Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, 1486

Witch hunts became widespread in Europe at the end of the fifteenth century, mostly as a result of the publication of *The Malleus Maleficarum*, or Witches’ Hammer, in 1487. Written by two Germans, Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger, this handbook argued that witches were real and posed threats to the safety and sanctity of all people. It specified how to find and persecute witches, and it was widely used during the Inquisition. Historians estimate that thousands of people—mostly women—died as a result of this work.


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**PART I.**

**QUESTION VI.**

Concerning Witches who copulate with Devils.

*Why is it that Women are chiefly addicted to Evil superstitions?*

There is also, concerning witches who copulate with devils, much difficulty in considering the methods by which such abominations are consummated. On the part of the devil: first, of what element the body is made that he assumes; secondly, whether the act is always accompanied by the injection of semen received from another; thirdly, as to time and place, whether he commits this act more frequently at one time than at another; fourthly, whether the act is invisible to any who may be standing by. And on the part of the women, it has to be inquired whether only they who were themselves conceived in this filthy manner are often visited by devils; or secondly, whether it is those who were
offered to devils by midwives at the time of their birth; and thirdly, whether the actual venereal delectation of such is of a weaker sort. But we cannot here reply to all these questions, both because we are only engaged in a general study, and because in the second part of this work they are all singly explained by their operations, as will appear in the fourth chapter, where mention is made of each separate method. Therefore, let us now chiefly consider women; and first, why this kind of perfidy is found more in so fragile a sex than in men. And our inquiry will first be general, as to the general conditions of women; secondly, particular, as to which sort of women are found to be given to superstition and witchcraft; and thirdly, specifically with regard to midwives, who surpass all others in wickedness.

*Why Superstition is chiefly found in Women.*

As for the first question, why a greater number of witches is found in the fragile feminine sex than among men; it is indeed a fact that it were idle to contradict, since it is accredited by actual experience, apart from the verbal testimony of credible witnesses. And without in any way detracting from a sex in which God has always taken great glory that His might should be spread abroad, let us say that various men have assigned various reasons for this fact, which nevertheless agree in principle. Wherefore it is good, for the admonition of women, to speak of this matter; and it has often been proved by experience that they are eager to hear of it, so long as it is set forth with discretion.

For some learned men propound this reason; that there are three things in nature, the Tongue, an Ecclesiastic, and a Woman, which know no moderation in goodness or vice; and when they exceed the bounds of their condition they reach the greatest heights
and the lowest depths of goodness and vice. When they are governed by a good spirit, they are most excellent in virtue; but when they are governed by an evil spirit, they indulge the worst possible vices.

This is clear in the case of the tongue, since by its ministry most of the kingdoms have been brought into the faith of Christ; and the Holy Ghost appeared over the Apostles of Christ in tongues of fire. Other learned preachers also have had as it were the tongues of dogs, licking wounds and sores of the dying Lazarus. As it is said: "With the tongues of dogs ye save your souls from the enemy."

For this reason S. Dominic, the leader and father of the Order of Preachers, is represented in the figure of a barking dog with a lighted torch in his mouth, that even to this day he may by his barking keep off the heretic wolves from the flock of Christ’s sheep. It is also a matter of common experience that the tongue of one prudent man can subdue the wrangling of a multitude; wherefore not unjustly Solomon sings much in their praise, in Proverbs x.: "In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found. And again, The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth. And again, The lips of the righteous feed many; but fools die for want of wisdom. For this cause he adds in chapter xvi, The preparations of the heart belong to man; but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.

But concerning an evil tongue you will find in Ecclesiasticus xxviii: A backbiting tongue hath disquieted many, and driven them from nation to nation: strong cities hath it pulled down, and overthrown the houses of great men. And by a backbiting tongue it means a third party who rashly or spitefully interferes between two contending parties.

Secondly, concerning Ecclesiastics, that is to say, clerics and religious of either
sex, S. John Chrysostom speaks on the text, He cast out them that bought and sold from the temple. From the priesthood arises everything good, and everything evil. S. Jerome in his epistle to Nepotian says: Avoid as you would the plague a trading priest, who has risen from poverty to riches, from a low to a high estate. And Blessed Bernard in his 23rd Homily On the Psalms says of clerics: If one should arise as an open heretic, let him be cast out and put to silence; if he is a violent enemy, let all good men flee from him. But how are we to know which ones to cast out or to flee from? For they are confusedly friendly and hostile, peaceable and quarrelsome, neighborly and utterly selfish. And in another place: Our bishops are become spearmen, and our pastors shearers. And by bishops here is meant those proud Abbots who impose heavy labors on their inferiors, which they would not themselves touch with their little finger. And S. Gregory says concerning pastors: No one does more harm in the Church than he who, having the name or order of sanctity, lives in sin; for no one dares to accuse him of sin, and therefore the sin is widely spread, since the sinner is honored for the sanctity of his order. Blessed Augustine also speaks of monks to Vincent the Donatist: I freely confess to your charity before the Lord our God, which is the witness of my soul from the time I began to serve God, what great difficulty I have experienced in the fact that it is impossible to find either worse of better men than those who grace or disgrace the monasteries.

