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KING JAMES AND THE INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES OF THE WITCHCRAFT  
PHENOMENON IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

by

LASHONDA M. SLAUGHTER

Under the Direction of Jacob Selwood, PhD

ABSTRACT

King James VI of Scotland took part in the prosecution of several witches between 1590 and 1592. As a result, the king composed and published a treatise on witchcraft that placed emphasis on popular European understandings of witchcraft, the Devil and Magic. This treatise subsequently had a profound influence on English and Scottish intellectual responses to witchcraft during the seventeenth century.

INDEX WORDS: Early Modern England, Early Modern Scotland, Witchcraft

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PHENOMENON IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

by

LASHONDA M. SLAUGHTER

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2020

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2020

KING JAMES AND THE INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES OF THE WITCHCRAFT  
PHENOMENON IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

by

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Georgia State University  
December 2020

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this to my husband Adam and my son Aiden, who have stood beside me and supported me through this journey.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### I. James VI and the Development of Sixteenth Century Witchcraft Belief

King James VI and I of Scotland and England was a prolific author who skillfully used his position and the rising popularity of and access to the printed word to inform and instruct his subjects. In 1597, he published *Daemonologie*, an eighty-eight-page treatise consisting of a comprehensive analysis of the existence and threat of diabolical witchcraft.<sup>1</sup> The treatise, formatted as a dialog between a skeptic of witchcraft's danger and a believer covered an array of topics including a witch's powers, how they obtained those powers, and the intended targets of a witch's attacks. *Daemonologie*'s two narrators, Epistemon and Philomathes, engaged in a debate about the anecdotal and scriptural evidence that for many of James's contemporaries, proved that witchcraft was real and that it posed a significant threat to all of Christianity. Witches possessed evil and unnatural abilities acquired through a pact with Satan and used them to cause serious harm to their entire community. Societal fears of evil magic were real, and publications like James's are examples of increased concern about the subject by the turn of the seventeenth century.

Personal experience led James to develop an interest in witchcraft and the Devil. Six years before the publication of *Daemonologie*, the king assisted in uncovering an alleged conspiracy to murder him and his new wife, Anne of Denmark.<sup>2</sup> *Newes from Scotland* (1592), the first witchcraft pamphlet published in Scotland, recounts the details of the plot and the prosecution of eleven accused witches in North Berwick, where the conspiracy took place.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie in Forme of a Dialogue, Divided into Three Books* (Edinburgh: Robert Walde-Grave, 1597).

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous, *Newes from Scotland, Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of Doctor Fian* (London: 1592).

<sup>3</sup> Anonymous, *Newes from Scotland*.

According to the pamphlet, the witches made sinister pacts with Satan, conducted diabolical rituals, and plotted to kill their enemies. The crimes were shocking on their own, but the more pressing significance of the acts committed in *Newes* was that the target was the king, God's anointed representative on earth. James took the allegations against the witches seriously and personally participated in the interrogation and prosecution of several of the North Berwick witches. Without the North Berwick conspiracy, James's *Daemonologie* and its subsequent influence on English and Scottish witchcraft belief would probably not exist.

Officials obtained information from the witches in North Berwick from long periods of interrogation and torture.<sup>4</sup> *Newes from Scotland* provides a detailed description of how the eldest of the accused witches, Agnes Sampson, appeared before King James and other Scottish nobles after her initial arrest and revealed the details of the entire conspiracy.<sup>5</sup> Sampson and several of her co-conspirators admitted to acts of demon worship and malicious sorcery, but more importantly, Sampson specifically admitted to attempted regicide with assistance from the Devil.<sup>6</sup> According to the pamphlet, Sampson confessed that Satan loathed the king, "by reason the king is the greatest enemy he hath in the world."<sup>7</sup> Sampson subsequently confessed to multiple acts of harmful magic, including regicide, poisoning, the ritual sacrifice of cats, the defiling of human corpses, and the conjuring of a destructive tempest.<sup>8</sup> The events relating to the North Berwick witch-hunt had a profound effect on the young monarch. After the trials, James believed that witches, in collusion with Satan, posed an increasingly dangerous threat to both himself and his subjects. The king immersed himself in the study of witchcraft, and in 1597, he

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<sup>4</sup> Anonymous, *Newes from Scotland*, B2v.

<sup>5</sup> Anonymous, *Newes from Scotland*, B2v.

<sup>6</sup> Anonymous, *Newes from Scotland*, A4r.

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous, *Newes from Scotland*, A4r.

<sup>8</sup> Anonymous, *Newes from Scotland*, A4r-Cr.

presented his findings by publishing *Daemonologie*. The insidiously unnatural activities of the North Berwick witches convinced King James of the necessity to eradicate witches, but he was in no way alone in those beliefs. By the end of the sixteenth century, public concerns about the nature of magic resulted in higher rates of witch prosecutions, which paralleled the emergence of an intellectual interest in the witchcraft phenomenon throughout Europe.

### **Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe**

Thousands of men, women, and children faced prosecution for witchcraft in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe, including Scotland and England. However, although both countries were among the European territories that prosecuted witches, prosecution rates and the methodologies used to detect and try witches differed from many of their continental neighbors. By 1597, Agnes Sampson and her North Berwick co-conspirators represented a significant percentage of witchcraft executions taking place in England and Scotland, but for the most part, numbers increased significantly throughout the next century. According to the University of Edinburgh's *Survey of Scottish Witchcraft*, in the hundred years between 1550 and 1650, over two thousand mentions of witchcraft littered records of the Scottish courts alone.<sup>9</sup> English numbers in roughly the same timespan reveal considerably lower rates of prosecution. However, according to parliamentary estimates, English courts tried at least 513 witches between 1560 and 1700.<sup>10</sup>

The nature of European witch hunts varied from place to place. However, for the most part, European hunts consistently adhered to similar sets of ideologies and processes, but the

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<sup>9</sup> Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, Joyce Miller and Louise Jeoman, "The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft," *The University of Edinburgh*, accessed October 20, 2017, <http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/witches/>.

<sup>10</sup> "Witchcraft," *Parliament of the United Kingdom*, accessed October 20 2017, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/religion/overview/witchcraft/>.

circumstances relating to English and Scottish prosecutions are somewhat unique. Both kingdoms experienced an uptick in prosecution rates after 1600,<sup>11</sup> but While Scotland's prosecutions more closely resemble outbreaks in continental Europe, the witchcraft phenomenon played out differently in England. Fewer English witches faced trial due and execution. On the one hand, England used different prosecutorial procedures (accused witches in England were tried by juries, unlike in continental Europe).<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Pamphlets published in England differed in their descriptions of magic and the behaviors of witches when compared to European publications. While Scotland's witch-hunts bore more of a resemblance to continental norms, England and Scotland share a connection. First, both kingdoms shared the same landmass, which was disconnected from the rest of Europe. Second, after 1603 a single monarch ruled both kingdoms.

One plausible contributing factor to the unique nature of English witch prosecutions lies with the 1597 release of King James' *Daemonologie*. Although at the time of the treatise's publication, James only ruled the kingdom of Scotland, political events less than a decade later significantly altered the relationship between Scotland and its southern neighbor. Queen Elizabeth I died on 24 March 1603 after forty-five years on the English throne. Elizabeth never married or gave birth to an heir, and both of her legitimate siblings, Edward VI and Mary I, died without offspring as well. This lack of progeny meant that upon the queen's death, the crown of England passed to her closest living relative, her cousin James VI of Scotland. King James ruled

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<sup>11</sup> These numbers reflect data provided by the University of Edinburgh's *Survey of Scottish Witchcraft* and a comprehensive selection of English Assize court records for the period that were compiled and edited by J.S. Cockburn in six volumes published between 1978 and 1982. J.S. Cockburn, ed., *Calendar of the Assizes Courts: Volumes I-VI, Elizabeth I – James I* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1975-1984).

<sup>12</sup> Publications from the period instruct jury members on proper approaches to witchcraft trials. In Scotland, juries also heard witchcraft cases, but there were slight differences in law and procedure. In Scotland, authorities used torture to obtain confessions, laws allowed children to be witnesses, and the regulations on admissible evidence were less strict. *An Advertisement to the Jury-Men of England Touching Witches* (London, 1653); Richard Bernard, *A Guide to Grand-Jury Men* (London, 1627).

the two kingdoms simultaneously from 1603 until he died in 1625, and his witchcraft treatise *Daemonologie* provided him with an opportunity to influence witchcraft belief throughout his expanded domain.

Intellectual works on witchcraft such as *Daemonologie* argued that witches posed a substantial threat to Europe's Christian population. The increased availability of printed works by the sixteenth century also allowed for demonological tracts to reach a wider audience. In recent years, historians Stuart Clark, Robin Briggs, and Christina Lerner have argued that several factors contributed to the increase in sixteenth and seventeenth-century witchcraft prosecutions moving away from monocausal explanations. Othering via gender or age differences, confessional conflicts, or the ramifications of war throughout Europe each played a significant role in witch prosecution rates.<sup>13</sup> However, an alternative approach exists, one that has gained relevance with Clark, Marion Gibson, and several other more recent inquiries into the complex history of European witch-hunts.<sup>14</sup>

This project examines transitions in the intellectual characterization of early modern witchcraft belief. Building on the scholarship of Christina Lerner, Barbara Rosen, Stuart Clark, James Sharpe, and Malcolm Gaskill, it will appraise the influence of demonological works such as James's *Daemonologie* on early modern ideas associated with magic and witchcraft.<sup>15</sup> This

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<sup>13</sup> Robin Briggs's *Witches & Neighbors* touches on several prevalent witchcraft theories presented by historians over the last thirty years and his hypothesis focuses on the effects of cultural and social change. According to Briggs, "The witch is an incarnation of 'the other,' a human being who has betrayed his or her natural allegiances to become an agent of evil." At the same time, Briggs emphasizes the fact that notions of diabolical witchcraft also existed in a world where usage of the occult and dabbling in the supernatural was common, even for the clergy. Robin Briggs, *Witches & Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (New York: Viking, 1996), 3-7.

<sup>14</sup> Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies, ed., *Witchcraft Historiography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Christina Lerner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2000); Christina Lerner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief* (Oxford: Basil and Blackwell, 1984); Barbara Rosen, *Witchcraft in England, 1558-1618* (Amhurst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1991); James Sharpe,

dissertation will also put James's *Daemonologie* in conversation with contemporary witchcraft treatises, medieval and early-Christian understandings of magic, and post-*Daemonologie* witchcraft publications to demonstrate the depth of James's influence on belief. James's *Daemonologie* co-opted prominent continental ideas about witchcraft and the Devil and presented them to his Scottish and English subjects as the indisputable truth about magic. Although theologians with continental influence penned treatises concerning witchcraft before *Daemonologie*, none of those authors had the authority or reach to influence the public discourse like the king. James's position and his method contributed to the broader spread of continental ideas about witchcraft in his kingdoms and significantly influenced the development of witchcraft belief, witchcraft law, and prosecutions in both England and Scotland.

Concerns associated with magic and witchcraft did not suddenly emerge during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and reservations about the use of magic existed before the publication of demonological treatises. How did the demonological treatises published roughly between 1500 and 1700 differ from previously held ideas and beliefs? In England, witchcraft accusations and trials took place in the villages and towns scattered across the countryside. Accused witches often faced charges made by friends, neighbors, and even family members. The local judicial authorities who handled prosecution resided in the accused witch's home county. On the other hand, popular ideas associated with magic and witchcraft spread outside the confines of village life and the county courts. Literacy and the ability to communicate expanded during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, allowing information and belief to spread in new ways. Historians like Tessa Watt have argued that the printed word targeted a much wider

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*Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996). Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchfinders: A Seventeenth-Century Tragedy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

audience than the wealthy and literate in society.<sup>16</sup> Broadsides, cheap pamphlets, and other forms of literature often reflected popularly held beliefs and sought to appeal to a broad audience.

Pamphlets that chronicled dramatized accounts of witch prosecutions accompanied poetry and plays performed for the monarch and in the streets. In other words, when considering the development of English and Scottish witchcraft belief, the ideas of the ordinary people mattered a great deal, they were not stagnant or unchanging, and they merit consideration when attempting to develop a comprehensive understanding of transitions in ideas about witchcraft after 1590.

Most of these shifts in English and Scottish understandings of witchcraft and magic occurred after the publication of King James's *Daemonologie*, especially after he inherited the English crown in 1603. James cultivated a collection of theological "truths" about magic and the Devil, which he felt was crucial information needed by his subjects. His ideology was influenced by numerous environmental factors that affected the lives of all Europeans during the period, including religious conflict, war, printing innovations, and political upheaval. James's perception of the world converged with his study of witchcraft in his treatise, where he warned about the dangers of witchcraft and the possibility of the disruption of social stability. James's ominous warnings about the work of Satan and the inevitable harm he caused fed into public anxieties and fears about the tumultuous present and the unseen future. *Daemonologie* blended religious belief, folklore, and intellectual curiosity with ideas about magic and the Devil, which moved from the pages of intellectual inquiry to influence the outcomes of witchcraft cases from Glasgow to London.

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<sup>16</sup> Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

## **II. The Historiography of Witchcraft Belief**

Scholarship dedicated to uncovering the underlying causes of early modern witch-hunts is abundant, containing diverse approaches, questions, and methodologies. The historical study of witchcraft's multiplicity and lack of overall consensus about causation and interpretation presents a problem for historians of the field. Why did the number of witch prosecutions increase at the end of the sixteenth century before sharply declining by the end of the seventeenth? Why were both secular and religious authorities adamantly prosecuting and executing thousands of alleged witches roughly between 1500 and 1700? To answer those questions, historians have examined religious upheaval, shifts in political thought, the development of capitalism, gender dynamics, as well as war, famine, plague, and other critical disruptions to the social order. Scholars have cited all of these factors as evidence for the timing and nature of European witchhunts.

In the last four decades, some historians of early modern witch-hunts have taken a multi-causal approach to the subject, leaning heavily on interdisciplinary methodologies.<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies argue that “the witch trials cannot be understood properly without considering the developments of science, medicine, religion, and the political and economic apparatus of the modern European state,” and recent historiography on the subject reflects that diversity.<sup>18</sup> One prominent trend in early modern witchcraft scholarship examines the history from the bottom-up. By using principles of anthropology, psychology, and literary analysis, historians have attempted to uncover the core beliefs of non-elite men and women who have left little to no trace in the archives. For example, Alan Macfarlane's *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* provides a statistical analysis of witchcraft outbreaks in the English county of Essex

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<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies, eds., *Witchcraft Historiography* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2007), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Barry and Davies, eds., *Witchcraft Historiography*, 1.



over a century.<sup>19</sup> Macfarlane's research centers on the identities of the accusers and the accused in witchcraft cases, and his study uses court records and printed material to underscore the continued practice of folk belief, the effects of economic hardship on communities, and the blaming of witchcraft for misfortune and interpersonal community conflicts.<sup>20</sup> Macfarlane's work connects to other recent studies of witchcraft like Robin Briggs' *Witches & Neighbors* (1996) and *The Witches of Warboys* (2008) by Philip C. Almond.<sup>21</sup> Both studies examine the early modern witchcraft phenomenon at the village level, searching for causation by examining social relations, beliefs, and behaviors of the ordinary people involved in documented cases of bewitchment.

Notions of authority, power dynamics, and gender play an important role in early modern witchcraft historiography, and scholars, including Keith Thomas and Deborah Willis, emphasize the importance of each in their work.<sup>22</sup> The analysis of gender and power dynamics in witchcraft cases makes sense as a majority of accused witches were women. Scholars differ in their approaches to and the interpretation of gender as an analytical tool, but most focus on the control of women and the female body. Keith Thomas's *Religion and the Decline of Magic* emphasizes the dominance of patriarchal institutions by arguing that women were wholly dependent on men during the period and legally held little to no personal rights or freedoms.<sup>23</sup> According to Thomas, a woman's position at the bottom of the early modern socio-economic ladder connected

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<sup>19</sup> The Macfarlane text provides extensive statistical data from Essex, where prosecution percentages were considerably higher in comparison to the rest of England. Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 3-13.

<sup>21</sup> Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*. Philip Almond, *The Witches of Warboys: An Extraordinary Story of Sorcery, Sadism, and Satanic Possession* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991). Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 678-679.

directly to the commonality of witchcraft accusations disproportionately affecting women.<sup>24</sup>

Thomas's explanation for the higher numbers focused on "economic and social considerations, for it was the women who were the most dependent members of the community and thus the most vulnerable to accusation."<sup>25</sup>

According to Thomas's argument, accusations of witchcraft related directly to early modern shifts in understandings of communal responsibility and charity.<sup>26</sup> Victims of bewitchment often breached longstanding codes of charity or neighborliness by refusing aid.<sup>27</sup> Thomas argues that mutual aid traditions were dying away as more commercial-centric economic trends increased, which placed the elderly and infirm who depended on aid at a disadvantage.<sup>28</sup> In theory, a witch sent away empty-handed would get their revenge on targets who "had put their selfish interests before their social duty."<sup>29</sup> However, there are several problems with Thomas's assertions that put into question his approach. Poverty was not a woman-only state of being, especially by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as shifts in agricultural production and labor changed the economic situations of men and women, and historians like Lara Apps and Andrew Gow caution against the statistically problematic argument that witches were old and infirm women.<sup>30</sup>

Deborah Willis's approach to gender and early modern witch-trials relates prosecutions to ideas surrounding motherhood.<sup>31</sup> Comparing witches to a concept of "perverse mothers,"

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 678.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 678.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 660-662.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 660.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 672-673.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 663.

<sup>30</sup> Laura Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*.

Willis argues that witches used “powers of nurture malevolently against neighbors.”<sup>32</sup> Her argument continues with the idea that “witches were – or were believed to be – mothers ‘gone bad,’ women past childbearing years who used their mothering powers against neighbors who had enraged them.”<sup>33</sup> Willis’s research examined pamphlets and records of confessions that illustrated a correlation between accused witches and motherhood. She based her connections on the presence of demonic familiars that the women cared for and fed like infants with teats filled with blood instead of milk.<sup>34</sup> Again, this overly narrowed analysis is lacking. On the one hand, Willis’s maternal thesis is unique, pointing out shifts in the understandings of familial roles and societal structures that relate to the circumstances surrounding motherhood and witchcraft.<sup>35</sup> On the other, Willis uses English sources, and her thesis about motherhood hinging on the motherly relationship with infant-like familiars stands with those sources but fails to address the fact that continental cases of witchcraft with familiars did not reflect the motherhood model. Furthermore, accusations of witchcraft were more often associated with infant death during childbirth and midwives, and not necessarily with inverted representations of motherhood.

Deborah Willis argued that women accused of witchcraft violated patriarchal norms by refusing to conform to their gender role and by being independent-minded and openly assertive.<sup>36</sup> While partially true, the analysis does not fit all cases. Other examples of gender analysis from Amy Froide and Amy Erickson add complexity to the understandings of women’s roles and their ability to maneuver outside of male control.<sup>37</sup> Neither Froide nor Erickson

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<sup>32</sup> Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*, 14.

<sup>33</sup> Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*, xi.

<sup>34</sup> Several English witchcraft pamphlets include tales about familiars, animals who give witches power in exchange for blood. Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*, 16-17.

<sup>36</sup> Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*, 9.

<sup>37</sup> Amy Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Amy Louise Erickson, *Women & Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993).

explicitly deal with accusations of witchcraft. However, both authors illustrate how some women managed to live independently, worked outside of the strict confines of English property law, and challenged patriarchal norms without facing accusations of witchcraft.<sup>38</sup> In *The Common Peace*, Cynthia Herrup argues that societal expectations, law, and procedure also contributed to a higher rate of female felony convictions over males.<sup>39</sup> According to Herrup, the saving grace of the benefit of clergy was unavailable to women, meaning “defendants who were female had no hope of routine mitigation” of convictions, and “juries still had no easy way to punish a woman without placing her life at risk.”<sup>40</sup> While gender is crucial to witchcraft analysis, criminal law and court procedures skewed conviction numbers in a way that could affect any gendered analysis of witchcraft cases. As a result, employing a specifically gendered analysis of witchcraft belief overlooks important factors that complicate the characteristics of witchcraft belief.

Understanding the shifts in perception and belief associated with witchcraft ultimately requires a multi-causal approach. Economic status, motherhood, the power structure, and gender are all necessary components of a successful analysis that seeks to uncover the causes of increased numbers of witch-hunts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In a similar vein, a purely “bottom-up” perspective is insufficient to understand early modern witchcraft fully. Examining the witchcraft phenomenon via stratified views of society pays special attention to the experiences of the accused and accusers at the village level or on the experiences of the elite. However, it is essential to avoid placing stark divisions between elite and popular culture because of the mixture of both groups in daily life. Placing too much emphasis on the

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<sup>38</sup> Most cases featured in Froide’s book contain women with very unique financial situations, allowing them freedoms that were unavailable to most poor women. Erickson’s book illustrates how women did manage to receive financial support and property despite English laws that prohibited it. These differences bring attention to a need to avoid stark gendered approaches to the witchcraft phenomenon.

<sup>39</sup> Cynthia Herrup, *The Common Peace: Participation and the Criminal Law in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 143.

<sup>40</sup> Herrup, *The Common Peace*, 143.

stratification of early modern society diminishes lines of reciprocal influence and cultural communication at both ends. Furthermore, learned scholars and elite members of society publicly expressed opinions about the witchcraft threat, and any robust analysis of the nature of witchcraft belief should not discard their contribution to the overall witchcraft narrative.

Witchcraft belief existed in many forms, from word of mouth to the printed page, and people from all sectors of society shared information. To limit the scope of analysis diminishes our ability to understand the complicated relationship between early modern society and magic.

Christina Lerner, James Sharpe, and Stuart Clark examine the state of early modern witchcraft belief through the lens of intellectual history and literary analysis.<sup>41</sup> In *Thinking with Demons*, Clark noticed a significant gap in witchcraft scholarship. He argued that by the early 1980s, modern studies of most aspects of the subject were fast appearing, but no sustained attempts had yet been made to reconsider the views of the many intellectuals – clergymen, theologians, lawyers, physicians, natural philosophers, and the like – who published books about it at the time.<sup>42</sup> For that reason, Clark’s book looks at an extensive sampling of intellectual writings on early modern witchcraft published between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. Clark argues that contemporary examples of intellectual witchcraft writing are critical to understanding the nature of witch-hunts. According to *Thinking with Demons*, several branches of intellectual inquiry influenced witchcraft theory with the legitimate rationale of demonologists drawing upon broader shifts in natural philosophy, history, religion, and politics.<sup>43</sup> Clark and fellow historian James Sharpe refuse to dismiss early modern witchcraft theory as an exercise in irrationality but instead uses literary analysis to interpret “witchcraft beliefs in terms of either

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<sup>41</sup> Lerner, *Enemies of God*. Lerner, *Witchcraft and Religion*. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*.

<sup>42</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, viii.

<sup>43</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, vii-ix.

intrinsic meaning or their capacity to inspire meaningful actions.”<sup>44</sup> James Sharpe characterizes the witchcraft phenomenon as a “subject of serious intellectual debate,” and argues that the interplay between the common people and the work of demonological scholars both significantly influenced the cultivation of witchcraft belief.<sup>45</sup> As Brian Levack put it, Clark “shows how demonology, rather than being some kind of esoteric theological specialty, was part of the mainstream of early modern intellectual life.”<sup>46</sup> One objective of this study is to expand upon Clark’s work by focusing on the influence that demonological texts, specifically, James’s *Daemonologie*, had on the construction and evolution of Scottish and English witchcraft belief. The intellectual theory of witchcraft did not cause the European witch-hunts, and Clark is correct to make such a point. He is, however, too quick to dismiss the effect that demonological works like *Daemonologie*, especially when, in the case of the latter, a sitting monarch published it and later witchcraft publications frequently quoted the treatise.<sup>47</sup>

Christina Larner’s *Witchcraft and Religion* and *Enemies of God* both considered the influence of contemporary intellectual responses to the early modern witchcraft threat. They argued that the intensity of prosecutions developed “from the beliefs and attitudes of the elite rather than spontaneous expressions from below.”<sup>48</sup> Larner’s work focused explicitly on Scottish witch-hunts and illustrated how the combination of elite and popular understandings of witchcraft contributed to the construction of Scottish witchcraft belief.<sup>49</sup> In *Enemies of God*, Larner posited three central themes relating to Scottish belief: witch-hunting was an activity fostered by the ruling class, witchcraft was an idea before it was an actual phenomenon, and

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<sup>44</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 5. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*.

<sup>45</sup> Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, 30-32.

<sup>46</sup> Brian P. Levack, “Review: *Thinking with Demons*,” in *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1999), 106.

<sup>47</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*.

<sup>48</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*. Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion*, 21.

<sup>49</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 1-3.

witch-hunts served as a possible synonym for women hunting.<sup>50</sup> Larner's emphasis on the spread of ideas about witchcraft exposed a flaw in prior studies of witchcraft in that she emphasized the importance of values over behavior. To Larner, "historical knowledge is primarily the knowledge of past dominant values; past actions and behaviors emerge in fragmented photographic stills through the distorting mirror of past beliefs."<sup>51</sup> She argued that because our historical understanding of society rests with surviving texts, we know more about values than behavior.<sup>52</sup>

Larner's scholarship serves as a starting point for studying the cultivation of a specific English and Scottish understanding of witchcraft because she recognized the influence that elite ideas had on witchcraft belief during a period where literacy and the printed word transformed how information spread and knowledge developed. However, Larner's claim that witch-hunting was an activity fostered by the ruling class is problematic, and the scope of her scholarship is limited by the fact that she mainly focuses on hunts in Scotland. In England, witch-trials were community-specific. An accused witch most likely knew their accusers, the witnesses in the case, and the jury. Moreover, equating witch-hunting to women hunting is dismissive and simplistic. More recent analysis proves that while gender was indeed a factor, it was not the primary cause of prosecutions. Men also faced accusation, prosecution, and execution for witchcraft.<sup>53</sup> English and Scottish witchcraft beliefs and the subsequent witch prosecutions developed through the participation of both the intellectual elites like James and the common folk.

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<sup>50</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 1-3.

<sup>51</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 3.

<sup>52</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 2-3.

<sup>53</sup> English and Scottish statistics of male witch prosecutions are considerably lower than women, but they are often in the double digits. In Essex, thirteen percent of the prosecutions between 1560 and 1602 included men. That said, statistics in other parts of Europe appear more even. Lashonda Slaughter, "The Forgotten Witch: The Necessity of a Reexamination of Witchcraft Historiography and the Inclusion of Male Witches," in *Journal of the Georgia Association of Historians XXXVI* (2020), 5-8.

Examining the cultivation of English and Scottish witchcraft belief requires analysis of both elite and popular understandings of magic. Practicing witchcraft was a felonious crime in seventeenth-century England and Scotland, which also influenced how the population viewed the use of magic. Historians like Marion Gibson and Brian P. Levack stress that any comprehensive examination of belief must also include an examination of law, prosecution, and punishment.<sup>54</sup> In her *Reading Witchcraft*, Marion Gibson draws attention to several surviving written and published accounts of witch prosecutions from sixteenth and seventeenth-century England.<sup>55</sup> When discussing the legal process of witch prosecution, Gibson argues that although physical evidence of court proceedings is scant, some pamphlets written about English prosecutions provide a relatively accurate depiction of cases.<sup>56</sup> According to Gibson, the prosecution of an accused witch, just like any other felony case, involved the presentation of evidence, the testimony of witnesses, and a jury-led analysis of the crime.<sup>57</sup> The entirety of the trial process exhibits how witnesses, juries, and the local authorities spread ideas about witchcraft in a formal setting, giving them legitimacy and relevance.<sup>58</sup>

Documented cases of witch-trials combined with publications about the nature of magic and sorcery give us a sampling of the prevailing characteristics of witchcraft. Brian P. Levack argues that historians should also examine witchcraft laws that “also played a role in the development of the witch-beliefs.”<sup>59</sup> Alone, fears associated with witchcraft did not lead to witch-hunting, and the increased intensity in calls for prosecution did not take place until secular

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<sup>54</sup> Marion Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches* (London: Routledge, 1999). Brian P. Levack, “Witchcraft and the Law,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>55</sup> Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft*.

