

the Holy See.

⁹⁸ A considerable literature has grown up round Madeleine de la Palud and there are many valuable monographs and detached studies. The contemporary *Histoire admirable de la possession et conversion d'une pénitente séduite par un Magicien la faisant sorcière . . .* by Father Sebastian Michaelis, 8vo, 1612, which ran into some eight editions, Paris, Douai, Lyons, 1613, 1614, and later, is, of course, of prime importance. Raoul Gineste, *Les Grandes Victimes de l'Hystérie, Louis Gaufridi . . . et Magdeleine de la Palud*, Paris (no date, c. 1900), contains much valuable material but is ill-arranged, and must be used with great caution. The work of Ven. Sebastian Michaelis was translated into English, London, 1613, *Admirable Historie of the Possession and Conversion of a Penitent Woman*.

⁹⁹ Our chief authority is the contemporary work of J. Lenormant de Chisemont, [I] *Histoire véritable, mémorable de ce qui c'est passé sous l'exorcisme de trois filles possédées es pais de Flandre, en la descouverte et confession de Marie de Sains, soy disant Princesse de la Magie ; et Simone Dourlet complice, et autres. Ou il est avssi traité de la police du Sabbat, et secrets de la Synagogue des magiciens et magiciennes. De l'Antichrist et de la fin du monde.* [II] *De la vocation des magiciens et magiciennes par le ministère des démons : et particulièrement des chefs de la magi a sçauoir de Magdeleine de la Palud, Marie de Sains, Louys Gaufridy, Simone Dourlet, etc. . . . Item de la vocation accomplie par l'entremise de la seule autorité ecclesiastique à sçauoir de Didyme, Maberthe, Loyse, etc. Avec Trois petits tractez.* Paris, De Varennes et Nicolas Buon, 1623, 3 parts in two volumes, 8vo. The second volume, unknown to Brunet, and bearing (as above) a different title from Volume I is of the last rarity. One may also consult *Les confessions de Didyme, sorcière pénitente, avec les choses qu'elle a déposées touchant la synagague de Satan ; Plus les instances que cette complice (qui depuis est rechâtée) a faites pour rendre nulles ses premières confessions : Véritable récit de tout ce qui s'est passé en*

There was an extraordinary sequel to the scandals and sorceries of Aix when some two years after three Bridgittines of the convent of S. Bridget of Sweden at Lille, Sisters Françoise Bolonnais, Catherine Fournier, and Imbert, declared themselves to be possessed. They fell into violent paroxysms, vomited strange substances, spoke in divers tongues normally unknown to them, Hebrew, Greek, English, Spanish, and in short gave every sign of Satanic disease. In their convulsions they accused a nun, Marie de Sains, who until then had been accounted a saint far advanced on the mystic way, of having cast an evil spell upon them. When interrogated she denied any such complicity with demons, but none the less she was put under cloistral restraint and carefully watched. Presently Father Sebastian Michaelis and Father Domptius, the two Dominican exorcists, arrived at Lille, and proceeded to examine closely into the affair. Marie de Sains was closely questioned by these experts, and before long she made the most astounding confessions. She swore that she had dedicated herself body and soul, her will, every wish and movement to the powers of hell. She had confected charms to cause sickness and delirium, and these she had secretly fastened to the habits of the nuns, in the straw of their pallets, in some corner of their cells. It was these which caused the possession of the three Sisters, as well as the diabolic attacks on Sister Vandermotte, Sister Launoy, and Sister Peronne, who were now on the verge of madness. The formula for these amulets of evil power had been invented by none other than Louis Gaufridi, who had taught her how to fashion them at the Sabbat. They were composed of the Sacred Host and the Precious Blood, commingled into a paste with a powder made from human and animal bones, the skulls of infants, hair, nails, flesh, the liver, brain, and spleen of an executed murderer, and the semen of a sorcerer. She further avowed that she had slain a number of young children, many of whom she had cut open alive to offer their agonized and writhing

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ecclesiastical court to perpetual imprisonment in the dungeons of Tournai.⁹⁹

coming of the Antichrist and the imminence of the Last Judgement.