Now the wickedness of women is spoken of in Ecclesiasticus xxv: There is no head above the head of a serpent: and there is no wrath above the wrath of a woman. I had rather dwell with a lion and a dragon than to keep house with a wicked woman. And among much which in that place precedes and follows about a wicked woman, he concludes: All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman. Wherefore S. John
Chrysostom says on the text, It is not good to marry (S. Matthew xix): What else is woman but a foe to friendship, an unescapable punishment, a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic danger, a delectable detriment, an evil of nature, painted with fair colors! Therefore if it be a sin to divorce her when she ought to be kept, it is indeed a necessary torture; for either we commit adultery by divorcing her, or we must endure daily strife. Cicero in his second book of The Rhetorics says: The many lusts of men lead them into one sin, but the lust of women leads them into all sins; for the root of all woman’s vices is avarice. And Seneca says in his Tragedies: A woman either loves or hates; there is no third grade. And the tears of woman are a deception, for they may spring from true grief, or they may be a snare. When a woman thinks alone, she thinks evil.

But for good women there is so much praise, that we read that they have brought beatitude to men, and have saved nations, lands, and cities; as is clear in the case of Judith, Debbora, and Esther. See also I Corinthians vii: If a woman hath a husband that believeth not, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife. And Ecclesiasticus xxvi: Blessed is the man who has a virtuous wife, for the number of his days shall be doubled. And throughout that chapter much high praise is spoken of the excellence of good women; as also in the last chapter of Proverbs concerning a virtuous woman.

And all this is made clear also in the New Testament concerning women and virgins and other holy women who have by faith led nations and kingdoms away from the worship of idols to the Christian religion. Anyone who looks at Vincent of Beauvais (in Spe. Histo., XXVI. 9) will find marvelous things of the conversion of Hungary by the
most Christian Gilia, and of the Franks by Clotilda, the wife of Clovis. Wherefore in many vituperations that we read against women, the word woman is used to mean the lust of the flesh. As it is said: I have found a woman more bitter than death, and good woman subject to carnal lust.

Others again have propounded other reasons why there are more superstitious women found than men. And the first is, that they are more credulous; and since the chief aim of the devil is to corrupt faith, therefore he rather attacks them. See Ecclesiasticus xix: He that is quick to believe is light-minded, and shall be diminished. The second reason is, that women are naturally more impressionable, and more ready to receive the influence of a disembodied spirit; and that when they use this quality well they are very good, but when they use it ill they are very evil.

The third reason is that they have slippery tongues, and are unable to conceal from the fellow-women those things which by evil arts they know; and, since they are weak, they find an easy and secret manner of vindicating themselves by witchcraft. See Ecclesiasticus as quoted above: I had rather dwell with a lion and a dragon than to keep house with a wicked woman. All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman. And to this may be added that, as they are very impressionable, they act accordingly.

There are also others who bring forward yet other reasons, of which preachers should be very careful how they make use. For it is true that in the Old Testament the Scriptures have much that is evil to say about women, and this because of the first temptress, Eve, and her imitators; yet afterwards in the New Testament we find a change of name, as from Eva to Ave (as S. Jerome says), and the whole sin of Eve taken away by the benediction of Mary. Therefore preachers should always say as much praise of them
as possible. But because in these times this perfidy is more often found in women than in men, as we learn by actual experience, if anyone is curious as to the reason, we may add to what has already been said the following: that since they are feebler both in mind and body, it is not surprising that they should come more under the spell of witchcraft. For as regards intellect, or the understanding of spiritual things, they seem to be of a different nature from men; a fact which is vouched for by the logic of the authorities, backed by various examples from the Scriptures. Terence says: Women are intellectually like children. And Lactantius (Institutiones, III): No woman understood philosophy except Temeste. And Proverbs xi, as it were describing a woman, says: As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

But the natural reason is that she is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations. And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives. For Cato says: When a woman weeps she weaves snares. And again: When a woman weeps, she labors to deceive a man. And this is shown by Samson’s wife, who coaxed him to tell her the riddle he had propounded to the Philistines, and told them the answer, and so deceived him.

And it is clear in the case of the first woman that she had little faith; for when the serpent asked why they did not eat of every tree in Paradise, she answered: Of every tree, etc. —lest perchance we die. Thereby she showed that she doubted, and had little in the word of God. And all this is indicated by the etymology of the word; for Femina comes from Fe and Minus, since she is ever weaker to hold and preserve the faith. And this as
regards faith is of her very nature; although both by grace and nature faith never failed in the Blessed Virgin, even at the time of Christ’s Passion, when it failed in all men. Therefore a wicked woman is by her nature quicker to waver in her faith, and consequently quicker to abjure the faith, which is the root of witchcraft.

And as to her other mental quality, that is, her natural will; when she hates someone whom she formerly loved, then she seethes with anger and impatience in her whole soul, just as the tides of the sea are always heaving and boiling. Many authorities allude to this cause. Ecclesiasticus xxv: There is no wrath above the wrath of a woman. And Seneca (Tragedies, VIII): No might of the flames or the swollen winds, no deadly weapon, is so much to be feared as the lust and hatred of a woman who has been divorced from the marriage bed.