<sup>56</sup> Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft*, 51.

<sup>57</sup> Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft*, 51-65.

<sup>58</sup> Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft*, 57.

<sup>59</sup> Levack, “Witchcraft and the Law,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, 468.



and religious authorities throughout Europe renounced and outlawed the practice.<sup>60</sup> According to Levack, many witchcraft beliefs, “especially those regarding the witch’s relationship with the Devil, did not acquire legitimacy until prescribed criminal procedures, especially the use of torture in criminal trials, forced witches to confess to diabolical activity.”<sup>61</sup>

Torture was common in Europe, but its use as a means of obtaining confessions in England and Scotland was ambiguous in its definition and legality. In short, the Scottish advocated for the use of torture in witchcraft prosecutions, and England did not. However, legal ambiguities complicate the legitimacy of confessions mentioned in court documents and records of witchcraft cases because not only did torture delegitimize a witch’s confession, but laws were vague in both kingdoms on what did and did not constitute torture. Levack argues that Scotland and England shared similar torture statutes, deeming the implementation of the techniques illegal unless the Privy Council gave special permission.<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, Christina Larner argued that the Scottish Privy Council not only authorized torture in October of 1591 but encouraged its use in the efforts of obtaining confessions from alleged witches.<sup>63</sup> Pamphlets published in England and Scotland beginning in the late-sixteenth century often included detailed descriptions of an alleged witch’s interrogation. In both kingdoms, officials implemented legal and extralegal methods of coercion to obtain confessions. The use of these tactics is significant because they alter the characterization of witchcraft by providing a mouthpiece for intellectual and elite understandings of witchcraft to spread as the accused witch often confessed to what the torturer asked in order to end their suffering. For that reason, recent historiographical emphasis on the

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<sup>60</sup> Levack, “Witchcraft and the Law,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, 468.

<sup>61</sup> Levack, “Witchcraft and the Law,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, 468.

<sup>62</sup> According to Levack, officials used torture under the guise of other names in Scotland, which in some cases, circumvented the law. However, pamphlets from the period, including *Newes from Scotland* (1591) contradict these claims. *Newes* includes several instances of torture. Levack, “Witchcraft and the Law,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, 475. Anonymous, *Newes from Scotland*.

<sup>63</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 70.

significance of elite and intellectual characterizations of witchcraft are especially relevant when examining the overall influence of James's *Daemonologie* on English and Scottish belief because James was both an intellectual and at the highest level of authority.

### **III. Sources of Witchcraft Belief**

Evidence of how people in early modern Scotland and England understood magic exists in surviving intellectual treatises, religious works, court records, popular pamphlets, and forms of art and entertainment. Each source offers a different interpretation of early modern witchcraft beliefs. Furthermore, the sources also touch on contributing factors in the rise of witch-hunts during the period, including gender relations, societal divisions, religious controversies political changes, and the general uncertainty of early modern life. This study uses each type of source to demonstrate how one man's personal experiences managed to influence a shift in belief and why his words and warnings to his subjects led to that shift.

The main primary source material for this project is King James's *Daemonologie*. First published in 1597 by the king's personal printer in Edinburgh, *Daemonologie* is a comprehensive explanation of James's interpretation of the witchcraft threat.<sup>64</sup> Several original prints of the treatise remain in circulation. However, this analysis used three specific prints, one housed in the British Library in London, another at the Scottish National Library in Edinburgh, and a third unique scribal manuscript of the text, which resides at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C.<sup>65</sup> Both the analysis of the text and a comparison between the printed and manuscript copies provide a comprehensive breakdown of James's understanding of witchcraft

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<sup>64</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*.

<sup>65</sup> I think a total of sixteen original prints of the treatise survive. James VI, *Daemonologie*. Scribal Manuscript, James VI, *Daemonologie in form of a dialogue*, V.a.185, Vault (Deck C), The Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.

belief and his solutions for handling the perceived witchcraft threat. His assumptions about witchcraft and how he describes the practice in *Daemonologie* when compared to English and Scottish belief before and after publication highlight shifts in the broader population's understandings of magic and the king's influence on such shifts. Furthermore, mining James's list of influences and the sources mentioned in *Daemonologie* can shed light on how James developed his views.

King James educated himself on the topic of witchcraft because of his involvement in the North Berwick witch-conspiracy of 1590-1592. An anonymous author published a pamphlet about the outbreak in 1592 titled *Newes from Scotland*. This is also crucial to the study of English and Scottish witchcraft beliefs because of its depiction of witches in the text and its record of the events surrounding James's involvement in the cases.<sup>66</sup> For example, the pamphlet includes several foundational witchcraft characteristics also mapped out by James later in *Daemonologie*. These include the demonic pact, the witch's assembly, and the advocacy of using torture to obtain confessions.<sup>67</sup> However, while *Newes from Scotland* is singularly important because of its connection to King James, English witchcraft pamphlets published before and after James's *Daemonologie* are equally relevant. They, too, provide examples of typical characteristics associated with witches, shifts in the composition of witchcraft prosecutions, and detailed accounts of the alleged witch's actions and motives that are often absent from court documents. Pamphlets give voice to the men and women involved in the witch-hunts and, in turn, shed light on community relations, motives, and past-occurrences that may hold bearing on

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<sup>66</sup> The original prints of the pamphlet do not name an author, but historians Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts argue that King James or his associate James Carmichael authored the text. These assumptions are supported by diplomatic correspondence about the North Berwick trials. Anonymous, *Newes from Scotland*. Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 291-293.

<sup>67</sup> Anonymous, *Newes from Scotland*.

the reasons for a case. A pamphlet not only contains a witch's confession, but offers clues about the cultivation of that confession and the beliefs associated with the criminal act of witchcraft fostered by the pamphlet's author, the officials interrogating the prisoner, and the witches themselves.

While pamphlets tell a story associated with the prosecution of an alleged witch, English and Scottish legal statutes along with surviving court records supply the criteria that constituted witchcraft as a crime and statistical data for how prosecution rates shifted between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in both kingdoms. The archives can never be without bias. Witchcraft pamphlets served as entertainment, moral instruction, and warnings against magic and the Devil, which all altered the honesty of the stories they told. Pamphlets are not official accounts of criminal proceedings. Surviving court records from the Scottish Kirks, the English Assize courts, and the language of the statutes against witchcraft do contain insight into the state of witchcraft belief. For example, each chapter of this study traces shifts in the legal status of magic in England and Scotland. Subtle alterations in language, description, and the timing of the witchcraft statutes illuminate changes in the public's perception and treatment of witchcraft. The English and Scottish governments enacted or made changes to their witchcraft laws during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, reflecting shifts in the perceived threat of witchcraft as a crime, but more importantly, alterations in how the laws defined witchcraft.

Official court records used in this study come from two central sources. For England, most analysis comes from the records of the English Assize courts, regional sessions that met once or twice a year and heard a majority of tried witchcraft cases.<sup>68</sup> Here I focus on Assize

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<sup>68</sup> The Assize records examined primarily include cases from Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, and Sussex. These records have been reproduced in a multi-volume edition printed between 1975 and 1982 and edited by J.S. Cockburn. The number of cases in Essex and the accessibility of the other records are the main reasons I depend on them. Historians including Marion Gibson have used the same editions in their own research. A few witchcraft

records from Essex, Kent, Hertfordshire, and Sussex that mostly offer up little more than the names of the parties involved in a case with a brief description of the charges. For example, the 21 July 1564 session of the Colchester Assizes charged Elizabeth Lowys of Great Waltham with witchcraft. Lowys allegedly bewitched and killed a three-month-old infant, a second toddler-aged child, and a husbandman by the name of Robert Wodley, according to the records.<sup>69</sup> Apart from names, residencies, and the primary criminal act, the record only contains the verdict (guilty) and that Lowys was remanded from hanging because she pled pregnancy.<sup>70</sup> However, names, locations, charges, and verdicts provide insight into the nature of prosecutions over time and, when used in tandem with the narrative accounts from English pamphlets, provide a vital tool for the historical analysis of the change in beliefs over time.

For Scottish cases, I use *A Survey of Scottish Witchcraft*, compiled by historians at the University of Edinburgh, which contains statistical information about witch trials in Scotland and brief explanations of some of the trials. Some of the Scottish cases contain more information than names and criminal charges.<sup>71</sup> Records associated with the 1662 trial of Margaret McLevin include a confession, the naming of over a dozen accomplices, and details of the torture used

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prosecutions that appeared in the Quarter Sessions of Essex county are available via the internet through *Essex Archives Online*. According to officials at the archive, the surviving Quarter Sessions records are too fragile to produce, but the contents of several of the documents are transcribed in the record database. J.S. Cockburn, ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments, James I, Volume III* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1980). J.S. Cockburn, ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Essex Indictments, James I, Volume V* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1982). J.S. Cockburn, ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Hertfordshire Indictments, James I, Volume I* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1975). J.S. Cockburn, ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Surry Indictments, James I, Volume IV* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1982). J.S. Cockburn, ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Sussex Indictments, Volume II* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1975). J.S. Cockburn, ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Essex Indictments, Elizabeth I, Volume III* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1978). J.S. Cockburn, ed., *Western Circuit Assize Orders: 1629-1648, A Calendar* (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1976). "Castleton – Depositions Concerning Witchcraft," *QSP/1/255/70-71* (Lancashire: Lancashire Archives).

<sup>69</sup> Cockburn, ed., *Essex Indictments*, 31.

<sup>70</sup> Cockburn, ed., *Essex Indictments*, 31.

<sup>71</sup> Goodare, et. al., *The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft*.

during her interrogation.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, the “Witchcraft Papers,” housed at the National Records Office in Edinburgh, contain some pre-*Daemonologie* witchcraft cases that allow for comparisons of the nature of witch prosecutions before and after James published his treatise.<sup>73</sup>

In combination with pamphlets, court records, and legal documentation, this study examines how forms of popular entertainment depicted witches during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, specifically the depiction of witches and the Devil in early modern stage productions. The most prominent examples of contemporary drama to feature witches were William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford’s *The Witch of Edmonton*, both composed and performed during the seventeenth century.<sup>74</sup> In *Macbeth*, “the weird sisters” predict the future, make ominous warnings, and serve as a pivotal plot device in Shakespeare’s tragedy. Inspired by actual events and the trial of accused witch Elizabeth Sawyer, *The Witch of Edmonton* illustrates how playwrights combined witchcraft belief, actual events, and parody to entertain early modern audiences. Each play offers a unique interpretation of English and Scottish witchcraft beliefs and echoes witchcraft characteristics found in legal statutes, intellectual treatises, pamphlets, and witch-trials of the period. Concluding the dissertation with a comprehensive analysis of popular depictions of witches after the publication of *Daemonologie* helps to demonstrate how James’s text influenced popular culture and

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<sup>72</sup> “Margaret NeLevin (14/2/1662,” *Survey of Scottish Witchcraft*, Goodare, et. al., [http://witches.shca.ed.ac.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.caserecord&caseref=C%2FEGD%2F1533&search\\_type=searchaccused&search\\_string=lastname%3D%26firstname%3D%26sex%3Deither%26maritalstatus%3DAny%26socioecstatus%3DAny%26placename%3D%26place%3Dcounty%26date%3D1500%26enddate%3D1699](http://witches.shca.ed.ac.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.caserecord&caseref=C%2FEGD%2F1533&search_type=searchaccused&search_string=lastname%3D%26firstname%3D%26sex%3Deither%26maritalstatus%3DAny%26socioecstatus%3DAny%26placename%3D%26place%3Dcounty%26date%3D1500%26enddate%3D1699)

<sup>73</sup> Scottish witchcraft cases also appear in George Black’s edited collection of cases from 1510 to 1727, and a statistical analysis of Scottish witch-prosecutions *A Source-book of Scottish Witchcraft*. “Witchcraft Papers,” JC40/5 (Edinburgh: Scottish National Records Office). George F. Black, ed., *A Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft in Scotland: 1510 to 1727* (New York: New York Public Library, 1938). Christina Lerner, Christopher Hyde Lee, and Hugh V. McLachlan, eds., *A Source-book of Scottish Witchcraft* (Glasgow: Grimsay Press, 2005).

<sup>74</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth: A Norton Critical Edition*, ed., Robert Miola (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 2004). William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton: A Known True Story* (London, 1658).

subsequent manifestations of witchcraft belief. Together with treatises like *Daemonologie*, and other depictions of witches, early modern entertainment will provide the foundational source material for illustrating how James's treatise changed the way his subjects in both kingdoms understood the relationship between magic and the Devil.

#### **IV. The Importance of Textual Analysis in Documenting Shifts in Belief**

The primary goal of this study is to illustrate that James's *Daemonologie* significantly influenced narrative shifts in witchcraft beliefs for both England and Scotland during the seventeenth century. Historians like Stuart Clark have proven that the published works of early modern demonologists must be taken into account when attempting to understand the evolution of the witch-panics of the period. However, the position and authority of an author also hold significance when that author is the king. For that reason, it is not only necessary to deconstruct the message and arguments contained in *Daemonologie* but also to understand the language of other contemporary examples of English and Scottish witchcraft publications.

Treatises, pamphlets, cheap print, and public performance significantly increased the dissemination of ideas associated with witchcraft and magic. Peter Burke argues that these cultural forms were tools for enforcing orthodoxy.<sup>75</sup> Religious and secular authorities used print and performance to infiltrate popular belief and convey lessons in conformity.<sup>76</sup> Keeping that in mind, any comprehensive examination of the origins and transformations of English and Scottish witchcraft characteristics necessitates an exploration of the language used to describe supernatural events. Stuart Clark argues that "to make any sense of the witchcraft beliefs of the

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<sup>75</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 170.

<sup>76</sup> Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 170.

past we need to begin with language.”<sup>77</sup> Textual representation is one way that historians can connect to their subjects, giving historical actors who have little to no agency in the archives gain a voice. Textual analysis not only helps us interpret the language of a text, but reveals the authority of the author, as well as the voices, present and missing within that text. Language conveys more than a description of events but provides inroads into the minds of those who appear in the story. According to Marion Gibson, the authors of witchcraft texts produced those stories for more than one reason, and those reasons point towards motive, authority, and belief.<sup>78</sup>

In conjunction with textual analysis, this study relies heavily on the methodology associated with the work of historians of transformations in intellectual ideologies. Critics of intellectual history often misrepresent the field as a limited examination of elite ideological expression, but that description is both reductionist and dismissive. Intellectual history seeks “to recover the assumptions and contexts which contributed to the fullness of meaning that such writing possessed for their original publics.”<sup>79</sup> Peter E. Gordon argues that historians teeter between two “understandings” of historical analysis, which are painstakingly evident in the study of intellectual history.<sup>80</sup> Historians either think of history as “an exercise in reconstruction” with an aim “to rebuild for ourselves its language and its customs” or view history as “a discipline that is devoted primarily to the study of change.”<sup>81</sup> However, Gordon argues that both ideas should be implemented in comprehensive historical analysis, “especially in the practice of intellectual history,” which relies on contextual analysis to understand what the archives do not

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<sup>77</sup> Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 3.

<sup>78</sup> Marion Gibson, “Thinking Witchcraft: Language, Literature, and Intellectual History,” in Barry and Davies, eds., *Witchcraft Historiography*, 165.

<sup>79</sup> Stefan Collini, “Intellectual History,” *Making History: The Changing Face of the Profession in Britain*, The University College of London School of Advanced Study (London: The University College of London, 2008), accessed April 3, 2020, [https://archives.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/intellectual\\_history.html](https://archives.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/intellectual_history.html).

<sup>80</sup> Peter E. Gordon, “Contextualism and Criticism in the History of Ideas,” in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 33-34.

<sup>81</sup> Gordon, “Contextualism and Criticism,” in McMahon and Moyn eds., *Rethinking Modern*, 34.



say.<sup>82</sup> These ideas are especially significant in the case of deconstructing shifts in English and Scottish witchcraft beliefs because we can use the texts that exist to examine the mindset of the authorities who had a platform for their voices and also analyzing the language of texts like *Daemonologie*.

An examination of language, meaning, and authorship allows us to make conclusions about the state of belief within the cultures that produced it. Intellectual witchcraft treatises, including *Daemonologie*, possessed the power of information and influence with language that sought to make an educated argument proving that witchcraft existed and that it posed a significant threat to the safety of the public. This is particularly relevant to *Daemonologie* and its influence on English and Scottish witchcraft belief because the authority of its author reinforced its significance. James's status as king directly correlates to the spread of beliefs espoused in *Daemonologie*. James's interpretation of witchcraft was the product of his exposure to continental belief, and *Daemonologie* served as a conduit for that belief leading to its spread into England and Scotland. For that reason, the authorship of *Daemonologie* is critical to understanding why belief began to change.

Historians like Marion Gibson approach the study of witchcraft with an emphasis on textual analysis by borrowing methodologies from linguists, philosophers, anthropologists, and literary critics to delve into the underlying meanings behind the language of witchcraft writing.<sup>83</sup> Connections between early modern understandings of witchcraft and the influence of works like *Daemonologie* become apparent when employing methodologies similar to Gibson's style of textual analysis. The analysis highlights the primary characteristics used by those who penned European witchcraft treatises while also illustrating how those opinions spread into England and

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<sup>82</sup> Gordon, "Contextualism and Criticism," in McMahon and Moyn eds., *Rethinking Modern*, 34.

<sup>83</sup> Gibson, "Thinking Witchcraft," in Barry and Davies, eds, *Witchcraft Historiography*, 164.

Scotland through James. Emphasizing the influence of intellectual works is important because “the witch-hunters – the ideologists, prosecutors and judges of the witch trials – were the intellectual elite of the period, educated men of reason,” and these thinkers and representatives of authority warned the public about the threat of witchcraft with rational, documented, and educated language.<sup>84</sup> Examining the power and authority associated with the language of published witchcraft accounts does not exclude the beliefs or behaviors of the wider public. Following in the steps of historians like Stuart Clark, Orna Darr, and Christina Lerner, this study examines contemporary studies of witchcraft with what Darr calls an “Enlightenment approach,” meaning interpreting the ideas posited by contemporary demonologists as a rational field of study and not as manifestations of ulterior motives or unfettered superstitious belief.<sup>85</sup> Authors like Kramer, James, and Jean Bodin approached the subject of witchcraft and demonology with the same intellectual curiosity and study as they did with other relevant topics of the day, including governance and scripture.

Although a concentrated analysis of intellectual developments provides many tools for analyzing the development of early modern witchcraft belief, using it alongside other methodological approaches such as cultural history and literary analysis provides a more robust examination of witchcraft beliefs from several perspectives. In turn, using both the sophisticated works of the educated elite while also taking into consideration the beliefs held by a wider population develops a better understanding of how those ideas came together. In an article on

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<sup>84</sup> There is some debate among historians over the level of elite participation in early modern witch prosecutions. Authors like Deborah Willis argue that common people, specifically women, played a key role in the accusation and trial process. The authority presiding over the prosecutions the higher ranks of society in Willis’s examination. However, the participation of the community does not exclude the influence of the elite. Judges, clergy, local nobility, and the monarchy actively spoke to the subjects in England and Scotland and saw it as their duty to teach and guide the people. Orna Darr, *Marks of an Absolute Witch: Evidentiary Dilemmas in Early Modern England* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2000), 8. Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 34-37.

<sup>85</sup> Darr, *Marks of an Absolute Witch*, 19.

teaching history through the examination of popular culture, Benjamin Leff asked, “how can a historian use a popular culture text as a historical source?”<sup>86</sup> The study of “popular culture” does have its pitfalls. According to Bob Scribner, “historians of ‘popular culture’ have become increasingly dissatisfied with some of its underlying conceptual assumptions, not least the ‘two-tier model’ which constructs ‘popular’ and ‘elite’ culture as analytically distinct categories for the purpose of investigation.”<sup>87</sup> For Scribner, cultural history’s value lies in its ability to merge stratifications in society and expose common themes in behavior and belief.

To better understand the development of Scottish and English witchcraft beliefs, this study explores the changeable nature of all levels of early modern society through the examination of intellectual scholarship, language, art, performance, pamphlets, cheap print, and legal documentation and procedure. With an approach that looks at historical realities, authorship, intention, social origin and background, this study examines each source to compare behaviors and perspectives throughout the period in order to discern how knowledge of and belief in witchcraft as a threat developed.<sup>88</sup> Scribner and historians like Tessa Watt refer to Alfred Kroeber and Peter Burke’s analytical model that defines culture as “a system of shared meaning, attitudes and values, and symbolic forms (performances, artifacts) in which they are expressed and embodied.”<sup>89</sup> And although Burke’s model stratified society, Scribner’s “total

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<sup>86</sup> Benjamin J. Leff, “Popular Culture as Historical Text: Using Mass Media to Teach American History,” in *The History Teacher* 50, no. 2 (February 2017), 228.

<sup>87</sup> Ray Browne defines “popular culture” as “the way of life in which and by which most people in any society live.” Bob Scribner, “Is a History of Popular Culture Possible,” in *History of European Ideas* 10, no. 2 (1989), 175. Ray Browne, “The Voice of Popular Culture in History,” in *Perspectives on History* (May 1997), accessed January 13, 2020, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-1997/the-voice-of-popular-culture-in-history>.

<sup>88</sup> Leff, “Popular Culture as Historical Texts,” *The History Teacher*, 229.

<sup>89</sup> Both point out flaws in the model, but Watt asks an important question by saying, “Should we completely abandon the concept of ‘popular culture,’ or can we find a more constructive way of using it?” Scribner, “Is a History of Popular Culture Possible,” *History of European Ideas*, 181-182. Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 2.

unified culture” works perfectly.<sup>90</sup> What defines culture is in no way fixed, identifying what is “culture” is not uniform, but rather a complicated set of “complex processes of inculcation, appropriation, competition, assimilation, or rejection of any given set of cultural values or practices.”<sup>91</sup> Browne, in turn, argues that historians must expand our understanding of what popular culture is, not limiting our scope to popular entertainment because it is only one part of a large whole.<sup>92</sup> The producers of popular texts like pamphlets, intellectual treatises, broadsides, and newspapers composed those works with a specific perspective and purpose in mind, which underscores prominent patterns of belief in their place and time.<sup>93</sup>

Literary analysis is a valuable tool when examining the physical production of popular culture. It allows us to understand changes in narrative and approach in representations of witchcraft belief as they traveled from the pages of intellectual treatises to the streets of London and Edinburgh. Joseph Kelley and Timothy Kelley argue that the bond between literary criticism and historical research is essential, and “looking at the value of literary ‘texts’ as evidence for historical explanation” is paramount to understanding the past.<sup>94</sup> To that end, using aspects of a narrative or discursive approach to historical analysis rejects a lack of agency or influence in historical actors, using examples from all aspects of a culture to illustrate how beliefs and behaviors changed individually and induced shifts in society.<sup>95</sup> Close examination of witchcraft texts provides linguistic hints about the state of belief in England and Scotland because “the

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<sup>90</sup> Scribner, “Is a History of Popular Culture Possible,” *History of European Ideas*, 181-182. Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, 2.

<sup>91</sup> Scribner, “Is a History of Popular Culture Possible,” *History of European Ideas*, 182.

<sup>92</sup> The study of folklore, belief, behavior, dress, eating and gathering habits, etiquette, art, and prevailing thought are all facets of cultural analysis that can point to how beliefs developed during a specific period. Browne, “The Voice of Popular Culture in History.”

<sup>93</sup> Leff, “Popular Culture as Historical Texts,” *The History Teacher*, 229.

<sup>94</sup> Joseph Kelley and Timothy Kelly, “Social History Update: Searching the Dark Alley: New Historicism and Social History,” in *The Journal for Social History* 25, no. 3 (1992), 677.

<sup>95</sup> Jürgen Pieters, “New Historicism: Postmodern Historiography Between Narrativism and Heterology,” in *History and Theory* 39, no. 1 (Feb. 2000), 22-24.

cultural meaning of any particular act is determined by a whole system of constitutive rules.”<sup>96</sup> This underlines how in “the same way the grammar of language enables meaning, cultural rules make events, actions, and expressions possible.”<sup>97</sup> Examining a wide variety of depictions of witchcraft belief unearths the introduction and spread of several significant cultural markers, which illuminate how the ideologies associated with magic shifted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Literary markers include the identity of the audience, connections between abstract and concrete societal beliefs, and the reasons why certain men and women faced accusation and execution for witchcraft.

The use of literary analysis is particularly critical when examining dramatized representations of witchcraft in works like Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* because it highlights cultural markers that, in turn, reflect the state of witchcraft belief. This approach avoids the rigidity of a “history from the bottom up” and develops a more nuanced and less stratifying examination of social history. For example, Jonathan Goldberg’s analysis of Jacobean theater highlights how plays produced during the reign of James I reflect the importance of monarchical power and supreme authority.<sup>98</sup> That is not to say that no stratification existed in English and Scottish society, but it does imply that people were not merely elite or peasant, educated or uneducated, informed or ignorant. Using these methodologies uncovers how early modern English and Scottish beliefs relating to magic, witchcraft, and the Devil contained characteristics affected by understandings of gender, order, authority, and religion. More importantly, they provide the theoretical framework to demonstrate how King James’s *Daemonologie* played a significant role in the shaping of English and Scottish witchcraft belief during the seventeenth century.

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<sup>96</sup> Kelley and Kelly, “Social History Update,” 680.

<sup>97</sup> Kelley and Kelly, “Social History Update,” 680.

<sup>98</sup> Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Johnson, Shakespeare, and Their Contemporaries* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 6-7.

## V. Early Modern Shifts in Witchcraft Characteristics and Belief

Chapter One delves into the realm of pre-modern understandings of witchcraft and sorcery. The analysis begins with the Old Testament's "The Witch of Endor" and then examines the pre-modern works of Christian fathers like St. Augustine, who addressed concerns about practicing magic that both sharply contrast and directly relate to early modern witchcraft belief.<sup>99</sup> King James's collection of published works mainly consists of biblical and religious commentary, and when the king did venture into politics and the nature of kingship, his works still reflected his religious beliefs. In other words, James considered himself a theological scholar who read the masters of religious thought and who possessed a substantial amount of knowledge on scripture, doctrine, and religious history. Although he composed *Daemonologie* amidst the Reformation, religious controversy, wars, and at the edge of the scientific revolution, pre-modern controversies in the Church and European politics likewise influenced how theologians and laypeople viewed magic. Thus, chapter one explores theologically relevant religious texts and historically relevant events that expose new connections between magic and the Devil.

The second chapter, "The Origins and Structural Foundations of Diabolical Witchcraft," surveys the state of witchcraft belief in early modern Europe to highlight contemporary influences on the development of James's understanding of witchcraft. First, the chapter addresses shifts in the historiography of early modern witchcraft by acknowledging recent attempts to re-examine the importance of demonology as an intellectual field of study during the period and agreeing that historians should take the work of demonologists seriously. By examining King James's personal library, prominent theological scholars, and numerous publications on witchcraft, the chapter follows the development of demonological scholarship

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<sup>99</sup> "I Samuel 28: 3-20," in *The Holy Bible Translated from the Latin Vulgate: Diligently Compared with the Hebrew, Greek, and Other Editions, in Divers languages* [reprint] (Dublin: James Duffy and Sons, 1857), 215-216.

from the late fifteenth century to the height of witch-prosecutions in the 1600s. For example, the analysis includes the seminal demonological text, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, a late fifteenth-century inquisitorial manual for the hunting and prosecution of diabolical witches.<sup>100</sup> By recognizing the state of demonological belief in England and Scotland in the late-sixteenth-century and highlighting intellectual influences on the development of James's understanding of witchcraft, the analysis provides evidence of a less-structured and cohesive witchcraft narrative existing in England and Scotland before the publication of James's *Daemonologie*.

