

CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF GEORGE GIFFORD'S VIEWS ON WITCHCRAFT
IN THE LATE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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"Because religion makes some run mad
must I live an atheist?"

- Sir George Etherege,
The Man of Mode

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Introduction.

Accounts of the witch-hunts and persecutions in both England and America during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have become popular and are being re-emphasized owing to present world conditions and political practices. In the present situation, it is not the subject of witches which has caught the attention of the public; rather, the whole problem of persecution is being considered. That persecution for belief is a problem not yet solved is evident from a glance at current books, newspapers, and periodicals. It is an old problem - one in which the men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were particularly interested. George Gifford, a non-conformist preacher of Maldon, Essex, during the years 1582-1600, is but slightly known for his works on witchcraft and for the part he played in the history of Puritanism. However, Gifford was a man whose attention was directed to the "furious rage" against witches and the great amount of blood which was being shed.

This thesis will be devoted to an examination of Gifford's views concerning witches, primarily those views which are presented in his Dialogue concerning Witches and Witchcraftes (1593). An attempt will be made to determine the literary value of the dialogue and to point out the way in which the preacher made use of the Calvinistic doctrine to present a logical argument for tolerance.

Before dealing with Gifford's ideas, however, a consideration of the world in which he lived and the evolution of the witch persecutions

in that world will be necessary. This historical background will include references to views of some of the minister's contemporaries. Furthermore, a brief summary of the pertinent portion of Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion will be necessary to determine how closely Gifford adhered to the ideas of the Reformer.

Historical Background.

The history of the belief in witches is age old; it begins in the dim past when magic and religion were inextricable. It has not yet ended. In the so-called "progressive" world of today, the world of science, magic is considered a form of entertainment; however, people still cling to their superstitions and carry "charms" for luck. In the "backward" communities, a certain amount of witch belief is still prevalent.¹ In the sixteenth century the growing field of science was tending to disprove many of the superstitions, and the Christian Church, split asunder by the Reformation, was terming the tradition of magic heretical.

Undoubtedly, Calvinism brought the question of witchcraft into sharper focus in the sixteenth century. Even before Calvin denounced witches and sorcerers, however, the Catholics had left a trail of blood and ashes as evidence of their own witch-hunt. The Inquisition during the thirteenth century was devised by the church to cope with a rising tide of heresy and to bring religious conformity to Europe. When the church took its stand, it decided that witchcraft was heresy since it involved a pact with the devil. A number of Bulls concerning witchcraft had been issued: Pope Gregory IX in 1233, and Pope Alexander IV in 1258 ordered that witches should be hunted out and punished. These, and many other Bulls of lesser importance, were issued against the practice of sorcery. Of the many Bulls published, that of Innocent VIII, issued 9 December 1484, is considered one of the most important

¹J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough (London, 1913), I & II, and Lynn Thorndike, A History of Magic and Experimental Science (New York, Macmillan & Co., 1923), II, 981, both illustrate and call attention to the prevalence of superstition.

in the history of persecution.

The Bull of Innocent VIII, Summis desiderantes affectibus,² was set forth to "restate those particular means and methods" for driving "all heretical depravity...from the frontiers and bournes of the Faithful..." It states that the Pope has had news of men and women who "...have abandoned themselves to devils, incubi and succubi...", and this news has brought "bitter sorrow." These people "afflict and torment men and women..." and "...blasphemously renounce that Faith which is theirs by the Sacrament of Baptism..." They "...outrage the Divine Majesty and are a cause of scandal and danger to very many." Because of this terrible state, the Pope authorizes Henry Kramer and James Sprenger, who have "...no legal right to exercise their powers of inquisition" over the territory under the influence of witches, with the power "...to proceed to the just correction, imprisonment, and punishment of any persons, without let or hindrance, in every way as if the provinces, townships, dioceses, districts, territories, yea, even the persons and their crimes in this kind were named and particularly designated in Our letters." Furthermore, the two men have the power "...to proceed...against any persons of whatsoever rank and high estate...the penalty being adapted to the offence." So, in order to combat what was believed an enemy of the Catholic Church, James Sprenger and Henry Kramer were given complete authority to convict and punish any suspicious persons.

The effect of this Bull was that it gave the inquisitors a free hand in their convictions of witches and tended to emphasize the reality of witches. As a result of their experiences, James Sprenger

²A copy of the complete Bull may be found in the Appendix, I.

and Henry Kramer published, in 1487, Malleus Maleficarum Maleficas & earum haeresim, ut framea potentissima conterens ("The Hammer of Witches which destroyeth Witches and their heresy as with a two-edged Sword"). The work became very popular and was used, ultimately, as a standard text-book on witches.³ The book is divided into three parts, and is meant as a guide to the discovery and conviction of witches. Part I, "Treating of the Three Necessary Concomitants of Witchcraft which are the Devil, a Witch, and the Permission of Almighty God", concerns the nature of witches and their abilities. The devil has power over the minds and bodies of man if he is permitted by God, write the inquisitors. The witches, who are susceptible to evil, are under the power of Satan:

...those who try to induce others to perform such evil wonders [such as are not normal, but magical] are called witches. And because infidelity in a person who has been baptized is technically called heresy, therefore such persons are plainly heretics.⁴

Furthermore, the Bible states that witches should die. Women are more susceptible to witchcraft than men "...since they are feebler both in mind and body, it is not surprising that they should come more under the spell of witchcraft."⁵ Intellectually, women are like children and are more carnal than men, write the witch-hunters. Part II, "Treating of the Methods by which the Works of Witchcraft are wrought and Directed, and how they may be successfully annulled and dissolved", concerns the question of the witches' powers and the remedy against them. Three

³Reginald Scot refers to it often in his book, The Discoverie of Witchcraft (1584), and King James used many of the ideas in writing his dialogue Daemonologie (1597).

⁴Malleus Maleficarum, intro. Montague Summers (London, J. Rodker, 1928), pp. 2-3.

⁵Ibid., p. 44.

types of persons cannot be injured by witches;

...those who administer public justice against them, or prosecute them in any public official capacity...
...those who, according to the traditional and holy rites of the Church, make lawful use of the power and virtue which the Church by her exorcisms furnishes in the aspersions of Holy Water, the taking of consecrated salt, the carrying of blessed candles on the Day of the Purification of Our Lady, of Palm Leaves upon Palm Sunday, and men who thus fortify themselves are acting so that the powers of devils are diminished...
...those who, in various and infinite ways, are blessed by the Holy Angels.⁶

As for the remedy against witches, "...there is no remedy for such practices, unless witches be entirely eradicated by the judges, or at least punished as an example to all who may wish to imitate them..."⁷ However, mass, confession, exorcism by a priest, prayer, all help to unbewitch the bewitched. Part III, "Relating to the Judicial Proceedings in both the Ecclesiastical and Civil Courts against Witches and indeed all Heretics", concerns the correct method of trying and punishing a witch. For those who will not confess, torture is advisable, and the best punishment is by fire. As a result of Pope Innocent VIII's Bull and the Malleus Maleficarum, witchcraft was brought closer to the attention of the people and practices were instituted which would bring misery and death and which took about two centuries to eradicate.

In the years following the Bull of Innocent VIII thousands of people died by burning at the stake. Then came the Reformation. When Luther tacked his ninety-five theses on the church door at Wittenberg in 1517, ushering in the Protestant Revolution, he was also ushering in a new attack on witches. To Luther the devil was very real, an evil

⁶Malleus Maleficarum, p. 89.

⁷Ibid., p. 164.

being whose afflictions should be accepted with patience. His belief in the reality of the devil is indicated by a story that Luther once threw an ink pot at the devil whom he thought he saw leering at him. The Reformer believed that one should combat evil with evil in order to resist temptation:

...when the devil comes to tempt thee - drink, my friend, drink freely, get drunk, and make thyself a fool, and sin out of hatred to the evil spirit, and to annoy him.⁸

Later, in a letter to Jerome Weller, Luther again advises wine as a remedy against the temptations of Satan:

A large glass of wine full to the brim, behold, when one is old, the best ingredient for appeasing the senses, inducing sleep, and escaping satan.⁹

The Reformer believed Satan possessed the creative faculty; he could be touched, seen, felt, and had the power to assume any shape, good or bad. Furthermore, the Pope was the Antichrist, and was working with the devil to destroy man. As for witchcraft, Luther, like the Catholics and like Calvin who followed him, denounced witches as an abomination of the Lord. In his "Transgression of the Commandments", Luther lists all those who oppose God's law:

Against the First

He who in his tribulation seeks the help of sorcery, black art, or witchcraft.

He who uses letters, signs, herbs, words, charms, and the like. He who uses divining-rods and incantations, and practices crystal-gazing, cloak-riding, and milk stealing.

He who orders his life and work by lucky days, the signs of the zodiac and the advice of the fortune-tellers.

He who seeks by charms and incantations to protect himself, his cattle, his house, his children and all his property against wolves, iron, fire and water.

He who blames his misfortunes and tribulations on the devil or

⁸Letter quoted by Jean M. V. Audin, History of the Life, Works, and Doctrines of John Calvin, tr. John McGill (Baltimore, 18..), p. 256.

⁹Ibid., p. 257.

on wicked men, and does not accept them with praise and love, as good and evil which come from God alone, and who does not ascribe them to God with thanksgiving and willing patience.

He who tempts God, and needlessly puts himself in danger of body or soul.

He who glories in his piety, his wisdom, or other spiritual gifts.

He who honors God and the saints only for the sake of temporal gain, and is forgetful of his soul's need.

He who does not trust in God at all times, and is not confident of God's mercy in all he does.

He who doubts concerning the faith or the grace of God.

He who does not keep back others from unbelief and doubt, and does not help them, so far as in him lies, to believe and trust in God's grace. Here, too, belong all forms of unbelief, despair, and misbelief.¹⁰

This passage indicates that to Luther Catholicism and witchcraft were categorically the same, for anyone who uses charms and incantations against witches is as much at fault as the witches themselves. Unlike the advice of Sprenger and Kramer, Luther's counsel is that one should seek God as the cause of good and evil and have patience. Thus, the remedies differ. Although he believed the devil was very real, very tangible, and in spite of the fact that he denounced witchcraft as blasphemous, Luther did not instigate a nation-wide witch-hunt. That practice was left for his fellow-reformer Calvin.

John Calvin, the author of Christiana Religiois Institutio, was more zealous than Luther in his denunciation of witches. He not only denounced them; he hunted and burned them. From 1541 to 1543, the period of Calvin's "dictatorship" in Geneva, the reformer began a practice which continued long after he had left that city, a practice which spread to other parts of the world and caused considerable bloodshed. Calvin, who sought to make the accepted principles of the reform movement a part of Christian thought and life, followed the practices of

¹⁰Works of Martin Luther, intro. Henry E. Jacobs (Philadelphia Edition, Philadelphia, 1915), II, 358-9.

the Catholics before him; he tried to hunt out and destroy any opposition to his doctrine. Since the Pope was the Antichrist and worked with the devil, and since the witches made pacts with the devil, both the witches and the Pope were working together for the same cause. God was all-powerful and the devil was the Lord's executioner. Daemonic possession, sorcery, and witchcraft were signs of the devil's power over the damned. The devil did not have the creative faculty, but deluded the people into believing he had that power. Since the devil had no power except over the reprobate, possession was a sign of eternal reprobation; therefore, the witch, or the person possessed, should be put to death. Calvin even went so far as to condemn lunatics and epileptics as being possessed by the devil:

The scripture does not indistinctly characterize those possessed, by the name of demoniac; it calls by this name those who, by an avenging decree of the Omnipotent, are delivered over to satan, who comes and takes possession of them, soul and body. The lunatic is one whose malady increases or decreases with the different phases of the moon, as the epileptic, for example. These maladies are not to be cured by ordinary remedies; God, in driving them away, displays the omnipotence of his divinity.¹¹

Further, echoing the words of Luther, Calvin asserts that the Pope is the Antichrist. It is the duty of the minister to combat Satan and the Antichrist; therefore, they should hunt out and destroy all idolaters and blasphemers. Since sorcery was the highest treason against God because of the pact with the devil, the punishment for sorcery was by fire.¹² These ideas of Calvin led to the great persecution in Geneva when hundreds of witches were burned at the stake. The concern for witches and the methods used in hunting them soon found their way to

¹¹Quoted by J. M. V. Audin, op. cit., p. 258.

¹²Audin, pp. 253-64.

other parts of the world and particularly to England.

Up to the time of Calvin's reform movement, England had not been suffering from an over-abundance of witches. There are two important trials of Henry VIII's reign, however, which probably influenced the movement against sorcery. In 1533, Elizabeth Barton, the Holy Maid of Kent, was exposed and eventually executed (20 April 1534) for fraudulently professing to have the power of prophecy. Under the influence of Catholic priests, she had prophesied that the King would meet a bad end for having divorced Catherine.¹³ The other trial was the arraignment of Lord Hungerford, who was beheaded on 29 July 1540 for having "practised magic and invocation of devils."¹⁴ He had retained two men and "one Mother Roche to conjure and shew how long the King should live; and moreover has practised the abominable vice of buggery..."¹⁵ These incidents, and others like them, motivated Henry to issue a statute, 33 Henry VIII, cap. 8 (1541), "against conjurations, and wichecraftes, and sorcery, and enchantments."¹⁶ In the bill, conjuration, enchantment, witchcraft, or sorcery to get money, to harm another or his goods, or to provoke unlawful love were considered a felony. Henry, in drawing up his statute, was concerned with the disturbances caused by these conjurers who were busy discovering "...in what place treasure of golde and silver shoulde or mought be founde", and who were digging up and pulling down "...an infinite number of crosses within

¹³See Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, ed. James Gairdner, vol. VI (London, 1882), pp. 543-51, 584-90; vol. VII (London, 1883), pp. 28-30, 118-26, 208. The affair implicated Sir Thomas More, who was eventually charged with treason and beheaded.

¹⁴Op. cit., vol. XV (London, 1896), p. 458.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 216.

¹⁶The statute will be found in the Appendix, II.

this realme..." Furthermore, he was afraid the sorcerers might hurt and damage his subjects, "to the greate dishonor of God, infamy and disquietnes of the realme."

This statute was repealed in 1547, during the first year of Edward VI's reign. The attitude toward witchcraft and sorcery was one of complete abhorrence rather than fear of the supernatural on the part of the court, as is indicated in Edward Underhill's account of King Edward's experience with a sorcerer:

When we hade dyned, the major sentt to [two] off his of-fycers with me to seke Alene; whome we mett withalle in Poles, and toke hym with us unto his chamber, wheare we founde figures sett to calke the nativetic off the kynge, and a jugementt gevyne off his deathe, wheroff this folyshe wreche thoughte hymselfe so sure thatt he and his conselars the papistes bruted it all over.

The kynge laye att Hamtone courte the same tyme, and me lord protector at the Syone; unto whome I caryed this Alen, with his bokes off conejuracyons, cearkles, and many thynges beloungynge to thatt dylvyshe art, wiche he affyrmed before me lorde was a lawfulle cyens, for the statute agaynst souche was repealed. 'Thou folyshe knave! (sayde me lorde,) yff thou and alle thatt be off thy cyens telle me what I shalle do to-morrow I wylle geve the alle thatt I have;' commaundyng me to cary hym unto the Tower; and wroote a letter unto Syr John Markam thene beyng leffetenaunte, to cause hym to be examyned by souche as weare learned. Mr. Markam, as he was bothe wyse and zelous in the Lorde, talked with hym; unto whome he dyde affirme thatt he knewe more in the syence off astronomy then alle the unyversyties off Oxforde and Cambrige; wheruppon he sentte for my frende, before spokyne off, doctor Reccorde, who examined hym, and he knewe nott the rules of astronamy, but was a very unlearned asse, and a sorcerer, for the wiche he was worthy hangynge, sayde mr. Recorde.¹⁷

The tone of this account is one of aversion for any who pretended to have supernatural powers. Concern is evident in the journal of Underhill and in the later statutes of the realm that papists by working with sorcerers and witches were attempting to undermine England and

¹⁷"Autobiography of Edward Underhill", Narratives of the Days of the Reformation, ed. John G. Nichols (Camden Society Publication, Westminster, 1859), pp. 172-4.

give power to the Pope.

During the reign of Mary Tudor (1553-58), witchcraft was not considered of great importance, possibly because persecution was directed boldly in another way. As a result of the restoration of Catholicism, many leaders among the Reformers were burned for heresy, and others went into exile on the continent, especially to Zurich and Geneva. There, the persecution of witches was at its height.

When Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558, the Reformed religion was adopted through the Anglican compromise, and the men who had been in exile returned. Some of these men became prominent in church and state; Thomas Bentham, who had been to Zurich and was a preacher to the exiles in Basel became Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield; John Parkhurst, who had been in Zurich, became Bishop of Norwich; John Scory, who had been chaplain to the exiles in Geneva, was made Bishop of Hereford; Richard Cox, who had travelled through Frankfort and Strassburg, became Bishop of Ely; Edmund Grindall, Bishop of London, had been through Strassburg, Speier, and Frankfort; Miles Coverdale, who had been Bishop of Exeter but was not reappointed, had been in Geneva; and John Jewel, the Bishop of Salisbury, had been in Geneva.¹⁸ John Strype, in his Annals of the Reformation, says that Jewel was the person responsible for bringing the matter of witchcraft formally before the queen and the government.¹⁹ In a sermon before the queen sometime between November, 1559 and March, 1560 (the exact date is not known), Jewel made the following comment:

It may please your grace to understand, that this kind of

¹⁸Wallace Notestein, A History of Witchcraft in England from 1558 to 1718 (American Historical Association, Washington, 1911), pp. 14-16.

¹⁹Annals (Oxford, 1824), I, i, 11.

people, I mean witches and sorcerers, within these few last years are marvellously increased within your grace's realm. These eyes have seen most evident and manifest marks of their wickedness. Your grace's subjects pine away even unto the death, their colour fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their senses are bereft. Wherefore your poor subject's most humble petition unto your highness is, that the laws touching such malefactors may be put in due execution. For the shoal of them is great, their doings horrible, their malice intolerable, the examples most miserable: and I pray God they never practise further than upon the subject.²⁰

Jewel is implying, by this speech, that witches had flourished during the reign of Mary and were now infesting the country. The last sentence quoted above should have been enough to cause the queen anxiety, for she had already come into contact with plots against her life. In 1558 Anthony Fortescue, comptroller to Cardinal Pole, was arrested with a few others for plotting to win the throne of England for Mary of Scotland. The plot was uncovered and revealed that the papists had used conjurers to calculate the life of the queen and the duration of her reign.²¹

As a result of the warnings of the men newly arrived from the continent and the fears of the queen and her court, a bill against witchcraft was passed in the next parliament. In 1562 a statute (5 Eliz., c. 16) was drawn up which inflicted penalties for conjuration, invocation of wicked spirits, witchcraft, enchantment, charms, and sorcery.²² Death was the penalty for anyone who used sorcery or witchcraft to kill or destroy. Other practices of witchcraft were punishable by the pillory for the first offense, death for the second offense. Furthermore, if anyone should use magic or sorcery to find stolen property or to discover treasure, or to provoke unlawful love, the punishment was a

²⁰Quoted by Strype, *Annals*, I, i, 11.

²¹Strype, *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

²²The statute may be found in the Appendix, III.

year's imprisonment and four appearances in the pillory. Too, it is noticeable that the bill was primarily aimed at those who intended to hurt or kill or to bring themselves wealth. There is no mention of the sorcerer or magician who cures diseases by means of charms.

Almost immediately after the bill was passed, witches were found in and around the city of London, and the great witch scare had started. In Elizabeth's reign alone, 535 individuals were indicted for witchcraft, and of these eighty-two were executed. Of this number, 303 of the indictments were in Essex, and at least fifty-three of the executions. Essex, therefore, because it was so close to the capital city, and because most of the returned Calvinists settled in that county, had the majority of witch trials.²³ The first important trial known during Elizabeth's reign was that of 26 July 1566, held at Chelmsford, Essex. One Mother Waterhouse was convicted for having a pact with the devil and for afflicting her neighbors. In this trial, Mother Waterhouse's daughter, Joan, was called in to testify against her mother. In 1579, at Chelmsford, more witches were convicted, primarily from their own confession, and the young son of one Elleine Smith was called upon to give evidence against his mother. The witches were convicted and hanged. One of the most famous trials was that at St. Oses, or St. Osyth, Essex, in 1582, when sixteen were accused of witchcraft. This trial is believed to have been the motivating influence which led Reginald Scot to publish his famous Discoverie of Witchcraft in 1584.