This is shown too in the woman who falsely accused Joseph, and caused him to be imprisoned because he would not consent to the crime of adultery with her (Genesis xxx). And truly the most powerful cause which contributes to the increase of witches is the woeful rivalry between married folk and unmarried women and men. This is so even among holy women, so what must it be among the others? For you see in Genesis xxi how impatient and envious Sarah was of Hagar when she conceived: How jealous Rachel was of Leah because she had no children (Genesis xxx): and Hannah, who was barren, of the fruitful Peninnah (I. Kings i): and how Miriam (Numbers xii) murmured and spoke ill of Moses, and was therefore stricken with leprosy: and how Martha was jealous of Mary Magdalen, because she was busy and Mary was sitting down (S. Luke x). To this point is Ecclesiasticus xxxvii: Neither consult with a woman touching her of whom she is jealous. Meaning that it is useless to consult with her, since there is always jealousy, that is, envy,
in a wicked woman. And if women behave thus to each other, how much more will they do so to men.

Valerius Maximus tells how, when Phoroneus, the king of the Greeks, was dying, he said to his brother Leontius that there would have been nothing lacking to him of complete happiness if a wife had always been lacking to him. And when Leontius asked how a wife could stand in the way of happiness, he answered that all married men well knew. And when the philosopher Socrates was asked if one should marry a wife, he answered: If you do not, you are lonely, your family dies out, and a stranger inherits; if you do, you suffer perpetual anxiety, querulous complaints, reproaches concerning the marriage portion, the heavy displeasure of your relations, the garrulousness of a mother-in-law, cuckoldom, and no certain arrival of an heir. This he said as one who knew. For S. Jerome in his Contra Iouinianum says: This Socrates had two wives, whom he endured with much patience, but could not be rid of their contumelies and clamorous vituperations. So one day when they were complaining against him, he went out of the house to escape their plaguing, and sat down before the house; and the women then threw filthy water over him. But the philosopher was not disturbed by this, saying, “I knew the rain would come after the thunder.”

There is also a story of a man whose wife was drowned in a river, who, when he was searching for the body to take it out of the water, walked up the stream. And when he was asked why, since heavy bodies do not rise but fall, he was searching against the current of the river, he answered: “When that woman was alive she always, both in word and deed, went contrary to my commands; therefore I am searching in the contrary direction in case even now she is dead she may preserve her contrary disposition.”
And indeed, just as through the first defect in their intelligence that are more prone to abjure the faith; so through their second defect of inordinate affections and passions they search for, brood over, and inflict various vengeances, either by witchcraft, or by some other means. Wherefore it is no wonder that so great a number of witches exist in this sex. Women also have weak memories; and it is a natural vice in them not to be disciplined, but to follow their own impulses without any sense of what is due; this is her whole study, and all that she keeps in her memory. So Theophrastus says: If you hand over the whole management of the house to her, but reserve some minute detail to your own judgment, she will think that you are displaying a great want of faith in her, and will stir up a strife; and unless you quickly take counsel, she will prepare poison for you, and consult seers and soothsayers; and will become a witch.

But as to domination by women, hear what Cicero says in the Paradoxes. Can he be called a free man whose wife governs him, imposes laws on him, orders him, and forbids him to do what he wishes, so that he cannot and dare not deny her anything that she asks? I should call him not only a slave, but the vilest of slaves, even if he comes from the noblest family. And Seneca, in the character of the raging Medea, says: Why do you cease to follow your happy impulse; how great is that part of vengeance in which you rejoice? Where he adduces many proofs that a woman will not be governed, but will follow her own impulse even to her own destruction. In the same way we read of many woman who have killed themselves either for love or sorrow because they were unable to work their vengeance.

S. Jerome, writing of Daniel, tells a story of Laodice, wife of Antiochus king of Syria; how, being jealous lest he should love his other wife, Berenice, more than her, she
first caused Berenice and her daughter by Antiochus to be slain, and then poisoned herself. And why? Because she would not be governed, and would follow her own impulse. Therefore, S. John Chrysostom says not without reason: O evil worse than all evil, a wicked woman, whether she be poor or rich. For if she be the wife of a rich man, she does not cease night and day to excite her husband with hot words, to use evil blandishments and violent importunations. And if she have a poor husband she does not cease to stir him also to anger and strife. And if she be a widow, she takes it upon herself everywhere to look down on everybody, and is inflamed to all boldness by the spirit of pride.

If we inquire, we find that nearly all the kingdoms of the world have been overthrown by women. Troy, which was a prosperous kingdom, was, for the rape of one woman, Helen, destroyed, and many thousands of Greeks slain. The kingdom of the Jews suffered much misfortune and destruction through the accursed Jezebel, and her daughter Athaliah, queen of Judah, who caused her son’s sons to be killed, that on their death she might reign herself; yet each of them was slain. The kingdom of the Romans endured much evil through Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, that worst of women. And so with others. Therefore it is no wonder if the world now suffers through the malice of women.

And now let us examine the carnal desires of the body itself, whence has arise unconscionable harm to human life. Justly we may say with Cato of Utica: If the world could be rid of women, we should not be without God in our intercourse. For truly, without the wickedness of women, to say nothing of witchcraft, the world would still remain proof against innumerable dangers. Hear what Valerius said to Rufinus: You do not know that woman is the Chimaera, but it is good that you should know it; for that
monster was of three forms; its face was that of a radiant and noble lion, it had the filthy belly of a goat, and it was armed with the virulent tail of a viper. And he means that a woman is beautiful to look upon, contaminating to the touch, and deadly to keep.

