected.[33] Therefore, Cotta sought to distinguish between witches and those who were possessed and obsessed by demons because he was aware that sometimes the demoniac's and the witch's abilities could overlap. The distinguishing feature that separated a witch from a demoniac (whom Cotta also referred to as bewitched, although he does not state that witchcraft is necessary for one to become possessed) was that although both were 'habitacles of Deuils', the witch entered into a contract with the Devil knowingly and willingly, whereas a demoniac was possessed against their will.[34]

Cotta did identify obsession as an affliction distinct from possession:

> I call them obsessed, in whose bodies outwardly appearing no extraordinarie signes or tokens of the Diuels corporall presidence, or residence in them (as was in the possessed manifest) yet are their mindes, vnderstanding, wils, and reasone palpably obserued to bee besieged, captiued and inchanted, by an extraordinary and more then naturall, or rather an infernall inuasion of the Diuels illusions, for the magnifying and aduancing whereof, the Diuell doth oft-times mix and temper them with some rare and wonderfull reuelations, by or through the obsessed deliuered.[35]

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[33] John Cotta, *The triall of witch-craft shewing the true and right methode of the discouery: with a confutation of erroneous wayes* (London: George Purslows for Samuel Rand, 1616). A second edition of the work, entitled *The infallible true and assured vvitch: or, The second edition, of The tryall of witch-craft Shewing the right and true methode of the discouerie: with a confutation of erroneous vvayes, carefully reuiewed and more fully cleared and augmented* (London: I[ohn] L[egat] for Richard Higgenbotham) was published in 1624. For Cotta, see Peter Elmer, 'John Cotta (1575?-1627/8)' in *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6393> [accessed October 15 2008]
[34] Cotta, *Triall of witch-craft*, p. 96
[35] Cotta, *Triall of witch-craft*, p. 53

For Cotta then, an obsessed person might suffer from trances and 'frightful visions' but they did not suffer physically like those who were possessed and whose bodies were wracked by violent fits, contortions and self-harm.[36] On the other hand, his reference to the 'Diuels corporall presidence, or residence in [possessed persons]' suggests that he did accept that demoniacs were internally possessed; yet like Draxe and Adams, he perceives obsession as an outward assault, again echoing the definition given by Deacon and Walker.

Cotta did seem to believe in contemporary possession. He notes how 'it may be obiected, that these examples out of the holy Scriptures are recorded as things specially seene, or noted in some speciall ages & times, which after-times & other ages doe not, or cannot affoord.' However, he refers to accounts as recent as John Foxe's relation of Martin Luther's story regarding the conversation of a young man with the Devil, and John Speed's *The history of Great Britaine* (1611), which records the appearance of the Devil in a church in Danbury, Essex during the reign of Henry IV. These examples, he argued, were 'vndoubted and vncontrouled references vnto ages and successions of continued histories from one vnto another manifested, how […] the Diuell hath apparently offered himsele vnto the outward sense'.[37] The continuation of tales of the physical appearance of the Devil proved that such activity had not ceased. In relation to possession, this meant that the Devil was palpably and physically present within the demoniac.

However, Cotta seems reluctant to be drawn into contemporary debates about possession, and does not cite any cases of his time. In fact the only one he does refer to

[36] Cotta, *Triall of witch-craft*, p. 73
[37] Cotta, *Triall of witch-craft*, pp. 29-30

is that of Marthe Brossier, which he uses to demonstrate the Devil's power of illusion and deception, emphasising the idea that Catholic miracles were in fact false wonders.[38] Cotta attempted further to remove himself from controversy by restricting himself to citing references 'of such onely as by the common consent of times, and generall voice of all Writers, exact credit and esteeme' and avoiding those which 'which may seeme to depend vpon the obscure or doubted credit of superstitious factions, or partiall Authors' when arguing for the existence of Devil's supernatural physical activity.[39] It is interesting that even though he was a Puritan, he does not allude to the Darrel controversy at all with regard to possession. However, this may be perhaps to protect himself against censorship, and partly because his main aim was not to prove the validity of possession; in fact there is an implicit assumption of its truth in his work. Rather, Cotta was concerned with the true nature of witchcraft, so that it could be correctly identified and punished.