Reginald Scot (1538?-1599) was a Kent man who studied at Hart Hall, Oxford, but left without his degree. He became interested in

²³Reginald T. Davies, Four Centuries of Witch-Beliefs (London, Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1947), p. 17.

horticulture and published, in 1574, A Perfect Platforme of a Hoppe-Garden and necessary instructions for the making and maintaining thereof. Scot grew up in a community which was active against any signs of heresy. In 1534 Elizabeth Barton, the Holy Maid of Kent, had been exposed and executed for her religious mania; in 1575 Mildred Norrington, by using ventriloquism, convinced her neighbors that she was possessed and accused an old woman, Alice of Westwall, of being a witch. However, the accuser's fraud was discovered, and old Alice was set free. This incident occurred but six miles from Scot's home, and it undoubtedly had some great influence on the conclusions drawn by Scot in his book, for he mentions ventriloquism as one of the tricks of magicians and accusers of witches. In all events, Scot became very much interested in the cases of witches and attended trials in order to question clergymen and magistrates and to observe their methods. As a result of this investigation and presumably because the trial of St. Osyth was so outstanding in the number of witches convicted, Scot gathered his material together and published Discoverie of Witchcraft in 1584. In his book, Scot set out to prove that both reason and religion rejected the belief in witches and magic; he was attempting to curb the cruel persecution of "poor dotting women." He, like the other writers and nonconformists of the period, laid the maintenance of the superstition at the door of the Roman Catholic Church: it is the greatest influence in the prevalence of witch belief. During the Inquisition, witches could buy their freedom by paying the Inquisitors:

...They that have seene further of the inquisitors orders and customes, saie also; that There is no waie in the world for these poore women to escape the inquisitors hands, and so consequentlie burning: but to gild their hands with monie, wherby oftentimes they take pitie upon them, and deliver them, as sufficientlie purged. For they have authoritie

to exchange the punishment of the bodie with the punishment of the pursse, applieng the same to the office of their inquisition: whereby they reape such profit, as a number of these seelie women paie them yeerelie pensions, to the end they may not be punished againe.²⁴

Soot, like Calvin, believes in the omnipotence of God and in the subservience of the devil. He disproves the witch's bargain with the devil, however, and disproves the whole idea of witches. True, Soot says, in seeking the help of cunning women, man is worshipping the devil rather than God; however, the devil hasn't the power to harm man unless God permits. Even with this power, the devil cannot and does not work through witches. The devil is subtle and can appear in the likeness of people whom he wishes to be accused of witchcraft. Too, he can trick poor, melancholic old women into believing they have great power:

...the force which melancholie hath, and the effects that it worketh in the bodie of a man, or rather of a woman, are almost incredible. For as some of these melancholike persons imagine, they are witches and by witchcraft can worke wondrous, and doo what they list; so doo other, troubled with this disease, imagine manie strange, incredible, and impossible things.²⁵

As for the pact with the devil, no witnesses to this bargain are available except for the confessions of these diseased and melancholic persons. There are, however, malicious women, self-confessed witches or otherwise, who gain fame for themselves and sometimes cause trouble for others:

...These are such as take upon them to give oracles, to tell where things lost are become, and finallie to appeach others of mischeefs, which they themselves most commonlie have brought to passe; whereby many times they overthrowe the good fame of honest women, and of such others of their

²⁴Reginald Soot, The Discoverie of Witchcraft, intro. Montague Summers (London, John Rodker, 1930), p. 20.

²⁵Ibid., p. 30.

neighbors, with whom they are displeased.²⁶

These are the Ventriloqui among whom are included Elizabeth Barton, the "holie maid of Kent", and the witch of Endor.²⁷ In trying witches, therefore, the old women should be examined thoroughly to make sure they are not suffering from melancholy and to make certain the people are not being tricked by a ventriloquist. The accuser as well as the accused should be examined. Scot believes that one of the influences of superstitious fears could be the nurses and their bed-time stories of "bugs"; i.e., ghosts and evil spirits. Be that as it may, Catholicism is the greatest influence, for the Catholic Church is opposed to the good steps to true Christianity. Furthermore, all who believe in the metamorphosis of witches are papists.²⁸ The Pope is the Antichrist and all belief in miracles and conjurations are mere "Popish trumpery", for miracles are ceased. Scot accuses the papists of being false prophets and of listening to the words of idols; "vaine is the answer of idols" for all is mere ventriloquism and trickery. Turning to the ability to foretell the future, Scot writes that things in nature have "manifest causes" which are God's work; man is given the ability to foretell certain natural events by applying his experiences and observations of phenomena in nature:

...To foretell things to come upon probable conjectures, so as therein we reach no further than becommeth humane capacite, is not (in mine opinion) unlawfull, but rather a commendable manifestation of wisdom and judgment, the good gifts and notable blessings of God for the which we ought to be thankfull;...²⁹

It is folly, however, to believe that all destinies can be foretold by

²⁶Scot, Ibid., p. 72.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 54-5.

²⁹Ibid., p. 95.

the stars. Although weather observations are lawful, one should not attribute too much to his observations. Furthermore, physicians are lawful, but one should not neglect God and seek the physician alone for help. In his book, Soot is preaching moderation; moderation in one's practice of science and in one's belief. He becomes quite radical in his thinking when he denounces witchcraft as mere delusion, when he states emphatically that witches do not exist except in the minds of the people. For this reason he was looked down upon by some, and King James, in the preface to his dialogue, Daemonologie, denounces the man "...called SCOT an Englishman..." who "...is not ashamed in publike print to deny, that ther can be such a thing as Witch-craft;..."³⁰

Few men of Soot's day felt as he did; or, if they did, they had little to say. Meanwhile, England was still concerned with the problem of Mary of Scotland, Spain, and the Pope. The queen's life was in danger constantly, and trials against witchcraft grew. On 25 October 1581 Anne Piers of Padstow was accused of being a witch while her husband, John, was a confessed pirate.³¹ In this same year, Elizabeth took further steps against danger from witches; Statute 23 Eliz., cap. 2 is "An Act against seditious words and rumours uttered against the Queen's most excellent Majesty."³² Paragraph 5 of this act states that many persons have been apprehended who have "...by divers means practised and sought to know how long her Highness should live, and who should reign after her decease, and what changes and alterations should thereby happen;..." Should anyone cast the queen's nativity, or, with

³⁰Daemonologie, in Forme of a Dialogue, ed. G. B. Harrison (London, The Bodley Head Ltd., [1924/]), p. xi.

³¹Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1581-1590, ed. Robert Lemon (London, 1865), CL, 29.

³²Paragraph 5 of the statute will be found in the Appendix, IV.

malicious intent prophesy the death of the queen, such an offense would be treated as a felony, and the offender would suffer death without benefit of clergy. The passage of this bill indicates the court's fear of the papists and their attempts to undermine the government. In the Calendar of State Papers for the year 1584 is an account of a group who conspired against the queen:

'The names of the Confederates against Her Majesty who have diverse and sundry times conspired her life and do daily confederate against her.' Among others - Lord Paget, Sir Geo. Hastings, Sir Tho. Hanmer, 'Oulde Birtles the great devel, Darnally the sorcerer, Maude Twogood enchantresse, the oulde wiche of Ramsbury, several other "oulde witches," Gregson the north tale teller, who was one of them 3 that stole awaye the Earl of Northumberlandes heade from one of the turrettes in York..' &c.³³

So the trials of witches mounted in number.

Towards the end of Elizabeth's reign the feeling of the people was growing in intensity against witchcraft while the administration at London was inclining to be more lenient. In 1595 and 1600 a few witches were either pardoned or reprieved and there was some attempt to curb popular excitement. Since Mary of Scotland had been beheaded in 1587, the Spanish Armada had been defeated in 1588, and the fear of Rome had abated somewhat, the fear of witches was probably receding as well in the minds of the court. The ministers continued their tirade against witches, however, and the dread which had been instilled in the people could not be stayed so easily. The court found it could not prevent the accusations against witches.

The witch terror was kept alive partly by the witch literature which was appearing. A number of popular pamphlets were written concerning the witch-trials, and a few scholarly works were published.

³³Op. cit., CLXXV, 220.

Henry Holland, in 1596, published A Treatise against Witchcraft, in which he stated a firm belief in the witches' pact with the devil. In the treatise he divulged ways and means of purging one's house of all unclean spirits. Then, in 1597, appeared James I's Daemonologie in forme of a Dialogue, Divided into three Bookes. The dialogue was first published in Edinburgh and republished in London in 1603, the year of James' ascension to the throne of England. That witches are real is evident from the proof found in the Scriptures, writes James, and from the proof of daily experience. There are two sorts of devilish art: "...the one is called Magie or Necromancie, the other Sorcerie or Witch-craft."³⁴ The difference between the two is "...that the Witches ar servantes onellie, and slaves to the Devil; but the Necromanciers are his maisters and commanders."³⁵ The reason why more women than men are convicted for witchcraft is that the sex is frailer and, therefore, more easily persuaded by Satan's guile; as evidence, James refers to the temptation and fall of Eve. Since the devil often prevents a witch from confessing her guilt, two methods for proving a witch are described as infallible;

...the one is the finding of their marke, and the trying the insensibleness thereof. The other is their fleeting on the water; for as in a secret murtherer, if the deade carcasse be at any time thereafter handled by the murtherer, it wil gush out of bloud, as if the blud wer crying to the heaven for revenge of the murtherer, God having appoynted that secret super-naturall signe, for tryall of that secrete unmaturall crime, so it appeares that God hath appoynted (for a super-naturall signe of the monstrous impietie of the Witches) that the water shal refuse to receive them in her bosom, that have shaken off them the sacred Water of Baptisme, and wilfullie refused the benefite thereof: No not so much as their eyes are able to shed teares (thretten and torture them as ye please) while first they repent (God not permit-

³⁴Daemonologie, p. 7.

³⁵Ibid., p. 9.

ting them to dissemble their obstinacie in so horrible a crim) albeit the women kinde especially, be able otherwaies to shed teares at every light occasion when they will, yea, although it were dissemblingly like the Crocodiles.³⁶

After the witch has been found guilty, she should suffer death "...according to the Law of God, the civill and imperial law, and municipall law of all Christian nations...It is commonly used by fire, but that is an indifferent thing to be used in every cuntrie, according to the Law or custome thereof..."; as for sex, age, rank, "...no exception is admitted by the law of God."³⁷ James was not as merciful as Elizabeth and her court in his feeling toward witches. All who dabbled in the magic art, whether they did harm or not, were guilty of witchcraft or necromancy. All such dabblers were working with the devil and should die. There was no shading of penalties.

Another important treatise was that of William Perkins (1558-1602), a Puritan minister. His work, A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft, so far forth as it is revealed in the Scriptures, was first published in 1608, six years after Perkins' death. According to R. Trevor Davies, in his book Four Centuries of Witch Beliefs, Perkins argues that both bad and good witches should be put to death; i.e., both witches and cunning women, for both are working with the devil:

...though the Witch were in many respects profitable, and did no hurt, but procured much good; yet because he hath renounced God his king and governor, and hath bound himself by other lawes to the service of the enemie of God, and his Church, death is his portion justly assigned him by God;...³⁸

Torture is lawful in the examination of witches "...upon strong and great presumptions going before, and when the partie is obstinate."³⁹

³⁶Daemonologie, pp. 80-1.

³⁷Ibid., p. 77.

³⁸Davies, p. 51.

³⁹Ibid.

Davies quotes another preacher who wrote on witchcraft: James Mason, whose The Anatomie of Sorcerie was published in 1612.⁴⁰ His main thesis was that witches had no power whatever; they are servants of the devil and do his bidding.

The tendency of opinion was toward a stronger statute against witchcraft, one which would not permit witches and sorcerers to try their arts a second time. When James I came to the throne in 1603, he brought with him the attitude toward witches and sorcerers found in his dialogue. In 1604, therefore, Elizabeth's statute was repealed and a new one enacted (1 Jac. I, c. 12). This was the celebrated "witch act" of James. Elizabeth's statute was primarily an extension of the murder law, since it was directed most particularly against those witches who were responsible for the deaths of others. With the statute of James, however, all witchcraft, whether black or white, was the result of a pact with the devil. The "Act against Conjuracion, Witchcraft and dealing with evil and wicked Spirits" decreed death without benefit of clergy for all those convicted:

If any person or persons...shall use practice or exercise any Invocation or Conjuracion of any evil or Wicked Spirit, or shall consult covenant with entertaine employ feede or rewarde any evil and wicked Spirit to or for any intent or purpose; or take up any dead man woman or child out of his her or their grave, or any other place where the dead bodie resteth, or the skin bone or any other parte of any dead person, to be imployed or used in any manner of Witchcraft Sorcerie Charme or Inchantment; or shall use practice or exercise any Witchcraft Inchantment Charme or Sorcerie, Whereby any person shalbe killed destroyed wasted consumed pined or lamed in his or her bodie, or any parte thereof; and then everie such Offendor or Offendors, their Ayders Abettors and Counsellors, being of any the saide Offences duly and lawfullie convicted and attainted, shall suffer pains of deathe as a Felon or Felons, and shall loose the

⁴⁰Davies, p. 52.

privilege and benefit of Cleargie and Sanctuarie.⁴¹

This was the statute which started a new and more intense witch-purge, one which James tried to control after he began to look upon the problem with reason rather than emotion. By 1618 he had almost completely renounced his witch-beliefs and attempted to stop the persecution. The witch-scare would not be stopped, however, for the people were too filled with the seeds of hatred for the blasphemous workings of the devil. When the persecution finally was ended, it did not stop abruptly but gradually faded from the people's interest.

The opinion of men of the seventeenth century was more varied than that of the sixteenth century. Science was developing in importance, and the age of reason was beginning. Many attempts were being made to disprove witchcraft. Davies gives an account of an experiment of Dr. Harvey, Charles I's physician and discoverer of the circulation of blood.⁴² The doctor pretended to be a sorcerer and induced a self-confessed witch to show him her "imp", a toad. While the old woman was out, Harvey cut the toad open and proved it to be but an animal. He concluded, therefore, that most of the women accused of witchcraft were merely suffering from delusion. Thomas Browne's attitude toward witchcraft and magic is an entirely different one from those of his predecessors. He believes that much of what is termed "philosophy" owes its existence to the experiments of "good and bad angels":

It is a riddle to me, how this story of Oracles hath not worm'd out of the World that doubtful conceit of Spirits and Witches; how so many learned heads should so far forget their Metaphysicks, and destroy the ladder and scale of creatures, as to question the existence of Spirits. For my

⁴¹The statute will be found in the Appendix, V.

⁴²Davies, pp. 67-8.

part, I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are Witches: they that doubt of these, do not onely deny them, but Spirits; and are obliquely and upon consequence a sort not of Infidels, but Atheists...I hold that the Devil doth really possess some men, the spirit of Melancholly others, the spirit of Delusion others; that, as the Devil is concealed and denied by some, so God and good Angels are pretended by others...

...Again, I believe that all that use scroceries, incantations and spells, are not Witches, or, as we term them, Magicians. I conceive there is a traditional Magiok, not learned immediately from the Devil, but at second hand from his Scholars, who, having once the secret betrayed, are able, and do emperically practise without his advice, they both proceeding upon the principles of Nature; where actives, aptly conjoynd to disposed passives, will under any Master produce their effects. Thus, I think at first a great part of Philosophy was Witchcraft; which, being afterward derived to one another, proved but Philosophy, and was indeed no more but the honest effects of Nature; what, invented by us, is Philosophy, learned from him, is Magiok. We do surely owe the discovery of many secrets to the discovery of good and bad angels.⁴³

More evidence of Browne's attitude is found in an account of a witch trial on 10 March 1665, when two women were accused of bewitching children. When Browne was asked for his opinion, he cited the discovery of witches in Denmark. He believed, most certainly, in the ability of witches to heighten fits which were, in themselves, "natural."⁴⁴ Still another attitude toward witches is that of Robert Burton who, in The Anatomy of Melancholy, gives a detached and academic view of the belief:

Many deny Witches at all, or, if there be any, they can do no harm. Of this opinion is Wierus, lib. 3, cap. 53, de praestig. daem. Austin Lerchemer, a Dutch writer, Biarmannus, Ewichius, Euwaldus, our country man Scot; with him in Horace,...
...They laugh at all such stories; but on the contrary are most lawyers, Divines, Physicians, Philosophers, Austin, Hemingius, Danaeus, Chytraeus, Zanchius, Aretaeus, etc...⁴⁵

⁴³The Works of Sir Thomas Browne, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, Faber & Gwyer, Ltd., 1928), I, 1, sect. 31, 39-40.

⁴⁴Forrest Reid, "Sir Thomas Browne and a Trial of Witches", Westminster Review, CLXXV (1911), pp. 197-202.

⁴⁵Anatomy, ed. A. R. Shilleto (London, 1893), I, 231.

That Burton was, himself, a bit superstitious and dabbled in astrology is evident from Sir William Osler's account that the author died on 25 January 1639/40, "...very near the time which he had some years before foretold from the calculation of his nativity."⁴⁶ Thus, although the belief in witches was not entirely gone, still the men of the seventeenth century were looking upon the superstition with a more critical eye.

In reviewing the history of the witch scare in England, one will notice that the fear was closely related to religion and politics. The court, influenced by Calvinism, feared Rome and stirred the people against witches. While the feeling against witchcraft had abated somewhat in court, toward the end of Elizabeth's reign, the fury of the people against the blasphemers was growing. The Calvinist preachers were out for blood and were getting it. Emotion had the upper hand, and it was only when men applied their reason that some of the reaction against witches was curbed. We have seen that Reginald Scot in his book was appealing to man's reason, and he was denounced for it. George Gifford, who wrote his Discourse and Dialogue when the witch-scare was at its height in the reign of Elizabeth, was also appealing to man's reason; however, he does not, like Scot, renounce the belief in witches. His moderate approach to the problem, how it is achieved, and his methods of forwarding his ideas can be discovered only by examining his works. First, however, it is necessary to know Gifford, himself, who he was, and what he was doing at the time of the witch persecutions.

⁴⁶"Robert Burton and the Anatomy of Melancholy", Oxford Bibliographic Society Proceedings and Papers, I (1926), p. 183.

The Life of George Gifford

The life of George Gifford, non-conformist minister at Maldon, Essex, was a full and active one, one devoted to truth, to the people, and to God. Because he was forthright in his convictions, his life was also a troubled one. A description of his activities in forwarding Puritanism is recorded in many of the books which are concerned with the rise of Puritanism in the sixteenth century; however, because of the lack of family records, many of the facts concerning Gifford's private life are not available.

The exact date of Gifford's birth is unknown owing to the absence of any birth record; but since the Alumni Cantabrigienses gives the information that Gifford was ordained deacon and priest in London, December, 1578, at the age of thirty, he must have been born in 1547 or 1548.¹ As for Gifford's parentage, Anthony à Wood, in the Athenae Oxonienses, states that a George Gifford mentioned by Thomas Warton in his Life of Sir Thomas Pope was probably the minister's father; however, Wood gives no reason for his assumption.² The great difficulty in tracing the family history of George Gifford arises from the fact that there were apparently a great many men of that name during the sixteenth century: George Gifford, who took part in the Babington plot; Humphrey Gifford, the poet; Roger Giffard, physician to the queen. Furthermore, the name Gifford was spelled many different ways: Gifford, Giffard, Gifforde, Gyffard, to name only a few.

Gifford was a student at Hart Hall, Oxford, probably for several years before 1568³, but he left Oxford without his degree and went to

¹John and J. A. Venn, (Cambridge, University Press, 1922), II, 1, 213.

²Anthony à Wood, (London, 1815), II, 291n.

³Joseph Foster, Alumni Oxonienses (Oxford, 1891), II, 563.

Cambridge. He received his B. A. degree from Christ's College in 1569/70, and his M. A. degree in 1573.⁴ The minister was in Cambridge with Spenser, who came there in 1569, and Gabriel Harvey, the poet's friend, who arrived in 1570. It was during this period that Thomas Cartwright met with great disfavor. He had been appointed Lady Margaret Professor at Cambridge in 1569. In this position he criticised and denounced the constitution and hierarchy of the English Church. He was answered by Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, from the pulpit, but Cartwright was far superior in his oratorical power. When Cartwright became candidate for the degree of D. D. on 29 June 1570, his degree was vetoed by the vice-chancellor, Dr. May. Cartwright appealed to Lord Burghley, but he could not be aided. The heads of the church, led by Whitgift, deprived Cartwright of his professorship on 11 December 1570, and of his fellowship in September 1571. Cartwright left England and went to Geneva.⁵ During his college years, therefore, Gifford came into direct contact with the controversy between the Puritans and the Church of England.

The same year he received his M. A. degree (1573), Gifford published a translation of Dr. William Fulke's In sacram Divi Johannis Apocalypsim praelectiones ("Prelections upon the sacred and holy Revelation of St. John"). Fulke was a Puritan and fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1564. He was a great friend of Cartwright. The fact that Gifford chose the translation of Fulke's work as his first publication indicates he had some interest in Puritanism at this early

⁴Venn, *loc. cit.*

⁵A. F. S. Pearson, Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism (Cambridge, The University Press, 1925), pp. 42-47; M. M. Knappen, Tudor Puritanism (Chicago, University Press, 1939), pp. 223-25.

date.