The third chapter reviews the series of events that motivated James to study witchcraft and provides the contextual evidence which substantiates the argument that his 1597 publication of *Daemonologie* had significant influence over shifts in English and Scottish witchcraft characteristics during the seventeenth century. First, the chapter examines King James's political and personal past to provide a context for his later actions. The young king's brief encounter with alleged witches did not single-handedly cause James to pen such a lengthy and detailed warning about witchcraft and the danger it posed. The chapter also argues that the king's extensive life experiences as Scotland's monarch since infancy played a significant role in the message and tone of his witchcraft treatise. Next, chapter three provides a comprehensive analysis of the two published texts that summarize James's beliefs, *Newes from Scotland* and *Daemonologie*. Both texts circulated as James transitioned from the head of a small European kingdom to the King of England. Both texts warn James's subjects about the deadly threat of diabolical witches, and both texts charge their readers to take action or face dire consequences.

Personal experiences aside, James ruled amid religious controversy, political intrigues, and social instability, as well as general disorder and rebellion, all of which influenced his

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<sup>100</sup> Christopher S. Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

decisions as a Christian and as King. James's ideology of kingship centered on the understanding that the king was divinely appointed by God and the steward of his people. As a result, James's *Daemonologie* was not a mere suggestion for dealing with witchcraft and the Devil, but well-documented guidelines from king to subjects on the necessity of hunting down and eradicating all witches.<sup>101</sup>

The dissertation closes with a demonstration of how *Daemonologie* and the characteristics of diabolical witchcraft he promoted influenced popular belief and intellectual thought post-1600. "Daemonologie in Practice and Print" examines several manifestations of seventeenth-century witchcraft belief, including witch trials, shifts in the law, popular responses, and depictions of witchcraft in several forms of printed material. Reinforcing the overall thesis of the study, the content of chapter four illustrates how direct and indirect references to James's treatise appear on the English stage, in witchcraft pamphlets, legal statutes, and court proceedings, exhibiting *Daemonologie's* influence on English and Scottish witchcraft belief. The seventeenth century brought on a series of immense changes and serious conflicts for England and its northern neighbor that made it easier for scholars and the wider population alike to place blame on Satan and his army of witches. As a result of confessional divides and civil wars, advocates for the virulent eradication of the witchcraft threat like Matthew Hopkins roamed the countryside to rid towns and villages of their deadly witches and published lengthy and detailed accounts of their work.<sup>102</sup> James's intellectual curiosity and concern about the witchcraft threat led to a dissemination of continental beliefs. After 1600, England and Scotland both passed

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<sup>101</sup> James's understanding of kingship plays a significant role in the production and publication of *Daemonologie* in that his interpretation of royal authority and obligation meant that as king, he had an obligation to lead and instruct his subjects and the people had a reciprocal obligation to do as he commanded.

<sup>102</sup> Matthew Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches in Several Queries, Lately Delivered to the Judges of the Assize for the County of Norfolk* (London, 1647).



stricter witchcraft statutes, which increased prosecution rates. More accusations of witchcraft raised the public's awareness, and a rise in scholarly and popular literature on the subject followed.

## 2 “THOU SHALT NOT SUFFER A WITCH TO LIVE:” THE ORIGINS OF THE WITCHCRAFT NARRATIVE

The Old Testament’s *I Samuel* includes the story of Saul, King of Israel, who faced the threat of a mighty Philistine army.<sup>103</sup> On the eve of his most decisive battle, Saul prayed to and pled with God to guide him, but God did not speak to him.<sup>104</sup> Devastated and afraid, Saul sought the assistance of one who possessed the ability to provide him with answers, “And Saul said to his servants: Seek me a woman that hath a divining spirit and I will go to her and enquire by her.”<sup>105</sup> Saul desperately needed guidance or an assurance of his victory in the upcoming battle. As a result, Saul ventured to Endor in disguise to consult with a woman who summoned the spirit of Samuel, which revealed the King’s fate.<sup>106</sup> Scholars refer to the passage in *I Samuel* 28: 3-20 as “The Witch of Endor.” Early modern demonological treatises, including James’s *Daemonologie*, cite “The Witch of Endor” as proof of witchcraft’s existence.<sup>107</sup> Although the story’s significance expands beyond scriptural references to the practice of magic and sorcery, the tale of Saul’s consultation with a conjured spirit also illuminates the scope and age of the witchcraft narrative.

Magic, sorcery, and witchcraft were not newfound discoveries in early modern England and Scotland, but concepts rooted in much older beliefs and traditions. To understand the transformation of the witchcraft narrative after the publication of James’ *Daemonologie*, we must first delve into the nature of witchcraft belief before 1597. Although examples like “The Witch of Endor” demonstrate a longstanding belief in magic and witchcraft, sentiments and perceptions

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<sup>103</sup> I Sam. 28: 3-20, *The Holy Bible Translated from the Latin Vulgate: Diligently Compared with the Hebrew, Greek, and Other Editions, in Divers Languages* (Dublin: James Duffy and Sons, 1857), 215-216.

<sup>104</sup> When I reference *I Samuel*, the older translations will have *I Kings. The Holy Bible*, 215-216.

<sup>105</sup> I Sam. 28: 3-20, *Holy Bible Translated*, 216.

<sup>106</sup> I Sam. 28: 3-20, *Holy Bible Translated*, 216.

<sup>107</sup> James VI, King of Scotland, *Daemonologie in Form of a Dialogue, Divided into three Bookes* (Edinburgh: Robert Walde-Grave, 1597), 3-5.

changed over time. To accurately map out the development of belief, it is essential to provide a contextual background to the history of witchcraft. Each chapter of this dissertation examines aspects of the witchcraft narrative. I use this format to underscore certain foundational elements of the witchcraft prosecutions in England, Scotland, and the rest of continental Europe before the publication of *Daemonologie* in order to identify how understandings changed over time.

Historians still tend to separate historical attitudes towards witchcraft into two distinct categories, intellectual and social.<sup>108</sup> More importantly, historians of witchcraft focus mainly on the period of heightened witch-prosecution, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Citing the advent of new scientific discovery or the Reformation, medieval magic and the belief systems associated with it take a backseat.<sup>109</sup> However, the Church in the middle ages also experienced periods of crisis and transition like the Great Schism in 1378. Although the medieval European population did use magic as “a tool for dealing with ontological and epistemological problems of their age,” perceptions and understandings of magic changed very little during the period.<sup>110</sup> Theologians spoke out against sorcery, and accused magicians faced prosecution. While there is dissonance in whether popular or intellectual understandings of witchcraft were dominant in the middle ages, historians have come to a consensus on the assertion that understandings of

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<sup>108</sup> Responses to witchcraft are most commonly seen (especially in the middle ages) in public responses to witchcraft accusations or in theological writing on the subject, which makes sense as to why historians categorize attitudes that way, but I believe there is significant transmission of ideas through increased clerical contact with the public during the high middle ages. William Monter, “The Historiography of European Witchcraft: Progress and Prospects,” in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (MIT Press, Spring 1972), 435.

<sup>109</sup> Clark, Trevor-Roper, Norman Cohn, and even Richard Kieckhefer all agree that medieval witchcraft belief stemmed from either residual pagan traditions or the work of intellectuals. While each of them delve into the nature of medieval magic, it is often a precursor to the early modern hunts or transitions in interpreting topics like orthodoxy, heresy, and the Devil. Peter Elmer, “Science, Medicine, and Witchcraft,” in *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), Barry and Davies, eds., 44.

<sup>110</sup> Michael D. Bailey, “The Disenchantment of Magic: Spells, Charms, and Superstitions in Early European Witchcraft Literature,” in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 2 (Oxford University Press, April 2006), 386.

witchcraft and magic began to shift during the period and increasingly contain connections to the diabolical and Satan.<sup>111</sup>

When examining the development of witchcraft belief, this study uses the word “narrative” to discuss the cosmology of the witchcraft phenomenon of the early modern period, specifically in England and Scotland.<sup>112</sup> As a scholarly tool, using narrative does not mean constructing a story without any concrete evidential basis, even for the demonologists. Maurice Mandelbaum argued that equating narrative to a story “is far too simplistic,” and it neglects the scholarship of the historian.<sup>113</sup> On the same level, dismissing the witchcraft narrative as a story about superstition and magic overlooks the scholarship of theological and intellectuals who contributed to the evolution of belief. The grand narrative associated with witchcraft and witch prosecution in the early modern period did include storytelling and the construction of distinct characteristics, but it also originated in intellectual thought. The story and belief connected to witchcraft in the early modern period developed over time through the works of ancient philosophers, early church fathers, and medieval theologians.

Witchcraft belief continued to transform throughout the middle ages, while also maintaining ancient and biblical roots. In *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages*, Jeffrey Burton Russell describes witchcraft as “sometimes refers to simple sorcery, the charms of spells used by simple people in all times and all over the world to accomplish such practical ends as healing a

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<sup>111</sup> Bailey, Trevor-Roper, Cohn, Clark, Kieckhefer, and Monter each argue that understandings of magic shifted towards the diabolical during the middle ages. Elmer, in Barry and Davies, eds. Monter, in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), xi. Kieckhefer, 9.

<sup>112</sup> I am using “narrative” as “in structuralist and post-structuralist theory,” is “a representation of history, biography, process, etc., in which a sequence of events has been constructed into a story in accordance with a particular ideology. “Narrative, n.,” *The Oxford English Dictionary*, last modified June 2003, accessed March 15, 2019, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.gsu.edu/view/Entry/125146?rskey=9RVOnt&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>.

<sup>113</sup> Richard Ely, Rolf Gruner, and William Dray, “Mandelbaum on Historical Narrative: A Discussion,” in *History and Theory* 8, no. 2 (New York: Wiley, 1969), 275-276.

child, assuring the fertility of crops or the abundance of game.”<sup>114</sup> However, witchcraft also had more sinister characteristics relating to harmful magic and the Devil. According to Russell, concepts of both good and bad magic coexisted and “Whether the accused witch ever believed or practiced the Satanism attributed to them or whether it was wholly projected upon them by their enemies, the conviction that Satanic witchcraft was real pervaded western society for three centuries...”<sup>115</sup>

Russell’s definition of witchcraft emphasizes a few central characteristics of belief while glossing over others. First, sorcery existed long before 1400, and the connection between magic and the Devil did not materialize suddenly. Second, while flawed, Russell’s third definition of witchcraft perfectly describes the foundations of the early modern witchcraft narrative, its practical use, and the outcome of the spread of those beliefs. Russell’s multi-faceted explanation of witchcraft illustrates that the idea of witchcraft was fluid and not permanently set. He is correct by arguing that by 1400, a unique and specific stereotype of the witch began to emerge and was used by both secular and ecclesiastical authorities to prosecute offenders. That said, foundational pieces of early modern witchcraft belief appeared as early as the New Testament and continued to develop over time, especially as the medieval church underwent its period of transformation and standardization.

This chapter includes a brief overview of the history of witchcraft from ancient representations to the close of the medieval period, or around 1400. By providing examples from several historical moments, we can develop a better understanding of how the witchcraft narrative evolved throughout the early modern period and highlight the influence that James’s

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<sup>114</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 295-296.

<sup>115</sup> Russell, *Lucifer*, 295-296.

*Daemonologie* had on shifts in understanding and belief following its 1597 debut. The chapter also examines language about and responses to the subject of witchcraft, as well as the motivations behind those responses. When examining the association of ancient and medieval ideas concerning magic, necromancy, and witchcraft, the language used to define magic highlights the nature of a society's perception or understanding of magic at a specific time. Additionally, the reasons theologians condemned, and accepted magic also transformed over time. Factors including Christianization, education, and Church (both theological and institutional) development influenced the ecclesiastical and secular responses to magic. Similarly, in examining how the Church and the public punished magic users, we can see what people believed about witchcraft before the early modern period.

### **I. Early Witchcraft Belief**

Men and women who possessed the ability to harness magical powers appear in the records of several early civilizations. Characteristics of early modern European witchcraft beliefs have origins directly tied to ideas developed in Ancient Greece and the Roman empire. For example, in the *Homeric Hymns to Demeter* written in the seventh century B.C.E., the Anatolian goddess Hecate was associated with the patronage of sorcery and demons.<sup>116</sup> This affiliation with witchcraft continued into the early modern period when Shakespeare featured the goddess in the play, *Macbeth*.<sup>117</sup> The play contains three women referred to as the “weird sisters” who dance, cast spells, and prophesize the future, but also serve as subordinates to Hecate.<sup>118</sup> Shakespeare's

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<sup>116</sup> Victor H. Matthews, “Hecate,” in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition, volume II*, Richard M. Golden, ed. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 479.

<sup>117</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth: A Norton Critical Edition*, Robert S. Miola, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), 49-50.

<sup>118</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*. Matthews, in *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, 479.

sisters mix ancient ideas about witchcraft with early modern perceptions of witches. The weird sisters underline the creation of a unique early modern witchcraft ideology that relates directly to much older manifestations of witchcraft belief, which were interpreted and transformed by later religious and secular authorities.

### **Magical Thought in Biblical Text**

Biblical references to sorcery and magic serve as an essential part of the developing witchcraft narrative from the first Church fathers to the early modern period. In both the Old Testament and New, people who possessed supernatural ability enticed and repelled Kings and apostles alike. Theologians, including Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, cite several biblical passages when examining the nature of magic during their lifetimes. Although there are dozens of references to magic and sorcery in the Bible, ecclesiastical authorities, Church fathers, and secular experts regularly mention three specific examples, *I Samuel 28: 3-20* (The Witch of Endor), *Exodus 22:18*, and the temptation of Eve in *Genesis*.

#### *The Witch of Endor*

Ecclesiastical scholars used the Old Testament's *I Samuel 28: 3-20*, The Witch of Endor, which includes the consultation of spirits and divination, to prove the existence of magic.<sup>119</sup> Before his encounter with the witch, King Saul expelled all sorcerers from the kingdom of

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<sup>119</sup> Meaning that demonologists used biblical reference as proof of the reality of witches. They looked upon the Bible as fact, and if a passage validated the existence of a sorcerer and necromancer, the demonologists used it as verified truth. Although Saul knew that soothsayers and necromancers were evil, he sought the use of one when he was desperate, which would point to the fact that people had magical abilities and were able to do what they professed to do. In other words, these biblical witches possessed supernatural ability and were not fakes or charlatans. On the other hand, Saul did attempt to contact God first, "And he consulted the Lord, and he answered him not, neither by dreams, not by priests, nor by prophets." *The Holy Bible*, 215-216.

Israel.<sup>120</sup> As a result, *I Samuel* not only confirms the existence of magic (solid proof in the eyes of theologians), but the passage also provides later Church scholars with the basis for theological arguments against the use of magic.<sup>121</sup> All the same, when Saul feared the outcome of his upcoming battle, he turned to magic. During the encounter, Saul witnessed the witch summon a spirit. The spirit warned Saul of the destruction of his armies and his ultimate demise, which occurred as “the Israelites were defeated at the Battle of Gilboa, Saul’s sons were killed, and he committed suicide by falling on his sword.”<sup>122</sup>

The language used in the bible passage is essential to developing an understanding of the ideological construction of early modern witchcraft belief in that it provides insight into how the earliest Christians interpreted magic and sorcery. On the one hand, the witch used magic to conjure the dead, and a spirit with Samuel’s appearance did emerge.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, the spirit provided accurate information while also revealing to Saul why God no longer spoke to him.<sup>124</sup> However, the language in the passage also illustrates that at least by the time of the Old Testament, the practice of sorcery and magic was discouraged. For example, the danger associated with sorcery was so severe that the witch in *I Samuel* made Saul guarantee her safety before using magic in his presence: “And the woman said to him: Behold thou knowest all that Saul hath done, and how he hath rooted out the magicians and soothsayers from the land: why then doest thou lay a snare for my life, to cause me to be put to death.”<sup>125</sup>

Scholarly interpretations of “The Witch of Endor” changed over time. Fourth and fifth-century theologian St. Augustine questioned the identity of the spirit summoned by the witch in *I*

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<sup>120</sup> I Sam. 28: 3-20, *The Holy Bible*, 215-216.

<sup>121</sup> I Sam. 28: 3-20, *The Holy Bible*, 215-216.

<sup>122</sup> I Sam. 28: 3-20, *The Holy Bible*, 215-216. Charles Zika, “Endor, Witch of,” in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition, Volume II*, Richard M. Golden, ed. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 308-309.

<sup>123</sup> I Sam. 28: 3-20, *The Holy Bible*, 215-216.

<sup>124</sup> I Sam. 28: 3-20, *The Holy Bible*, 215-216.

<sup>125</sup> I Sam. 28: 3-20, *The Holy Bible*, 215-216.



*Samuel*. According to Augustine, Saul’s actions were folly, and while the spirit did possibly resemble Samuel in appearance, the apparition equally could have been a random ghost, a conjured soul, a demonic apparition, or the Devil himself in disguise.<sup>126</sup> As Augustine argues, the fact that the ghost of Samuel delivered accurate prophecies when summoned “does not make the wickedness of summoning such spirits any less abhorrent.”<sup>127</sup> Augustine condemned magic in all forms, emphasizing the pride and sin of the practice.<sup>128</sup> Here we see the early roots of the witchcraft narrative prominent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries first emerging. As time passed, treatises on witchcraft cited Augustine and others, including Thomas Aquinas, to support the idea that the conjured figure of Samuel was a diabolical illusion.<sup>129</sup> In other words, interpretive origins in the sixth century provided foundational components of later manifestations of witchcraft belief. Iconic Church fathers provided substantial biblical evidence that highlighted the diabolical nature of magic, and this evidence inspired the men who composed demonological tracts during the height of witch prosecutions.

The use of the passages in *I Samuel* as biblical evidence to condemn witchcraft was uncommon before the early modern period. Although Saul previously expelled magicians and soothsayers, he enlisted the aid of the witch when in need and, in turn, received accurate news. According to Charles Zika, demonologists and theologians cultivated specific interpretations where “by the fifteenth century the story began to acquire an overtly diabolical interpretation with the ‘witch’ representing the one practical spiritual example for sanctioning campaigns against witchcraft.”<sup>130</sup> Representations of the “Witch of Endor” appear in several examples of

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<sup>126</sup> Language is again important. By the sixth century theologians are associating magic and sorcery with Satan, something that does not appear evident in biblical text alone. Zika, in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, 308-309.

<sup>127</sup> Saint Augustine, “On Christian Teaching: Book II,” in *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 44.

<sup>128</sup> Augustine, “On Christian Teaching,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 43-44.A

<sup>129</sup> Zika, in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, 308-309.

<sup>130</sup> Zika, in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, 308-309.

early modern art that increasingly emphasize the demonic nature of the biblical passage. Again, the biblical text itself never mentions the existence of anything diabolical or even sinister in Saul's encounter. If anything, the spirit of Samuel admonishes Saul for his sins and expresses God's displeasure.<sup>131</sup> As time passed, religious authorities and popular interpretations included the presence of the diabolical in *I Samuel*. The fifteenth-century *Bible Historiale* (Appendix, Figure 1.1) includes a miniature illustration of the moment when Saul encounters the witch.<sup>132</sup> In the illustration, Saul stands before the witch, who is kneeling with the spirit of Samuel behind her.<sup>133</sup> All three figures appear entirely corporeal, but in the background, against a brightly colored red and blue mosaic sits a fanged and black-winged demon.<sup>134</sup> The image is significant because it illustrates the spread of the idea that the Devil was associated with magic. Illustrations convey a story, but authorities also used them to teach orthodoxy and morality. Thus, a fifteenth-century illustration of a witch includes a demon to convey the dangers of magic and its connection to the Devil to Christians.<sup>135</sup>

The illustration in the *Bible Historiale* is just one of several early modern interpretations of *I Samuel*. In 1526, artist Jacob Cornelisz van Oostanen emphasized the presence of diabolical sorcery in his painting *Saul and the Witch of Endor* (Appendix, Figure 1.2).<sup>136</sup> The sixteenth-century painting contains dozens of details relating to early modern notions of paganism, heresy, the diabolical, and witchcraft. In the painting, the witch now stands in the center bare-breasted

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<sup>131</sup> I Samuel 28: 3-30, *The Holy Bible*, 215-216.

<sup>132</sup> Morgan Library & Museum, "MS. M. 126 Fol. 108r," in *Images from Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts – The Morgan Library & Museum* (2002), accessed on March 3, 2019, [ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/132/112314](https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/132/112314).

<sup>133</sup> "MS. M. 126 Fol. 108r."

<sup>134</sup> "MS. M. 126 Fol. 108r."

<sup>135</sup> It can be argued that illustrations provide a great deal of instruction in a time where literacy rates were low.

<sup>136</sup> Jacob Cornelisz van Oostanen, "Saul and the Witch of Endor (1526)," *The Rijks Museum* (2018), accessed on March 3, 2019, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collections/SK-A-668>.

and exposed.<sup>137</sup> As the witch kneels, several otherworldly creatures, including owls, dragons, bats, flying chickens, goats, and other monsters, surround her.<sup>138</sup> Charles Zika argues that by the time Oostanen paints his interpretation of *I Samuel*, the sorceress “has now come to be identified with the new group image of sixteenth-century witchcraft.”<sup>139</sup> The 1526 painting further authenticates the idea that by the early modern period, *I Samuel 28:3-20* had developed into an example of the dangers of magic, sorcery, and the Devil due to transformations in interpretation.

### *The Temptation of Eve*

While prevalent in theological writings and early modern artistic interpretation, *I Samuel* is only one of several biblical references used by theological authorities to promote the prosecution of witches. A second crucial biblical passage on witchcraft that appears in the Old Testament links to a theme present in Christian thought throughout history. Church fathers and later theologians describe Eve as the original witch and the progenitor of the female sex’s weakness for diabolism.<sup>140</sup> In *Genesis 3:1-19*, a serpent tempts Eve to eat the fruit from a forbidden tree.<sup>141</sup> Eve then convinces Adam to do the same, causing the wrath of God and the couple’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden.<sup>142</sup> As early as the second century, theologians, like Tertullian, composed commentaries on the weakness of women to the Devil’s temptation, calling them “the Devil’s gateway.”<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> “Saul and the Witch of Endor (1526).”

<sup>138</sup> “Saul and the Witch of Endor (1526).”

<sup>139</sup> Zika, in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, 308-309.

<sup>140</sup> Merry Wiesner-Hanks, “Eve,” in *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, 329-330.

<sup>141</sup> Gen. 3: 1-19, *The Holy Bible*, 6-7.

<sup>142</sup> Gen. 3: 1-19, *The Holy Bible*, 6-7.

<sup>143</sup> Weisner-Hanks, in *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, 329-330.

Further, Aristotle highlighted the flaws in women by arguing that the female sex was a defective version of the male, both passive and weak in morality and intellect.<sup>144</sup> Later, theologians including Johannes Nider and Johannes Dominicus, emphasized Eve's mental and physical weakness, arguing that all women inherited the failings of Eve.<sup>145</sup> These theological perceptions of gender differences were manifestations of pre-existing gender beliefs. Max Breitenberg argues that because of their perceived, the structure of the early modern patriarchal system relied on the regulation of women, which sometimes resulted in jealousy, anxiety, and violence against women.<sup>146</sup> By the onset of the Reformation, associations between women and the weakness of Eve coincided with an increased connection between women and witchcraft. Merry Wiesner-Hanks attributes this association between women and witchcraft to gender roles and poverty.<sup>147</sup> As women depended on men to provide all of life's essentials, women also served as "dependent agents of a male Devil," which reflected societal order.<sup>148</sup> Martin Luther addressed the connection between witchcraft and the Devil in *Sermon on Exodus* by arguing that in the case of witches, women were more spoken of than men "because of Eve."<sup>149</sup>

Similar to events described in *I Samuel*, the words used in *Genesis* do not convey, in particular, any magic or sorcery performed by Eve or an explicit encounter with the Devil.<sup>150</sup> However, the biblical passage also contains words and imagery that later theologians interpret as supernatural and diabolical. According to Philip C. Almond, the interpretation of the biblical Fall, where Satan entered the body of the serpent to tempt Eve, "can be found within the Jewish

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<sup>144</sup> Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 287.

<sup>145</sup> Wiesner-Hanks, in *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, 330.

<sup>146</sup> Max Breitenberg, "Anxious Masculinity: Sexual Jealousy in Early Modern England," in *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1993), 377.

<sup>147</sup> Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 280.

<sup>148</sup> Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 282.

<sup>149</sup> Wiesner-Hanks, in *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, 330.

<sup>150</sup> Gen. 3: 1-16, *The Holy Bible*, 6-7.

tradition for the first time around the first century in *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch*.<sup>151</sup>

Almond argues that by the publication of Augustine's works, "the belief that Satan was the serpent was a central feature of Christian doctrine."<sup>152</sup> When Eve meets the Serpent in the garden and explains that God prohibited her from eating the fruit, he says, "No, you shall not die the death. For God doth know that in what day so ever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil."<sup>153</sup> When God then discovers Adam and Eve's defiance, he punishes the Serpent, Adam, and Eve in turn. For the deceptive Serpent, God commanded: "And the Lord God said to the Serpent: because thou hast done this thing, you are cursed among all cattle, and beasts of the earth; upon thy breast shall thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."<sup>154</sup> As for Adam and Eve, Adam's lot was to toil in the earth outside the bounty of the Garden and Eve, "in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power and he shall have dominion over thee."<sup>155</sup> Such Interpretation created an inarguable and common link between Eve, the Fall, and a woman's weakness. The use of passages from *Genesis* and other parts of the bible illuminated the weakness of at least one half of humanity to the powers and allurements of Satan, a concept that appears consistently in early modern depictions of witchcraft.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Philip C. Almond, *England's First Demonologist: Reginald Scot & 'The Discoverie of Witchcraft'* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 180.

<sup>152</sup> Almond, 180.

<sup>153</sup> Gen. 3: 1-16, *The Holy Bible*, 6.

<sup>154</sup> Gen. 3: 1-16, *The Holy Bible*, 7.

<sup>155</sup> Here the weakness of Eve is codified by God's commandment. Gen. 3: 1-16, *The Holy Bible*, 7.

<sup>156</sup> In his book on Scot, Almond also mentions I Pet. 3:7 because the section attributed Satan's choice to approach Eve as she was "the weaker vessel." Almond, 59.

“*Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Witch to Live*”<sup>157</sup>

The third significant aspect of the witchcraft narrative found in the Bible is in the book of *Exodus*. *Exodus 22:18* is one of the most widely used passages to justify the need for witch-hunts by demonological scholars of the early modern period. There are several translations of the verse, which adds to its complexity and usage in the construction of witchcraft belief. By 1613, *Exodus 22:18* read, “thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”<sup>158</sup> Similarly, but not an exact match, the Latin Vulgate’s, “*Maleficos non patieris vivere*,” can be interpreted in several ways.<sup>159</sup> According to Wanda Wyporska, one interpretation read, “do not permit wrongdoers to live,” but she admits the term *maleficos* could also mean criminal or witch.<sup>160</sup> Such a direct command from biblical scripture left nothing to chance. According to the Bible, all witches necessitated destruction, and most demonological tracts, including James’s *Daemonologie*, press that point as a reason to uproot diabolical heresy and destroy witches.

