"THE PHANTASTICK AIR": THE IDEA OF THE PRAETERHUMAN IN COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND

BY

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This essay tries to show that belief in witchcraft in seventeenth-century New England was not so much an aberration as it was a product of mind and hence an integral part of culture. The focus of attention, then, is on the theoretical foundation of the belief in demons and witches. The first chapter examines the Scholastic basis of demonology, namely, the Aristotelian idea that motion is the product but of the relationship between mover and moved. This distinction between mover and moved made it possible for Scholastic and later, Puritan demonologists to explain how a demon—a spirit and hence a mover—could produce effects on the material world and the human body—the things moved. The next chapter treats of the peculiarly Puritan contribution to demonology, the providential idea of nature. The Puritans believed that God enforced his judgments on the chosen people for their sins by sending natural disasters to punish them. One of these punishments, however, was not strictly natural—namely the destruction that God allowed the devils to work. It was instead praeternatural. The demons worked, not above nature as God would nor according to nature, but rather above the ordinary course thereof. Thus the Puritans could say that although the operations of evil spirits were invisible and for the most part beyond
human comprehension, they were nonetheless real and providential.

The operation of the demon on the human being required an elaborate theoretical explanation. The devil could not possess the rational soul, for that contained the divine spark. But such possession brought mental distress as well as physical agony. Thus such possession had to be in some sense mental. Puritans such as Cotton Mather and Charles Morton built an explanation. The human personality contained not just body and soul, but body, spirit, and soul. Mather and Morton borrowed this idea of the spirit of man from the philosophical medicine of Paracelsus and van Helmont, who had used it to explain how each man's reaction to disease and treatment was unique. Mather and Morton extended the meaning of spirit. It became the constituent in man particularly susceptible of and responsive to diabolical or praeternatural influences. The faculty of imagination became the seat of the spirit of man. By working on the animal spirits in the imagination that flowed to other parts of the body, the devil could produce his torments.

The relation between the witch and the devil also required an elaborate theory for its explanation, and the New-England divines borrowed much on this score from their contemporaries in England, the Cambridge Platonist, Henry More, and his associate Joseph Glanvil. This relation of witch to demon hinged again on a correspondence between the internal power of imagination over the spirit of man and
the external power of the demon. In this way the seventeenth-century demonologists conceived a praeternatural universe, and Morton could say that "the Phantastic Air, ... Huddles, and is precipitant in all things."
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Despite the somatic ideology of the era of "exact" science, the demonological theory of these dark ages has in the long run justified itself. Cases of demoniacal possession correspond to the neuroses of the present day; in order to understand these latter we have once more had recourse to the conception of psychic forces. What in those days were thought to be evil spirits to us are base and evil wishes, the derivatives of impulses which have been rejected and repressed. In one respect only do we not subscribe to the explanation of these phenomena current in mediaeval times; we have abandoned the projection of them into the outer world, attributing their origin instead to the inner life of the patient in whom they manifest themselves.

Sigmund Freud
I. DEMONOLOGY AND SCHOLASTIC PHYSICS

The fundamental document in the history of witchcraft belief is Malleus Maleficarum. It is the work of two Dominican friars, Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, who were delegated by Pope Innocent VIII in 1484 to serve as inquisitors of those accused of witchcraft in northern Germany. In their book Kramer and Sprenger set down, in the Scholastic manner, the physical and psychological principles on which demonology and witchcraft theory would rest until their demise in the eighteenth century. Since all writers on witchcraft in the early modern period, including those in New England, took these principles for granted and were often careless about making them explicit, the burden of this chapter will be to examine them in some detail. For only then can the reader understand the seventeenth-century elaboration of witchcraft theory that will be treated later on in this essay.

As a thoroughly Scholastic treatise on the nature and operations of the soul, Malleus Maleficarum is heavily dependent on Aristotle's work De Anima. Let us examine then how Scholastic theology borrowed from Aristotle in order to rationalize witchcraft belief.

According to Aristotle, motion is the product of a mover acting on that which is moved. The action of the
mover on the thing moved must be constant. Otherwise the thing that is moved would quickly return to its formerly passive state. Aristotle and the mediaeval thinkers who adopted him could not conceive of motion as Galileo and Newton would, that is, as the persistence of a body in motion in a straight line and at a uniform rate until acted on by an external force. Newtonian mechanics made no distinction, as the Scholastics had done, between active and passive, mover and moved. Newton treated every body in the universe alike. Each particle of matter acts in two ways at the same time: its own motion is affected and determined by its relationship to the other particles in its vicinity; it in turn contributes its mass and location in space to the determination of the movement of its neighbors and, if one wished to think so, of every other particle in the universe. In a strictly mechanical sense then each particle is indistinguishable from every other. That is to say, every particle functions at once both as mover and as moved.

But this was not the case with Aristotelian and Scholastic physics. For Aristotle had held that movement is not due simply to the action of physical forces, whether at random or by design. Every object has instead an end, a purpose, a ratio, and the movement of an object, whether it be a particle in space or the human soul, is an endeavor, an impulse, a nisus towards reaching the end that is appropriate to that object at a particular time. Motion then is the product of two elements and of the relationship existing
between them. One element is the end towards which an object is by nature set. The other element is the natural constitution of the object, its potentiality, that both allows the object to reach a certain end and confines it to the act of seeking that end. The middle term, the connection between the end and the object is a kind of force or energy. Aristotle often writes of it as privation. That is to say, every object is a product of the fusion of form into matter and, therefore, exists not in a state of pure and determinate being or actuality but in a partially indeterminate state, a state of unrealizedness or potentiality. In consequence, an object is striving to make itself more actual, and this striving is the cause of motion. But this sort of cause is not susceptible of quantitative measurement or mathematical conceptualization as the Newtonian idea of causation would later be. For Newton motion is the result of purely physical forces. The movement of one body is caused by the action of another body on the first. Mover and moved are of the same order and distinguishable not at all in kind, but in quantitative difference. For Aristotle and the Scholastics, however, the movement of bodies is the consequence of something that is not bodily, an immaterial agency of an order distinct from what is moved.

This immaterial agency is, nevertheless, a real force. For organic life, this agency is the soul or the levels of soul controlling the various operations of living matter. Aristotle's principle of an immaterial agency as the motive
of life is what attracted the Scholastics. Aristotle had held that soul could not exist apart from some body. But Christianity had also inherited the doctrine of separable forms, that is, of spirits existing independently of matter or bodily container, enunciated by Plato in the Phaedrus and appropriated into Christianity through the neo-Platonism of the late Roman Empire and the early Christian age. These separable forms became in Christian thought the angels, the demons, and the disembodied spirits of the deceased. Scholasticism accomplished a fusion of the Platonic and the Aristotelian lines of thought in regard to the nature of spiritual agency. Plato and his mystical successors provided the idea of independent, incorporeal entities, and the Aristotelian tradition provided an explanation of the way in which these spiritual creatures worked.

As has been said, Aristotle himself had denied the possibility of a soul's working apart from that aggregation of matter that it was its particular function to inform. But the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Christian thinkers who received the Aristotelian corpus from the hands of Arabic and Jewish commentators read that system with an entirely different view of life in mind from that of Aristotle. Man did not fulfill himself in this life. Rather his destiny lay in another life beyond this earthly existence. But the division of being into a natural and a supernatural realm did not prevent the two realms from being related. They were in fact intimately connected. God had created the world and had
created man to enjoy its bounty. After man had fallen from innocence, God prepared a plan for man's elevation to grace and revealed that plan in Scripture and in Christ. God's providence, moreover, did not terminate in the sacrifice of his only begotten Son. For salvation not only required the crucifixion; it also required vigilance against sin on the part of man. But sin was pervasive and instinctual and not easily surmounted. So God instituted the Church to re-enact the sacrifice through the Eucharist and thus instill, quicken, and sustain the faith. He also set his angels to the task of shielding man against the harm of sin. God, however, had also created evil spirits, whom he was sustaining in being, even though they led man into further sin. How was this seeming paradox to be explained? How could the Scholastics reconcile the malevolent function of demons with God's provident goodness? This problem did not present itself during the high middle ages, when Scholastic theology enjoyed its creative phase. Not until the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries did the presence of evil seem so great to men's minds that evil threatened to become a separate and contrary supernatural principle. But even then men such as Kramer and Sprenger kept God's sovereignty and goodness on the one hand and the reality of Satan's power on the other in a sort of uneasy balance. The danger, however, was always present that this balance would dissolve and that Christians would espouse a real Manichaeism. But in theory at least demonology conformed to the monotheistic dictates of
Christian orthodoxy as these had been laid down in Scholastic theology.

Thus, one of the ways by which God could procure his will was to permit evil spirits the freedom to torment man. Such torment was said to be a part of the harmony of the cosmic order and by extension a piece of God's providence. For in this way the demons would release their accumulated hatred against God for casting them out of Heaven. Man in turn would either submit to the devil by succumbing to his temptations or resist him by begging God's succor. In any case God's will would be done. He would determine whom to save and whom to damn, or at least he would make man conscious of his utter dependence on divine favor. In the process God himself would remain free of the least suspicion of doing or causing evil, for he would only be allowing men and demons to do what they would. Hence, demonology and Scholastic theology were of a piece. But more important for the purposes of this essay than the connections between demonology and theology is the way in which demonology borrowed from Aristotelian psychology or pneumatology to explain how evil spirits operated to tempt and torment man.

The soul of man functions in the Aristotelian sense as the mover of the human body. The soul is active and directive, while the body is passive and receptive. A demon is a spiritual entity of the same sort as the human soul. But the demon has larger power than the human soul because the demon is free to move at will, unencumbered by any
particular body. In one basic respect they are alike, however. Just as the soul moves its body, the demon is able to direct to its own purposes any body through which it passes or in which it may choose to reside.9

Thus, for example, since the devils often inhabit "the clouds of the air," "they can so bring together the active and passive agents that, when God permits, they can bring down fire and lightning from heaven."10 Moreover, because devils have the power to move "vapours released from the earth or the water," they can cause "winds and rain and other similar disturbances of the air."11 Besides having the ability to raise storms, evil spirits could also bring about the generation of certain kinds of animal life. This could be done in two ways. The first way made use of what the Stoics had called the seminal reasons. These were invisible seeds or corpuscles, dispersed over the earth, that would eventually give rise to living organisms. St. Augustine of Hippo had appropriated this Stoic idea into Christian thought in order to avoid having to say that God Himself is constantly involved in creating new organisms.12 The seminal reasons contained the preformed organisms of creatures low in the scale of being, generally, the insects, some rodents, frogs, and toads. Scholastic demonologists attributed to the devil the power to trigger the generation of these organisms.13 The other process of generation over which the devil had control also involved what would be called pests and vermin. This second way was the generation of creatures out of the
decay of dead matter. Creatures that were themselves filthy arose out of the filth of putrefaction. The devil was said to have the power to raise new creatures out of the decomposition of the old. In this way demonology explained how devils were able to cause plagues and infestations. This power of the devil also explained how the witch came by her familiar. When the witch contracted with Satan to become his servant, she was presented with an animal, known as her familiar, as a seal of the bargain. This was no ordinary creature. It was a product of the devil's power over the generation of vile and inferior beings. It therefore owed its existence to the devil and was itself in some sense demonic, for it often took part in the witchcraft.

Far more frightful because more personal than the natural disasters that Satan wrought were his attempts to deceive the human being and thereby to lead the individual soul astray. The devil worked in this matter in the same way in which he worked to produce storms and plagues, that is according to the principles of Aristotelian physics and psychology. But when the devil worked directly on the person of a man, what took place was much more complicated than when he moved a portion of inanimate matter or directed a creature that did not possess a human soul. For now the devil was in contest with the rational soul, and the locus of the struggle was the human body. But before it is possible to learn how the devil possessed the body and tempted the soul into further sin, it is necessary to understand Aristotelian psychology,
according to whose principles this possession was said to take place.

Knowledge, Aristotle says, depends on perceiving. Only by reflecting on what he perceives, can man be said to know anything. The senses deliver to the mind a representation of external things in the way that they actually exist outside the mind. If the senses did not apprehend reality precisely as it is, man would never know the truth. For he builds concepts only as he reflects on the deliverances of the senses, and the clarity and persuasiveness of his concept, that is of his idea in the mind, depends on the care with which he attends to sensory experience, that is the information of the mind via the senses. But this explanation of knowing applies only to speculative knowledge. The inferior modes of knowing, unlike the contemplative path of the philosopher, are susceptible of error. Men do not always or even often attend to the cultivation of reason. They are also creatures of appetite. When they act out of appetite they are not only neglecting the further cultivation of reason, they are also in danger of disregarding what reason already tells them and of relying instead on the confused impressions that they remember from past acts of attention. For appetite depends on imagination, the faculty that stores and evokes those impressions. Imagination can affect the appetites in one of two ways. On the one hand imagination can arouse such an intense image of the object of one's desires that he consents to the indulgence
of those desires without deliberating on whether or not such indulgence is conformable to reason. If man follows this course, the quality of his life descends to the level of the brutes. On the other hand, since man possesses reason, his imaginings do not have to lead him into error. He has the power to refer his images to a higher authority for rectification and in this way to temper his passions or appetites to which these erroneous impressions gave rise. First Aristotle explains the chastening of appetite in this way: "...Those who successfully resist temptation have appetite and desire and yet follow mind and refuse to enact that for which they have appetite." In this sense reason is an arbiter to which imagination submits for scrutiny and that corrects those imaginings that do not conform to rational dictates. This explanation, however, does not satisfy Aristotle, for it implies that reason has no unique function, but is dependent for its activity on the activity of the imaginative faculty. Aristotle knows that this is not the case. Reason has a force, an insistency, a life peculiarly its own. He therefore says that reason acts not to judge imagination but to turn imagination to reason's own right purposes. In summary, imagination intervenes along the way to knowledge and raises the danger of diverting man from the real good to the pursuit of the merely apparent. But if man does not let the mind atrophy and keeps himself open to rational persuasions, he can come to discern the real good even in spite of imagination's threat.
This analysis of knowing and error is characteristically Greek. Man is able to know to the degree that his faculties partake of perfection. The thinker excels in thought not so much from any effort on his part as from a superior mental endowment. The mass of men err because they are not thus gifted. Such error is not the fault of those who err. For the nature of things decrees that the many will stumble in knowing and only the few will know without error. These few know not because they have purged themselves of any instinctive tendency to err, but because their faculties are so constituted that they can know without error. Similarly the many would be foolhardy if they tried to attain to knowledge without error because their tendency to error is inherent in the relative imperfection of their faculties. Faculties cannot give qualitatively more light than nature will allow. The only fault lies in one's failure to evoke from the faculties as much knowledge with as little error as their qualitative capacity will allow. For one cannot improve the faculties in the sense of increasing their capacity to yield knowledge; one can only evoke from them the quantity of knowledge that it is already in their qualitative capacity to give.

Thus it is seen that although the Scholastics would adopt Aristotle's faculty psychology, the presuppositions about knowing and error that the mediaeval Christians held, were quite different from the Aristotelian. For the mediaevals error was the result not of native mental
endowment, but of the willful fall from innocence into perpetual sin. As a consequence of that fall two conflicting tendencies continued to wage war in the human soul. One tendency led the soul to persist in sin or error and was evil. The other tendency appealed to man to surmount sin and was godly. The evil tendency lay in the faculty of imagination, the faculty to which Aristotle had ascribed error. The godly tendency had its seat in the faculty of mind to which Aristotle had attributed the power to distinguish the real from the apparent good, that is the power to know without error. The Scholastics believed with Aristotle that error was the mistaking of the apparent for the real good in the imagination. Knowledge without error arose from the submission of the confused impression that imagination wrought to the clear light of reason, where a knowledge of the real good and the power to distinguish between the apparent and the real good lay.

The mediaeval thinkers, however, made one profound change in the mechanics of Aristotelian psychology. Aristotle had attributed the act of submission to the persuasion or attraction that the mind itself exerted on the lower faculties. But St. Augustine and all subsequent mediaeval thinkers imputed the power to decide what direction the soul would take, the power of decision, to a faculty with a life of its own—the will. This addition made a major change in the knowing process. For Aristotle to know was to consent to knowledge. But the mediaeval Christian knew that man could
know—in fact did know through the divine revelation—and still resist reason's sway. There was something recalcitrant in man that could rebel even in the very sight of what was right. The will then was the seat of the conflict between this recalcitrance and the influence of holy light. Man could not win the war once and for all. The battle was perpetual. As such the addition of the will is symbolic of how vastly Scholastic thought differs in character from Aristotelian, even though both use the same forms for their respective psychological explanations.