Let us consider another property of hers, the voice. For as she is a liar by nature, so in her speech she stings while she delights us. Wherefore her voice is like the song of the Sirens, who with their sweet melody entice the passers-by and kill them. For they kill them by emptying their purses, consuming their strength, and causing them to forsake God. Again Valerius says to Rufinus: When she speaks it is a delight which flavours the sin; the flower of love is a rose, because under its blossom there are hidden many thorns. See Proverbs v, 3-4: Her mouth is smoother than oil; that is, her speech is afterwards as bitter as absinthium. [Her throat is smoother than oil. But her end is as bitter as wormwood.]

Let us consider also her gait, posture, and habit, in which is vanity of vanities. There is no man in the world who studies so hard to please the good God as even an ordinary woman studies by her vanities to please men. An example of this is to be found in the life of Pelagia, a worldly woman who was wont to go about Antioch tired and adorned most extravagantly. A holy father, named Nonnus, saw her and began to weep, saying to his companions, that never in all his life had he used such diligence to please God; and much more he added to this effect, which is preserved in his orations. It is this which is lamented in Ecclesiastes vii, and which the Church even now laments on account of the great multitude of witches. And I have found a woman more bitter than death, who is the hunter’s snare, and her heart is a net, and her hands are bands. He that pleaseth God shall escape from her; but he that is a sinner shall be caught by her. More
bitter than death, that is, than the devil: Apocalypse vi, 8, His name was Death. For though the devil tempted Eve to sin, yet Eve seduced Adam. And as the sin of Eve would not have brought death to our soul and body unless the sin had afterwards passed on to Adam, to which he was tempted by Eve, not by the devil, therefore she is more bitter than death.

More bitter than death, again, because that is natural and destroys only the body; but the sin which arose from woman destroys the soul by depriving it of grace, and delivers the body up to the punishment of sin. More bitter than death, again, because bodily death is an open and terrible enemy, but woman is a wheedling and secret enemy.

And that she is more perilous than a snare does not speak of the snare of hunters, but of devils. For men are caught not only through their carnal desires, when they see and hear women: for S. Bernard says: Their face is a burning wind, and their voice the hissing of serpents: but they also cast wicked spells on countless men and animals. And when it is said that her heart is a net, it speaks of the inscrutable malice which reigns in their hearts. And her hands are as bands for binding; for when they place their hands on a creature to bewitch it, then with the help of the devil, they perform their design.

To conclude. All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable. See Proverbs xxx: There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, a fourth thing which says not, It is enough; that is, the mouth of the womb. Wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort even with devils. More such reasons could be brought forward, but to the understanding it is sufficiently clear that it is no matter for wonder that there are more women than men found infected with the heresy of witchcraft. And in consequence of this, it is better called the heresy of witches than of wizards, since the
name is taken from the more powerful party. And blessed be the Highest Who has so far preserved the male sex from so great a crime: for since He was willing to be born and to suffer for us, therefore He has granted to men the privilege. What sort of Women are found to be above all Others Superstitious and Witches. As to our second inquiry, what sort of women more than others are found to be superstitious and infected with witchcraft; it must be said, as was shown in the preceding inquiry, that three general vices appear to have special dominion over wicked women, namely, infidelity, ambition, and lust. Therefore they are more than others inclined towards witchcraft, who more than others are given to these vices. Again, since of these vices the last chiefly predominates, women being insatiable, etc., it follows that those among ambitious women are more deeply infected who are more hot to satisfy their filthy lusts; and such are adulteresses, fornicatresses, and the concubines of the Great.

Now there are, as it is said in the Papal Bull, seven methods by which they infect with witchcraft the venereal act and the conception of the womb: First, by inclining the minds of men to inordinate passion; second, by obstructing their generative force; third, by removing the members accommodated to that act; fourth, by changing men into beasts by their magic art; fifth, by destroying the generative force in women; sixth, by procuring abortion; seventh, by offering children to devils, besides other animals and fruits of the earth with which they work much harm.

And all these will be considered later; but for present let us give our minds to the injuries towards and first concerning those who are bewitched into an inordinate love or hatred, this is a matter of a sort that it is difficult to discuss before the general intelligence. Yet it must be granted that it is a fact. For S. Thomas (IV, 34), treating of
obstructions caused by witches, shows that God allows the devil greater power against men’s venereal acts than against their other actions; and gives this reason, that this is likely to be so, since those women are chiefly apt to be witches who are most disposed to such acts.

For he says that, since the first corruption of sin by which man became the slave of the devil came to us through the act of generation, therefore greater power is allowed by God to the devil in this act than in all others. Also the power of witches is more apparent in serpents, as it is said, than in other animals, because through the means of a serpent the devil tempted woman. For this reason also, as is shown afterwards, although matrimony is a work of God, as being instituted by Him, yet it is sometimes wrecked by the work of the devil: not indeed through main force, since then he might be though stronger than God, but with the permission of God, by causing some temporary or permanent impediment in the conjugal act.