## **II. The Christianization and Standardization of Witchcraft Belief**

### **Saint Augustine and Diabolical Sorcery**

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<sup>157</sup> *The Holy Bible*, 38.

<sup>158</sup> *The Holy Bible*, 38.

<sup>159</sup> Wanda Wyporska, “Exodus 22:18,” in Golden ed., 337.

<sup>160</sup> The Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate uses the term “wizards,” while the Geneva and 1613 editions of the bible printed in London uses “witch.” Furthermore, for clarity, the Hebrew bible uses the term “sorceress,” and cites the verse as seventeen and not eighteen. That said, according to Wyporska, some original Hebrew translations use the term *mekascheph*, which means poisoner, and some translate the Latin Vulgate to “do not permit wrongdoers to live.” Wyporska also states that the term was gender neutral until the publication of Luther’s 1534 bible. *The Holy Bible*, 59. *The Bible and Holy Scriptures Contained in the Olde and New Testament* (Geneva: Rowland Hall, 1560), 34. *The Holy Bible Containing the Old Testament, and the New, newly translated out of the Original Tongues* (London: Robert Baker, 1613), 38. *Sacred Writings Judaism: The Tanakh, The New JPS Translation* (New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1992), 119. Wyporska, in Golden, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, 337.

Saint Augustine voiced concern about the threat of witchcraft and magic. Augustine made clear connections between magical practices and the Devil, which is a vital characteristic of witchcraft belief used by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religious authorities. Augustine's association of the devil with magic serves as a foundational characteristic in the development of witchcraft belief and influences most scholars of the subject that followed after him. When discussing witchcraft and demonology, Augustine argued that sins such as mortal pride and curiosity exploited human weakness and led to devil worship.<sup>161</sup> Augustine's main argument against magic in *On Christian Teaching* (426) profoundly influenced the development of Christian thought and canon law.<sup>162</sup>

Augustine shares four specific points that later influenced European witchcraft belief. He argued that the gods of the pagans were merely demons in disguise, that pagan religious practices were a superstitious abomination, that humans and demons made pacts for mere glorification, and finally that there was a clear difference between magic and miracle.<sup>163</sup> The message in *On Christian Teaching* is plain in its denunciation of magic. At the same time, the language is also indicative of a common theme in the development of witchcraft belief before 1400, Christianization, and standardization. Although ecclesiastical leadership made a concerted effort to curb "pagan" practices among their congregations, increased condemnation does not alter the narrative created by those efforts. Augustine's words prove that even by the fifth century, at least some Church officials refused to give credence to the idea that magic performed by laypeople held any benefit.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, in Kors and Peters, eds., 43.

<sup>162</sup> Augustine, in Kors and Peters, eds., 43.

<sup>163</sup> We continue to see echoes of Augustine's arguments throughout early modern witchcraft and demonological thought. Augustine, in Kors and Peters, eds., 43-44.

<sup>164</sup> Augustine, in Kors and Peters, eds., 44.

Augustine also argues that “Demons and humans made pacts, each for private glorification,” using *Isaiah 28:15* as his evidence.<sup>165</sup> To Augustine, people who fell prey to the “deadly superstition” of astrology and divination endangered their souls. The danger came from “the fact that they use it to try to predict our activities is a grave error and amounts to selling uneducated people into a wretched form of slavery,” because circumventing God to obtain knowledge was a sin.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, Augustine described magicians as “deluded and deceived by corrupt angels,” which many interpret as devils or demons.<sup>167</sup> The early church leader informed other theologians of the inherent danger of practicing magic. He accused magicians of joining an “untrustworthy and treacherous partnership” with devils, which “must be totally rejected and avoided by the Christian.”<sup>168</sup> In other words, Augustine contributed to a developing witchcraft narrative that cited and interpreted biblical references to condemn witchcraft and sorcery.

### **Ecclesiastical and Secular Responses**

By the fifth century, and due in part to Augustine’s work, the clergy believed that dealing with or making a pact with a demon was equal to becoming that demon’s slave, losing the grace of God, and falling into “deadly bondage.”<sup>169</sup> This sentiment grew in prominence throughout the sixth and seventh centuries as Church leadership continued to condemn the use of magic, but the Church was not alone. By the sixth century, statutes in the early medieval German territories

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<sup>165</sup> The verse reads, “For you have said: We have entered into a league with death, and we have made a covenant with hell. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come upon us: for we have placed our hope in lies, and by falsehood we are protected.” Augustine, in Kors and Peters, ed., 44. *Isa. 28:15*, in *The Holy Bible*, 531.

<sup>166</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 48.

<sup>167</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 51.

<sup>168</sup> Here Augustine also cites *I Cor. 10:19-20*, which reads: “What then? Do I say, that what is offered in sacrifice to idols, is anything? Or, that the idol is anything? But the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. And I would not that you should be made partakers with devils.” “I Corinthians 10:19-20,” in *The Holy Bible Translated*, 134. Augustine, 51.

<sup>169</sup> Augustine, 52.



condemned and punished those who practiced harmful magic.<sup>170</sup> However, early statutes were not in any way comparable to strict and all-encompassing laws of the witch-hunts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In a study of medieval magical practices, Richard Kieckhefer provides two examples of Germanic statutes that condemned the practice of magic and sorcery, but those statutes dealt more with the crime committed and not the means.<sup>171</sup> In other words, people faced condemnation and punishment for hurting others or destroying property, not for magic alone. According to Kieckhefer, “it seems to have made little difference whether the harm was done by magic or by purely natural means.”<sup>172</sup> “Secular law could prescribe any of various penalties, including execution, for the crimes of magic, but it was usually more concerned with the harm worked by magic than with the magical ceremonies themselves.”<sup>173</sup> Nevertheless, the link between sorcery and the diabolical continued to expand in theological circles in a time when secular authority and ecclesiastical leadership worked in tandem to maintain societal order.

Both secular and ecclesiastical leadership had particular ways of approaching witchcraft that underline shifts in belief over time. Catharina Raudvere, Edward Peters, and Ronald Hutton agree that the attitudes of medieval Church officials were “uncompromisingly hostile” to magic.<sup>174</sup> Most accusations of sorcery remained under the purview of Canon law.<sup>175</sup> In seventh-century England, the Church oversaw witchcraft punishments, and “women or men who

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<sup>170</sup> Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 177.

<sup>171</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 177-178.

<sup>172</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 177-178.

<sup>173</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 177-179.

<sup>174</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, From Ancient Times to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 153. Catharina Raudvere, “The Legal Code: Law and Trial,” in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages*, Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 151-156. Edward Peters, “Early Canon Law and Carolingian Legislation to 1100,” in Ankarloo and Clark, eds., 194-206.

<sup>175</sup> Peters, in Ankarloo and Clark, eds., *Witchcraft and Magic*, 194.

perform[ed] incantations or divinations, or perform[ed] auguries from omens or dreams, [had to] do penance for five years.”<sup>176</sup> In Iceland, by the twelfth century, officials put to paper older oral law codes against pagan practices, including magic, and the punishment for *trolldómr* (magic) was negotiated, or the people involved “took the law into their own hands.”<sup>177</sup>

Lay responses to witchcraft relied less on medieval law codes and courts than on local and spontaneous public action.<sup>178</sup> “On the ground,” responses to magic varied, and the consultation of magicians and sorcerers flourished.<sup>179</sup> While some medieval law codes did prescribe penalties for the use of “harmful” magic, there is little proof of official prosecution.<sup>180</sup> Local instances of mass violence in Cologne (1075), Ghent (1175), France (1190), and Austria (1296) resulted in the execution of dozens of accused witches, but Ronald Hutton argues that these events were dramatic and rare enough “to be worth chronicling.”<sup>181</sup>

Moral and legal condemnations of magic appeared centuries before James’s *Daemonologie*. Although rarely prosecuted, the existence of statutes like those in Germany contributed to the development of negative witchcraft beliefs.<sup>182</sup> Representations of the Devil transformed into depictions of a more corporeal and literal threat to the souls of Christians over time. The language of religious treatises became increasingly foreboding about the threat posed by the Devil. Norman Cohn argues that medieval theology developed a type of “morbid

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<sup>176</sup> Peters, in Ankarloo and Clark, eds., *Witchcraft and Magic*, 195.

<sup>177</sup> The *Eygyggja Saga* 16 does include a formal trial against sorcery where a female sorcerer was accused of harming a man named Gunnlaugr. The community tried the woman with a jury of twelve who found her innocent. Raudvere, in Ankarloo and Clark, eds., 151-156.

<sup>178</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 154-155.

<sup>179</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 154.

<sup>180</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 154.

<sup>181</sup> Look at the dates here, nothing of notice before 1000, which further highlights how punishments (even scarce ones) ramped up over time while the message from Church authorities prohibited magic. Though these mass movements did take places during the Crusades and although violence of this kind was directed at specific groups during the period, the specification of witches is relevant because they are singled out. Hutton, *The Witch*, 155.

<sup>182</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 177.

fascination” with the Devil, stating that his “power is manifested in whatever draws men away from God, and above all in any and every form of resistance to Christianity.”<sup>183</sup>

Shifts in theological approaches to magic in the middle ages affected the way religious scholars viewed the practice. Caesarius of Arles, a sixth-century monk and bishop, represents what Kors and Peters describe as an “ascetic turn” in Gallic Christianity.<sup>184</sup> Caesarius wrote a sermon that condemned the consultation of magic users and spoke of the evils associated with magic, echoing the works of Augustine.<sup>185</sup> In the sermon, those who sought relief through magic or observed omens, paid attention to singing birds and dared “to announce devilish prophecies as a result of their song,” “immediately loses the sacrament of baptism,” which condemned a soul forever.<sup>186</sup>

By the sixth century, the Church actively condemned magical practices and continued to lean on secular authority to do the same.<sup>187</sup> Several secular rulers worked closely with the church. As a result, secular laws began to reflect the language of ecclesiastical codes.<sup>188</sup> These trends are evident in the works of the seventh-century Bishop of Seville, Isodore, who served as a theological advisor to the early kings of Spain and also wrote about magic and witchcraft in his

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<sup>183</sup> Here Cohn speaks of the increased efforts put forth by the Church during the middle ages to regulate Christian orthodoxy and practices while also converting new Christians and eliminating popular and pagan behaviors. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom, Revised Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 22-23.

<sup>184</sup> *Witchcraft in Europe* defines ascetic turn as “the movement of ascetic, world-rejecting values of monastic communities from the fringes of Gall-Christian culture to the social forefront, partly through the influence of aristocratic sympathy, and a consequent marginalization of the secular accommodation with religion that had characterized other regional Christian communities.” Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 47.

<sup>185</sup> Saint Caesarius of Arles, “Sermon 54,” in *Fathers of the Church, a New Translation: Saint Caesarius of Arles, Sermons, Volume I: 1-80*, Peggy Muellere, ed. (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1956), 265.

<sup>186</sup> With these early church theologians, the threat of paganism appears to be the larger problem and not any conspiratorial pact with the Devil. That said, while the threat is different, the language in many cases remains the same. Augustine and Caesarius warned against magic and attributed it to the Devil. These subtle differences illustrate how the seventeenth-century notion of witchcraft belief related to earlier narratives. Caesarius, in Muellere, ed., *Fathers of the Church*, 265-266.

<sup>187</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 177.

<sup>188</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 177.

religious works.<sup>189</sup> Isodore's commentary on witchcraft echoed previous writings by saying that magic users, diviners, oracles, and necromancers all used infernal and wicked arts.<sup>190</sup> In the ninth chapter of his *Etymologies*, Isodore argued that "the magi are they who are usually called *malefici* because of the greatness of their guilt," but more importantly, the bishop's work shows further development of a witchcraft narrative resembling ideas promoted by early modern thinkers.<sup>191</sup> According to the bishop, witches "throw the elements into commotion, disorder men's minds, and without any draught of poison they kill by the mere virulence of a charm... They summon demons, and dare to work such Juggleries that each one slays his enemies by evil arts."<sup>192</sup> The language in *Etymologies* intentionally emphasized the harm that magic practitioners caused without any mention of popularly accepted folk behaviors or harmless vestiges of pagan practice. Although theologians like Isodore, Caesarius, and Augustine defined magic in diabolical terms, the allowance of magical practice continued, and it remained benign in most facets of common belief.

By the eighth century, Church authorities were openly condemning the use of magic and associated those practices with the Devil, and beginning to provide detailed explanations of what the practitioners of *malefici* could do. People who used magic did so with ill intent and evil. Theological opinion influenced secular authority, and that is evident with the writings and actions of Charles the Great, or Charlemagne. During his reign, Charlemagne implemented and enforced strict codes against the use of magic and sorcery.<sup>193</sup> His eight-century *Admonitio*

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<sup>189</sup> Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 50.

<sup>190</sup> Isodore, Bishop of Seville, "Etymologies: Book VII, Chapter Nine," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 51.

<sup>191</sup> Here when Isodore says "magi" he refers to magic users. Isodore, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 51.

<sup>192</sup> Isodore, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 52.

<sup>193</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 179.

*Generalis (General Admonition)* prohibited all magical practices in his kingdom.<sup>194</sup> The text acted as a capitulary for Saxons, whom he conquered in the eighth century.<sup>195</sup> In the *Admonitio*, he declared, “all those found guilty of sorcery or divination should be turned over to the Church as slaves, while those who sacrificed to the Devil should be killed.”<sup>196</sup> While Charles’s declarations provide evidence of a continuing shift towards secular and ecclesiastical leadership linking magic with evil and the Devil, it is also important to delve into someone like Charlemagne’s intentions when condemning magic. Several of his statutes against sorcery and magic coincided with conquering groups of people and making attempts to assimilate diverse cultures into his growing empire.<sup>197</sup> Magic and sorcery intermingled with notions of pagan practices that Charlemagne wanted to curb while converting his subjects to Christianity. However, it does not diminish the fact that by the eighth century, magic and sorcery (whether authorities used language to demonize pagan practices or was a serious attempt to condemn sorcery) met with more substantial restrictions and condemnation by ecclesiastical and secular authorities.<sup>198</sup> Church intellectuals like Isodore, condemned the practice and urged all Christians to avoid and reject such dangers. Secular authorities reinforced those actions by implementing punishments for the practice of sorcery and attaching language that evoked evil and the Devil when describing magic.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Peters, in Ankarloo and Clark, eds., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, 198.

<sup>195</sup> The OED defines a capitulary as a service book containing the chapters used in the liturgy and usually also containing the collects. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 179.

<sup>196</sup> The *General Admonition* was written in 789. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 179.

<sup>197</sup> Peters, in Ankarloo and Clark, eds., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, 198-199.

<sup>198</sup> While not exactly “lip service,” the enforcement of such prohibitions were lax. Edward Peters argues that magical practice flourished during Charlemagne’s reign and punishment for magical crimes was rare. Hutton, *The Witch*, 199-200.

<sup>199</sup> Isodore, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 53.

Actions taken by the Church in the ninth century highlights how the institution, in a broader sense, began to recognize magical practices as a growing threat to Christian society.<sup>200</sup> Church leaders held a synod around the year 800 in the German territories of Freising and Salzburg to air such concerns.<sup>201</sup> It is also at this point that we see more specific references to punishments for sorcery-related offenses. Men and women caught performing magical incantations, divination, conjuring storms, or auguries merited examination by local Church officials.<sup>202</sup> Next, if found guilty, the offenders received moderate punishment “so that they do not lose their lives,” spending time in prison “for their own salvation” until they repented.<sup>203</sup>

The excerpts from the synod contain similar language to Isodore’s earlier commentary. The statute provides details about the abilities witches possessed, in this case, conjuring storms (often mentioned in early demonological treatises).<sup>204</sup> More importantly, the synod records call for the implementation of physical punishment and prison time until the accused rectifies their sin, which is a considerable change.<sup>205</sup> The suggested sentences and language used when discussing the sins of sorcery indicate a decisive turn in ideology and consequence. The *malefici*’s actions not only endangered their souls, but punishment threatened the freedom of their bodies, increasingly limiting the scope of any level of acceptable magic. Also, in the ninth century, Gerbald, the Bishop of Liège, issued a diocesan statute on witchcraft after a request from Charlemagne, which illustrates not only a Church concern but the continued rise of secular interest and collaborative efforts to diminish the use of sorcery. The statute stressed the need to

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<sup>200</sup> Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 54.

<sup>201</sup> Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 54.

<sup>202</sup> John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, trs. *Medieval Handbooks of Penance: A Translation of the Principal “Libri poenitentiales” and Selections from Related Documents*, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 54.

<sup>203</sup> Hubert Mordek and Michael Glatthaar, “Vom Wahrsagerinnen und Zauberern. Ein Beitrag zur Religionspolitik Karls des Grossen,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 54.

<sup>204</sup> Mordek and Glatthaar, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 54.

<sup>205</sup> Mordek and Glatthaar, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 54.

investigate “those who perform *sortilegium* (sorcery),” *malefici*, interpreted dreams, wore charms, or brewed potions.<sup>206</sup> Echoing biblical sources that condemned all sorcery, Gerbald’s language not only specifies magic that harmed others, but it also included harmless magic like dream interpretation, divination, and amulets.<sup>207</sup> Simple language alterations like the mention of *malefici* and the inclusion of all types of magical practices (many that remained popular) illustrate a growing intolerance of previously overlooked behaviors.

Messages from Church leadership condemning magic did not necessarily immediately translate to active efforts to suppress magical practices on the local level, but by the ninth century that was also changing. In 830, Haltigar, the Bishop of Cambrai, at the behest of Archbishop Ebbo of Rheims, composed a handbook for confessors to use as a standardized replacement for several sets of theological rules and guidelines used in Europe at the time.<sup>208</sup> The ninth-century guides dictate a specific set of punishments for transgressions.<sup>209</sup> The offenses include the use of magic and is an example of one of the first standardized groupings of Christian punishments for magical offenses.<sup>210</sup> Punishment ranged from short sentences of penance to restricted diets and subjection. For causing death, those found guilty received a sentence where “he shall do penance for seven years, three years on bread and water,” which pales in comparison to the executions conducted in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>211</sup> Lesser offenses, like divination and the production of amulets, required shorter sentences.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> The excerpt from the statute originally appeared in a French volume of religious laws edited by Carlo de Clercq titled *La Legislation Rligieuse Franque*, 2. Vols. and a portion of it was included in the Kors and Peters text. Gerbald, Bishop of Liège, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 54-55.

<sup>207</sup> Gerbald, Bishop of Liège, Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 54-55.

<sup>208</sup> Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 55.

<sup>209</sup> Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 55.

<sup>210</sup> Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 55.

<sup>211</sup> Haltigar of Cambrai, *The “Roman” Penitential*, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 56.

<sup>212</sup> Haltigar of Cambrai, Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 56-57.

On the one hand, As part of the ongoing development of a distinct early modern belief in witchcraft, the Church continues to cultivate and stress the idea that sorcery was a threat to Christians and a punishable offense. However, the Bible does mention that Saul expelled magicians and soothsayers from Israel, the guidelines set by Haltigar in the ninth century further specify how to punish magical practices, not as a suggestion, but as instruction.

On the other hand, the perceived threat sorcery posed to the Church was minimal, and punishments reflected an overall lack of concern. Punishments set in response to magical crimes mainly consisted of spirit-related punishments (apart from restrictive diets).<sup>213</sup> The clergy sentenced offending parties to do penance at the church and, for the most extreme offenses, forfeit the right of communion, cutting the guilty off from God.<sup>214</sup> These punishments coincided with spiritual cleansing and the rehabilitation of the soul, except in the most extreme of circumstances. Witchcraft was not yet severe enough of a threat to require harsh physical consequences or torture as a means of uncovering corrupt practices or dealing with punishments. By the ninth century, practicing witchcraft remained in the purview of the Church, and it was not yet severe enough for the ninth century church to require harsh physical consequences or torture as a means of discovery or punishment.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Haltigar of Cambrai, Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 56-57.

<sup>214</sup> Haltigar of Cambrai, Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 56-57.

<sup>215</sup> Only one of the guidelines written by Haltigar calls for severe punishments for magic-related crimes. Number thirty-two states, “if anyone acts as a magician for the sake of love but does not cause anybody’s death, if he is a layman he shall do penance for half a year; if he is a cleric, he shall do penance for a year on bread and water; if a deacon, for three years, one year on bread and water; if a priest, for five years, two years on bread and water. But if by this means anyone deceives a woman with respect to the birth of a child, each one shall add to the above six forty-day periods, lest he caused of homicide.” This statement points to a couple of different things. One, it clearly lays out several versions of punishment depending on the social status of the offender, but it also illustrates that once a death is deemed a homicide, perhaps the nature of the case changes and secular authorities are involved. Haltigar of Cambrai, Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 56-57.



### III. Witchcraft in the High Middle Ages

#### *The Canon Episcopi*

During the high middle ages, the Church continued to preach against the practice of magic and sorcery, expressing increased concern. For example, Regino of Prüm composed *The Canon Episcopi*, containing a stern warning against such practices.<sup>216</sup> Chapter 5:43 condemns those who made offerings to things other than God, and later the text condemns diabolical songs, enchantments, and other forms of magic.<sup>217</sup> More importantly, chapter 5:45 commands members of the clergy to investigate:

any woman who by any *malficia* or incantations says that she is able to change men's minds, that is, from hatred into love or from love into hatred, or that she can take or damage the goods of men. And if they find any woman who says that she belongs to a group which rides with demons transformed into the likeness of women on certain beasts on certain nights,

and those women faced parish expulsion for their crimes.<sup>218</sup> *The Canon* argues that clergy had the responsibility to work against “the pernicious art of *sortilegium* and *maleficium*, which was invented by the Devil,” and, “If they find a man or woman follower of this wicked sect [they were] to eject them foully disgraced from their parishes.”<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Regino of Prüm, *The Canon Episcopi*, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 60.

<sup>217</sup> Regino of Prüm, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 60-61.

<sup>218</sup> Regino's text is critical because of its popularity, spread, and wording. According to Kors and Peters, “Regino elaborates further on these practices [witchcraft] and others, citing texts from earlier Church councils and Church fathers, papal statements (chiefly from Gregory I), Roman law, and earlier penitentials.” More importantly to the purpose of this study, Regino openly condemns supernatural practices that involve consorting with demons to conduct activities including divination, injury, weather-control, and love potions. These behaviors and methods are among the same practices attributed to witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries. However, Regino also mentions the goddess Diania. Regino of Prüm, Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 61.

<sup>219</sup> Regino of Prüm, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 61.

The descriptive language of early modern witch-hunt literature closely resembles several characteristics emphasized in *The Canon Episcopi*. Witches gave themselves to the Devil; they rode upon demonic spiritual beasts and lost the light of God, and endangered their eternal souls.<sup>220</sup> However, tenth-century warnings against witchcraft were not merely early versions of sixteenth and seventeenth-century prosecutions. *The Canon Episcopi*'s primary purpose is to point out the danger of pagan idolatry, pagan beliefs, and pre-Christian thought, not necessarily the Devil. Instead, Regino associates sorcery and witchcraft with the worship of the pagan goddess Diana and urges those who fall prey to un-Christian activities to repent and earn salvation.<sup>221</sup>

### Variations in Approach

Determining what constituted practicing witchcraft complicated the Church's efforts to diminish sorcery's popularity. Although Christian authorities had written on the subject for centuries, those observations traveled in the limited circles of the educated elite. The Church did not necessarily have the influence and reach in the ninth century that it would have by the sixteenth. The secular and ecclesiastical approach to magic differed from common held belief and practice at the village level. People regularly involved themselves in "diverse magical activities: monks, parish priests, physicians, surgeon-barbers, midwives, folk healers and

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<sup>220</sup> Regino of Prüm, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 61-62.

<sup>221</sup> Note that Church fathers like Augustine did associate pagan Gods with Satan. Regino of Prüm's work on magic demonstrates a consistent theme in witchcraft literature, which is the Church's efforts to eradicate pagan and pre-Christian folk tradition. Regino's own experiences may have influenced his work as well because of constant political conflict that erupted in violence around Prüm and Trier during his lifetime. Regino of Prüm, in Kors and Peters, eds., 92. J.P. Kirsch, "Regino of Prüm," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), accessed January 18, 2020, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12719c.htm>. Augustine, find citation.

diviners with no formal training, and even ordinary women and men, who, without claiming special knowledge or competence, used whatever magic they happened to know.”<sup>222</sup>

Twelfth-century secular law codes increasingly included statutes that mentioned supernatural practices, reflecting the heightened sense of urgency expressed by the Church to curb the intermingling of pagan tradition and Christian orthodoxy. For example, King Roger II of Sicily called for the execution of people who used magical or natural poisons, but more significantly, “indicated in vague terms that love magic should be punished even if no one was hurt: an indication that magic was evil in itself, apart from its potential harm to others.”<sup>223</sup> What statutes like Roger II’s illustrate is that the ideology that linked magical practice with the diabolical began to spread, at least within educated circles.<sup>224</sup> The natural world was still overwhelmingly mysterious, and the only sensible explanations to unanswerable questions came from the clergy. “Powerful, awesome, and mysterious as nature might be,” Kieckhefer says, “the theologians and philosophers were not willing to see all magic as natural. Even in granting the possibilities of natural effect, they often tended (like Augustine) to suspect that demons were somehow involved.”<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 56. This is a significant when examining differences between medieval and early modern witchcraft belief. Kieckhefer highlights the existence of a wide and accepted use of magic and “it was not regularly limited to any specific group.” He notes that monks copied classical manuscripts containing magic and “would not have thought themselves as dabbling in magical arts.” In other words, some of the practices picked up by monks from classical texts and pagan practices that continued to occur after Christianization were considered acceptable and normal behaviors that authorities might describe as magic, but did not necessarily put forth efforts to stop the practice. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 56-58.

<sup>223</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 179.

<sup>224</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 182.

<sup>225</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 183.

### Accounts of Magic: Warnings and Instruction

Whether real accounts of events or completely fabricated stories of moral instruction, historical accounts of witchcraft and sorcery from the middle ages also contribute to the development of a layered and complex system of witchcraft belief by the fifteenth century. English chronicler William of Malmesbury, “one of the greatest chroniclers of the middle ages,” composed works that included both historical and anecdotal morality messages.<sup>226</sup> Malmesbury penned his *Chronicles of the Kings of England* around 1140, which includes a tale of magic and sorcery about an infamous witch at Berkeley.<sup>227</sup> The accuracy of Malmesbury’s story is unverifiable, but the way he addresses sorcery, the language he uses, and his geographical location (in England) provides insight into the state of witchcraft belief as it continued to form. One particularly interesting tale in the Chronicle involved a gluttonous and lascivious infernal sorceress living in Berkeley, around the year 1065.<sup>228</sup> In the story, the woman received ominous news from a jack-daw with whom she possessed the ability to speak (birds were mentioned as conduits for sorcery earlier).<sup>229</sup> Immediately after, news arrived from the village that her son and his entire family had died in a sudden accident.<sup>230</sup> The devastation and shock caused the woman to fall gravely ill, and she summoned a monk, a nun, and her surviving children to hear her deathbed confession.<sup>231</sup> The dying woman confessed that “formerly, my children, I constantly administered to my wretched circumstances by demoniacal arts: I have been the sink of every vice, and teacher of every allurements...”<sup>232</sup> Although the witch seemed repentant and begged for

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<sup>226</sup> Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 70.

<sup>227</sup> J.A. Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury’s Chronicle of the Kings of England: From the Earliest Period to the Reign of King Stephen, with notes and illustrations* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1847), 230.

<sup>228</sup> Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury’s Chronicle*, 230.

<sup>229</sup> Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury’s Chronicle*, 230.