Much the same can be said of Jean **Le Normant**, even though the tone of his writings is more extravagant and he fell foul of the Sorbonne theologians in writing them. We have already had occasion to consider *Le Combat de David contre Goliath* as an expression of general hopes for apocalyptic witch-cleansing. But **Le Normant** also viewed this purgative action as a kind of exorcism of the body politic, 'possessed', as it were, by heresy, disaffection, and demonism. In his next tract of 1619, *De l'exorcisme*, he claimed that the Antichrist had already arrived in France, that magic and witchcraft had in consequence reached a peak of intensity, and that only the most powerful ecclesiastical weapons wielded by a divine king could break their grip. His striking suggestion was that Louis XIII should personally undergo exorcism and then, free of all demonic contamination, should undertake the exorcism of the whole kingdom. By this he clearly meant the vigorous use of the ritual itself but also the promulgation and enforcement of laws against magicians and witches. Exorcism became a kind of model for the conduct of politics and the character of royal justice. Finally, having issued two 'remonstrances' defending his account of the Lille demoniacs, **Le Normant** wrote his *De la fin du monde* of 1625. Drawing on the eschatology of Perrières-Varin and Panigarola, he attempted a chronology of the last times—from the birth of the Antichrist in 1611, through the onset of his reign in 1640, to the end of the world on 21 March 1651. Again he emphasized the flourishing of magic and witchcraft as signs of a 'dying' world; again he called on Louis to extirpate the forces of darkness and in so doing demonstrate the sacredness of his own rule and of the French monarchy in general. But there is little here that we have not already come across in the literature of demonology and eschatology. The nature and sequence of the last things is commonplace, the association of the Antichrist with magicians and witches wholly traditional. The idea that possession could suggest the whole state of a society and exorcism its political remedy is implicit in the Catholic rite and explicit in many commentaries on the subject. Only **Le Normant's** elevated imperialism seems momentarily out of place; yet his view of Louis XIII's role is only an early modern version of a form of political eschatology with a very long history indeed.²⁴

One other aspect of **Le Normant**'s eschatological demonology deserves mention—he had himself experienced possession. In 1611 at the very instant of Gaufridy's execution he was attacked by a furious fever that led him to proclaim apocalyptic prophecies in the streets around Notre Dame—rather like some Parisian Abiezer Coppe. The episode was due, he said, to the effects of magic. Having himself

²³ Michaëlis, *Discourse of spirits*, 133, 148–9.

²⁴ See Ch. 25 above; **Le Normant**, *L'Exorcisme*, *passim*; id., *Fin du Monde*, *passim*.

Before Loudun

been one of Concino Concini's clients, he had become infected by 'a demon of this chief minister of Antichrist', a state of affairs that lasted until 1617 when Concini was assassinated and **Le Normant** successfully exorcized.²⁵ Were these natural events, which he somehow suffered from, or were they intentional but fraudulently inspired? At the time it was suggested to him that he was either ill or mad. Yet the cultural idiom for this particular behaviour is equally prominent. In fact, there is an overwhelming logic to the idea of the demoniac become prophet. It matches totally the views of possession we have explored and it complements, in particular, the belief that to be possessed was itself to signify future happenings. **Le Normant** was hardly speaking in a private language, nor was his behaviour peculiar to him. Johann Weyer

LE NORMANT, JEAN, *Le Combat de David contre Goliath au roy tres-Chrestien Louis le juste* (n.p., 1618).

— *De l'exorcisme, au roy tres-Chrestien Louis le juste* (n.p., 1619).

— *Histoire veritable et memorable de ce qui c'est passé sous l'exorcisme de trois filles possedées es pais de Flandre, en la descouverte et confession de Marie de Sains, soy disant princesse de la magie, et Simone Dourlet complice, et autres. Ou il est aussi traicté de la police du sabbat, et secrets de la synagogue des magiciens et magiciennes. De L'Antechrist, et de la fin du monde, pt. 1. [pt. 2] De la Vocation des magiciens et magiciennes par le ministre des demons: et particulierement des chefs de Magie: à scavoir de Magdelaine de la Palud. Marie de Sains. Louys Gaufridy. Simone Dourlet, etc. Item. De la vocation accomplie par l'entremise de la seule autorité Eccles. à scavoir*

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Works before 1800

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Didyme, Maberthe, Louyse, etc., Avec trois petits traitez. 1. Des merveilles de cet œuvre. 2. De la conformité avec les sanctes Escrites. et S. S. Peres etc. 3. De la puissance Eccles. sur les demons (2 vols.; Paris, 1623).

— *Remonstrances du Sieur de Chirement à messieurs de Sorbonne* (n.p., n.d. [1623]).

— *Secondes Remonstrances du Sieur de Chirement, à messieurs de Sorbonne* (n.p., n.d. [1623]).

— *De la fin du monde au roy tres-Chrestien Louis le juste* (n.p., 1625).

the fact. In 1610, a devil in possession of the *aixoise* nun Louise Capeau warned that the Last Judgement was imminent; in 1613 Simone **Dourlet** confessed to Jean Le Normant that so much magic would never have been known but for the certainty ‘that the end of the world approaches’.¹¹

These particular exorcisms concluded with a claim that was implicit to them all—that of the two beasts mentioned in Revelation 8, the first (with seven heads) was Lucifer and the second the Antichrist. Later in his account, Le Normant pointed out that just as the coming of Christ had been revealed to the Gentiles and to the Magi,

Dourlet complice, et autres. Ou il est aussi traicté de la police du sabbat, et secrets de la synagogue des magiciens et magiciennes. De L'Antechrist, et de la fin du monde, pt. 1, 1–71.

