

THE SATANIC INGREDIENTS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY  
WITCHCRAFT DEBATE.

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE FOR GRADUATE STUDIES IN  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY

BÜLKENT UNIVERSITY

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## **ABSTRACT**

This Thesis is a study on the witchcraft debates of seventeenth century England. Throughout the study a special emphasis is given to the debate over the existence of alliance of witches with the Devil. This conception of witchcraft including Satanic ingredients imply the togetherness of spiritual and material existence and their cooperation in creating effects upon the natural phenomena. The discussions whether spiritual forces were effective upon natural activity in the world were already existent among the educated circles of seventeenth century England. Having this in mind, the aim of this work is to display the debate on the nature of witchcraft as a microcosm of the general intellectual atmosphere of seventeenth century England.

## ÖZET

Bu tez, Onyedinci yüzyılda İngiltere’de geçen cadılık tartışmaları üzerine bir çalışmadır. Bu çalışma boyunca cadıların peytanla işbirliği yaptığı üzerine tartışmalara özel bir önem verilmektedir. Peytani unsurları barındıran cadılık kavramı materyal ve ruhani varlıkların birlikteliğinin ve doğa olaylarının gelişimine toplu halde etki edebileceğini gerektiriyordu. Ruhani güçlerin doğa olayları üzerinde etkilerinin olup olmadığı Onyedinci yüzyılda, İngiltere’de eğitimli çevreler tarafından halihazırda tartışılmaktaydı. Bu göz önüne alındığında, bu çalışmanın amacı cadılık tartışmasını Onyedinci yüzyılın genel atmosferinin bir modeli olduğunu gözler önüne sermektir.

*To the ones,  
whoever contributed my state of mind  
of everlasting restlessness.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Seventeenth century England is of special interest for historians of science. The reasons for this are various but the main one would be suggested as its complexity. It is a period of transition from an old paradigm of universe to a new one. The old paradigm is the tri-partite cosmology of heaven, hell and earth. The new one is more mechanistic,



dividing the realms of spiritual and material, and accepting them in their mechanism. The role of science was defined within the old paradigm throughout the European centuries, but the new paradigm allows a freedom for science to deal with and investigate the mechanism of the nature by mechanical means. This transition or evolution was not immediate and did finish with the end of the seventeenth century. And it would be anachronistic to argue that the period was a transition from a concept of Godly universe to a Godless one, because it was not done on purpose with an awareness. The hints of this transition could be found by taking major intellectual discussion of the contemporary individuals as a sample. One of the debates of the seventeenth century England was the witchcraft debate. Witchcraft as a concept, is a perfect example for understanding the reality of such a transition, because it represented in its very definition the togetherness of the material and spiritual existence and alliance. The discussions on the nature of witchcraft could be taken as the discussions on how universe works, and what is the degree of the spiritual intervention on the mechanism of the universe. The aim of this study is to investigate the approaches to the concept of witchcraft within the context of seventeenth century intellectual atmosphere. For this investigation, a selection of primary sources will be given as examples of the debates on the abovementioned topic. The objectives of this selection are : the frequency of circulation of the primary source in seventeenth century, the widely read tracts of the time generally initiated some of the debates, like the Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Witchcraft debate started by the reactionary writings against Reginald Scot and went on with the debates in the form of chain reaction. One individual William Perkins, wrote against Scot, right after one another, Robert Filmer wrote against William Perkins. Another objective was that, being part of a

one-to-one debate. In other words, the debates of the intellectuals like the one of Henry More and John Webster, Thomas Vaughan and Henry More, Joseph - Glanvill and John Webster, were significant with the literature they created and with the citations they had by other intellectuals of secondary importance of seventeenth century. The main aim of this study is not to grasp what the totality of the concept of witchcraft was all about but to understand the background of the arguments of the people arguing for their interpretation of the concept of witchcraft. This is why, I was selective in picking up the primary sources as not to lose the central argument.

First chapter is an overview of the seventeenth century intellectual atmosphere with the European concept of witchcraft added to it. The general terminologies in identifying the philosophical and theological positions of seventeenth century intellectuals are under discussion. The danger of putting strict categories in identifying an idea or an intellectual position is discussed. In the second chapter an account of the debates in England is given in seventeenth century. The chronological survey is for the purpose of seeing the change of arguments before and after the satanic compact was introduced to the nature of witchcraft. This chapter is an effort to classify the different approaches to witchcraft like judicial, theological and empirical so that these classifications might serve our purposes in making generalisations in the coming chapter. The third chapter starts with a representative of the end of the debate in seventeenth century. Francis Hutchinson's *A Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft* (1718) is a work which handles the debates in a historical perspective, for this reason it is a relatively valuable work for our purposes. After giving this early eighteenth century interpretation of the witchcraft debate as a last

example, the chapter continues with my interpretation of the debate. The aim of this chapter is to propose a place for witchcraft debate within the whole intellectual context of seventeenth century. Since the debate went on through the century, its evolution should not be independent from the general intellectual changes of the period. Having this in mind I attempted to interpret the intellectual attitudes, theological and scientific tendencies in companion with the discussions over the nature of witchcraft. The reason for doing this is to answer the question why and how the history of witchcraft is connected to the intellectual history of the period. While doing this, I was cautious not to fall into the complexity of terminology in identifying the theological/philosophical and scientific attitudes of educated people in the period under discussion. Instead of using series of labels to introduce the intellectuals or dividing some common tendencies of the period into sets of categories, like mechanistic, rational theology, e.t.c., I rather have chosen to identify the intellectuals with their stands taken towards witchcraft and preferred to take the mentalities of the period as being far or close to my subject of research, the nature of witchcraft. For this reason, some tendencies like the so-called strict mechanistic view of nature is excluded from my vision of the period. The contemporary reactions to mechanistic philosophers are also cited according to their closeness to the witchcraft debate.

The outcome of this study is an interpretation of the seventeenth century intellectual history of England through the witchcraft debate. Our view of the period through the eyes of the educated people touched upon the nature of witchcraft, will be a micro-interpretation of the changing mentalities of England during seventeenth century. In

doing this the question of whether the witchcraft debate was a parameter of a problem is tested. In other words, the questions why and how the witchcraft discussions are connected to the intellectual environment, and whether there was a proportionate relationship between the intellectual changes and changing attitudes towards the concept of witchcraft are going to be answered.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY CONCEPTION OF WITCHCRAFT**

#### **1.1 Seventeenth Century Conception of Universe**

In the early modern world, the division between natural and supernatural differed from our modern classification. The concept of nature was not restricted to things observable and corporeal, but included things not observable through the senses, i.e. incorporeal substances were part of the seventeenth century cosmos. “In Renaissance Europe it was

virtually unanimous opinion of the educated that devils, and *a fortiori*, witches, not merely existed in nature but acted according to its laws”<sup>1</sup> The activities of witches were defined as natural phenomena. It was not an irrational thing to believe in the existence of spirits causing natural effects. Newton argued for the existence of occult principles causing activity in nature:

“The *Vis inertiae* is a passive Principle by which the Bodies persist in their Motion or Rest, receive Motion in proportion to the Force impressing it, and resist as much as they are resisted. By this Principle alone there never could have any Motion in the world. Some other principle was necessary for putting Bodies into Motion; and now they are in Motion, some other principle is necessary for conserving the Motion.”<sup>2</sup>

The active Forces are attributed to God by Newton. The use of active principles within matter helped philosophers to deal with nature without having to refer to God. Robert Boyle, though he believed in spirits and occult qualities, argued that one should use mechanical explanations in dealing with natural phenomena.<sup>3</sup>

The investigation of nature, the methods and the seeking of explanations for natural phenomena kept philosophers occupied. The question whether or not spirits were one of the parameters of scientific research caused some problems. Those who argued that the explanation of natural phenomena could be done by experimental research were called mechanical philosophers. The empiricism of these people, however, was not enough to

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Clark, “The Rational Witchfinder: Conscience, Demonological Naturalism and Popular Superstitions” pp.222-248 in Science, Culture and Popular Belief in Renaissance Europe, Ed. Stephen Pumfrey et.al. New York: Manchester University Press, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> John Henry, “Occult Qualities and the Experimental Philosophy: Active Principles in pre-Newtonian Matter Theory” History of Science, vol.24, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

give the initial reason of peculiar phenomena like the action of one object upon another. The limitation of the mechanical world view derived from the limitation to things observable.<sup>4</sup> The questions raised however, did not remain unanswered. Occult forces, which existed within matter, were proposed as the driving forces of natural phenomena. At this point, the break between natural and mechanical philosophers sharpened. Natural philosophers like Henry More, gave spiritual forces not an intermediary role in universe, but accepted them as active representations of God in nature. So natural phenomena depended on the action of this Spirit. In this way, the ultimate and immediate cause of any kind of phenomena is God.<sup>5</sup> The framework of the tension between natural philosophers and mechanical philosophers was this difference in their conceptions of nature. This difference however is not wholly dividing, because, although mechanical philosophers tried to avoid spiritual ingredient in their scientific researches, this was merely a methodological attitude. When it came to their beliefs, it was not easy for anyone to state that he did not believe in spirits. Nearly all the scientific philosophers were aware of the necessity of a religious connection in the subjects that they were dealing with.

Experimental science at the beginning of the Restoration is dependent on theology to provide it with a rationale to unite “the homology of royalist politics, experimental philosophy, and Anglicanism” in the ideology of the Royal Society.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Gabbey “Henry More and the Limits of Mechanism” in Sarah Hutton ed. Henry More (1614-1687) Tercentenary Studies, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990 pp. 19-37.

<sup>5</sup> Lichtenstein, Aharon Henry More: the Rational Theology of a Cambridge Platonist, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond D. Tumbleson “The Science of Anglicanism” Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. 57, No.1, 1996 pp.131- 156.

Whenever their ideas seemed dangerous to Church and faith, nearly all of them attempted to avoid these implications<sup>7</sup>. There was a desire not to allow the scientific discoveries to encourage atheism and irreligion. Francis Bacon's efforts to differentiate the spheres of science and religion resulted in accusations of atheism and infidelity.<sup>8</sup> A contemporary divine John Edward's attitude is an example to show the danger for the science:

Learned Enquirers are apt to give encouragement to Atheism by *an obstinate endeavoring to solve all the Phenomena in the world by mere Natural and Corporeal causes*, and by their averseness to admit of the aid and concurrence of Supernatural or Immaterial Principle for the production of them.<sup>9</sup>

Thomas Sprat in his *The History of the Royal Society* (1667), argued that, experimental science was not harmful to the Christian Religion and Royal Society was taking measures not to be in contradiction with the essentials of Christian faith:

'Tis true his [Experimenter] *employment* is about *material things*. But this is so far from drowing him to oppose invisible *Beings*, that it rather puts his thoughts into an excellent good capacity to believe them... If (as the *Apostle* says) the invisible things of *God* are manifested by the visible; than how much stronger Arguments has he for his belief, in the *eternal power* and *Godhead*, from the vast number of creatures, that are invisible to others, but are expos'd to his view by the help of his *Experiments* ?<sup>10</sup>

A scientist, however, does not immediately attribute the reason of natural phenomena to God, the self mechanism of nature was the primary subject of investigation according to Sprat:

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<sup>7</sup> Hunter, Michael *Science and Society in Restoration England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp. 162-188.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>10</sup> Sprat, Thomas *The History of the Royal Society of London For the Improving of Natural Knowledge by Thomas Sprat, London, Printed by T.R. for J. Martyn at the Bell without Temple-bar, and J. Allestry at the Rose and Crown in Duck-lane, Printers to the Royal Society, MDCLXVII.,pp. 348- 349.*

He cannot suddenly conclude all extraordinary events to be the immediat Finger of *God*, because he familiarly beholds the inward working of things: and thence perceives that many effects, which use to affright the *Ignorant*, are brought forth by the common *Instruments of Nature*...He cannot be forward to assent to *Spiritual Raptures*, and *Revelations*: becaus he is truly accuainted with the Tempers of mens Bodies, the Composition of their Blood, and the power of Fancy: and so better understands the difference, between *Diseases*, and *Inspirations*.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.2 Philosophical/Theological Categories Revisited

In the discussions of witchcraft, we are faced with another complexity that makes it difficult to use strict divisions like that between the natural/rationalist and empiricist standpoints. Whatever their philosophical standpoint may have been, intellectuals - with a few exceptions - believed in the existence of witchcraft. The leading figure who totally rejected the concept was Thomas Hobbes. The belief in witchcraft, according to him, was fed by popular ignorance with the support of the clergy. Such superstitions, he believed “ to have originated in ignorance of natural causes and to have been preserved by crafty men for the purpose of keeping simple men in power”<sup>12</sup>. He did not even include the concept of the supernatural in his understanding of nature. He was famous among the seventeenth century *philosophers*

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<sup>11</sup> Sprat, Thomas, pp. 358-359.