And touching this we may say what is known by experience; that these women satisfy their filthy lists not only in themselves, but even in the mighty ones of the age, of whatever state and condition; causing by all sorts of witchcraft the death of their souls through the excessive infatuation of carnal love, in such a way that for no shame or persuasion can they desist from such acts. And through such men, since witches will not permit any harm to come to them either from themselves or from others once they have them in their power, there arises the great danger of the time, namely, the extermination of the Faith. And in this way do witches every day increase.

And would that this were not true according to experience. But indeed such hatred is aroused by witchcraft between those joined in the sacrament of matrimony, and such
freezing up of the generative forces, that men are unable to perform the necessary action for begetting offspring. But since love and hate exist in the soul, which even the devil cannot enter, lest these things should seem incredibly to anyone, they must be inquired into; and by meeting argument with argument the matter will be made clear.

**QUESTION VII.**

*Whether Witches can Sway the Minds of Men to Love or Hatred.*

It is asked whether devils, through the medium of witches, can change or incite the minds of men to inordinate love or hatred; and it is argued that, following the previous conclusions, they cannot do so. For there are three things in man: will, understanding, and body. The first is ruled by God (for, The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord); the second is enlightened by an Angel; and the body is governed by the motions of the stars. And as the devils cannot effect changes in the body, even less have they power to incite love or hatred in the soul. The consequence is clear; that though they have more power over things corporeal than over things spiritual, they cannot change even the body, as has been often proved. For they cannot induce any substantial or accidental form, except as it were their artificer. In this connection is quoted what has been said before; that whoever believes that any creature can be changed for the better or worse or transformed into another kind or likeness, except by the Creator of all things, is worse than a pagan and a heretic.

Besides, everything that acts with design knows its own effect. If, therefore, the devil could change the minds of men to hatred or love, he would also be able to see the inner thoughts of the heart; but this is contrary to what is said in the Book of Ecclesiastic
Dogma: The devil cannot see our inner thoughts. And again in the same place: Not all our evil thoughts are from the devil, but sometimes they arise from our own choice.

Besides, love and hatred are a matter of the will, which is rooted in the soul; therefore they cannot by any cunning be caused by the devil. The conclusion holds that He alone (as S. Augustine says) is able to enter into the soul, Who created it.

Besides, it is not valid to argue that because he can influence the inner emotions, therefore he can govern the will. For the emotions are stronger than physical strength; and the devil can effect nothing in a physical way, such as the formation of flesh and blood; therefore he can effect nothing through the emotions.

But against this. The devil is said to tempt men not only visibly but also invisibly; but this would not be true unless he were able to exert some influence over the inner mind. Besides, S. John Damascene says: All evil and all filthiness is devised by the devil. And Dionysius, de Divin. Nom. IV: The multitude of devils is the cause of all evil, etc.

Answer. First, one sort of cause is to be distinguished from another: secondly, we shall show how the devil can affect the inner powers of the mind, that is the emotions; and thirdly, we shall draw the fit conclusion. And as to the first, it is to be considered that the cause of anything can be understood in two ways; either as direct, or as indirect. For when something cause a disposition to some effect, it is said to be an occasional and indirect cause of that effect. In this way it may be said that he who chops wood is the cause of the actual fire. And similarly we may say that the devil is the cause of all our sins; for he incited the first man to sin, from whose sin it has been handed down to the whole human race to have an inclination towards sin. And in this way are to be understood the words of S. John Damascene and Dionysius.
But a direct cause is one that directly causes an effect; and in this sense the devil is not the cause of all sin. For all sins are not committed at the instigation of the devil, but some are of our own choosing. For Origen says: Even if the devil were not, men would still lust after food and venery and such things. And from these inordinate lusts much may result, unless such appetites be reasonably restrained. But to restrain such ungoverned desire is the part of man’s free-will, over which even the devil has no power.

And because this distinction is not sufficient to explain how the devil at times produces a frantic infatuation of love, it is further to be noted that though he cannot cause that inordinate love by directly compelling a man’s will, yet he can do so by means of persuasion. And this again in two ways, either visibly or invisibly. Visibly, when he appears to witches in the form of a man, and speaks to them materially, persuading them to sin. So he tempted our first parents in Paradise in the form of a serpent; and so he tempted Christ in the wilderness, appearing to Him in visible form.

But it is not to be thought that this is the only way he influences a man; for in that case no sin would proceed from the devil’s instruction, except such as were suggested by him in visible form. Therefore it must be said that even invisibly he instigates man to sin. And this he does in two ways, either by persuasion or by disposition. By persuasion, he presents something to the understanding as being a good thing. And this he can do in three ways; for he presents it either to the intellect, or to the inner perceptions, or to the outer. And as for the intellect; the human intellect can be helped by a good Angel to understand a thing by means of enlightenment, as Dionysius says; and to understand a thing, according to Aristotle, is to suffer something: therefore the devil can impress some form upon the intellect, by which the act of understanding is called forth.
And it may be argued that the devil can do this by his natural power, which is not, as had been shown, diminished. It is to be said, however, that he cannot do this by means of enlightenment, but by persuasion. For the intellect of man is of that condition that, the more it is enlightened, the more it knows the truth, and the more it can defend itself from deception. And because the devil intends his deception to be permanent, therefore no persuasion that he uses can be called enlightenment: although it may be called revelation, in that when he invisibly uses persuasion, by means of some impression he plants something on the inner or outer sense. And by this the reasoning intellect is persuaded to perform some action.