Cotta clearly believed in the contemporary occurrence of possession, but, again, he demonstrates a willingness to adopt Deacon and Walker's label of 'obsession' as a category of demonic affliction separate from possession, and specifically as a result of the outward attacks of demonic spirits. It also was fundamentally more spiritual in nature than possession, which was characterised primarily by physical torment.

The Church of England clergyman, Thomas Cooper touched upon the difference between possession and obsession in his book *The mystery of witchcraft* (1617).[40] This book aimed to establish that so-called 'good' witchcraft, that is, divination, was in fact

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[38] Cotta, *Triall of witch-craft*, pp. 63-64
[39] Cotta, *Triall of witch-craft*, pp. 29-30
[40] For Cooper see Stephen Wright, 'Thomas Cooper (*b.* 1569/70, *d.* in or after 1626)' in *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6230> [accessed October 27 2008]

'the most dangerous and powerful' form of witchcraft because it was the direct result of demonic influence in an individual: therefore it was a diabolic practice and an affront to God's supremacy and absolute authority.[41] Cooper saw this demonic influence as the result of possession or obsession. He described how 'it is prooued that Satan also vseth to foretell things to come without meanes, and that either by Reall possessing of the soules & bodyes of men, or else by Obsession, and inspiring them with his euill counsels.'[42] These persons 'become counterfeit prophets, and reuealers of things to come'.[43]

There is a distinction here between possession and obsession. Possession seems to indicate the internal presence of demons, juxtaposed with the 'outward' nature of obsession. Cooper uses the term 'reall possession', which suggests that he thought of demons as being physically within a person during possession, in the same way as the term 'real possession' was used by Deacon and Walker to describe such a concept. On the other hand, this idea of obsession as indicating the external working of demonic spirits was further emphasised in Cooper's discussion of how witches were used by the Devil to help him carry out his methods of torment. These ranged from causing

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[41] Thomas Cooper, *The mystery of witch-craft Discouering, the truth, nature, occasions, growth and power thereof. Together with the detection and punishment of the same. As also, the seuerall stratagems of Sathan, ensnaring the poore soule by this desperate practize of annoying the bodie: with the seuerall vses therof to the Church of Christ. Very necessary for the redeeming of these atheisticall and secure times* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1617), pp. 128-129

[42] Cooper, *Mystery of witch-craft*, pp. [13-14]. See also the second edition of this work, which is entitled *Sathan transformed into an angell of light expressing his dangerous impostures vnder glorious shewes. Emplified [sic] specially in the doctrine of witchcraft, and such sleights of Satan, as are incident thereunto. Very necessary to discerne the speciplague raging in these dayes, and so to hide our selues from the snare thereof* (London: Barnard Alsop, 1622), pp. 154-155

[43] Cooper, *Mystery of witch-craft*, p. 155. Cooper believed that divination 'by meanes' involved the use of external indicators, such as the flight of birds, the entrails of animals, astrology, dreams and the casting of lots. 'Without meanes' is without the need for consultation of external things, so that the knowledge (whether false or true) is imbued directly into the individual. (*Mystery of witch-craft*, p. [8-9], 133)

animosity between people, inducing madness, causing physical distress and even death, and also demons' ability 'To haunt men and places with spirits, and so by a kinde of obsession to vexe and torment them.'[44] This suggests that the spirits were sent as an external torment. Cooper's work again demonstrates how many of those who were concerned with the nature of demonic assault did accept Deacon and Walker's category of obsession as an external, outward attack, even if they did not accept that possession no longer occurred.

Contemporaries seem to have adopted this distinction between possession as indicating the internal presence of a spirit, and obsession indicating the external actions of a spirit. For example, in a sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:19, John Donne stated that 'Man is not a soule alone, but a body too; That man is not placed in this world onely for speculation; He is not sent into this world to live out of it, but to live in it; […] God did not breathe a soule towards him, but into him; Not in an obsession, but a possession.'[45] Although not a precise reflection of Deacon and Walker's usage of the term, the use of the specific word 'obsession' does demonstrate the way in which their proposed category of obsession was accepted as a distinct concept of external spiritual influence.