<sup>12</sup> Moody A. Prior “ Joseph Glanvill, Witchcraft and Seventeenth Century Science” Modern Philology, vol.80, (1932-33), pp. 167-193.



who undermine the generally received proofs of the existence of God and Providence and “attribute too much to the mechanical powers of matter and motion”<sup>13</sup>

With this stand, he turned out to be the point of attack for people arguing for the existence of witchcraft. His intellectual stand takes him and similar philosophers out of the concern of this study, because of their unwillingness to incorporate the supernatural into their cosmos.

It is difficult to disentangle different trends of thought in seventeenth century England. The establishment of the Royal Society offers an example to this difficulty. The Restoration could be taken as the period of the rise of empiricism and the Royal Society of London was founded with the purpose of improving new science. but the founders of the Royal Society had quite different conceptions of the world from each other.

To be sure, it invited men of diverse political and religious backgrounds to membership and attempted to temper its discussions by the exercise of courtesy, forbearance and mutual respect.<sup>14</sup>

Henry More, Robert Boyle, John Webster and Joseph Glanvill were members of the Society and known because of the debates on scientific research and witchcraft; but argued on opposite sides. Even the “most notorious heterodox philosophers” like Spinoza and Hobbes were in close contact with members of the Royal Society.<sup>15</sup> There are famous debates between the members of the Royal Society like the Glanvill-Webster, More-

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<sup>13</sup> Sarah Hutton “Science, Philosophy, and Atheism” in Richard H. Popkin et. al. ed. Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, Leiden;New York;Koln: Brill Publishers, 1993, p. 111.

<sup>14</sup> J.R. Jacob “ Restoration, Reformation and the Origins of the Royal Society” History of Science, vol. 13, (1975), 155-176.

<sup>15</sup> Hunter argues that only an anachronistic definition could exclude Hobbes and Spinoza from the title ‘scientist’.p.172.

Webster, More-Vaughan, Casaubon-Webster debates. Being members of the Royal Society, they shared the similar tendencies regarding natural phenomena. They approached the nature of witchcraft differently however. One could interpret these debates as a conflict between two opposing kinds of science, the occult versus the mechanical and their corresponding political and theological beliefs.<sup>16</sup> According to this interpretation by Allison Coudert, the attached concepts to mechanistic concept of nature was atheism and its political implication was anarchy. Rejection of the Christian religion was a threat for the existing political order, and this is why attackers of mechanistic philosophers were scientists or who were called rational-theologians and they were politically conservative. These categories do not help, however, to understand the essence of the debates. Henry More, for example aimed to refute atheism, and according to him and Joseph Glanvill denial of witchcraft was a declaration of atheism. Other contemporaries, such as John Wagstaffe, also took the denial of witchcraft as an attack on religion.<sup>17</sup> But it is hard to categorise these abovementioned intellectuals. There were philosophers of mechanistic points of view rejecting the existence of witchcraft, but not necessarily as a continuation of their religious or political beliefs. One of these people was John Webster, a member of Royal Society, another was Robert Boyle. One should consider their scepticism as a methodological attitude of scientists' who were trying to differentiate the spheres of corporeal and incorporeal although they declared repeatedly that they had a belief in incorporeal existence. Another example putting the argument of Coudert under dispute is Joseph Glanvill. He was also a member of Royal Society, sharing the ideas brought by new-science, adoring empiricism, but defending the existence of witchcraft. This is surely

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<sup>16</sup> Allison Coudet, "Henry More and Witchcraft" in Sarah Hutton ed. Pp. 115-137.

not a contradictory attitude in seventeenth century context. This shows that his attitude towards witchcraft was not necessarily an outcome of his scientific tendencies, but his Christian neo-platonism. As the principal founder of the Royal Society, Robert Boyle, had varieties of interests seem to contradict within an effort of matching the scientific and religious attitudes with the beliefs of witchcraft. He was a advocate of new experimental science. His reputation among historians of science is with his success of giving “Chemistry a theoretical foundation by assimilating it to the new experimental and mechanical philosophy.”<sup>18</sup> He, however did not declare of himself as a disbeliever in the existence of witchcraft but argued that the practitioners of new philosophy “will examine with more strictness and skill, than the ordinary men able, miracles, prophecies, or other proofs, said to be supernatural, that are alleged to evince a real religion”<sup>19</sup> Although there is a truthness in arguing that the aim of the educated people arguing for the existence of witchcraft was not to defend their philosophical/scientific stand but to avoid the atheistic threat does not provide us a sound basis of discussion throughout the survey. This presupposition stands in our way of investigation through primary sources, since it hinders the differences of approach to the nature of witchcraft. The concept of witchcraft shows changes in the hands of intellectuals of seventeenth century. Our aim is to find out the common tendencies in defining witchcraft among intellectual circles. By this way we will be able to argue on the stand taken towards witchcraft. The investigation of the witchcraft debates should not be made, therefore by taking the philosophical backgrounds of the individuals as the reference point. Rather the following survey of the conception of

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 120

<sup>18</sup> J.R. Jacob, p. 156.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Harrison “Newtonian Science, Miracles, and the Laws of Nature” [Journal of the History of Ideas](#).

witchcraft will enable us to realise that the definitions of witchcraft determined the stand taken towards it.

### 1.3. The word “Witch”

The word witch comes from the Old English *wicce* derived from the root *wikk-*, which applies to magic and sorcery. *Wicce*, however comes from Germanic root *wic-*, which means ‘to bend’ or ‘to turn’, referring to the activities of witches like controlling and bending forces in order to effect changes.<sup>20</sup> Witchcraft, witches, sorcerers, “them that have familiar spirits”, are mentioned numerous times in the Bible.<sup>21</sup> The most famous Biblical quotation cited by witch hunters of Renaissance period and later was Exodus 22:18: “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live”<sup>22</sup>. Some distinctions were made between white witches and the black witches. White witches were those who cured illness, divined lost property, exposed thieves, enhanced fertility and drove away bad weather. Black witches were those who used their magic to harm others. White witches were often called by other names like cunning folk, wise folk, sorcerer and the witch doctor.<sup>23</sup> The witch was believed to have innate capacity to harm. The term ‘witch’ should be so understood. The power to use evil forces was a characteristic of a witch. Apart from this general definition, there existed varieties of usage of the term ‘witch’ throughout Europe. In Scotland, a witch was regarded as a monstrous criminal who had committed the ultimate treason by rejecting God and entering into alliance with Devil. In Spain, there was a

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vol. 56, no.4, 1996.

<sup>20</sup>Guiley, Rosemary Ellen Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft, New York, Oxford: Facts on File, Limited., 1989.

<sup>21</sup> Witch of Endor in Samuel I, Old Testament. The Witch of Endor was a necromancer who raised the spirit of Samuel at the request of King Saul of Israel. Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft, p.367

<sup>22</sup> Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft.

distinction between *brujeria* (witchcraft) and *hechiceria* (sorcery). French historians on the other hand, use the term *sorcier* to cover these two.<sup>24</sup> In Northern Netherlands, the term most commonly used was *toverij*. The term not only indicated injurious witchcraft, but also some magical practices including healing. The term *heks* started to be used after the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup> In Hungary *taltos*, a shaman-like sorcerer<sup>26</sup> was the subject to accusations of witchcraft of seventeenth century. In Italy, the word for witch was *strega*.

#### 1.4. Conception of Witchcraft in Europe

Accusations of witchcraft generally included accusations of Satanism throughout Europe in seventeenth century. Examples are numerous. An interesting information concerning the pacts with the Devil is from France. A priest of Loudun, whose name is Urbain Grandier, accused of entering in a pact with the Devil. In 1634 he condemned by the Council of State, Laubardemont. The pact as a document was used as an evidence against Grandier:

My Lord and Master, I won you for my God; I promise to serve you while I live, and from this hour I renounce all other Gods and Jesus Christ and Mary and all the Saints of Heaven and the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, and all the goodwill thereof and the prayers which might be made for me. I promise to adore you and do you homage at least three times a day and to do the most evil that I can and to lead into evil as many persons as shall possible to me, and heartily I renounce the Christ, Baptism,

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<sup>23</sup> [Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft.](#)

<sup>24</sup> Scarre, Geoffrey, [Witchcraft and Magic in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe.](#)

<sup>25</sup> Marijke Gijswit-Hofstra et.al. [Witchcraft in the Netherlands from the fourteenth to the twentieth century.](#) , Amsterdam: Universitate Pers Notterdam., 1991, p.2

<sup>26</sup> Ankarloo, Bengt and Gustav Henningsen (eds). [Early Modern European Witchcraft, Centres and Peripheries.](#) New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.p. 244.

and all the merits of Jesus Christ; and in case I should desire to change, I give you my body and soul, and my life as holding it from you, having dedicated it for ever without any will to repent. Signed URBAIN GRANDIER in his blood.<sup>27</sup>

In Scotland, between 1592 and 1662 there were nearly 1300 prosecutions of witches accused of being in a pact with Devil. The notion of the pact of witches with the Devil was introduced to criminal procedure after 1563. Before this date, witchcraft was an offence in ecclesiastical and common law. Sorcery was among the cases of offence to be treated by the Justice of Ayre ( travelling law court).<sup>28</sup> The Witchcraft Act of 1563, was directed to the witches who “ had entered into a pact with the Devil and flew by night to secret ceremonies to worship him.”<sup>29</sup> The first trials having demonological ingredients existed between 1590-1. These trials were so famous that *Newes from Scotland* was published in London in 1591. These trials were treason trials:

Large numbers of people were accused of meeting with the Devil at the North Berwick in order to perform acts of sorcery against the person of the King.<sup>30</sup>

In Leipzig, the tract named *Practica Nove Rerum Criminalum* written by Benedict Carpzov, published in 1635, illustrates the common notion of diabolical pact. Carpzov believes in stories of renunciations of God and worshipping the Devil. His work is of special importance because he was one of the leading jurists of his time.<sup>31</sup> In Sweden, after 1650 a number of women were accused of gathering for Sabbaths. Some of them were burnt as a result. In 1652, in Geneva, a woman named Mice Chaperon was burnt because

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<sup>27</sup> De Givry, Grillot *Witchcraft, Magic and Alchemy*, New York: Dover Publishers, 1971. p. 119.

<sup>28</sup> Larner Christina, *Witchcraft and Religion, The Politics of Popular Belief*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishers, 1984., p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>31</sup> Lea, H.C. *Materials towards the History of Witchcraft*, Howland Publishers, 1957.

she had a witch- mark showing her demonical power to possess.<sup>32</sup> In Hungary, a treatise of 1656, called *Disputatio Theologica de Lamiis at Veneficus* written by John C. Mediomontanus distinguishes the sorcerer as one in a pact with the Devil, sorcerers are labelled as *Lamia Veneficae*.<sup>33</sup> The argument of Mediomontanus is that the witches in a pact with the Devil are punishable criminals. In Wallachia, an act issued between 1648 and 1667 divided witches into three categories. “ Those blended by the devil and imagine themselves to be witches” called *melancoliae*, “ Those who have already entered into pact but have injured no one” called *realiter foederate non tamen maleficiae*, and finally those who were actively in work with the Devil. These were *maleficiae*, and deserved to be executed.<sup>34</sup> The Bamberg Neue Zeitung of 1659, reported that a Sabbath gathering was held at Kerydenberg and had an attendance of 3000. “There were priests who baptised in the name of the devil and parents who dedicated their unborn children to Satan”<sup>35</sup> Twenty-two girls were burnt consequently. Seventeenth century approach to those who denied the existence of witchcraft was to label them as heathens <sup>36</sup> In Wurttemberg, a group of children accused adults of being possessed and eleven women and three men were executed consequently between 1666-1667.<sup>37</sup>

At the centre of the most witch beliefs was the Devil, the source of witches’ magic, “ the partner with whom she concluded the pact, and the object of her

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1118

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1254.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1269-1270.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1182.

<sup>36</sup> Lea, p. 1206, J. Klele. a nineteenth century writer in his tract called *Hexenwahn und Hexenprozesse in der ehemaligen Reichstadt und Landvogtei* (1893) published in Hagenau stated that:

They are godless men, teachers of error, heretics and not Christians, as they told, like the atheist, the heathen and the Turks, who believe there exists no devil and no hell and therefore no sorcerers.