<sup>230</sup> Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury’s Chronicle*, 230.

<sup>231</sup> Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury’s Chronicle*, 230.

<sup>232</sup> Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury’s Chronicle*, 230.

forgiveness, beseeching her family to intercede on her behalf with God, the conclusion of the tale demonstrates the futility of her efforts. Malmesbury's story teaches that the crime of witchcraft was too great to overlook at the time of judgment.<sup>233</sup>

The tale of the sorceress exposes the depravity of sin and God's unmerciful punishment of the damned. In an act of clerical intervention, a "choir of priests" sang songs for her.<sup>234</sup> Nevertheless, a battalion of devils broke into the church with one "more terrible in appearance than the rest," calling the dead woman from her coffin and commanding her to rise.<sup>235</sup> Next, taking her by the hand, the head devil "dragged her out of the church," mounted a black horse "with iron hooks projecting over his while back."<sup>236</sup> As the condemned woman cried for aid, the devils dragged her away with her audible cries lingering in the air "for nearly the space of four miles."<sup>237</sup>

Malmesbury's story gives insight into the development of witchcraft beliefs during the middle ages. It reveals that clerical authority viewed sorcery as an evil practice with diabolical origins, which endangers the soul of the practitioner. The diabolical aspect of the sorceress's crimes is so high that even traditional clerical and lay intercession between God and man for souls in purgatory did nothing, and the sorceress faced peril and hellfire in death.<sup>238</sup> The vivid descriptions used by Malmesbury to illustrate the witch's torments implies to the reader or anyone else hearing the story that the evil of sorcery led to irreversible damnation. Malmesbury's anecdote about sorcery does not reflect the laxity of church statutes, but the language of the text

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<sup>233</sup> Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, 231.

<sup>234</sup> Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, 231.

<sup>235</sup> Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, 231.

<sup>236</sup> Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, 231.

<sup>237</sup> Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, 231-232.

<sup>238</sup> Giles, ed., *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, 232.

demonized magic and dramatic tales from popular chronicles spread more quickly than theological doctrine.

Malmesbury's diabolical version of witchcraft and sorcery was not unheard of, and other intellectuals of the time also condemned the use of magic through morality tales and performance.<sup>239</sup> During the same period, the cleric and protégé of St. Thomas Becket, John of Salisbury, also addressed using magic in his theological works.<sup>240</sup> In his *Policraticus*, written in 1154, John describes several characteristics of the developing witchcraft narrative involving the nature and power of sorcery.<sup>241</sup> Like other clerical authorities before him, he argues that God allows the practice of magic, citing that “the evil spirit, with God’s permission, inflicts the excesses of his malice on certain people in such a way that they suffer in the spirit things which they erroneously and wretchedly believe they experience in the flesh.”<sup>242</sup> Moreover, Salisbury discusses popular witchcraft beliefs of the period that included the existence of what he describes as “nocturnal assemblies,” the ritual murder and eating of infants, and the diabolical origins of sorcery, many of which transform into staple characteristics attributed to the early modern witch.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Communicating to the public the diabolical characteristics of magic via storytelling and performance persisted into the early modern period.

<sup>240</sup> John of Salisbury, “The Policraticus,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 77.

<sup>241</sup> Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 77.

<sup>242</sup> John of Salisbury, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 77-78.

<sup>243</sup> Salisbury's analysis of sorcery and its practitioners provides examples of witchcraft characteristics that were not present or uncommon in theological treatises on sorcery before the twelfth century. His *Policraticus* is one of the first examples that includes the mention of killing and consuming children as part of a witch's arsenal. There is intersection between the portrayal of witches and medieval anti-Semitism, specifically the “blood libel,” the allegation that around Easter, Jews take and murder Christian children to use in ritual worship. Further, one of the uses of the blood allegedly collected during these acts was in sorcery and the creation of potions. It is also important to note that the idea of inversion as it relates to religious worship is prominent in early modern depictions of witchcraft and this is discussed in Chapter Three. John of Salisbury, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 77-78. Alan Dundes, “The Ritual Murder or Blood Libel Legend: A Study of Anti-Semitic Victimization Through Projective Inversion,” in *Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*, Simon J. Bronner, ed. (Denver: University of Colorado Press, 2007), 382-383.

The inclusion of skepticism in John of Salisbury's work is another characteristic that resembles early modern belief. Although Salisbury provides a detailed summation of how many theologians discussed the behaviors of witches at the time, he also includes his doubts about the existence of sorcery or people having the ability to perform magic.<sup>244</sup> That is not to say that Salisbury discounted the notion of the existence of demons or that the devil interfered with the physical world to harm the souls of men, but he expressed doubts about the human capacity to practice diabolical magic.<sup>245</sup> Towards the end of *Policraticus*, after describing in detail the nature of witch assemblies, Salisbury asks, "who could be so blind as to not see in all this pure manifestation of wickedness created by sporting demons? Indeed, it is obvious from this that it is only poor old women and the simpleminded kinds of men who enter into these beliefs."<sup>246</sup> Salisbury's blatant skepticism is significant because it becomes a topic of great debate amongst later demonologists. Several early modern authors, including King James and Matthew Hopkins, refuted skepticism and wrote their treatises in part to validate claims that witchcraft existed and posed a threat to Christian society. However, earlier authors also refuted disbelief, including Augustine and Malmesbury. *The Policraticus* is consequential to the development of witchcraft belief because Salisbury is one of the first theologians who publicly doubted witches even existed.

### **Shifting Views of Sorcery**

Towards the end of the middle ages, ecclesiastical authorities adopted an increasingly direct approach to eliminating the problem of magic. That does not mean that people on the local

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<sup>244</sup> John of Salisbury, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 78.

<sup>245</sup> John of Salisbury, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 78.

<sup>246</sup> John of Salisbury, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 78.

level agreed with clerical authorities or heeded their warnings.<sup>247</sup> In previous years, it was common to encounter clerics who also tinkered with sorcery. Local clergy provided an array of services to the community they served.<sup>248</sup> In addition to spiritual guidance and liturgical duties, the local priest treated and cared for the sick and provided for the poor, sometimes via supernatural means.<sup>249</sup> “While ordinary parish priests may have dabbled in medicine, they were more likely to practice other forms of magic.”<sup>250</sup> For example, Kieckhefer’s book describes a twelfth-century ritual performed by village priests to solve the dangerous problem of infertile fields.<sup>251</sup> Performed by the local priest, the ceremony begins before sunrise “with the digging of four clumps of earth from the four sides of the affected land.”<sup>252</sup> Next, the earth is sprinkled with holy water, honey, oil, milk, and herbs, while the priest recites in Latin, “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.”<sup>253</sup> Finally, after the performance of four masses, the dirt mixture is spread on the fields to “spread the power for growth to all the land.”<sup>254</sup> The mixture of Catholic and pagan

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<sup>247</sup> This is noteworthy in the cultivation of European witchcraft belief because time and time again we see stark differences between how authority figures, clerical or secular, and the general population viewed and approached magical practice. On the one hand, despite increased efforts and escalated levels of punishment over time, the belief in folk magic and its use continued. On the other, clerical and secular authorities used increasingly harsh language and responses to word of those practices.

<sup>248</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 57-58.

<sup>249</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 57-58.

<sup>250</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 58.

<sup>251</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 58.

<sup>252</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 58-59.

<sup>253</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 58-59.

<sup>254</sup> The ritual described in Kieckhefer highlights the mixture of Christian and pagan practices in the middle ages, which may be one reason for Church leaders to speak out against pagan behaviors and emphasize orthodoxy among the clergy. Keith Thomas argues that “the boundaries between magic and religion were blurred at best in the middle ages, where medicine, ritual, and even words become cross-boundary avenues to navigate life’s daily struggles.” The description of the ritual also offers insight into a gap between how ecclesiastical authority perceived the practice of magic and how the population approached the subject. There is no indication in the ritual description that anyone involved in the efforts to produce fertile fields communed with the Devil or demons. In fact, the ritual appears to be a mesh of Christian and pagan, old practices blended with newer traditions. The contrast will continue into the early modern period where Church and secular authorities took increasingly drastic measures to stamp out such behaviors. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 58-59. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971), 28-56.



rites extended beyond lay practice and in-part led to efforts by the Church to professionalize the clergy.

In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council met under the guidance of Pope Innocent III. With the input of four hundred and twelve bishops, nine hundred abbots, and envoys from France, England, Hungary, and several other nations, Church authorities attempted to standardize official doctrine and procedure.<sup>255</sup> Amid topics including theological correctness, morality, and the training of clergy, the council issued a Canon entitled “Procedure and Penalties against Heretics.”<sup>256</sup> Canon Three declared that the Church would “excommunicate and anathematize” any discovered heresy that raised “itself up against this holy, orthodox and Catholic faith,” which would, in theory, eliminate the unorthodox behaviors of parish priests who dabbled in magic on the side.<sup>257</sup> Also, the Canon condemned all “believers who receive, defend or support heretics.”<sup>258</sup> However, the definition of heresy is conspicuously unclear with no explicit mention of magic, although several theologians contemporary to the council spoke out against its practice.

The clash between competing understandings of magic and the continuance of pagan practice mixed with Christianity created an environment where official church policy contradicted with how people perceived and dealt with magic in everyday life. This complication with witchcraft belief was not exclusive to the middle ages, and by the early modern period, Church officials worked diligently to close the divide between popular and official beliefs. On the other hand, medieval Church authorities sought to better serve their parishes by reexamining

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<sup>255</sup> Henri Leclercq, “The Fourth Lateran Council,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 2017), accessed on December 22, 2019, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09018a.htm>.

<sup>256</sup> H. J. Schroeder, ed., “Twelfth Ecumenical Council: Lateran IV 1215,” in *The Medieval Sourcebook* (Fordham University, 1996), accessed on December 23, 2019, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/lateran4.asp>.

<sup>257</sup> Schroeder, ed., “Twelfth Ecumenical Council,” in *The Medieval Sourcebook*.

<sup>258</sup> Schroeder, ed., “Twelfth Ecumenical Council,” in *The Medieval Sourcebook*.

the role of the clergy with the people, leading to reform in the observance of doctrinal procedure and clerical practice.

#### **IV. Evolution of Thought and the Influence of Aquinas**

During the late-middle ages, religious thought took a scholastic turn. The father of the movement, St. Thomas Aquinas, oversaw the creation of “a comprehensive intellectual system which drew extensively on the thought of the pagan Greek philosopher Aristotle.”<sup>259</sup> Scholastics used Aristotle’s categorization system of form and matter to apply rational thinking when studying the natural world.<sup>260</sup> As a leading voice in the Church, Aquinas’s work and integration of Aristotle influenced the direction of intellectual thought.<sup>261</sup> Both *Summa Theologica* and *Summa contra Gentiles* delved into the topics of demonic influence and magical practice.<sup>262</sup> Like scholars before him, Aquinas linked all magic to the demonic, but his language diverges from earlier scholarship even if, as Levack notes, he does not mention witchcraft specifically in this work.<sup>263</sup> Aquinas influenced other major authorities on demonology and witchcraft, including the authors of the fifteenth-century witch-hunting manual *The Malleus Maleficarum*.<sup>264</sup>

In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, Aquinas’s view of magic differs from earlier Church doctrine on the matter by presenting new approaches to how magic functioned as well as its relation to the presence of human intentionality.<sup>265</sup> First, Aquinas argues that those who perform magic received their powers from an outside source because magic originated with “another

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<sup>259</sup> Brian P. Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (London: Routledge, 2015), 38.

<sup>260</sup> Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 38.

<sup>261</sup> Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 38.

<sup>262</sup> Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Theologica and Summa Contra Gentiles,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 38-41.

<sup>263</sup> Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 38.

<sup>264</sup> Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 38.

<sup>265</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Contra Gentiles, III,” in Levack ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 39.

species.”<sup>266</sup> In other words, God did not grant man magical ability; a magician acquired their powers elsewhere. Furthermore, Aquinas goes on to argue that the intellectual substance that gives magicians their powers is flawed.<sup>267</sup> Aquinas directly associates sorcery with an evil mind, deception, and bad men by arguing that “it is plain that it is not good and praiseworthy, for it is the mark of an ill-disposed mind to countenance things contrary to virtue.”<sup>268</sup> In these words, we see human intentionality in the place of older thought, which depicted man as too ignorant or weak to combat the power of demonic allure.

*Summa Theologica* delves deeper into the relationship between demons, intellectual influences over men, and the use of magic that includes a caveat later used by several early modern demonologists.<sup>269</sup> According to Aquinas, demons worked diligently to assail men out of envy and pride maliciously.<sup>270</sup> The goal was “to try to prevent a man’s progress... and arrogate to themselves a likeness of God’s power, assigning determinate servants to attack men in the same way that the angels serve God in determinate roles for the sake of saving men.”<sup>271</sup> In other words, the demons tempt man with supernatural power to endanger their eternal salvation. Aquinas argues that the demons do not do this because of their innate powers, and thus adds a vital characteristic of magic belief present in later pivotal texts like *The Malleus Maleficarum*, the work of Jean Bodin, and *Daemonologie*. *Summa Theologica* states that “the way in which the attacks are ordered itself stems from God, who knows how to use evils in an orderly way by

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<sup>266</sup> Aquinas, “Summa Contra Gentiles, III,” in Levack ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 40.

<sup>267</sup> Aquinas, “Summa Contra Gentiles, III,” in Levack ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 40.

<sup>268</sup> Aquinas, “Summa Contra Gentiles, III,” in Levack ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 40.

<sup>269</sup> Thomas Aquinas, “Summa theologiae,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 97.

<sup>270</sup> Aquinas, “Summa Theologiae,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 97.

<sup>271</sup> Aquinas, “Summa Theologiae,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 97-98.

directing them towards goods.”<sup>272</sup> God used demons to test man’s faith and the ability to resist temptation.

Although most of Aquinas’s work speaks of magic via demonic temptation in the abstract, it does examine evident characteristics of magic when *Summa Theologica* addresses miracles or wonders. One question that *Summa Theologica* asks is whether demons can seduce men by using “genuine miracles.”<sup>273</sup> This line of discussion implies that demons who perform unearthly feats can easily use them to seduce men. Although a demon does not possess the power to perform actual miracles, Aquinas believed, following Augustine before him, that magical arts were “similar” to miracles in how men perceived them, but not in operation.<sup>274</sup> A miracle exceeded human power and understanding, which on the one hand, allowed for demons to appear (but only appear) to perform miracles.<sup>275</sup>

Some of Aquinas’s work on witchcraft reflects the official stance of the Church in the thirteenth century. While it deals with magic often in the abstract, Aquinas’s arguments against demons, like ecclesiastical authorities who sought to suppress remnants of pagan practices deemed heretical and diabolical, condemned behaviors associated with magic. However, canon

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<sup>272</sup> Aquinas goes on to explain that demonic attacks are not always at the behest of God, so the passage does diverge significantly from later interpretations of God’s interference in diabolical magic. “First they prompt (*instiganti*) them to sin. And, in this sense, they are not sent by God to attack men, though they are sometimes permitted to attack men according to God’s just judgements. Sometimes, however, they attack men by punishing them. And in this sense, they are sent by God, in the way that according to III Kings 22:22, a deceitful spirit was sent to punish Ahab the king of Israel. For punishment is traced back to God as its first source. And yet the demons who are sent to punish men carry out the punishment with an intention different from the intention with which they are sent. For they themselves punish out of hatred or envy, whereas they are sent by God because of His justice.” By the seventeenth century, demonological and witchcraft treatises do not implicate that God in any way can be subverted by demons or the Devil and so, all demonic temptations that lead to the practice of sorcery and witchcraft are directly at the behest of God. Aquinas, “*Summa Theologiae*,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 98-99.

<sup>273</sup> Aquinas, “*Summa Theologiae*,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 101-102.

<sup>274</sup> Aquinas, “*Summa Theologiae*,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 101-102.

<sup>275</sup> Aquinas regularly references Saint Augustine and Augustine’s influence is evident in Aquinas’s approach to magic, but as we have seen with other scholars, as time passed, theological and philosophical trends influenced how Church leadership interpreted the nature and danger of witchcraft and sorcery to the souls of human beings and the practice’s ultimate relationship to God and the Devil. Aquinas, “*Summa Theologiae*,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 101-102.

law and official correspondence between Church leadership increasingly mentioned sorcery as a diabolical practice as well as a growing problem. In 1234, Pope Gregory IX issued the first Papal collection of canon law of the century titled *Liber Extra*.<sup>276</sup> The fifth book of *Liber Extra* concerns the status of criminal law and the Church, but the text also examines magic, divination, and diabolism.<sup>277</sup> Gregory IX also sent a letter the year before addressed to the Archbishop of Mainz, the Bishop of Hildesheim, and to Conrad of Marburg, which warned of the practice of diabolical magic among a group of suspected Rhineland heretics.<sup>278</sup> The letter reveals a heightened concern over the use of sorcery as it related to remnants of pagan traditions and practices while not precisely mirroring the later concerns about witchcraft.<sup>279</sup>

The letter reveals the cultivation of theological ideas concerning witchcraft that include practitioners willingly communing with diabolical creatures in the form of animals and animal hybrids as well as ritualistic worship of those creatures in place of God.<sup>280</sup> Gregory IX describes a group of heretics that worshipped at the feet of a half-animal and half-demon lord.<sup>281</sup> The letter also contains references to sexual unnaturalness and human depravity, two characteristics that are common characteristics of early modern European witchcraft belief.<sup>282</sup> Finally, the letter contains evidence where the heretics renounced God in exchange for a pact with their demonic lord.<sup>283</sup> The Pope's description of the behaviors of the heretics underscores the rejection of God, worship of a devil-like creature, and, most importantly, an organized sect of magicians.<sup>284</sup> The letter argues that the heretics "receive the body of the Lord every year at Easter from the hand of

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<sup>276</sup> Pope Gregory IX, "Liber extra," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 112.

<sup>277</sup> Gregory IX, "Liber extra," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 112.

<sup>278</sup> "Introduction to *Vox in Rama*," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 112.

<sup>279</sup> "Introduction to *Vox in Rama*," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 112.

<sup>280</sup> Gregory IX, "Vox in Rama," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 116.

<sup>281</sup> Gregory IX, "Vox in Rama," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 116.

<sup>282</sup> Gregory IX, "Vox in Rama," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 116.

<sup>283</sup> Gregory IX, "Vox in Rama," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 116.

<sup>284</sup> Gregory IX, "Vox in Rama," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 116.

a priest, and carrying it in their mouths to their homes, they throw it in the latrine in contempt of the savior.”<sup>285</sup>

Over the next two decades, Church authorities expressed an intensified concern about sorcery and divination. In response, the Church sent agents sent across Europe to root out and quash any outbreaks of heresy. Pope Alexander VI addressed heretical practices by instructing inquisitors in the mid-thirteenth century to eradicate heresy in the local parishes.<sup>286</sup> By the 1250s, the detection of magic and sorcery principally sat with lower Church officials. In 1258 Alexander VI penned a letter that, in part, reinforced that practice, instructing inquisitors that they “must not intrude into investigations of divination or sorcery without knowledge of manifest heresy involved.”<sup>287</sup> The letter marks the point where the language is crucial in understanding the stark divide between medieval and early modern magical beliefs and the Church’s official responses to such practices. The letter goes on to say, “it is reasonable that those charged with the affairs of the faith, which is the greatest of privileges, ought not thereby to intervene in other matters. The inquisitors of pestilential heresy, commissioned by the apostolic see, ought not to intervene in cases of divination and sorcery unless these *clearly savor* of manifest heresy.”<sup>288</sup> While it may be true that an inquisitor possessed the authority to call into question the type of magical practice based on centuries-old theological thought, Alexander VI’s letter shows that the

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<sup>285</sup> The charges against the heretical sect in the letter parallel language used against other marginalized groups in Europe during the thirteenth century. In France, both Jews and lepers were accused of similar acts including poisoning, murder, and harmful rituals. David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 51-54. Gregory IX, “Vox in Rama,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 116.

<sup>286</sup> Pope Alexander IV, “Quellen, Liber Sextum Decretalium Liber,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 117.

<sup>287</sup> Alexander IV, “Quellen,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 117.

<sup>288</sup> “Ordinary Gloss: ‘clearly savor’ as to pray at the alters of idols, to offer sacrifices, to consult demons, to elicit responses from them...or if they associates themselves publicly with heretics in order to predict the future by means of the Body and the Blood of Christ, etc.” Kors and Peters are correct when they argue that while not openly condoning an inquisitorial hunt for sorcerers, the text does clearly link magic to the Devil officially, while allowing for interpretation and discretion on the part of the inquisitor. Alexander IV, “Quellen,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 117.

church still did not wholly associate all magic with the Devil and that the Church in the thirteenth century at least tolerated some types of magical practices. An inquisitor of the Church had a significant amount of leeway in interpreting his duties within the vague limits set by Alexander VI. The responsibility of classifying a magician's power resting with individual inquisitors may seem like semantics because it is simple to assume that inquisitors deemed all magic demonic. However, subtle differences in approach and language uncover the transformation in belief that resulted in the fervor of witchcraft prosecution later.

Medieval understandings of witchcraft do not equate to early modern beliefs. Clerical authorities did have some control over cases of magical practice, but there was a clear divide between heretical magic and non-heretical magic, limiting the ability of the Church to interfere even if scholars like Aquinas and Augustine condemned all magic.<sup>289</sup> Alexander VI's letter does not enable inquisitors with the power to pursue the eradication of all magic, but it does give agents more interpretive freedom in discerning if a practice contained heresy. The letter shows that at least by the 1250s, the Church still tolerated some magic. However, Alexander VI's words emphasized an acknowledged relationship between sorcery and the Devil and were reissued in 1298 by Pope Boniface VIII to reinforce the Church's stance on such heresies.<sup>290</sup>

The knowledge of a growing Satanic threat was not the only reason that the Church expressed anxiety about magic in the late-middle ages. Institutional instability and infighting also heightened tensions in the Church, which exacerbated other concerns. By the fourteenth century, turbulence and disagreement within the Church resulted in splits, disorganization, and conflict. As a result, a growing urgency to deal with the threat of magic and sorcery littered correspondence between Church officials and Popes. For instance, in 1320 letter from Cardinal

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<sup>289</sup> Alexander VI, "Quellen," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 117.

<sup>290</sup> Alexander VI, "Quellen," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 117.

William of Sabina denounced the practice of sorcery and emphasized the dangers magic posed to Christianity.<sup>291</sup> The Cardinal addressed the letter to the inquisitors of Carcassonne and Toulouse and argued that “our most holy father and lord, by divine providence Pope John XXII, fervently desires that the sorcerers, the infectors of God’s flock, flee from the midst of the house of God.”<sup>292</sup> In the letter, the Cardinal described the offenders as, “them who make sacrifice to demons or adore them, or do homage unto them by giving them as a sign a written pact or other token; or who make certain binding pacts with them, or who make or have made for them certain images or other things which bind them to demons, or by invoking the demons plan to perpetrate whatever sorceries they wish...”<sup>293</sup> The letter also describes rituals using wax figures, the act of denying one’s baptism, and the abuse of the sacraments of the Church as heresies committed in witchcraft and sorcery.<sup>294</sup>

Sabina’s letter gave inquisitors more freedom to investigate sorcery but did not contain any mention of prescribed consequences or punishment. That is not to say that by the fourteenth century punishments did not exist for acts of blatant heresy, and previous examples of Church doctrine indicate that blasphemy and heresy met with serious repercussions.<sup>295</sup> Within six years, the embattled Pope John XXII, no longer heading the Church from Rome, and residing in the French city of Avignon, firmly believed that a conspiracy to assassinate him existed that involved poison and sorcery.<sup>296</sup> John XXII’s experiences and heightened tensions within the

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<sup>291</sup> William, Cardinal of Santa Sabina, “Letter, 22 August 1320,” Edward Peters, tr., in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 119.

<sup>292</sup> William, Cardinal of Santa Sabina, “Letter,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 119.

<sup>293</sup> William, Cardinal of Santa Sabina, “Letter,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 119.

<sup>294</sup> William, Cardinal of Santa Sabina, “Letter,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 119.

<sup>295</sup> William, Cardinal of Santa Sabina, “Letter,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 119.

<sup>296</sup> Poison and sorcery were often linked in ecclesiastical treatises and secular criminal statutes during the period. Further, Pope John XXII’s experiences and the objections concerning the validity of his Papal seat influenced his concerns of outside threats. His discovery of a magical plot to assassinate him is similar to plots uncovered by King James that inspired *Daemonologie*. According to Richard Kieckhefer, most medieval witchcraft prosecutions involved high-ranking members of society, which surged in the early-fourteenth century. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the*



Church most likely contributed to the tone of his official addresses that touched on the witchcraft threat. *Super illius specula* (1326) not only reinforced older charges laid out by theologians, including William of Sabina, but it threatened excommunication to anyone who practiced magic.<sup>297</sup> As a result, high profile trials and accusations of disloyalty, conspiracy, and treason often also included charges witchcraft. In one such trial involving the Templars that took place between 1307 and 1314, both highly complex political and religious issues muddled the proceedings, but the case also contained accusations of diabolical.<sup>298</sup> Although the purpose of the prosecution centered on destabilizing the power of political threats to the Church, charges against the Templars included “venerating a magical head and a cat.”<sup>299</sup> The prosecution of the Templars that resulted in several executions and prison sentences may have had nothing to do with magic or witchcraft, but the inclusion of such charges emphasized the guilt and evil of the offenders.<sup>300</sup> Consistent mention, prosecution of, and increasingly severe responses to magic reveal a shift in perception regarding sorcery where authorities not only showed concern about its use but began to prosecute and punish magic users regularly.

### **V. Later Secular Responses to Medieval Magic**

By the fourteenth century, ecclesiastical authorities were not alone in their condemnation of magic and sorcery. Legal statutes and official proclamations in England increasingly contained references to magic. King Edward III released such a statute in 1351 that, in part,

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*Middle Ages*, 187-188. Pope John XXII, “Super illius specula,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 119-120.

<sup>297</sup> Pope John XXII, “Super illius Specula,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 119-120. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 187-188.

<sup>298</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 188.

<sup>299</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 188.

<sup>300</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 188.

denounced sorcery.<sup>301</sup> The statute contains precise language and prohibited only certain types of magical practice, but it is also one of the first times secular authorities moved to prosecute or outlaw certain forms of magic in England. Addressing prognostications, the statute outlaws divination that “doth compass or imagine the Death of our Lord the King, or of our Lady his [Queen] or of their eldest Son and Heir.”<sup>302</sup> The statute implies that some forms of divination and amounted to high treason, resulting in the loss of land, property, titles, and the offender’s life.

Similarly, several Germanic states prohibited the practice of magic entirely.<sup>303</sup> Associating magic with paganism and false demons, “the state’s punishments tended to be more serious than the Church’s penance, because of magic’s association with poison and murder. Civil courts punished the guilty with large fines of money, enslavement, banishment, flogging, or even death.”<sup>304</sup> That said, official civil trials against magic were still rare, due to continued skepticism about magic’s ability to harm, the difficulty to prove witchcraft in court, and the ability of suspects found innocent to bring charges against their accusers.<sup>305</sup>

Examining popular responses to witchcraft and magic that demonstrated at least some evidence of negative attitudes by the late middle ages highlights shifts in attitudes about magic and sorcery. The complexities of community relations and group action muddled the reasons for extra-legal and public punishment for witchcraft in late-medieval Europe. Violent mobs that attacked individuals and marginal groups used magic and sorcery as an excuse for their actions.<sup>306</sup> Public acts condemning sorcery were often spontaneous and without official

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<sup>301</sup> “25<sup>o</sup> Edw. III. Stat. 5. C. 1.2,” in *The Statutes of the Realm: Volume I*, Alexander Luders, ed., (London: By Command of his Majesty King George the Third, 1811), 319-320.