Cooper also discussed the relationship between possession and cessationism, particularly in relation to the cure for possession. He stated that 'to vse Ex[or]cismes to this end; Namely, to ad[ju]re and command the Diuell in the Name of God, to goe from

[44] Cooper, *Mystery of witch-craft*, p. 260
[45] John Donne, 'SERMON XXI. The first Sermon upon this Text, Preached at S. Pauls, in the Evening, upon Easter-day. 1626' in *LXXX sermons preached by that learned and reverend divine, Iohn Donne, Dr in Divinity, late Deane of the cathedrall church of S. Pauls London* (London: for Richard Royston, 1640), p. 206

the Partis. This is now ceased, because the Gift of Miracles, as also the promise annexed to the Gift is ceased withall.'[46] This was because this power was

> not necessary for these Times, seeing they were ordayned onely for the Confirmation of the Doctrine of the Gospel, newly planted and to bee rooted in the hearts of Infidels, or to bee iustified thereby against their forged miracles; which being now approoued and acknowledged of the Christian Churches, and hauing a constant and ordinary Ordinance of the Word, to instruct the same sufficiently.[47]

Thereby he reiterated the standard arguments in support of the doctrine of the cessation of miracles covered in Chapter Five, and he argued that any exorcisms which took place in the current time were 'fained and diuellish wonders', wrought 'by the Power of Delusion, through the efficacy of Satan' and they actually served the purposes of the Antichrist by inadvertently leading those who believed in the miracles into worshipping the diabolical powers responsible for creating the illusions.[48]

However, Cooper did believe that there were possible contemporary cures for possession, but he conceded that they were 'not absolute and necessarily effectuall, as was the gift of casting out of Diuells which ceased with the Apostles and Prime Churches: yet profitable and conuenient to be vsed, euen vnto the worlds end of all Christians.'[49] He recognised the miraculous aspect of the apostles' exorcisms, because they had an immediate and guaranteed result. However, he believed that other remedies

[46] Cooper, *Mystery of witch-craft*, p. 306
[47] Cooper, *Mystery of witch-craft*, pp. 297-298
[48] Cooper, *Mystery of witch-craft*, p. 298-302
[49] Cooper, *Mystery of witch-craft*, p. 295

could be offered, 'even vnto the worlds end', which conveys the idea that although the age of miracles had passed, the affliction of possession was an on-going one.

Methods for curing possession proposed by Cooper involve seeking out the cause of the affliction, 'namely [the demoniac's] sins', and then 'To approoue our faith in the free mercie of God by heartie Prayer and Fasting, for pardon especially of sinne, and remouall of the affliction, as may stand with Gods glorie, submitting heerein to the will of God' and to tolerate and wait out the affliction patiently. Cooper believed that possession was aimed at revitalising a flagging faith, as once cured, it should have 'More weaned vs from the world [;] More humbled vs in a hatred of sinne [;] More prouoked vs to hunger after heauen [and] More purged and prepared vs thereunto.'[50]

Although Cooper maintained the possibility of contemporary demonic possession and reiterated Darrel's assertion that prayer and fasting was a valid non-miraculous means of curing possession, he was clearly influenced by Deacon and Walker's association of exorcism with cessationism, which shows the effectiveness of that argument. Because Deacon and Walker emphasised the idea that those exorcisms performed by Jesus and the apostles were miraculous and invariably effective and that that type of exorcism no longer occurred, this meant that those who defended the possibility of contemporary possession and dispossession had to qualify the phenomenon by conceding that contemporary dispossession was not a guaranteed cure. This, in effect, robbed it of its power as a spectacular, communal cure, and served to render it as more of a routine exercise in pious living instead.