<sup>37</sup> Lea, H.C., p. 1086.

adoration.”<sup>38</sup> In the fullest sense of the word a witch was both a harmful magician and a worshipper of the Devil, and the pact was the means by which the two forms of activity were most clearly related. Another idea which was taken together with the pact was that those witches who made pacts with the devil also worshipped him collectively and engaged in a number of blasphemous, amoral and obscene rites. These gatherings or so called Sabbaths was another driving motive of the witchcraft accusations. Without the belief in the Sabbath and the alliance of Devil, the European witch-hunt would have been a much smaller judicial operation.<sup>39</sup> These concepts were not new. Keith Thomas argues that these ideas could be observed in late Middle Ages.<sup>40</sup> Their elaboration however, is the work of religious authorities of Europe and measures started to be taken. The Papal Bull *Summis Desiderantes Affectibus* issued by Innocent VIII in 1484 and *Malleus Maleficarum*, put out by Dominican Inquisitors in 1486, created a new perception of witchcraft and the proposed methods of prosecutions used in Europe at large throughout seventeenth century.<sup>41</sup> Pope Innocent VII declared in 1484 that: “ [the witches], unmindful of their own salvation and straying from the Catholic faith have abandoned themselves to devils and [practised] incubi, and succubi... are a cause of scandal and dangerous example to many.”<sup>42</sup> The interest of educated people in witchcraft was determined by this new satanic component. Debates among intellectuals focused on the

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<sup>38</sup> Levack., p. 29.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas, Keith, Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England, London: Penguin Books, 1971.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 521. Thomas asserts that The Papal Bull was issued in Germany, and *Malleus Maleficarum* published sixteen times before 1700, and eleven times only in France.

<sup>42</sup> H.C. Erik Midelfort “ Were there Really Witches “ in Kingdon, Robert M. (ed.), Transition and Revolution, Problems and Issues of European Renaissance and Reformation History., Minneapolis, Minnesota: Burgess Publishing Company, 1974. p.208.



possibility of a pact with Satan. Alberico Gentile, an Italian jurist and philosopher,<sup>43</sup> states in 1604 that:

It is disputed, if a witch only makes a compact and does nothing evil; but his is a most atrocious crime- not a mere attempt but a consummated apostasy.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, Tomasso Campanella, in *De Sense Rerum et Magica*, expresses his doubt about the alliance of witches with the Devil.<sup>45</sup> John Baptist Van Helmont, in 1644 argued for the supervision of Satan in the activities of witches. Van Helmont splits disciples of Satan into three categories;

those who deny the existence of Satan and his works, those who believe in demons but say that there are not enemies of man and that crimes of witches are fallacious fables and hypochondriac inventions; third, those under the authority of Scripture admit diabolical doings but say that these are mere arts which are condemned only because framed by Satan for evil.<sup>46</sup>

It was the heretical component which was under discussion, the scepticism concerned not with the existence of witches but the possibility of the Devil's active involvement in witchcraft.

### **1.5. Conception of Witchcraft in England**

In England, the belief that some people had supernatural forces, of course, is older than seventeenth century. Witchcraft was a general term and included a variety of

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<sup>43</sup> Lea notes that he is placed among philosophers because of his character of mind., p.1351.

<sup>44</sup> ibid., p. 1352.

<sup>45</sup> ibid., p. 1356.

practices. The main distinction was made between sorcerers and witches. The early seventeenth century popular concept of witchcraft did not include the pact with the Devil. “ There was no English translation of *Malleus* until modern times.”<sup>47</sup> The Essex minister George Grifford observes in 1587 that:

The people’s hatred was not a form of their religious intolerance; it sprang from their fear of their hostile acts towards their neighbours, not from outrage at their supposed association with the Devil.<sup>48</sup>

The main distinction was made between witches and sorcerers. Witches served for evil or good purposes with their innate capacity to harm or cure. On the other hand, anyone knowing the true formula could practice sorcery. Apart from this general distinction there existed various definitions belonging to various religious groups. The works of a contemporary, Reginald Scot who wrote the *Discoverie of Witchcraft* and modern scholar Alan Macfarlane with his Witchcraft and Magic in Tudor and Stuart England both aimed to identify various usages of the term witch. According to Macfarlane, the term witchcraft has been used in two ways. First, it has been employed as a term to cover all the activities “which came within the scope of the English witchcraft statutes of 1542, 1563, 1604 or the ecclesiastical visitation articles which talked about “ witchcraft conjuring southsaying, charmes.”<sup>49</sup> Prior to the act of 1604, the concept did not include the pact with the Devil. The notion that the witch owed her powers to the Devil was not welcomed by judicial mechanism of England previously. An argument is made by Keith Thomas

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<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1356.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas., p. 523.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 534.

about the late arrival of the so-called continental concept of witchcraft. The independence of the English Church according to Thomas seems to have been partially responsible for this.<sup>50</sup> England had no Inquisition and no Roman Law and Papal authority was rather weak in comparison to the European mainland. So the acceptance of ideas and the corresponding modification of laws might have taken a longer time in England. In 1584, for example when Reginald Scot denied the possibility of a diabolical compact in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, “his opponents were mainly continental writers.”<sup>51</sup> In England, this work was not published in the authors lifetime: the question of compact was of little interest. It was in the late seventeenth century, when the work was published in England. A known witch case was Mary Glover Case, which was interpreted by A scientist of the time Edward Jorden. Jorden attempted to explain her position as hysteria rather a state of being in a compact with Satan, i.e. possession. Mary Glover, declared to have been witched by a woman called Elizabeth Jackson, and she was examined by the physician Edward Jorden. The pamphlet *A Brief discourse of a disease called the Suffocation of the Mother, Written uppon on occasion which hath beene of late taken thereby, to suspect possession of an evil spirit or some such like supernatural power.* (1603), suggested to search for natural causes of bewitchment cases. Even the learned men, argues Edward Jorden:

may mistake the causes...they are carried unto Magical and Metaphysical speculations. But the learned Phisitian who hath first beene trained up in the study of Philosophy, and afterwards

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<sup>49</sup> Macfarlane, Alan *Witchcraft and Magic in Tudor and Stuart England*, London: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971. Pp. 3-4.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas, p. 522.

<sup>51</sup> ibid., p. 522

confirmed by the practice and experience of all manner of naturall diseases, is best able to discern what is naturall, what not naturall<sup>52</sup>

#### 1.4. Satanic Ingredient Introduced in England

The last act concerning witches, the act of 1604, was issued against demonic witchcraft, and in this way, magical practices gained another dimension. The acts issued before had not given attention to witchcraft as springing from possession; rather it was seen as a social crime. This as of 1604 made it “ a felony to conjure, consult, entertain, covenant with, employ, feed or reward any evil spirit for any purpose”<sup>53</sup>, thus introducing the Devil’s pact into the law of England. The first oral Devil’s pact was recorded in 1612.<sup>54</sup> The tract published in 1646 by John Davenport called *The Witches of Huntington* gives an account of witches accused of being charmed by a demon. “They renounce God and worship him ... The demon has intercourse with the women”<sup>55</sup> In 1684, Sir Robert Filmer, chiefly known as the most influential political philosopher of the period, in his *Advertisement to the Jurymen of England touching Witches*, gives the definition of witchcraft as “an art serving for the working of Wonders, by the assistance of Devil, so far as God shall permit”<sup>56</sup>

The circulation of the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the Papal Bull *Summus Desiderantes Affectibus* in England created an environment of discussion on the nature of

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<sup>52</sup> Jorden, Edward *A Brief discourse of a disease called the Suffocation of the Mother, Written upon on occasion which hath beene of late taken thereby, to suspect possession of an evil spirit or some such like supernatural power.* (1603),Pp. 4-5.

<sup>53</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft*, p. 372.

<sup>54</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft*, p. 102.

<sup>55</sup> Lea, p. 1312.

witchcraft. The notion of the alliance of the Devil with the witches, changed the essence of witchcraft. Practice has changed into Christian heresy, because it involved the renunciation of God and adherence to his enemy.<sup>57</sup> Attached to this was the concept of the Sabbath, the nocturnal meeting where witches gathered and worshipped the Devil. This was also under discussion. The Sabbath was rarely seen in England compared to Europe. There was no trial record relating to the Sabbath until 1612.

The demonical ingredient gained increasing importance with the involvement of English intellectuals in the debates. Reginald Scot, displayed a disbelief in the alliance of witches with the Devil in his tract called *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584)<sup>58</sup>. His standpoint was that God could not allow witches exercise supernatural power.<sup>59</sup> He believed in the existence of witches, but he argued that there was no Biblical reference confirming the possibility of a demonical pact. John Webster shared Scot's view. He was regarded as one of the significant witch-ologists of the Restoration. He was known as a non-conformist clergyman but afterwards it is probable that he quit for his studies in medicine.<sup>60</sup> In his work called *Displaying the Supposed Witchcraft* (1699), denying that witches were mentioned in the Bible, Webster stated that:

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<sup>56</sup> ibid., p. 1312.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas, p. 521

<sup>58</sup> The circulation date of the book in England is 1651, it was firstly printed in 1584, but the publication was forbidden for about seventy years.

<sup>59</sup> Thorndike, Lynn History of magic and Experimental Science, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1958.

<sup>60</sup> Notestein, Wallace, A History of Witchcraft in England from 1558 to 1718. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968., p. 298.

To deny the existence of angles and spirits or the resurrection does not infer denial of the existence of God. Nor denying witchcraft infer denial of the existence of angles and spirits.<sup>61</sup>

John Webster found it unnecessary to attribute any kind of phenomena to supernatural causes. Lack of understanding of natural phenomena, according to Webster, encouraged the belief in the existence of witches.<sup>62</sup> He was a member of the Royal Society and praised the experimental science promoted by it. “... Continued discoveries of these learned and indefatigable persons that are of the Royal Society...do plainly evince that hitherto we have been ignorant of almost all the true cause of things.”<sup>63</sup> Belief in the supernatural and hence on demonical power acting upon nature suggested that experimental science was hopeless. He did not declared of himself as a disbeliever in the existence of witchcraft, indeed, he thought that witches did exist, but not through supernatural means. Witches according to him, were “ evil minded creatures inspired by the Devil”. Another member of the Royal Society, Joseph Glanvill, a minor Cambridge Platonist, published his *Sadducismus Triumphatus, or full and plain Evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions and Apparitions* in 1688 to refute John Webster. Expressing his belief, Glanvill stated that: “ ...Thousand in our nation have suffered Death for their vile compacts with Apostate Spirits”<sup>64</sup> Mentioning the doubt about the demonical pact, he argued that the more things may be impossible, the more credible

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<sup>61</sup> Webster, John *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft. Wherein is affirmed that there are many sorts of Deceivers and Impostors, and Divers persons under a passive Delusion of Melancholy and Fancy. But that there is a corporeal League made betwixt that Devil and the Witch, Or that he sucks on the Witches body, has Carnal copulation, or that Witches are turned into Cats and Dogs, raise tempests, or the like, is utterly denied and disproved.* By John Webster, Practitioner in Physick. London, printed by J.M. and to be sold by the Booksellers in London, 1699., preface.

<sup>62</sup> Coudert, Alison in Sarah Hutton ed. *Henry More: Tercentenary Studies*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990, p. 129.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p.129.

they are. ( *Credo quia impossibile* )<sup>65</sup> His defence of the existence of the incorporeal substances is mainly out of the inspiration he had from the ideas of Henry More. Similarly his attitude towards those who deny the existence of witchcraft is an extension to his attacks on mechanical philosophers. Mentioning Hobbes as a disbeliever in the existence of witchcraft Glanvill argued that:

What right do dogmatists have to deny the possibility of witchcraft since they themselves have no alternative explanations to offer for its palpable effects?<sup>66</sup>

Another leading figure in the witchcraft debate was Henry More. Henry More was a Cambridge Platonist who probably was the most known of the Cambridge men. His neo-platonic conception of the world, could be observed in his first publications, his *Conjectura cabbalistica* (1662) is a full discourse of his philosophical stand. Another main writing of Henry More is *An Antidote Against Atheisme* (1653). In his *Antidote*, More argues for the existence of spirit and immortality of the soul. His was against what he called philosophical materialism, and religious enthusiasm. *An Antidote*, is an attempt to degrade materialistic approach to nature, an approach which is leading to atheism. *Immortality of the Soul*, (1662) was written with the aim to define the existence of spiritual substance. His concept of 'Spirit of Nature' is fully developed in this work. This concept was not an intermediary between God and the World, like the occult forces, rather it was the active representation of God within the universe and acting upon it.

It is a substance incorporeal, but without sense and animadversion, pervading the whole matter of the universe, and

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<sup>64</sup> Lea, p. 1317.