How then did the demonologists, Kramer and Sprenger, use Aristotelian physics and psychology to explain the devil's torment of the human body? Demons were said to work in two ways. They could operate either externally or internally. When they operated externally they deceived man through the senses. But how could this be so. For it has already been stated that the Scholastics accepted the Aristotelian idea that whatever man sees is what there is to see. The senses present an accurate transcript of reality to the apprehension. But this notion did not contradict the other notion that demons could deceive through the senses. For by arranging very subtle and airy particles the devil could contrive a phantasm, an ingenious artifice that the human mind could not discriminate from the real object. Though the senses presented a phantasm to the apprehension, that phantasm was such a clever deception that the apprehension could not distinguish it from the real thing and
expose it for what it was. The phantasm would represent some object to the mind, the victim's appetites would be aroused; he would seek to satisfy his passions as a result of unnatural stimulation; he would become preoccupied with the life of the body and ignore the life of the soul. In this way he would lose any hope of salvation and sink into the degradation that could lead only to damnation.

The more prevalent way by which the devil worked to win the human soul was not through external deception, but through internal distortion and inducement to indulge temptation. This internal demonic operation involved all the principles of Scholastic physics and psychology that this paper has set forth. The devil could invade and act on the body because he was immaterial and active and the body passive and susceptible of the influences of spirit, whether good or evil. But the devil could not reach the rational soul and operate on it directly. For the rational soul was active too and the especial province of the godly illumination that lay beyond Satan's corrosive power. The only way then in which Satan could win the soul was indirectly by tempting man to pursue the life of bodily indulgence to the exclusion of the life of the spirit. If the devil could not affect reason itself, he could at least induce man to ignore reason's light by presenting images to his mind that would arouse his appetites and move him to revel in their gratification in spite of reason's claim. Thus the devil had to restrict his activity to the inferior faculty of imagination.
But this is where it was logical for the devil to work and achieve his ends anyway. For the imagination was the seat of those impulses, which the Scholastics called impressions, that when excited would entice man to carnal indulgence or sin. "...Devils so stir up the inner perceptions, that is the power of conserving images, that they appear to be a new impression at that moment received from exterior things."\textsuperscript{21} These images "retained in the repositories of men's minds are drawn out and made apparent to the faculties of fancy and imagination, so that such men imagine these things to be true. And this is called interior temptation."\textsuperscript{22} If the impressions were attractive enough they would arouse the appetites. If in turn the appetites were strong enough, they would blight the divine reason illuminating the rational soul. Man then was no longer able to distinguish the apparently good from the really good. Thus the will was robbed of the voice of reason and left powerless to do anything but to consent to the indulgence of the appetites that clamored to be gratified.\textsuperscript{23} If the devil could not affect reason itself, he could at least induce man to ignore reason's light by presenting images to his mind that would arouse his appetites and move him to revel in their gratification. If man would be saved, he had to keep the will so attentive to what reason prescribed that when body and appetite beckoned the will to consent to their gratification, it would listen to God and obey the divine illumination instead.
The term "witchcraft belief" makes the distinction between the belief in witches and the practice of witchcraft quite clear as simply the term "witchcraft" would not. Accordingly this essay will follow that distinction.


Perhaps the clearest study of the development of witchcraft theory is George Lincoln Burr's "The Literature of Witchcraft," Papers of the American Historical Association, IV (July 1890), 37-66.

When I say that Malleus Maleficarum is a Scholastic treatise, I do not mean that its contents are representative of the opinions of the Schoolmen of the high middle ages. For though thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas wrote on witches and demons, the theory of witchcraft was not articulated until Sprenger and Kramer did so. What I do mean is that Sprenger and Kramer and their imitators used the same physics, psychology, and metaphysics to formulate a theory of witchcraft that the earlier Scholastics had used in their philosophizing. The structure of belief was much the same in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as it had been in the twelfth and thirteenth; only the emphasis had changed. The later middle ages and the Reformation era gave rise to conditions that were favorable to the spread of superstition and the persecution of supposed witches.


Though more will be said later, it might be noted here that Malleus Maleficarum explains the activities of the good and evil spirits in regard to man in these terms:
"...The intellect is enlightened by a good Angel only to the knowledge of the truth, from which proceeds the love of that which is good, for the True and the Actual are the same thing. So also the intellect can be darkened by a bad angel in the knowledge of what appears to be true; and this through a confusion of the ideas and images received and stored by the perceptions, from which comes an inordinate love of the apparently good, such as bodily delectation, which such men seek after." (Summers, 53.)

7. This essay will use the words evil spirit, devil, and demon as synonyms to mean Satan's spiritual agents. It will reserve the word Satan to express what the word usually means, namely, the evil, supernatural principle at work in the world to thwart man's better nature. I am making the distinction that Cotton Mather makes in Balsamum Vulnerarium ex Scriptura; the Causes and Cure of a Wounded World:... (Boston: Printed by Bartholomew Green, and John Allen, for Nicholas Buttolph, 1692), 14, where he writes: "Our Air has a Power, or an Army of Dvels in it; which because they are all United in one Monarch, and in one Design, we speak of them, as if they were but one Evil Spirit." See also, Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World (London: John Russell Smith, 1862), 44, where he writes: "When we speak of, The Devil, 'tis, A name of Multitude; it means not One Individual Devil, so Potent and Scient, as perhaps a Manichee would imagine; but it means a Kind, which a Multitude belongs unto."

8. Summers, 8.

9. The question how a demon could be said to reside in a human being as in cases of demoniacal possession was vexed even for the mediaevals. For the human body already had a mover in the human soul. Another would be superfluous and without effect. How, moreover, can a demon that is pure spirit be said to occupy place, for example, to reside in the human body? The Scholastic demonologists generally answered these difficulties by saying that the locus of a demon was not where he was, that is physical location, but where he acted, that is mental or spiritual location. Thus a devil could not be apprehended through his spatial dimensions, for he had none; but through his force and effects. He was then a sort of energy with an ethical and not an electric or quantitative determination or charge. Cotton Mather himself states this idea in Balsamum Vulnerarium..., 14, when he writes: "The EVIL SPIRIT has his marvellous Energy in wounding of our Consciences." But if this was so, what then was a ghost or apparition? How could the devil appear in bodily form? These are questions that the Scholastic did not answer clearly. As
this essay will show the answers are later additions to demonology.

10Summers, 147.

11Ibid.


13Summers, 8.

14Ibid.


16Ibid., Bk. III. 3, 429a. "...Because imaginations remain in the organs of sense and resemble sensations, animals in their actions are largely guided by them, some (i. e., the brutes) because of the non-existence in them of mind, others (i. e., men) because of the temporary eclipse in them of reason by feeling or disease or sleep." This idea that animals possess souls containing all the faculties of human souls, save that of reason, survived into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although brutes were denied reason, their powers of imagination and memory were of quite the same order as human imagination and memory. Thus when man voluntarily denied himself the benefit of his reason by yielding to the lower orders of his soul, he could be said to be actually living the life of the brutes. When in the seventeenth century the Cartesian philosophy denied souls to brutes and referred to animals other than man as mere automata, the followers of Aristotle and of Plato and neo-Platonism rose to the defense of the ancient teaching on the existence of soul in animals and opposed the mechanical philosophy. The story of the controversy that raged between Cartesians and anti-Cartesians over the nature of brutes is told in Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, From Beast-Machine to Man-Machine; the Theme of Animal Soul in French Letters from Descartes to La Mettrie (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), 73-100.

17J. A. Smith (trans.), De Anima, III. 10, 4336. Aristotle is ambiguous about how the submission of the imagination to the mind takes place. In the passage cited here, he seems to say that man has a component of imagination, which Aristotle calls "calculative," that
brutes do not have and that it is this component that takes charge of referring images to the mind. But in the pages immediately preceding this passage, Aristotle implies that the process of referring impressions to mind is not a factor of imagination, but of mind itself. Cf. *Ibid.*, III. 10, 433a-433b.


20 Summers, 129. *Malleus Maleficarum* says: "...In so far as the devil provides the outer suggestion of sin... to the senses... to that extent he is said to inhabit the character of a man when he is moved by every stirring of temptation, like a ship in the sea without a rudder." Here Sprenger and Kramer show how they regarded evil. It was not simply a matter of character. Evil did not reside within the man. Rather it was an external and demonic force or principle that preyed on the body. The body, because of its fleshly needs and appetites, drove man to yield to the demonic enticements. Only then in this tendency to consent to corporeal gratifications, if not otherwise persuaded by the higher faculties of the human soul, could man be said to be sinful or to commit evil.


22 *Ibid*.

Demonology and witchcraft theory grew out of an Aristotelian understanding of the way the universe worked. Or better, certain Scholastics particularly in the late middle ages built a theory of demonic possession by appropriating Scholastic physics and psychology to their own use. Kramer and Sprenger, as we have seen, insisted on the weakness of the flesh and the presence of Satan's agents on earth to tempt the flesh, to force the will to consent to bodily indulgence, and thus to lead the whole man into a life of sin. But two centuries intervened between the first publication of *Malleus Maleficarum* and the outbreak of witchcraft belief in New England. New-England witchcraft theory then owes a debt not only to the Scholastic argument for the operation of devils and witches, but also to that occult profusion that spread throughout Europe and to America during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During the Renaissance the revival of antique literature meant the revival of the antique superstitions embodied in that literature. In addition, a greater attention to folk medicine brought superstitions to the fore that had lain dormant. Finally, men were turning to an interest in the physical universe. As they did so they were met with a whole body of mysteries in nature that their primitive science could not explain in
altogether rational terms. Here again men resorted to superstition and conjecture in order to fill out their current understanding of how nature worked. New England writers on witchcraft and demonology, particularly Cotton Mather, gathered notions from all these sources. In this way they were able to build a rather complex theory of witchcraft. But they did not discard the Scholastic explanation that has already been described. Rather they used that explanation as the basis of their own elaborations. For the Puritan thinkers were Scholastic anyway in the conduct of their intellectual labor—in their sermons and discourses and their university curriculum. Besides, the Aristotelian world-view remained dominant in New England until the first part of the eighteenth century. Certain thinkers with deeply scientific interests may have become Newtonians before the end of the seventeenth century. But most would remain Aristotelian in their theology and their frame of mind even in spite of what the clear light of scientific reason had to say. No society casts off the old order to embrace the new as soon as the new arrives. This is especially true of a society as conservative and as deeply committed to Christian and in some sense mediaeval values as New England in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Thus New-England writers on witchcraft combined the Scholastic outlook with their own inheritance from the two intervening centuries, the biological and medical speculation of the Renaissance and the religious temper of the Reformation.
The next task then—and the bulk of this essay—will be to examine in detail witchcraft theory in colonial New England, as it led to the witch persecution in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692, and as it lingered into the eighteenth century. The emphasis of this treatment will not be on the course of events pertaining to witchcraft during these years, but on the theory and the habit of thought and feeling that stood behind these events. Thus this essay will pay particularly close attention to the English and Continental intellectual currents on which the New-England mind fed during this period. What was happening in New England in realms other than the intellectual and emotional will receive consideration only as outward events affected what was thought and felt among the divines who devoted themselves to speculating on witchcraft and related phenomena.

In 1681, Increase Mather, writing in his *Remarkable Providences*, said: "I have often wished, that the Natural History of New-England might be written and published to the World; the Rules and method described by that Learned and excellent person Robert Boyle, Esq. being duly observed therein." One might think that Mather was asking for a strictly Baconian enterprise, and indeed a few New-England ministers had caught the spirit of English science in its Baconian and Boylean style. But in the same paragraph in which Increase expresses a desire to follow Boyle's
prescriptions, he gives an indication that what he considered "Natural History" to be was something distinctively Puritan and quite different from the objective account of natural phenomena that is usually associated with the term today. For he says that what he really wanted to do was "to publish a Discourse of Miscellaneous observations, concerning things rare and wonderful, both as to the works of Creation and Providence, which in my small Readings I have met with in many Authors...."\(^5\) Mather, then, does not have the Enlightenment idea of nature in mind. Natural history for him is not a record of the orderly flow of events according to nature's own self-operative law. What he accounts in nature as worthy of his interest is instead the evidence of the hand of God intervening in the natural order. His idea of nature is not even that of the seventeenth-century English virtuosi among whom Boyle was the leader.\(^6\) For this group tried to reconcile the idea of a provident God with a mechanistic theory of the universe by making God the guarantor of order, the Mechanic of the world-machine. Mather, on the other hand, is not so much interested in the order that God sustains or even in God's sustaining that order as he is in God's intervention in the system to accomplish "things rare and wonderful." This becomes perfectly apparent when in the same essay he specifies the "things rare and wonderful" that a proper natural history should contain:
I. In Order to the promoting of a design of this nature, so as shall be indeed for Gods Glory, and the good of Posterity, it is necessary that utmost care shall be taken that All, and Only Remarkable Providences be Recorded and Published.

II. Such Divine Judgements, Tempests, Floods, Earthquakes, Thunders as are unusual, strange Apparitions, or what ever else shall happen that is Prodigious, Witchcrafts, Diabolical Possessions, Remarkable Judgements upon noted Sinners, eminent Deliverances, and Answers of Prayer, are to be reckoned among Illustrious Providences.

This passage reveals much about the Puritan's attitude towards the world. Nature for the Puritan was not as for the mediaeval saint rich in evidence of God's perfections and rich in inspiration to seek those perfections. This world was instead the scene of human suffering; nature bore those providences that Mather describes as being "Illustrious," but that might be better called baleful. What explains this difference between the mediaeval and Puritan understanding of nature? After all both the mediaeval and the Puritan lived with the Christian religion uppermost in mind, and the whole Reformation era of which Puritanism was a part has often been treated as a reassertion of mediaeval values. In its subordination of the secular role to the clerical, Puritanism did return to the mediaeval emphasis. The Reformation was, however, a break with Roman Catholicism, and this break produced the difference. In the very act of revolt from the Church, Protestantism struck out boldly on its own. The mediaeval Church had stressed a transcendence of the world as necessary to salvation. In the waning middle ages and the Renaissance, however, the Church had diverted its energy from the quest for spirituality and turned its attention to the
pursuit of temporal power. But in northern Europe religious fervor still ran strong. Because the tendency towards worldliness in the Church had taken place, this religious feeling could not express itself as it had before. It had first of all to confront the worldly pretensions of the Church. It had to express spirituality not purely and simply in mystical and pietistic devotions as before, but in criticism and protest. This protest eventually turned into reformation and is what determined the distinctive character of the Protestant movement. The Reformer's position as a reaction was then not so much otherworldly as it was anti-worldly, and he incorporated this anti-worldly feeling into his theology. Man was evil, and all of his capacities for good were rendered impotent by the Fall. He could do nothing by himself that merited salvation in God's sight. Rather the infusion of grace that made redemption from sin possible could come only on the initiative of God. The most that man could do was properly to dispose himself to receive this gift—if it came. In the meantime the sinner could hope that he was doing God's will, but he could never be certain. His religion made him feel that in his natural condition he could not be obedient and hardly more than civil. In the misfortunes that befell him he had even further confirmation that he was still not in the company of the elect. The disasters that nature wrought on man's person and property were not to be cursed as mere quirks of fate. They were instead the just punishment from God that
men must suffer for their iniquity. Man was not supposed
to despair. For despair was a sign that he could not even
muster the wisdom to see how sinful he really was and thus
how just was God's wrath and retribution. And if man could
not even recognize his plight, how should he suppose that
God would ever favor him with election? He had to accept
his wretchedness. He had to face disaster without flinching,
and the only way he could do that was to recognize that
punishment was what he deserved. Finally, he had to stand in
awe of the power that could cause destructions of the magni-
tude of "Floods, Earth-quakes" and "Diabolical Possessions,"
and he had to wonder what he had done that was so unworthy
as to cause God to make these things happen. Passages such
as the following pervade the papers of the Puritans and
betray the sense they had that much in nature was a punish-
ment for man's Fall:

Oh what troops of sorrows would be rushing in upon
us, if not secured by the hedge of divine power &
goodness, & surrounded with the shield of his
favor. Its now a very sickely time at Hartford, &
the neighboring Towns. Sundry dead of late; Major
Talcotts...eldest son buryed this week. The
excessive rains have raised, & long continued a
flood, here, & upon most of the Towns upon
Connecticute, to the great losse of hay & some
dorne, & damifying of most of the corn. The Lord
humble & teach by all to know his will, & yield
obedience.