Robert Burton investigated the link between melancholy and possession and obsession in his *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) when discussing the various

[50] Cooper, *Mystery of witch-craft*, p. 296

diseases of the mind. Although he saw a link between melancholy and demonic assault, he seemed reluctant to attribute the causes of this assault to possession and obsession. He argued that 'of all other, melancholy persons are most subiect to diabolicall temptations, and illusions, and most apt to entertaine them and the Divell best able to worke upon them. But whether by obsession, or possession, or otherwise, I will not determine, 'tis a difficult question.'[51] He therefore seems to have a perception of melancholy as a medical condition (although one still effected by demons) distinct from possession or obsession.[52]

Burton did convey a degree of scepticism towards the idea of contemporary possession, for, like Deacon and Walker, he associated the phenomenon with the Catholics, stating how the Jesuits, Menghi 'and others of that rancke of pontificiall writers, it seems, by their exorcismes and conjurations approve of it, having forged many stories to that purpose.'[53] He argued that the Catholic fear of possession was so pervasive that it led to all manner of superstitious behaviour such as crossing oneself and exorcising meats.[54] For Burton, this association of possession with Catholic superstition and false miracles discredited the possibility of contemporary possession.

With regard to the more spectacular physical symptoms of possession, such as vomiting foreign objects like eels, dung and wood, Burton concurred with the opinion propounded by Johann Weyer that these were merely illusions created by the Devil. However, even these illusions were created 'to try us and our faith, 'tis for our offences,

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[51] Robert Burton (edited by Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling, Rhonda L. Blair; with an introduction by J.B. Bamborough) *The anatomy of melancholy*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 194
[52] Gowland, pp. 85-88
[53] Burton, *Anatomy*, Vol. 1, p. 194
[54] Burton, *Anatomy*, Vol. 1, p. 194

and for the punishment of our sinnes, by Gods permission they doe it'.[55] Furthermore, he states that those demoniacs found in the Bible were possessed as the result of a lack of faith and/or the punishment of sins. Therefore he seems to refute the idea that possession (or seeming possession) was linked to melancholy (a medical condition), but rather conveyed the idea that it was the result of sinfulness or a lack of faith; yet he is ambiguous about whether or not genuine cases of possession occur in his own day.

Instead, Burton proposed a condition that he termed religious melancholy, which was where the natural human desire for the beauty of divinity became corrupted and defective.[56] It was characterised by 'Feare, sorrow, anguish of mind, extreame tortures and horror of conscience, fearefull dreames, conceipts, visions, &c'.[57] He described how the Devil caused this, stating that 'His ordinary engine by which he produceth this effect, is the melancholy humour it selfe, which is *Balneum Diaboli*, the Divels bath; and as in *Saul*, those evill spirits get in as it were and take possession of us.'[58] Therefore, Burton recognised the Devil's agency in religious melancholy, but he emphasised the idea that the Devil produced these effects through natural means; he therefore argued that 'we must first beginne with prayer, and then use Physicke, not one without the other, but both together.'[59] Although not ruling out the role of faith and God's active participation in healing, Burton also maintained that God worked through natural means, to work on natural causes. Burton's desire to stress the natural cause of such behaviour, and his apparent rejection of both possession and obsession as explanations for this type of affliction, demonstrates the effect of the arguments of both

[55] Burton, *Anatomy*, Vol. 1, p. 195
[56] Gowland, pp. 69-70
[57] Burton, *Anatomy*, Vol. 3 (1994), p. xvii
[58] Burton, *Anatomy*, Vol. 3, p. 411. See also pp. 433, 443
[59] Burton, *Anatomy*, Vol. 2 (1990), p. 5

Weyer and Scot, and also of Deacon and Walker who similarly believed that some of those who were thought to be possessed were in fact suffering from melancholy.[60] For Burton, 'religious melancholy' was a natural affliction because the cause was primarily physical (an excess of melancholy), although demonic forces affected this, and the cure was natural (medicine), although this was also coupled with faith and prayer.