<sup>302</sup> “25<sup>o</sup> Edw. III. Stat. 5. C. 1.2” in Luders, ed., *Statutes*, 319-320.

<sup>303</sup> Brian Pavlac, *Witch Hunts in the Western World: Persecution and Punishment from the Inquisition Through the Salem Trials* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 30.

<sup>304</sup> Pavlac, *Witch Hunts in the Western World*, 30.

<sup>305</sup> Pavlac, *Witch Hunts in the Western World*, 30.

<sup>306</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 190-192; Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 109-110.

backing.<sup>307</sup> In the eleventh-century German territory of Vötting, three women faced accusations of using sorcery to destroy village crops.<sup>308</sup> The village collectively accused the women and tested their guilt; “they underwent the ordeal by water as a test of their innocence, and though they were successful, the populace remained unconvinced.”<sup>309</sup> The community subjected the women to whipping to convince them to confess their crimes, but when they refused to do so, the village burned them alive.<sup>310</sup> Kieckhefer argues that examining the nature of popular violence is relevant in a discussion about the development and spread of witchcraft beliefs among the lay population. Local prosecution and popular punishment of witchcraft increased during the late-middle ages, and Kieckhefer attributes that to population growth in towns beginning in the twelfth century.<sup>311</sup> Kieckhefer’s claim resonates on two levels. First, it does make sense that as more people occupy space and living situations increase in confinement, conflict within a community more often led to violence. Besides, the accusation of witchcraft against a problematic neighbor as an act of retaliation was not uncommon. On the other hand, it is also safe to assume that as more people lived in towns and encountered educated members of the clergy, beliefs shared between ecclesiastical scholars spread more quickly to the broader population. Secular statutes like those in England and the German states heightened the

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<sup>307</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russel argues that while heresy did exist in the middle ages and heretics did in fact commit some crimes, a broad worship of the Devil did not exist. “The belief in such things seems to be the result of a combination of anti-heretical propaganda with negative psychological projections. The ancient traditions that heretics were at least unwitting servants of the Devil and part of his mystical body encouraged such illusions. The elements of demonization of heretics had long existed in the theory that those immediate, demonization became intense.” Furthermore, Russell, argues that minority groups like the Jews were often targeted and harassed in this way. In fourteenth-century Aragon, Jews were pulled out of their homes and murdered on charges of ritual and poisoning. Russell, *Lucifer*, 190-192; Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 109-110.

<sup>308</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 188.

<sup>309</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 188.

<sup>310</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 188.

<sup>311</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 188.

correlation between magic and crime (though not necessarily with diabolical origins), which affected public perception and response.

Another factor contributing to an upsurge in the prosecution of magic during the late-middle ages involved assigning dedicated investigators to charges relating to sorcery.<sup>312</sup> The upsurge in prosecution also resulted in the further spread of an ideology that directly linked magical practice to ill intent and the diabolical. By 1376, ecclesiastical authorities felt the need to provide institutional and uniform instructions on dealing with magical offenses and Nicholas Eymeric, an inquisitor in Aragon, composed *The Directorium Inquisitorium* to fill such a need.<sup>313</sup>

The *Directorium Inquisitorium* touches on punishment for the use of magic and sets guidelines for inquisitors in approach and recourse. The manual equates using magic to heresy and, as a result, charges Church agents to root out and deal with offenders.<sup>314</sup> *Directorium Inquisitorium* does not explicitly mention malefic magic; Eymeric's work provides context for the later development of the witch stereotype, "since it provides clearly defined connections between the practice of demonic magic and heresy."<sup>315</sup>

What makes Eymeric's manual essential in understanding late-medieval ideas of magical practices is the detail it uses when discussing magic and heresy. *Directorium* provides a clear example of contemporary belief. Eymeric assesses the threat level of magicians and diviners while also explaining the responsibility of inquisitors for dealing with them.<sup>316</sup> In a part of that explanation, Eymeric argues that there are two types of magicians to consider, and he includes a division between acceptable and unacceptable magic practices, which is different from most

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<sup>312</sup> Kieckhefer argues that by the thirteenth century, religious authorities including Pope Gregory IX appointed inquisitors to root out heresy and instructed the inquisitors to stop the practices that consisted of an intermingling of religion and magic. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 190.

<sup>313</sup> Nicholas Eymeric, "Directorium Inquisitorium," in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 46.

<sup>314</sup> Eymeric, "Directorium Inquisitorium," in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 45.

<sup>315</sup> Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 45.

<sup>316</sup> Eymeric, "Directorium Inquisitorium," in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 46.

early modern treatises.<sup>317</sup> Eymeric considered harmless, “those who act purely according to the technique of chiromancy, who divine things from the lineaments of the hand and judge natural effects and the condition of men for this...”<sup>318</sup> The existence of acceptable magic began to dissipate by the onset of the early modern period and had little to no bearing at the height of witch-hunts in Europe, but in the middle ages, we regularly encounter caveats or exceptions in scholarly texts.

The second type of magician referenced by Eymeric was “contracted by heretics,” and involved the denunciation of God and the worship of demons where the witches sang “the praises of the demon or [sang] songs in his honor, and genuflect[ed] and prostrate[ed] themselves before him.”<sup>319</sup> The demonic magicians burnt candles to the Devil, sacrificed animals and used their blood to create cures.<sup>320</sup> Referencing Augustine and the *Canon Episcopi*, Eymeric calls for the punishment of magicians who worshipped and consulted demons.<sup>321</sup> Use of demonic magic, the practice of arts deemed unacceptable by Eymeric and those who went before him, necessitated punishment, and by providing detailed descriptions of heretical magical practices, Eymeric proves a need for action.

The practices described by Eymeric as worthy of punishment amounted to committing blasphemy and the renunciation of the Christian faith.<sup>322</sup> Eymeric’s work demonstrates that by the late middle ages, ecclesiastical authorities viewed at least some magical practices to be dangerous and associated with the Devil while also continuing to overlook other behaviors that later theologians also deemed diabolical. Eymeric used the works of other theologians to

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<sup>317</sup> Eymeric, “Directorium Inquisitorium,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 46.

<sup>318</sup> Eymeric, “Directorium Inquisitorium,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 46.

<sup>319</sup> Eymeric, “Directorium Inquisitorium,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 46.

<sup>320</sup> Eymeric, “Directorium Inquisitorium,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 46.

<sup>321</sup> Eymeric, “Directorium Inquisitorium,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 46.

<sup>322</sup> Eymeric, “Directorium Inquisitorium,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 47-48.

legitimize efforts to track down and stamp out dangerous magical behaviors. As he states, “Augustine shows clearly that such sacrifice ought to be offered to God alone, and when it is offered another than God, then by that deed one shows oneself to believe that the person is higher than God, which is heresy.”<sup>323</sup> By the fourteenth century, scholars like Nicholas Eymeric asserted a belief that magic and sorcery endangered Christian society. They believed that Church inquisitors possessed the authority and should do all in their power to stop practitioners of magic and to prove that they were “considered heretics and [to be] avoided.”<sup>324</sup>

As the fourteenth century closed, major scholastic bodies openly debated the nature of magic and sorcery, bringing attention to the subject. In September 1398, the faculty at the University of Paris composed a set of twenty-eight articles that condemned the practice of magic.<sup>325</sup> Moreover, the language used in the articles refers to magic as diabolical and evil because “the demon is judged to be an undaunted and implacable adversary of God and man.”<sup>326</sup> Brian Levack argues that “in making this pronouncement, the Parisian faculty presented the argument, developed by scholastic theologians during the fourteenth century, that the practice of summoning up demons and commanding them to perform deeds was heretical because it gave demons what was only due to God.”<sup>327</sup> Each article implicitly states that any contact or communion with demons was considered idolatry and heretical.<sup>328</sup> No longer making allowances for acceptable types of magic, the articles described sorcery as heresy, saying “that it is not

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<sup>323</sup> Eymeric, “Directorium Inquisitorium,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 47.

<sup>324</sup> Eymeric, “Directorium Inquisitorium,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 48.

<sup>325</sup> “Determination made by the faculty of theology at Paris in the year of our lord 1398 regarding certain newly arisen superstitions,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 50.

<sup>326</sup> “Determination made by the faculty of theology at Paris,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 50.

<sup>327</sup> Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 49.

<sup>328</sup> “Determination made by the faculty of theology at Paris,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 50.

allowed to use magical arts or other kinds of superstition prohibited by God and the Church for any good moral purpose,” and that “evil cannot be done that good may result from it.”<sup>329</sup>

For centuries Church scholars had argued that all magical practices originated with the Devil for centuries, and the articles of the University of Paris did not ignite a previously unknown fervor. However, previous Church authorities held fragmented views of magic, and they did not regularly enforce the condemnation of sorcery that appeared in theological texts. Likewise, society as a whole did not suddenly view magic as diabolical by the end of the late-middle ages. The connection between the supernatural and Satan remained convoluted and complicated for centuries after 1398, but the University of Paris’ articles do further cement the belief that all magic was demonic. The demonization of magic in regards to perception, treatment, and practice appears more prominent at the end of the middle ages.<sup>330</sup> By 1400, the Church was issuing stronger warnings against magic, the fear of the supernatural arts was growing, and stereotypes began to emerge that would later flourish during the height of witch-hunting.<sup>331</sup>

## **VI: Conclusion**

Acts 8:9-25 tells the story of a man named Simon, a magician who practiced his art in Samaria.<sup>332</sup> The people of Samaria marveled at Simon’s abilities and said: “This man is the power of God, which is called Great.”<sup>333</sup> The story of Simon teaches that if one asks for

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<sup>329</sup> “Determination made by the faculty of theology at Paris,” in Levack, ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 50.

<sup>330</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 187.

<sup>331</sup> Kieckhefer includes a late-fourteenth century excerpt that described witches, which included terms like “bewitchment” and “curse.” The language connects that type of “mischief” to serving demons, but at the same time, the narrative shifts and links more traditional popular practices to demonic sorcery. “Even women who administer healing herbs are not beyond suspicion. Demons are most likely to know the medicinal uses of herbs, and they may teach those uses to their friends.” Kieckhefer, 187.

<sup>332</sup> Acts 8:9-25, *The Holy Bible*, 98.

<sup>333</sup> Acts 8: 9-25, *The Holy Bible*, 98.

forgiveness, no matter the crime, God will listen and offer mercy.<sup>334</sup> The book of Acts never questions Simon's abilities, and the language of the passage never indicates that magic is fake or derived from the Devil. However, by the middle ages, ecclesiastical authorities used the stories of Simon, Eve, and the Witch of Endor to prove the existence of diabolical magic and warn the public of the dangers the practice posed.

Perceptions of magic evolved considerably during the medieval period. While in some circles, magic always equated to evil; in others, magic remained an acceptable part of daily life. Arguments used by theologians in interpreting pre-Christian and biblical texts about magic are critical to the development of a comprehensive witchcraft narrative. By the 1597 publication of *Daemonologie*, an established set of beliefs about witchcraft had permeated throughout European society. This set of beliefs had changed over time, and viewpoints expressed by St. Augustine did not contain the same language or intention as the words of James VI. Words and meanings transformed over the centuries as religious, political, and social intentions shifted. The Church's stance on magic was one thing in the sixth century and something very different in the sixteenth.

That is not to say that no notion of malefic or diabolical magic existed before the fifteenth century, and Church scholars consistently condemned the practice. Most Church officials and doctrines wholly condemned the practice of necromancy. Necromancy involved performing spells or divining truth by communion with the dead.<sup>335</sup> However, in the middle ages, the necromancer encapsulates the early modern definition of one who practiced diabolical witchcraft. According to Philip C. Almond, "In contrast to natural magic, which looked for the efficacy of its practices to occult or hidden powers within nature, there also developed

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<sup>334</sup> Acts 8: 9-25, *The Holy Bible*, 98.

<sup>335</sup> "necromancy, n." *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed April 2 2019, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.gsu.edu/view/Entry/125700?redirectedFrom=necromancy>.



‘necromancy’ or demonic magic; or better, since it involved the invoking of commanding of both demons and angels, ‘daemonic magic.’<sup>336</sup> Theologians who gave “natural magic” a pass openly condemned necromancy manuals as “texts of explicit demon conjuring.”<sup>337</sup> In 1323, an ecclesiastical court in Paris presided over a case that involved a group of clergy and laypeople who allegedly plotted to raise the demon Berich from a circle made of cat skin.<sup>338</sup> A half-century later, the church burned the accused necromancer Niccolò Consigli for crimes including conjuration, attempted murder, and exorcism via the evocation of Lucifer.<sup>339</sup> At first glance, perhaps the similarities between the acts and the word ‘necromancer’ are not apparent, but the pre-modern understanding of a necromancer was almost a mirror image of the early modern definition of a witch.<sup>340</sup> By the close of the middle ages, theologians like Emyric used the term ‘necromancer’ to describe who practiced diabolical magic and warned against consulting with such men in times of need.<sup>341</sup> Manuscripts like *The Munich Handbook* were actual instructional texts on magic rituals and practices that were exclusively associated with necromancers by inquisitors.<sup>342</sup> The ‘Munich Handbook of Necromancy,’ produced by a member of the lower or

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<sup>336</sup> Philip C. Almond, *The Devil: A New Biography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 77.

<sup>337</sup> Frank Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic: Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), 58.

<sup>338</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 191.

<sup>339</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 191.

<sup>340</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft* states that the word ‘necromancy’ derived from the Greek words *nekros* (dead) and *manteria* (divination), meaning “necromancy is a form of divination in which the dead are used.” Necromancy essentially involves the use of a corpse to perform sorcery. Necromancy is also mentioned in the Bible several times and some sources refer to the Witch of Endor in *I Samuel* as a necromancer. The *Encyclopedia* also asserts that clerics often faced accusations of necromancy in heresy trials. Marguerite Johnson, “Necromancy,” in *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft, Volume III*, 808-809.

<sup>341</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 153-155.

<sup>342</sup> The description of the *Munich Manual* in *Magic in the Middle Ages* and *The Devil* supports the assertion that the witch of the early modern period and the medieval necromancer were the same or very similar creatures. In *Magic in the Middle Ages* Kieckhefer says that the manual “contains a wealth of magical operations, which, following a standard usage of the era, it refers to as ‘experiments.’” Furthermore, he argues that necromancy manuals including instructions on how to summon demons to aid in performing acts such as divination, finding stolen goods, identifying thieves and murderers, as well as several other services that did not require the use of a corpse or any body parts. The significance of this lies in the fact that early modern demonologists and theologians who specialized in witchcraft attributed these exact abilities to witches. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 157-165; Almond, *The Devil*, 87-88.

middling clergy in the fifteenth century, exemplifies the genre of miscellanies of demonic magic.”<sup>343</sup> The handbook contained illusional, psychological, and divinatory rituals that could conjure illusions, create means of transport, and “make the living appear dead and vice versa,” each a characteristic attributed to all witches by demonologists like James by the late-sixteenth century.<sup>344</sup>

However, equally relevant is the visible differences in the medieval perception of demons used by necromancers and the nature of the diabolical in early modern witchcraft. The demons of the middle ages are not necessarily the same as the Devil in early modern demonological texts. While theologians associated necromancers with the demonic, their understandings of the diabolical world differed considerably from the depictions of demonic involvement in early modern magic. In his *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer’s Manual of the Fifteenth Century*, Richard Kieckhefer argues that medieval theologians believed that demons were vast in number, and “held various ranks, in a kind of hierarchy that parodied that of God’s heavenly court...”<sup>345</sup> Demonological texts, including the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the work of Johannes Trithemius, echo the existence of a complex and layered demonic hierarchy that existed as early as Thomas Aquinas.<sup>346</sup> By the seventeenth century, English witchcraft texts rarely mentioned multitudes of demons, but emphasized the witch’s pact with the Devil himself.

James’s *Daemonologie* provided a comprehensive list of a witch’s abilities and how he or she obtained them. When compared, witches in *Daemonologie* closely resemble the definition of a medieval necromancer, but why does that matter? Language and interpretational shifts are

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<sup>343</sup> Almond, *The Devil*, 88.

<sup>344</sup> Almond, *The Devil*, 88.

<sup>345</sup> Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer’s Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 77.

<sup>346</sup> Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 77.

apparent enough. Nevertheless, the way that demonologists like James cultivated a belief system presents not only a refinement in definition but a widening of scope to place all magic practices and practitioners under the auspice of what was merely one of many types of magic two centuries before. The medieval Church sought to standardize the liturgy, organize and control the clergy, and consolidate authority over people still adjusting to conversion to Christianity. The Church's needs and intentions when dealing with magical practice differed from early modern approaches. In other words, the roots of witchcraft belief that came from the Bible and motivated theologians like Augustine, Aquinas, and Eymeric to act remained prevalent in the language and attitudes of early modern demonological and witchcraft treatises. However, the world those treatises emerged from was much different. The post-Reformation Church did not stand as the sole authority over religious doctrine. Religious authorities in control of the flock's spiritual well-being depended on where a person lived and the faith of the monarch. By the early modern period, the dominance of the Church was, in some cases, usurped by a secular authority. These authorities interacted more frequently with the general population. Witchcraft prosecutions, especially in England and Scotland, took place in secular courts, were overseen by secular judges, and regulated by secular laws.

This chapter has outlined the foundational aspects of the grand narrative surrounding witchcraft, which dominated demonological treatises in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By providing an overview of thought from the ancient world, it has demonstrated shifts in what constituted as magic and how that definition changed. By focusing on language, I have illustrated how medieval mindsets, combined with personal experience and, inspired King James's *Daemonologie*, the focus of this study. To James, magic was evil regardless of reason or method,

and all witches were bound to “the Devil their master.”<sup>347</sup> By 1597, the definition and understandings of magic began to shift further and, through James’s study and interpretation, re-emerged in a treatise penned by a king that defined witchcraft as evil, witches as diabolical, and magical acts as works of the Devil.

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<sup>347</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 34.

### 3 THE ORIGINS AND STRUCTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF DIABOLICAL WITCHCRAFT

A “godly protestant minister,” Calvinist leaning and Cambridge educated Henry Holland promoted an austere and penitent form of religious observance that condemned dancing, living in excess, and using magic of any sort.<sup>348</sup> Before his death in 1604, Holland published several printed works, including *The Christian Exercise of Fasting* (1596), *Spiritual Preservatives Against the Pestilence* (1593), and *A Treatise Against Witchcraft* (1590).<sup>349</sup> Holland’s work had “a curiously remote and academic flavor,” and thus was neither widely read nor influential to his contemporary audience.<sup>350</sup> However, *A Treatise Against Witchcraft* reflects a growing connection between magic and the Devil in the construction of seventeenth-century witchcraft belief while also closely resembling arguments laid out by King James in *Daemonologie*.<sup>351</sup> In *A Treatise Against Witchcraft*, Holland argued that Satan’s magic was substandard natural manipulation, not the miracles of God, and echoed the sentiments of European demonologists about the manipulation and power of the Devil over the mortal mind.<sup>352</sup> Holland’s treatise covers the existence of witches, the origins of a witch’s power, and a detailed and evidence-based condemnation of all magical practices. Organized as a dialog between two opposing thinkers,

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<sup>348</sup> James Sharpe, ed., *English Witchcraft: 1560-1736, Vol. I, Early English Demonological Works* (London: Pickering & Chalto, 2003), 1. Clive Holmes, “Holland Henry,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed November 2019, <http://doi.org/10/1093/13521>.

<sup>349</sup> Henry Holland, *The Christian Exercise of Fasting* (London, 1596), Henry Holland, *Spiritual Preservatives Against the Pestilence* (London, 1593), Henry Holland, *A Treatise Against Witchcraft* (Cambridge: John Legatt, 1590).

<sup>350</sup> Holmes, “Holland, Henry,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>351</sup> There is also an evidential similarity in style and format between Holland and James VI. Sharpe, ed., *English Witchcraft*, 1.

<sup>352</sup> Harman Bhogal, “Miracles, Cessationism, and Demonic Possession: The Darrell Controversy and the Parameters of Preternature in Early Modern English Demonology,” in *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies in the Preternatural* 4, no. 2 (2015), 158.

Holland's understanding of witchcraft and the Devil unfolds with an emphasis on the dangers both pose.<sup>353</sup>

By the 1590s, evidence illustrates that theologians like Henry Holland increasingly warned the public about the dangers of the Devil, but the emphasis was on demonic possession and not necessarily witchcraft.<sup>354</sup> Instances of witchcraft like the case of Agnes Brigges and John Foxe in 1574 mentioned the Devil, but concerning possession and using magic to cure such ailments.<sup>355</sup> Furthermore, although Marian exiles returning to England after 1558 brought continental European beliefs with them, demonological ideas associated with witchcraft were not widespread.<sup>356</sup> Official responses to witchcraft remained "lax and lenient" in the sixteenth century, treating the transgression more like a public nuisance than a felonious crime.<sup>357</sup> That is not to say that James invented or single-handedly introduced demonological concepts into English and Scottish witchcraft belief. However, James's influence far exceeded the spread and influence of works that connected witchcraft to the Devil published before *Daemonologie*. The king's work was the first witchcraft treatise published in Scotland, and he profoundly influenced the composition of *Newes from Scotland*, the first pamphlet to introduce continental witchcraft beliefs to Scottish readers. Moreover, James's unique position as king increased his reach and influence as an author and theologian, thus allowing for a wide distribution of his treatise. King James developed his understanding of witchcraft by studying contemporary works on the subject. Examining James's theological and literary influences provides a pathway to

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<sup>353</sup> Holland, *A Treatise Against Witchcraft*.

<sup>354</sup> Brian Levack, *The Devil Within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 85.

<sup>355</sup> Carol Levine, Anna Riehl Bertolet, and Jo Eldridge Carney, eds. *A Biographical Encyclopedia of Early Modern Englishwomen* (Oxen: Routledge, 1988), 319.

<sup>356</sup> Michelle Brock, Richard Raisewell, and David Winter, eds. *Knowing Demons, Knowing Spirits in the Early Modern Period* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 31.

<sup>357</sup> C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London: Heath Cranton Limited, 1933), 45.

contextualizing his construction of witchcraft belief that helped shape the seventeenth-century English and Scottish ideology. Further, exploring the works of James's contemporaries and cited influences underscores the idea that before 1597, witchcraft belief in Scotland did not reflect continental belief at the time.

The transformation of witchcraft ideology from an emphasis on superstition to diabolical maleficence occurred slowly and had roots in early and medieval Christianity. However, by the fifteenth century, there is a stark shift in the approach to and language of witchcraft. Theological texts increasingly employed cautionary language to initiate a marked effort to uproot and eradicate witches because they colluded with Satan. This chapter examines the connection between those ideological shifts and James's understanding of witchcraft. By discussing works on the subject mentioned or read by James, we can develop a clear picture of what assisted in cultivating James's fascination with the subject following his personal experiences.

First, by examining the state of witchcraft belief at the time of *Daemonologie's* publication and combining both continental and English interpretations of witchcraft, we can underline the root cause of sorcery according to "experts" and examine how perceptions of the Devil shifted. Recent scholarship emphasizes the increased theological focus on the link between witchcraft and Satan, which resulted in an increased urgency to prosecute and eliminate witches.<sup>358</sup> Initially, the concentration on the diabolical nature of witchcraft colored the structure of European witchcraft belief, but by 1600, English and Scottish belief also reflected continental trends. King James cultivated his understanding of witchcraft during the period of this thematic

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<sup>358</sup> Stuart Clark's *Thinking With Demons* explicitly deals with the ever-present threat of the Devil in early modern witch belief and argues that demonology plainly influenced the tenor and veracity of witch-hunts. Clark says the relationship is not straightforward and his eight-hundred-page monograph illustrates how complicated the relationship between witchcraft and the Devil is. However, the language in demonological tracts and witchcraft belief intersects constantly throughout the seventeenth-century and Clark proves that. Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), vii, 14-19.

shift in belief. As a consequence, James's treatise emphasizes the central role of Satan in the practice of witchcraft. His months-long visit to the European continent in 1590 (specifically to an area with increased witch prosecutions) intensified the fervor of his study. It resulted in the incorporation of popular ideas associated with witchcraft and prominent demonological texts from Europe into his witchcraft belief, and his treatise provided a platform for those ideas to spread.

James provides several examples of influential demonological texts in *Daemonologie*. The treatise references *The Malleus Maleficarum*, works by Jean Bodin and Johann Weyer, and theological tracts published by prominent religious leaders like John Calvin. The witch-obsessed king also conducted intensive research on the subject and subsequently pulled from dozens of sources when composing his opus on the subject. With this in mind, this chapter examines not only the influences specifically named by James but also uses the text of *Daemonologie*, contemporary depictions of witchcraft in print and legal proceedings, theological writings, and records from the king's library to construct a detailed understanding of the environment where James's obsession with witchcraft began.

### **I. Re-examining Demonological Belief in Early Modern Witchcraft Historiography**

Witchcraft historians have not always given proper deference to the sincerity of its believers or their scholarship on the subject. They can take the contemporary student of witchcraft seriously and at face value without dismissing belief as superstition or entertaining the idea that supernaturally powered witches existed. The early modern population believed in, practiced, and sought help from witches, which influenced how witchcraft characteristics developed. In recent years, the historiography of witchcraft has progressed on that front, and



more studies focus less on the notion of hidden agendas or mass conspiracy and recognize the complexity of witch prosecutions. Scholars, including Stuart Clark and Marion Gibson, have shed light on the importance of early modern witchcraft and demonological study, arguing that historians must approach demonology as a “legitimate and sincere avenue of study.”<sup>359</sup> That earlier interpretations of witchcraft belief (including the work of C. L’Estrange Ewen) presented witchcraft with a dismissive tone that treated the subject as ignorance and superstition.<sup>360</sup>

Early twentieth-century studies of witchcraft emphasized superstition and hysteria.<sup>361</sup> Wilhelm Gottfried Soldan referred to it as a delusion.<sup>362</sup> Even in criticizing Soldan’s work, E. William Monter suggests a mixture of “rationalism and romanticism,” which conveys a reductive tone. In other words, witchcraft studies during the first half of the twentieth century were both reductive and dismissive in tone, emphasizing notions of the “primitive” and “uncivilized” practices of population groups.<sup>363</sup>

More recent studies concerning witchcraft have begun to highlight a shift in the ideological tone associated with magic between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries by once again emphasizing the influence of demonologists. Over time, magic and magic users went from an accepted and useful part of society to a tangible threat. Similarly, witchcraft scholarship over the last three decades, have begun to examine new reasons for those shifts, moving away from an

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<sup>359</sup> Marion Gibson, “Thinking Witchcraft: Language, Literature, and Intellectual History,” in *Witchcraft Historiography*, Johnathan Barry and Owen Davies, eds. (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 172-173. C. L’Estrange Ewen, *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials: The Indictments for Witchcraft from the Records of 1373 Assizes Held for the Home Circuit AD 1559-1736* (London: Taylor Francis, 2011).

<sup>360</sup> The Ewen book was originally published in 1929. Gibson, “Thinking Witchcraft: Language, Literature, and Intellectual History,” 172-173. C. L’Estrange Ewen, *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials: The Indictments for Witchcraft from the Records of 1373 Assizes Held for the Home Circuit AD 1559-1736* (London: Taylor Francis, 2011).

<sup>361</sup> E. William Monter, “The Historiography of European Witchcraft: Progress and Prospects,” in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, no. 4 (Spring 1972), 435.

<sup>362</sup> Monter, “The Historiography of European Witchcraft,” in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 435.