The most telling evidence of how the Puritans felt
towards themselves comes not from quotations like those
already cited, but from a bit of deduction from what has been
said. Natural occurrences were pregnant with divine meaning.
They were a kind of natural revelation, although far from what
the deists had in mind when they used that term. For the Puritans, nature supplemented Scripture. They found in the Bible the type of the chosen people and they identified themselves as the current embodiment of that type. Natural providences confirmed them in that belief in their uniqueness as the children of God. For why else would God send floods and fevers if not to speak to his people and to address them in their peculiar circumstance as he could not do so directly through the Bible, which had been written in a much earlier time? But it is the message God spoke through these natural providences that is most revelatory of the Puritan character. Although they would not have admitted it, he did not treat them very graciously. By far the most of the providences even in Increase Mather's catalogue are dire punishments for the sins of the flock or at most "eminent Deliverances, and Answers of Prayer." This attitude that God had to act retributively in nature bespeaks more eloquently than anything else could how deep was the Puritan sense of sin. They were as guilt-ridden and as preoccupied with evil as any people ever could be. They even went so far as to interpret what happened in nature as a punishment for their supposed sins. One might beg Alfred North Whitehead's pardon and call this attitude "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness" in reverse. For according to the Puritans nothing obeyed laws that were themselves completely independent of and impervious to what the chosen people did. Divine providence could supercede the normal course of
nature at any time for the instruction of men. In this sense, the natural order was but an expression of the Puritan religious experience. The natural order was but a piece in the larger theological order, a piece that had no value and held no interest apart from that larger order. This attitude prevailed especially in the observation of those events that seemed to interrupt the normal course of nature to let Providence intervene. Among these works of Providence were of course witchcraft and diabolic possession. Thus a keen observer such as Cotton Mather could write in Memorable Providences or A Brand Pluck'd out of the Burning a close account of the torments of the afflicted and never doubt that what he witnessed was anything other than a demonstration of the forces of Providence at work.  

In this way Baconian empiricism served superstitious belief. But of course the Puritans did not believe that witchcraft was superstition. Their belief in the theological postulates was so strong that they confused myth with fact and insisted that the operations of spirits were susceptible at least in their traces and effects of empirical observation and description. Spirits in fact were not mythic for these Puritan successors of the Aristotelian and Scholastic traditions. As was shown in the last chapter, spirits were real; they permeated the universe and did its work. They were as basic to mediaeval and as we shall see to Puritan physics and psychology as atoms and neutrons are today. Thus, Puritan demonology was not something forcibly imposed on a
world-view that would otherwise sound reasonable to a modern ear. Rather it grew out of an entirely different configuration of ideas about the universe. That demonology and witchcraft theory were not altogether logically consistent with Aristotelian physics may perhaps be conceded. But they borrowed enough from Aristotelian and pre-Galilean science to seem credible and to find acceptance in the minds of the learned men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The task of this essay is to show how demonology and witchcraft theory in seventeenth-century New England emerge out of the world view and the intellectual content of the time.

In one sense God caused providences by ordaining them to happen. But he was not their immediate cause. He would not sully his hands in the world by stooping to make his dictates effectual. He stood aloof and delegated the duty of carrying out his dictates to subordinate agencies. Among the lesser agencies to which Increase Mather ascribed the power to produce earthly effects were the heavenly bodies. The seventeenth century witnessed a controversy over whether or not the appearance of comets and other unusual phenomena in the skies was only signal or causal of events on earth. Mather was somewhat ambivalent, for as shall be shown in greater detail later the Puritans feared that if too great powers were attributed to heavenly bodies, men would begin paying less attention to Scripture and more attention to astrology. Although astrology did not deny the existence
of God, it did detract from his sovereignty by presuming to enable man to presage his will. For a Puritan, of course, this was utter impiety. Increase, however, admitted that the heavens not only hold signs of what is going to happen; they also take part in making it happen or more precisely carry out God's will to make it happen.

...Droughts, Caterpillars, Tempests, Inundations, Sicknesses, are frequently known to follow upon the appearance of such phenomena as comets, I see no sufficient reason why we should not suppose them to be not only signal but causal thereof; and perhaps of Earth-quakes...also. It is indubitable that the true Planets and fixed Stars have a natural influence into such things, though the manner of their operation is by us silly Mortals undeclarable Gen. 1:14; Deut. 33:13,14; Judg. 5:20; Job 38:31,32,33. And therefore it is not impossible but that Comets may have the like natural influence, especially when they are near to the Sun, and that therefore the Blaze proceeding from them reacheth the Earth, though by us undiscernable.... As to their natural operation, they may have different effects, causing Droughts in one place, inundations in another, Earth quakes in another,...according to the occult qualities which are in the subjects of their influence.¹⁰

Mather seems to have limited the influence of the heavens to natural disasters. For he says: "Wars, Commotions, Persecutions, Heresies, the Death of Princes, Changes, and overturnings in the World do usually happen after the appearance of such Stars, they seem to be only signal and not causal of such events."¹¹

But the heavens were not the only agency through which God could work his will. As has been shown in the treatment of Malleus Maleficarum, he could also unleash the demonic powers or fallen angels to tempt and torment men. The devil
could produce natural providences just as the powers in the heavens could. But the devil's chief end was the torment of man not just by sending plagues to destroy his health and storms to destroy his property, but by possessing his body, tempting him, and winning his will. Cotton Mather said in this regard: "The Devil is by the wrath of God the Prince of this World..."12 Mather, however, was perhaps exaggerating the extent of the devil's power. Satan had his way in the world, to be sure, since man was forever sinning. But there were two reasons why Satan was not the master of this world. First he had to take the world as he found it. He could not alter the structure of the universe; that was alone in God's power. Secondly, because the devil acted only at the command of God, God or his own spiritual agents could intervene in the world at any time to void the devil's work or as the Puritans themselves would put it, to render a divine and most merciful deliverance. The cosmos that the Puritans conceived was then no simple affair. Perhaps William Perkins, an early seventeenth-century English divine and one of the most authoritative theologians of the Puritan faith, best described the complexity of the interrelation between the divine and diabolic worlds, when he wrote in his magisterial Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft:

...God is not onley in generall a Soveraigne Lord and King over all his creatures, whether in Heaven or Earth, none excepted, no not the devils themselves; but...he exerciseth also a speciall Kingdom, partly of grace in the Church militant upon earth, and partly of glory over the Saints and Angels, members of the Church triumphant in Heaven.
Now in like manner the Devill hath a Kingdome called in Scripture the kingdome of darknes, whereof himselfe is the head and governour, for which cause he is termed the prince of darknesse, the God of this world, ruling and effectually working in the hearts of the children of disobedience.

The Puritan believed then that man lived in one world, this earth, and in relation to two others, Heaven and Hell. The cosmos was tri-partite. This earth was God's creation, and its order sustained man in life. But the other two orders had larger significance. This earth was merely the scene or setting for the operations of divine influences on the one hand and diabolic on the other. But the distinction between the divine and the diabolic was not all that sharp. For first of all God was the creator of the whole world system. As such he remained in ultimate control even of the devil and in fact used him to accomplish his own purposes. Secondly, only when God intervened directly in the world without acting through intermediaries did he work by supernatural power alone. When he did so, he was said to have set the laws of nature aside, and this was what the performance of a miracle meant. For the most part, however, God chose to work through lesser agencies, through the heavens or through the angelic host. When he did so these lower agencies did not supplant the ordinary laws of nature, but rather collaborated in their distinctive power with the ordinary course of nature in a way that man could not precisely discern. So also did the forces of Satan work to produce "wonders,... lying and deceitful, which also are extraordinary workes in
regard of man, because they proceed not from the usuall and ordinary course of nature: and yet they be no miracles, because they are done by the vertue of nature, and not above or against nature simply, but above and against the ordinary course thereof....

Suffice it to say now that the seventeenth-century religious mind did not apprehend the universe as existing on only one plane, the natural, the rational or objectively explicable, and by extension the human or humane, as the eighteenth-century rationalist would. Rather as has been suggested, the seventeenth-century man thought of three orders of being and power in the cosmos, this world or the "ordinary course of nature"; God or the supernatural, which manifested itself in this world through direct intervention or what can be called the miraculous; and finally a third order. In order to distinguish this third order from the purely natural and the purely supernatural, this essay has adopted the term praeternatural. The term was not alien to the seventeenth century. This essay uses the word in the same way that the seventeenth century did, that is, to denote that whole realm of interrelation between the world of men and nature and the supernatural world of good and evil spirits. This realm of the praeternatural is in part what Increase Mather had in mind when he said that he hoped to write a natural history of "things rare and wonderful."

This essay will explore how certain Puritan divines in New England during the last half of the seventeenth century
accommodated their biology and psychology to the tri-partite scheme of the cosmos and particularly to the idea of the praeternatural. Demonology and witchcraft theory also hinged on the Puritan idea of the praeternatural and its operations in the world. This essay will explain that dependence.
NOTES

1Increase Mather in fact cites Malleus Maleficarum as one of his sources in Cases of Conscience Concerning Evil Spirits Personating Men... (London: John Russell Smith, 1862), 272. Both Cotton and Increase Mather and in fact most New-England writers on witchcraft were intimately acquainted with the whole body on literature on witchcraft. If one wants proof he only has to turn to Mather's Cases, cited above, where he will find at least one reference on almost every page. Two excellent books examine the history of witchcraft literature in Great Britain. They are: Wallace Notestein, A History of Witchcraft in England from 1558 to 1718 (Washington: The American Historical Association, 1911); and George Lyman Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929). Kittredge exonerates the judges of the witch trials of guilt by saying that the climate of opinion made belief in witches natural, while disbelief would have seemed not just dissident but perverse. G. L. Burr takes issue with Kittredge in Papers of the American Historical Association, on the grounds that the seeming naturalness of a belief does not excuse its bearers, if that belief, leads to immoral behavior such as the persecutions to which witchcraft belief led.


5Burr, Narratives..., 16.


These essays are reprinted in Burr, Narratives..., 89-144 and 253-288, respectively.

Increase Mather, Kometographia, or a Discourse Concerning Comets...(Boston: Printed by S. G. for S. S. And sold by J. Browning At the Corner of the Prison Lane next to the Town-House, 1683), 132-133.

While Mather was writing his tract on comets Charles Morton, an English Puritan clergyman and scholar had already finished his Compendium Physicae. In the Compendium Morton controverted Mather's opinion that comets exercise causal power over events in nature. Morton writes:

"The End of Comets hath been Guessed by their supposed effects; to prognosticate some Great Evills to Some particular Country; So that they have stricken Great terror into the Vulgar; But wiser men see no satisfactorily reasons for these Supposed Omens. They see that which is Said in this business is Grounded on falsehood, (or at least uncertainty) Namely that they are inflamed matter and that their smoke and Ashes pollute the Air. But All this is to be reckoned among the Astrological Vanities...." (The brackets are the editor's.)

Morton seems to be in sympathy with the providential idea when he writes in the same paragraph that the chief end of comets, if not to cause things to happen according to God's will, is still "to raise admiration in the mind's of men, and that the rather by the rarity of their appearance to convince us how little we know of the Universe, and so to magnifie the Creator." (Compendium Physicae, ed. Theodore Hornberger, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Collections, XXXIII/1946, 93.)

Ibid., 133.


III. THE SPIRIT OF MAN AND THE
PRAETERNATURAL IDEA

European Antecedents

Puritan thinkers in New England adopted the Scholastic psychology in full, as had their teachers before them such as William Perkins, in England.\textsuperscript{1} We shall see how colonial divines used Scholastic theory to amplify their providential scheme of the universe, particularly in its praeternatural aspect. But another idea of the psyche crept into Massachusetts intellectual circles during the last fifteen years of the seventeenth century and perhaps had more to do with giving substance to the idea of the praeternatural than even traditional Scholastic terms had. This new conception of the human being in relation to a providential God found expression in the works of three men, Charles Morton, Samuel Lee, and Cotton Mather. Morton and Lee both came to America from England in 1686 and remained only a few years, Morton dying in 1698, and Lee returning to England in 1691. Cotton Mather may very probably have learned what he had to say on pneumatology from his association with these men.\textsuperscript{2} Or he may have arrived at the same opinions by reading the same sources. In any case, the opinions of all three appeared during the last years of the seventeenth century, bear a close resemblance, and
suggest a degree of intellectual exchange, if not actual collaboration.

In 1693, Morton published a tract titled The Spirit of Man. It sets out to show how man is unholy in the sight of God and what in man is specifically in need of sanctification. For the Puritan sanctification was not the same as redemption. Rather it was the next stage after God had raised man into the company of the elect. Man gained a state of grace not from any moral ability of his own, but through God's gratuitous gift in spite of human sin. After receiving redemptive grace, however, man was in a position to improve the moral caliber of his life. In fact this moral enterprise became his chief end. He strove to show God that he was worthy of election. Morton then is asking the question what is the seat of man's sin that must be purified before the elect can lead the life that befits a saint.

Morton deduces first of all that what is in need of sanctification is not the spirit of God that every man innately possesses and that the Puritans usually identified with the rational soul in the faculty psychology of the Scholastics. "...For He [the spirit of God in man] is not capable of Sanctification, being already, and always in himself perfectly Holy." The divine spark remains innocent of sin. The root of sin is rather something that obscures the rational soul. The pursuit of the flesh does so, but the corrupt article cannot be the body per se. For the body has no directive capacity of its own. It is subject to
something else. The source of the unholy life must reside then in the capacity that leads the body astray—a fluid capacity that can be molded for good or ill, a capacity that can be molded for good or ill, a capacity that can respond equally to the Logos in the mind and to the wiles of the flesh. Morton calls this middle capacity, this nexus between the body and the soul, the spirit of man, citing as Scriptural justification for this tripartite division of the human being, the following text:

And the very God of Peace Sanctifie you wholly, and I pray God your whole SPIRIT, and SOUL and BODY, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I Thes. 5:23.

Spirit is the principle and the process that renders a man an individual human being. Morton gives an account of its ingredients. It is subject alike to the faculties of the soul and to the temperament of the body. Habits acquired "by Instructions, Examples, or Customes" also mold its constitution. Finally "the Outward Adjacents, or Circumstances of...Life" affect its disposition. But Morton warns that "this Spirit of a man, is most liable to Assauls by Temptation...." Morton continues:

Man has but Dark Apprehensions of himself, and therein oft times grossly does mistake; But God by his Word Searcheth intimately, and Discovereth fully to him what he else would not take notice of.... That word shews him, How his Soul came pure out of the Hand of God; but he hath added thereto a vicious Spirit, by the perverting of what God did make upright.

Thus Morton accommodated the economy of salvation to the tripartite division of the human being. But by
making the spirit a separate entity, he also left the way open for something else. For if the spirit, as distinct from the soul, was the source of man's recalcitrant behavior, it of all man's capacities was especially susceptible of the enchantments of evil spirits. It could thus be interpreted and was as the peculiar agency in man through which the praeternatural forces in the universe could work their effects. Not only then did the universe contain a praeternatural aspect, but the human being also harbored a peculiar capacity that was apprehensive of and responsive to the operations of this praeternatural realm. Let us examine in detail how Morton, Lee, and Cotton Mather understood this correspondence between what they called "the spirit of man" and "the wonders of the invisible world."¹⁰

In his "Preface" to Morton's Spirit of Man, Cotton had said:

"...As the whole work of Sanctification upon the Spirit, is necessary to make it Excellent, so, there is a notable stroke of that work performed in the Sanctification of the Humour, which is seen in the Temper and Bias of that Spirit. There is a certain Air of our Complexion, which Results from some Circumstances of the Union between our Souls and our Bodies; and this Disposition, we ordinarily call, The Spirit of the man."