This desire to explain a spiritual malady without reference to possession demonstrates how the Darrel controversy had made the category problematic for people like Burton. He was clearly aware of the arguments raised by Deacon and Walker, for in the third edition of the book (1628), he states:

> The last kinde of madness or melancholy, is that demoniacall (if I may so call it) obsession or possession of devills, which *Platerus* and others would have to bee præternaturall: stupend things are said of them, their actions, gestures, *contortions*, fasting, prophesying, speaking languages they were never taught, &c. many strange stories are related of them, which because some will not allowe (for *Deacon* and *Darrell* have written large volumes on this subject *pro* and *con*) I voluntarily omit.[61]

This demonstrates how the controversy over possession led Burton to choose not to consider it as a type of disease of the mind. It is evident that Deacon and Walker's

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[60] It is worth noting that Johann Weyer still maintained the possibility of possession, although he argued against the idea that witches could send demons into a body. He agreed with Philip Melanchthon that 'it is nevertheless certain that devils enter into the hearts of some men and cause frenzy and torment in them–whether accompanying natural causes of not.' See Weyer, *On Witchcraft*, p. 251. See also, *On Witchcraft*, p. 164 where Weyer, when describing a case of apparent possession at a nunnery in Wertet, argues that 'It cannot be doubted that in fact Satan had possessed these maidens.' Book Five of *On Witchcraft* is concerned with the proper treatment of those thought to be possessed. He emphasises the importance of piety in protecting oneself against possession and maintains the validity of prayer and fasting for overcoming possession. See Weyer, *On Witchcraft*, pp. 189-195; p. 140

[61] Burton, *Anatomy*, Vol. 1, pp. 135-136. See also Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: [John Lichfield] for Henry Cripps, 1628), sigs. B[v]-B2[r]

arguments against the possibility of contemporary possession, and their introduction of the competing category of obsession, was enough to raise uncertainty about the subject for Burton, and for him therefore to side-line possession as a contemporary affliction.

To summarise, by offering the category of obsession as an alternative to possession, Deacon and Walker still maintained that the Devil could affect a person spiritually through obsession (that is, as distinct from a natural disease such as melancholy). Obsession was effected through natural means (as described in Chapter Four) because the Devil could not operate outside nature, but it was a spiritual affliction because the cause was spiritual (sin), the cure was spiritual (repentance, prayer, piety, reading the Bible, listening to the Word), and the outcome was spiritual (reassertion of faith and obedience to God). Therefore, the category was palatable to those who were concerned with how the Devil affected believers, and how Christians could protect themselves against such attacks. The writers discussed above accepted the category of obsession as an outward assault, and even though they still maintained the possibility of possession, and the idea that the demon worked in this case by being within the body, the acceptance of obsession necessarily restricted the scope of possession. Therefore cases that did not involve spectacular physical torments, such as the swelling of the body, contortions, lumps and so on, could be diagnosed as obsession instead of possession. In this sense, Deacon and Walker were successful, if not in completely dismantling belief in possession, then at least in restricting its parameters and therefore reducing the chances of it being diagnosed in cases of spiritual affliction and in usefully extending the range of concepts available to contemporaries.

Deacon and Walker therefore succeeded in 'spiritualising' demonic assault—that is shifting the focus away from the fantastic physical displays that had characterised previous cases of possession, to emphasising the spiritual origins and cures for demonic affliction. The spiritual dimension of possession has been recognised by Nathan Johnstone. He argues that the main role of the Devil in early modern England was as tempter and he therefore states that possession '*was* temptation albeit in extreme form'.[62] As seen in Chapter One, temptation is certainly a major feature of possession cases, but I think Johnstone's treatment of possession does not recognise the way in which contemporary treatment and perception of possession changed because of the Darrel controversy. Prior to the Darrel controversy, possession was primarily defined symptomatically and the spiritual dimension could be eclipsed by the dramatic physical aspects of the phenomenon, because the spiritual significance was often implicit in the narratives rather than systematically expounded. It is therefore important to recognise that the spiritual aspect of possession received a boost after the Darrel controversy and from the arguments of Deacon and Walker, and this is evident in the discussions we have examined in this chapter. These treatises explicitly discuss what possession and obsession actually were, thereby emphasising the spiritual aspect over the actual physical details of a particular possession case. In this process, the spiritual origins of the affliction also became more pronounced.