But as to how he is enabled to create an impression on the inner sense, it is to be noted that the bodily nature is naturally born to be moved locally by the spiritual; which is clear from the case of our own bodies, which are moved by souls; and the same is the case with the stars. But it is not by nature adapted to be directly subject to influences, by which we mean outside influences, not those with which it is informed. Wherefore the concurrence of some bodily agent is necessary, as is proved in the 7th book of the Metaphysics. Corporeal matter naturally obeys a good or bad angel as to the local motion; and it is due to this that devils can through motion collect semen, and employ it for the production of wonderful results. This was how it happened that Pharao’s magicians produced serpents and actual animals, when corresponding active and passive agents were brought together. Therefore there is nothing to prevent the devils from effecting anything that appertains to the local motion of corporeal matter, unless God prevent it.

And now let us examine how the devil can through local motion excite the fancy
and inner sensory perceptions of a man by apparitions and impulsive actions. It is to be noted that Aristotle (*De Somno et Vigilia*) assigns the cause of apparitions in dreams through local motion to the fact that, when an animal sleeps the blood flows to the inmost seat of the senses, from which descend motions or impressions which remain from past impressions preserved in the mind or inner perception; and these are Fancy or Imagination, which are the same thing according to S. Thomas, as will be shown. For fancy or imagination is as it were the treasury of ideas received through the senses. And through this it happens that devils stir up the inner perceptions, that is the power of conserving images, that they appear to be a new impression at that moment received from exterior things.

It is true that all do not agree to this; but if anyone wishes to occupy himself with this question, he must consider the number and the office of the inner perceptions. According to Avicenna, in his book *On the Mind*, these are five: namely, Common Sense, Fancy, Imagination, Thought, and Memory. But S. Thomas, in the First Part of Question 79, says that they are only four, since Fancy and Imagination are the same thing. For fear of prolixity I omit much more that has variously been said on this subject.

Only this must be said; that fancy is the treasury of ideas, but memory appears to be something different. For fancy is the treasury or repository of ideas received through the senses; but memory is the treasury of instincts, which are not received through the senses. For when a man sees a wolf, he runs away, not because of its ugly color or appearance, which are ideas received through the outer senses and conserved in his fancy; but he runs away because the wolf is his natural enemy. And this he knows through some instinct or fear, which is apart from thought, which recognized the wolf as hostile, but a
dog as friendly. But the repository of those instincts is memory. And reception and retention are two different things in animal nature; for those who are of a humid disposition receive readily, but retain badly; and the contrary is the case of those with a dry humor.

To return to the question. The apparitions that come in dreams to sleepers proceed from the ideas retained in the repository of their mind, through a natural local motion caused by the flow of blood to the first and inmost seat of their faculties of perception; and we speak of an intrinsic local motion in the head and the cells of the brain. And this can also happen through a similar local motion created by devils. Also such things happen not only to the sleeping, but even to those who are awake. For in these also the devils can stir up and excite the inner perceptions and humors, so that ideas retained in the repositories of their minds are drawn out and made apparent to the faculties of fancy and imagination, so that such men imagine these things to be true. And this is called interior temptation.

And it is no wonder that the devil can do this by his own natural power; since any man by himself, being awake and having the use of his reason, can voluntarily draw from his repositories the images he has retained in them; in such a way that he can summon to himself the images of whatsoever things he pleases. And this being granted, it is easy to understand the matter of excessive infatuation in love.

Now there are two ways in which devils can, as has been said, raise up this kind of images. Sometimes they work without enchaining the human reason, as has been said in the matter of temptation, and the example of voluntary imagination. But sometimes the use of reason is entirely chained up; and this may be exemplified by certain naturally
defective persons, and by madmen and drunkards. Therefore it is no wonder that devils can, with God’s permission, chain up the reason; and such men are called delirious, because their senses have been snatched away by the devil. And this they do in two ways, either with or without the help of witches. For Aristotle, in the work we have quoted, says that anyone who lives in passion is moved by only a little thing, as a lover by the remotest likeness of his love, and similarly with one who feels hatred. Therefore devils, who have learned from men’s acts to which passions they are chiefly subject, incite them to this sort of inordinate love or hatred, impressing their purpose on men’s imagination the more strongly and effectively, as they can do so the more easily. And this is the more easy for a lover to summon up the image of his love from his memory, and retain it pleasurably in his thoughts. But they work by witchcraft when they do these things through and at the instance of witches, by reason of a pact entered into with them. But it is not possible to treat of such matters in detail, on account of the great number of instances both among the clergy and among the laity. For how many adulterers have put away the most beautiful wives to lust after the vilest of women!

We know of an old woman who, according to the common account of the brothers in that monastery even up to this day, in this manner not only bewitched three successive Abbots, but even killed them, and in the same way drove the fourth out of his mind. For she herself publicly confessed it, and does not fear to say: I did so and I do so, and they are not able to keep from loving me because they have eaten so much of my dung—measuring off a certain length on her arm. I confess, moreover, that since we had no case to prosecute her or bring her to trial, she survives to this day.