Mather was then aware of the tripartite division of the soul and made use of it in his own work at least as early as 1693. But he did not make what he means by "Spirit" fully clear until he published a pamphlet, Angel of Bethesda, in 1722, in which he is almost entirely occupied with the
problem of defining and describing the operations of this spirit. In 1725, he made his earlier Angel of Bethesda chapter five of an extended medical treatise that was also titled "The Angel of Bethesda," but was never published. In chapter five, Mather clearly defines what he means by the spirit, this third term of man's being.

There is a Spirit in Man; a wonderful Spirit, which from very good Authority may be called NISHMATH-CHAJIM; (or, The Breath of Life:) and which may be of a Middle Nature, between the Rational Soul, and the Corporeal Mass; but may be the Medium of Communication, by which they work upon one another. It wonderfully receives also Impressions from both of them; and perhaps it is the vital Ty between them.

He concludes this paragraph with the remark that "the scriptural Anatomy of Man" also divides his person "into Spirit, and Soul, and Body...." It seems reasonable to assume that Mather was referring to the same biblical passage that Morton had used in 1693 and that Mather was making the same tripartite division of the personality that Morton had made.

Mather continues, saying that Nishmath-Chajim "has the Denomination of the aerial Spirit, with some Philosophers, who trouble the Stars, more than there is any Need for." The last part of this sentence is indicative of the circumspection that the Puritans showed towards astrology. But the sentence reveals much more. For the use of the term "aerial spirit" links Mather's speculation with a definite tradition. The aerial, or as it was more usually known, the astral spirit was in neo-Platonic lore the middle term
of the human being that had its origin in the celestial spheres and formed the connection as Mather himself says between "the Rational Soul, and the Corporeal Mass." This doctrine had its roots in ancient thought. Mather acknowledges this when he writes: "...Indeed, the old Platonists had a notion, of a certain excellent body, pellucid and ethereal, subservient unto the faculties of the soul, and uniting it unto the more terrestrial body." Thence, the idea passed through the middle ages in a submerged form, and was revived in the mystical and magical treatises of Marsilio Ficino, a prominent member of the Florentine Academy in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. D. P. Walker in his *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, says that an important element in Ficino's magic was "the aetheric vehicle which" the neo-Platonists believed that "the soul acquires from the various stars and spheres it passes through during its descent into the earthly body." But even if the Florentine Academy revived the idea of the spirit, it is unlikely that Mather borrowed it from that source. For there is another link in this tradition, and that is the alchemical, biological, and medical speculation of such men as Paracelsus in the sixteenth century and Jean Baptista van Helmont in the seventeenth. Several New England scholars were acquainted with the works of these two men and others less well known. John Winthrop, Jr., governor of Connecticut and scientific observer, was one of the first to study this literature.
and perhaps had a more thorough knowledge of it than anyone else in New England ever would have. But Winthrop died in 1676, probably too early to have had any direct influence on Cotton Mather. Mather, however, did not need such influence because he read the works of Paracelsus and van Helmont for himself. "The Angel of Bethesda" cites both of these men; and The Wonders of the Invisible World acknowledges Paracelsus. What then was Mather's debt to philosophical medicine?

According to Paracelsus, an illness is not uniform in nature for everyone who shows the same symptoms. Rather each patient suffers a condition peculiarly his own, even though the symptoms may be superficially the same. In adopting this point of view, Paracelsus was reacting against the Galenic tradition in medicine that during the middle ages had become exceedingly academic in its approach and hardly more than the application to the patient of set prescriptions whenever certain symptoms appeared. Paracelsus needed some theoretical explanation of disease and treatment in order to distinguish his own position as sharply as possible from that of the traditionalists and thus to register his protest. For this reason, he developed the theory that disease was not simply the entrance of some foreign factor into the body that had to be discharged by blood-letting, but was instead a process by which the whole organism was poisoned by and finally succumbed to the working of whatever the foreign factor was. Since the whole
organism was involved in sustaining the disease, the treatment had to vary from patient to patient because each organism was unlike every other. Still Paracelsus needed to attribute this variation to some locus in the human being. The idea of the astral spirit supplied his need. The spirit as distinct from the soul and the body determined each man's specificity. This spirit or balsam was the source of each man's vital functions. When it was working properly it kept him healthy. But it was also susceptible of being infected, and was not only the internal factor in disease, but also the determinant of the peculiar character of each man's reaction to infection.24

Van Helmont was perhaps the most prolific and original of Paracelsus' disciples. He carried the work of his teacher out of the realm of occult speculation and into true, albeit primitive, science. The parallels between the two are nevertheless great, and one of these is their intense and common interest in the application of their discoveries to the welfare of man. Van Helmont was particularly successful at blending his biology and medicine with a Christian pietism and a concern for social service.25 The blend of social service and piety in van Helmont is what attracted Cotton Mather, whose own Essays To Do Good reflect this attitude.26 Van Helmont's speculative medicine rested on the same identification of the spirit or vital principle as the source of health and sickness that Paracelsus had made.
Samuel Lee, among New-England divines in the latter part of the seventeenth century, seems to have been particularly interested in Paracelsus' and van Helmont's work as well as the work of others of their kind. In the printed catalogue of his library are to be found the titles of books by both Paracelsus and van Helmont. In his *Triumph of Mercy*, Lee agrees with van Helmont that blood-letting is dangerous because it drains away "the very Balsam of Mans Body for the prolongation of life." Cotton Mather, however, is the New England Puritan who best exemplifies all that Paracelsus and van Helmont had stood for, namely, the empirical concern of the physician, the speculative concern of the natural philosopher and the social concern of the Christian pietist. Like Paracelsus and van Helmont, Mather believed that man's spirit was the source of the bodily functions.

*Tis the Nishmath-Chajim, that is the Strength of every Part in our Body, and that gives Motion to it. Here perhaps the Origin of muscular Motion may be a little accounted for. And this is the Spirit, and the Balsams, and one might almost say, the Keeper, of each Part, which is occupied and befriended with it.

But it is also the element in the person that loses its balance when disease strikes and needs treatment in order that the whole organism can mend. Man, however, can take definite precautions against disease. Because the Nishmath-Chajim is a spirit, it has the capacity to obey a higher order of incorporeal substance, and in man such a higher order is the rational soul that God illumines in
response to man's prayer and devotion. If man will but allow the Nishmath-Chajim to have its proper access to the commands of illumined reason, the Nishmath-Chajim will repay his effort by keeping the body in good health. In the following passage, Mather epitomizes van Helmont's synthesis of medicine and theology with an ardor and a sense of commitment that tells the reader that he had made them his own:

Of all the Remedies under Heaven, for the conquering of Distempers, and for the Preservation of Health, and Prolongation of Life, there will now be found none like serious Piety. Many Remedies have done virtuously, (and had their Virtues) but thou excellest them all. The Rational Soul in its Reflections has powerful and wonderful Influences on the Nishmath-Chajim. Now, in the Methods of Piety, gett a Soul into the Peace of God, with Assurance of a Reconciliation to Him; and walk in the Fear of God, and the Comfort of the Holy Spirit; keeping always in, and filled always with, His Love; and indulge none of those Lusts, which render the Wicked like the troubled Sea. Keep a Conscience, which in a continual Aim at what is Right shall make a continual Feast. Be not Anxious about Futurities, nor Disturbed upon Provocations; but lett the Strong Faith of a faithful Saviour performing the Thing that is appointed for us in all that happens, produce a perpetual Tranquillity and Serenity in the Soul. Go on singing in the Ways of the Lord, and casting all Byrdens on Him, and rejoicing in the Hope of the Glory of God.

Even in this statement of the pietistic medicine of the Renaissance and Reformation one can detect the Aristotelian and Scholastic antecedents that we have already treated and that underlay every Puritan speculation on the nature of man. Man lives in precarious balance between sin and salvation. If he pursues his appetites without restraint
he will lose his soul. The remedy lies in his adherence to the rules of his rational soul. If anything, the Reformation and the Puritan theocracy in New England had increased man's sense of the precariousness of his position. One of the factors, however, that spared the Puritan from letting his fears become morbid preoccupations was the pietism in pietistic medicine, which insisted that man has an obligation to help himself and his fellows. The source of this help lay in the natural world around him. By inquiring into nature and finding therein a knowledge with practical and humane applications, man could repair some of the damage that sin had done. Unfortunately the Puritan was not accustomed to turning his gaze so much outside himself, and not until the early 1720's, when innoculation against smallpox was haltingly introduced, did Boston begin to reap the benefits of van Helmont's point of view. Before that time the Puritan continued to gaze within himself and find sin there still. The remainder of this essay is devoted to showing how Cotton Mather, Charles Morton, and their associates turned the speculations of van Helmont and others—which, as we have studied them, laid the basis for a humane view of man--into an explanation of a praeternatural realm in which demons and witches lurked and wrought their malice.
If the spirit was "the vital Ty" between the soul and the body, Mather had to give it some sort of substance. Thus he says:

Our Nismath-Chajim seems to be commensurate unto our Bodies; and our Bodies are conformable to the Shape which God our Maker gives to that plastic Spirit, (if we may call it so). But by what Principle the Particles of it, which may be finer than those of the Light itself, are kept in their Cohesion to one another, is a Thing yett unknown unto us.3

The Nismath-Chajim is then the shape of the body, and as such is a unity. In this sense it is independent in the particular form it takes of purely organic, causal factors or determination. It is not merely a function of the body formed from the action of the bodily mechanism. Instead, it receives its pattern from the hand of God. In this respect at least, it may be said to be spiritual, that is, distinct from and surpassing anything in the natural order both as to its cause and its character. But since the Nismath-Chajim sustains an intimate relationship with body, it has to have some connection thereto. Mather recognized this when in the passage just quoted he described "that plastic Spirit" as being composed of "Particles...which may be finer than those of the Light itself...." And in the paragraph immediately preceding, he cites Heurnius, (1543-1601), a Dutch physician and minor natural philosopher, as saying that the middle term of the person is "'A Kind of Ethereal Spirit, elaborated out of the purest Part of the
Blood, and changed into the Substance of a very subtil Air; and the prime Instrument of the Soul for the Performance of its Functions. If one were to take this passage by itself, he would conclude that the "Ethereal Spirit" was no more than a function of the body that "the purest Part of the Blood" is capable of producing. But Mather would strenuously have denied such a materialistic interpretation. He would have probably resolved the difficulty by saying that the Nishmath-Chajim is spiritual in that its source is God and corporeal in that it depends on the body for sustenance. The Nishmath-Chajim could be considered then from two points of view: either as a spiritual being of divine origin and therefore of a substance that mere matter was incapable of producing or in its working relationship with the body, as derivative of "the purest Part of the Blood." Mather and Morton adopted the first point of view from the Cambridge Platonists and the second from the corpuscularian philosophy of Robert Boyle and from the Cartesian speculation on those intermediaries between mind and matter, called animal spirits.

The Cambridge Platonists were a small group of broad-Church Anglican scholars who taught and preached in Cambridge during the middle part of the seventeenth century. They affirmed the preeminence of spirit in the universe as a causal and directive agency and in man as a source from which he could draw virtue and inspiration. The spirit that they found in man was an instrument by which he could
conduct his life according to the virtues of humility and humanity. Their insistence on tolerance and reason is an indication that their speculation was a reaction against the acrimonious controversy over religion and politics that plagued the intellectual life of seventeenth-century England. They proposed that man should turn inwardly and find there a guide to conduct that would inform his outward life with the serenity of a godly man. But their speculation was by no means only ethical in intention. For they were also reacting against the materialism that Thomas Hobbes had expounded and against the mechanistic implications of Cartesian philosophy. In differentiating their own position from that of Hobbes and later Descartes, they turned to the neo-Platonic philosophy that had flourished, as we have seen, in the Florentine Academy a century earlier. In The Platonic Renaissance in England, Ernst Cassirer shows how the English humanists, principally John Colet and Sir Thomas More, appropriated much of the neo-Platonicism of the Italian Renaissance through literary channels and how the work of these humanists passed then into that of the Cambridge men. From this neo-Platonic tradition, the most mystical of these Cambridge divines, Henry More, borrowed the idea of a whole hierarchy of immaterial agencies, performing functions vital to the life of the universe and of man. The agency that did these things for man was known as the plastic spirit. We have seen that
Mather used the term in an identical sense to denote the connection between the body and the soul, and the operation of the two as one, and it is probable that Mather borrowed the term from More. For Mather knew More's work, having a copy of More's *Divine Dialogues* in his library and being intimately acquainted with *Saducismus Triumphatus*, a work on which More had collaborated with another natural philosopher, Joseph Glanvil. This book purported to prove the primacy of spiritual agency in the universe by demonstrating the way demons and witches worked. The evidence of the diabolic and all else in tradition and popular imagination that science could not satisfactorily explain were ascribed to the work of spirits whether the plastic spirit of man or spirits independent of any body. Such a position was made the front line of defense against those who would argue that everything in the universe could be explained by matter in motion. Mather echoes this anti-Hobbesian bias that he had absorbed from reading the Cambridge Platonists and Joseph Glanvil, when he writes in "The Angel of Bethesda" that:

> There are indeed many Things in the Humane Body, that cannot be solved by the Rules of Mechanism. Our Nishmath-Chajim will go very far to help us, in the Solution of them. Indeed we can scarce well subsist without it.

But Henry More and Joseph Glanvil were not hostile to science. In fact both made important contributions to the "new Philosophy" while remaining loyal to the old faith. In their minds science and religion were eminently
reconcilable and one of their tasks was to show how this was so. What they did find objectionable was any opinion intimating that science denies spiritual agency. This was the position of the New England divines also. Thus when Mather was faced with the task of explaining the relationship of the Nishmath-Chajim or plastic Spirit to the body, he did not exclude corporeal factors from his explanation. Rather he tried to show how the corpuscularian explanation that the "new Philosophy" gave of the body's work was in harmony with the neo-Platonic notion of the immateriality of the plastic spirit. To do this he resorted to the Cartesian and corpuscularian notion of animal spirits.

Descartes had been concerned with how men can know with certainty. He rejected sense experience as the source of error. He found instead that knowledge comes from the Mind's contemplation of what it apprehends independently of sense. But by defining knowledge as the result of interior inspection, he changed the character of man's relation to the external world. He did not say that the external world was unimportant. To the contrary, what he discerned by the detached operation of the mind was a clear and distinct knowledge of just that world. But he did say that the knower and the known were fundamentally different. They were in fact different substances, thought being unextended and things extended. But this dualism of idea and the object that the idea represents before the mind raised difficulties. For how was he to explain perception? How was man ever to
know that the image he had of an object was really representative of that object? How could the extended in space become the unextended in mind? In order to explain sensation, feeling, emotion and all those states of man's being that are neither purely physical nor purely mental he resorted to the Scholastic notion of animal spirits. These spirits were said to transform the materiality of a thing into an immateriality sufficient to enable that thing to be entertained by the mind as an image.

The corpuscularian philosophy also appropriated the notion of spirits. Robert Boyle's position in this regard commanded considerable respect in England for some time. Since Boyle was primarily a chemist he used the word "spirit" to denote much more than Descartes. For him spirits were not things different in substance from matter but only the most rarefied forms of matter. All the world consisted of corpuscles obeying the same laws of combination and dissolution, save when Providence intervened. Spirits were simply the most subtle and active of these corpuscles. Boyle was devoutly religious, and he tried in page after page to explain how his universe for all its intrinsic regularity still needed a provident and personal God. But he had a difficult time of it. Unlike the Platonists who said that spirit is a distinct order of being through which God works his will, Boyle considered spirit as simply an aspect of matter. The universe had only one constituent, the corpuscle. When God wanted to act in the world he had to act.
directly, and when he did so he had to set aside the natural laws that governed the universe in its normal course. Still, because Boyle tried to reconcile his mechanical idea of the universe with the older, providential idea and seemed to succeed if one did not look too closely, divines adopted his views without fear of being heterodox for doing so.