Their association of possession with cessationism meant that those who defended the possibility of contemporary possession had to qualify this belief by conceding that dispossession through prayer and fasting was not comparable to the miraculous

[62] Nathan Johnstone, *The Devil And Demonism In Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 102

undertakings of Jesus and the apostles, and to emphasise the routine, private spiritual remedies, rather than the sensational public dispossessions reported in earlier narratives. This meant that the affliction itself came to be seen as a more internalised suffering of the soul and the conscience. To give an example, this is reflected in *The Christian sword and buckler* (1623), which was a letter sent by a minister, John Sprint, to a man 'seuen yeares grieuously afflicted in conscience, and fearefully possessed by the Diuel'.[63] The possession in this case consisted of the sufferer doubting the truth of God's word and anxiety over his status as one of the elect.[64] Sprint's advice was for the demoniac to couple a life of virtue with faith, and to rely on God for his deliverance, stating that 'It is better to trust in the Lord, then to put any confidence in man, or euil spirit, for the diuels cannot free vs from the hands of God, but God can keepe vs from the power of diuels.'[65] This emphasises the individualistic nature of the deliverance, and whilst this idea of a demoniac being responsible for his own cure is present in earlier possession narratives, this statement seems to remove the need for the participation of any third party, and there is no appeal to communal prayer and fasting.

We can see then that Deacon and Walker's concept of obsession did have an impact upon early modern English thinking about demonic affliction, but it was slightly more complicated than an unequivocal acceptance of all their arguments. The concept was filtered and renegotiated through pre-existing concepts and so altered to fit in with these; it was also adapted to exist alongside possession. However it is clear that the concept of obsession was accepted as another valid diagnosis for demonically induced

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[63] John Sprint, *The Christian sword and buckler, or, A letter by D. Sprint to a man seuen yeares grieuously afflicted in conscience and fearefully possessed by the Diuel very comfortable and commodious to withstand the assaults of Sathan* (London: B. Alsop for Samuel Rand, 1623)
[64] Sprint, *The Christian sword*, pp. [9-12]
[65] Sprint, *The Christian sword*, p. B3[r]

behaviour. Even those who maintained the contemporary occurrence of possession accepted obsession as a spiritual concept, distinct from possession and denoting external, as opposed to internal, demonic attacks, which is how Deacon and Walker defined it.

Deacon and Walker's arguments were persuasive because they were not removing demonic agency from the world altogether, but rather were reclassifying the nature of it in their own time. Indeed, bearing in mind the extent to which demonic possession was embedded in early modern English spiritual experience, a wholesale denial of demonic assault would have been a difficult position to maintain. It is clear that the model of obsession that they proposed–of a highly internalised, individual torment resulting from the outward assaults of demons–was broadly adopted into wider demonological thought.

Conclusion

The Darrel controversy has been seen by historians as playing a significant role in sidelining demonic possession as a valid affliction and so creating a mentality and an environment in which it became increasingly difficult to attribute a particular form of human suffering to demonic and supernatural forces. Certainly the Darrel controversy led the Church of England to issue Canon 72 in 1604, which expressly prohibited exorcism through prayer and fasting except with special permission from the bishop of the diocese.[1] The reaction to the Mary Glover case can be seen as displaying these factors in motion: Edward Jorden attempted to offer an alternative explanation for Mary's torments, rooted in medicine, and the pastors involved were roundly censured.[2] The exposure of Anne Gunter as a fraud can be seen as further affirmation of this increasing scepticism towards demonic possession, especially when it was the result of bewitchment.[3] However, it is clear that belief in demonic possession persisted. What this thesis has shown is that it was the way in which it was thought of that changed, and this was due in large part to the arguments that Deacon and Walker proposed. Apart from Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Deacon and Walker's *Dialogicall discourses* was the only English work to really examine the intricacies of demonic possession and the only one to attempt to reconcile it with broader medical, natural philosophical and theological thought. They drew together disparate aspects of demonology that had previously been scattered through possession narratives and

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[1] Thomas, p. 579
[2] MacDonald, pp. xxii-xxiii; xxix-xxxiii
[3] See James Sharpe, *The Bewitching Of Anne Gunter: A Horrible And True Story Of Football, Witchcraft, Murder And The King Of England* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000)

attempted to create a concise exposition of what possession was, what it was not, and how it could be understood in relation to contemporary spiritual experience.