Nothing is known of Gifford's activities until 1578, when he was ordained deacon and priest at London. Perhaps he married soon after his ordination. On 28 December 1579, a George Gifford was issued a general license to marry Eleanor Bridges in the city of London.⁶ Whether this was our minister or not, one cannot say; however, since his son John matriculated at Cambridge in 1597, one could guess that the marriage of 1579 might be the correct one by surmising John's age at the time of his matriculation. Both John and Daniel, the other son, attended Cambridge. John became rector of Eynsford, Kent, and, like his father, became noted as an author.⁷

Little is known of Gifford's work until 1581, when he published, "Country Divinity, containing a Discourse of Certain Points of Religion which are among the common sort of Christians, with a Plain Confutation thereof." This treatise met with great approval and is believed to have been the immediate cause of Gifford's presentation to a living on 30 August 1582; he was appointed vicar of All Saints', St. Peters in Maldon, Essex.⁸ This same year Gifford published "A Dialogue between a Papist and a Protestant applied to the capacity of the unlearned." From the titles one can observe that Gifford had an early interest in teaching the common folk, an interest which makes itself evident in the witchcraft literature which he would publish later. Another point to be noted is that he began writing about the Catholic-Protestant problem at this time, and began building a reputation which would be of service

⁶George J. Armytage, ed., Allegations for Marriage Licenses issued by the Bishop of London, 1520 to 1610 (Harleian Society Publications, London, 1887), XXV, 93.

⁷Venn, op. cit., p. 213.

⁸Wood, op. cit., II, 293.

to him later; as Wood writes, Gifford was "withal a great enemy to Popery."⁹

Undoubtedly, Gifford's interest in Puritanism grew with his stay in Maldon. He had been at All Saints' a little less than two years when he joined a synod of Nonconformist Essex ministers in London in January, 1584. Evidently, he was considered a great danger to the Church of England, for, in the eyes of the Anglicans, he had assumed the position of a ringleader of the Nonconformists. On 18 January 1584, he was suspended by Bishop Aylmer for not subscribing to the three articles which had been set up "to secure uniformity in the church of England."¹⁰ The three articles were: (1) the queen had sovereign right and rule over all born subjects, and no foreigner had any authority within her realm; (2) the Book of Common Prayer and the ordering of Bishops was not contrary to the Word of God, therefore the subscriber must use this book and none other; (3) the subscriber had to acknowledge the book of the Articles of Religion as agreed in the Convocation of 1562-3, and had to accept the articles as agreeable to the Word of God.

The Puritans believed that the best way to spread their doctrine was to encourage true, zealous preachers. Conventicles were forbidden, but the Puritans believed there was no need for them if the parishes were provided with sufficiently able ministers. The three articles led to a great discussion since all ecclesiastics were obliged to adhere to them. The Puritans found no fault in the first article, but held it superfluous, since everyone would admit that the queen was supreme.

⁹Wood, *op. cit.*, II, 291.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 293.

They did find fault with the second article, however, for they believed that the Book of Common Prayer was not entirely conformable to the Word of God. The third article was accepted in terms of the Statute of Elizabeth (13 Eliz., c. 12). The second article, therefore, was the cause of much violent opposition which led to suspensions and dispositions. Because of his refusal to subscribe, Gifford lost his living at All Saints'.

Gifford and the others who refused subscription were accused of attempting to erect a new popedom in England, so they were arraigned as traitors. Although the minister was considered a ringleader among the nonconformists, his accusers were not able to prove their accusations, so Gifford was dismissed by Aylmer and permitted to return to his living.¹¹ Before very many months had passed, however, he was again suspended for not subscribing to the articles. He was relieved of his living in May or June, 1584 and another man, Mark Wyersdale, was appointed to replace him.¹² Once in prison, Gifford and his fellow prisoners signed a supplication for release, but this plea was ignored.¹³ John Strype comments that Gifford was suspended "...for refusing to subscribe the Articles, which all the clergy were obliged to subscribe to, there being many things in the Book of Common Prayer which he was not persuaded of to be agreeable to the word of God."¹⁴ Because of his strong convictions, the minister could not be swayed by threats. As we shall see later, he was a great influence in the town

¹¹John Strype, The Life and Acts of John Whitgift, D. D. (Oxford, 1822), I, 301.

¹²Wood, *op. cit.*, II, 293.

¹³Benjamin Brook, The Lives of the Puritans (London, 1813), II, 273-78.

¹⁴Historical Collection of the Life and Acts of the Right Reverend Father in God, John Aylmer (Oxford, 1821), p. 72.

of Maldon, and because of this he was probably considered a dangerous threat to the English Church.

In May, 1584, John Aylmer, Bishop of London, sent Archbishop Whitgift an account of the crimes charged against Gifford. At this time the country was instilled with the Papal scare, however, and Sir Francis Knollys, writing to Burghley, comments:

...But it grieves my heart to see the course of popish treason to be neglected and to see the zealous preachers of the gospel, sound in doctrine (who are the most diligent barkers against the popish wolf to save the fold and the flock of Christ) to be persecuted and put to silence as though there were no enemies to her majesty and to the state but they, and as though their refusal of an unlawful subscription (to such as are not persuaded therein) were a sufficient cause to exempt them and to exile or to condemn them...¹⁵

A similar attitude was held by many members of the Privy Council; in fact, the Council dealt so charitably with the Puritans that the bishops complained.¹⁶ The argument of many of these men was that the Puritans were aiding in the fight against the Papists, so they should be disregarded until the fear of Catholicism had quieted down.

Burghley was accused of encouraging the Puritans and of hindering the bishops "in their labours for the peace and unity of the church."¹⁷ When many reputable men brought Gifford's case to the attention of the Lord Treasurer, Burghley sent a letter to Whitgift in behalf of the minister. Strype writes: "This man [Gifford] was a great and diligent preacher, and much esteemed by many, and of good rank in the town, and had brought that place to more sobriety and knowledge of true religion; insomuch that many of his hearers obtained from the Lord Treasurer a

¹⁵M. M. Knappen, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

¹⁶Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

¹⁷Loc. cit.

letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury in his behalf."¹⁸ In reply to Burghley, Whitgift wrote: "It appeareth that the said Gifford is a ringleader of the rest; against whom also I have received certain complaints..."; therefore, he was not to be granted "...any further liberty or release of his suspension, until he have purged himself. His deserts may be such as will deserve deprivation."¹⁹ At this time, a large petition was sent to the bishop in Gifford's behalf, signed by fifty-two persons "...whereof two were Bailiffs of the town, two Justices of the peace, four Aldermen, fifteen head Burgesses, and the Vicar of the town."²⁰ In this petition, the people wrote of Gifford's piety and goodness and of his great and good influence upon the townsfolk of Maldon. During the short time he had been at All Saints' Church, two years, he had effected a great transformation among the common folk. Gifford's concern for his people was repaid by their great devotion. In spite of this petition, Whitgift was immovable and Gifford was finally deprived of his living entirely. Burghley was not satisfied with Whitgift's methods, however, and continued to write him concerning the problem. In a letter dated 1 July 1584, Burghley writes:

I am sorry to trouble you so often as I do; but I am more troubled myself, not only with many private petitions of sundry Ministers recommended from persons of credit, for peaceable persons in their ministry; and yet, by complaints to your Grace, and other your colleagues in commission, greatly troubled; but also I am now dayly charged by counsellors and publick persons, to neglect my duty, in not staying of these your Graces proceedings, so vehement and so general against Ministers and Preachers; as the Papists are thereby generally encouraged, all ill-disposed subjects

¹⁸Life of John Aylmer, p. 72. Burghley's letter concerning Gifford is unavailable.

¹⁹Strype, Life of John Whitgift, I, 302.

²⁰Strype, Life of John Aylmer, p. 72.

animated; and thereby the Queens Majesties safty endaun-
gered. With those kind of arguments I am dayly assayled...

I know your Canonists can defend these with al their
perticels, but surely under your Graces correction this
judicial and canonical sifting of poor Ministers is not to
edify or reform. And in charity, I think, they ought not
to answer to al these nice points, except they were very
notorious offenders in Papistry or heresy. Now, my good
Lord, bear with my scribbling. I write with a testimony
of a good conscience. I desire the peace of the Church...²¹

Another letter dated 20 September 1584, and signed by Burghley, the
Earls of Shrewsbury, Warwick and Leicester, contains a plea for the re-
turn of pastors to their churches. It is addressed to both Whitgift
and Aylmer:

...But that yet of late hearing of the lamentable state
of the Church in the county of Essex, that is, of a great
number of zealous and learned preachers there suspended
from their cures; the vacancy of the places for the most
part without any ministry of preaching, prayers, and sac-
raments; and in some places, of certain appointed to those
void rooms being persons neither of learning or of good
name...²²

It seems that Burghley and other members of the Privy Council were ac-
cusing Whitgift and Aylmer of sacrificing the safety of their country
for an apparently personal political feud. Whitgift could not be per-
suaded, however, and continued his practices.

Although Gifford was deprived of his living, he was permitted to
hold the office of lecturer, and he continued to preach now and again
in Maldon. Also, he continued to write and publish. In 1583 he had
written "A Catechism containing the sum of Religion...", which was re-
printed in 1586. Continuing his fight against the Papists, he wrote
and published, in 1584, a tract "Against the Priesthood and Sacrifice
of the Church of Rome." Besides these he had published "Four Sermons
Preached at Maldon, 1584, 'Penned from his mouth, and corrected and

²¹Strype, The Life of John Whitgift, III, 104-7.

²²Ibid., I, 328-30.

given to the Countess of Sussex as a New Year's Gift."²³

Although Gifford was permitted to continue preaching in Maldon, the Essex Nonconformists complained about the ignorance of the vicar replacing him. In 1586 Wyersdale, the minister's successor, asked permission to resign the living in Gifford's favor. Aylmer refused the request, and Gifford was suspended from his lectureship for a time, probably as a warning against any further complaints in his favor. Later, twenty-seven of the suspended Essex clergy, headed by Gifford, petitioned the Privy Council for redress of grievances, but this petition was set aside.

During this period the country was becoming more witch conscious than it ever had been. Essex, more than any other county, seemed to be polluted with witches. The trials at St. Osyth's in 1582 had prompted Scot to write The Discoverie of Witchcraft in 1584. Gifford probably attended these trials, or, if not, he undoubtedly received first-hand information. He must have attended some trials, for his "witch books" indicate a thorough knowledge of the methods used in trying witches. At any rate, three years after Scot's book was published, Gifford published "A Discourse of the Subtle Practices of Devils by Witches and Sorcerers" (1587). Its purpose was to teach the "simpler sort" the "truth" about witches as revealed by the Bible.

The same year Gifford's discourse appeared, a synod was held by the Puritans either at Cambridge or at Warwick. The Nonconformists met on 8 September 1587 to draw up orders for church discipline, rules to be observed by the ministers, and matters to be discoursed in con-

²³This Countess of Sussex may have been Frances, wife of the third Earl of Sussex and daughter of William Sidney. She died 9 March 1588/9.

ferences. Gifford attended this synod and helped to frame a Latin letter "...for the oversight and instruction of the rest in those places, as occasion required."²⁴ Sixteen articles, the decree of the synod, were drawn up to establish the course and method of settling discipline throughout the kingdom. Gifford was appointed to make the contents of the letter known to his county. Part of the letter states that "they laboured to vindicate themselves and their party from making a schism in the church established...they assumed no authority to themselves of compelling others to their decrees."²⁵ The pervading tone of the letter was one of discipline and pacification.

Gifford had subscribed to the "Book of Discipline" of the Puritans. In 1589 he attended another synod held at St. John's College, Cambridge, to discuss corrections of the book. Throughout the period the minister was actively engaged in forwarding and developing the Puritan movement. No doubt his attendance at the synods and his popularity with the people caused much discomfort for the Anglicans; however, he continued preaching and publishing. "Eight Sermons Preached at Maldon, 1589" was published; then Gifford became involved in the Brownist controversy.²⁶

The heads of the Brownists²⁷, Henry Barrow and John Greenwood, had been in prison since 1586 when, in 1590, Gifford began an attack on

²⁴Strype, Annals (Oxford, 1824), III, i, 690.

²⁵Ibid., p. 691 for a translation of the letter.

²⁶At this time, when beliefs were being formulated, many controversies took place. Five years before, 1585, the controversy began between Richard Hooker, Anglican Divine, and Walter Travers, a Puritan. This controversy motivated Hooker to write his famous The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, 1594.

²⁷The Brownists were adherents of Robert Browne, the Congregationalist. He preached for individual democratic congregations for a more effective Christian life.

them with "A Short Treatise against the Donatists of England, whom we call Brownists...." When Greenwood replied with a treatise upholding the Brownist views, the Essex minister resumed his attack with "A Plain Declaration that our Brownists be full Donatists...also a reply to Master Greenwood touching read prayer, wherein his gross ignorance is detected which, labouring to purge himself from former absurdities, doth plunge himself deeper into his mire." This treatise, printed in 1590, was dedicated to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, the man who had shown Gifford so much favor in his arraignment six years before. In 1591, Gifford continued the controversy with "A Short Reply into the last printed books of H. Barrow and J. Greenwood...wherein is laid open the gross ignorance and foul errors...." In the preface Gifford stated that personal motives were not involved in the controversy. Because of his concern for the state of the country, the minister was attacking the Brownists, not to implicate personalities but to prove that Congregationalists were Donatists "...who would ruin ecclesiastical discipline at a time when the ship needed wise men in the stern."²⁸ Gifford was fearful lest he offend; he wished only to arrive at truth by means of logical reasoning. The treatise of 1591 was the last Gifford wrote on the subject of Donatism; after Barrow replied with "Plain Refutation", the minister took no further part in the theological controversy. The fact that he did write against the Brownists found favor with the court, and Strype hints that these tracts perhaps had a great deal to do with his final release from suspicion.²⁹

In 1591, at the close of this controversy, Gifford found himself

²⁸Knappen, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

²⁹The Life of John Aylmer, p. 73.

busy as lecturer and preacher at St. Paul's Cross.³⁰ However, at a time of so much political and religious turmoil, Gifford, a man interested in the people, assumed the responsibility of clearing away the darkness. The persecution of witches was continuing to rage, and the number arraigned and put to death mounted with each coming year. Essex still had the inauspicious distinction of trying and convicting the greatest number of witches. Gifford felt that the people were permitting emotions to over-rule reason. In 1593 he published A Dialogue concerning Witches and Witchcraftes to prove that the wild fury against witches was opposed to the nature of God. His knowledge of the fancy of the people led him to present his ideas in dramatic form. Because the dialogue was simply and entertainingly told, it was probably more popular than the Discourse, which preceded it. Evidence of the popularity of the Dialogue can be surmised from the fact that it was reprinted in 1603, the year King James ascended the throne of England.

The year following publication of the Dialogue, Gifford published "A Treatise of True Fortitude" (1594), and two years later, in 1596, "Commentary or Sermons Upon the Whole Book of Revelations." His efforts toward establishing the Puritan Church in England continued steadily and strongly, and in 1597 he was made one of a presbytery elected in Essex. Two years before his death Gifford published "Four Sermons upon several parts of Scripture" (1598). On 10 May 1600, he died and was buried at Maldon.³¹

Two of Gifford's works were published posthumously: "Exposition on the Canticles" (1612) and "Fifteen Sermons on the Song of Solomon"

³⁰Venn, op. cit., II, 213.

³¹Ibid.

(1620). No doubt the minister's publications were fairly popular during the period in which he was writing; but like many writers of tracts whose subjects are not timeless, Gifford's works have drifted into obscurity. A glance through his "witch books" will reveal a conscientious writer but no literary genius. He had great ability, and his sermons are still awaiting an editor to reveal more of that ability.

The Institutes of John Calvin

George Gifford's treatises on witches indicate a close adherence to Calvinistic tenets. In order to determine how far Gifford does agree with Calvin's doctrine, an acquaintance with those pertinent ideas presented in the Institutes is necessary.

During the 1530's France was waging war against the Reformers, and a great number of men were either imprisoned or put to death. John Calvin was in Basle, Germany, at this time. Being a Reformer himself he felt he should acquaint the world outside France with the true state of affairs and hoped his readers might resent the malignancy of the French. His Christiana Religionis Institutio appeared in 1536. It was written in haste and was merely a handbook of faith when it was first published. Even while the book was being published, Calvin was busy revising his work. A second edition, much larger than the first, appeared in 1539, and its primary purpose was to guide the people in their study of the Scripture. As the years passed, new ideas were added, and new editions were published until the book appeared in its final and present form with the eighth edition of 1559.

Almost from the first, Calvin published his Institutes in two languages: Latin and French, in an attempt to reach a greater number of people.¹ The Reformer's efforts were realized when the Institutes found a wider circulation and, therefore, were a great influence on religious thought. The earliest French edition known, that of 1541, was translated from the second Latin edition by Calvin. Subsequent revisions of the Latin text were repeated in French; thus, the work was

¹The effort of the Reformers to influence the majority is noted by Eduardus Reuss, ed., Joannis Calvinii, Opera Quae Supersunt omnia (Brunswick, 1865), III, xxv.

as available to the common people as it was to the more scholarly. Although the French editions were of great influence among the unlearned, the Latin editions were responsible, no doubt, for the wide acceptance of Calvin's doctrines. These editions were read by those men who could be most powerful in spreading the principles: the scholars, translators, and ministers.

The Reformers, persisting in broadcasting their belief, translated the Institutes into other languages almost immediately: Italian, Dutch, English, German, Spanish, Hungarian.² Thomas Norton's English translation appeared in 1561, followed by six more editions before the close of the century. In addition to the translations of the entire work, a number of abridgments of the Institutes appeared. In 1579 Edmund Bunney published a Latin abridgment, and an English translation of it appeared in 1580.³ The great number of translations and abridgments indicates a growing demand for Calvin's work. In this period of religious confusion men were seeking a positive and concrete faith; Calvin offered an answer which was accepted by many.

The doctrine which Calvin was forwarding rested on the tenet that the Bible should be sole authority in all matters, religious and mundane. By thus accepting the Bible as the only guide to truth, Calvin was deprecating the power of the Pope and church tradition. In his Institutes, the Reformer argues against this impious power; he accuses the "order of priests" of being ignorant of the Scripture and of treating it with contempt. The priests are more interested in their

²Greek and Arabic translations were made as well, it is believed, although no copies are accessible.

³Edm. Bunnie, his abridgment of Calvin's Institutes, translated by Edw. May. Another abridgment was published in 1583, the work of William Delaune, and translated into English by Christopher Fetherstone in 1585.

"bellies" than in the word of God: "...their belly is their god, their kitchen is their religion;..."⁴ The most direct and most positive means of discovering and understanding God is through Scripture, which discloses the "doctrine of heaven." The Bible is not only necessary, it is sufficient, for it contains all the information essential for an understanding of God and His universe. Furthermore, one should be aware of the Bible's unity. From the beginning of history, Christ has been held as the object of the faith of the elect and He is the unifying theme throughout Scripture. There can be no knowledge of God without Christ. Thus, the purposes of the Scripture are to provide a necessary and sufficient understanding of God and to indicate the way to salvation through Christ.

Following his doctrine, Calvin employs Scripture to explain his concepts of God, the devil, and man. Gifford uses the Bible in much the same way to present his arguments. Although Calvin's conceptions of God and the devil differ little from Catholic belief, the development of these basic concepts and of man's relationship to God and Satan mark the schism between Calvinism and Catholicism. These concepts were most powerful in motivating Calvin's persecution of witches.

God is omnipotent and the creator of all things; He controls the laws of nature and works by means of a natural cause-and-effect sequence. To speak of "fortuitous accidents" (both good and bad) is to have an erroneous notion of the universe and God, for "...in the creatures there is no erratic power, or action, or motion; but that they are so governed by the secret counsel of God, that nothing can

⁴John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, tr. John Allen (Seventh American Edition, Philadelphia, Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, [1936]), I, 25.

happen but what is subject to his knowledge, and decreed by his will."⁵ Consequently, the belief in both God and fortune is contradictory. Opposed to God is Satan, who is the "...author, conductor, and principal contriver of all wickedness and iniquity."⁶ He is sly and deceptive and has the ability to transform himself into an angel of light or to assume the likeness of God; therefore, man must be constantly on guard against him. Because he is working continually to oppose God and to destroy man, he is called the "ruler of darkness." In spite of his power, the devil is subject to the might of God, who compels him to render obedience; although the devil causes much adversity, he works only by the will of God. Satan is the Lord's executioner, the instrument of God's wrath, and the dispenser of God's vengeance. The evils which God permits to afflict man are for an ultimate good, however, and that is the separation of the elect from the damned.

The doctrine of the elect and the damned was one which met with much disapproval among the non-Calvinists and among some of the Puritans, as well. The concept is implicit in the "witch books" of Gifford. This doctrine was especially influential in the persecution of witches as handmaids of the devil and members of the "damned." Calvin's concept, taken primarily from the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation in the New Testament, was that God had separated men into two classes: the elect and the damned. The elect are the chosen people of the Lord and are given the power to overcome their sins and to find God. The damned, however, have a natural inclination toward evil and can do nothing but sin; they are

⁵Calvin, op. cit., I, 222.