The best source to which to turn to find out how the Puritan scholar in New England understood Cartesian and corpuscularian thought is Charles Morton's *Compendium Physicae*. It became the textbook in science at Harvard in 1687 and endured in that role until 1726. It represents the stage in English scientific thought that had already absorbed Descartes and was feeling the impact of Boyle. But Morton's *Compendium* retains much of Aristotelian physics and is in tone decidedly Scholastic. It registers to a degree no other piece of literature could the curious relationship that the Puritan mind established, when it confronted the "new Philosophy" for the first time, between Aristotelian learning, Puritan theology and the new science. There could be no better index to the path by which early modern science found its way into the minds of men still preoccupied with the old ways of thought.

Charles Morton adopted the Cartesian and corpuscularian view that the spirits that linked the body and the mind were simply highly attenuated material particles or corpuscles. He says:

Matter Volatilized, and put in motion is Sometimes Equivocally call'd Spirits as the form or
Life of Vegetables, and those Steams cal'd natural, Vital, and Animal Spirits in the bodyes of men and beasts

And thus the Order of things, and harmony of the World appear, without that great Gapp [between] Spirituall, and bodyly Substance.

In a later chapter on what sleep is, Morton describes how the body manufactures spirits in greater detail. There he says:

Sleep a State or mode of [Existing] wherein the Exterior Senses, and that which is cal'd Common sens are obstructed in their operations, for the health of the Animal, and restauration of Spirits. Tis caus'd by the Steams of food and blood ascending into the brain, by whose coldness they are Said to be condensed into moisture which obstructs the passages of the Spirits that they cannot freely permeate to the Organs of Sens. But it Seams rather that nature intending but one work at once causes those vapours to lye; and ferment with the Spirits already formed, and by their mixture the finner parts are volatilized into the Same nature with the Spirits. So that as blood makes blood by Circulating the Chile with it. So Spirits make Spirits by their fermenting togethers with this Vaporous matter: and while this work is in doing they have not leisure to attend the Senses. And thus the continual Evaporation of Spirits is recruted, and the Animal is revived, and refreshed.

But again let it be said that the spirit itself or Nishmath-Chajim did not require attachment to the living body in order to exist as an entity. After the body had perished and had ceased making animal spirits the Nishmath-Chajim remained. For Mather says: "It is probable, that when we dy, the Nishmath-Chajim goes away, as a Vehicle to the Rational Soul; and continues unto it an Instrument of many Operations." The animal spirits that Morton describes are then not essential to the spirit's existence but merely the means the spirit uses to perform its functions, while
attached to a living body.

As we have seen one of the functions that Mather ascribes to the Mishmath-Chajim, working through animal spirits, is the preservation of bodily health. Writing in the tradition of Paracelsus and van Helmont in this regard, he also holds that the disruption of the generation and flow of animal spirits is the root of sickness and that the restoration of this process is the key to cure and the task to which the physician must apply himself. Mather’s treatment of how the disruption takes place, though none too clear, is nevertheless, highly important. He has already indicated an explanation for the disruption in the passage quoted earlier, where he said that men should "indulge none of those Lusts, which render the Wicked like a troubled Sea," and then advised: "Be not Anxious about Futurities, nor Disturbed upon Provocations; but lett the Strong Faith of a faithful Saviour...produce a perpetual Tranquillity and Serenity in the Soul." He is saying that any sort of excess or anxiety will throw the mind into a state of disequilibrium, that is to say, the individual, in his excitement or preoccupation will remove the mind from the suasions of the rational soul. "...The Strong Faith of a faithful Saviour" is an abbreviated way of saying the wisdom to which the mind has access through the rational soul and the comfort, the "perpetual Tranquillity and Serenity," that this wisdom brings to an otherwise anxious soul. What Mather is
suggesting then is a mental cause of physical illness and
likewise a mental cure. For he says:

Lett the Physician with all possible Ingenuity of Conversation, find out, what Matter of Anxiety there may have been upon the Mind of the Patient; what there is that has made his Life uneasy to him. Having discovered the Burden, lett him use all the Ways he can devise, to take it off. Offer him such Thoughts as may be the best Anodynes for his distressed Mind; especially the right Thoughts of the Righteous, and the Ways to a Composure upon religious Principles. Give him a Prospect, if you can; of sound Deliverance from his Distresses, or some Abatement of them. Raise in him as bright Thoughts as may be; and scatter the Clouds, remove the Loads, which his Mind is perplexed withal; especially, by representing and magnifying the Mercy of God in Christ unto him.43

But Mather did not simply postulate a psychosomatic factor in illness and let it go at that. His *Nishmath-Chajim* was an attempt to make that factor explicit, that is, an attempt to build a theory that would explain as satisfactorily as possible how mental and emotional factors can have physical effects. But it is not so much to Mather's "Angel of Bethesda" that one must turn for an elaboration of this theory as to Morton's *Compendium Physicae*. As we shall see, Morton uses Scholastic terminology, whereas Mather tended to use the multiple terms that he had absorbed from his vast and eclectic reading in the natural philosophy of the Renaissance. But to use Morton's and Mather's accounts somewhat interchangeably is not to be misrepresentative of either. For it has been shown that they knew each other's work, probably read many of the same sources, and also probably compared and exchanged notes.
Scholastic epistemology, borrowing from Aristotle, held that the senses yield an accurate representation of the external world. What men perceive is what there is to perceive. Indeed, the very way in which sensation takes place, does not permit of error. For perception is the transfer of the sensible form of the perceived object to the sense-organ of the perceiver. This sensible form is retained in the memory. Morton describes the work of memory in a picturesque prose: "What has appeared and been perceived by the Senses, has made an Impression upon the Animal Spirits in the brain which Signature is retain'd for Contemplation long after the Sensation is Ended...." The "Animal Spirits in the brain," which bear the sensible form of something formerly perceived, are called Phantasm which if they be materiall Images, they had need be much Contracted, because of the multitude lay'd up in that little Storehouse they may be Somewhat apprehended by those little pictures of outward objects that are deliniated in the Retina of the Eye, where a Whole Hemisphere may be, and is usually contracted to the breadth of a Pea, and yet all the variety of Colours, and figures is Exactly represented therein now the memoriall Species may be a contraction of these again, and So contain in them only as it were the Seed of Conceptions, which brought forth to the fancy may Soon in that fertile Soyle, grow up, and Expatiate themselves to a convenient magnitude for contemplation.

Fancy, the, is the recollection of the "Phantasm" that memory keeps. In a delightful passage that one would hardly expect to find in a physics textbook, Morton illustrates the service that fancy renders:
...Thus I have an Image of my friend whom I look upon with my thoughts, and with him (as it were) converse dayly, though he be personally far distant or perhaps dead.

fancy is Image-maker in the brain of absent friends we present Shape retain

In a more prosaic vein Morton writes:

Phantasy, or fancy is the second interior Sens, the Seat they place in the middle part of the brain, tis defin'd a Sensative power, whereby the Animal Soul can Apprehend, Compare and Estimate Phantasms, which are Images (Hence tis Cal'd Imagination,) or representations of things that have been some way or other perceived by outward Senses....

Two points need emphasis here. First of all, it is incorrect to term fancy a purely mental operation. To be sure, it occurs in the brain. But it does not involve ideas and ideation. Rather it involves images and imagination, and in this sense fancy is closer to sense than to reason. In fact Morton calls it "the...interior Sens." In this way he is following the whole philosophic tradition, especially the Aristotelian and Scholastic tradition, before Descartes. Aristotle had considered everything that was not pure idea, that is, the result of intellection, to be physical. Not until Descartes did all the modes of apprehension, including sensing and feeling, become mental operations, too. But even Descartes had had to borrow the notion of animal spirits from the Scholastics in order to explain the mechanics of perception. Yet it was by this very notion of animal spirits that the Scholastics had tried to preserve an organic distinction between ideation and sensation, memory, and imagination. For
the Scholastics, of course, the distinction was not primarily epistemological, but ontological and even ethical. Reason apprehended the divine light, from which wisdom came. The senses and their derivative, the imagination, on the other hand, apprehended the world and one's own body, the attractions of which caused men to forget the rational function and thus to err and sin. Reason, then, should exist on a separate and higher level in the epistemological scale than sense, memory, and imagination, just as the objects of reason existed on a higher level in the scale of being than did the objects of sense. As has been said, Morton had assimilated much of Cartesian philosophy, but he had learned his Descartes primarily through a Scholastic interpreter, Antoine Le Grand. Thus, although the new ideas stimulated his own thought, they stimulated him in the direction of elaborating and confirming what he already believed, namely the truth of Aristotelian or Scholastic physics. Those scholars, such as Morton, who were predisposed to think so, could treat Cartesian philosophy as a substantiation of the old truths. Morton could embrace Descartes' reaffirmation of the function of animal spirits (a constituent of Cartesian speculation that was really quite peripheral, but one that Aristotelians such as Le Grand emphasized) and at the same time ignore the novel attitude that Descartes assumed towards himself and the world.

Secondly, Morton tells, in the last passage quoted, what the particular function of fancy is. It is the faculty,
"whereby the Animall Soul can Apprehend, Compare, and Estimate Phantasms..." Their function, the estimation of Phantasms, is of importance in this treatment. The memory contained impressions of many desirable things, all the worldly comforts and pleasures. According to Morton fancy called these impressions forth to anticipate their satisfaction. But many of these pleasures that fancy entertained were either unattainable or if attainable then excessively mean, prideful, or sensual and thus bad for the health of the soul. Thus if fancy dwelt on these pleasures over-long, it would acquire an appetite for them and stir man to seek their satisfaction. In this way man would emasculate the divine light in the mind that alone kept him from evil and fall into a life of sin. The only way to prevent such a course was, as we have seen in considering Scholastic psychology, to keep the will open to the verdict of reason on what the appetite seeks. If man should fail in this obligation, the will was powerless to prevent the appetite from getting its way on whatever fancy proposed. As Horton says, a rampant fancy leads to "Vehemence of Passion." Such a "Vitiation" of the faculty is the distemper cal'd madness, which seems to be but a higher degree and more fixed State of the last act mentioned i.e., "Vehemence of Passion"; for when the tone of the brain is so altered, and misshapen that it continues in that deformity, as that reason cannot act for the fancy's Extravagance, then 'tis madness; for as a Maimed body is unfit for motion, so a distempered, and distorted brain is for ratiocination. The Difference therefore between madness, and Extavigant passion
Seems to be this; that madness is a broken limb, or a crooked body which renders it utterly unapt for some motions, whereas the wild vehemence of passions (before noted) is but a spry or a short temporary and voluntary, bowing of the body out of its natural posture this indeed hinders a convenient motion for the present but takes it not quite away.

The unrestricted pursuit of what the appetite ordains produces "vehemence of passion" that in turn alters "the tone of the brain." The brain as has been shown in an earlier quotation from Morton is responsible for the production of the animal spirits that keep the whole organism in health and equilibrium. But when man insatiably pursues his pleasure he throws the mind off balance, disturbs the process generative of animal spirits and thus taxes the body. A man in such a condition must then rely on what animal spirits he already has to keep control of the body. But they are agitated and spent. He reflects their condition, that is to say, he grows at once mentally agitated and physically spent. His behavior then becomes erratic and unreasonable. The "vehemence of passion" persists and finally turns to madness.

Madness, however, is not the only result of the collaboration of fancy and appetite. Sometimes the desire for something that fancy represented to the mind was so intense that appetite roused the animal spirits of which imagination consisted and caused them to produce physical effects on other parts of the body. Thus natural philosophers in both England and America commonly held that such
agitation in the mother during pregnancy could produce physical effects on the child in the womb. Morton even devotes a page of his *Compendium Physicae* to an explanation of this phenomenon.

As to those Externall, and Cuticuller Marks which happen to the Embryo, after its Substantial formation (as we see in Many persons blood-spots, and Notable Moles, having resemblance of Some fruit, or other thing longed for by the Mother; and it is Said that if the Mother in a longing Condition touch any part of her own body with her hand, the Correspondent part of the Child will accordingly be marked.) For all these things we know not how to account, but by those Phantastical impressions.

Cotton Mather repeats this notion in his "Angel of Bethesda," when he says:

> There is an astonishing Operation, and indeed some Illustration and Explanation of the Nishmath-Chajim, in prægnant Women; whose Imagination frequently makes Impressions on the unborn Infants, that would exceed all Beleef, if we had them not continually in View before our Eyes. The Instances are so numerous and so various, that one might compile a large Volume of them... 

Mather is noting the same Phenomenon as an instance of the power of the Nishmath-Chajim that Morton had noted as an instance of the power of fancy. But as can be seen in the passage from Mather, he like Morton, accepts the notion of imagination. Thus they are both talking about the same thing; only Mather is more elaborate in his notion than Morton. For Mather not only postulates the imagination; he also postulates "a Fabric of Spirits" through which the power of imagination makes itself felt. Mather writes:
The sagacious Dr. Sydenham, seems to have the Scent of our Mishmath-Chajim, when he tells us, that as the Outward Man is framed with parts, obvious to Sense, thus the Inward Man does consist of a due Series, and as it were a Fabric of Spirits, to be viewed only by the Eye of Reason; And as this is united with the Constitution of the Body, so the Frame of it is more or less easily disordered, by how much the Constitution of the Spirits is more or less firm within us. And that the Origin of the Splenetic and Hysteric Ataxy in the Body is a feeble Constitution of the Spirits, and the breaking of their System, so that they are easily dissipated, or have an unequal Distribution.

Mather not only agrees with Morton that the imagination has the power to produce physical effects by working through the animal spirits or what Mather calls Mishmath-Chajim. He also agrees with Morton that the upset of this system with its head in "the interior Sens" or fancy is the cause of distress or anxiety, that is to say what Morton called "madness," what Mather called "Splenetic and Hysteric Ataxy," and what we today would call mental illness. Furthermore, since Mather's concern in "The Angel of Bethesda" is primarily medical he holds that just as the imagination of the mother can work effects on the unborne babe so the distemper of the "Fabric of Spirits" can produce physical illness. The observed physical illness is symptomatic of mental distress, and not until the mental factor is brought to ease will the physical disease disappear.
NOTES

1 See Perkins, The Worke...for Scholastic psychology in the hands of an early English Puritan. Then see Deodat Lawson, Christ's Fidelity the Only Shield Against Satan's Malignity (Boston: Printed by B. Harris, & Sold by Nicolas Nuttog, next to Gutteridge's Coffee-House, 1693); and Charles Morton, Compendium Physicae, 15-19, 180-186, 194-205.

2 Cotton Mather wrote a preface to Charles Morton's Spirit of Man (Boston: Printed by B. Harris, for Duncan Campbell, at the Dock-Head, over-against the Conduit, 1693). See also, Theodore Hornberger, "Samuel Lee (1625-1691, a Clerical Channel for the Flow of New Ideas to Seventeenth-Century New England," Osiris, I (1936), 352-355, for the possibility of Cotton Mather's debt to Lee's scientific speculations and for the possibility of the influence of these speculations on a heightened interest in witchcraft theory just preceding the Salem episode.


4 The Spirit of Man, 3.

5 Ibid., 4.

6 Ibid., 1.

7 Ibid., 18ff.

8 Ibid., 4.

9 Ibid., 17-18.

10 The Wonders of the Invisible World is the title of Cotton Mather's best-known work on the realm of the preternatural, published in Boston in October, 1692, at the height of the Salem witch hunt.

11 Ibid., "Preface." See a like utterance in Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana: Or the Ecclesiastical
12 For the history of Mather's treatment of "The Spirit of the Man," see Otho T. Beall, Jr., and Richard H. Shryock, "Cotton Mather: First Significant Figure in American Medicine," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, LXIII (April, 1953), 99 and 102-103. This monograph has been a rich treasury of illumination for the author, for not only is it one of the few informative attempts to come to an understanding of the relationship between Mather's diverse intellectual interests and in turn their relationship to his elusive personality; it is also suggestive of the aspects of Mather's biography that have yet to be clarified or explored.

Although Mather did not make his idea of spirit explicit in any published work until 1722, he kept a great many notes throughout the last decade of the seventeenth century and the first two decades of the eighteenth that pertained to the powers of this third aspect of the soul. Ibid., chap. iv, 74-92.

13 I am using the shortened version of this manuscript that Beall and Shryock appended to the article cited in the last footnote. Ibid., 167-274. Fortunately this shortened version does contain chapter five. But it does not contain chapter eight, which would also be relevant to this study, since it treated "cures from the invisible world." Ibid., 102.