<sup>65</sup> Coudert, p. 130.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.* p. 125.

exercising a plastical power therein according to the sundry predispositions and occasions in the parts it works upon, raising such phaenomena in the World, by directing the parts of the matter and their motion, as cannot be resolved into mere mechanical powers<sup>67</sup>

According to Henry More, the mechanical interpretation of natural phenomena was hindering the existence of incorporeal substance. The danger of mechanical philosophy was being close to atheism. Another attitude which was taken by Henry More as being close to atheism was the denial of the existence of witchcraft. His effort was to establish the existence of witchcraft on scientific basis, and he has consequently been labelled as a “scientific demonologist” by modern historians of science.<sup>68</sup> His Platonic conception of the universe provided him ability to argue for the existence of evil/good spirits within nature. But he was against the ideas that devils enter into carnal intercourse with the possessed, i.e. there were *succubi*, the notion that a witch could be converted into animals, like cats however was probable according to him.

...So that many of these Transformations into Wolves and Cats, may be as likely of the Soul having left thus the Body, as by the Devil’s possessing the Body and transfiguring it himself.<sup>69</sup>

Generally speaking, the intellectuals of seventeenth century England got involved with the witchcraft debate after the introduction of the ‘continental’ concept of witchcraft to England, that is the alliance of a witch with the Devil. Whether this new ingredient of witchcraft gained popularity quickly is under dispute. However,

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<sup>67</sup> More, Henry *Immortality of the Soul, So fare forth as it is demonstrable from the Knowledge of NATURE and the Light of Reason. By Henry More, D.D., Fellow of Christ’s College in Cambridge, London, Printed by James Flesher, for William Morden Book-Seller in Cambridge. MDCLXII* , chap. 2, sec. 1.

<sup>68</sup> Coudert, p. 115-133.

<sup>69</sup> More, Henry, *Immortality of the Soul*, book II, p. 126.



contemporary evidence shows that the concept was under continuous discussion during the seventeenth century in England. The image of witches under discussion was that they kept familiar with themselves, these familiars were pets being with the witches wherever they go. Witches had power over natural phenomena. Another feature of witches was their ability to transform themselves into different forms, and transport themselves. All these abilities of witches, were believed to have been practised by the covenant with the Devil. With this alliance the Devil ruled the body and soul of the witch. Sabbath gatherings of the witches were the nightly meetings of the witches to show their loyalty to Devil. The total concept of witchcraft included these ingredients, and the educated people of seventeenth century argued about the existence of these features within the nature of witchcraft. The general problem being the nature of incorporeal things and their effect upon natural phenomena, was enriched with the addition to Satanic ingredient to the witchcraft. Before the introduction of demonic concept, there was no such a thing as a witchcraft debate. The cases of witchcraft turned out to be case studies for the intellectuals of the seventeenth century who argued for or against the Satanic ingredient. Next chapter is a survey of debate among the educated people over the total concept of witchcraft.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PAMPHLET LITERATURE ON THE NATURE OF WITCHCRAFT

#### 2.1. The Nature of the Debate

Seventeenth century writers who dealt with witchcraft were not directly concerned with the existence of witchcraft. Although there were authors who accused others of denying the existence of witchcraft, the main points of the discussion were the ingredients of the definition of witchcraft. " A pledge to serve the Devil or a lesser demon, sometimes oral but traditionally written on virgin parchment and signed in Blood. " <sup>70</sup> The pact between witches and the Devil was the central point in the witchcraft literature of seventeenth century. Taking the pact as the centre, philosophical, judicial and religious debates flourished. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the debates within the contexts of theology, law and intellectual. In fact there were no rigid boundaries between these different approaches. The mixed atmosphere of the period allowed mixed approaches to the conception of witchcraft. Books were written with the purpose of confuting or supporting one another in their opinion about witchcraft or with the aim of providing a sound basis of discussion on the being of witchcraft. One of the writers with the intention

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<sup>70</sup> Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft p.99

of putting the witchcraft discussions on scientific basis was John Webster. In his book called *The Displaying of supposed witchcraft* (1699), he complains about the lack of progress in witchcraft discussions:

There are numerous company of Authors that have written of magick, witchcraft and sorcery, Inchantment, Spirits and Apparitions, in sundry ages of divers countrys, and in various languages: yet have they for the most borrowed one from another, or have transcribed what others had written before them. So that thereby there had been no right progress made truly to discover the theory or ground of these dark and abstruse matters.<sup>71</sup>

## **2.2. First Phase of the Debate: Reginald Scot**

The witchcraft literature was fed by the ongoing debates among intellectuals, or so called sceptics and believers about witchcraft. One of the people who was mostly under continuous attack by believers was Reginald Scot. Reginald Scot is of special interest because he was the first individual who openly stated his scepticism about the concept of witchcraft. His scepticism was directed to the Continental concept of demonic witchcraft since the image of witches was not including the Satanic ingredient at the time of publication of his work. The treatise of Reginald Scot is called *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* printed in London. First edition of the book is dated 1584 , but the publication in England actually took place in the year 1665. Reginald Scot was highly influenced by the writings of Cornelius Agrippa, author of three volumes devoted to occult philosophy and also known as a sceptic about witchcraft in the sixteenth century.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Webster, John preface.

<sup>72</sup> King, Francis, Witchcraft and Demonology, London: Treasure Press, 1991.,p.76.

The alliance of the Devil with witches was Scot's concern in the definition of witchcraft:

That we do not deny the existence of Witchcraft absolute and simpliciter sed secundum quid, and that, they do not exist tali modo, that is they do not make a visible contract with the Devil, he doth not suck upon their bodies, they have not carnal copulation with him <sup>73</sup>

Reginald Scot with his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) was the subject of accusations. His scepticism on the alliance of witches with Satan led him to point out that there exists no Biblical reference confirming a pact between sorcerers and Devil, and argue that the phenomenon of the Incubus is a natural disease.

Reginald Scot's ideas and his book *Discoverie of Witchcraft* had chain of opponents starting from King James VI of Scotland. James VI, attacked Scot in his *Demonology* and moreover ordered the copies of the *Discoverie* to be burned. The reactions to the book came a bit later than its publications therefore.<sup>74</sup> Reginald Scot was not a philosopher nor had he a theological axe to grind.<sup>75</sup> His interest in witchcraft was a personal one and his interpretations of Bible were of a rather amateurish kind. His opponents, however, were fully equipped with the knowledge of Biblical texts and were regarded as authorities in their areas of interest. As we shall observe later, the defenders of the ideas of Reginald Scot were also more professional than Scot. Therefore, the ongoing

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<sup>73</sup> Scot, Reginald, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft, Wherein the lewde dealing of witches and witchmongers is notablie detected, the knaverie of conjurors, the impetie of inchantors, the follie of soothsaiers, .... Heerunto is added a treatise upon the nature and substance of Spirits and divels &tc: all latelie written by Reginald Scot. Esquire.* 1584. p. 37

<sup>74</sup> King, p.76

<sup>75</sup> Notestein, p.228

debate was initiated by Reginald Scot and kept going on among the intellectuals of different professions.

One discourse written against Scot, was by William Perkins: *The Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*. The book was written before the death of Queen Elizabeth. Perkins was a Puritan, his point of view was a theological one and his arguments were totally based on biblical texts.<sup>76</sup> Already, in the title page of the book it is mentioned that " the contents had been framed in his ordinarie course of preaching."<sup>77</sup> William Perkins constructs an analogy between the covenant of God with Church and the covenant of Satan with his subjects.<sup>78</sup> Talking about the Devil, he argues that:

“He knowes that Man naturally out of the light of grace hath but a mere Soul indued onely with some generall and confused notions, and as for matters of deeper apprehension touching God and heavenly things, there is a vaile of ignorance and blindnesse...”<sup>79</sup>

With man in this state, the Devil interferes and makes him his slave. And the witches are the most notorious rebel figures for him, because a witch " renounced God himself, the King of Kings, she leaves the societie of his Church and people, she bindeth herself in league with the devil."<sup>80</sup> William Perkins in *The Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608) had given the definition of Witchcraft which Reginald Scot was against:

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<sup>76</sup> ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ankarloo, p.56

<sup>78</sup> Perkins, William *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft; So Farre Forth as it is revealed in the Scripture, and manifest by true experience. Framed and Delivered by William Perkins, in his ordinarie course of preaching, Printed by Cantrel Legge, Printer to the Universitie of Cambridge., 1608., p.4.*

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, p.5

<sup>80</sup> Levack, p.66

“A witch is a magician, who either by open or secret League wittingly consenteth to use the aid and assistance of the Devil in the working of Wonders.”<sup>81</sup>

Prior to the statute of 1604, the identification of the witch was a matter of discussion. Contemporaries argued that, since the judicial mechanism is strict enough, one should be careful in accusing someone as a witch:

“Experience shows that ignorant people...will make strong proofs of such presumptions, whereupon sometimes jurors do give their verdict against parties innocent”<sup>82</sup>

After the 1604 statute we see an increasing emphasis on the satanic compact, and references to signs of the compact in identifying the witch, in other words the Devil's mark. William Perkins spent a chapter in his *Discourse* indicating ways to be sure of satanic compact.<sup>83</sup>

John Cotta was a physician, who thought rather like Perkins about witchcraft. He was a "Doctor in Physicke" at Northampton, who had taken his B.A. at Cambridge. He was interested in the relationship of witchcraft and sickness.<sup>84</sup> In 1616 he published *The Triall of Witchcraft*. He believed in the alliance of witches with the Devil and expressed the point in his writings. John Cotta explains the mechanism of the procedure:

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<sup>81</sup> Perkins p.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Thomas, Keith p. 523

<sup>83</sup> Perkins, p. 199-209

<sup>84</sup> Notestein p. 229

"sometimes the supernatural power of the Divell in this kinde, may appeare unto outward sense manifest, and the witch and sorcerer be found a voluntarie with him. " <sup>85</sup>

His aim was to find better ways of identifying witches and argued that many accusations of witchcraft were due to the lack of medical explanation.<sup>86</sup> His theological attitude however, was not altered by his efforts of finding medical explanations for witchcraft cases. His belief in the existence of the witches' alliance with the Devil was not undermined. Therefore, he found in Reginald Scot's writings a lot to attack. He blamed Scot for failing to differentiate real witches from impostors.<sup>87</sup> The investigation of the writings of Cotta shows that, his theological stand and scientific attitude were mixed in dealing with witchcraft. His efforts as a physician to identify the cases of bewitchment is an illustration to this fact. " God hath give nothing unto man but his travail and pain, and according to his studious...." <sup>88</sup>. According to Keith Thomas this was a glorification of the abilities of human beings in finding worldly solutions to the problems rather than supernatural explanations. On the other hand Cotta, talking about the unexplained phenomena stated that:

"The impossibilitie of either of these unusual or ordinarie course of nature, doth certainly prove an infallibilitie of superiour nature, which assuredly therefore must needs be either Divine or Diabolical" <sup>89</sup>

Not all of the leading thinkers of the period wrote against Scot. Robert Filmer in his *Advertisement to the Jurymen of England touching Witches* (1684) supported Scot.

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<sup>85</sup> Cotta, *The Triall of Witchcraft: Showing the true and Righ Method of the Discoverie*. 1616, p.40

<sup>86</sup> Notestein p. 230

<sup>87</sup> Notestein p. 231

<sup>88</sup> Thomas p.332

<sup>89</sup> Cotta, p. 70

His treatise was written with the purpose of refuting William Perkins.<sup>90</sup> His approach to the subject was highly theological. He read through the Old Testament and searched whether witchcraft was mentioned in the ways Perkins claimed by. He reached the conclusion that most of the evidence that had been used was worth little or nothing.

### **2.3. Second Phase: Late Seventeenth Century Discussions.**

Early Seventeenth century witchcraft discussions followed the path opened by Reginald Scot. His opposition to the definition of witchcraft faced continuous replies by intellectuals from various backgrounds. The point of view was mainly theological. The second period, which includes the debates between intellectuals like Henry More, Joseph Glanvill, John Webster and Meric Casaubon, had a somewhat different atmosphere. While arguing on the possibility of the existence of witchcraft, the above mentioned intellectuals approached the concept with their own, distinctive conceptions of universe. Common attitudes towards the disbelievers in witchcraft were harsh. The difference in the second half of the seventeenth century might be said to be the existence in an atmosphere of tension between science and religion. In such an environment, the declaration of disbelief in witchcraft was regarded as a declaration of the belief in the separation of religion and science. The common intellectual tendency was that reason, and preferably science, should be in the service of religion. Hence, the separation of the spheres of theology and science was dangerous as will be discussed soon.

Writers like Henry More and Meric Casaubon give an account of their conceptions of the universe before starting the arguments on the subject. Henry More in his *An*

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<sup>90</sup> Notestein p. 241



*Antidote Against Atheisme* (1653), and Joseph Glanvill in *Some Philosophical Considerations on the Being of Witchcraft* (1667) give an explanation of how nature works, argue for the existence of spirit within matter, and discuss the action of spirit in natural phenomena. This introductory information is preparatory to coming arguments on witchcraft. Joseph Glanvill and Henry More argued concerning the sexual intercourse of the Devil and witches.