It will be remembered that it was said that the devil invisibly lures a man to sin,
not only by means of persuasion, as has been said, but also by the means of disposition.
Although this is not very pertinent, yet be it said that by a similar admonition of the disposition and humors of men, he renders some more disposed to anger, or concupiscence, or other passions. For it is manifest that a man who has a body so disposed is more prone to concupiscence and anger and such passions; and when they are aroused, he is more apt to surrender to them. But because it is difficult to quote precedents, therefore an easier method must be found of declaring them for the admonition of the people. And in the Second Part of this book we treat of the remedies by which men so bewitched can be set free.

The Method of Preaching to the People about Infatuate Love.

Concerning what has been said above, a preacher asks this question: Is it a catholic view to maintain that witches can infect the minds of men with an inordinate love of strange women, and so inflame their hearts that by no shame or punishment, by no words or actions can they be forced to desist from such love; and that similarly they can stir up such hatred between married couples that they are unable in any way to perform the procreant functions of marriage; so that, indeed, in the untimely silence of night, they cover great distances in search of mistresses and irregular lovers?

As to this matter, he may, if he wishes, find some arguments in the preceding question. Otherwise, it need only be said that there are difficulties in those questions on account of love and hate. For these passions invade the will, which is in its own act always free, and not to be coerced by and creature except God, Who can govern it. From which it is clear that neither the devil nor a witch working by his power can force a man’s
will to love or to hate. Again, since the will, like the understanding, exists subjectively in the soul, and He alone can enter into the soul Who created it, therefore this question presents many difficulties in the matter of unraveling the truth of it.

But notwithstanding this, we must speak first of infatuation and hatred, and secondly about the bewitching of the generative power. And as to the first, although the devil cannot directly operate upon the understanding and will of man, yet, according to all the learned Theologians in the 2nd Book of Sentences, on the subject of the power of the devil, he can act upon the body, or upon the faculties belonging to or allied to the body, whether they be the inner or outer perceptions. This is authoritatively and reasonably proved in the preceding question, if one cares to look; but if not, there is the authority of Job ii: The Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand. That is, Job is in his power. But this was only in regard to the body, for He would not give his soul into his power. Wherefore He said: Only save thou his life; that is, keep it unharmed. And that power He gave him over his body, He gave also over all the faculties allied to the body, which are the four or five outer and inner perceptions, namely Common Sense, Fancy or Imagination, Thought, and Memory.

If no other instance can be given, let us take an example from pigs and sheep. For pigs know by instinct their way home. And by natural instinct sheep distinguish a wolf from a dog, knowing one to be the enemy and the other the friend of their nature. Consequently, since all our reasoned knowledge comes from the senses (for Aristotle in the 2nd book On the Mind says that an intelligent man must take notice of phantasms), therefore the devil can affect the inner fancy, and darken the understanding. And this is not to act immediately upon the mind, but through the medium of phantasms. Because,
also, nothing is loved until it is known.

As many examples as are needed could be taken from gold, which the miser loves because he knows its power, etc. Therefore when the understanding is darkened, the will also is darkened in its affectations. Moreover, the devil can effect this either with or without the help of a witch; and such things can even happen through mere want of foresight. But we shall give examples of each kind. For, as it is said in S. James i: Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Again, when Schechem saw Dinah going out to see the daughters of the land, he loved her, and seized her, and lay with her, and his soul clave unto her (Genesis xxxiv). And according to the gloss: When the infirm mind forsakes its own business, and takes heed, like Dinah, of that of other people, it is led astray by habit, and becomes one with the sinners.

Secondly, that this lust can arise apart from witchcraft, and simply through the temptation of the devil, is shown as follows. For we read in II. Samuel xiii that Ammon desperately loved his own sister Tamar, and yearned greatly for her, so that he grew ill for love for her. But no one would fall into so great and foul a crime unless he were totally corrupt, and grievously tempted by the devil. Wherefore the gloss says: This is a warning to us, and was permitted by God that we should always be on guard lest vice should get the mastery over us, and the prince of sin, who promises a false peace to those who are in danger, finding us ready should slay us unaware.

Mention is made of this sort of passion in the Book of the Holy Fathers, where it says that, however far they withdrew themselves from all carnal lusts, yet they were sometimes tempted by the love of women more than could possibly be believed.
Wherefore in II. Corinthians xii the Apostle says: There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me. On which the gloss says: It was given to me to be tempted by lust. But he who is tempted and does not yield is no sinner, but it is a matter for the exercise of virtue. And by temptation is understood that of the devil, not that of the flesh, which is always venial in a little sin. The preacher could find many examples if he pleased.

The third point, that infatuate love proceeds from the evil works of the devil, has been discussed above; and we speak of this temptation. It may be asked how it is possible to tell whether such inordinate love proceeds not from the devil but only from a witch. And the answer is that there are many ways. First, if the man tempted has a beautiful and honest wife, or the converse in the case of a woman, etc. Secondly, if the judgment of the reason is so chained up that by no blows or words or deeds, or even by shame, can he be made to desist from that lust. And thirdly, in especial, when he cannot contain himself, but that he is at times unexpectedly, and in spite of the roughness of the journey, forced to be carried through great distances (as anyone can learn from the confessions of such men), both by day and by night. For as S. John Chrysostom says on Matthew xx concerning the ass upon which Christ rode: When the devil possesses the will of a man with sin, he carries him at his will where he pleases. Giving the example of a ship in the sea without a rudder, which the winds carry about at their pleasure; and of a man firmly sitting a horse; and a King having dominion over a tyrant.