14 The author has not been able to find who this "very good Authority" was.

15 Ibid., 177.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 178.
18 Ibid.
19 In the middle ages elements of the neo-Platonic philosophy were absorbed into the Jewish Cabala (Copleston, 227). As the following passage shows the Cabala makes much of the tripartite division of the person, nepheshch, ruach, and the heschemah:

"Nephesh dumeure à côté du corps jusqu'au moment ou celui-ci est decomposé sous la terre; c'est cette partie de l'âme qui parcourt souvent ce bas monde et qui va trouver les vivants pour s'enquérir de leurs douleurs, et quand les vivants ont besoin
d'une grâce, elle prie pour eux.

"Rouah pénètre dans l'Eden d'en bas où il prend
la figure que le corps avait ici-bas, à l'aide
d'une enveloppe qu'il y entoure. Il y jouit du
bonheur du Jardin. ...

"La neschemah remonte immédiatement dans les
régions d'en haut d' où elle émane. ... Elle ne
descend jamais plus ici-bas, car elle est composée
du Monde d'en haut et de celui d'en bas.

"Tant qu'elle n'est pas arrivée à sa place où
elle est attachée au Trône sacré, rouah ne peut
pénétrer dans l'Eden d'en bas et nèphesch ne trouve
pas de repos près du corps. Dès qu'elle est
arrivée à sa place, toutes les autres parties de
l'âme se trouvent en repos. ... Ainsi toutes les
parties de l'âme sont en peine jusqu'à ce que la
neschemah se trouve à sa place en haut. ...

"Tant que la partie supérieure de l'âme n'est pas
arrivée à la place où lui est assignée, la seconde
ne peut pas pénétrer dans le Paradis d'en bas et
la troisième ne trouve pas de repos dans la tombe.
Nèphesch reste dans la tombe tant qu'il y a des os."
(Quoted in Pierre Duhem, Le Système du Monde;
Histoire des Doctrines Cosmologiques de Platon à
Copernic (Paris: Libraire Scientifique, A. Hermann
et fils, 1917, V, 158-159.)

Mather's Nishmath-Chajim would correspond to rouah in this
cabalistic scheme. Whether or not Mather was acquainted
with the cabalistic literature on this point cannot be
ascertained, but that he was familiar with the Cabala
itself or one of its derivative forms is at least a
probability, since he is certain to have come across
references to or extracts from the Cabala in his studies
of Hebrew.

20 Daniel Pickering Walker, Spiritual and Demonic
Magic from Pliny to Campanella (London: Warburg Institute,
University of London, 1933), 38.

21c. A. Brown, "Scientific Notes from the Books and
Letters of John Winthrop, Jr. (1606-1676)," Isis, XI (1928),
325-342. This article also suggests all the sources on
which a Puritan might have drawn and on which Winthrop did
draw for an understanding of Renaissance philosophy and
science.

22 Beall and Shryock, 253-4, 268.

23 Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible
World, 53.
24 Ibid., 167-188.
25 Ibid., 182.
26 Ibid., 163.
27 I have used Jan Baptista van Helmont, Oriatricke, or Physick refined, ... being a new rise and progress of philosophy and medicine ... rendered into English ... by J. Chandler (London: For Lodwick Loyd, 1662), 192ff., 262ff., 283ff., 289ff., 341ff., 351ff., and 552ff.
28 For the Mathers' debt to van Helmont, see Beall and Shryock, 62, 101-2, 104, 119, 122, 164.
29 The Library of the Late Reverend and Learned Mr. Samuel Lee (Boston: Printed for Duncan Cambell, Book-seller at the Book-head ever-against the Conduit, 1693), 6.
30 Samuel Lee, Eleodriamos, Or the Triumph of Mercy in the Chariot of Praise (Boston: Reprinted by B. Green, for Benj. Elliot, and Sold at his Shop, 1718), 65; see also 2-4, 93, 145, and 194, either for specific references to Paracelsus and van Helmont or for passages that were inspired by the scientific speculation of the time that was similar to Paracelsus' and van Helmont's. Other works by Lee, printed in America and illustrative of his wide-ranging, scientific interests are: The Joy of Faith ... (Boston: Printed by Samuel Green, 1687); The Great Day of Judgment (Boston: Printed by B. Green, 1692); and, Contemplations on Mortality (Boston: Reprinted by B. Green, and J. Allen, for Samuel Phillips, at the Birch Shop, 1698).
31 For this summary of Paracelsus' contribution to medicine, I have used Walter Pagel, Paracelsus; an Introduction to the Philosophical Medicine of the Renaissance (Basel: S. Karger, 1958), especially 117-121, 247, and 316; and Henry M. Pachter, Magic into Science; the Story of Paracelsus. (New York: Henry Schuman, 1951).
32 For Cotton Mather's role in the introduction of smallpox vaccination into New England see Beall and Shryock, 123-5 and 136-163.
33 Ibid., 179.
34 Ibid.

Beall and Shryock, 180.

Morton, Compendium Physicae, p. xxxi.

Ibid., 189. The brackets are the editor's.

Ibid., 194.

Beall and Shryock, 183.

Ibid., 187.

Ibid., 185-6. The similarity between what Mather says here and what medicine does today hardly needs acknowledging.

Morton, Compendium Physicae, 181.

Ibid., 182-3. The brackets around the period are mine; the others are the editor's.

Ibid., 181. One would be hard put to find a comparable remark in a physics textbook today. There is perhaps no remark more characteristic of the spirit of pre-Cartesian physics than the one Morton makes here. Incidentally, Morton interspersed such doggerel as I have quoted here throughout his text. It served Harvard scholars in colonial days as a mnemonic device and now serves an occasional scholar of a different sort by redeeming what might otherwise be dull reading.

Ibid. The brackets are the editor's.

Ibid., p. xxxii-xl.

Ibid., 182. The second pair of brackets are mine; the others are the editor's.

Ibid., 144.

Beall and Shryock, 180. In a letter to the Royal Society, Cotton Mather says: "The Spirits make the Bodies wherein they thus appear by the plastic power of Imagination (whereof the Signatures made by the Imaginations of the Mother on a Foetus (is) a pregnant Instance!" (Quoted in Frank Alexander Tredinnick, Jr., "Cotton Mather, Puritan Scientist; a Study of His Curiosa Americana"


53 Beall and Shryock, 186.

54 Ibid.
IV. DEMONOLOGY AND THE PRAETERNATURAL IDEA

The Demon

Let us now consider the theory that the Puritans shaped to explain how demons could work their malice on man. This chapter will treat of the way the devils used the human constitution, examined in the last chapter, to produce their praeternatural effects. But it should first be understood that the devil could operate in three ways. First, he could manipulate natural processes external to man to produce plagues and foul weather. Secondly, he could create illusory phenomena that man would mistake for the real thing. Only in the last instance did the devil have to invade the spirit and cause internal distress. The devil applied the first two methods more or less steadily. Every untoward occurrence could be attributed to the devil and could thus be interpreted as bearing a Providential meaning. The last method was the most terrible because the most direct. The Puritans counted themselves fortunate that God did not permit the devil to haunt them in this immediate fashion more often than he did. Thus, before turning to the manner of the devil's invasion of the human spirit, some consideration should be given to the other methods by which the devil could obtain his ends. Just as the Puritans
had used certain ideas of the Cambridge neo-Platonists to reinforce their own idea of spirit as the middle term of the person, so they also drew on Cambridge neo-Platonism for an explanation of the devil's operation in the external world. How then did the neo-Platonic heritage, especially as this heritage had found expression in the work of the Cambridge philosophers, contribute to the Puritan understanding of the devil's operation in the world at large?

The New-England Puritans believed that agents of evil inhabit the upper air. This notion seems anomalous when devils have always been depicted as the tormentors of men in hell. But the idea that at least some devils inhabit the sublunary spaces derived from a definite tradition, namely, the neo-Platonic speculation of antiquity and the Renaissance, from which as we have already seen, the idea of the spirit as the middle term of the soul had come. In Christian thought the demons retained the powers that the neo-Platonic demons had had, but they were no longer subordinates. For Christianity, with its strong bent towards Manichaeism, had made them the evil spirits that used their powers over natural processes, not for creative good as the neo-Platonic demons had done, but rather to beguile men into further and further sin. New-England divines did not use the term World-Soul to denote the forces of nature that demons could manipulate to their designs. They might consider what the neo-Platonists had called the World-Soul simply to be the course
of nature, as William Perkins had done. But since the latter part of the sixteenth century, when Perkins had written, the phrase, the course of nature had acquired a certain irreligious connotation. For in the hands of materialists and mechanical philosophers it implied not the nature in which Providence worked through praetomnatural means, but the nature that obeyed its own laws and precluded the intervention of supernatural agency. As we have seen, the Cambridge neo-Platonists reacted against this assertion and proposed instead that natural processes are not simply the result of matter in motion, but are the product of spiritual agency. They used the old idea of the World-Soul to show how such spiritual agency worked but adopted a new nomenclature. Ralph Cudworth, one of the Cambridge men, called the spiritual agency immanent in the universe the plastic nature. Cotton Mather adopted this idea to explain how the demons and witches practice certain aspects of their craft. He says: "Witchcraft seems to be the Skill of Applying the Plastic Spirit of the world, unto some unlawful purposes, by means of a Confederacy with Evil Spirits." Mather wrote this in the summer or early fall of 1692, during the Salem frenzy. Two years before a Harvard senior, Nathaniel Clap, had defended in formal Scholastic debate, the quaestio "whether the plastic force of the world can be applied to putting through a witchcraft job." That the idea of a plastic nature was fairly widespread among divines in New England is then fairly certain. That the New-England
ministers would use the idea to bolster witchcraft belief is further evidence of their acquaintance with another aspect of the speculation of the English neo-Platonists, namely, the attempt of Henry More and Joseph Glanvil to show the primacy of spiritual agency in the world by proving the existence of evil spirits and explaining the manner of their agency. Under pressure of attack from materialists and mechanists, men such as Cudworth, More, and Glanvil enlarged the scope of spiritual agency and built an elaborate theory in its defense. How England witchcraft theory reflects this expansion, and the growth and elaboration of the Puritan idea of the praeternatural in the late seventeenth century owes much to the speculation of Cudworth, More, and Glanvil. As we shall see, William Perkins the leading Puritan authority on witchcraft, was conservative in estimate of what spirits could do. When the Puritans were faced with making a choice between Perkins' circumspection and More's or Glanvil's extravagance, they often accepted what More and Glanvil said in spite of Perkins' authority.

The idea of the plastic nature accounts for the insistence of the Puritans on the devils' habitation of the upper atmosphere and, if not the celestial spheres themselves, which Christians tended to reserve for the angels and the souls of the saved, then at least the sublunary spaces. The World-Soul was traditionally thought to emanate from the heavens and thus the devils, if they were to have the power to manipulate the seeds of things in the womb of the
universe, had to reside in the heavens, too. Cotton Mather believed that from the devil's control of the air and the forces in the air, he could raise the storms that were the perennial terror of the Puritan colonists. Mather, by referring to Paracelsus' alchemical studies, even tries to suggest how the devil might brew a storm. He writes that "Paracelsus could have informed the Devil, if he had not been informed, as sure he was before, That if much Aluminious matter, with Salt Petre not throughly prepared, be mixed, they will send up a cloud of smoke, which will come down in Rain." Not only does this passage show that Mather knew Paracelsus' work; it is also illustrative of the way that Mather and others in New England understood science. The knowledge that science had begun to furnish did nothing to shake the Puritan belief in spiritual agency. Rather as Mather betrays here, man's feeble scientific knowledge was all the more reason to believe in such agency. Demons had known all along what man was just then finding out. Science invalidated the argument that demons do not exist because men cannot discover how they work. For science was showing men processes that they had never known to exist. The inference was of course that these were the processes that the devil used. Cotton Mather also believed that the devil's control of the air gave him the power to produce plagues. Again his exposition of the way this can happen smacks of Paracelsus and certainly of alchemy.
‘Tis the Destroyer, or the Devil, that scatters Plagues about the world. Pestilential and Contagious Diseases, ‘tis the Devil who does oftentimes invade us with them. ‘Tis no uneasy thing for the Devil to impregnate the air about us, with such Malignant Salts as meeting with the salt, of our Microcom, shall immediately cast us into Fermentation and Putrefaction, which will utterly dissolve all the Vital Tyres within us; Even as an Aqua-Fortis, made with a conjunction if Mire and Nitric, Corrodes what it Seizes upon.

Deodat Lawson, a Boston minister put the same notion in another way, when in a sermon in Salem on March 24, 1692, during the height of the witch hunt, he wrote:

Sometimes by Moving and Exasperating the Continent Particles of the Blood, & violated humour of the Body, ... the devil doth (by God's Permission) Smith the Bodies of Men, with Grievous, Pestilential and Leathsome Diseases, Of this Job was a special instance; Job 2,7.... Satan may (by Divine Permission) spread the Contagious Attaques of Epidemical Diseases, in the Airy Region, (the Territory assigned to him who is Prince of the Power of the Air, Eph. 2,2) and make them Penetrare, so as to render them the more Afflictive and Destructive to the Bodies of such as are Infected by them.

Here Lawson states in a clear utterance that evil spirits as inhabitants, in fact masters, of the air, have the power to use the elements, seeds, or "Contagious Attaques" that the air contains to procure the objects of their malevolent intent.

Man was also susceptible of the machinations of the devil in another way, namely, by being deceived into believing that the illusions the devil presented to the senses were real things. As Perkins said,

an illusion of the outward senses... makes a man to think that he heareth, seeth, feeleth, or toucheth such things as indeed he doth not. This the devill can easily doe divers wayses, even by the strength
of nature. For example, by corrupting the instruments of sense, as the humor of the eye, &c. or by altering and changing the ayre, which is the means whereby we see, and such like. 12

Perkins says that the devil can accomplish his deceptions "even by the strength of nature." Increase Mather a century later will write that the new discoveries in optics do indeed show that the devil uses the principles operative in nature to perpetrate his deceits. Increase, still attuned to the providential idea of nature, sees no inconsistency in maintaining on the one hand the existence of natural laws uniformly operative and on the other the ability of the devil to manipulate those laws to his own special ends. Thus in 1692 he writes that the devil "has perfect skill in Opticks, and can therefore cause that to be invisible to one, which is not so to another, and things also to appear far otherwise than they are: He has likewise the Art of Limning in the Performance of it, and knows what may be done by Colours." 13

In the same vein four years later, Increase says:

"Nor is it to be wondered at, that the Spirits of Darkness should be able to Deceive mens Senses; making them believe that they see that which is not. A man that is Skilled in Opticks, may Improve on the Senses of others, as did Descartes, when he caused Admiration in his Friend Brassica by Representing to him a Company of Soldiers which he concealed, and by a Glass brought such multiplied without doors, . . . . How easy then is it for Daemons who have a perfect Understanding in Opticks, and in the Power of Nature to deceive the Eyes, and delude the Imagination of Silly Mortals? 14"

As Mather and Lawson showed, the devil can produce disease by rigging the elements of the air. But far more
awesome is his power to enter the soul itself or more properly that part of the person that links the body and mind and to raise there the torments that cause both physical and mental distress. Following Scholastic demonology, the Puritans held that the devils could not invade the rational soul itself. But that restriction did not prevent the devils from winning the soul by indirect means. The imagination could serve them well in this regard. The fancy was the proper object of the devils’ agency.

Although the imagination was not inherently evil, when the devil roused there the images of a man’s desires or forebodings, he could divert it to evil ends. If the devil chose to tempt man to gratify his lusts, he would uncover in his victim’s imagination the images of the objects of those lusts and proceed to present them to the “interior Sens.” The appetites would seize the victim and block the way by which imagination would normally submit its impressions to the intellect. The will would thus be denied the verdict of reason and would hardly be able to resist the clamor that appetite made for the pursuit of the pleasures whose images the devil had raised in the mind. In this way, Lawson says, the devil would succeed in

“introducing Universal Ataraxy, and inordinacy, in the Passions, both Love and Hatred, the Cardinal or Radical affections, with all other that accompany or flow from them; Hence we read of Hating God who ought above all to be loved; Rom. i. 30. And loving the world (i.e) the Pleasures, Treasures, and Honours thereof, in such a degree as is inconsistent, with the Love of the chief good; I John 2.15. James 4.4. And
although it must be acknowledged that there is a Corrupt Principle in Fallen Man; yet it is Satan, that frequently moves it unto act, and all he intends thereby is the Captivating the whole Soul, and by consequence the whole Man, to Disobedience of the Command of GOD...