Bewitchment and possession were the cases Henry More interested in. The symptoms caused by the entering of the Devil into the body of a man is given by Henry More, according to his observations, “*foretelling things to come, Telling what such and such persons speak or do, as exactly as if they were by them*”<sup>91</sup> Devil, according to Henry More, after entering the body, holds all the operations of the Soul, and then acts and speaks as he wishes, by making use of the organs of the body at his own will. As justifications of his argument, Henry More in his *Antidote Against Atheisme* gives series of instances of the pact of witches with Devil.

One of the cases of possession and bewitchment is of Magdalena Crucia “first a *Nunne*, and then an *Abbatess*e of a Nunnery in *Corduba* in *Spain*.”<sup>92</sup> who was a sorcerer and was thirty years married to the Devil:” that by virtue of this contract she made with this spirit, she had done all the Miracles she did”<sup>93</sup> Magdalena was appearing in several places at once, and sometimes she would lift herself above the ground, and sometimes she could lengthen her hair so long that “ it would come to her heels, and

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<sup>91</sup> More Henry, *An Antidote Against Atheisme or An Appeal to the Natural Faculties of Minde Of Man, whether there be not a God. By Henry more, Fellow of Christ Colledge in Cambridge. London. Printed by Roger Daniel, at Lovell’s Inne in Pater-noster-Row. Anno 1653.*, p. 115.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.* p.117.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, p. 98

cover her all over”<sup>94</sup> These evidences were the proofs of the existence of the Devil’s ability to create supernatural effects within human bodies according to Henry More. Concerning the compact of witches with the Devil, More proposes that this was not an unbelievable thing:

For it is not all unreasonable that such Ceremonies should passe bewixt a *Spirit* and a *Man*, when the like palpable Rites are used for the more firmly tying of Man to God... the *Divel* hath greater hanck upon the Soul of a *Witch* or *Wizard*, hath been perswaded to complete their *Contract* with him in such a grosse sensible way, and keeps them more fast from revolting from him, than if they had only contracted in bare words.<sup>95</sup>

The sexual intercourse between the Devil and witches was thing that Henry More did not give much credit:

"Wherefore witches confessing so frequently they do, that the Devil lies with them, and withall complaining of his tedious and offensive coldness, it is a shrewd presumption that he doth lie with them indeed, and that it is not a mere Dream"<sup>96</sup>

Meric Casaubon, the dean of Canterbury showed interest in the nature of witchcraft in paralellity with Joseph Glanvill and Henry More. In is work Meric Casaubon *Of Credulity and Incredulity In things Natural, Civil and Divine* (1668), states that he was interested in witchcraft for a long time and attended trials of witches. His argument in *A Letter to Peter du Moulin* (1669), is that it seems rational to disbelieve in the existence

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<sup>94</sup> *ibid.* P. 118.

<sup>95</sup> More. *An Antidote Against Atheisme* P. 127.

<sup>96</sup> More, Henry *An Antidote Against Atheisme* p.138.

of witches. But he insisted that there existed a huge body of narratives so authentic that to doubt them would be evidence of infidelity:

Hence to infer and conclude, there is no such thing, as either *Witches*, or *Spirits*; there is no truth, but may be denied upon the same ground, since it is certain, there is no *truth*, no nor *vertue*, but it is attended with a counterfeit, often mistaken for the true; as by divers Ancients, both Historians, and Philosophers, is observed, by sundry pregnant instances confirmed;<sup>97</sup>

The scepticism shown concerning the existence of witches was dangerous according to Casaubon. Casaubon draw attention of atheistical implications of the tendency to ignore the supernatural interference in the activities of witches. “ They do not believe witches and wizards, seldom believe that there be *Devils*, or *Spirits*.”<sup>98</sup> In his other tract named *Of Credulity and Incredulity In things Divine and Spiritual* (1670), Casaubon expresses his idea regarding those who deny the existence of witchcraft:

...That they that deny, or will not believe any *supernatural operations*, by witches and magicians, are generally observed to be Atheists, or well affected this way.<sup>99</sup>

Concerning the pact of witches with Satan, he was cautious, and argued that this issue was problematic, because it was hard for anyone to distinguish the natural causes from demonic ones. The first part of *Of Credulity and Incredulity In things Natural, Civil and Divine* (1668) is an effort to display criteria for such a division in identifying the activities

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<sup>97</sup> Casaubon, *Of Credulity and Incredulity of things* 1668. p. 32-33.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.* xii.

<sup>99</sup> Casaubon, Meric *Of Credulity and Incredulity; in things Divine and Spiritual: Wherein, (among other things) A true and faithful account is given of the Platonic Philosophy, As it hath reference to Christianity: As also the business of Witches and Witchcraft Against a late writer, fully Argued and Disputed. By Merick Casaubon D.D. and one of the Prebends of the Christ Church, Canterbury. London, Printed by T.N. for Samuel Lownds over against Exeter-house in the Strand, 1670., p.171.*

of witches. One of his arguments regarding the effects of the Devil upon natural phenomena is that:

...when a thing doth happen in the clear light of the Sun, and in clear sight,...., if then many eyes be deceived; it is very likely, and so I grant, it doth often happen; it is by the art and intervention of the *Devil*, that they are so.<sup>100</sup>

Notestein's interpretation for Casaubon's stand, that it was hard for him to doubt the tradition of belief in spirits, the powers of Devil coming from the ancient times and fed by literature of centuries. "Criticism was but beginning to be applied to the tales of Roman and Greek writers. Their works were full of stories of magic and enchantment, and it was not easy for a seventeenth century student to shake himself free from their authority"<sup>101</sup> His belief in the tradition and religion, according to Notestein, he should be regarded as the upholders of superstition. Another interpretation of Casaubon comes from Robert Crocker, by creating a parallelism with that of Henry More. The two men's similar approach to the ones denying the satanic compact was by accusing them as disbelievers put them on the similar stands by Crocker in his "Mysticism and Enthusiasm in Henry More"<sup>102</sup>

John Webster, however, in *The Displaying of the Supposed Witchcraft* (1699) attempts to show the reasons why educated people hesitate to express their opinions on witchcraft. He thinks that fear or censorship and scandal is one reason and the weakness of virtue and morality is another. He gives examples of people like Roger Bacon, John Dee and Reginald Scot who were accused of conjuration by people like Meric Casaubon

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<sup>100</sup> Casaubon, *Of Credulity and Incredulity In things Natural, Civil and Divine* (1668) p. 164.

<sup>101</sup> Notestein. P. 294.

<sup>102</sup> Robert Crocker in Hutton p. 138.

and Joseph Glanvill. Reginald Scot was regarded as an anti-witchcraft writer by Casaubon,  
an interpretation which is found by John Webster to be groundless:

"People who strongly opposed and confuted the many wonderful  
and incredible actions and power ascribed our TD-0.1‡

the existence of witches is to deny the possibility of any sort of spiritual and divine world.<sup>105</sup>

Glanvill's interest in witchcraft cases led him to think of a project for defending belief in the existence of witches and for proving the credibility of supernatural phenomena. He received support from Henry More. More supporting the work of Glanvill, stated that:

I look upon it as a special piece of Providence that there ever and anon such fresh Examples of Apparitions and Witchcrafts as may rub up and awaken their benumbed and lethargick Minds into a suspicion at least, if not assurance, that there are other intelligent Beings besides those that are clad in heavy Earth and Clay.<sup>106</sup>

The Devil's assistance of witches, the sexual intercourse of Devil and the witch, should not be called into dispute according to Joseph Glanvill. This activity of the Devil is confirmed by numerous eye and ear witnesses. John Cotta, supporting Glanvill, argues that our understanding is twofold. First, there is our inward understanding, which he calls ratiocination. Then there are the outward senses, i.e. eye and ear.<sup>107</sup> This is why one should rely on the senses in the matter of witchcraft. Glanvill argued that, if someone denies the existence of witchcraft, he is infidel: for the notion of witchcraft is directly related to the idea of spirit. So, those who deny the existence of witches and compact with the Devil come close of denying the existence of vitals of religion like the existence of Angels, Spirits, Resurrection of the Body.<sup>108</sup> Denial is not rational according to him

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<sup>105</sup> Glanvill, Joseph, *Some Philosophical Considerations Touching the Being of Witches and Witchcraft written In a Letter to the much Honour'd Robert Hunt Esq. By J.G. a Member of the Royal Society. London, Printed by E.C. for James Collins at the Kings-head in Westminster-Hall. 1667.* p. 4-5.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted in Hunter, Religion and Science in early Modern England p.182.

<sup>107</sup> Cotta p.31

<sup>108</sup> Glanvill, p.4

because the world of spirits can not be measured by worldly rules. It is absurd, he argues to deny the existence of a phenomena by assuming its impossibility first.<sup>109</sup>

Taking these ideas into consideration, John Webster proposed that denial of the existence of Angels or Spirits, does not directly imply the denial of the God. Therefore, it is wrong of Glanvill to accuse those writers of Atheism. Moreover, denying the existence of witchcraft does not imply the Denial of the Spirits:

"Because in the priority of duration God was when spirits were not, for they are not immortal *a parte ante*. So, likewise the denying of existence of witches, doth not infer the denial of the Being of Spirits, for in the priority of the duration spirits were existent before witches... the denying of the existence of the latter doth not infer the denying of the being of the former." <sup>110</sup>

Another critical approach to the subject of the satanic compact was made by John Webster as an answer to Glanvill:

... as to ascribe the products of Nature to such wicked Instruments is blasphemus, in depriving Nature of the honour due to her, and robbing God of the honour and glory belonging unto him, for the wonderful power wherewith he hath endowed his creatures who were all made to shew for his power and Godhead.<sup>111</sup>

Supernatural phenomena should be attributed to God, not to Devil according to Webster. Those who take Devil as responsible for such matters become guilty of Idolatry. Webster followed the line of thought of Scot, Ady and Wagstaffe in denying that witches

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<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, p.12

<sup>110</sup> Webster, p. 38

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, p. 66.

were mentioned in the Bible.<sup>112</sup> He expressed his wonder that somehow absurd opinions about witchcraft were accepted by respectable writers.

Though the gross, absurd, impious, and Popish opinions of the too much magnified powers of Demons and Witches, in this Nation, were pretty well qualified and licenced by the writings of Wierus, Mr. Scot, Mr. Ady, Mr. Wagstaff and others.<sup>113</sup>

Webster took Glanvill's argument "We are ignorant of the extent and bounds of nature's sphere and possibilities" and argued that it was madness "to attribute those effects to wicked, fallen and degenerated demons that may be produced 'by the Course of Nature'."<sup>114</sup>

John Redwood in his book *Reason, Ridicule and Religion* regards Webster as being a hater of superstition and sought nature and reason as their satisfactory explanations. "He was among those rational theologians who believed in a theology other than the interventionist spiritual cosmology of their forbears"<sup>115</sup>. A careful reading through Webster shows that he was not a blind servant of the new science either. He attributed scientifically unexplained phenomena to God instead of proposing other explanations. The intellectual position of Webster regarding the concept of witchcraft is in between a mechanistic approach and a strictly theological attitude. Webster also in his *Displaying of the Supposed Witchcraft* defended Reginald Scot, arguing that Scot did not state the question whether witches existed or not, but: "he just wanted to know in what manner it

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<sup>112</sup> Thorndike, p. 575

<sup>113</sup> Webster, preface.

<sup>114</sup> Thorndike p.42

<sup>115</sup> Redwood, John *Reason, Ridicule and Religion. The Age of Enlightenment in England 1660-1750.*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1976.,p.153



acted."<sup>116</sup> So according to Webster, Glanvill and Meric Casaubon charged Reginald Scot falsely since he did not openly deny the existence of witchcraft.

The real target of the people who defended the concept of witchcraft with demonic elements in it was atheism and materialism:<sup>117</sup> John Redwood in his survey of theological controversies in England after the Restoration gave special interest to the attitude towards atheism. Redwood's account of the period will be discussed in coming chapter, but one thing to mention here is that according to Glanvill and More, the denial of witchcraft is a declaration of atheism. The project of More and Glanvill is regarded by Alison Coudert as a trial of differentiation of mechanism from materialism, and an employing of mechanistic philosophy in the service of religion.<sup>118</sup> For this reason, their attitudes towards people denying the spiritual, more precisely satanic, ingredients is understandable. The togetherness of corporeal and incorporeal should not be broken, according to Glanvill and More.