<sup>363</sup> Monter, “The Historiography of European Witchcraft,” in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 438-440.

emphasis on fear and superstition to an intricately structured theological belief system created and disseminated by both elite scholars and ordinary people. There are several contributing factors to this historiographical shift and historians like Raisa Maria Toivo point towards significant ideological transformations in religion and politics contemporary to alterations in witchcraft belief.<sup>364</sup> Peter Elmer attributes ideological shifts to a connection between the evolution of science and demonology as scholars sought answers for unexplained phenomena using new methodologies and ideas.<sup>365</sup> Arguing for the centrality of demonological studies in early modern science, the mix between the study of the natural world and religious orthodoxy, Elmer states that “demonologists investigated the preternatural precisely because it promised to yield further understanding of the natural world and its operations,” connecting supernatural acts to the Devil, demons, and witches.<sup>366</sup> Historians of early modern witchcraft now place more emphasis on the understanding that the roots of an ideological shift in witchcraft characterization can be found within the intellectual and theological discourses that focused on the Devil and demonology. Stuart Clark, Peter Elmer, and others argue that shifts in politics, religion, and scientific exploration explain the increased emphasis on the Devil in the discourse related to witchcraft belief.<sup>367</sup> By avoiding the trappings of oversimplification and painting past beliefs with a broad brush of skepticism, Gibson, Clark, and others reconnect the evolution of demonological and witchcraft belief to significant social and political shifts occurring during the same period.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Raisa Maria Toivo, “The Witch-Craze as Holocaust, in *Witchcraft Historiography*, Barry and Davies, eds., 101.

<sup>365</sup> Peter Elmer, “Science, Medicine, and Witchcraft,” in *Witchcraft Historiography*, Barry and Davies, eds., 44.

<sup>366</sup> Elmer, in Barry and Davies, eds., *Witchcraft Historiography*, 44.

<sup>367</sup> Elmer, in Barry and Davies, eds., *Witchcraft Historiography*. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*.

<sup>368</sup> Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft*. Gibson, *Witchcraft and Society in England and America*. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*. Gaskill, *Witchfinders*.

Religious controversies and divisions created ideal conditions for a shift in witchcraft ideology. The Reformation and the tensions that came with it manifested as enhanced fear, suspicion, and outright aggression against confessional foes. Stuart Clark argues that confessional conflict contributed to a heightened fear of an active Devil, which ignited a frenzy against practicing magic.<sup>369</sup> Clark both highlights the confessional differences between Catholics and Protestants and argues that both groups adopted demonological views of magic during the period. Protestant and Catholic demonologists followed “the universal assumption that cut off from divine revelation, the demonic intellect could only be exercised by the light of nature.”<sup>370</sup> As foundational shifts in religion divided European Christians, innovations in natural philosophy began to test the boundaries of unexplained and supernatural beliefs, which contributed to a rise in demonological study. Clark argues that the debates about salvation, humanity, and God’s grace became “inconceivable without” the study of Satan’s role in the spiritual and physical world.<sup>371</sup> Faith was the backbone of early modern life, and amidst the chaos of the Reformation, constant uncertainty and fear of the Devil appeared “in the patterns of thought and language of those who wrote about witchcraft.”<sup>372</sup> The Reformation cultivated an atmosphere of suspicion and opposition on both sides of the confessional divide. Clark posits that the controversy was a significant factor in the rise of witch-hunts with both Luther and Calvin warning their congregations about witches as the Catholic Council of Trent denounced the use of any type of magic.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 163.

<sup>370</sup> Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 163.

<sup>371</sup> Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 437.

<sup>372</sup> Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 437.

<sup>373</sup> Gary Waite argues that both Luther and Calvin promoted witch prosecutions. Luther agreed with the execution of four alleged witches in Wittenberg in 1541, and Calvin once told Genevan authorities to eradicate witches. There were slight variances in Catholic and Protestant witchcraft belief, but they mainly consisted of pointing the finger at confessional opponents as heretics and pawns of the Devil. Several early modern witchcraft and demonological

## II. The Demonization of Magic

Protestant reformers, popes, bishops, and most theological scholars believed in magic, even acknowledging several varieties of practice, both good and bad. Scholars of the natural world like Cornelius Agrippa, who recognized the existence and usefulness of magic, dismissed arguments connecting witchcraft exclusively to the Devil as late as 1519, calling them tales “born of the imagination and the dreams of old delirious women...acts which are only formed in imagination.”<sup>374</sup> Agrippa criticized the tactics of some witch-hunters and spoke against the *Malleus Maleficarum*.<sup>375</sup> Scholars like Agrippa and England’s John Dee walked a thin line between natural philosophy and the magical arts. Dee’s work often included a mix of natural and supernatural experiments, divination, and astrology, which was not uncommon. In the mid-sixteenth century, it was difficult to distinguish where magic ended, and natural philosophy began. Several royal courts in Europe employed magicians and astrologers to predict the future and advise their powerful masters.<sup>376</sup> Furthermore, scholars composed, published, and sold necromancy manuals, guidebooks on magic, as theological arguments linking magic and the Devil gained credibility.<sup>377</sup>

Depictions and understandings of Satan changed over time, and societal perceptions of the demonic changed with shifts in societal moods and theological necessity. Medieval

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treatises used specifically anti-Catholic rhetoric. This is evident in James’s *Daemonologie*. Gary Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft*, 134. Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 490,500.

<sup>374</sup> Cornelius Agrippa in Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 237.

<sup>375</sup> Agrippa involved himself in a witch trial in Metz as a legal advisor to an accused witch. His arguments were legalist and not necessarily theological, he did not deny the existence of witchcraft or even deny that the Devil could be involved, but his overall views were more complex and they did not maintain that witchcraft had to involve the Devil. Vera Hoorens and Hans Renders, “Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and Witchcraft: A Reappraisal,” in *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2012), 7-8.

<sup>376</sup> Frank Klaassen, “Curious Companions: Spirit Conjuring and Alchemy in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Knowing Demons, Knowing Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, Michelle Brock, Richard Raiswell, and David Winter, eds. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 145-147.

<sup>377</sup> Klaassen’s chapter examines two famous fifteenth and sixteenth century necromancy manuals, Rawlinsong D. 252 and CLM 849. Klaassen, in *Knowing Demons*, Brock et al., 150.

interpretations of the Devil often presented a comedic figure, “someone who could be outwitted, outrun, tricked, and mocked.”<sup>378</sup> Popular interpretations of the Devil were bawdy, funny, and harmless, “not presented as a warning against sin or a call to virtuous living.”<sup>379</sup> For example, in performances of miracle or morality plays, devils “became buffoons, drawing most of their comic traits from the clowns and devils” in popular culture.<sup>380</sup> For example, early Catholic responses to witchcraft were often a combination of religious ritual and prayer designed to alleviate the annoyances caused by witches like those who were known to curse butter churns.<sup>381</sup> In order to cure the butter churn curse, a priest was summoned who first performed a mass and then recited John 1:1 while washing his hands, making the sign of the cross, and sprinkling holy water.<sup>382</sup> C. L’estrage Ewen describes the pre-modern Devil as a “public nuisance,” and several historians cite the acceptance of magic and a lack of association between the practice of witchcraft and the Devil as a common characteristic of belief before the onset of organized witch-hunts.<sup>383</sup>

By the mid-fifteenth century, Christian sentiments concerning the Devil began to shift. The depiction of the Devil as a comic and banal figure began to transition to a more insidious and dangerous adversary.<sup>384</sup> The more dangerous manifestation of Satan increased in popularity as the Reformation conflict led to the threat of societal breakdown. When Martin Luther

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<sup>378</sup> Charlotte-Rose Miller, *Witchcraft, The Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2017), 31.

<sup>379</sup> Miller, *Witchcraft, The Devil*, 31.

<sup>380</sup> Wilfred Young, “The Comic Devil in Medieval English Drama,” in *Hermathena*, no. 86 (November 1955), 32.

<sup>381</sup> Gary Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 142.

<sup>382</sup> Gary Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft*, 142.

<sup>383</sup> Not all magic was void of connections to the Devil, but the concept of “good” magic existed and was more commonly associated with spirits and fairies before 1600. As late as 1523, Sir William Neville personally employed two magicians in his household. C. L’estrage Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London: Heath Cranton Limited, 1933), 45. Klaassen, in *Knowing Demons*, Brock et al., 145.

<sup>384</sup> Miller, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions*, 29.

unleashed a firestorm with his criticisms of the Church in Rome, theological arguments spread to the broader European population, impacting religious observance, politics, and several aspects of daily life. Confessional divides and self-interpretation affected understandings of the Devil, and the entertaining dirty trickster became a substantial threat with an army of converts who denied God, pledged loyalty to their dark master, and plagued the innocent.<sup>385</sup> Contentious religious debates led to a confessional crisis, and with that emerged new Christian theological paths. Religious authorities spoke and wrote with an urgency concerning the threat of Satan, directly tying it to efforts to enforce religious orthodoxy in both Catholic and Protestant congregations.<sup>386</sup> Works of theology began to propagate the idea of an active Devil, and this sentiment spread gradually via writing, preaching, and entertainment, creating a more threatening stereotype of the Devil that emphasized acts of heresy, manipulation, damnation, and blasphemy.<sup>387</sup> Moreover, repercussions from the confessional crisis and the split of the Church also caused the rise of apocalyptic views in theological discourse.<sup>388</sup> Both Protestants and Catholics spoke of a world in decline and viewed the threat of the Devil and the increase in witchcraft practices as harbingers of the end of days.<sup>389</sup> Gervase Babington, a Calvinist bishop under both Elizabeth I and James VI & I, “invoked the Calvinist third commandment to condemn the taking of the divine name vainly in “conjuring, witchcraft, sorcery, charming, and such like.”<sup>390</sup> The Devil was a symbol of chaos, disorder, and an inversion of God, and because the disorder derived from polarizing religious views, theological scholars on both sides of the Reformation debate warned of evil, the antichrist, and the end of the world while demonizing and denouncing their foes.<sup>391</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 44-45.

<sup>386</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 168.

<sup>387</sup> Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 178.

<sup>388</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 527.

<sup>389</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 527.

<sup>390</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 505. Gervase Babington, in Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 505.

<sup>391</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 81.

Confessional debates initiated by the Reformation were, therefore, a major contributing factor in the increased presence of the diabolical in works on witchcraft. Concerns about orthodoxy and “correct” religious belief caused theological authorities to chastise opposing views and express a need to formalize proper religious practice. The overall zeal for orthodoxy and the designation of any oppositional view as blasphemy or heresy fed into the frenzy of exposing and prosecuting witches. James Sharpe posits that the scientific revolution deserves more attention when considering witch prosecutions, but it is essential to remember that the opening of several theological debates facilitated by the Reformation allowed scientific exploration to flourish.<sup>392</sup> As traditional understandings of scripture, religious practice, and theology came into question, the muddling line between magic and the divine became increasingly problematic. Also, religious debates and confessional divisions seeped into politics. Princes and the heads of state dictated what religious belief the people followed, and being Catholic or Protestant depended on what side those Princes chose. Tensions between European states and the suspicion of outsiders or anyone who appeared to be different increased as religious and political leadership chose sides.

As the Reformation contributed to social divisions and religious uncertainty, theological discourse increasingly included the evocation and fear of the Devil, resulting in higher rates of witchcraft prosecutions and animosity in Catholic and Protestant camps. Stuart Clark argues that there was very little difference between Catholic and Protestant understandings of witchcraft. According to Clark, “the thought patterns and linguistic habits that groomed representations of witchcraft stemmed from cosmological traditions, communicating theories, and evaluative strategies that transcended religious difference.”<sup>393</sup> Both Catholic and Protestant churches

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<sup>392</sup> Sharpe, ed., *English Witchcraft*, 310.

<sup>393</sup> Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 527.

believed the Devil to be an active and perilous force; both sought to maintain control over disorder and teach orthodoxy to their congregations, and both rallied against witchcraft in efforts to stamp out evil.<sup>394</sup> Pope Hadrian VI, who warned against the threat of witchcraft in 1523, decried the act of denying one's baptism and "taking the Devil to be their lord and master" in exchange for malefic magic.<sup>395</sup> Similarly, Luther spoke of the horrific demonic illusions and denial of God perpetrated by witches, "for what a sin it is, that men should forsake God and give themselves over to Satan."<sup>396</sup> Nevertheless, the theology of Protestantism did provide alternative methods to combat diabolical witchcraft, and theologians from Catholic and Protestant camps used witchcraft and the Devil to demonize confessional foes. Catholics linked "the flourishing of witchcraft to the prevalence of new heresies."<sup>397</sup>

Historians acknowledge a deep connection between Reformation debates and the uptick in witchcraft prosecutions during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Stuart Clark argues that "witch-hating was certainly influenced and exacerbated by confession-hating," even if several other factors contributed to the rise in prosecutions.<sup>398</sup> In 1561, the Catholic lawyer Jean Gay declared that Protestants were responsible for an uptick in magical practices.<sup>399</sup> "These people have revived the ancient superstitions of the auguries and divinations of ancient idolaters, and they believe them."<sup>400</sup> Gay blamed the Protestant religion for the revival of various types of magic like astrology and divination, and arguing that "the Devil has caused them all to revive all

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<sup>394</sup> Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 86, 530. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 9.

<sup>395</sup> Hadrian VI, "On Diabolical Witchcraft (1523)," in *Witchcraft in Europe*, Kors and Peters, eds., 246.

<sup>396</sup> Martin Luther, "Decem praecepta Wittenbergensi praedicta populo (1518)," in *Witchcraft in Europe*, Kors and Peters, eds., 265. John Calvin, "Sermon on Deuteronomy (1555)," in *Witchcraft in Europe*, Kors and Peters, eds., 267-268.

<sup>397</sup> Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 536.

<sup>398</sup> Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 536.

<sup>399</sup> Jean Gay, "Histoire des scismes et heresies des Albigeois," in P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, ed., *The Occult in Early Modern Europe: A Documentary History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 168.

<sup>400</sup> Jean Gay, in P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, ed., *The Occult in Early Modern Europe*, 168.



the condemned arts of divination, judicial astrology, and necromancy.”<sup>401</sup> The Tridentine index published in 1564 following The Council of Trent included ten guidelines on how Church officials should censor problematic texts. The guidelines illustrate both the Catholic Church’s condemnation of Protestantism and witchcraft as heretical and subversive. Protestants, who translated the Bible from Latin or denied the sacraments, faced censorship of all books on magic and witchcraft.<sup>402</sup>

On the other hand, Protestant theologians actively linked Catholics to witchcraft and Devil worship. Protestant leaders used the inclusion of ritual and iconography to compare Catholicism to demonolatry and witchcraft. In his *Sermon on Deuteronomy*, John Calvin equated Catholicism to witchcraft, writing that “it is true that in Poperie all are witches in their idolatries,” and he described Catholic religious practices like services for the dead as “mere witchery.”<sup>403</sup> Michael Macdonald argues that radical Protestants also denounced Catholic methods for combatting witchcraft, such as exorcisms, devising new and untainted methods to ward off Satan. The political and diplomatic fallout from religious differences between Catholic Europe and the English monarchy also intensified religious animosity. In a letter to Henry Bullinger in 1571, the English Bishop Horn spoke of Catholic plots against Queen Elizabeth I and accused the Church of witchcraft and violence. “They besiege the tender frame of the most noble virgin Elizabeth with almost endless attacks, and most studiously endeavor to compass her death, both by poison, and violence, and witchcraft, and treason, and all other means that king which could ever be imagined, and which is horrible to even relate.”<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Jean Gay, in P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, ed., *The Occult in Early Modern Europe*, 168.

<sup>402</sup> *Sacros. Concilium Tridentinum: Editio reformata* (Cologne: Johann Busaus, 1664), at SMU Bridwell Library: Perkins School of Theology, accessed on March 13, 2020, <https://www.smu.edu/Bridwell/SpecialCollectionsandArchives/Exhibitions/Luther/CounterReformation/AFH7502>.

<sup>403</sup> John Calvin, “Sermon on Deuteronomy,” in *Witchcraft in Europe*, Kors and Peters, eds., 269.

<sup>404</sup> Bishop Horn, “Bishop Horn to Henry Bullinger,” in *The Zurich Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846), 252.

Associations between witchcraft and the Devil increased throughout Europe beginning in the fifteenth century, contributing to the creation of a unique form of continental demonology. By the sixteenth century, continental demonological beliefs emphasized the influence of Satan and the use of malefic magic supported by both Protestant and Catholic leadership as the Reformation unfolded. When James VI took the throne in England, he worked to facilitate further reforms in the English Church, and his religious works contained a theological ideology containing characteristics of the evolved demonology prominent in Europe.<sup>405</sup> In 1484, Pope Innocent VIII issued his *Summis Desiderantes affectibus* that cautioned against the growing threat of witchcraft.<sup>406</sup> The Pope claimed that

many persons of both sexes, heedless of their own salvation and forsaking the Catholic faith, give themselves over to Devils male and female, and by their incantations, charms, and conjurings, and by other abominable superstitions and sortileges, offenses, crimes, and misdeeds, ruin and cause to perish the offspring of women, the foal of animals, the products of the earth, the grapes of vines, and the fruit of trees...<sup>407</sup>

Almost a century later, Protestant theologian Lambert Daneau praised the Reformation for freeing people and revealing “the light of his holy gospel,” which uncovered the increase in the Devil’s trickery of sinners who “fall into the snares of Satan and become sorcerers...”<sup>408</sup> Both Daneau and Innocent were aware of the threat witches posed, and were worried about the risk of heresy and blasphemy. Protestants and Catholics may have argued bitterly over the

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<sup>405</sup> David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell, *Religion and Society in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 147-148.

<sup>406</sup> Innocent VIII, “summis Desiderantes Affestibus,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 178.

<sup>407</sup> Innocent VIII, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 178.

<sup>408</sup> Lambert Daneau, “A Dialogue of Witches in Foretime Commonly called Sorcerers,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 272.

sacraments and other foundations of theological belief, but they did not disagree on the threat of witches and provided several official decrees to eradicate such a threat.

### **III. The Development of Continental Witchcraft Theory**

James VI encountered the full force of the European witchcraft frenzy when he visited the continent in 1590 and 1591. As a result, *Daemonologie* echoes several prominent demonological tracts of the period, some of which are quoted or mentioned in the text. While Marian exiles and obscure theological scholars like Henry Holland spoke of diabolical magic, continental witchcraft belief did not necessarily influence popular belief in London or Edinburgh before 1600. Foundational ideas relating magic to the Devil appeared in a few scholarly treatises, but because of his reach, James's experiences, study, and exposure to a wider net of belief led to the spreading of continental ideology in ways that failed to seep into popular belief before. Evidence does suggest that even before the events in North Berwick alerted James to the witchcraft threat, the king's personal library contained several texts that addressed the subjects of magic, religion, and the existence of demonological witchcraft.<sup>409</sup>

#### ***The Malleus Maleficarum and The Core Characteristics of Witchcraft***

King James's personal library contained texts that included the Epistles of Augustine, the works of John Calvin, Hemmingius, Erasmus, Bodin, Bullinger, and Cornelius Agrippa.<sup>410</sup> Several of these theologians and academics influenced James's understanding of diabolical witchcraft, and one text appears to have a highly significant influence on the majority of early

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<sup>409</sup> Anonymous, *The Library of Mary Queen of Scots and King James VI*. George Warner, ed., *The Library of James VI, 1573-1583* (Edinburgh: Scottish Historical Society, 1895).

<sup>410</sup> Anonymous, *The Library of Mary Queen of Scots and King James VI*. George Warner, ed., *The Library of James VI, 1573-1583*.

modern demonological thought (Catholic and Protestant), *The Malleus Maleficarum*. Published in 1486, *The Malleus Maleficarum* was written by two Dominican friars appointed by the Church to root out heresy.<sup>411</sup> King James's arguments in *Daemonologie* closely resemble much of the language introduced in *The Malleus*, and this mimicry is common in the works of several demonologists of the period, illustrating the *Malleus*'s sway. Hans Peter Broedel argues that *The Malleus* largely contributed to the stabilization of the "learned definition of witchcraft" within fifty years of its publication.<sup>412</sup> Pre-sixteenth-century understandings of magic and witches were multi-faceted and unfixed. Moreover, heretical behaviors and a litany of bothersome evil spirits co-existed with mythical creatures and more traditional concepts of natural magic, which behaved very differently from the diabolical magic later described by most demonologists.<sup>413</sup> By the mid-sixteenth century, new ideas emerged about witchcraft and "educated men generally agreed on the definitions of 'witch' and 'witchcraft.'"<sup>414</sup>

*The Malleus Maleficarum* was the first comprehensive guide to diabolical witchcraft that provided a description of magic, the types of magic users, the nature of pacts with the Devil, and how clerics and authorities should proceed in prosecuting and eradicating the witchcraft threat.<sup>415</sup> More importantly, the text pointed out specific foundational characteristics of witchcraft belief. First, the authors Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger insisted that all sorcery was inherently diabolical, with demons giving magic power to witches.<sup>416</sup> Second, witches renounced God and worshipped the Devil, procreated with demons, inverted the sacraments, and infected neighbors

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<sup>411</sup> Christopher Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>412</sup> Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>413</sup> Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft*, 3.

<sup>414</sup> Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft*, 3.

<sup>415</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 5-11.

<sup>416</sup> The two Dominican monks who penned the *Malleus Maleficarum* were James Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer. Mackey, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 12-13.

with illness and pestilence.<sup>417</sup> Christopher Mackay argues that diabolism was a “new conception” characterized by six beliefs that constituted the definition of a witch by the late fifteenth century.<sup>418</sup> Those beliefs consisted of the demonic pact, sex with the Devil, supernatural flight, the witch assembly, malefic magic, and the (ritualized) murder of children.<sup>419</sup> In addition to the behavioral characteristics of witches, Kramer and Sprenger’s text also set religious and civil precedents by advocating for the cooperation between secular and clerical authority to bring witches to justice and eradicate the threat.<sup>420</sup> The authors recommended the use of torture and coercion in obtaining confessions from suspected witches with the caveat that without such measures, the evil witch had no reason to submit to clerical authority because they had irreversibly damned their souls.<sup>421</sup>

*The Malleus Maleficarum* supplied a pre-Reformation perspective on witchcraft that stressed the diabolical nature of magic and witchcraft with detailed breakdowns of the indoctrination of converts, the scope of a witch’s power, and a methodology by which clerical and lay authorities should prosecute offenders. Regardless of later confessional divides that split Christianity by the sixteenth century, *The Malleus Maleficarum* influenced scholars, including Erasmus, Martin Luther, and King James. Moreover, although the authors of *The Malleus* were little known agents of the Inquisition, well-known and highly respected scholars like Erasmus, who spoke out against witchcraft later, evoked the language of *The Malleus* to denounce magic use.<sup>422</sup> In 1501, Erasmus addressed the subject of sorcery in a letter, which spoke of a sorcerer, the use of illicit magical texts, inverted Catholic ritual, and the mechanizations of the Devil.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 13-15.

<sup>418</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 19.

<sup>419</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 19.

<sup>420</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 477.

<sup>421</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 14-15.

<sup>422</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, “Letter 143,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 233.

<sup>423</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, “Letter 143,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 233.

While both *The Malleus* and Erasmus warned against witchcraft and connected magic to the Devil, neither texts are carbon copies of the witchcraft belief espoused by James in 1597.<sup>424</sup>

The confessional divide between Catholics and Protestants created by the Reformation also opened the floodgates of individual theological interpretation. As Protestants sought to raise questions about theological doctrine and the Catholic Church attempted to manage those objections with a Counter-Reformation, witchcraft belief maintained some level of symmetry that crossed confessional divisions. Moreover, the existence of religious controversy contributed to an increase in anxieties about evil in the word and the work of the Devil. The Protestant theologian Heinrich Bullinger, who worked alongside John Calvin in Geneva, believed that the “black art” of witchcraft was a sign of demonic intervention in the world.<sup>425</sup> Bullinger placed particular weight on the indoctrination of a witch via the act of a demonic pact.<sup>426</sup> Because of the pact’s danger to the immortal soul, Bullinger stressed the need to prosecute and eradicate all witches, a sentiment later echoed by James in *Daemonologie*.<sup>427</sup> Similarly, Niels Hemmingius, the most influential Danish demonologist, emphasized the criminality of the demonic pact and that the most crucial task for the clergy was to eradicate the idea that beneficial magic was less of a sin.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Some characteristics of witchcraft belief that appear in the *Malleus* contain only minor differences when compared to James’s work, but these differences underline major confessional differences. For example, *The Malleus* posits that some men and women are immune to the workings of witches, but James argues that no one has immunity from the pain and suffering instigated by Satan’s earthly minions. These minor differences illustrate that James took what he read and cultivated his own version of witchcraft belief that fit in line with his theological ideologies. Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 14-15. James VI, *Daemonologie*.

<sup>425</sup> Ildiko Sz. Kristof, “‘Charming Sorcerers’ or ‘Soldiers of Satan’? Witchcraft and Magic in the Eyes of Protestant/Calvinist Preachers in Early Modern Hungary,” in *Religions; Basel* 10, no. 5 (May 2019), accessed February 21, 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2328361538?accountid=11226>.

<sup>426</sup> Amy Nelson Burnette and Emildio Campi, *A Companion to the Swiss Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 579.

<sup>427</sup> Burnette and Campi, *A Companion to the Swiss Reformation*, 579. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 2-4.

<sup>428</sup> Hemmingius’s refusal to acknowledge any form of acceptable magic is also echoed later by James who owned a copy of Hemmingius’s *de Superstitionibus Magicis* in his library by 1575. Anonymous, *The Library of Mary Queen of Scots and King James VI*, 18. Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Scotland*, 342.

The foundational characteristics of witchcraft mentioned by the authors of *The Malleus Maleficarum* constructed the “elaborated concept of witchcraft” espoused by late-sixteenth and seventeenth-century European demonologists.<sup>429</sup> James did not swallow the message of the *Malleus* wholesale, and while the characteristics appear in some form or another in James’s *Daemonologie*, they are not exact copies. The demonic pact, sexual intercourse, flight, assemblies, *maleficium*, and ritualistic child murder are significant characterization markers to follow when tracing the construction of witchcraft belief on the European continent, and in turn, the structure of belief built upon by James in *Daemonologie*. By tracing the mention and development of *The Malleus*’s central six characteristics from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century, we can pinpoint the specific pillars of belief that James adopted and then used to both influence and transform English and Scottish belief by the seventeenth century. Even by the publication of *The Malleus*, witchcraft belief was disjointed, and the text was “one of a large number of competing notions of what witchcraft was all about.”<sup>430</sup> By the 1550s, the *Malleus*’s influence helped to create the stabilization of the “learned definition of witchcraft,” thus paving the way for James to discover that definition in 1591 and spread his interpretation of witchcraft belief within his sphere of influence.<sup>431</sup>

Late-medieval religious scholars framed the conversion of men and women from Christianity to Satanic worship via witchcraft as an inversion of orthodoxy and evidence of the demonic war against God on earth.<sup>432</sup> The power promised to Satan’s servants through witchcraft tempted the corruptible and targeted the innocent. The Devil led his converts into blasphemy by

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<sup>429</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 19.

<sup>430</sup> Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft*, 7.

<sup>431</sup> Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft*, 7-8.