This diabolic temptation to gratify the lusts of the flesh was what Kramer and Sprenger had most feared. But such fear played little part in Puritan notions of what the devil could do. The Puritans were instead far more concerned with the devil's power to produce sickness, especially mental and emotional derangement. It was of course much harder to explain how the devil could work through the fancy to get this response than it was to explain how he could use the fancy to lead man to indulge the senses. But the Puritans would not and could not discard the Scholastic psychology as the framework of their explanation. Just as the images of worldly and sensuous things excited appetite so the inward apprehension of other phenomena aroused fear. The Puritan scholars never say what these frightful apprehensions are. Increase Mather simply calls them "evil thoughts" and then adds: "The Devil put it into the heart of Judas, that he should go, and betray his Master." Lawson is a little more explicit. In 1692, he writes that Satan maliciously Operates upon the more Common Powers of the Soul, by strange and frightful Representations to the Fancy, or Imagination, and by violent Tortures of the body, often threatening to extinguish life, as hath been observed, in those that are afflicted among us. And not only so, but he vents his malice, in Diabolical Operations, on the more sublime and distinguishing Faculties...
raising Mists of Darkness, and ignorance, in the Understanding.\textsuperscript{18}

The date and the passage "often threatening to extinguish life, as hath been observed, in those that are afflicted among us" are significant. It was the height of the excitement in Salem, and Lawson declares that the threat of suicide was the cause of greatest dread. Cotton Mather's writing, both during and long after the episode at Salem, dwells on suicide as the ultimate end of the devil's machinations. He almost invariably associates suicidal impulses with melancholia. The constitution of "the Melancholick" is most susceptible to the devil's insinuations. The victim is led to despair and finally brought to the brink of suicide. Mather's treatment is not altogether hypothetical. Mather's preoccupation with suicide seems to arise from more than the usual theological opposition. New England may have witnessed a remarkable number of suicides during the time of Mather's writing. In any case, Mather's concern and his explaining suicide as the work of devil are indicative of the dread sense of evil that at least this Puritan suffered and that must also have been a part of his milieu.

The Witch

The dread presences that drove men mad could arise in two ways, or as Lawson says "Satan\textsuperscript{19} exerts his malice, either (1) Immediately, or (2) Mediately...." In the immediate mode, which we have already discussed, he brings
Distress upon the Bodies of Men, by malignant Operations in, and Diabolical Impressions on, the Spiritual Principle or Vehicle of life & Motion."²⁰ He does this "by his own power and influence" and "without any Instrument whatsoever."²¹ The other way requires the mediation of another being and brings us to a treatment of the witch, her relationship to the devil and her role in the diabolic function. For as Lawson says the devil works

Literally by employing some of mankind or other creatures, and he frequently useth others persons or things, that his Designs may be the more indiscernable.... And the Devil, having then [witches] in this subjection, by their Consent, he will use their Bodies and Minds, Shapes and Representations, to Afflict and Afflict others....²²

In theory the witches were those who had willingly followed the devil into an indulgence of the temptations he had offered them. In exchange for the soul of the witch Satan placed his extraordinary powers at her disposal.²³ Satan then could work in association with the witch to accomplish his deeds. Then the witch succumbed to the devil's temptations, she received the power to command evil spirits to possess whomever she would. But unfortunately the neighbors whom she directed the demons to afflict, could easily discover that it was she who had done so. For when the devils who were in her employ appeared to the afflicted, they did so in the shape of their mistress. This idea of the spectral shape requires closer examination. As we have seen each human being possesses a spirit distinct from either body or mind, but important as the connection between
them. This third term of man's being was often called the shape of the body, and New-England demonologists identified this shape with the spectral shape that appeared to the afflicted. The witch then as part of her bargain with Satan agreed to lend her spirit to the devils in diabolic operations. This act of lending became a rather complex process. Just as in Scholastic witchcraft theory, when the witch made her pact, she was presented with a familiar, usually a rather vile animal. Until the seventeenth century this creature, who was supposed to have familiar relations with the witch, had played little part in the theory of witchcraft, except as a token of the compact and as a sign of the abominable character of the sin that the compact represented. But at least Cotton Mather attributes to the familiar the function of extracting the shape from the witch in order that the devils might use it in their activities. Then the devil afflicted its victims in the spectral shape of the witch, the victims could perceive the shape, even though invisible to normal sight, because as Cotton Mather says, the devil forced the "senses from conversing with their ordinary objects," and captivated "them unto this communion with the Powers of Darkness..." Cotton Mather also suggested that the shape became visible by attracting subtle matter to it to conform to its form. He writes:

...I know the Assertion of some, That every Spirit is endowed with an Innate Power by which it can attract suitable matter out of all Things for a Covering or Body, of a proportionable Form.
and nature to itself: which assertion, well stated, 
proved, and applied, would solve some of the 
hardest phenomena that belong to the uncouth and 
horrid shapes, wherein mischiefs are done by 
witchcraft. 25

Among "the hardest phenomena" that this "assertion" 
would solve, was the problem how the witch could be at two 
places at one and the same time. If it was held that a 
familiar could release the spirit of a witch, then the 
witch could travel the land, while her body remained in a 
fixed position; she could travel, unencumbered by the body, 
as rapidly as a spirit does and thus cover great distances 
in a short time. 26 In regard to the manner of this 
release of the spiritual vehicle, Glanvil disagrees some-
what with Cotton Mather. Mather said that the familiar's 
function was to extract spirits. But Glanvil holds that 
the familiar infuses "some vile vapour" into the witch and 
that "this ferment disposeth the imagination of the 
Sorceress to cause the ... separation of the soul from the 
body, and may perhaps keep the body in fit temper for its 
re-entry; as also it may facilitate transformation, which, 
it may be could not be effected by ordinary and unassisted 
imagination." 27 According to Glanvil, then, the familiar 
merely renders assistance to the witch in the process by 
which her imagination separates the constituents of her 
being, while according to Mather the familiar takes the 
active part in this separation. Either he misread Glanvil 
or he drew his notion from some source other than Glanvil. 
In any case, he followed Glanvil in another respect. He
agreed with Glanvil that any thrusts that the afflicted might make at the shapes afflicting him would appear as bruises on the witches whose shapes had taken part.  

Not only did the idea of a shape separable from the body furnish a way to explain how the witch could be transported through the air without the burden of her body. It also explained another class of praeternatural phenomena, namely, the images of the dead that Puritans believed haunted the living. As the shapes of the witch were known as specters, the shapes of the dead were known as apparitions. The dead had to await the reunion with the reconstituted body before they would enjoy glorification in Heaven or suffer torment in Hell. In the interim between death and the Judgment Day the soul existed apart from the body. This interim was usually regarded as a deep sleep. But this was not always the case. For the aerial vehicle or what Cotton called Mishmath-Chajim continued in the company of the rational soul and enabled it in its disembodied state to appear among the living. Then it did so it was with God's permission and generally for the purpose of punishing someone among the living for breaking some obligation, still owing to the deceased. Then the apparition appeared among the living, it had much the same power as the devils exercised. The devils in fact could represent themselves as an apparition from the dead and thus deceive their victims into honoring what they said. The devils could not appropriate an apparition for their
own uses as they could the specter of a witch. But they
could cast an illusion in the image of one of the dead and
fool their victims in that way. In any case Increase
Mather warns against jumping to the conclusion that the
images one sees are real apparitions. For such images may
instead be another of Satan’s plots to lead man into
greater error. 31

Let us return to a consideration of the witch. She
not only plays the passive role of lending her spirit to
the demons; she also acquires the power to afflict her
victims by herself. Again the familiar is involved, and
Mather makes it clear this time that the creature not only
extracts spirit from the witch, but also infuses diabolical
power into her. Thus Mather says:

...why should not Witch-markes be searched for?... I
never saw any of those markes, but it is doubt-
less not impossible for a chirurgeon, when he sees
them, to say what are magickal, & if these become
once apparent, it is apparent that these witches
have gone so farre in their wickedness as to
admit most cursed Succages, whereby the Devils
have not onely fetched out of them, it may be
the Spirits of which they make vehicles, wherein
they visit the afflicted, but also they have
infused a venom into them which Exalts the
malignity of their spirits as well as of their
bodyes:...32

The witch, thus fortified with the devil’s venom, can direct
her excess of spirits to those whom she chooses to afflict.
Joseph Glanvil, from whom Cotton Mather quite likely
borrowed this aspect of witch theory, puts the notion in
these terms:
In this passage Glanvil is suggesting that one's imagination not only has the power to affect one's own person, but if envenomed as the witch's is, can also produce effects on other human beings. Glanvil also says that certain persons are more susceptible to the witch's power than others. "Children and timorous persons" are particularly susceptible "because their spirits and imaginations being weak and passive, are not able to resist the fatal invasions; whereas men of bold minds, who have plenty of strong and vigorous spirits, are secure from the contagion."  

This influence of the witch's imagination was often thought to proceed from her eyes when she gazed at her victim. This power of sight was also obviously another instance of the effect that imagination, working through animal spirits, could produce even on distant objects. Perkins, writing in the late sixteenth century, had circumscribed the power of imagination to one's own person, and had explicitly rejected the doctrine of the evil eye, saying:
...it is an old received opinion, that in malicious and ill disposed persons, there proceed out of the eye with the besmears, noyse and malignant spirits, which infect the aire, and doe poison or kill, not only then with whom they are daily conversant, but others also whose company they frequent, of what age, strength, and complexion soever they be. But the opinion is as fond, as it is old: for it as much against nature that such vertuo should proceed out of the eye, or such spirits break out of the nerves to the partic hated, as it is for the blood of the body, of it self, to gush out of the veines.\footnote{7}

But between the time of Perkins and that of the Mathers, religion had begun to be challenged by philosophies springing from the scientific revolution. Men such as More and Glanvil rose to religion's defense. In an effort to build a vitalism to counter materialism and mechanical philosophy, they even went so far as to resurrect old superstitions and to give them a gloss of philosophical respectability by fitting them into their system. Some of the occult speculations that Perkins had feared had also reentered the intellectual current \textit{via} the philosophical medicine of such men as van Helmont, so that quiso-science itself contributed the occult. As we have seen Cotton Mather was aware of this intellectual current. In consequence, when he undertook to write about witchcraft, he often threw Perkins' circumspection to the wind and adopted instead the extravagant notions of his contemporaries.\footnote{8}

This extravagance was, however, not unanimous. Charles Morton wavers in his acceptance of the doctrine of the evil eye. The doctrine rested on the theory that man sees "by Extramission or Sending forth Rayes, or Spirits
from the Eye to the Object." But Morton says that since man can see the fixed stars, even though the Eye is not powerful enough to send rays that far, then he must see not by extrarission, but "by Introlieception (or receiving inwards) of Lightson rayes, Sent Originally (as from Luminous bodyes) or Reflecten (as from all others) into the Eye." He then considers what this theory does to the notion of the evil eye:

This doctrine of introlieception Militates with that Conceit of Fascination (or Witch-Craft) by Looking upon with an Evill Eye. According to the Vulgar tradition, yet with all it must be Granted that as the whole body is Perspirable, so the Eye may have its Emissions for some small distance, but whether So as to affect another body, I much doubt. He may indeed be terrifyed with a fierce Look, and Refreshed with a Gracious...one,... But this Seems to be rather by Ratiocination about the Person who Shews Such a Countenance than by any Steams which proceed from the Eye. Tis as if one should say to himself; that Person looks fiercely, therefore he will hurt me.... Certain it is that a Passion Changes the Eye, but not the Beholder of that Eye, Unless by Humane Sympathy or Reason about the Consequence of that Passion.

Fierce Looks do terrour strike Love,
Grief in Eye
Work Like by Reason, or by Sympathy.

Morton equivocates on the issue of the evil eye, though he tends to think it unreasonable. The Salem witch trials, however, used the notion of the evil eye as a test for the discovery of a witch. The accused would be asked to look at the afflicted and more often than not when this was done, the afflicted would become agitated. The accused would then be asked to touch the afflicted.
The theory behind this was that the poisonous spirits that the witch had sent to the afflicted via her sight would pass out of the afflicted and into the witch again when she touched her victim.\footnote{41} Again the theory held good when it was tested in the Salem courtroom. As the trials wore on and the number of the accused increased, two among the clergy spoke out against the validity of the doctrine of the evil eye. Samuel Willard wrote an anonymous tract in 1692, in which he disparaged the evil eye as a test of witchcraft.\footnote{42} But the more interesting protest against the use that was being made of the evil eye came from Thomas Brattle (1658-1713), Harvard mathematician and astronomer, some of whose calculations were used by Newton in his *Principia* to show that the paths of comets are determined by the law of gravity.\footnote{43} Brattle wrote:

> The Salem Justices, at least some of them, do assert, that the cure of afflicted persons is a natural effect of this touch; and they are so well instructed in the Cartesian philosophy, and in the doctrine of effluvia, that they undertake to give a demonstration how this touch does cure the afflicted persons; and the account they give of it is this; that by this touch, the venemous and malignant particles, that were ejected from the eye, do, by this means, return to the body whence they came, and so leave the afflicted persons pure and whole. I must confess to you, that I am no small admirer of the Cartesian philosophy; but yet I have not so learned it. Certainly this is a strain that it will by no means allow of.\footnote{44}

Brattle's scientific acumen permitted him to read Descartes in the proper light. But he suggests that many of his fellow Puritans had not. As far as one can determine from what Brattle said, some Puritans had used Descartes' doctrine of
animal spirits and Boyle's "doctrine of effluvia" or streams of corpuscles to confirm the theory that spirits or tiny venomous particles could pass out of the witch into her victim and back again on command from her imagination and with no more of her body involved than the gase of her eye and the touch of her hand. Here then is a clear example of how the Puritans could use the "new Philosophy," by way of misunderstanding it, to bolster what that philosophy, rightly understood, would have condemned as superstition, as Brattle did.

The speculation about the evil eye was an interesting controversy. But by far the most important issue was the question whether spectral evidence should be admitted or not. Spectral evidence rested on no more than the word of the afflicted that during their torments the specter of the witch who was sending the devils to persecute them, had appeared. The afflicted always recognized the specter as representing someone in their own neighborhood. But a shadow of doubt remained about whether or not the one whose specter appeared was really guilty. For if the devil would do anything to deceive man and if the witch was possessed of diabolic power, would it not be possible for the one or the other to cause the shape of an innocent party to be presented to the afflicted? For this reason the tendency in England had been to discourage the admission of spectral evidence. But the judges at Salem accepted such evidence as legitimate and as sufficient for conviction. A treatment
of the use that was made of spectral evidence in the courtroom is not within the scope of this essay. The concern here is rather the reaction, principally of the Mathers, to the court's admission of such evidence.

Cotton Mather held even early in 1692 before the public reaction against the witch trials had set in that it was possible for the devil to represent the shape of an innocent person, though he makes a curious reservation.

It is very certain that the devils have sometimes represented the shapes of persons not only innocent, but also very virtuous. Tho I believe that the just God then ordinarily provides a way for the speedy vindication of the persons thus abused. Moreover I do suspect that persons who have too much indulged themselves in Malignant, Envious Ebullitions of their souls, may unhappily expose themselves to the judgment of being represented by devils, of whom they never had any vision, & with whom they have much less written any covenant.45

The devil then could represent the innocent. These innocent, however, were not innocent of all sin, only of witchcraft. Thus even though they were innocent of witchcraft, they perhaps deserved to be punished for those sins of which they were guilty, and in this sense their being represented to the afflicted was a just punishment. Increase Mather agrees with his son on this point, when he says: "Perhaps some of those whom Satan has represented as committing witchcrafts, have been tampering with some foolish and wicked Sorceries, though not to that degree, which is Criminal and Capital by the Laws both of God and Men;...or it may be they have misrepresented and abused others, for which cause
the Holy God may justly give Satan leave falsely to mis-represent them. Increase's mention of the "tampering with...foolish and wicked Sorceries" is a recurrent theme in Cotton Mather's writings on witchcraft. It would appear from the frequency of Cotton's reference to this "tampering" that superstitious practices were fairly widespread among the people of New England. Cotton inveighs against such practices for "some Devil is evermore invited into the Service of the Person that shall Practice these Witchcrafts;...the Devil may perhaps become at last a Familiar to them...." The Mathers saw these "Sorceries" then as the first step towards a full-fledged witch scare.