#### **2.4. Balthasar Bekker: A Dutch Sceptic**

Being Dutch, Balthasar Bekker, seems to be out of context in our survey of the debate but his work *The World Bewitched* (1695) deserves attention with its place in seventeenth century witchcraft discussions since this work was widely read and cited by English writers of the period. His book is said to have sold 4000 copies in two months and was translated into French, German and English.<sup>119</sup> Bekker was not called a

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<sup>116</sup> Webster, p.8

<sup>117</sup> Coudert in Hutton, Henry More: Tercentenary Studies p.119

<sup>118</sup> ibid., p.122

<sup>119</sup> H.R. Trevor-Roper "From the Ethnography of Witchcraft" in Mawrick, Max (ed.) Witchcraft and Sorcery, Selected Readings, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970.,p. 139.

monotheist, but a Cartesian, Hobbist. He was expelled from the Dutch Reformed Church on August 21, 1692. He spent the remaining six years of his life against charges of atheism.<sup>120</sup> There is a debate among the historians of science whether Bekker was the one who helped to change history through his rational criticism of the belief of witchcraft.<sup>121</sup> In order to comment on this argument, let us see the argument of Bekker in *The world Bewitched*. The driving force in writing his book is stated by Bekker in the beginning of his work: people had all kinds of prejudices about the power of the Devil. They attribute the ability to appear in the form of living or dead people, and in various forms animals as well. The belief that witches could make pacts with the Devil is a continuation of such kind of powers of the devil<sup>122</sup>.

Further it is imagined, that these People may, with the cooperation of the Devil, stir up tempest, shut the wind up into a Handkerchief, and let it out when they will... People even for the most absurd thing; they persuade themselves also, that these People devoted to Devil, learn of him the secret of making certain ointments, by which they make themselves invulnerable against Swords or Musquets.<sup>123</sup>

The abovementioned beliefs in the powers of the Devil, according to Bekker, were under continuous debate among the intellectual people of the time. He classifies the opinions concerning the nature of witchcraft as either believing everything what had been told, or denying almost anything about the common witch beliefs. As an example of these stands, the *Demonology* of James VI, is mentioned as opposed to Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*:

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<sup>120</sup> *ibid.* P. 121

<sup>121</sup> Gijswit-Hofstra and Frijof, p. 150

<sup>122</sup> Bekker, Balthasar *The World Bewitched or An Examination of the Common Opinion Concerning Spirits*, by Balthasar Bekker D.D. and Pastor at Amsterdam. Translated from a French Copy, approved of and subscribed by the Author's own Hand. Printed for R. Baldwin in Warwick-Lane, 1695.

<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*, p. 222-223.

These two Opinions so different, ought to be attributed to two Scots; to the one an Illustrious *King of Britain*, which is *King James*, the sixth King of *Scotland*, and first *King of England* of that name; on the other, to one of his Scotch subjects, A Scot by birth as by name, being called *Reynard Scot*; the King held the affirmative as to the popular Opinion of Witchcraft, and Apparition of Spirits, which his subject had already confuted.<sup>124</sup>

According to Bekker the Reformed Church should teach its members that the belief in witchcraft is superstition. The secular authorities also should punish the people who make accusations. The attitude of both secular and ecclesiastical authorities is just the reverse as Bekker observes. The preachers continuously talk about the powers of the devil in their Sermons.<sup>125</sup> Bekker, gives attention to the interpretation of the Bible in order to justify his argument that Devil has no power to be in a pact with witches. Nowhere in the bible it states that Devil has entered into a pact with the witch:

Reason I endeavour to bring the Reader to consider, whether the scripture gives occasion to believe all those things that are ordinarily said upon that subject, or to believe them so as they are said; or whether such Sentiments have not taken root in us from our tender Youth, and been confirmed by Custom.<sup>126</sup>

The significance of Bekker in our survey is that, he made use of the ideas of English writers for his purposes. Joseph Glanvill, Reginald Scot were some of the people he cited. Thus, he could be regarded in the context of England. His support and reaction were directed to English intellectual environment. With his approach to the debate, he was perhaps the most radical man who declared that the nature of witchcraft was not

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<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, P. 302.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*, Preface.

involving demonic features. The tools he made use of were purely theological however. His use of Biblical interpretation, his lack of knowledge on new science, makes it hard for us to label him as a follower of the trend of empiricism. His problem was with the powers assigned to the Devil in the course of witchcraft debate, his aim was to show that the tools of witchcraft were purely corporeal.

## **2.5. Judicial Side of the Debates**

Witch hunting in Europe in general usually took a judicial form, it is only reasonable to assume that the legal procedures used in criminal prosecutions and operated had a good deal to do with the origins of witch-hunt. Legal developments between thirteenth and sixteenth century which were widely used by the judicial mechanisms of seventeenth century could be summarised in a couple of points, first of these was the new inquisitorial system that made it easier for witch cases to be initiated and prosecuted, second was that the courts acquired the right to torture people who were accused of witchcraft to have confessions in a respectively short time. Third feature was that Local and Regional courts were allowed to operate without much interference from central or national judicial control, thus ensuring a relatively high number of convictions and executions. Accusation of witchcraft was a formal, public, sworn statement which resulted in the trial of the accused before the judge. If the accused admitted his guilt, or if the private accuser could provide certain proof, then the judge would decide against the defendant. If there was any doubt, however, the court would appeal to God, to provide some sign of the accused person's guilt or innocence. The most common way of doing this

was the water ordeal.<sup>127</sup> The idea of using water ordeal was that if the water refuses to receive the witch then this was one of the signs of the satanic alliance with the Devil. The reasoning behind such a practice was that “ the pure element would refuse to receive those who had renounced their baptism”.<sup>128</sup> Although the ecclesiastical authorities prohibited the use of water ordeal with in thirteenth century, still in the seventeenth century this practice is widely observed in popular level. Informal public ordeals named ‘swimming’ were used in England in by 1590.<sup>129</sup> “ The water, as the instrument of baptism, would reject those who had renounce it”<sup>130</sup> William Perkins, in his *Discourse of the Damned art of the Witchcraft* argued that the testing of witches through water ordeal was a method of no value.<sup>131</sup> This attitude of Perkins did not undermine his belief in satanic alliance of witches. Another contemporary who expressed his opinion on the existence was John Cotta. Cotta in his *Triall of Witchcraft*, argued that although he believed in diabolic compact of witches with the Devil, he declared his suspicion on the reliance on the trial of witches by water.<sup>132</sup>

English courts, like their continental counterparts, abandoned, the ordeal and other ‘ supernatural’ probations by the early thirteenth century. Technically, a private person , the individual who swore out the original complaint, not a legal official, prosecuted the crime. The trial remained public and oral and still resembled a contest between two adversaries, not a secret judicial investigation to establish the truth. The proof of a diabolical compact was a matter of difficulty for the legal procedure. In 1603, a

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<sup>127</sup> Levack, p. 68.

<sup>128</sup> Notestein, p. 99.

<sup>129</sup> Thomas, p. 658.

<sup>130</sup> Quoted in Thomas, p. 658.

<sup>131</sup> Perkins, pp. 186-251.

London preacher asserted that satanic compact could not be verified because: “ there can not be assigned any proper token or sign to know that any is essentially possessed; which sign must be apparent in all such as are so possessed from nature in disorder; and they choose rather to let the guilty escape than to punish the innocent”<sup>133</sup>. An evidence showing diabolical compact was the witch mark. The supposed witch bore the devil’s sign on her body, and carried a familiar with her. Familiar was a pet. The confession of the accused witch was needed as the best was for persecution, and the most commonly used procedure for having the confessions was the use of torture. The use of torture was sometimes so harsh that as one contemporary observed: “ witches , long tortured witch watching and fasting, and pinched when but ready to nod, are contended causelessly to accuse themselves, to be eased of present pain.”<sup>134</sup>

Many writers mention the procedures for the execution of witches. The first was Reginald Scot. According to him, the encouragement of torture and hanging of witches is wrong. Anyone urging these methods “deserve[d] a hundred times greater punishment than the murderers and thieves”<sup>135</sup>. Concerning the law of examination of witches by the inquisitors, Reginald Scot argued that, the accusations, in other words the phenomena which believed to be practised by witches may not be the activities of witches themselves:

Some of theses crimes may not onelie be in the power and the will of a witch, but may be accomplished by natural means: and therefore by them the matter in question is not decided... If all be

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<sup>132</sup> Cotta, pp. 104-114.

<sup>133</sup> Thomas, p. 686.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, p. 617.

<sup>135</sup> Lea, p. 1307

true that is alleged of their owings, why should we believe in Christ, because of his miracles, when a witch doth as great wonders as ever he did? <sup>136</sup>

Reginald Scot also made comments on the use of torture to have the confessions of the witches. He argued that the feeling of torments made people to declare themselves as witches although there was no proof found in this direction detected by witch-mongers of the time. Robert Filmer in his *Advertisement to the Jurymen of England touching Witches* (1684) argues that:

Although the Statute runs altogether in the disjunctive Or, and so makes every single crime capital, yet the Judges usually by a favourable interpretation take the disjunctive Or for the copulative And, and therefore ordinarily they condemn none for Witches, unless they be charged with the murdering of some persons. <sup>137</sup>

William Perkins, as a defender of the existence of demonical pact, allows the use of torture; “which may be lawfully used, hoebeit not in every case, but only upon strong and great presumption and when the party is obstinate”<sup>138</sup>. The proofs of the existence of the compact according to Perkins are confession and witnesses confirming the pact with the Devil. But he gives advice to judges to be sure of their proofs:

“ I advise all Jurors, that as they be diligent in their zeal of Gods glory, so they would be careful what they do and not to condemn any party suspected upon bare presumptions without sound and sufficient proofs, that they be not guilty through their own rashness of shedding innocent blood.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 34.

<sup>137</sup> Lea, p. 1312

<sup>138</sup> Perkins, p. 325.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*, p. 332.

Once the guilt has been proved, the punishment is Death as Perkins argues. Perkins as an answer to the question why should the witches be harshly punished gives the answer that league with the Devil, either secret, or openly is enough crime of witches. Perkins referring to witches being in alliance with the Devil stated that for they had given themselves to the Devil, they are the enemies of God:

...because he renounced God, his King and governour, and hath bound himselfe by other lawes to the service of the enemie of God, and his Church, death is his portion justly assigned him by God; he may not live<sup>140</sup>

The judicial mechanism concerning witchcraft was closely related to its satanic ingredient. The previously accepted innate capacity of witches to create supernatural effects upon natural phenomena was referenced back to Devil with the Act of 1604. Otherwise, the practices of witchcraft could have probably regarded as a social crime.

If one is to interpret the attitudes towards the nature of the witchcraft in seventeenth century, the first thing to be said is that, nearly nobody had debated over whether witches existed or not. The existence of witches was not under dispute, rather the centre of the discussions was the spiritual interference on the practices of witchcraft. The Devil, taken as an ally of the witches, constituted the subject of debate.

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<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 184-185.



## CHAPTER III

### THE WITCHCRAFT DEBATE IN A WIDER CONTEXT

#### 3.1. Francis Hutchinson: “Final Blow”

In the history of witchcraft the years from 1688 to 1718 may be taken as a period. This is not to say that the year of Glorious Revolution marked any transition in the course of the history of the belief. It did not. But we have attempted to suggest it as a date to constrain the influences of the Restoration. The year 1718 derives its importance for us from the publication, in that year, of Francis Hutchinson’s *Historical Essay on Witchcraft*, a book which, it is not to much to say, gave the final blow to the belief in England. This work must rank with Reginald Scot’s *Discoverie* as one of the most important works on the

subject in England.<sup>141</sup> The Chronological table of facts in Francis Hutchinson's *Essay*, is a valuable contribution to the history of witchcraft. The most complete authority on the subject of witchcraft is Francis Hutchinson's *An Historical Essay on Witchcraft* (1718). Hutchinson restricted himself for the most part to cases in which he had obtained most information.<sup>142</sup> The number of executions he counts having taken place in 250 years is about thousands as he suggested. 140 of the executions were in England. Hutchinson arguing that the torture as a method to obtain the confessions of witches was not common in English Law, but the famous witch-finder Matthew Hopkins and 'equally enthusiasts' invented such methods:

One was placing the accused on a table cross-edged, tying her legs and keeping her in that posture without food or sleep for twenty-four hours- an intolerable torture which would in most cases lead to confession of whatever was wanted.<sup>143</sup>

Hutchinson gives an account of procedures to discover the witches' pact with the devil, and the way to discover it, was to search for devil's mark. The change of attitude of the judiciary could be observed in the cases that Hutchinson give as examples. In one of the measures taken to identify the devil's mark:

The witch is kept cross -legged for twenty-four hours, a little hole is made in the door for the imps to enter and suck; as they can assume any shape the watchers are told to sweep the room at intervals and to kill any spiders or flies that they may see- if they can not be killed they are unquestionably imps. .. When these tests failed, came the water ordeal.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Notestein p. 343.

<sup>142</sup> Lecky, p. 120.