And fourthly, it is shown by the fact that they are sometimes suddenly and unexpectedly carried away, and at times transformed, so that nothing can prevent it. It is shown also by the hideousness of their very appearance. And before we proceed to the
further question of witches, touching the powers of generation, which follows, we must first resolve the arguments.

Here Follow the Resolutions of the Arguments.

But for the answer to the arguments: for the first, that the will of man is ruled by God, just as his understanding is by a good Angel, the solution is clear. For the intellect is enlightened by a good Angel only to the knowledge of the truth, from which proceeds the love of that which is good, for the True and the Actual are the same thing. So also the intellect can be darkened by a bad angel in the knowledge of what appear to be true; and this through a confusion of the ideas and images received and stored by the perceptions, from which comes an inordinate love of the apparently good, such as bodily delectation, which such men seek after.

As to the second argument, that the devil cannot effect physical changes in the body; this is in part true, and in part not, and this is with reference to three sorts of mutation. For the devil cannot change the body in such a way that its whole shape and appearance is altered (which is rather to be called a new production than a change) without the help of some agent, or with the permission of God. But if we speak of a change in quality, as in the matter of sickness and health, as has been shown before, he can inflict upon the body various diseases, even to taking away the reason, and so can cause inordinate hatred and love.

And a third kind of mutation can be added, which is when a good or bad angel enters into the body, in the same way that we say that God alone is able to enter into the soul, that is, the essence of life. But when we speak of an angel, especially a bad angel, entering the body, as in the case of an obsession, he does not enter beyond the limits of
the essence of the body; for in this way only God the Creator can enter, Who gave it to be as it were the intrinsic operation of life. But the devil is said to enter the body when he effects something about the body: for when he works, there he is, as S. John Damascene says. And then he works within the bounds of corporeal matter, but not within the very essence of the body.

For this it appears that the body has two properties, matter and spirit. And this is like the distinction between the apparent and the real. Therefore when devils enter the body, they enter the power belonging to the bodily organs, and can so create impressions on those powers. And so it happens that through such operations and impressions a phantasm is projected before the understanding, such as the seeing of colors, as it is said in the 3rd book de Anima. And so this impression penetrates also to the will. For the will takes its conception of what is good from the intellect, according as the intellect accepts something as good either in truth or in appearance.

As for the third argument: a knowledge of the thoughts of the heart may come about in two ways, either from seeing their efforts or by reading them actually in the intellect. In the first way they can be known not only by an angel, but even by man, although it will be shown that an angel has more skill in this matter. For sometimes the thoughts are made evident, not only by some external action, but even by a change in the countenance. And doctors also can discern some affections of the mind through the pulse. Wherefore S. Augustine says (de Diuin. Daem.) that sometimes it is very easy to tell a man’s disposition, not only from his words, but from his very thoughts, which are signs of the soul expressed in the body; although in his book of Retractions he says that no definite rule can be laid down how this is done; and I think that he is reluctant to admit
that the devil can know the inner thoughts of the heart.

From another point of view, the thoughts of the intellect and the affectations of the will can be known only by God. For the will of a rational creature is subject only to God, and He alone can work in it Who is its first cause and ultimate end. Therefore that which is in the will, or depends only on the will, is known only to God. Moreover, it is manifest what depends only on the will, if one considers things by their resultant actions. For when a man has the quality of knowledge, and the understanding that comes from it, he uses it when he wills.

It is proved, then, from what has been said, that a spirit cannot enter the soul, therefore he cannot, naturally, see what is in the mind, especially what is in the inner depths of the soul.

Wherefore, when it is argued that the devil cannot see the thoughts of the heart, and therefore cannot move the hearts of men to love or hatred, it is answered that he does learn men’s thoughts through their visible effects, and is more skilful in this matter than man; and so by subtle ways he can move men to love and hatred, by creating phantasms and darkening the intellect.

And this must be said by way of comfort to relieve the apprehensions of the virtuous: that when the sensible exterior and bodily change which accompanied men’s thoughts is so vague and indeterminate that the devil cannot by it arrive at any certain knowledge of the thoughts, especially when the virtuous at times take a little leisure from study and good works, he molests them then chiefly in dreams; as is known by experience. But when the physical effect of thought is strong and determinate, the devil can know by a man’s appearance whether his thoughts are turned towards envy or luxury.
But we find that it must be left an open question whether he can by this means have certain knowledge in respect of all circumstances, as such and such; although it is true that he can know such circumstances from their subsequent results.

And fourthly: although to enter the soul belongs only to God, yet it is possible for a good or bad angel to enter the body and the faculties allied to the body, in the manner which has been shown above. And in this way hatred and love can be aroused in such a man. For the other argument, that the powers of the spirit are greater than the physical powers, which themselves cannot be changed by the devil, in so far as they can be hastened or retarded in the flesh and bone.

But he does this, not for the sake of impeding or stimulating the inner or outer perceptions, but for his own gain; since he derives his chief benefit by the deception of the senses and the delusion of the intellect.

QUESTIONS

1. What does this account see as the most threatening aspect of witchcraft?

2. How does this document set the boundaries for women during the Renaissance?

3. According to this document, what roles does the Devil play in everyday life?