It is apparent that before the Darrel case, the understanding of demonic possession was based on a number of implicit assumptions about what the phenomenon entailed, but there was no concise explanation of what the affliction was, or how it worked. The existence of demonic possession was deeply embedded in Christian culture and tradition and belief in it persisted following the Reformation. However, the Darrel controversy reveals the way in which the role of the supernatural was reassessed in light of anti-Catholicism and in particular the doctrine of the cessation of miracles. Previous historians such as Keith Thomas and Thomas Freeman have seen possession as a Puritan propaganda tool, but, as has been demonstrated, possession was an integral part of early modern spiritual experience, and was not an exclusively Puritan belief. There has been a tendency to concentrate upon the work of Harsnett, because his arguments reflect the assessment of historians: that is, that Darrel's activities were acts of Puritan propaganda, and were orchestrated by him to serve the Puritan agenda. By viewing the incident primarily through the lens of the conflict between Puritans and the authorities, historians have therefore viewed the repressive action taken by the authorities as affecting belief in demonic possession at the time. That is not to argue that the authorities did not genuinely perceive a threat in Darrel's activities, but as has been shown, there really was very little in Darrel's activities that can be read as Puritan propaganda.

This analysis of the conflict over demonic possession as a straightforward manifestation of the hostility between Puritans and the authorities also needs to be

reconsidered in light of the fact that much of the hostility towards demonic possession was rooted in hostility towards the Catholic rite of exorcism. It was a rejection of this rite purporting to be the true cure for demonic possession that led to the phenomenon as a whole coming under great scrutiny, and to the authorities and Deacon and Walker seeking to shift attention away from it. Because the Catholic rite of exorcism—with its emphasis on ritual and the conjuration of spirits, and its reliance on the intercession of Mary and the saints—represented all the false, superstitious and heretical aspects of Catholicism, it was roundly condemned, and this attack on exorcism was extended to include the affliction which exorcism claimed to solve. Crucially, Deacon and Walker's work argued that dispossession was incompatible with cessationism, a theological concept that was emerging as a significant feature of the English Protestant church. By incorporating a major theological strand into their argument, Deacon and Walker were able to argue more convincingly against the contemporary occurrence of possession, especially as this argument utilised existing anti-Catholic sentiments. At the same time, they were able to expand the scope of cessationism to include possession and dispossession, thus contributing towards the further dissemination of cessationist thinking and its acceptance as an assumed characteristic of English Protestant theology.

Deacon and Walker's arguments against possession based on natural philosophy reflect wider demonological thought in that they maintained that the Devil could not act outside the laws of nature. However, in their argument against the internal presence of demons they were attempting to redefine the boundaries of what was natural; by expanding the scope of natural laws they denied the Devil this feat of internal possession. In this way, they were contributing to the broader discussions concerning

demonologists of what the Devil could not do, considering he was bound by nature.[4] In attempting to redefine what the Devil could and could not do with relation to natural laws, Deacon and Walker were following in the tradition of Weyer and Scot. However, as Stuart Clark points out, the idea that a demon could inhabit a person, persisted amongst the learned in Europe, including the medical profession, until well beyond the seventeenth century.[5] Yet in the years between the conclusion of the Darrel controversy and the Civil War, many of the cases involving possession that we know about, resulted in an exposure of fraud or the failure to secure a conviction of the alleged witch. For example, Anne Gunter was forced to confess to faking her possession at the instigation of her father, whilst in 1621, it was revealed that Katherine Malpas had been taught by Elizabeth Saunders to fake her possession in order to get money. Even in the Glover case, whilst the accused witch, Elizabeth Jackson was initially convicted, she was quickly released from prison and possibly acquitted.[6] In the case of household of Edward Fairfax, where Fairfax's daughters began displaying signs of possession in October 1621, Fairfax attempted to get six women convicted of bewitching his daughters but failed to secure a conviction in two separate assizes because the judges and juries were convinced the whole thing was a hoax.[7] There were no reports of cases like those seen before the Darrel trial, such as that of Mylner, Brigges or Nyndge, and

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[4] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, pp. 161-166
[5] Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, pp. 390-391
[6] MacDonald, p. xviii-xix
[7] Edward Fairfax, 'A Discourse of witchcraft as it was acted in the family of Mr. Edward Fairfax' (1621-23), *BL*, Additional MS 32496. A published version with a biographical introduction and notes by W. Grainger is also available (Harrogate: R. Ackrill, 1882, facsimile edition, London: Frederick Muller, 1971). See also Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750* (London: Continuum, 2003), pp. 162-163.

indeed it was this latter and the Margaret Cooper/Hooper that were republished and it is revealing that the gap was filled by the republishing of these old cases.