<sup>143</sup> Hutchinson, Francis, *An Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft with observations upon matters of fact, tending to clear the Texts of the Sacred Scriptures, and to confute the vulgar Errors about that point. And also two Sermons One in proof of the Christian Religion; the other concerning Good or Evil Angels.* By Francis Hutchinson, D.D. Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty, and Minister of St. James's Parish in St. Edmunds Bury. 1718 ,p. 83.

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, p. 83.

In 1712, the case of the Chief Justice Parker illustrates the change of attitude towards arbitrary procedures practised by witch-finders: At the summer assizes at Brentwood, when the jury brought in a verdict of manslaughter, he gave notice and warning that in future, if the ordeal was used and the accused died, all concerned would be guilty of willful murder.<sup>145</sup> According to Hutchinson, the laws directed to cases of witchcraft should be modified according to the needs of the time. Mentioning the laws he states that: “ they are not binding us, farther then we find them useful, and agreeable to our own Times.”<sup>146</sup> Francis Hutchinson does not declare his stand concerning the nature of witchcraft until the end of his *Essay*. Throughout the book, he gives examples of witch-trials, stories of accused witches and gives an account of the seventeenth century debate. One of the chapters in the book is reserved for the investigation through the Bible in order to see whether witches and their alliance with the Devil were mentioned in scripture or not. His aim is to understand whether the word ‘witch’ used in the Bible has the meaning with all its satanic implications or not. He realises that the meaning of the word itself had changed through time.:

It seems that there hath happened as great a Change to the word *Witch*; for *Witch* if Dr. More interprets it rightly, signifies a *wise woman*; and one may be pretty sure, that the law was not, *Thou shalt not suffer a wise Woman to live*.<sup>147</sup>

Moreover, concerning the pact of witches with the Devil, Hutchinson argues that, there is no mentioning of a diabolic pact with the Devil in the Bible. The word witch is applied to

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<sup>145</sup> *ibid.* p. 175-6

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*, p. 182.

*Inchanters* who were people ‘ working of wonders, by singing powerful Verses’ . These people were not acting in alliance with the Devil. The witches who were mentioned in the Bible were diviners and false prophets.<sup>148</sup> After this, he comes up to the argument that :

the Principles that the Witch-finders have proceeded upon, are unnatural, contradictory, and absurd; and if the Premises be prov’d false, who but a Mad-man will believe the conclusion?<sup>149</sup>

He declares himself to have made use of ‘ *Historical Examples*’ which made him to conclude that filling peoples heads with the stories of devils and spirits and witches corrupts the mind, and false accusations and prosecutions do not decrease but increase the evil deeds. Concerning the assumed pact of witches with the Devil, he argues that this supposition was never proved. Giving Holy Scripture as a reference, states that there is no reference in the scripture to such a kind of witches.<sup>150</sup>

*An Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft*, is of special importance because of its approach to the history of witchcraft beliefs. Francis Hutchinson, being a divine, had a respectable authority in dealing with scripture, and his arguments about the existence of an alliance of witches with the Devil through biblical justifications sound convincing. The advantage of Hutchinson was that, he had a knowledge of a century of debate about the nature of witchcraft. The belief in the existence of witchcraft was not dead by the eighteenth century, however, a variety of approaches to the nature of witchcraft were tolerated. The fate of Hutchinson would have been quite different in a seventeenth century

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<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, p. 287.

environment. Perhaps he would be remembered together with Reginald Scot, because their approaches show parallels. Here, at this point one wonders about the modification in opinion concerning witchcraft within a century. Changes in ideas cannot be observed easily. The way to understand the shifts of opinion in this study is to investigate the changing attitudes to the definition of witchcraft. These attitudes will be taken as parts of bigger attitudes of the period under discussion. In other words, the mentality of the period determined the approach to any kind of intellectual debate in seventeenth century. Since the period was a time of transition, the history of witchcraft was also changing considerably. The aim of this chapter is to underline this change with reference to mentalities of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment in England.

### **3.2. Renaissance and Seventeenth Century Witchcraft.**

In the previous chapter, several intellectuals are mentioned and their philosophical, religious and judicial approaches adverted to. Each individuals' stand is an object of investigation. However, they are reflections of common tendencies of the period. A connection of witchcraft debate with the Renaissance beliefs is suggested by Levack in The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe. His argument is that the concept of witchcraft was threatened by the Renaissance. However, the Renaissance developed the idea of witchcraft. The main philosophical system of Renaissance which is neo-Platonism, challenged the learned concept of witchcraft.<sup>151</sup> Instead of attributing the supernatural events to Devilish forces, neo-Platonic idea proposed that, the natural forces of the

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<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>151</sup> Levack, Brian P. , The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe, London: Longman Group Limited, 1995., p. 60

universe could be used by human beings themselves to create supernatural effects. The learned men of Renaissance “called magic ‘the highest point of natural philosophy’”.<sup>152</sup> The intellectual atmosphere of Renaissance provided interest in occult. The studies of matter-theory, cosmology, causality enabled the development of concepts like occult qualities.<sup>153</sup> Another intellectual trend, Hermetism, could have provided respectability to the practice of magic. The Hermetic interpretation of man as “semi-divine intermediary between the divine, and the terrestrial and as capable of creating his own nature, the key to which was the practice of magic...”<sup>154</sup> provided freedom for practitioners of magic. The natural magic of Renaissance had its counterpart as demonic magic which was sinful. Some of the Renaissance humanists were themselves practitioners of natural magic. However, they were not practising magic as the witches did. Their interest was rather a learned interest. In England, John Dee is no doubt the most famous. Dee used magic and astrology in Elizabethan Court. Dee had believed that he was in contact with good angels and he declared himself as an angel-conjuring magician.<sup>155</sup> The Renaissance *magi*, despite their use of the tools of witchcraft, like occult forces, were not punished for magic and witchcraft. Queen Elizabeth gave support to John Dee and assured that she would defend him in a case of persecution.<sup>156</sup> The accusations of witchcraft was seen but, did not come

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<sup>152</sup> Schmitt, Charles B., et.al. (eds.) The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1988, p. 264.

<sup>153</sup> ibid., p. 288

<sup>154</sup> Clulee, Nicholas H. John Dee’s Natural Philosophy, Between Science and Religion, London: Routledge, 1988, p.5.

<sup>155</sup> Yates, France Rosicrucian Enlightenment, London: Routledge, 1993., p 223. Yates argues that this declaration of him makes him subject of suspicion as being possibly in contact, not with angels, but with devils.

<sup>156</sup> ibid., p. 226.

up with a punishment in England. Renaissance magician was seen rather as “ a pious religious philosopher with insights into the secrets of divine and natural order”<sup>157</sup> .

The diabolic intervention was developed in Renaissance period. English intellectuals of Neo-Platonic background continued as most Christians did and probably still do, to believe in the power of Devil. Henry More and Joseph Glanvill were major thinkers who certainly did. The belief in the powers of the Devil was a much earlier belief than the Renaissance and it was not undermined with Renaissance. Indeed, belief in the total concept of witchcraft, reached a higher level in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

### **3.3. Reformation and Satanic Ingredient of Witchcraft**

The first reason for this is the Reformation. The Reformation could have increased the belief in the powers of the Devil<sup>158</sup>. Reformation brought the idea that the Devil was responsible for all the evil forces in the world. Some historians argue that the Reformation was the most painful of all the transitions through which the human intellect has passed.<sup>159</sup> The precondition for believing in witches was the belief in Satanic power and Satanic presence. This concept is a contribution of the Reformation which is central to witch beliefs.<sup>160</sup> Lecky gives the examples of Luther and Erasmus, and their firm belief in witchcraft with a Satanic alliance.<sup>161</sup> Luther declared that witches should be burnt even if

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<sup>157</sup> Clulee, Nicholas H. p.5

<sup>158</sup> Mappen, Marc (ed.)Witches and Historians. Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publisher Company, Inc., 1980., p.11

<sup>159</sup> Lecky, History of the Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe., New York: George Braziller, Inc. 1995 p.81.

<sup>160</sup> ibid., p. 81

<sup>161</sup> Lecky, P. 82-5.

they did no harm, because of the pact they made with the Devil.<sup>162</sup> Another Reformation figure expressing his opinions concerning witches was Calvin. He stated that “ the Bible...teaches us that there are witches and that they must be slain...God expressly commands that all witches and enchantresses shall be put on death; and this law of God is universal”<sup>163</sup>. The belief in the near omnipotent powers of the Devil continued in seventeenth-century witchcraft literature. Joseph Glanvill explains the nature of the Devil in his *Sadducismus Triumphatus* as: ‘The Devil is a body politic, in which there are very different orders and degrees of spirits, and perhaps in as much variety of place and state, as among ourselves’<sup>164</sup> According to Keith Thomas in the Reformation period ‘the Devil was a greater reality than ever’<sup>165</sup> A contemporary, John Knox, regarded him as ‘the prince and God of this world.’<sup>166</sup> Stories of satanic intervention in daily life were common in England and are paralleled by examples of God’s providential intervention upon universe.

The effect of Reformation on the concept of witchcraft could be in the form of strengthening the diabolic ingredient in the nature of witchcraft. A suggestion is that the Reformation period caused a change so that, now, all supernatural forces other than divine ones, came from a single source. This source remained to be the Devil throughout the seventeenth century.

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<sup>162</sup> Quoted in H.R. Trevor-Roper p. 130. In a book of Nicholas Paulus named *Hexenwahn und Hexenprozess, vornehmlich im 16ten Jahrhundert*, an the attitude of Luther towards witchcraft is given. Trevor-Roper argues that Luther justified his ideas giving the Bible as a reference.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.* p.130

<sup>164</sup> Thomas, Keith, p. 560

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*, p. 561

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*, p. 561.



### **3.4. Witchcraft Debate as Part of a Wider Context: An Interpretation**

The question of why debate of witchcraft played a part in seventeenth century

throughout the debate of seventeenth century the demonic alliance was continuously mentioned when talking about the activities of witches. So, the assumption that if someone believed in witches, he believed that the witch was in compact with Satan is not without some foundation. On the other hand, the reverse of argument is not true for debaters of the seventeenth century. The disbelief in the satanic intervention in the activities of witches did not mean a declaration that witches do not exist. There are numerous examples of individuals stating that there is no indication in the Bible that witches do have an alliance with the Devil. These people however came under attack those who accepted that the witchcraft did involve a diabolic compact. Their argument was that, if someone denied Satanic intervention, he might well deny God's intervention too. The concept of universe, as a battle field of the good and evil forces, survived in the Reformation period and was still popular among the seventeenth century intellectuals. The rage of neo-platonic ideas also helped the concept of spiritual intervention in nature. The blend of these ideas with the belief which has been confirmed by the Reformation that Devil is an active force in the universe, created an intelligentsia arguing for the existence of witchcraft as a concept having spiritual, and demonical ingredients. These intellectuals also took anyone doubting about these ingredients as antagonists and therefore labelled them as disbelievers of spirits, Devil, and God.

The chief point to be derived from the writings of the abovementioned people is that the point of concern is not whether witches existed or not, but rather the nature of the crime. The Devil as the ally of witches gains a considerable importance in these discussions. On the whole, it would be fair to say that the existence or practices of witches

were held together by the figure of the Devil. The concept of a Satanic compact was powerful enough to create considerable disputes between educated people of seventeenth century. The main controversy of the period is summarised by Joseph Glanvill:

The Question, wether there are *Witches* or not, is not a matter of vain Speculations, or of indifferent Moment; but an Inquiry of very great and weighty Importance. For, on the resolution of it, depends the Authority and just Execution of some of our *Laws*; and which is more, our *Religion* in its Main doctrines nearly concerned.<sup>167</sup>

According to Joseph Glanvill and Henry More, the belief in witches was a part of the chain of beliefs including, the power of demons, the Devil and Hell. The belief in an afterlife, more precisely the belief in eternal punishment, according to Glanvill, was a secure way to maintain order-political and social-, in this world. Once this chain was broken with a denial of the existence of witches the diabolical alliance, there would be a threat to social order. The common target of Henry More and Joseph Glanvill was Thomas Hobbes. With this information, it can be argued that, the fear of atheism and anarchy was a driving motive in defending the existence of the concept of witchcraft with satanic ingredients. The doctrine of Hell, however, was not as strong in the seventeenth century as it was before:

...people who had doubts about the eternity of hell, or who had come to disbelieve it, refrained from publishing their doubts not only because of the personal risk involved, but also because genuine moral scruples. In the 17th century disbelief in eternal torment seldom reached the level of a firm conviction, but at most was a conjecture, which one might wish to be true; it is therefore

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<sup>167</sup> Coudert, p. 121.

understandable that one should hesitate to plunge the world into moral anarchy for the sake of only conjectural truth.<sup>168</sup>

This interpretation by D.P. Walker in his book Decline of Hell shows that, the belief in Hell was under dispute, though not openly. Those who doubted the doctrine of eternal torment are classified by Walker. One of the categories were English Arians, those “who denied that the Son is co-equal or co-eternal with the Father, but only the first and highest of all finite beings, created out of nothing by an act of God’s free will.”<sup>169</sup> Walker argues that Newton was one of these people, though did not state his ideas on the subject openly. And he did not believe in Hell. The Cambridge Platonists, sometimes identified as a first generation of Latitudinarians, constituted a reaction to the mid-century Calvinist ascendancy. A belief in the effectiveness of natural religion led them to condemn less souls to hell and allowed for acceptance of some religious diversity. The principle ethical work of Cambridge men is the *Enchiridion Ethicum* of Henry More. Although Henry More did not declare a disbelief in Hell, he was interested in most of the religious discussions of the period and advocating difference of opinion in theological subjects. As Cassirer observed correctly:

Diversity of Doctrinal opinion is not looked upon as necessary state of things which for good or for ill must be endured, but it is made the instrument of the religious knowledge itself. Differences of doctrinal opinion are not only tolerated, but welcomed by Cambridge Platonists.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Walker, Decline of Hell, Seventeenth Century Discussions of Eternal Torment., London: The University of Chicago Press, 1964.