⁶Ibid., p. 192.

weak and have not the power to find God. Because God has provided him with a free and flexible will, man's actions are precipitated by his own inclinations; thieves and malefactors are, therefore, not excused for their crimes. Nor does the fact that God operates through the damned implicate Him. However, God has made man's salvation possible through Christ and through the Gospel which presents God's laws. The damned will reject this way to salvation because they are steeped in evil, but the elect will seek the mercy of God through Christ.

Calvin has indicated that man is continually surrounded by dangers and evils. Witches, sorcerers, and magicians are evil and of the damned since they seek to reveal secrets hidden by God and because they place no faith outside the magical powers which they pretend to possess; but God is the only real power in the universe. Though God has bestowed man with many abilities and virtues, He conceals future events that man may be prepared constantly to meet new problems, surmount them, and be strengthened by his experience. It is against the will of God to inquire into the future, for those who do are presumptuous of their power and blasphemous to God:

Wherefore let us remember that we ought to avoid too much curiosity of research, and presumption of language.⁷

The worst evil is the Antichrist, however, of whom Paul writes: "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders."⁸ The Pope is the Antichrist, for he is working with Satan to seduce people from God. The miracles which the Catholic Church professes to have performed are "juggling tricks" to

⁷Calvin, *op. cit.*, I, 186.

⁸I Thessalonians 2:9.

delude the people into turning from God. Like Satan, the Pope turns to trickery to entice the people, and, to accomplish his mission, makes use of the sleights of magicians and sorcerers; in fact, sorcerers, enchanters, and witches are aiding both the devil and the Pope. The exorcising priests, themselves, are possessed of the devil:

It is pretended that they are invested with power to lay hands upon maniacs, demoniacs, and catechumens; but they cannot persuade the demons that they are endued with such power; not only because the demons do not submit to their commands, but because they even exercise dominion over them. For scarcely one in ten can be found among them who is not influenced by an evil spirit.⁹

In order to free one's self from the devil's power, one should not seek help from charms, but should turn to God. To avenge the afflictions of the faithful, God has given His ministers the power to destroy evil on earth. They are not bound by common law which treats killing as a sin and crime; they are permitted by God to hunt out and condemn all malefactors trespassing the law of the Lord. The magistrate should show mercy, however, rather than excessive and unnecessary cruelty in his treatment of those accused of trespass. This plea for mercy is surprising in view of Calvin's action against witches; however, the Reformer qualifies his instructions by saying:

Yet it behoves the magistrate to be on his guard against both these errors; that he do not, by excessive severity, wound rather than heal; or, through a superstitious affectation of clemency, fall into a mistaken humanity, which is the worst kind of cruelty, by indulging a weak and ill-judged lenity, to the detriment of multitudes.¹⁰

These are the ideas which were set forth by Calvin in his Institutes; they are reflected in the treatises on witchcraft of Gifford. Calvin's witch purge was not an "unnecessary cruelty", for witches were

⁹Calvin, op. cit., II, 757.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 784.

guilty of the highest treason against God, it was believed, and a "detriment of multitudes." Because sorcery was blasphemous, such offenders were destroyed by fire: the cleansing punishment. As a result of Calvin's tenets and actions, hundreds of people were burned.

Summary of Gifford's Discourse

George Gifford's first work concerning the problem of witchcraft appeared in 1587, a formal treatise entitled, "A Discourse of the subtill Practises of Devilles by Witches & Sorcerers. By which men are & have bin greatly deluded; the antiqutie of them; their divers sorts & Names. With an Answer unto divers frivolous Reasons which some doe make to proove that the Devils did not make those Aperations in any bodily shape." It may have been republished in 1598, since the Stationers' Register for 13 May 1598 notes that Gifford's "booke of Wytches" was transferred from Tobie Cooke to Masters Field and Kingston.^{1a} Whether this notation refers to but one of Gifford's works on witchcraft or to both collectively is not known.

The Discourse was published but three years after the appearance of Reginald Scot's The Discoverie of Witchcraft. It has been noted that Scot's book was written as a reaction against the trials held at St. Osyth in 1582. Since St. Osyth is about twenty-five or thirty miles northeast of Maldon, Gifford may have attended these trials. The number of witch trials occurring in Essex undoubtedly exerted marked influence on the minister; however, the manner in which he handles the subject of witchcraft indicates some reaction against Scot's theories. This reaction will be dealt with as the Discourse is summarized.

Gifford dedicates his work to the "Right Woorshipfull Maister Richard Martin, Alderman, & Warden of her Majesties Mint." Sir Richard Martin (1534-1617) was Master of the Mint from 1581 to 1617. Appointed alderman of the city of London on 29 May 1578, he assumed the position of Lord Mayor upon the deaths of Sir Martin Calthorpe in 1589 and Sir Cuthbert Buckle in 1594. He was quite active in his duties as Master

^{1a}A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, ed. Edward Arber. (London, 1876), III, 114.

of the Mint and did much to improve the coinage. In dedicating his Discourse to Martin, Gifford indicates that the godly alderman had shown him great favours in the past. Gifford writes:

...in respect of that loving favour, & friendship which your worship hath for certaine yeares shewed towards me... because that your zeale hath bin shewed towards the gospel, & love towards all those that publish & professe it. (sig. A2^v)^{1b}

Apparently Gifford was on friendly terms with this member of the queen's court at a time when his reputation was suffering from the accusations of his enemies.

In his epistle, the minister rebukes the "ignoraunt men" who have been deceived by the devil into forsaking "the light of the gospel." But even more, he rebukes the men "instructed in the truth" that they "should be abused and erre though not in the grossest maner, yet grossly:..." (sig. A3) The Discourse was written, therefore, to show the more learned the way back to the word of God and away from the devil, and, also, to instruct the "simpler sort" in the way of truth. The simple townsfolk whom Gifford met in his congregation at Maldon were the special concern of the minister; they were the people with whom he lived; they were those who had not the means of a formal education and needed instruction. Practically all Gifford's efforts were spent in teaching the masses, particularly in the understanding of Scripture.

Gifford's attitude toward Scripture was a Calvinistic one; i.e., he believed that all problems could be settled by some word in the Book of God. The Bible should be one's guide in life. In writing the Discourse, Gifford states:

I had not this minde, to set forth any large discourse what

^{1b}All quotations thus indicated refer to the Discourse.

hath bin judged & deemed in former times by learned men, & what they testifie concerning the slights of devills by oracles, divinations & such vaine deceit; but onely to give a taste to the simpler sorte even from the doctrine of the bible unto which I doo only leave. (sig. A2v)

Since the Bible was a holy book, believed to be the sacred word of God, Gifford was using the strongest authority possible, one which could be refuted only by a different interpretation of the Word. The authority of the Scripture is carefully set down by Gifford whenever he wishes to prove a point, if not in the text itself, then in the margin opposite the point made. The minister is careful to indicate that every point he proves has its conception in the Bible; thus, he humbly acknowledges God as his guide. Gifford was a pious man, attempting to guide the people to the Word of God and proving himself a thorough Calvinist.

Before entering into a discussion of the Discourse and its contents, it might be wise to consider the chapter headings. These headings give a brief, but fair, summary of the work and illustrate the author's logical handling of his subject. The Discourse is divided into twelve chapters, each one hammering again and again the omnipotence of God and the delusion of the devil:

- I. Introduction.
- II. The definition of a witch; the antiquity of witchcraft.
- III. That there be 8. sortes of Witches and practisers of devilish art, mentioned, Deuter. 18. whose names and their interpretation do here follow.
- IV. The nature of devils described with there operations and effectes.
- V. Devils have no power to hurt mens bodies or goods, but upon speciall leave given unto them.
- VI. Divels can appeare in a bodily shape, and use speche and conference with men.
- VII. An answeere unto certaine frivolous reasons, which some doe make to prove that the Devils did not make those apparitions, & that he cannot appeare in any bodily shape.
- VIII. No man nor woman can give power unto the devill to doe hurt, neither doth their sending authorize him, but he useth them onely for a colour.

- IX. That the Devill practising his mischief by sorcerers, both lead the wicked world into many horrible sinnes which snare the soules of men unto eternall condemnation.
- X. The sharp punishment appointed in the word of God for such as worke with the devill, and the true cause of the same, and that it is no godly zeale but furious rage, wherewith the common sort are caried against witches.
- XI. What manner of persons are fittest for the devill to make his instruments in witchcraft & sorceries, and who are subject unto his harmes.
- XII. The true remedy whereby men are delivered from all feare and daunger of witchcraft.

The logical structure of the Discourse is evident in the step-by-step development of the subject. Each chapter answers questions which are provoked by preceding comments, resulting in a clear revelation of Gifford's ideas.

After a short introduction, in which he reasserts the fact that the Bible is his sole authority, Gifford begins his treatise with a definition of a witch:

A witch is one that woorketh by the Devill, or by some devilish or curious art, either hurting or healing, revealing thinges secrete, or foretelling thinges to come, which the devil hath devised to entangle and snare mens soules withal unto damnation. The conjurer, the enchaunter, the sorcerer, the deviner, & whatsoever other sort there is, are indeede compassed within this circle. (sig. B2)

This definition is a broad and all-inclusive one. Reviewing the history of witchcraft in England, the reader may recall that the statutes up to the time of James I were aimed primarily toward condemning either the witch who hurt or the sorcerer who might be working to overthrow the realm. In Gifford's definition one word is included which differentiates his conception of a witch from general belief; that word is "healing." According to common belief, witches neither could nor would heal; however, cunning men and wise women were sought to dispel curses. In his definition, Gifford is implying that the cunning men and wise

women are witches, also. This concept is made more explicit later in the Discourse, when the minister states that to seek the help of cunning men and wise women is sinful; when one is healed by such persons, the devil is the physician (sig. HV). By seeking the aid of these "witches", therefore, one is actually seeking the aid of the devil.

Using Deuteronomy 18 as his source,² Gifford explains his definition of a witch by listing and commenting upon the eight types of witches found in the Bible:

1. Kosem Kesamim - "...one which devineth by divinations:..." (sig. B3^v)
2. Megnonen - "...it is usually taken for such as did practise Judiciarie Astrologie, which from the course of the heavens, and the stars, did take upon them to foreshew warres, pestilences, sedicions, treasons, & the death of great Princes." (sig. B4)
3. Menachesh - kind of soothsayer. This witch interprets the entrails, the voices, and flying of birds. She interprets signs such as "Chattering of pyes", the cry of ravens, hares crossing the path, the spilling of salt. (sig. CV)
4. Mechashshepha - kind of witches and sorcerers who use ointments, medicines, poisons. A general name for witchcraft and sorcery (Greek), writes Gifford. This type also interprets dreams. (sig. C3)
5. Choberohabar - "enchaunt by enchauntment." (sig. C3)
6. Schoel ob - "one which enquireth..." This witch may be the Pythe of the "Gretians." (sig. C3^v)
7. Jiddegnoni (Iiddegnoni) - differs little from 6. This type seeks knowledge of things. (sig. C4)
8. Doresh el hammethim (Greek - Necromantes) - divinations by the dead. This witch is deceived by the devil into believing she can raise dead souls. (sig. C4)

In his interpretation of the Bible, Gifford points out that all the types of witches represented there are still extant; while the findings of some, like astrologers, could very well be used to the greater glorification of God, all the witches listed are guilty of working with the

²Deuteronomy 18:10-11: "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.

"Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer."

devil for their own glorification and gain.

Witches are real; but the question arises whether the witch actually controls the devil, whether the witch is indeed as powerful as the people believe her to be. Gifford declares that the witch is powerless to do evil. She is deluded by the devil into believing she has great power, but the truth is that she is the servant and the "uncleane spirits" are her masters; for "...shall a silly old creature scarce able to bite a crust in suder, give autortiy [sic] & power to ye prince of darkness?" (sig. F4^v) While the witch is powerless to hurt, or enchant, or foresee things future, her sin lies in the fact that she does work with the devil and, by doing so, she attempts to bring others to sin by seeking help of Satan.

Although the devil and his evil deeds seem to be the special emphasis in Gifford's Discourse, the treatise, in its entirety, is a glorification of God and His works. Although the devil seems to have great power, is he as powerful as God and, therefore, a great threat to God's kingdom? Gifford answers this question in a consideration of the relationship between God and the devil. God is the great power, the great creator; He rules all by his providence. The devil, on the other hand, hates God and works to bring His people into error and sin. The devil, or devils, has not the power to hurt or to tempt men except by the permission of God; the devils are "instruments of Gods vengeance, and executioners of his wrath..." (sig. D2) Because he is permitted to tempt man, and because he is deep-seated in the hearts of man from the sin of Adam, the devil is called the "God of the world", the "...prince but of darknes...." (sig. C4^v) Because he is wily and treacherous, he can assume the shape of "an angell of light", or can assume bodily form and use speech. He can do this even though he is, in his own nature,

invisible, for such is the nature of spirits. The devil has not the power either to create or to change bodies; therefore, his appearance in visible form is an apparition. Gifford emphasizes that the devil has a power and scope no further than God allows. By the permission of God the devil has the power to affect the humours in the bodies of men and beasts and to cause sores and diseases. This act is not one of creation but one of destruction, so the author has not fallen down in his logic. Since the devil works for destruction rather than for creation, those creative acts attributed to him, i.e., storms and tempests, are actually the works of God; it is impious to ascribe the glorious creation of God to devils. As opposed to God, who is the creator and author of good, the devils are the "...authours and devisers of sinne, they drawe men into it, the Devill then hath devised witcherye, conjuration, and Enchauntment." (sig. F4^v) The devil is not content with chastizing and tempting; he is also a murderer. He blinds the people and instills them with a "...wonderfull rage and fury..."; he holds them in the palm of his hands and causes them to try and to condemn the most innocent for witches. These raging people are working with the devil by shedding innocent blood. What is more, while the people believe they can be saved by sprinkling holy water and using charms, Gifford asserts that these are merely the inventions of the devil to mock the people. By pretending to be driven off, the devil creeps deeper into the hearts of men; by pretending to be interested in man's body and goods, he is working to win the soul.

This assertion that holy water, holy bread, and crosses are inventions of the devil to mock the people illustrates the author's attitude toward the Catholics. While the Discourse deals primarily with the subject of witchcraft, it contains a "jab" at the Pope and papists as

well. From a glance at the minister's "witch books", it appears that no discussion of the world's evils would be complete without the inclusion of "Poperie" as one of the causes; the Pope, therefore, is included in the Discourse as one of the chief causes of witchcraft. Gifford implies that the cunning men and wise women are the worst types of witches to be found, for they seduce people into worshipping the devil. Since the papists believe they can be saved from the devil by using charms and crosses, Gifford places them in the same category as the cunning men and wise women. Because they place faith in bishops, the Pope, and "idols", the papists are guilty of impiety, since one should have complete faith in Christ and God alone. Since the Pope has set himself up as the supreme authority, he has turned the people away from their faith in Christ. The Pope is the Antichrist:

The Gentiles did worship diuels, since the coming of our Saviour Christ, when hee was bound for a thousand yeares, being let loose againe, hee seduced the world; yea he was the means, and it was by the efficacie of his power, that Antichrist the Pope and his false religion was set up. And so all the world woondered and followed the beast (for so the holy ghost termeth Antichrist) and they worshipped the beast, and they woorshipped the dragon which gave power to the beast. (sig. D^v)

Because they seek help of the saints, the papists have forsaken the "holie word" and have turned to idolatry and worship of the devil. Throughout the Discourse Gifford refers to the papists as the originators of blind superstitions; they prescribe charms to drive off the devil, ascribe power "to drive away Devils unto words & sillabes pronounced,..." (sig. E4), and suppress the light of God's word. The minister speaks of the "Idolatrours, & adulterous masse-priest" as one of those particularly fitted to devil worship. Gifford's intense hatred of the Catholics is evident and cannot be quelled; this subject

was his sore spot, one about which he could become most heated.

These bee the frutes of Poperie, which hath removed away the light, and left the people in the dark to be deluded by the devill; which removed away the spirituall armour wherewith the souls should bee defended and taught the people verie witcheries. (sig. H3^v)

With such words as these, it is no wonder that Gifford found some consideration in the Council when he was being arraigned. Although he might be a Nonconformist and some threat to the Church of England, still, he was proving himself a great foe of the greater threat to England: the Pope and Catholicism.

Up to this point Gifford has been dealing with the evil effects of witchcraft. He turns now to a consideration of those persons who are most likely to become witches, of witch trials, and of the true remedy against the evil.

Gifford declares that the correct punishment for witches is death without mercy, the sharpest penalty appointed Moses by God. In the Discourse he refers to the following Biblical passages:

Numbers 35:31 - Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death; but he shall be surely put to death.

Exodus 22:18 - Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

Leviticus 20:27 - A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.

The true witch deserves no mercy. But how can one determine the true witch? The people have become so blinded and enflamed "with a wonderful rage and fury" that they condemn people for being witches without making certain that they are such. The errors of the blind multitude are that they condemn, not "for any zeale of God", but because they believe the witches torment men (sig. I). As a result, many innocent

persons are put to death;

The Lord doth not allow one witness being a man in a cause of death to be sufficient; but these would allow the accusation of one devill if he accuse xl. persons; they thinke it a merveilouse charitable deede where there is one that hath bene suspected for witchery, to hire or entice children to accuse them, to practise with some subtill maide which faineth her self to be bewitched, to get some matter of accusation. Many jurors never weigh the force of the evidence which is brought, but as if they had their oth for conjectures or likelihoodes, they are oftentimes very forward to finde guilty, being sicke of the same disease that the accusers be. (sig. I)

These are the faults of the people who make blind accusations; they are guilty of ignorant superstitions, false suspicions, and prejudices. These evils must be remedied, for by selfishly thinking of their own troubles and by falling a slave to their prejudices and emotions the people are drifting away from the primary purpose in condemning witchcraft (as a sin against God), and being propelled swiftly into the arms of Satan. Rather than being bewitched by any person, most of these people "...bewitch themselves through infidelitie." (sig. H)

After condemning the procedure used in finding witches, Gifford produces what he believes to be the correct method of trial. First, the jury should examine the religious background of the accused to determine if he were living according to God's Word. Implicit in the minister's Discourse is a plea for more concrete evidence and more substantial witnesses than has been the custom. If one must hunt out witches and condemn them, then the most careful methods must be employed. But the faithful followers of God's Word do not seek witches as the cause of their hurt; rather, they will confess their sins and seek the favour of God. However, to aid witch-finders, Gifford describes the type of person most likely to fall into the power of the devil. The devil seeks subtle minds, those who are proud, vain-

glorious, "...stiffe to maintain any purpose." (sig. I2) The narrow-minded person who will not be swayed from his purpose, ignorant and prejudiced as it may be, even in the light of truth, is the man most apt to be controlled by the devil. Gifford asserts further that the devil seeks to make witches of ungodly persons, those who are blind to the word of God, who are full of infidelity, who are "...overwhelmed & drowned in dark ignorance." (sig. I2) If the person is of melancholic disposition, so much the better, for then the impressions will penetrate deeper into the mind. If the person is given to anger and ready to revenge, he is so much the more suited to the devil's purposes. Gifford adds that "...poverty also will help in some respect." (sig. I2) This is the only instance in the two works on witchcraft that Gifford considers environment and social pressures as possible factors causing evil. Since he handles the subject so carefully, treating it at the last as one of the many possible influences, he probably did not wish to commit himself without more proof of a possible connection between poverty and the will to do evil. Perhaps many of his friends were of the poorer class. To assert that they were most likely to fall under the influence of the devil would be to expose them to condemnations, threats, and accusations. The minister passes over the subject swiftly and speaks no more of it. The proud, the bigoted, the ignorant, the ungodly are those who are most likely to be the devil's instruments in witchcraft and sorcery.

After so much description of witches and the evils instituted by the devil, a remedy against these evils is necessary else the devil would overrun the earth and God would be defeated, since even the "...faithful and elect people of God..." are beset by devils. (sig. D2^v)

Gifford ends his Discourse with a colorful prescription to be used against the devil and his ways. According to Scripture, witches cannot hurt the body at all; however, with the permission of God, the devil can hurt both the body and the soul. Since God is the ultimate power in the universe, only the power of God can prevail against the devil. This power is ours through faith, which is the free gift of God. Gifford likens the Christian to a soldier of God, clad in armor, and armed with the shield of faith and the spiritual sword of the Word of God. He declares that faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ arms us with "...power of grace, with true knowledge and light, with sincere integrity of heart, and with a godly life, with zeale, with patience, and with all other heavenly vertues...." (sig. 13^v) The faithful and elect of God, while they may be vexed by the devil, are given strength by God to overcome the evil force.