The attitude of the Mathers so far seems to be the admission that the devil can represent the shape of the innocent to the afflicted, but that such representation should have little or no effect on the conduct of the trial because the innocent so represented are not by any means innocent of everything and indeed are probably guilty of petty sorceries. Both Mathers, nevertheless, do insist that spectral evidence is not itself enough to prove the guilt of a witch. In fact, in the autumn of 1692, after the numbers of the accused had increased alarmingly, Increase Mather took a definite stand in his Cases of Conscience against the admissibility of spectral evidence. He does, however, exonerate those who had tried the Salem witches during the previous spring and summer of any blame for their use of spectral evidence to get convictions. He
says that "there never was an Instance of any innocent Person Condemned in any Court of Judicature on Earth, only through Satan's deluding and imposing on the Imaginations of Men, when nevertheless, the Witnesses, Jurors, and Judges, were all to be excused from blame." Although Increase repudiates spectral evidence, he by no means repudiates the validity of trying the accused for witchcraft. He would simply demand severer tests to determine guilt.

Cotton Mather equivocates on the issue of spectral evidence even more than his father. Cotton, in his Wonders of the Invisible World made public in the fall of 1692, about the same time as his father's Cases of Conscience, still maintains as he has all along that the devil can represent the shapes of innocent persons to the afflicted. But he also says that when the accused have been hauled into court and then tried on the basis of spectral evidence, they have often been led to admit their own guilt. This voluntary confession of supposed witches is interesting first of all because it shows how deep the belief in witches had sunk into the minds of the people. When the accused came to court, she probably knew that she was not a witch. But in the midst of the court's proceedings a change in her mental condition took place. For when she looked at the afflicted, they would respond by throwing fits. She was accused, moreover, of lending her shape to evil spirits. For the afflicted attested to her appearance to them in
spectral form during the periods of their torments. Recognizing that these operations were invisible and being credulous anyway, the accused might actually come to believe that she was a witch. These voluntary confessions are interesting for a second reason. If the accused confessed of witchcraft, the court would let her go free without punishment other than the public ostracism and humiliation to which she was probably subject. But she could do something even to erase the stigma. For after she had confessed her own guilt, she could then point to others in the neighborhood who according to her were also implicated in the diabolic plot. This is one of the reasons why as the trials wore on the number of the accused rose to unreasonable proportions. The judges and divines never let on that the accused might have confessed to witchcraft and implicated others just to escape punishment themselves. But it is likely that the frequency with which these voluntary confessions occurred was one of the factors that led to the reaction against the whole affair that came in the autumn of 1692.

Cotton Mather for his part honored these voluntary confessions to the letter. He does say, as sort of a sop to those who would hold that the devil could even make the innocent confess, that "we know not, at least I know not, how far the Delusions of Satan may be Interwoven into some Circumstances of the Confessions."\(^5\) Immediately, however, Mather adds: "...But one would think, all the
Rules of Understanding Humane Affairs are at an end, if after so many most Voluntary Harmonius Confessions,...
we must not Believe the main strokes wherein those Confessions all agree: especially when we have a thousand preternatural Things every day before our eyes, wherein the Confessors do acknowledge their Concernment, and give Demonstration, of their being so Concerned."

Mather's fear as he expressed it in the passage just cited would seem to be that if it is admitted that the devil can represent the shapes of the innocent or wrest false confessions from them in the very court of law set up to discover who the witches are, then any future attempt at the discovery of witchcraft would be altogether futile. An admission of the arbitrariness of the devil's power would undermine the whole theory of the praetemnatural idea of nature. The upshot would be that man could never hope to know praetemnatural operations or more important the meaning of those operations. He would not be able to bring them within the bounds of his comprehension and examine them there to find out what they told him about God's providence. This is what Mather meant when he said: "... All the Rules of Understanding Humane Affairs are at an end, if after so many most Voluntary Harmonius Confessions,... we must not Believe the main strokes wherein those Confessions all agree...." As it turned out, though others may have foresworn their earlier belief in the theory of praetemnatural operations after the Salem episode, Mather
never did. As we have seen even as late as 1724, thirty
years after the witchcraft frenzy, Mather was still seek-
ing explanations for praeternatural phenomena. If anything
his theory grew both in intricacy and extent with the
passage of the years.

Perhaps this essay can suggest why the idea of the
praeternatural seemed so important to the Mathers and
especially to Cotton. Such an attempt at suggesting the
importance of the praeternatural may not be without value.
This essay has explored a mentality almost entirely alien
to our own. The reader may have asked himself why the
Puritans insisted on the reality of the invisible world
when it obviously does not exist. To the historian such a
query is evidence of how different the past can be and an
invitation to display that difference. In the case of the
praeternatural idea, the difference between the contempo-
rary attitude and that of the seventeenth-century Puritan
grows out of differing presuppositions. Both Puritan and
contemporary man confront the same irrational elements in
human behavior. But the Puritan turned to his minister for
explanations, while contemporary man turns to the psychol-
ogist. By way of conclusion, then, let us see how the
theological idiom in which the Puritan labored, determined
the way he regarded the irrational, or as he would have said,
the praeternatural.
Demonology in colonial New England was a part of a larger outlook. The Puritans believed implicitly in the intervention of God in the natural order. Such a providential idea had much to do with the way in which the Puritans understood nature. Nature was not for the most part something to be studied objectively, that is, for its own sake. Rather it had reference to another, a supernatural level of being, and its significance lay in man's reading that reference. Specifically, nature was the means God used to instruct men and to punish them for their sins. Nature in itself then was not objectively real. Reality lay elsewhere, namely, in man's conduct and God's judgements on that conduct. Misdeeds required retributions; exemplary behavior, on the other hand, warranted deliverances. These retributions and deliverances came to men by way of the natural order. Natural disasters meant that the holy commonwealth had incited God to wrath; relief from such disasters meant that the saints had earned God's mercy. The primary realities then were of an ethical character, and nature did no more than register in tangible form these intangible ethical realities. Nature—indeed the whole of creation—played a subordinate role in the economy of redemption.

Demonology, as this essay is intended to show, was one facet of the providential idea. Just as God worked through the natural order to reveal his will, so he permitted good and evil spirits to do the same.
The assumption of a providential universe was so implicit and the Puritans themselves were so certain that torments and temptations were the work of evil spirits, operating in accordance with the providential scheme of things, that they built a theory that would give objective reality to diabolical operations. Witchcraft belief may have been a product of morbid fear and fervor, but the Puritans placed it in a rational framework, namely Scholastic physics and the praeternatural idea of nature, that persuaded the mind as well as the emotions to consent to its reality.

Cotton Mather remarks on this score:

"Albeit the business of this witchcraft be very much transacted on the Stage of Imagination, yet we know, that...the business thus managed in Imagination yet may not be called Imaginary. The effects are dreadfully real. Our dear neighbours are most really tormented. Really murdered, & really acquainted with hidden things, which are afterwards proved plainly to have been Realityes."

The human imagination was the faculty peculiarly receptive and responsive to this praeternatural order. Thus the vision of a spectre or an apparition was not simply a projection of one's own anxiety, but was instead a reception of an external phenomenon that had its being in the praeternatural order. Charles Hutton said in his Spirit of Man that "the Phantastick Air,...huddles, and is precipitant in all things." The human counterpart of this "Phantastick Air" was the aerial vehicle or "Nishmath-Chajim. The constituent of this "Phantastick Air" in the external world was what the Cambridge neo-Platonists had called—and what
Puritan thinkers had adopted from them—the plastic power. As the faculty of imagination, fancy, or phantasy presided over the *Misymath-Chajin*, so the evil spirits presided over the plastic power. The Puritans sometimes referred to Satan as the "Prince of the Power of the Air". As such, the devil could work his temptations or torments on the aerial vehicle, which was that part of man that corresponded to the devil's peculiar province in the external world. Because man's spirit was weaker than the devil's, the devil could often get his way. If he did one of two things happened. Either he drove the mind to distraction and the body to ill health—a condition that might very well end in suicide—or he persuaded the possessed into the company of the damned. If the latter happened, the possessed became a witch and gained a certain measure of diabolic power with which to afflict her neighbors. The devil in return might use the aerial vehicle of the witch, the same aerial vehicle that he had previously tortured, in his own operations.

In demonology then the Puritans carried to its ultimate conclusion the tendency to give everything a theological explanation. To be sure the Puritans regarded the impulse to gratify lust and the impulse to self-destruction as in themselves irrational. But they did not consider such impulses to be purely subjective as men would today. Rather they were in large measure the work of an external force, evil spirits, operating in and through an objective
realm, the realm of the praeternatural or what Charles Morton called "the Phantastick Air, that Riddles, and is precipitant in all things." In this way the Puritans gave even man's base and irrational impulses a place in a rational theology that they took to be representative of objective reality. Thus what men today consign to the depths of the psyche, the Puritans understood as being a part of the providential scheme of things and hence both rational and objectively existent.
NOTES


2 Walker, 46-47. See also Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 121-123.

3 Perkins, 610.


6 Quoted in Morison, I, 283.

7 Cotton Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, 43-44 and 46. Also see "Cotton Mather to John Richards" *The Mathers Papers*, 391 and 393. The notion that demons inhabit the celestial spheres was also the opinion of Marsilio Ficino (Walker, 46-47) and of Paracelsus (Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 121-123). This notion then had approximately the same history that the idea of the spirit as the nexus between man's body and soul had.


9 The passage may also mean that as early as the sixteenth century man had found a way to make rain by chemical means.


11 Deodat Lawson, *Christian Fidelity, the Only Shield Against Satan's Malignity* (Boston: Printed by B. Harris, and Sold by Nicholas Butterleigh, next to Guttridge's Coffee-House, 1693), 16-19. Lawson's sermon was an authoritative statement of demonology and witchcraft theory. In the front of the printed work, Cotton and Increase Mather, Charles Morton, and another Puritan divine active in the witchcraft controversy, Samuel Willard, attested to its orthodoxy in these terms: "...we apprehend several Weighty, Probable, and Seasonable Truths, are therein soberly Explained; some of the Mysterious Methods, and Malicious Operations of Satan, modestly Discussed...."

Increase Mather, Angelographia (Boston: Printed by B. Green & J. Allen, for Samuel Phillips at the Brick Shop, 1696), "To the Reader." See also Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World, 192-193, for the same notion that the devil could use his knowledge of optics to create illusions.

Ibid., 45-46. See also Lawson, Christ's Fidelity, 17.

Lawson, Christ's Fidelity... 16-17.

Increase Mather, Angelographia, 45.

Lawson, Christ's Fidelity... 16-17.

Lawson, Christ's Fidelity... 22.

Ibid., 17.

Ibid., 22-23.

Ibid., 24-25.

Trefz, 273.

Cotton Mather, A Brand Pluck'd out of the Burning, in Burr, 262-63.

Ibid., 281

Joseph Glanvil, Saducismus Triumphatus: Or Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions (3rd ed.; London: Printed for S. L. and are to be sold by Anth. Baskerville, at the Bible, the Corner of Essex-street, without Temple-Bar, 1689), 73-74.

Ibid., 75-76.

Cotton Mather to John Richards," The Mather Papers, 395; Glanvil, Saducismus Triumphatus, 75.

John Russell to Increase Mather," The Mather Papers, 86.

Increase Mather, *Remarkable Providences*, 155-175.

Cotton Mather to John Richards," The Mather Papers, 396. Mather continues by referring to the question whether witches float or not when dunked. He says: "...it is likely, that by means of this ferment they would be found Buoyant (if the water-Ordeal were made upon them.)" Here Mather is letting his speculation get the better of him, for earlier in the same letter he objects to the "un-English" resort to torture to determine a witch's guilt. (Ibid., 394.) In regard to the matter of dunking, see also Increase Mather, *Remarkable Providences* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1690), 198-203; and Increase Mather, "Cases of Conscience," in Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World, 274.

Joseph Glanvil, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 75-76. See also Ibid., 80.

Ibid., 81.

Perkins, 631.

The witch's practice of sticking pins into "Poppita" in order to produce a like effect in her victim rested on the same principle of occult sympathy as did the evil eye (see Deodat Lawson; "The Examination of the New England Witches" in Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World, 213; and, "Cotton Mather to John Richards," The Mather Papers, 395-96).

Perkins, 632. The attitude of Perkins throughout his discourse on witchcraft is one of circumspection as to the opinions he admits as true. His caution is perhaps due to the age in which he was writing. As a first generation Puritan, he was reacting against the secular culture that had burst forth in Renaissance England. One aspect of this secularism was the profusion of occult speculations. Men began to read the stars to predict their fate, for instance, the Puritans cursed such speculations as irreverent and as threatening the power of Providence and the sovereignty of God.

There is another aspect of witchcraft theory in which Cotton Mather explicitly differed with Perkins, namely, the matter of exorcism of evil spirits. Perkins had said:

"...Exorcism... is an adjuring and commanding the Devill in the name of God, to depart from the partie possessed, and cease to molest him any more. This means was used by our Saviour Christ himselfe, and after him by his Apostles and other beleevers,
in the time of the Primitive Church, when the gift of working miracles was in force: but in those dales... that gift is ceased, and also the promise of power annexed to the use of adjuration: and therefore the means thereof must needs cease. And for an ordinary man now to command the Devil in such sort, is mere presumption, and a practice of Sorcery." (Ibid., 650.)

Mather, on the other hand, repeatedly practiced the priestly function of exorcism, finally even evolving a kind of formula, requiring that he pray or fast for three days. Mather found that the spirits would almost always leave the victim. Concerning the affliction of one of his patients, Margaret Rule, he writes: "When the afflicted young woman had undergone six weeks of prae自然 Calamities and when God had helped me to keep just three Days of Prayer on her behalf, I had the Pleasure of seeing the same Success, which I used to have, on my third Fast, for such possessed People, as have been cast into my cares." (Diary, Part I, 1661-1706, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, VII-7th Series, 172. See also Beall and Shryock, 241.)

The difference between the attitudes of Perkins and Mather arises out of the differing circumstances in which they wrote. They were both Puritans. But Perkins lived when Puritans were repudiating the pretensions of Elizabethan society, whether those pretensions were social as with the courtier, intellectual as with the astrologist, or religious as with the Catholic and Anglican priesthood. Mather lived in a situation where Puritanism was no longer critic but was itself the establishment and where in consequence the power of the clergy, especially in the person of Cotton Mather, was exorbitant.


Morton, Compendium Physicæ, 161. See note at the bottom of the page cited here for the construction Theodore Hornberger puts on this passage.


42Ibid.


45 "Cotton Mather to John Richards," The Mather Papers, 392-393.


47 Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, 60; and The Wonders of the Invisible World, 96-99 and 190-191.

48 Ibid., 20.


50 Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World, 15. Samuel Willard was one of those to whom Mather threw this sop. For Willard believed that it was often difficult if not impossible to detect whether a person was one of the afflicted or one of the witches. Willard's caution in this respect comes through in the following passage:

"Whether shee [Elizabeth Knapp] have covenanted with the Divell or noe, I thinkke this is a case unanswerable, her declarations have been so contradictory, one to another, that wee know not what to make of them & her condition is such as administers many doubts; charity would hope the best, love would alsoe feare the worst; but thus much is cleare, shee is an object of pitye, & I desire that all that heare of her would compassionat her forlorn state. Shee is (I question not) a subject of hope, & therefore, all meanes ought to bee used for her recoverye. Shee is a monument of divine severity, & the Lord grant that all that see or heare, may fear and tremble: Amen. (Samuel Willard, "Account of the Strange Case of Elizabeth Knapp of Groton," The Mather Papers, 570.)


52 "Cotton Mather to John Richards," The Mather Papers, 393.
53 Charles Morton, The Spirit of Man, 74.

54 Deodat Lawson, Christ's Fidelity..., 19.
See also, Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World, 44-45.
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