<sup>169</sup> Goring, Rosemary (ed.) Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions, Hertfordshire, Chambers Ltd., 1992.,p. 33.

<sup>170</sup> Cassirer, Ernst The Platonic Renaissance in England, trans. J.P. Pettigrove London, 1953.,pp. 34-37.

Joseph Glanvill, another Cambridge Platonist, followed the same line of thought. In the context of the witch debate, the positions of Henry More and Joseph Glanvill were no different. Diversity of opinion was welcomed by them, with one exception: The closeness of ideas to atheism was out of the boundaries of their tolerance. Their tolerance to diverse opinions was among the contributions of the Cambridge men to the early English Enlightenment.<sup>171</sup> The Early English Enlightenment could be regarded as a period of controversy between two extremes - the anti- authoritarian ‘deists’ and the High Church defenders of hierarchy and orthodoxy-<sup>172</sup>. The English Enlightenment was prefigured by Herbert of Cherbury and the Cambridge Platonists. But if one is to fix a date, 1688 - the Year of the Whig Revolution - could be suggested. Until this date the Church of England’s authority in the state was effective and religious diversity was suppressed. Books had been subject to censorship and the religious diversity had been discouraged. After the Revolution, liberals had more influence on politics and the latitudinarians, in the Church began to rise. Controversial works started to be published legally by 1690’s. Although there was a control on the press ( Blasphemy Act of 1698) there was a considerable tolerance of religious deviation.<sup>173</sup>

In such an atmosphere theological discussions could be made in a relatively free environment, with cautiousness though. The danger of being accused with atheism and deism was still there and witchcraft debate realised it. The total concept of witchcraft contained lots of theological concepts under discussion. Like the discussions of Hell, the belief in witchcraft was not an isolated one. It touched upon debates over spiritual

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<sup>171</sup> Redwood., p. 14-16.

<sup>172</sup> Brown, Stuart (ed.) British Philosophy and the Age of Enlightenment London: Routledge, 1996., p.3

<sup>173</sup> Brown, p. 3

intervention in the universe expressed in the discussions of the powers of Devil over human beings, the source of the power of the witches, in other words, the question whether witches were acting in companion with the Devil. All of these features of the witchcraft debate kept the intellectual circles of seventeenth century occupied. The survey of the debate- an account of which is given in previous chapter-, shows that, arguing for or against the total concept of witchcraft, had implications and contemporary reactions exceeding the boundaries of the debate. Therefore, we may widen our scope to understand the tensions underneath the witchcraft debate. Modern intellectual historians propose some ideas to clarify the changing environment of the late seventeenth century which paved way to the Enlightenment.

One interpretation of the period is offered by Isabel Rivers in her book Reason, Grace and Sentiment. She argues that two crucial shifts occurred in the period from the mid seventeenth century until the later eighteenth century. One of these was the emphasis in Anglican thought on the capacity of human reason and free will to cooperate with divine grace in order to achieve a holy and happy life. This was, according to Rivers, an optimistic portrait of human nature and a rejection of the orthodox Reformation tradition which:

Stresses the depravity of human nature and God's arbitrary exercise of his free grace in electing the few of salvation.<sup>174</sup>

The second shift attempted to divorce ethics from religion and to find the springs of human action not in the co-operation of human nature and divine grace but in the

constitution of human nature alone. In Seventeenth century, we can observe the symptoms of such a shift. Divine intervention in the nature was under discussion. Intellectuals of this period, according to Peter Harrison, “ had a dual commitment on the one hand to a science promised upon a mechanical universe and on the other to laws of nature and on the other to a omnipotent God who intervened in the a natural order from the time to time, breaching these.”<sup>175</sup> One of the preachers of experimental science, Thomas Sprat, argued that the God had the initiative to change to Laws of creation. The ultimate cause of all things was God. The activities within the world were caused by secondary causes, as Robert Boyle puts out. Newton’s explanation of divine intervention follows:

Where natural causes are at hand, God uses them as instruments in his works, but I doe no think them alone sufficient for ye creation and therefore may be allowed to suppose that amongst other things God gave the earth its’ motion by...degrees.<sup>176</sup>

Newton, interconnected the nature and divine activity by arguing that: “nothing is beyond the possibility of nature, nothing too hard for the omnipotent power of God.”<sup>177</sup> With such a conception of universe, he could have justified his devotion to experimental science.

Another interpretation is offered by Alison Coudert in her article “Henry More and Witchcraft”. She argues that those who rejected traditional beliefs in witchcraft were involved in rethinking such areas as the authority and credibility of Christian Revelation,

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<sup>174</sup> Rivers, Isabel, Reason, Grace and Sentiment, A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780, Cambridge, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, pp. 3-5.

<sup>175</sup> Peter Harrison “ Newtonian Science, Miracles, and the Laws of Nature” Journal of the History of the Ideas, vol.56,1995., pp. 531-553.

<sup>176</sup> ibid., p. 545.

<sup>177</sup> ibid., p. 553.

the nature of man, the physical condition of the created universe.<sup>178</sup> Those of more traditional inclination, in other words those who believed that the universe had a divine order of hell, heaven and earth, attached the concept of witchcraft to the concept of the Devil and Hell. The intellectuals of the late seventeenth century, shared one common tendency with varying frequency. This was empiricism. Empirical study, whatever their philosophical stand may have been , served the purposes of educated people who were involved in the discussions on the nature of witchcraft. The shift that Isabel Rivers suggests, displays itself well in abovementioned efforts to attach the divine intervention to the mechanism of universe. The possibility of an accusation of deism and atheism could have forced scientists to declare their belief in a divinely ordered universe.

A recent interpretation of the witchcraft debate is made by Michael Hunter in his book named Science and the Shape of Orthodoxy, Intellectual Change in the Late Seventeenth Century Britain. Hunter's suggestions are followed after an account of a



It is far more easie, and far more rational to believe, that witnesses are lyars and perjured persons, than it is to believe; that an old woman can turn herself, or anybody else into a Cat.<sup>180</sup>

The position of Wagstaffe, according to Hunter was not peculiar, however his tract represents the debate on the nature of witchcraft in seventeenth century England. Wagstaffe and people of similar stand concerning witchcraft were frequently under accusations of atheism. Witchcraft debate according to Michael Hunter: “elaborated an almost entirely imaginary conspiracy against society, to which individuals who showed anti-social traits in a less extreme form were assimilated”<sup>181</sup> The concerns of contemporary individuals were found in extremes if they laid stress on reason and natural causes, or the secularisation of thought as Hunter puts it. The means of assimilation was accusation of atheism. Witchcraft debate was an imaginary discussion according to Hunter, because the sides of the debate had their own conceptions of the subject and labelled their antagonists according to their values. The reality of the debate, probably is that the concept of witchcraft did not change, and not all the individuals accused of atheism were not having atheistic intensions.

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<sup>180</sup> Quoted in Hunter, p. 297.

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*, p. 232.

## **CONCLUSION**

If one is to ask why witchcraft was taken as a subject to investigate in the complexity of intellectual atmosphere of seventeenth century England, the answer lies in the body of this study and now may be elucidated a little further. Contemporary interpretations of the nature of witchcraft determined my approach to the concept. There are commonalities under the surface of attitudes towards witches. In the very beginning of

this study, while criticising the classification of Alison Coudert, I argued that it would not be safe to start with general assumptions regarding the philosophical/theological and scientific attitudes of contemporary individuals who wrote on the subject. I have chosen to start with a particular problem shared and disputed among intellectuals of seventeenth century England. One of the shared topics of dispute was the satanic ingredient in the nature of witchcraft. The mostly debated definition of witchcraft included the Devil's interference to the practices of witches. As I went on further with primary reading, I started to wonder why the witchcraft debate held a considerable position in seventeenth century debate, in other words, why people bothered about the nature of witchcraft at all ? As the picture of the debate appeared before me, I realised that, these discussions could be connected to many of the most important debates of the seventeenth century. The changing attitude towards the witchcraft was a part of the changing mentalities concerning not only witches but also of the Devil, Hell and such.

First of all, the concept of witchcraft has a variety of elements, allowing diverse opinions about its nature. In other words, witchcraft is a togetherness of corporeal and supernatural existence. The concept thus drew the attention of philosophers/scientists of the time who were already discussing the relationship of supernatural forces to natural phenomena. The pact of witches with the Devil turned out to be a valuable case study for the thinkers of the time. The declaration of a disbelief in the power of the Devil, was not welcomed, so the fate of these people were no different than those advocating a mechanical picture of universe: accusations of atheism. The rage of spiritual or supernatural forces was existent in seventeenth century, namely, seventeenth century

cosmos was still a battlefield of evil and good forces, and the existing order of things, i.e. of state, of science, of philosophy and such, depended on God. Therefore, those who were under defence of the nature of witchcraft with all its satanic ingredients, were arguing for this old belief -old even in seventeenth century context.- in the powers of the Devil. Similar observations can be made regarding eighteenth century beliefs. In eighteenth century, the period when secularisation began on the topics mentioned, the belief in the powers of the Devil, did not have a proportionate decrease. Change in this belief is slow and a process of centuries, coming until modern times.

The pre-eminent representative of eighteenth century approach to the subject is Francis Hutchinson with his *A Historical Essay on Witchcraft*. After reading Hutchinson, the hypothesis that the transition to a much mechanical world picture had a relationship with the changing approach to the nature of witchcraft can be put under discussion. If Francis Hutchinson's approach to the nature of witchcraft, in other words his denial of satanic interference in the activities of witches, his disbelief that diabolic witchcraft was mentioned in the Bible was tolerated in his period, we could probably argue that, the deviations from the belief of satanic witchcraft, either with scientific or theological intensions-as Francis Hutchinson had- was under considerable toleration towards the end of the seventeenth century. The foundations of satanic witchcraft put under discussion within the environment of discussion concerning spiritual interference upon universe. Francis Hutchinson, as an intellectual of eighteenth century, put witchcraft back to its popular foundations, in other words, he did not quite welcome the Devil in his definition of witchcraft. But one should be cautious in establishing immediate connections with the changing beliefs in witchcraft and changing mentalities of the period.

The seventeenth century evidenced the respective fashion of new science. The willingness of scientific circles to use empirical methods in their investigation of natural phenomena increased in seventeenth century. A contemporary scientist in England who attempted to use purely mechanical explanations of natural phenomena was under the danger of accusations of atheism, because this meant that he disregarded the spiritual intervention in the universe. The underestimation of the powers of the Devil over witches, in other words, the attempts of purifying the concept of witchcraft from diabolic elements resulted with similar accusations. Whenever the tools of new-science was not capable of explaining the natural phenomena, the initial reason was attributed to God. The source of the innate capacity of the witches was the Devil and anyone being sceptical of this fact faced by literary attacks and accusations of atheism. The sides of this debate could not be gathered into two groups on opposite sides as Michael Hunter observes correctly:

On the central issues - particularly that of the Devil and his activity- the two sides merely stated their case and there the matter understood, with two incommensurate positions embattled against one another.<sup>182</sup>

To sum up, the Devil, the interference of Devil in witches' activities was the centre of the debate on witchcraft. The debate itself was a part of a larger one which contained the tension between science and religion, reason and belief, the corporeal and spiritual. Neither in the wider perspective where the spirits were under discussion, nor in the micro level where the interference of the Devil in the activities of witches was under dispute, there were no winners of the controversy. At least no such observation can be made for the period under discussion. Seventeenth century is an early period to talk about the effects of scientific changes or changing concepts of universe upon the belief in

witchcraft. The approaches to the belief were under change in the period, but the change in the belief could not be observed in the period chosen.

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