In his Institutes, Calvin emphasized the authority of the Bible and formulated concepts of God, the devil, the elect, and the damned.³ Gifford's ideas voiced in his Discourse confirm the minister's close adherence to Calvinism. The use of the Scripture as sole authority is one of the points emphasized by Calvin and re-emphasized by Gifford, who makes direct reference to sixty-nine Biblical passages. By emphasizing Scriptural authority, Calvin aimed to draw the people away from their "false" faith in saints, bishops, and the Pope (the Anti-Christ), and to urge them to seek God as the only real power in the universe. Gifford accepts this view. In the development of his Discourse, the minister follows Calvin in emphasizing that no evil can afflict man unless God permits it. Calvinistic is his portrayal of

³See "The Institutes of John Calvin", pp. 39-45, above.

the devil who is God's pawn, the Lord's executioner and who is sent to chastize the damned and to try the faith of the elect. The Calvinistic tenet followed by Gifford is that the faithful will seek redemption through Christ by means of repentance and prayer alone. They will gain salvation through faith in God. Witches, sorcerers, and exorcisers are handmaids of the devil, for they place their faith in their presumed powers. They, like the Antichrist, seek to destroy the faith of the elect. These defamers of the Lord should be destroyed; however, careful investigation and mercy rather than an unnecessary cruelty in their trials is the advice of both Calvin and Gifford.

A practice authorized by Calvin and emphasized by Gifford is the glorification of God through the observation of nature. Undoubtedly, Gifford was a close observer of nature, a scientific thinker to a degree, and the Discourse includes many of these "scientific" observations, which are simply and charmingly told, and yet are indicative of Gifford's logical analysis. Concerning the difference between a natural cause-and-effect sequence and the supernatural (or unnatural) sequence found in the realm of magic and witchcraft, Gifford observes that one must not disallow "...those things which are to be approved. For no doubt, as we see by experience, fowls & beasts do foreshew some things, but yet by a natural cause." (sig. C2) The minister is refuting the practices of the Menachesh, the soothsayer who interprets the voices of birds, and he points out that the signs used by these witches have no relationship in nature with future events; there are some signs, however, which are indicative of coming events: before a rain the goose and the duck dive in the water, the crow cries for rain, some birds flock and come away from the sea when cold weather is imminent,

the gnat buzzes to warn of rain, and the cow frisks.

...there is a natural cause, and that is this: the disposition of the ayre is changed, & that do these fowles & beasts feel in their bodies, which maketh them so to deale, that ther is such a change in the disposition of the aire, though common sense in men, do not perceive it, yet many things do shew. (sig. C2)

Aches in wounds or bruises on the body are signs of rain as well, and are the result of "...the alteration of the air." (sig. C2^v) Gifford approves these signs as acceptable, but those signs which have no basis in nature are to be rejected.

Another observation, scientifically logical in its development and delightful in the way it is presented, concerns the creation of fire. There is fire in the air which is dispersed from the sun's beams. When these beams are collected or drawn together, they burn "...as experience doth teach by some glasses which being holden in ye sun, Plutarch sheweth concerning the holy fire which the virgines called vestals, did keepe, ordeyned by Numa, that when it was out, either by negligence or mishap, it might not be kindled from common fire: but they had a way to collect the beames of the sun." (sig. D4) When flint and iron are struck together, fire is produced; however, fire is not contained in either of these objects. The author's explanation follows:

God hath so ordeined that in this whole worlde there cannot be Vacuum, that is to say, any place void or emptye, but it must needs be filled with sōwhat, there is no power in man to make such empty place, so much as a pins head; for somewhat must fill the roome, we see therefore that water will not run out at the bottom of a vessell that hath holes, unlesse there be way for the ayre to come in, to fill the roome, put a bottle into the water being empty, you shall well perceave that it is ful of ayre, for no water wil into it but as the ayre goeth out, even so when a man striketh a sharpe stone, upon the sharpe edge of steele, hee parteth the Ayre in sunder at some strokes, that if there were not a quicker thing then ayre, there would for some moment of time be Vacuum, the fire therefore being dispersed doth gather to a sparke & fill the place where the ayre was

parted. What marvel is it thē though a sorte of malignant spirites, which have farre greater power and skill then men, do collect the fire which is scattered in the ayre, and drawe it downe upon men. (sig. D4-D4^v)

In an age when the interest in science was growing, Gifford was making use of his scientific knowledge and observations of nature to illustrate the mighty power of his God.

To define further the power of God as opposed to the presumed power of witches and sorcerers, Gifford relates a simple incident occurring in nature; it is effective because of its simplicity and applicability. Gifford refutes the ability of the magicians of Pharaoh to turn their staves into serpents⁴; to believe the magicians have such power is to ascribe them with the power of Christ. This belief is against pietie. Furthermore, if the magicians had such skill by nature, they must "...go beyond nature herselfe..."; for, while the enchanters could create snakes in an instant, nature, God's handiwork, "...can not bring forth the least things that grow, or that have life but by degrees: take a little flie, first it is a fliblow, then a maggot, and afterwards commeth to have wings, both godlinesse and nature condemning such opinion of naturall magike, I will speake no further of it." (sig. E2^v-E3) Gifford had great ability to strike at the root of the problem and to prove his point logically and clearly by means of simple illustrations.

A knowledge of human nature, its good points and its bad, is evident when Gifford illustrates, clearly and concisely, man's follies and mistakes. The minister was opposed to superstition and credulity; he voices his defiance by denouncing rumors and by pointing out that

⁴Exodus 7.

superstitious beliefs about storms is the "wicked folly" of papists:

When they heare of houses burnt, or trees rent up and other harmes by Sea or by Lande, by and by they begin to suspect that there have been conjurors abroade, then rumors are spread, the conjurors, sayeth one, are taken, they have confessed that they raised up Devils, & that three are broken loose, yea five, saith another, & how they wil get them in againe God knoweth, this wicked folly which possesseth the mindes of the ignorant sort, is a fruit of Poperie. For they tooke away the light, and the Devill did delude them in the darke at his pleasure, for beholde the wisdome of their greate Prelates in this poynt. (sig. D3v)

By calling attention to the errors man makes, Gifford hopes they can be corrected. His method of presentation is evident; he wrote in a moving but plain style that would be intelligible and pleasing to the "simpler sort."

Moreover, in writing his Discourse, Gifford was attempting to refute Reginald Scot's The Discoverie of Witchcraft.⁵ In his book, Scot discounted the belief in witches as mere fancy. Old, melancholic women have not the power to harm but are deluded by the devil into believing so. A bargain with the devil cannot be proved against them because there are no witnesses of this action. Evil is caused, however, by malicious women, who throw suspicion upon others, and by ventriloquists, who make believe they have power to raise spirits. By revealing the incident as mere trickery, Scot disproved the theory that the Witch of Endor had raised the spirit of Samuel:⁶

Whereby you may know that Saule sawe nothing, but stood without like a mome, whilst she plaied hir part in hir closet: as may most evidentlie appeere by the 21. verse of this chapter where it is said; Then the woman came out unto Saule. Howbeit, a little before she cunninglie counterfai~~ted~~ that she saw Samuel, and thereby knew it was Saule that was come unto hir. Whereby all the world may percei~~ve~~ the cousening,

⁵See pp. 14-18, above.

⁶I Samuel 28.

and hir dissimulation.⁷

In his Discourse, Gifford opposes Scot's disbelief in witches. Using the Bible as his guide, the minister asserts that witches exist; and, although they have not the power to harm, they should die because they work with the devil to influence the faithful away from God. As for the witch of Endor, the shape of Samuel before Saul was a "false and counterfeit Samuel, even a wicked Devill." (sig. EV) To prove that the spirit was the devil, Gifford points out that the apparition was content to have Saul worship him; since Samuel was a holy man, he would have condemned Saul for seeking the aid of a witch. Furthermore, souls of the righteous are not subject to the call of a witch. The devil deluded Saul, and the king was condemned by God for consulting with Ob, the devil. Even though Gifford and Scot are opposed in these points, they agree in the advisability of sufficient and concrete proof in witch trials. Furthermore, in his total concept, Gifford is disproving the reality of witches as well as Scot; witches have no power for they are deluded by the devil, although some use "juggling" tricks, i.e., magic, to accomplish their aims. Scot calls them ventriloquists, jugglers, old and melancholic women; Gifford terms them witches. Both believe in their powerlessness. Scot's investigation is scientific; he is concerned, primarily, with saving men's lives. Gifford's point-of-view is religious; he is chiefly concerned with saving men's souls.

Gifford's Discourse demonstrates the minister's wide range of knowledge: he was well-acquainted with the Bible, he had some concept of science, and he knew the people. Furthermore, he must have been schooled in Hebrew and Greek; Gifford's comments on the types of

⁷The Discoverie of Witchcraftes, p. 83.

witches found in the Bible (Chapter III of the Discourse) are his interpretation of Hebrew and Greek definitions. The minister makes use of this knowledge by presenting it to the reader in an interesting and enlightening Discourse.

In comparing the Discourse with the Dialogue which Gifford wrote six years later, one will notice the relationship between the works in the ideas expressed as well as in subject matter. However, while the earlier work is expository and formal, as a discourse is expected to be, the Dialogue is dramatic, contains many anecdotes from contemporary life, and presents characters of a type easily recognizable and understood by the readers. No doubt this explains why the Dialogue was more popular, even though it echoes the Discourse.

Gifford's Dialogue

a. Summary of Action and Ideas

In 1593, the year the Samuells of Warboys were condemned for bewitching Lady Cromwell to death, and six years after the Discourse, Gifford published "A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes. In which is laide open how craftely the Divell deceiveth not onely the Witches but many other and so leadeth them awrie into many great errours." It was republished in 1603, the year James I assumed the throne of England and three years after Gifford's death. It may have been included among the books reprinted in May, 1598.¹

Gifford addresses his epistle "To the Right Worshipfull Maister Robert Clarke, one of her Majesties Barons of her Highnes Court of Eschequer." He addresses the work to Clarke because of his justice in handling trials:

I am bolde to offer it unto your Worship, not unto one as needeth to be taught in these thinges, being zealously affected to the Gospell, & so grounded in the faith of the high providence, that I have been delighted to heare and see the wise and godly course used upon the seat of justice by your Worship, when such have beene arraigned. (sig. A3)²

Robert Clarke had been elected to the exchequer bench on 22 June 1587, and was assigned to the Hertford assizes. In his duties as judge he presided over witch-trials³, but no evidence has been disclosed that he was exceptionally fair-minded in his judgment of witches. That he did

¹See p. 46, above.

²George Gifford, A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes, intro. Beatrice White (Shakespeare Assoc. Facsimiles No. 1, Oxford, University Press, 1931). Subsequent references will be indicated by the signature in the text.

³C. L'Estrange Ewen, Witch Hunting and Witch Trials (New York, The Dial Press, 1929), p. 167.

tend to be merciful in other cases is evident from an incident which occurred in July, 1590. John Udal, a Puritan clergyman, had been indicted of felony under statute 23 Eliz. c. 2, par. 4.⁴ When he was tried before Clarke in July, 1590, he was found guilty, but sentence was deferred until the spring assizes. Clarke was not unfavorably disposed toward the Nonconformist, but urged him to comply with the court's wishes. Although Udal was sentenced to death, he was reprieved by the queen, perhaps through the intervention of Clarke. The judge was knighted on 23 July 1603, and died four years later on 1 January 1606/7. His will directed that £ 40 be distributed in alms. Apparently Clarke, like Burghley and Knollys, did not approve of Whitgift's actions. In his epistle, Gifford continues:

I offer it [the Dialogue] therefore as a testimony of a thankful mind for favours and kindnesse shewed towards me: and so intreat your worshippe to accept of it. (sig. A3-A3^v)

Clarke's attitude toward the Puritans is evident.

The minister explains in the epistle why he has written the Dialogue. During the years following publication of the Discourse the witchcraft problem had become so intense that the minister felt the need to express himself further. His ideas are expressed "...in waye of a Dialogue, to make the fitter for the capacity of the simpler sort." (sig. A3) His interest in teaching the people is emphasized further at the close of the epistle when he expresses his happiness if "...it may doe good unto any of the weaker sort in knowledge...." (sig. A3^v) Over and above explaining why he has written the Dialogue, Gifford states his tenet:

⁴This is the same statute referred to, pp. 18-19, above. However, while paragraph 5 dealt with conjuration and witchcraft, Udal was being tried under paragraph 4 of the statute which dealt with sedition.

Sathan is now hearde speake, and beleaved. He speaketh by conjurors, by sorcerers, and by witches, and his word is taken, He deviseth a number of thinges to be done, and they are put in practise and followed. The high providence of God Almighty and soveraigne rule over all, is set forth so unto us in the Scriptures, as that without him a Sparrow can not fall upon the ground. All the haire of our head are numbred. The Devils would hurt and destroy with bodily harmes, both men and beastes and other creatures; but all the Divels in Hell are so chained up and brided by this high providence that they can not plucke the wing from one poore little Wrenne, without speciall leave given them from the ruler of the whole earth. And yet the Witches are made believe that at their request, and to pleasure them by fulfilling their wrath, their spirites doe lame and kill both men and beastes. And then to spread this opinion among the people, these subtill spirites bewray them, and will have them openly confesse that they have done such great things, which all the Divels at any mans request cold never doe. (sig. A2^v)

Gifford states further that God does give the devil power to afflict men and beasts, at times, but witches have no power over him:

There be many diseases in the bodies of men and beastes which he seeth will breake forth unto lamenes or unto death, he beareth the witches in hand he doth them: He worketh by his other sort of Witches, whome the people call cunning men and wise women to confirme all his matters, and by them teacheth many remedies, that so he may be sought unto and honored as God. (sig. A3)

These cunning men and wise women stir the people against witches as persons to be feared; "...raising up suspicions and rumors of sundry innocent persons, many giltles are upon mens othes condemned to death, and much innocent bloud is shed." (sig. A4) According to his epistle, Gifford wishes to emphasize that the devil can afflict only by the permission of God, that the devil cannot be controlled by witches, and that cunning men and wise women are more to blame than any other since they stir up a "furious rage" against many innocents.

Gifford has written his Dialogue after the manner of Plato; i.e., two speakers are pitted against one another to arrive at a logical conclusion by means of syllogisms. He introduces five characters into his

treatise and places them in a local setting, presumably Maldon or a similar town. These five characters are: Daniell, Samuell, M. B., the Wife of Samuell, and the Good Wife R. They constitute an intellectual hierarchy from the rational to the most irrational in judgment. In the Dialogue, the attitudes of five different types of people are disclosed and reveal Gifford's familiarity with and knowledge of the people of his town.

Daniell, Gifford's spokesman, is a minister (the Good Wife R calls him a "scripture man") of Gifford's order, presumably. Undoubtedly, his name is derived from the Biblical Daniel, who was distinguished for his purity and wisdom, the prophet who influenced King Nebuchadnezzar to discard his sorcerers, astrologers, and magicians and revealed the true God to him.⁵ The Daniell of Gifford's Dialogue is well-liked by the people, listens to their problems, and advises them. Evidently, he is often sought for his advice since his friend Samuell exclaims, "Indeede I have alwaies found you my very good friend, and I am sure you will give me the best counsell you can...." (sig. A4^v) In giving advice, Daniell is logical and sympathetic, and he tries to teach by means of illustrations and examples. In an argument he is not dogmatically narrow, but is willing to correct his views if he can be proved wrong: "If I speake this rashlie and foolishlie, as you say, and your self learned as you boast, and I unlearned, I shall be the more easilie overthrowne." (sig. B3) Nor is he above criticising his antagonist: "I am sorie you are so farre awrie, it is pitie any man should be in such errour, especiallie a man that hath learning, and should teach others knowledge." (sig. C4) Daniell's logic can be illustrated by his

⁵See Book of Daniel.

attempt to keep his antagonist from digressing from the subject:

Order doth require that we speak first of his sending, and then of those bodilie harmes which he doth, & afterward of these meanes which are used to repell him. Let us therefore step one step backe againe, if you agree to the rest which I have spoken. (sig. C3-C3v)

At times he reveals an ironic humour: Daniell is trying to persuade his friends that cunning men and wise women have not the power to dispel the devil; when his friends ask why their charms seem successful, Daniell answers, satirically:

O man, the devill can abide no roast meate, nor no fire, he is affraide, if they call a roasting, that they will roast him. If they run at him with a spit red hot, they gaster him so sore, that his dame shal go her self, if she will he will come no more there.... (sig. E2v)

Daniell is kindly, rational according to Calvinistic tenets, and one who speaks the language of the people.

Daniell's opponent is M. B.⁶, a "...Schoolemaister that is a good pretie scholler, they say, in the Latine tongue...." (sig. B2) He is admired as a learned man and sought for advice by members of the community. M. B. is speaking in defense of the witch purge and echoes the beliefs of the better educated men in England. He tends to be logical, but he is swayed by traditional belief and opinion. Rather than investigating for himself, he tends to rely upon the words of others who tell of their "experiences" with witches:

The worde of God doeth shew plainlie that there be witches, & commaundeth they should be put to death. Experience hath taught too too manie, what harmes they doe. And if any have the gift to minister help against them, shall we refuse it? Shall we not drinke when we are a thirst? Shall wee not warme us when wee are a colde? It is pitie that anie man should open his mouth anie way to defend them, their impietie

⁶Gifford uses initials rather than names for most of his references to persons and places. This practice is also noted in the work of Reginald Scot. Perhaps this prevented the implication of persons and places.

is so great. (sig. B2^v)

He has taken the words of the Bible literally without questioning what is meant by the word "witch"; Daniell, on the other hand, has made a thorough study of the Biblical witch. M. B. believes witches have power to hurt; but this belief is the result of what he has heard and not of what he has experienced. The schoolmaster, however, is not ashamed of admitting his error: "...by Gods grace I wil consider better of the matter: for I have counselled manie to seek unto those cunning folkes, and to use such helpes as they prescribe, and you say, it is to seeke help at devils." (sig. D2) Like Daniell and most Englishmen, M. B. hates the Pope and Catholicism, for when Daniell declares that the papists worship the devil rather than God, M. B. exclaims, "Trulie I like your wordes well, I am persuaded the devill doth seduce and bewitch mens mindes:..." (sig. B4-B4^v) He, like Daniell, is eager to find truth and will not cling to a doctrine which has been proved wrong:

I may be awry, I see well; I will not be obstinate, if the word of God shew me mine errour. Let us even friendly conferre of the matter. Be not offended with me, and for my part, I will speake all that I know or thinke. (sig. B4^v)

Samuell, the third man, is one of the "simpler sort"; however, he is interested in learning. His name is derived from the Biblical Samuel, perhaps, who was a judge and prophet and, in his early days, quite willing to learn.⁷ While Samuell is not a judge, he is a jurymen, and he serves on the jury in trials against witchcraft. Although he does not have the education of Daniell or M. B., he likes a good debate. When he meets Daniell, who gives his opinion of witches, Samuell

⁷See I Samuel.

says, "I pray you let me intreat you to go thither [^tto his home], you two [Daniell and M. B.] may reason the matter, for you are learned." (sig. B2) Although Daniell hesitates, Samuell insists, for, says he, "...foure or five houres is not so much." (sig. B2) During the debate, Samuell interrupts the speakers to ask questions and to offer examples from his court experience. Like M. B., Samuell is biased by popular opinion, but he will accept a reasonable explanation for the witch problem. One can conjecture that had he had the chance, he, like M. B., would have been a good scholar.

The two women in the Dialogue are the Wife of Samuell and the Good Wife R. Intentionally or unintentionally, they add a bit of comedy to the piece because their bigoted, narrow-minded attitudes are such a contrast to the learned words of the debaters. Samuell's wife believes only what she sees and is influenced by the opinions of the majority. She is practical and rules the household with a hot tongue; when Samuell enters his home with Daniell, the wife remarks, "He is verie welcome....", but immediately she chastizes Samuell for not seeking aid against the witches:

But trulie man, I am angrie with you, and halfe out of patience, that you go not to seeke helpe against yonder same olde beast, I have another hen dead this night.... (sig. B2)

When she is riled, she cannot be quieted, and she adds, angrily:

I met the olde filth this morning. Lord, how sowerlie she looked upon me, and mumbled as she went, I heard part of her wordes. Ah (quod she) you have an honest man to your husband, I heare how he doth use me. In trueth, husband, my stomacke did so rise against her, that I coulde have found in my heart to have flowen upon her, and scratched her, but that I feared she would be too strong for me. It is a lustie olde queane.... (sig. B2v)

Samuell's wife is plain-spoken and afraid of nothing, apparently, but God and the powers of darkness. If the "olde queane" had been an

ordinary woman she would have been scratched beyond recognition; but this was a witch with the power of the devil. Near the end of the Dialogue, the Wife indicates that she has been listening closely to the words of Daniell; however, she abstracts only those points which seem most important to her. She recalls, most clearly, that Daniell has, unwittingly, included her friend, the Good Wife R, in the types of witches. She becomes angry over this implication; however, because she is a gossip, she is anxious to see the reaction of her friend when the accusation is revealed to her.