This suggests that incidents of demonic possession were perhaps pushed underground because of the authorities' hostility towards them, but it also reflects a change in the perception and diagnosis of demonic assault with obsession being insisted instead of possession. By creating the category of 'obsession', Deacon and Walker offered an alternative way in which demonic affliction could be understood, while still, importantly, maintaining that demonic forces were active in the world; but this also demanded that contemporaries engaged with the categories and decided for themselves what was going on in apparent possession cases. Not everybody accepted Deacon and Walker's definition of possession as purely external, and nor did they all accept that possession had ended. However, what is clear is that the concept of 'obsession' did enter into broader demonological thought. Discussions about demonic possession shifted from reports of possession cases to examinations of how possession was to be understood and protected against. It therefore became part of pastoral treatises, mentioned in Chapter Six, aimed at strengthening the faith of Christians and exhortations about guarding oneself against the threat posed by the Devil; it is therefore not unreasonable to assume that it was also increasingly applied as a diagnosis for demonic affliction.

The Darrel controversy was therefore instrumental in affecting the way in which people thought of demonic possession in early modern England, but not solely because of the authorities' actions against Darrel or Harsnett's polemical attacks. The authorities' reaction against Darrel did not result in a widespread or unequivocal denial

of demonic possession simply because those in power succeeded in prosecuting a well-known dispossessor and embarked on a campaign to undermine his credibility. Rather, the case led two Puritan ministers, John Deacon and John Walker, to create a comprehensive exposition of what they believed demonic possession to be, and to lay out the way in which they believed the Devil affected believers in their time. As a result, those concerned with such issues also reassessed the phenomenon of possession, and the adoption of Deacon and Walker's category of obsession led to a gradual shift in the perception of possession, from a dramatic, primarily physical affliction, often associated with witchcraft, to a more spiritualised, internalised form of temptation and torment.

Michael Hunter, in his study on Sadducceeism in early modern England, argues that people were impelled to come up with their own conclusions whenever options were presented, and that particular events could affect the way in which they did this.[8] The Darrel controversy is a case in point, juxtaposing the authorities' essential dismissal of the possibility of possession with Darrel's staunch defence of the phenomenon, and so making people aware firstly that there were conflicting attitudes towards demonic possession between which they had to decide, and consequently creating an environment in which people were more receptive to different ideas. Deacon and Walker's arguments found traction amongst many because they provided a sort of *via media*, presenting an alternative both to unequivocal belief in possession and to outright dismissal of any demonic activity. Harsnett's attack on possession was important in creating a climate in which the phenomenon came under scrutiny, but Deacon and

[8] Michael Hunter, 'The Decline of Magic: Challenge and Response in Early Enlightenment England', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 55, Issue 2 (2012), p. 399-425

Walker were equally important in providing the theoretical reasoning against belief in contemporary possession. Whilst they denied the possibility of possession, and supported the position that Sommers' possession was feigned, they offered the possibility of obsession as an explanation for bizarre behaviour, one which still maintained the truth of the Devil's activity in the world. They did this by drawing on, and expanding, existing and accepted medical, natural philosophical and theological arguments. In this way, their arguments were interwoven with the many threads that informed demonological thought, and it for this reason that Deacon and Walker significantly influenced and affected attitudes towards possession and demonic activity in early modern England.

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with a shamelesse penne most slanderously hath sought to deface: finished sometime sithence: and now published for the stay of the Christian reader till Maister Charkes booke come foorth (London: Thomas Dawson and Tobie Smith, 1583)

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come by such abhominations. Hereunto is also added a short discourse, containing the most certen meanes ordained of God, to discouer, expell, and to confound all the Sathanicall inuentions of witchcraft and sorcerie (Cambridge: Iohn Legatt, printer to the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, 1590)

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