⁸ Ibid. 72–116.

⁹ Ibid. 92, 100–4.

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so the coming of the Antichrist was fittingly known to seventeenth-century magicians, and through the announcements not of the heavens but of hell. Since he must come at the end of the world, the exorcisms at Lille were in effect an annunciation of the eschaton, a part of the final accomplishment of scriptural promises. Earlier in June it was said that the warnings of Isaiah 10 (directed at the King of Assyria, a figure of the devil) were about to be fulfilled. On 19 June the demoniacs identified their actions with one of the trumpets of the Last Judgement and spoke of the coming together of St John, Moses, and the two prophets Elias and Enoch. The next day they stated that ‘all that which is written in the Apocalypse would come.’ On other occasions their pronouncements dwelt on the themes of cumulative sinfulness, inescapable reckoning, and ultimate dissolution, a sequence in which the idea of the Antichrist was necessary to every stage. It was even revealed that God would have

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As if this was not evidence enough of their eschatological significance, Le Normant added to the disclosures of 1613 the later testimony of one further Brigidine, Didyme, who in March and April of 1617 confessed to having participated in the same witchcraft and seen the Antichrist at the same sabbats. In three other cases from 1618, 1619, and 1621, all from unspecified sources and locations, he claimed to have found further proof that witches had witnessed to the birth of the Antichrist and his reception as 'Mignon de la Synagogue'. And to emphasize the conclusion still more he reprinted the material from Michaëlis's account of the Gaufridy affair, including the apocalyptic speeches of Verin. Towards the end of the *Histoire véritable* the cases at Aix and at Lille are regarded, for eschatological purposes, as one.¹¹

In addition to its function as an ecclesiastical ritual, exorcism was the purest and most rewarding form taken by demonological enquiry. For under its direct threat demons were expected to reveal important truths about their activities that scholars would never otherwise have discovered. But that they were in fact truths was a claim that had to be defended.¹² Michaëlis readily conceded (following John 8: 44) that left to his own devices the devil was indeed the ‘father of lies’. He insisted none the less that faced with ‘the efficacy of the name of God’ he could no longer dissemble—just as the possessing devils in Mark 5 had pronounced their true names

¹⁰ Le Normant, *Histoire véritable et memorable*, 115–61, 257–61, 321 (mispagination), 351–60, 82, 303–14.

¹¹ Ibid. 2nd pagination, 1–346. The Gaufridy materials begin pt. 2 of the work, entitled *De La Vocation des magiciens et magiciennes par le ministre des demons: et particulièrement des chefs de Magie: à sçavoir de Magdelaine de la Palud. Marie de Sains. Louys Gaufridy. Simone Dourlet, etc. Item. De la vocation accomplie par l’entremise de la seule autorité Eccles. à scavoir de Didyme, Maberthe, Louyse, etc., Avec trois petits traitez. 1. Des merveilles de cet oeuvre. 2. De la conformité avec les sanctes Escrites. et S. S. Peres etc. 3. De la puissance Eccles. sur les demons.*

¹² For the general theological debate on the issue, see Marc Venard, ‘Le Démon controversiste’, in Michel Péronnet (ed.), *La Controverse religieuse (XVI^e–XIX^e siècles)* (2 vols.; Montpellier, 1980), ii. 45–60.

The first case concerned the Ursuline convent at Aix-en-Provence and led to the trial and execution (in April 1611) of Louis Gaufridy, priest of the parish of the Accoules in Marseilles. The chief investigators were Sebastien **Michaëlis**, who at the time was prior of the neighbouring Dominican community at Saint-Maximin, and another Dominican, François Doncieux (Domptius). **Michaëlis** was an energetic reformer of his order and became both its vicar-general and the founder of its new Parisian community in 1613. He had already been involved in witch trials in the 1580s, and in 1587 had published a tract on demons and witchcraft called *Pneumalogie: Discours des esprits*. Doncieux was a theologian from the university of Louvain. In 1613 the two men issued an account of the exorcisms of Gaufridy's victims which they

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dedicated to the Queen Regent Marie de Medici, entitled *Histoire admirable de la possession d'une penitente*. In terms of the intensity and complexity of the public debates aroused, this affair was easily overshadowed by the later possessions at Loudun and Louviers. It is significant, none the less, for establishing a new pattern of relationships of which the later cases were in essence only modifications—in particular, the attribution of the collective possession of nuns to the *maleficium* of priest-magicians who had hitherto been their spiritual guardians. The charges against Gaufridy originated in the accusations of one of his Ursuline penitents, Madeleine Demandols de La Palud. She alleged that he had sexually enchanted her