The Good Wife R, the last character in the Dialogue, is a gossip. Like Samuell's wife, she is practical, but a malicious carrier of tales. She is a firm believer in the power of witches and in the power of charms and devices to dispel witchcraft, for she frequents cunning men and wise women. She is a perfect example of the person most likely to fall into the devil's power, according to Gifford's Discourse.⁸ The Good Wife R is proud, "stiffe to maintain any purpose", "overwhelmed & drowned in dark ignorance." When she is confronted with the accusation of being a witch, she retorts:

Is that witchcraft? Some scripture man hath tolde you so.
Did the devill teach it? Nay the good woman at R. H. taught
it my husband: she doeth more good in one yeare than all
these scripture men will doe so long as they live. (sig. M3^v)

The Good Wife's attitude is evident when she is cornered by M. B.'s logical reasoning; she evades the questions, for she does not know the answers, and resorts to curses:

Is your husband turned to? I wold you might loose all your
hens one after an other, and then I would she would set her
spirite upon your duckes and your geese, and leave you not
one alive...Yes, yes, there be too many that take their part,

⁸See pp. 55-56, above.

I would they might witch some of them even into hell, to teach others to defend them. And you M. B. I wold your nagge might hault a little one of these dayes; see whether you would not be glad to seeke helpe. (sig. M4)

She is a prevaricator and absurdly dogmatic. Before she leaves, she thunders: "...let them say what they can all the Scripture men in the world shall never perswade me otherwise." (sig. M4^v) Her attitude and her quickness to curse leads one to believe that she, herself, might be feared as a witch by her enemies.

Gifford's characters are well-drawn. They are not merely instruments to present the problem debated (as the characters are in James I's Daemonologie); they are dramatic personalities with a purpose in the Dialogue. Gifford wrote of various types of people in his Discourse and indicated their strengths and weaknesses; in his Dialogue, the minister has transformed these perceptions into conceivable characters. Each contributes to make the Dialogue interesting and lively.

The first section of the Dialogue, or the introduction, begins with the meeting of Samuell and Daniell on a road or street near Samuell's home. The season is probably spring or summer, for Daniell speaks of the country as having a "...sweete wholesome aire and fruitfull grounds." (sig. A4^v) The situation is presented when Samuell reveals that he is burdened with a problem: from which person should he seek help against witches, the cunning man at T. B. twenty miles away or the woman at R. H. twenty-five miles away. Samuell is worried because "These witches, these evill favoured old witches doe trouble me." (sig. A4^v) He fears he is bewitched by an old woman "which I like not"; therefore, when one of his hogs and five or six of his wife's chickens die, he attributes the bad luck to the old woman's power. When asked for advice, Daniell agrees to give his best counsell, "...for

indeede I pittie your case, it is most certaine you are bewitched." He continues:

Nay I doe not thinke that the olde woman hath bewitched you, or that your body is bewitched, but the divell hath bewitched your minde, with blindnes and unbeleefe, to draw you from God, even to worship himselve, by seeking help at the hands of devils. It is a lamentable case to see how the devill hath bewitched thousands at this day to run after him; and even to offer sacrifice unto him. (sig. B^v-B2)

Realizing that this problem will produce an interesting debate, Samuell encourages Daniell to come home with him and meet M. B., the schoolmaster. At Samuell's home the argument begins.

At the beginning of the dialogue proper, Daniell and M. B. state their precepts. Daniell's basis is opposed to traditional belief:

For my part, I go not about to defend witches. I denie not but that the devill worketh by them. And that they ought to be put to death. We ought also to seeke remedie against them: but as I told my friend, the devil doth bewitch men by meanes of these witches, and lead them from God even to follow himself to offer sacrifice unto him to worship him, to obey his wil, to commit manie grievous sinnes, and to be drowned in manifold errorrs. (sig. B2^v-B3)

Those who are stirred into a "blinde rage and mad furie" against witches are also deluded, for even the most faithful may err through weakness of faith and ignorance. M. B., the schoolmaster, defends traditional belief: witches have familiars and are masters of the devil; cunning men and wise women, as well as those who seek remedy against witches, are not misled but defy the devil. The arbiter, or judge, of the debate will be God's word, the Bible. Thus, the dialogue proceeds.

The argument itself might be divided into three sections. The first section deals with witches and their presumed power; the second section concerns the remedy against witches; the third treats of the conviction and execution of witches.

Dealing with the problem of witches and their power, Daniell

argues that the witch is the devil's servant, while M. B. insists that the devil is the witch's servant. To prove that the devil is the servant, M. B. asks if witches have spirits which they control. Daniell answers that these spirits are but "...a great deceit and great illusion...." (sig. B4^v) M. B. retorts that the reality of spirits is proved by the confessions of witches and by experience. However, Daniell is not opposed to the belief in "familiars"; he remarks that he is opposed to the statement that witches control these "familiars." There are multitudes of devils all of whom are working to dishonour God; because of their singular purpose they are spoken of as one devil in Scripture. Since the devils are spirits, one can appear as many while a group may seem but one. When the devil, or devils, appears as a cat, weasel, or hare (the witch's "familiars"), he is subtly hiding his tyranny and power. While witches believe they are using the devil to keep cheese from running and butter from coming, Satan is busy stirring up hatred and pride. Although he appears to be busy with trifles, he is working on men's souls. The devil deludes the people into believing he never works except through witches and by means of "familiars." He deludes further by pretending he is easily driven away by charms. Thus, the people are unaware of the spiritual battle raging within.

In spite of Daniell's reasoning, M. B. argues that the devil is the witch's servant. The devil is willing to serve her, for the "...witches themselves have confessed thus much: and for my part, I think no man can disprove it." (sig. C3^v) Daniell answers with quotations from the Bible:

They that doe the will of God are the children and servants of God. And they which fulfill the lustes of the devill, and

obey him, are his children & his servantes, Joh..8, vers. 44, Act. 13, vers. 10. Are they not?...The devilles are the rulers of the darkness of this world. Ephes. 6, ver. 12... The darknesse of this world, is not meant of the darknesse of the night, which is but the shadow of the earth, but it is the spiritual darknes, which consisteth in the ignorance of God, in infidelitie, and in sinne. (sig. C3v)

M. B. agrees. Daniell continues by asserting that witches, conjurers, and sorcerers are guilty of great infidelity to God because of their familiarity with devils. Since they work with the devil, they are his servants, according to Scripture. The devil rules the witch's heart, for he kindles her wrath against her neighbor and pushes her to revenge. He does not need to be "hired", for he is always active and ready for mischief. Because Satan persuades the "blind people" that he works only when sent by a witch, the world moves to root out witches as if they were plagues. These people believe that by ridding the world of witches, all torments and troubles will cease. Daniell turns to his listeners and asks: if all witches were wiped from the land would all troubles cease? M. B. answers, "...good riddance it were if the whole land could be set free from them." Samuell echoes the schoolmaster: "...I wold they wer all hanged up one against another...."; the Wife of Samuell exclaims vehemently, "They that would not have them hanged or burnt, I would they might even witch them unto hell. If I had but one fagot in the world, I would carry it a myle upon my shoulders to burne a witch." (sig. D^v) They are all of one mind and opposed to Daniell's views. Gifford's spokesman humorously calms the woman by urging, "Well good woman, spare your fagot a while, and ease your shoulders, and let us reason the matter a little further?" (sig. D^v) When M. B. finally agrees with Daniell's assertion that the devil does harm and not the witch, the minister delves further into the problem by stating that the

devil has not the power to hurt the creatures of God unless he is permitted by God to do so; only God can give the devil power. The devil is the Lord's executioner, and afflictions are signs that the Lord is displeased. Man should seek repentance, therefore; but instead, he runs to the devil for aid; to the cunning men and wise women. To believe that there would be no plagues if there were no witches is to believe that God has no reason to punish, that man is without sin. Since man is sinful, God punishes. Moreover, God permits Satan to try the faith and patience of the elect; but the elect will not seek the witch as the cause of their troubles. The faithful followers of God are aware of their sins and will seek repentance. They will turn to God, for only God can help overcome the devil. Daniell declares, "...overcome thou the devill, and thou overcomest all." (sig. D4)

Samuell interrupts the two debaters because he is not quite convinced that the witch does not have power. To prove that the witch does control the devil, he relates an incident about which he has heard. One M., who lives but "...seven miles hence at W. H.", was bewitched to death by a neighbor. A cunning man told M.'s wife that "one mother W." had bewitched her husband because of an argument between the two. When Mother W. was apprehended, she confessed, was arraigned, condemned, and executed. In her confession, she had revealed that she had a spirit in the likeness of a cat which she controlled. Samuell wishes to prove that the cat was the witch's servant and that she had sent him to do harm. By asking Samuell a few questions, Daniell proves to him that the cat was the devil, that Satan had filled the old woman with rage against M. and had moved her to send him, in the form of a cat, against her neighbor. The devil ruled the woman's heart. Daniell

asks the juryman who had told the woman the cat had caused the trouble. Samuell answers that the cat had. Daniell replies that since the cat is the devil, and the devil is a liar and a cheat, then the cat would lie; therefore, his word is not to be taken. To prove that witchcraft is mere delusion, Daniell explains that afflictions are the result of natural causes and these the devil can foresee; the devil works to make the witch believe that she has caused the afflictions which are the natural workings of God. As for the cunning man in the incident, the spirit which revealed the witch to him was really the devil:

For they that doe thinke the cunning men and women deale with any other Spirite than Satan, have no understanding. Satan saith, the man was witched to death. (sig. E2^v-E3)

The devil is at the root of the matter, therefore, and is the cause of all the trouble. Samuell is convinced, finally, that witches are deceived by the devil and that God gives Satan power to "...strike man or beast."

Having proved that witches are servants of the devil, the debaters deal with the problem of the remedy against witches. M. B. believes that cunning men and wise women are a great help in fighting the evil. He gives many examples of the aid given by these cunning folk: they have helped find a stolen communion cup, they have cured a little girl who was bewitched, they have cured a butcher of sores. Daniell answers that these people may have received help, but it was help from the devil, for cunning men and wise women are servants of the devil. These cunning folk deal with charms and crystals which are an abomination of the Lord, according to Scripture. One should seek help of God, for to seek help at the hands of exorcisers is sinful. Although these men and women may use good words and use Scriptures to ward off evil (by hanging them about the neck of the bewitched), this use of holy words and

relics is blasphemous and one of the subtilties of Satan. Although the Evil One may pretend to have been driven away by these cunning men and women, actually he has penetrated deeper into man's heart. By seeking aid of these servants of the devil, man is in danger of losing his soul and body for ever. The schoolmaster is almost convinced of his error, but he hesitates: "For they doe not mean to doe any thing by the devill. Me thinketh therefore it is hard to call them witches." (sig. G) Daniell answers, "Take the name of witchcraft for all that dealeth by the power and devices of the devill." Some witches are worse than others but all are an abomination before the Lord. Sometimes natural helps may cure man of his afflictions, and these should be used:

No doubt there be great secrets in nature, which the skilfull Physicians, and naturall Philosophers do find out. As the hanging of some thinge about the necke, may have force to drive away an ague, the wearing of some thing may have such vertue to deliver from the cramp, and such like. (sig. G^v)

God has provided man with these helps for his benefit. However, man's imagination may be to blame for much of the "afflictions":

Againe, we must note that mans imagination is of great force, either to continue a disease, or to diminish and take away some diseases. And in this also Satan deludeth some, for his medicine seemeth to do somewhat, when it is but the parties conceit...Imagination is a strong thing to hurt, all men doe finde, and why should it not then be strong also to help, when the parties mind is cheared, by beleeving fully that he receiveth ease? (sig. G3^v-G4)⁹

Samuell interrupts to comment that the woman at R. H. "...by report hath some weeke fourtie come unto her, and many of them not of the meaner sort." (sig. H) Daniell replies that the devil can deceive "...thousand thousands, and even the wisest for this world, when they will not be taught of God, but dispise his doctrine...." Because of

⁹See Scot's comments concerning imagination, pp. 16-17, above.

their great deception and because they do the greatest harm, the cunning men and women should die, "...of all other." Other witches who appear to do harm have no power to hurt; "...but these that seeme to doe good, do harme indeed, and that many wayes, as everie one that light in him, may easily see." (sig. H2) To prove that these "wise" people should die, Daniell refers to Exodus 22:18: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." In using the word "witch", the Bible is here referring to the "Mecasshephah"¹⁰, which includes the witches that heal as well as the witches that hurt. By using God's Word, Daniell convinced M. B. that the cunning people should die.

The last problem dealt with is that concerning the conviction and execution of witches. M. B. believes this is the "...hardest matter of al,..." but Daniell declares:

...how is a theef or a murtherer convicted but by prooffe? If there be vehement suspition, and the party upon examination confesse the fact, that is a sufficient prooffe. If the partie doe denie, and two or three of credite doe testifie upon their knowledge with a solemne oath, that he is guiltie of the fact, that is also a sufficient prooffe. And touching this, God commanded by Moses, that none should dy, unlesse the matter were proved against them by two witnesses at the least. Deutronom. 19. ver. 15. (sig. H2-H2v)

M. B. is of the opinion that "...likelihood, and suspition, and common fame..." are proof enough since the devil has so much power over the witch she will not confess. It is best that all suspected of witchcraft be put to death, even though some are innocent. M. B. is convinced, however, that afflictions would be present even though witches were destroyed. What is more, he now believes they actually have no power; therefore, it is useless to seek them out and destroy them on little evidence. Daniell agrees and re-emphasizes that God afflicts

¹⁰See p. 50, above.

man and tries the faith of his children through Satan. Therefore:

If thy sinnes have provoked God, and the enemy doth touch thy body or thy goods, fall downe and humble thy selfe with fasting and prayer, intreat the Lord to turne away his displeasure: looke not upon the witch, lay not the cause where it is not, seeke not help at the hands of devils, be not a disciple of witches, to commit thinges abhominable, by polluting the name of God, and honouring Satan, nor thirst not after the blood which is innocent, as it falleth out in many. (sig. H3^v)

The shedding of innocent blood is a horrible act and is the special desire of the devil. In trying witches, the jury must be "...most warie and circumspect...", they must condemne none "...but upon sure ground, and infallible proofs, because presumptions shall not warrant or excuse them before God if guiltlesse blood be shead." (sig. H4) Again, the schoolmaster points out the difficulty of finding a witch because, according to common opinion, she deals in secret and because the devil does not wish her to confess. Daniell declares that the devil gains by having witches confess:

The Lord giveth him power to possesse a man. He under a colour will be sent by a conjurer, or by a witch; and the one thinketh the devill entreth at her intreaty: the other supposeth he doeth even bind him thereto, whereas he ruleth both their mindes, and setteth them a worke. Then doeth hee willingly bewray them, even for many subtile purposes: but chiefly, that he may be sought unto, that he may set the people a worke in their calamities to be troubled about witches and conjurers, as though they could plague, and never looke to God, and that bewraying some witches and conjurers, he may winne credite, and be beleevd, even when he accuseth falslie, that he may bring innocent blood upon the land. (sig. I3)

At this point, Samuell interrupts the debate to ask Daniell a few questions. As a juryman, he has first-hand knowledge of witch-trials. Because he is not a scholar of the Bible, he turns to personal experience and hearsay for his authority. Like M. B., Samuell believes the devil prevents a witch from confessing. He tells a story of a woman who was accused by a gentleman of being a witch; however, the woman

proclaimed her innocence. When pressed to confess, she finally revealed that she had sent a spirit to do harm. Since she was not on trial, the woman was sent home. On her way she was confronted by another witch who flew at her for betraying herself: "Ah thou beast, what hast thou done? thou hast bewrayed us all." (sig. I3^v) In order to rectify her mistake, the poor witch sent her spirit to harm the man; however, he turned to God for help and was not hurt. The witch again sent her spirit who killed the man's child. Both witches confessed the deed and were hanged. In view of this evidence, Samuell declares that the devil was unwilling to have the witches confess. Daniell replies that the devil had brought about the confession of the witch and had stirred the other woman against her in order to flaunt his power. The juryman is not convinced, however, and tells another story of a witch who caused the death of some horses as retribution for being forced to confess. In answer to this, Daniell reiterates his entire argument, pointing out that the devil is the master, that he is subtle and deludes the witch, that God gives him power to afflict, and that though Satan seemed angry because the witch confessed he was not "...but sought to have things known." Samuell hesitates, still, and when Daniell asks for more examples, the juryman replies, with resignation, "I have heard of many such like, but you say all is but craft, and that he would have men thinke hee doeth all harmes that are done." (sig. K2) He is not convinced.

M. B. returns to the debate by commenting that the devil's word should not be taken as evidence; however, he believes that sometimes witches can be discovered in amazing ways. He presents an example. A witch confessed her crime, then accused a woman "...about ten or twelve

miles off, whom (it may be) she did not knowe, and yet could name, and not only that, but said, the woman had, as it were, a little bigge in her mouth, where the spirite did sucke blood." (sig. K2) This must prove that the woman "ten or twelve miles off" was a witch. Daniell answers that it is an easy thing for the devil to reveal secrets to a witch and to urge her to accuse others, even those who are "...very religious and godly." Since the devil deludes, a jury should not take evidence of a devil or a witch. Another example is presented by M. B.: a witch, sentenced to die, confessed upon the gallows and accused others. He asks, "Is not the testimonie of the woman upon her death, a sufficient warrant for a Jurie to find this woman guiltie? here they have now the testimonie not of the Devill to proceed by, but of a woman, and though not upon her oath, yet upon her death, which is no lesse." (sig. K2^v) Daniell replies that the witch's confession is not to be credited for she may be deluded by the devil into believing she is telling the truth. The devil deludes witches for he leads them to believe they are responsible for phenomena which are really the works of God:

In Germany and other countries, the devilles have so deluded the witches, as to make them beleve that they raise tempests of lightnings and thunders. For the devils do know when these things be comming, tempests of winds, and thunders, and faine would he make the blind world beleve that those great works of God, be not Gods but his.... (sig. K2^v-K3)

Then, exclaims the schoolmaster, since the witch is not to blame, why should she die? To this, Daniell replies that a witch should die, not because of the harm she does to man physically, but because she works with devils. By law, however, the witch who does not cause death is not condemned. Daniell wishes for a more strict law:

These cunning men and women which deale with spirites and

charmes seeming to doe good, and draw the people into manifold impieties, with all other which have familiarity with devils, or use conjurations, ought to bee rooted out, that others might see and feare. (sig. K3^v)

M. B. is intent on finding some sure method for finding a witch, so he continues his prodding with another anecdote. A woman was accused of causing a man's hog to die, another man's horse to fall sick, while one man "...could not sit upon his stoole at worke." (sig. K3^v) A great many spirits belonging to the witch were seen. Because of all this evidence, should not the witch be convicted? These men were deluded by the devil, answers Daniell; man's thoughts are coloured by his imagination. He proves his point with a humorous anecdote:

As not long since a rugged water Spaniell having a chaine, came to a mans doore that had a saut Bytch¹¹, and some espied him in the darke, and said it was a thing as big as a colt, and had eyes as great as saucers. Hereupon some came to charge him, and did charge him in the name of the Father, the Sonne and the holy Ghost, to tell what he was. The dogge at the last told them, for he spake in his language, & said, bowgh, and thereby they did know what he was. (sig. K4^v)

One should be wary of his imagination. Nor is common fame sufficient evidence. The fear of witches is so great, asserts Daniell, that it causes the people to be credulous; they will do anything to prove a witch, even entice children to accuse their parents. Rumors and likelihoods are not sufficient; consequently, the best proofs of a witch's guilt are either sufficient witnesses or a confession, but even these may be incompetent for both witnesses and witch may be deluded by the devil. Many damages may occur by condemning a witch on suppositions. If she is not executed, she is imprisoned or placed on the pillory; in cases of innocence, nothing can be done to requite the injury done to

¹¹Probably a dog in heat; "sault", sometimes "saut", or "saute", meant either to heat, or to assault.

the person's name and spirit. The jury had best acquit the accused, "...for what warrant have they upon their oath to goe by gesse, or to find that which they knowe not." (sig. LV)

Samuell interrupts the debate once more because he is disturbed over Daniell's argument. He tells the minister that he has been a member of the jury many times when witches were arraigned, and "...we have found them guilty upon common fame, upon likelihoods, and upon such testimonie as you disalow." (sig. L2) Many of them have pleaded their innocence, and here Samuell returns to his argument that the devil does not wish them to confess. Whereupon, Daniell repeats his argument for the benefit of the juryman. Samuell is not convinced, however, for he does not appreciate the fact that he may be responsible for the deaths of innocent persons. He presents an example from his own experience and asks if he had not judged correctly. He tells of a woman who was arraigned for a witch with eight or ten witnesses against her. One woman's husband had been bewitched to death; another man was made lame; another was plagued by "...the signe of the Saracens-head..." in the middle of the night; a child had died; a man could not sit upright as a result of a quarrel with the old woman. Three others revealed that the woman was a witch "...by common fame." She was found guilty and condemned. "Do you thinke we did not well?" Samuell asks fearfully. Daniell answers that the Jury had done wrong: "I would not upon mine oath doe such a thing for to gaine a kingdome." (sig. LA) The witnesses could have been deceived in their evidence, and those persons who fell sick or died were probably afflicted naturally. Furthermore, "...what is common fame grounded upon imaginations?" (sig. LA) In order to vindicate himself, Samuell relates another of his experiences

on the jury. A woman was accused of witchcraft by five or six people. She was found guilty, and, because she had not killed anyone, was sent to prison. Although she maintained she was no witch, and many of her neighbors said she was none, Samuell is thoroughly convinced she possessed evil powers. Daniell repeats his argument that the devil deludes both witches and people, so no one should convict a witch on hearsay. The minister concludes the debate by re-asserting that man in affliction should seek God for help:

Yea that is it which I say, men do so little consider the high sovereignty and providence of God over all things: they ascribe so much to the power of the devill and to the anger of witches, and are in such feare of them, that the least shew that can be made by the sleights of Satan deceiveth them. The only way for men that will eschew the snares & subtilties of the devil and all harmes by him, is this, even to heare the voyce of God, to be taught of him by his lively word which is full of pure light to discover & expell the darke mistes of Satan in which he leadeth men out of the way, and to be armed with faith to resist him, as the holy Apostle S. Peter willeth, so much as doe forsake this way are seduced into grosse errors & into many abominable sinnes, which carrie men to destruction. (sig. M2^v)

In the debate, Gifford has presented rational, logical thought concerning the witch problem. In the final section of the Dialogue, the reader is introduced to an irrational conception of the matter which produces an amazing, but amusing, contrast. After Daniell has left, Samuell and M. B. sit and talk over the debate. They are thoroughly convinced that Daniell's concepts are right; Samuell remarks, "It is strange to see how many thousands are caried awry and deceived, yea many that are very wise men." (sig. M3) At this point, his wife announces the arrival of her friend, the Good Wife R, and hurries to tell her that she has been accused of witchcraft. The gossip, probably with fear in her heart, cannot believe it, and says, "...you do but jest." The earnestness of Samuell's wife angers the Good Wife

R, and she attempts to prove her innocence by declaring, "I would all the witches in the land were hanged, and their spirits by them." (sig. M3) M. B. tries to persuade the Good Wife to Daniell's way of thinking and asks her who taught the cunning woman at R. H. her art. The woman answers, "It is a gift which God hath given her, I thinke the holie spirite of God doth teach her." (sig. M3^v) The devil did not teach her, for who ever heard of the devil doing good? When M. B. persists in questioning her, the Good Wife pretends the whole incident is a joke instigated by M. B.:

You are merrily disposed M. B. I know you are of my minde,
though you put these questions to me. For I am sure none
hath counselled more to go to the cunning folke than you.
(sig. M4)

M. B. convinces her that he is now of another opinion, however; whereupon, the woman begins cursing at the two men and at her friend, as well. When the schoolmaster speaks of his former ideas as folly, the woman chides him: "Folly? how wise you are become of a suddaine?" (sig. M4^v) Finally, the schoolmaster tells the gossip to listen to God's word and realize her error; but the Good Wife answers, "What tell you me of Gods worde? doth not Gods word say there be witches, and doe not you thinke God doth suffer bad people? Are you a turnecote? Fare you well, I will talke no longer with you." She leaves unconvinced, angry, and probably on her way to spread the scandal. Thus, the Dialogue ends, with a dramatic conflict between the more enlightened and the bigoted.

b. Analysis

From the concept that God is all-powerful and uses the devil to chastize the damned and try the faith of the elect, Gifford develops

his entire thesis that witches are powerless and should not be feared; however, the other sort of witches, cunning men and wise women, should be destroyed because they are working with the devil to damn men's souls. Gifford's attitudes toward Scriptural authority and toward the relationship between God, the devil, and man are a reiteration of those attitudes found in the Discourse. These ideas are closely related to views presented by Calvin in the Institutes of the Christian Religion, and in principle opposed to the Catholic doctrines.

Those concepts which are found both in Calvin's doctrine and in Catholic belief are the mighty power of God, the subservience of the devil, and salvation through Christ. The points wherein both Gifford and Calvin differ from Catholic doctrine are those upon which the Reformers based their religion: the authority of Scripture alone, the doctrine of the elect and the damned, and the view that faith only in God can withstand the devil.

Like Calvin, Gifford based his ideas on the Bible. When he wishes to clarify a point which might be questionable, he quotes Biblical passages, or, when he does not refer precisely to a Scriptural passage, he paraphrases. The minister uses Scripture to prove that God, as the ultimate power in the universe, sends Satan to afflict the ungodly because of their wickedness, and to try the faith and patience of the elect.

Implicit in the Dialogue is the doctrine of the elect and the damned. The elect are chosen by God and are faithful to His Word, while the damned are those who forsake God and live in opposition to His law. The devil, who is continually seeking to destroy the soul, makes use of the damned as instruments to draw men away from God.

Witches and sorcerers are of the damned because they work with the devil and are guilty of great infidelity. They delude the people into believing no one can be saved from the devil without the help of magic, so they use good words and charms to drive Satan away. The faithful will not seek help at the hands of devils, by means of cunning men and women, however, but will turn to God alone for help. Although the Lord provides natural aids for afflictions and diseases, man should not have complete faith in these aids because they are for temporary use against physical afflictions. The elect are conscious of this fact. They will not blame others for the evil which has fallen upon them, nor will they be concerned with such trifles as the concern over the deaths of a few chickens, or perplexity over one's butter not churning. In case of affliction, the faithful will be conscious of his sins and will seek repentance through Christ. The chosen people of God will strive to save their souls and ask God's forgiveness for their sins.

Gifford's relationship to Calvin in doctrine can be noted from the summary of ideas included in the Dialogue. This relationship ended, however, in the application of that doctrine. Calvin used his tenets to institute a war against the damned which developed into the witch purge so difficult to check. Gifford used the same doctrine to plead tolerance.

Calvin, though he spoke for mercy, warned against "...a superstitious affectation of clemency." Because he was promoting a doctrine, Calvin attempted to impose that doctrine upon the people and to wipe out all evil and detracting influences. Though he preached tolerance in the name of truth, he resorted to a wild persecution of all those whom he judged to be among the damned. He believed himself a capable

judge of what was right and what was wrong and he proceeded to pass sentence with an uncritical and emotional attitude. Concerning Calvin's intolerance, Ernest Renan remarks:

Moderation and tolerance...could not exist in an age ruled by ardent and absolute convictions. Persuaded that sound belief was the supreme good, in comparison with which earthly existence was of small account, and assured of having exclusive possession of the truth, each party must be inexorable towards the rest. A terrible reciprocity was the result. The man who holds his existence cheap, and is ready to give it up for his faith, is sorely tempted to make light of others' existence too. Human life, which temperate epochs are justly so saving of, is sacrificed with frightful prodigality.¹²

In preaching liberty and tolerance of belief, Calvin became as bigoted and intolerant as the Catholics had the century before during the Inquisition. This Gifford opposed.

Though he was not completely divorced from the belief that witches were in existence, Gifford "...represented the more conservative position and was the first in a long line of writers who deprecated persecution while they accepted the current view as to witchcraft."¹³ Gifford apparently takes the via media with Scot to one extreme and Calvin and his adherents to the other; though he could not wholly agree with Scot in disproving witches, he opposed the procedures of the witch-hunters. He pleaded for tolerance and a critical examination of all evidence before condemning a witch. By examining his argument, however, one will note that no such creature as a witch exists; Gifford argues that man is either deluded by the devil or by his imagination into believing in the witches' powers. The only true witch, recognized as such in the Dialogue, is the cunning man or wise woman who seduces

¹²Studies of Religious History and Criticism, tr. O. B. Frothingham (New York, 1864), p. 293.

¹³Notestein, p. 72.

the people by doing evil while pretending to do good. These persons are dangerous and should be hunted out and condemned. Furthermore, it would be easy to prove their practices, for, as Samuell remarks, "... some weeke fourtie come unto her, and many of them not of the meaner sort." There are many witnesses to their practices. Actually, these cunning folk are using trickery for their own gain; they have accused and have brought the sentence of death upon many innocent people. They are murderers, therefore, and should be condemned as such. In trials, however, one must be quite certain of the evidence before anyone is condemned for witchcraft. To execute a person for evil practices without a critical examination of facts presented is, according to Gifford, opposed to both reason and religion. The minister's reasonable attitude differs considerably from Calvin's practices.

The successful reception by the people of Gifford's ideas was no doubt largely due to the manner in which they were presented. In the presentation of his concepts, the minister exhibits another characteristic of the Calvinists; that is, in the attempt to teach the ordinary folk, he resorted to a language and a device which the people would understand and accept. To produce a more interesting dialogue, he included common proverbs, incidents from life, and humorous anecdotes. All these contribute to the literary value of the Dialogue.

Gifford's method of applying his ideas to a dramatic sequence can be noted in the differences between the Discourse and the Dialogue. In the Discourse, the minister describes various personalities and the ways in which they are affected by witchcraft. In the Dialogue, description has been forsaken for characterization. The Discourse speaks of "...men instructed in the truth..." who are "...abused and erre

though not in the grossest maner, yet grosly:..." (sig. A2) This description is undoubtedly the basis for the character, M. B., who is a "...good pretie scholler...in the Latine tongue...", but who is "...so farre awrie..." that "...it is pitie any man should be in such errour, especially a man that hath learning, and should teach others knowledge." The "simpler sort", who may derive some benefit from his words and for whom Gifford writes both the Discourse and Dialogue, achieve characterization through Samuell, who is not a scholar but is willing to learn. Samuell's wife and the Good Wife R are the comic characters of the piece because of their obstinate attitudes. The blind and ignorant person of whom Gifford speaks in his Discourse, the type most easily ruled by the devil, is characterized by Samuell's wife who cannot see past her chicken house. She, like the Good Wife R, cannot be taught because she is emotional and "...stiffe to maintain any purpose." However, the Good Wife R is the most dangerous by far and the one most likely to become a witch. She is proud and vainglorious, and when she is provoked to anger she is quick to revenge.

By making his characters lively and interesting, Gifford achieves a greater success in his Dialogue than he had in the Discourse. A dramatic effect is achieved by the attitudes of these characters. M. B. is opposed to Daniell at first but he bows to a logical argument. Samuell is more difficult to persuade because he has the deaths of many witches on his conscience. If it can be proved that these victims were innocent, then he has blood on his hands. He finally yields to the argument of the more learned man; in fact, he accepts Daniell's logic to the extent that he remarks, with the confidence of the newly-enlightened, "It is strange to see how many thousands are caried awry and deoeived, yea many that are wisemen." The two women are never convinced

but remain true to their convictions. The contrast between the attitudes of these dogmatists and the attitudes of their male companions adds color and excitement to the close of the Dialogue and is akin to the tradition which satirized women. This contrast succeeds in exposing the foolishness of credulity.

In order to produce convincing characters, Gifford made use of common speech. This speech adds a bit of charm to the Dialogue for the modern reader. Words and phrases are used which would be familiar to the reader of the sixteenth century. Some examples of the speech used have already been given; however, for the sake of illustration and because they are colorful and effective, these sentences are included:

They think that the country might be ryd of such spirits, if there were none to hoister¹⁴ them, or to set them a worke.

(sig. D)

But I meane Satan did play the Jugler¹⁵; For, doth he not offer his service? (sig. E^v)

If they run at him with a spit red hot, they gaster¹⁶ him so sore, that his dame shal go her self,... (sig. E2^v)

Alas poore man, what case¹⁷ are they in which must learne good words of the devill? (sig. F3)

...and there be many which come home again with a flea in their eare¹⁸, they receive an answere, as good as a flim flam.¹⁹

(sig. G3-G3^v)

Yea, a number of such cosoning answers the devill maketh which satisfie ignorant people, which are rea^{dy} to beleeve all that he telleth, and to daunce after his pipe.²⁰ (sig. G3^v)

...the woman had, as it were, a litle bigge²¹ in her mouth, where the spirite did sucke blood. (sig. K2)

Experience doeth teach howe heady²² much people are in judging men or women to be witches upon everie surmise. (sig. L)

¹⁴hoister - to lift or raise.

¹⁵Jugler - one who deceives by trickery; one who works by magic.

¹⁶gaster - to frighten or scare.

¹⁷case - a condition or plight.

¹⁸flea in their eare - a stinging or mortifying reproof which sends one away discomfited.

¹⁹flim flam - nonsense or idle talk.

²⁰to daunce after his pipe - to follow his lead or to act after his desire.

²¹bigge - (dial.) a teat.

²²heady - passionately desirous; also, affected in the head, giddy.

A colloquial touch is added to the following speeches through the use of the word "man" as an address:

Aire man? I finde no fault with the aire, there be naughty people. (sig. A4^v)
But trulie man, I am angrie with you, and halfe out of patience, that you go not to seeke helpe against yonder same olde beast. (sig. B2)

Toward the end, the speeches of each person which hitherto have been primarily serious and comparatively lengthy become shorter and tinged with humor:

The good wife R. I a Witch? I defie him that sayth it, though he be a Lord. I would all the witches in the land were hanged, and their spirits by them.
M. B. Would not you be glad if their spirites were hanged up with them to have a gowne furred with some of their skinnes.

The good wife R. Out upon them, there were furre. (sig. M3)

The good wife R. Yes, yes, there be too many that take their part, I would they might witch some of thẽ even into hell to teach others to defend them. And you M. B. I wold your nagge might hault a little one of these dayes: see whether you would not be glad to seeke helpe.

M. B. I would seeke helpe, I would carry him to the smith to search if he were not pricked or graveld.

The good wife R. Tush you laugh, If you were plagued as some are, you wold not make so light account of it.

(sig. M4)

All these speeches lend an air of reality to the work and produce a more interesting dialogue.

Besides the words and phrases of the common people, Gifford added proverbs, incidents, and anecdotes which would appeal to his reader.

Among the proverbs used are:

I perceive your danger is betweene two stooles.²³ (sig. B^v)
...remember the proverbe, aske his fellow if he be a theefe.²⁴ (sig. E3)

²³Proverb - "To fall, come to the ground, sit between two stools." - to meet failure as the result of inability to choose between two different courses of action.

²⁴Proverb - similar to the saying: "The pot calls the kettle black."

Among the incidents presented, those which Samuell and M. B. relate indicate that Gifford was well-acquainted with trial procedure. The following quotation is Samuell's attempt to prove that wise women were helpful in dispelling witchcraft:

...Here was but seven miles hence at W. H. one M. the man was of good wealth, and well accounted of among his neighbors. He pined away with sicknes halfe a yeare, and at last died. After hee was dead, his wife suspected ill dealing: she went to a cunning man, I know not where, and desired to know whereof her husband died. He told her that her husband died of witcherie: he asked her if she did not suspect any therabout. She sayd there was one woman which she did not like, one mother W. her husband and she fell out, and he fell sick within two dayes after, and never recovered again. He shewed her the woman as plaine in a glasse, as we see one another, and in the very apparell she went in at that hower, for shee ware and old red cappe with corners, such as women were wont to weare; and in that she appeared in the glasse: Hee taught her how she might bring her to confesse. Well, she followed his counsell, went home, caused her to be apprehended and caried before a Justice of peace. He examined her so wisely, that in the end she confessed shee killed the man. She was sent to prison, she was arraigned, condemned, and executed:...

(sig. D4^v-E)

This incident is similar to the following excerpt from a trial of Essex witches in 1645. Although this trial occurred much later than Gifford's Dialogue, the likeness between the evidence and the minister's account strengthens the supposition that he was working with facts:

The Information of John Rivet, of Mannintree, Taylor, taken before Sir Harbottell Grimston, Knight and Baronet,...and Sir Thomas Bowes, Knight...the 21st of March, 1645.

This informant saith, That about Christmas last, his wife was taken sicke and lame, with such violent fits, that this informant verily conceived her sicknesse was something more than meerly naturall: whereupon this informant, about a fortnight since, went to a cunning woman, the wife of one Hovye, at Hadleigh in Suffolke, who told this informant, that his wife was cursed by two women who were neer neighbours to this informant, the one dwelling a little above his house, and the other beneath his house, this informant's house standing on the side of an hill: whereupon he beleaved his said wife was bewitched by one Elizabeth Clarke, alias Bedingfield, that dwelt above this informant's house, for that the said Elizabeth's mother and some other of her kinsfolke did suffer

death for witchcraft and murther.²⁵

The minister's belief that anger and imagination play a part in witch accusations is supported by the following evidence from the witch trials:

The Examination of Judith Moone, daughter of the said Margaret Moone, taken before the said Justices, the 29th day of Aprill, 1645.

This examinant (being a single woman, and having such marks of a witch as aforesaid) saith, that about a fortnight before her mother was apprehended for a witch, the said Margaret bid this examinant goe and fetch a bundle of wood, and this examinant told her mother shee would not fetch any wood: Whereupon the said Margaret threatned this examinant, and told her shee had as good have gone for some wood; and that the next night as this examinant lay in her bed, she felt something come into the bed, about her legges, being at that time broad awake, and that she searched to see what it should be, but could not finde any thing.²⁶

The incidents quoted in the Dialogue were undoubtedly familiar to the people, if not as actual events, then as examples of ordinary occurrences.

In addition to the anecdotes of witch trials, Gifford hoped to appeal to his reader by relating humorous stories of credulous people. These stories enliven the Dialogue and are reminiscent of "cracker barrel" tales in their simplicity and charm:

...Ther was one in London (as report goeth) which was acquainted with Feats, Now, this Feats had a blacke dogge, whome he called Bomelius. This partie afterward had a conceit that Bomelius was a devill, and that hee felt him within him. He was in heavinesse, and made his moane to one of his acquaintance, who had a merie head, he tolde him, hee had a friend could remoove Bomelius. Hee had him prepare a breakfast, and he would bring him. Then this was the cure, he made him be stripped naked and stand by a good fire, and though he were fatte ynough of himselfe, basted him all over with butter against the fire, and made him weare a sleeke stone next his skin under his bellie, and the man had present

²⁵Thomas B. Howell, Cobbett's Complete Collection of State Trials (London, 1809), IV, 832-3.

²⁶Ibid., p. 849.

remedie, and gave him afterward greate thankes. (sig. G4)

Another incident which exposes man's credulity concerns a foolish German woman:

...The cure was done by a lewde cosening Knave in Germanie. A woman had bleare eies that were watery. The knave lodging there, promised for certainty that hee would heale them: hee did hang a litle writing about her necke, charging strictlie, that it should not be taken from thence nor read, nor opened, for if any of these were done, she could have no help at all by it. The woman had such a confidence in the thinge, and was so merry and glad, that she left weeping (for her often weeping and teares had spoiled her eies) and so by little and litle, the moysture stayed, and her eies were whole. It fell out that she lost the writing, whereat she was in such griefe and sorrowe, and weeping, that her eies were sore againe. Another founde the writing, opened it, and read it. It was written in the Germane tongue, to this effect translated into English: The devill pluck out thine eies, and fill their holes with his dung. Was not this, thinke you, a proper salve for to cure her eies? (sig. G4v)

These incidents indicate not only the credulity of the people, but the power of man's imagination, as well. Furthermore, by treating these incidents humorously, by exposing them to laughter, Gifford effectively indicated their absurdity.

In addition to exposing man's credulity, the incidents reveal the minister's knowledge of magic practices. Living in an age when magic was accepted as a serious art, and the practices of witches was common knowledge, Gifford's acquaintance with charms and incantations is understandable. The anecdote of the man from London and Feats' dog contains a charm or preventive which is similar to the following recipe found in the Leech Book:

...Work thus a good salve against temptations of the fiend. Bishopwort, lupin, vipers bugloss, strawberry plant, the cloved wenwort, earth rime, blackberry, pennyroyal, wormwood; pound all the worts, boil them in good butter, wring through a cloth, sit them under the altar, sing nine masses over them; smear the man therewith on the temples, and above the eyes, and above the head, and the breast, and the sides under the arms. This salve is good for every tempta-

tion of the fiend, and for a man full of elfin tricks, and for typhus fever. If thou wilt cure a wit sick man, put a pail full of cold water, drop thrice into it some of the drink; bathe the man in the water, and let the man eat hal-lowed bread, and cheese, and garlic, and cropleek, and drink a cup full of the drink; and when he hath been bathed, smear with the salve thoroughly; and when it is better with him, then work him a strong purgative drink...²⁷

Furthermore, Gifford's reference to the cunning woman's use of good words and holy relics to drive away evil is indicated in the following charms:

Against every evil rune lay, and one full of elvish tricks, write for the bewitched man this writing in Greek letters: alfa, omega, Iesum Beronikh.²⁸

Write this along the arms for convulsions or against a dwarf, three crosses, T for the Trinity, and Alpha and Omega, and rub down celandine into ale. St. Machutus, St. Victricius. Write this along the arms as protection against a dwarf, some crosses and letters, and powder celandine into ale.²⁹

The similarity between these charms and those mentioned in Gifford's Dialogue indicates his attempt to be as accurate as possible in his presentation.

By bringing together all types of characters and by having them relate these various anecdotes, Gifford has produced a Dialogue outstanding in its clarity and appeal. However, the reader may find fault with the minister because he repeats his argument so much; but one should realize that Gifford was writing for the "simpler sort" and felt that through repetition he could impress his ideas on the minds of his readers. Furthermore, the concepts are repeated to strengthen Gifford's belief that no argument can confute the Word of God.

²⁷Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England, ed. Oswald Cockayne (London, 1865), II, 336.

²⁸Ibid., p. 139.

²⁹Ibid., vol. III (London, 1866), pp. 39-41.

Another element in the Dialogue which the reader may find disturbing is Gifford's abbreviation of place names. Assuming that Gifford was using initials of actual towns and that Maldon was the setting of the Dialogue, one might suppose that R. H., twenty-five miles away (sig. B) refers to Rainham, Chafford, which was about twenty to twenty-five miles southwest of Maldon; T. B., twenty miles away (sig. B) might be Theydon Bois, Ongar, about twenty miles west of Maldon. Witham of Witham Hundred, about eight miles north, might be the locality of W. H., seven miles away, where a man was bewitched to death. (sig. D4^v) Great T might be recognized as Great Totham, about four miles north of Maldon. These place names are but surmises, since practically every town in Essex was over-run with witches and cunning folk.

By combining all these factors, Gifford has created a Dialogue which would be acceptable and stimulating to contemporary readers; the work is equally interesting and enlightening to the modern reader.

Conclusion

In his Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes, Gifford has presented varying views of the witch problem, and has, by means of a Calvinistic interpretation of the Bible, produced a logical argument disproving the power of witches. He achieves his purpose of attempting to reach the people by means of conceivable characters, ordinary speech, recognizable incidents, and humor. Though the subject of the Dialogue is a timely one, the implication of Gifford's views is timeless. The importance of the work to the modern reader lies in its plea for critical analysis.

Gifford opposed intolerance. Though he was supporting Calvin's doctrine, he was refuting the Reformer's extreme practices; according to Calvin's practices, all men were guilty until proved innocent, and no one was innocent; but Gifford believed that though all men were sinful, they may be innocent of the accused crimes; therefore, their guilt must be proved. In both the Discourse and the Dialogue, the minister argues for a reasonable rather than an emotional attitude. He achieves this attitude himself by means of a close observation of life and of a thorough examination of the Bible on which he bases that life. That he did live as he preached is evident from the fact that he was well-liked by the members of his community, and, apparently, was a friend of all ranks of society. In his plea for critical thinking, Gifford indicates that by carefully and rationally weighing and investigating all problems man will achieve greater understanding and tend to build order out of chaos.

Appendix I

Bull: Summis desiderantes affectibus¹

Innocent, Bishop, Servant of the servants of God,
for an eternal remembrance.

Desiring with the most heartfelt anxiety, even as Our Apostleship requires, that the Catholic Faith should especially in this Our day increase and flourish everywhere, and that all heretical depravity should be driven far from the frontiers and bournes of the Faithful, We very gladly proclaim and even restate those particular means and methods whereby Our pious desire may obtain its wished effect, since when all errors are uprooted by Our diligent avocation as by the hoe of a provident husbandman, a zeal for, and the regular observance of, Our holy Faith will be all the more strongly impressed upon the hearts of the faithful.

It has indeed lately come to Our ears, not without afflicting Us with bitter sorrow, that in some parts of Northern Germany, as well as in the provinces, townships, territories, districts, and dioceses of Mainz, Cologne, Treves, Salzburg, and Bremen, many persons of both sexes, unmindful of their own salvation and straying from the Catholic Faith, have abandoned themselves to devils, incubi and succubi, and by their incantations, spells, conjurations, and other accursed charms and crafts, enormities and horrid offences, have slain infants yet in the mother's womb, as also the offspring of cattle, have blasted the produce of the earth, the grapes of the vine, the fruits of trees, nay, men and women, beasts of burthen, herd-beasts, as well as animals of other kinds, vineyards, orchards, meadows, pasture-land, corn, wheat, and all other cereals; these wretches furthermore afflict and torment men and women, beasts of burthen, herd-beasts, as well as animals of other kinds, with terrible and piteous pains and sore diseases, both internal and external; they hinder men from performing the sexual act and women from conceiving, whence husbands cannot know their wives nor wives receive their husbands; over and above this, they blasphemously renounce that Faith which is theirs by the Sacrament of Baptism, and at the instigation of the Enemy of Mankind they do not shrink from committing and perpetrating the foulest abominations and filthiest excesses to the deadly peril of their own souls, whereby they outrage the Divine Majesty and are a cause of scandal and danger to very many. And although Our dear sons Henry Kramer and James Sprenger, Professors of Theology, of the Order of Friars Preachers, have been by Letters Apostolic delegated as Inquisitors of these heretical pravities, and still are Inquisitors, the first in the aforesaid parts of Northern Germany, wherein are included those aforesaid townships, districts, dioceses, and other specified localities, and the second in certain territories which lie along the borders of the Rhine, nevertheless not a few clerics and lay folk of those countries, seeking too curiously to know

¹Montague Summers, tr., Malleus Maleficarum, by James Sprenger and Henry Kramer (London, J. Rodker, 1928), pp. xliii-xlv.

more than concerns them, since in the aforesaid delegatory letters there is no express and specific mention by name of these provinces, townships, dioceses, and districts, and further since the two delegates themselves and the abominations they are to encounter are not designated in detailed and particular fashion, these persons are not ashamed to contend with the most unblushing effrontery that these enormities are not practised in those provinces, and consequently the aforesaid Inquisitors have no legal right to exercise their powers of inquisition in the provinces, townships, dioceses, districts, and territories, which have been rehearsed, and that the Inquisitors may not proceed to punish, imprison, and penalize criminals convicted of the heinous offences and many wickednesses which have been set forth. Accordingly in the aforesaid provinces, townships, dioceses, and districts, the abominations and enormities in question remain unpunished not without open danger to the souls of many and peril of eternal damnation.

Wherefore We, as is Our duty, being wholly desirous of removing all hindrances and obstacles by which the good work of the Inquisitors may be let and tarded, as also of applying potent remedies to prevent the disease of heresy and other turpitudes diffusing their poison to the destruction of many innocent souls, since Our zeal for the Faith especially incites us, lest that the provinces, townships, dioceses, districts, and territories of Germany, which We have specified, be deprived of the benefits of the Holy Office thereto assigned, by the tenor of these presents in virtue of Our Apostolic authority We decree and enjoin that the aforesaid Inquisitors be empowered to proceed to the just correction, imprisonment, and punishment of any persons, without let or hindrance, in every way as if the provinces, townships, dioceses, districts, territories, yea, even the persons and their crimes in this kind were named and particularly designated in Our letters. Moreover, for greater surety We extend these letters deputing this authority to cover all the aforesaid provinces, townships, dioceses, districts, and territories, persons, and crimes newly rehearsed, and We grant permission to the aforesaid Inquisitors, to one separately or to both, as also to Our dear son John Gremper, priest of the diocese of Constance, Master of Arts, their notary, or to any other public notary, who shall be by them, or by one of them, temporarily delegated to those provinces, townships, dioceses, districts, and aforesaid territories, to proceed, according to the regulations of the Inquisition, against any persons of whatsoever rank and high estate, correcting, mulcting, imprisoning, punishing, as their crimes merit, those whom they have found guilty, the penalty being adapted to the offence. Moreover, they shall enjoy a full and perfect faculty of expounding and preaching the word of God to the faithful, so often as opportunity may offer and it may seem good to them, in each and every parish church of the said provinces, and they shall freely and lawfully perform any rites or execute any business which may appear advisable in the aforesaid cases. By Our supreme authority We grant them anew full and complete faculties.

At the same time by Letters Apostolic We require Our venerable Brother, the Bishop of Strasburg, that he himself shall announce, or by some other or others cause to be announced, the burthen of Our Bull,

which he shall solemnly publish when and so often as he deems it necessary, or when he shall be requested so to do by the Inquisitors or by one of them. Nor shall he suffer them in disobedience to the tenor of these presents to be molested or hindered by any authority whatsoever, but he shall threaten all who endeavour to hinder or harass the Inquisitors, all who oppose them, all rebels, of whatsoever rank, estate, position, preeminence, dignity, or any condition they may be, or whatsoever privilege of exemption they may claim, with excommunication, suspension, interdict, and yet more terrible penalties, censures, and punishment, as may seem good to him, and that without any right of appeal, and if he will he may by Our authority aggravate and renew these penalties as often as he list, calling in, if so please him, the help of the secular arm.

Non obstantibus...Let no man therefore...But if any dare to do so, which God forbid, let him know that upon him will fall the wrath of Almighty God, and of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at Rome, at S. Peter's, on the 9 December of the Year of the Incarnation of Our Lord one thousand four hundred and eighty-four, in the first Year of Our Pontificate.

Appendix II

33 Henry VIII, cap. 8 (1541)

The bill against conjuracions, and wichecraftes,
and sorcery, and enchantments.¹

Whereas dyvers and sundrie persons unlawfully have devised and practised invocacions and conjuracions of sprites, pretending by suche meanes to understande and get knowlege, for their own lucre, in what place treasure of golde and silver shoulde or mought be founde or had in the earthe or other secrete places, and also have used and occupied wichecraftes, inchantments, and sorceries, to the distracion of their neighbours persones and goodes. And for execucion of their saide false devises and practises have made or caused to be made diverse images and pictures of men, women, children, angelles, and develles, beastes, or fowles; and also have made crownes, septures, swordes, rynges, glasses, and other things, and, gyving faithe and credit to suche fantasticall practises, have dygged up and pulled down an infinite number of crosses within this realme, and taken upon them to declare and tell where things lost or stollen should become; wyche things cannot be used and exercised but to the greate offence of God's lawe, hurte and damage of the kinges subjects, and losse of the sowles of such offenders, to the greate dishonor of God, infamy and disquietnes of the realme. For reformation whereof be it enacted by the Kynge our Sovereigne Lord, with th'assent of the lordes spirituall and temporall, and the commons in this present parliament assembled, and by auctoritie of the same, that if any persone or persones, after the first day of Maye next comyng, use, devise, practise, or exercise any invocacions or conjuracions...shall be demyd accepted and adjudged felony; and that all and every persone and persones offendyng as is above said...shall be demyde, accepted, and adjudged a felon and felones, and the offender or offenders contrarie to this Acte, being thereof lawfullie convicted before suche as shall have power and auctoritie to here and determyne felonyes, shall have and suffer such paynes of deathe, loss and forfaytures of their landes, tenements, goodes, and catalles, as in cases of felonye, by the course of the common lawes of this realme, and also shall lose privilege of clergie and sayntuarie.

¹The Statutes of the Realm (1817), III, 837.

Appendix III

5 Eliz., c. 16 (1562)

An Act agaynst Conjuraçons Inchantmentes and Witchecraftes¹

Where at this present, there ys no ordinarye ne condigne Punishment provided agaynst the Practisers of the wicked offences of Conjuraçons and Invocaçons of evill Spirites, and of Sorceries Enchauntmentes Charmes and Witchecraftes, the which offences by force of a Statute made in the xxxiiij yere of the Reigne of the late King Henry the Eyghthe were made to bee Felonye, and so continued untill the sayd Statute was repealed by Thacte and Statute of Repeale made in the first yere of the Reigne of the late King Edwarde the vjth; sythens the Repeale wherof many fantasticall and devilishe p/er/sons have devised and practised Invocaçons and Conjuraçons of evill and wicked Spirites, and have used and practised Wytchecraftes Enchantementes Charms and Sorceries, to the Destrucçoon of the P/er/sons and Goodes of their Neighbour and other Subjectes of this Realme, and for other lewde Intenttes and Purposes contrarye to the Lawes of Almighty God, to the Perill of theyr owne Soules, and to the great Infamy and Disquietnes of this Realme; For reformaçon wherof bee it enacted by the Quenes Majestie with thassent of the Lordes Sp/irit/uall and Temporall and the Cõmons in this p/rese/nte P/ar/liament assembled, and by thauthoritee of the same, That yf any p/er/son or p/er/sons after the first daye of June nexte cõming, use practise or exercise any Invocaçons or Conjuraçons of evill and wicked Spirites, to or for any Intent or Purpose; or els if any p/er/son or p/er/sons after the said first daye of June shall use practise or exercise any Witchecraftes Enchantment Charme or Sorcerie, wherby any p/er/son shall happen to bee killed or destroyed, that then aswell every suche Offendor or Offendors in Invocaçons or Conjuraçons as ys aforesayd, their Consellers & Aidours, as also every suche Offendor or Offendors in Witchecraftes Enchantment Charme or Sorcerie wherby the Deathe of anny p/er/son dothe ensue, their Aidours and Consellers, being of either of the said Offences lafully convicted and attainted, shall suffer paynes of Deathe as a Felon or Felons, and shall lose the Priviledg and Benefite of Sanctuarie & Clergie; Saving to the Wief of such parcone her Title of Dower, and also to the Heyre and Successour of such p/er/son his or theyr Tytles of Inheritance Succession and other Rightes, as though no suche Attayndour of the Auncestour or Predecessour had been hadd or made.

And further bee yt enacted by thauthoritee aforesayd, That if any p/er/son or p/er/sons, after the saide first daye of June next cõmyng, shall use practise or exeroyse any Wytchecraftes Enchantment Charm or Sorcerie, wherby any p/er/son shall happen to bee wasted consumed or lamed in his or her Bodye or Member, or wherby any Goodes or Cattelles of any p/er/son shalbee destroyed wasted or impayred, then every suche Offendour or Offendours their Councilloures and Aydoures, being therof

¹The Statutes of the Realm (1819), IV, 18-22.

laufully convicted, shall for his or their first Offence or Offences, suffer Imprisonement by the Space of one whole Yere, without Bayle or Mayneprise, and once in every Quarter of the said Yere, shall in some Market Towne, upon the Market Daye or at such tyme as any Fayre shalbee kepte there, stande openly upon the Pillorie by the Space of Syxe Houres, and there shall openly confesse his or her Errour and Offence; and for the Seconde Offence, being as ys aforesayd laufully convicted or attaynted, shall suffer Deathe as Felon, and shall lose the Privilege of Clergie and Santuarie: saving to the Wief of suche p/er/son her Title of Dower, and also to Theire & Successor of suche p/er/son, his or their Titles of Inheritance Succession and other Rightes, as thoughe no suche Attaindor of Thancestor or Predecessor had bene hadde or made.

Provided alwaies, That yf the Offendour, in any of the Cases aforesayd for whiche the paynes of Death shall ensue, shall happen to bee a Peere of this Realme, then his Triall thereyn to be hadd by hys Peeres, as yt ys used in case of Felonye or Treason and not otherwyse.

And further to thintent that all maner of practise use or exercise of Withecrafte Enchantment Charme or Sorcerye shoulde bee from henceforth the utterly avoyded abolished and taken awaye; Bee it enacted by thauthoritee of this p/rese/nte P/ar/liament, That yf any p/er/son or p/er/sons shall from and after the sayd first daye of June nexte cōming, take upon him or them, by Withecrafte Enchantment Charme or Sorcerie to tell or declare in what Place any Treasure of Golde or Sylver shoulde or might bee founde or had in the Earthe or other secret Places, or where goodes or thinges lost or stollen should bee founde or become, or shall use or practise anye Sorcery Enchantment Charme or Withecrafte, to thintent to provoke any p/er/son to unlauffull love, or to hurte or destroye any p/er/son in his or her Body, Member or Goodes; that then every such p/er/son or p/er/sons so offending, and being therof lauffully convicted, shall for the said Offense suffer Imprysonement by the space of One whole yere without Bayle or Mayneprise, and one in every Quarter of the said yere shall in some Market Towne, upon the Marcket day or at suche tyme as any Fayre shall bee kept there, stande openly upon the Pillorie by the space of Sixe Houres, and there shall openly confesse his or her Error and Offense; and yf anye p/er/son or p/er/sons, beyng once convicted of the same Offenses as ys aforesayd, doo estesones p/er/petrate and cōmitt the lyke Offence, that then every suche Offendours beyng thereof the seconde tyme convicted as ys aforesaid, shall forfait unto the Quenes Majestie her heires and successoures, all his Goodes and Cattelles and suffer Imprysonement during lyef.

Appendix IV

23 Eliz., c. 2 (1581)

An Act against seditious words and rumours uttered
against the Queen's most excellent Majesty¹

I. Whereas by the laws and statutes of this realm, already made against seditious words and rumours uttered against the Queen's most excellent Majesty, there is not sufficient and condign punishment provided for to suppress the malice of such as be evil affected towards her Highness....

V. And for that divers persons wickedly disposed and forgetting their duty and allegiance have of late not only wished her Majesty's death, but also by divers means practised and sought to know how long her Highness should live, and who should reign after her decease, and what changes and alterations should thereby happen;...and be it also enacted, That if any person...during the life of our said Sovereign Lady the Queen's Majesty that now is, either within her Highness' dominions or without, shall by setting or erecting any figure or by casting of nativities or by calculation or by any prophesying, witchcraft, conjurations, or other like unlawful means whatsoever, seek to know, and shall set forth by express words, deeds or writings, how long her Majesty shall live, or who shall reign a king or queen of this realm of England after her Highness' decease, or else shall advisedly and with a malicious intent against her Highness, utter any manner of direct prophecies to any such intent, or shall maliciously by any words, writing or printing desire the death or deprivation of our Sovereign Lady the Queen's Majesty that now is...that then every such offence shall be felony, and every offender therein, and also all his aiders... shall be judged as felons and shall suffer pains of death and forfeit as in case of felony is used, without any benefit of clergy or sanctuary....

¹The Statutes of the Realm (1819), IV, 659-60.

Appendix V

1 Jac. I, c. 12 (1604)

An Acte against Conjuracion Witchcraft and
dealing with evill and wicked Spirits¹

Be it enacted by the King our Sovereigne Lorde the Lordes Spirituall and Temporall and the Cōmons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authoritie of the same, That the Statute made in the fifte yeere of the Raigne of our late Sovereigne Ladie of moste famous and happie memorie Queene Elizabeth, instituted An Acte againste Conjuracions Inchantments and Witchcrafts, be from the Feaste of St. Michaell the Archangell nexte cōming, for and concerninge all Offences to be cōmitted after the same Feaste, utterlie repealed.

And for the better restrayninge the saide Offenses, and more severe punishinge the same, be it further enacted by the authoritie aforesaide, That if any p^{er}/son or p^{er}/sons, after the saide Feaste of Saint Michaell the Archangell next cōminge, shall use practise or exercise any Invocation or Conjuracion of any evill and Wicked Spirit, or shall consult covenant with entertaine employ feede or rewarde any evill and wicked Spirit to or for any intent or purpose; or take up any dead man woman or child out of his her or their grave, or any other place where the dead bodie resteth, or the skin bone or any other parte of any dead person, to be imployed or used in any manner of Witchcraft Sorcerie Charme or Inchantment; or shall use practise or exercise any Witchcraft Inchantment Charme or Sorcerie, Wherebie any p^{er}/son shall be killed destroyed wasted consumed pined or lamed in his or her bodie, or any parte thereof; and then everie such Offendor or Offendors, their Ayders Abettors and Counsellors, being of any the saide Offences dulie and lawfullie convicted and attainted, shall suffer pains of deathe as a Felon or Felons, and shall loose the priviledge and benefit of Cleargie and Sanctuarie.

And further, to the intent that all manner of practise use or exercise of Witchcraft Inchantment Charme or Sorcerie should be from henceforth utterlie avoyded abolished and taken away, Be it enacted by the authoritie of this present Parliament, That if any p^{er}/son or p^{er}/sons shall from and after the saide Feaste of Saint Michaell the Archangell next cōminge, take upon him or them by Witchcraft Inchantment Charme or Sorcerie to tell or declare in what place any treasure of Golde or Silver should or might be founde or become; or to the intent to provoke any person to unlawfull love, or wherebie any Cattell or Goods of any p^{er}/son shall be destroyed wasted or impaired, or to hurte or destroy any p^{er}/son in his or her bodies, although the same be not effected and done; that then all and everie such p^{er}/son & p^{er}/sons so offendinge, and beinge thereof lawfullie convicted, shall for the said Offense suffer Imprisonment by the space of one whole

¹The Statutes of the Realm (1819), IV, 1028-29.

yeere, without baile or maineprise, and once in everie quarter of the saide yere, shall in some Markett Towne, upon the Markett Day, or at such tyme as any Faire shalbe kepte there, stande openlie upon the Pillorie by the space of sixe houres, and there shall openlie confesse his or her error and offense; And if any p~~er~~/son or p~~er~~/sons beinge once convicted of the same offenses as is aforesaide, doe eftsoones p~~er~~/petrate and cōmit the like offense, that then everie such Offendor, beinge of any the saide offenses the second tyme lawfullie and duellie convicted and attainted as is aforesaide, shall suffer paines of death as a Felon or Felons, and shall loose the benefitt and priviledge of Clergie and Sanctuarie: Savinge to the wife of such person as shall offend in any thinge contrarie to the Acte, her title of dower; and also to the heire and successour of everie such person his or theire titles of Inheritance Succession and other Rights, as though no such Attaindor of the Ancestor or Predecessor had bene made: Provided alwaies, That if the Offendor in any the Cases aforesaide shall happen to be a Peere of this Realme, than his Triall therein to be had by his Peeres, as it is used in cases of Felonie or Treason, and not otherwise.

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