<sup>432</sup> Late-medieval and early modern demonological scholars argued that Satan used witchcraft to increase the size of his army against God, most of them also insist in their treatises that God allowed the Devil to use witchcraft as a means to test humanity. Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 13, 277.

causing them to turn their backs on God, abusing the sacraments, and making an eternal pact for their souls.<sup>433</sup> According to *The Malleus*, the witch's ultimate crime was their pact with the Devil.<sup>434</sup> Every aspect of the sin of witchcraft lies within the demonic pact. Without the physical and spiritual pact with Satan, witchcraft in a criminal and heretical sense does not take place. According to *The Malleus*, the witch offers his or her body and soul in exchange for the Devil's gift of malefic power.<sup>435</sup> Before the *Malleus*, fifteenth-century theological tracts denouncing witchcraft did not necessarily mention any evidence of a formalized pact with a supernatural entity. For example, although Pope Innocent VIII's *Summis Desiderantes affectibus* warned against devils and incantations, there was no mention of an explicit demonic pact.<sup>436</sup> However, within twenty years and the publication of *The Malleus* and other similar works, interpretations of witchcraft began to change.

Following the publication of *The Malleus Maleficarum*, its diabolical characteristics began to appear more regularly in other scholarly works. Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg warned his readers of the dangers of diabolical witchcraft in *Die Emeis*.<sup>437</sup> He argued that "the Devil has made a pact with certain men and has given them certain words and signs."<sup>438</sup> Soon after, Heinrich Bullinger asserted that witchcraft was only possible through demonic means, and he emphasized the damnable severity of the crime because of its necessary ties with Satan.<sup>439</sup> Bullinger, like several of his Protestant contemporaries, fostered a method of theological debate that spread through Europe, relying on constant correspondence with religious thinkers who

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<sup>433</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 283-287.

<sup>434</sup> The pact was often coupled with the reception of the Devil's mark by willing converts. Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 19.

<sup>435</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 287.

<sup>436</sup> Innocent VIII, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 178.

<sup>437</sup> Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg, "Die Emeis," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 238.

<sup>438</sup> Kaysersberg, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 238.

<sup>439</sup> Louis Nyhold Kallestrup, *Cultural Histories of Crime in Denmark, 1500 to 2000* (Milton: Routledge, 2017), 22.



engaged in a vigorous debate over theological tenets and sought the spread and unification of a larger Protestant European project.<sup>440</sup> Bullinger's theology concentrated heavily on the threat of Satan because he viewed the Devil's increased activity as a sign of the Second Coming, with both the rise of witches and the conflicts with the Catholic Church as proof of the end of days.<sup>441</sup> Bullinger's contemporary Niels Hemmingius echoed similar sentiments. One of the most notable Dutch authorities on witchcraft, Hemmingius argued that the seduction of a witch and her pact with the Devil irreversibly condemned the soul to hell.<sup>442</sup>

The emphasis on the witch's pact was not exclusive to Protestants, and Catholics like Jean Bodin, a sixteenth-century legal professor and advisor to the French king, stressed that the crime of witchcraft was heresy because of the demonic pact and a witch's renunciation of God.<sup>443</sup> Bodin denounced skeptics of the witchcraft threat and involved himself in the 1578 witchcraft trial of Jeanne Harvillier, who was seduced by the Devil disguised as "a tall, dark man dressed in black with spurs, boots, and sword."<sup>444</sup> By the 1520s, a majority of clerical authorities used diabolical language when describing witchcraft and its associated sins. For the witch, taking "the Devil to be their lord and master, promising him worship and obedience" created opportunities for revenge, wealth, and power.<sup>445</sup> On the other hand, the threat of Satan and an army of compliant witches spurred the Church into action even as confessional divisions led to

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<sup>440</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 176-177.

<sup>441</sup> Bruce Gordon, "God Killed Saul: Heinrich Bullinger and Jacob Ruef on the Power of the Devil," in *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits: Traditional Belief & Folklore in Early Modern Europe*, Kathryn Edwards, ed. (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2002), 155-156.

<sup>442</sup> It is clear that Hemmingius's views on the demonic pact contradicted prominent Calvinist ideas of predestination and the only explanation I can posit here is that demonologists like Hemmingius correlated predestination with the belief that God allowed Satan to recruit witches, meaning that mortals who chose the pact with the Devil were predestined to do so and would be used as tools against the innocent and faithful to test them on earth. Kallestrup, *Cultural Histories of Crime in Denmark*, 22.

<sup>443</sup> Jean Bodin, "On the Demon -Mania of Witches," in Martha Ramston, ed., *European Magic and Witchcraft* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 367.

<sup>444</sup> Bodin's description of the Devil becomes one of the standard characteristics of witchcraft belief where Satan is depicted as a man clad in all black or other types of dark creatures. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft*, 131.

<sup>445</sup> Pope Hadrian VI, "On Diabolical Witchcraft," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 246.

more significant controversies. Between 1581 and 1593, authorities prosecuted several alleged witches in the German province of Trier. Surviving documents from the prosecution describe occurrences sorcery, demonic visitation, and the official renunciation of God and the Virgin as proof of witchcraft and heresy.<sup>446</sup> The alleged witches in Trier met in groups, danced, and worked with the Devil to plot against their enemies.<sup>447</sup> Trier encapsulates the shifting narratives associated with European witchcraft prosecutions in that accusations did not always come from either the top or bottom of society. Occurrences of witchcraft appeared throughout the German territories. For example, the villages of Overnau and Wendelsheim petitioned the local government to prosecute a noblewoman as a witch for predicting storms and causing chaos in 1590.<sup>448</sup> By the late sixteenth century, European theologians repeatedly wrote of a pattern emerging in witch-hunts. These alleged witches exhibited behaviors that were increasingly becoming common characteristics attributed to witchcraft and were facilitated by Satan.

### *The Demonic Pact*

The witch gained his or her power from an eternal pact with the Devil. Coupled with the renunciation of God and one's baptism, a witch's heresy involved converting to the open worship of Satan in exchange for his supernatural gifts. Catholic and Protestant theologians cited the rejection of God's light and included it with the demonic pact as the ultimate crime of practicing witchcraft. Pope Hadrian VI denounced the men and women who willingly strayed from God, denied their baptism, abused the sacraments, and turned to the Devil.<sup>449</sup> While the

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<sup>446</sup> "The Prosecutions at Trier," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 311-312.

<sup>447</sup> "The Prosecutions at Trier," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 311-312.

<sup>448</sup> Johannes Dillinger, *Evil People: A Comparative Study of Witch Hunts in Swabian Austria and the Electorate of Trier*, Laura Stokes, tr., (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 74-75.

<sup>449</sup> Hadrian VI, "On Diabolical Witchcraft," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 246.

pact with Satan was a blatant sin against God, theological tracts on witchcraft often emphasized the inversion of orthodox Christian practices as an example of how witches committed blasphemy. Used as both a tool to warn against the crime of heresy and a way to instruct the laity on proper Christian orthodoxy, abusing traditional behaviors and inverting their meanings represented a denunciation of God and the true faith. Further, the language in demonological texts pointedly warned men and women against falling back into the habits of using folk traditions and magic to cure common ills. In the 1560s, Huguenot pastor Lambert Daneau warned his parishioners against the allure of Satan and turning from God by not taking the threat seriously because the mortal soul was weak and, without proper faith, vulnerable.<sup>450</sup> For Daneau, Reformation and “the light of his [God’s] holy gospel,” exposed the Satan-addicted witches, but also made people easier targets, tricked into a false sense of security because the only protection against witches was God.<sup>451</sup>

The French jurist and demonologist, Henry Boguet, composed his first demonological work, *Examen of Witches*, around 1590.<sup>452</sup> In his chapter, “Of the Witches Renunciation of God, Baptism, and Chrism,” his description of the witch’s demonic conversion echoes *The Malleus Maleficarum*. Boguet emphasized that to obtain supernatural powers, a witch had to renounce God and the baptism completely. However, also similar to arguments posed by the authors of *The Malleus*, Boguet stated that although the witch performed the requirements to receive power from his or her dark lord, “the witch has only the intent to harm, whilst Satan actually performs that which he would have done.”<sup>453</sup> For Boguet and an increasing number of theologians

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<sup>450</sup> Lambert Daneau, “A Dialogue of Witches,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 272.

<sup>451</sup> Lambert Daneau, “A Dialogue of Witches,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 272.

<sup>452</sup> Gary Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft*, 165.

<sup>453</sup> Henry Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, Montague Summers, ed. (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2009), xix.

examining the threat of witchcraft, the demonic pact quickly became the primary component of diabolical conversion and the original sin of witches.

### *Intercourse with the Devil*

Demonologists who emerged following the publication of *The Malleus Maleficarum* stressed the danger of the Devil increasing his numbers in his eternal war against God. By destroying humankind, Satan sought to strike a deadly blow at his master and used every trick in his arsenal to tempt and sway converts. Satan deployed the promise of wealth, power, or revenge while recruiting, but when he “cannot move a man by fair words, he compels him by threats of danger.”<sup>454</sup> Once one was initiated into the Devil’s service, the pact required regular upkeep through ceremonial acts of dedication and sanctification. *The Malleus Maleficarum*’s second central characteristic of witchcraft involved the physical consecration of a witch’s bond with Satan through sexual intercourse.<sup>455</sup> Kramer and Sprenger described the diabolical union as “filthy acts,” and explained how intercourse took place with examples of forty-one sorceresses who admitted to committing such acts in 1485.<sup>456</sup> While typical, not all demonologists explicitly included sexual intercourse. Von Kaysersberg and Hemmingius each alluded to sexual immorality, seduction, and the weakness of women, but neither mentioned sex with the Devil as part of a witch’s duty to her master.<sup>457</sup> The female sex’s weakness to seduction and temptation served as a consistent theme in demonological texts throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Italian philosopher Gianfrancesco Pico Della Mirandola echoed that perceived

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<sup>454</sup> Nicholas Jacquier, “A Scourge of Heretical Witches,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 171.

<sup>455</sup> Intercourse was one interpretation of the physical bond between Satan and his witch servant. Not all demonological treatises include sexual intercourse with the Devil, though James’s *Daemonologie* does include it. Later interpretations include the Devil’s mark. Christopher Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 302.

<sup>456</sup> Christopher Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 302-309.

<sup>457</sup> Kors and Peters, eds., in *Witchcraft in Europe*, 22-26. Johan Kaysersberg, “Die Emis,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 238.

weakness in 1523 when describing a witch named *Strega* who flew into the houses of her enemies at night, drank their blood, and learned her magics from demons.<sup>458</sup> She described experiencing “greater pleasure with it than with my husband.”<sup>459</sup>

Jean Bodin’s *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* insinuated that copulation occurred between witch and master, but that congregations of witches participated in incestuous acts.<sup>460</sup> Like the other significant characteristics laid out in *The Malleus Maleficarum*, ritualized worship of the Devil and its heretical methodology represented an inversion of proper forms of orthodox worship. Not only did the witches have sexual intercourse with the Devil, but they also participated in hedonistic sexual acts with each other.<sup>461</sup> In his demonological treatise, Bodin included excerpts from several witch-confessions with evidence of demonic intercourse because of the alleged witch’s desire for “carnal pleasures,” meaning the Devil used the lure of sex to ensnare further and corrupt his converts.<sup>462</sup> “Satan couples with the witches sometimes in the form of a black man, sometimes in that of some animal, as a dog or a cat or a ram,” and he degraded the bodies and souls of his converts, making the sin of joining the Devil more egregious.<sup>463</sup>

### *Supernatural Travel and Witches’ Flight*

According to *The Malleus Maleficarum*, witches were able to conduct their devilish work over large swaths of land via unnatural forms of flight.<sup>464</sup> Kramer and Sprenger evoked the pagan

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<sup>458</sup> Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, “Strix,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 243-245.

<sup>459</sup> Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, “Strix,” in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 243-245.

<sup>460</sup> Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, Randy A. Scott, tr. (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2001), 8.

<sup>461</sup> Henry Boguet, *An Examen of Witches* (New York: Dover Publications, 2009), 29.

<sup>462</sup> Boguet, *An Examen*, 29.

<sup>463</sup> Boguet, *An Examen*, 32.

<sup>464</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 293.

goddess Diana in describing how witches allegedly rode on the backs of spirit animals in the night to “pass over great stretches of land during the silence of the dead of night, obeying her in all things as their mistress.”<sup>465</sup> The mythical flying witch appears to have origins before the publication of *The Malleus Maleficarum* and the authors refer to older beliefs of flying witches and magic users.<sup>466</sup> However, throughout the sixteenth century, witches’ flight, like all of the characteristics listed by Kramer and Sprenger, transitions into a central characteristic of prominent understandings of witchcraft. Within twenty years of the publication of *The Malleus*, theologians regularly contained accounts of witch’s flights or “women who travel through the night and meet at assemblies.”<sup>467</sup> Synchrony took time and resulted in the belief that witches traveled by spiritual and physical means. Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg claimed that witches used the method of spiritual and not physical flight. “They do travel hither and yon, but that they also remain where they are because they dream that they travel, since the devil can create an impression in the human mind, and thus a fantasy that they dream with others that they travel, and when they go with each other and see other women and dance, feast, and eat, and he can do all that to them...”<sup>468</sup> By the late sixteenth century and the publication of *Daemonologie*, theologians of witchcraft agreed that both physical and spiritual travel was possible with the Devil’s aid.

### *The Witches’ Assembly*

Whether it be spiritual flight or physical travel on the backs of goats or brooms, witches often moved over long distances to congregate at a witches’ assembly. The assembly serves as

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<sup>465</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 293.

<sup>466</sup> Von Kaysersberg, in Kors and Peters., eds. *Witchcraft in Europe*, 236.

<sup>467</sup> Von Kaysersberg, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 237.

<sup>468</sup> Von Kaysersberg, in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 237.

the fourth pillar of witchcraft belief mentioned in *The Malleus Maleficarum* that becomes standardized knowledge by the seventeenth century.<sup>469</sup> Demonological tracts commonly included detailed depictions of witch assemblies that highlighted the hedonistic and sacrilegious nature of the meetings. Witches danced frantically to music played by their demonic master, participated in incestuous acts, and told Satan of their malefic exploits against the community.<sup>470</sup> As the Devil's servants attended an inverted version of Christian worship, they mocked orthodox religion by dancing, sexual intercourse, gluttonous feasts, and the heretical worship of Satan. All the while, the Devil appeared to his followers "in the shape of a big black man and now as a goat," whom they bowed to and kissed his "shameful parts," the blasphemous opposite of communion.<sup>471</sup> The same activities appear time and time again in witchcraft tracts written during the sixteenth century. Catholics and Protestants alike describe the decadence and sin of the witches' assembly to illustrate the growing numbers in Satan's army and the threat it posed to true religion.

### *Malefic Magic*

Malefic magic was the fifth central characteristic of witchcraft described in *The Malleus Maleficarum*. As the witches danced and reveled in their sin, the converts of the Devil told their master of how they used diabolical magic to plague neighbors and wreak general havoc.<sup>472</sup> The threat of harmful magic exacerbated fears caused by witches and was used as a tool by the clergy and demonologists to instill fear in the minds of the laity. Witches plagued their neighbors,

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<sup>469</sup> Christopher Mackay, ed., *The Hammer of Witches*, 63.

<sup>470</sup> Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, 56.

<sup>471</sup> Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, 56.

<sup>472</sup> *The Malleus Maleficarum* and several demonological tracts that followed its publication contain very structured and layered descriptions of the different types of magic used by witches and even though all magic originated with the Devil.

causing illness, death, and the destruction of crops and property. Further, the pestilence and famine brought on by the whims of diabolical witches were not merely the acts of the Devil, but tests that were allowed by God to try the faithful.<sup>473</sup> Using malefic magic to test the faith of Christians coincided with the rise of Protestantism and specifically Calvinist belief. According to Calvinist doctrine, death, famine, and pain tested the faith of Christians, who only through God's mercy experienced grace and eternal life. Predominantly Calvinist parts of Europe conducted several intense witch-hunts, and throughout the Swiss Confederacy, communities blamed the outbreaks of the plague on the work of "Satan-bound" witches.<sup>474</sup> However, like several other aspects of the characteristics of witchcraft, the fear of malefic magic crossed confessional divides and was established as a core witchcraft characteristic.

Catholic theologian Jean Bodin warned his readers of the evocation of evil spirits and the use of necromancy in causing widespread pain and suffering.<sup>475</sup> Bodin reiterates earlier arguments made by fellow demonologist Johann Nider, who penned a fifteenth-century witchcraft treatise titled *Formicarius*, warning readers of the malicious acts of mutilation and murder attributed to witches.<sup>476</sup> During the trial of an alleged witch named Stadlin in the Lausanne diocese, the defendant confessed to "having killed seven children in their mother's womb; and also that he had caused all the livestock of that household to abort."<sup>477</sup> Stadlin's methods are early forms of later witchcraft staples that, by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, evolved from abortion to outright murder. Murder, cannibalism, poisoning, the destruction of livestock, and the creation of famine were all forms of malefic magic, a practice

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<sup>473</sup> Brian P. Levack, ed., *Demonology, Religion, and Witchcraft* (London: Routledge, 2001), 61.

<sup>474</sup> This is an example of the evolution of scapegoating from the medieval to early modern periods. Witches replaced Jews and Lepers as scapegoats in communities under crisis. Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft*, 164.

<sup>475</sup> Bodin, *On The Demon-Mania of Witches*, 104-105.

<sup>476</sup> Bodin, *On The Demon-Mania of Witches*, 138.

<sup>477</sup> Bodin, *On The Demon-Mania of Witches*, 138.



distinguished from other forms of magic and increasingly mentioned in condemnations of witchcraft over the sixteenth century.<sup>478</sup>

### *The Ritual Murder of Infants and Children*

Malefic magic gave witches the ability to afflict neighbors with any number of ailments, plagues, and misfortunes as a means to get revenge, wealth, or power.<sup>479</sup> The sixth foundational characteristic stressed by the authors of *The Malleus Maleficarum* was a specialized manifestation of malefic magic in the form of the ritualized murder of infants and children.<sup>480</sup> The ritual sacrifice and mutilation of a community's youngest and most innocent members provide us with deep insight into the nature of witchcraft belief by 1600. Not only did witches murder, but they used the pure, helpless, and unprotected when sacrificing infants, but it was that innocence that fueled particular aspects of their magic. In the process of worshipping Satan and damning their eternal souls, witches violently destroyed God's gift of life and endangered the souls of the newly born and unbaptized.<sup>481</sup> This was an easy scenario to implant in the minds of the population as childbirth was extremely dangerous for both infant and mother. The birth, fast-decline, and death of infants without explanation was common, and those who sought answers examined the character and behaviors of midwives and neighbors as suspects of foul play. Ritual

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<sup>478</sup> Although early Christian theologians like Augustine associated magic with Satan, the separation of magic in "good" and "bad" categories survived well into the early modern period and the argument that all magic originated from the Devil becomes the primary focus of demonologists around 1600. Pope Innocent VIII, *Summis desiderantes affectibus*, in Kors and Peters, eds., 178-179. Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, 97-100.

<sup>479</sup> Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, 90.

<sup>480</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 19.

<sup>481</sup> Henry Boguet argued that diabolical witches serving as midwives threatened the salvation of newly born infants as a means to emphasize the importance of baptizing a newborn without delay, a tool to maintain orthodox religious practice as well as a warning against witchcraft. Deborah Willis connects the inclusion of infants in witchcraft prosecutions as depictions of bad mothers, an inversion of motherhood. Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, 89. Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*.

sacrifice and the murder of infants for potions and spells represent the pinnacle of malefic and diabolical witchcraft behavior.

*The Malleus Maleficarum* places particular scrutiny and suspicion on the role of midwives in witchcraft, an accusation that continues to grow into a common aspect of witchcraft literature by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>482</sup> Mirandola's 1523 account of *Strega's* crimes include the alleged witch confessing to entering the homes of neighbors at night, stealing their infant children, and piercing their flesh with needles, drinking their blood, and preserving the corpses to make ointments for travel.<sup>483</sup> Documents associated with the witch prosecutions at Trier also mention similar acts against children where witches confessed to kidnapping infants out of their beds at night.<sup>484</sup> Henry Boguet's *Examen of Witches* goes further, explicitly blaming diabolical witchcraft on midwives, arguing that after assisting the mother during labor, the Satan-corrupted midwives murdered the newborns and offered the sacrifices to their demonic master.<sup>485</sup> Lyndal Roper found evidence of these beliefs in many of the witch-trials that took place in seventeenth-century Ausburg where accusations were typically "brought by mothers, soon after giving birth, against women intimately concerned with the care of the child," but instead of midwives, the guilty parties were the lying-in-maids.<sup>486</sup>

Almost every demonological tract from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contained the idea that witches murdered children to facilitate their magic. Jean Bodin denounced the ritual murder of infants and children as one of the witch's most heinous crimes.<sup>487</sup> Witches sacrificed infants to Satan by raising the children into the air, and "insert[ing] a large pin into their head,

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<sup>482</sup> Mackay, ed., *The Hammer of Witches*, 14-19.

<sup>483</sup> Mirandola, "Strix," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 243.

<sup>484</sup> "Prosecutions at Trier," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 310.

<sup>485</sup> Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, 88.

<sup>486</sup> Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus & The Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in early modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), 201.

<sup>487</sup> Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, 205.

which causes them to die.”<sup>488</sup> Diabolical witches chose the innocent and unbaptized on purpose, adding to the malefic nature of the act. Combined with the five other characteristics of witchcraft stressed by the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the ritual murder of children contributed to the construction of a very different understanding of magic in comparison to earlier ideologies. Demonologists who followed in *The Malleus*’s footsteps contributed to the cultivation of belief by composing their own detailed and evidence-based theological tracts that warned readers of the imminent threat witchcraft posed to society. By the 1590s, King James’s personal experiences with witchcraft initiated his study of the subject and led him to compose *Daemonologie*, spreading continental beliefs to his subjects, to whom he was responsible in the eyes of God.

### **III. Witchcraft in Sixteenth-Century England**

Commonly held English understandings of witchcraft belief and official responses to witchcraft as a criminal offense differed considerably from the frenzied witch-hunts taking place throughout the rest of sixteenth-century Europe. The diabolical nature of the witch was a lesser-known attribute of English witchcraft belief, and the definition of magic more fluid and interpretive. That is not to say that the Devil had no place in English witchcraft belief, but demonological tracts were not as prevalent, and those who did warn against the dangers of diabolical witches were unpopular, rare, and quoted continental sources. Pre-1600 English witchcraft belief did not emphasize the six foundational characteristics of witchcraft belief laid out by the *Malleus Maleficarum*, and those beliefs did not gain traction until the publication of James’s *Daemonologie*.

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<sup>488</sup> Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, 205.

The religious and political tensions caused by the Reformation in sixteenth-century England and Scotland acutely influenced the nature of belief in both nations as confessional divides affected all of Europe. Isolation and unique governmental structures like Parliament and the English Church affected the development of belief and these outliers created an environment where, as Peter Burke argues, the “stereotype of the witch as a heretic or blasphemer, in league with the Devil, was a learned belief to which ordinary people were only converted gradually.”<sup>489</sup> Furthermore, James Sharpe highlights the differences between European and English beliefs by arguing that the island’s location “on the edge of sixteenth-century European intellectual trends” caused English theological and political scholars to fall behind, and thus the status of magic remained a muddled field longer.<sup>490</sup>

As early as the year 1500, European demonological scholars began to reiterate the vital characteristics of witchcraft belief laid out by Kramer and Sprenger in *The Malleus Maleficarum*. England and Scotland, on the other hand, did not reflect those trends and illustrate the minimal development of home-grown diabolical witchcraft beliefs.<sup>491</sup> For example, an anonymous pamphlet published in London in 1532 described the Devil as the medieval comedic trickster.<sup>492</sup> In the pamphlet, the Devil tempts a man in his sleep with the promise of wealth and gold, but instead of getting gold, the story culminates with the man soiling his bed because the Devil told him to cover the gold with feces to deter others from finding it.<sup>493</sup> The Devil offered the man

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<sup>489</sup> Burke is specifically talking about all of Europe, but the instructional aspect of diabolical belief is implemented differently in England and thus Burke’s argument is especially relevant with English witchcraft belief. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 168.

<sup>490</sup> Sharpe, *Early Modern England*, 313.

<sup>491</sup> This section’s focus will mainly follow English developments because Scotland’s first two demonological tracts were not published until 1592 and 1597 and they were both either penned entirely or curated by James VI.

<sup>492</sup> Anonymous, *Tales and Quick Answers, Very Merry, and Pleasant to Read* (London: 1532), CIr.

<sup>493</sup> *Tales and Quick Answers*, CIr.

wealth, but merely to humiliate him and the only thing hurt by the interaction was the man's pride. As Charlotte-Rose Millar notes, the Devil did not appear as a threat, but a joke.<sup>494</sup>

Even in clear cases of witchcraft and magic, the presence of the Devil did not loom as a spiritual and physical threat in most sixteenth-century English examples. In 1566's *The Examination of John Walsh*, the attitude of the pamphlet is anti-Catholic, not necessarily anti-magic.<sup>495</sup> Church officials questioned John Walsh of Nethersbery about his alleged practice of sorcery and witchcraft.<sup>496</sup> While the pamphlet derides witchcraft and calls it a "devilish" practice, the author spends more time admonishing "lusty priests," and the only mention of the Devil is associated directly with high ranking Catholic authority figures like the Pope.<sup>497</sup> John Walsh confessed to practicing "physicke or surgery" after learning the magical arts from a priest named Robert Draiton.<sup>498</sup> According to the pamphlet, "Cardinals and Bishops were chiefly and wholly given to the study and exercise of these most wicked and devilish sciences, and by these means did work to come to the Papal seat, by dignities, and great wealth."<sup>499</sup>

John Walsh's confession bears no resemblance to the characterization of witches provided by demonologists like Bodin, Boguet, or *The Malleus Maleficarum*. The kind of magic John Walsh practiced did not involve a pact with the Devil, witches' meetings, or malefic magic. In contrast, Walsh learned how to practice magic from another human being and healed the sick.<sup>500</sup> Satan never approached or tempted the alleged witch; Walsh received magical aid from

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<sup>494</sup> Miller, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions*, 32.

<sup>495</sup> Anonymous, *The Examination of John Walsh* (London, John Awdely, 1566).

<sup>496</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, AIIr.

<sup>497</sup> Taken into historical context, the anti-Catholic rhetoric makes more sense than stressing the fear of demonic witchcraft. By 1566, Elizabeth I had only ruled the English throne for eight years and her Protestant faith and religious reforms enraged Catholic Europe and rumors of Catholic plots to kill the queen were constant. *The Examination of John Walsh*, AIIr.

<sup>498</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, AIIIr.

<sup>499</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, AIIr.

<sup>500</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, Br.

green, white, and black fairies that he met near a mound of earth.<sup>501</sup> He did not behave in the ways continental witchcraft experts would have expected. Walsh never admitted to killing his enemies, causing plagues, or murdering infants. Instead, he found stolen items (with the aid of fairies), helped others who were bewitched, and confessed to performing symbol-filled rituals and spells from a book given to him by his former teacher.<sup>502</sup> Hints of continental belief are present in *The Examination*, but overall the pamphlet had less to do with the practice and sin of witchcraft than making public the failings and faults of the Catholic Church, which by the 1560s, held a precarious and contested position in the realm of public opinion in England. *The Examination of John Walsh* was a condemnation of religious heresy and corruption with witchcraft thrown in the mix to underscore bad behavior. If the anonymous author of the pamphlet is to be believed, Pope Alexander VI and Gregory VII both worshipped Satan and maintained power through demonic help, not the alleged witch John Walsh.<sup>503</sup>

Continental witchcraft belief did seep into England via “Marian exiles,” Protestants who fled England to avoid religious persecution during the reign of Mary Tudor between 1553 and 1558. When Mary I ruled England, Protestant theologians like John Jewel risked imprisonment and execution if they stayed in the country. Several notable theologians and scholars fled to Protestant-friendly parts of Europe to wait out the storm in hopes that Mary’s younger sister Elizabeth would eventually inherit the crown. Jewel was a notable and influential Oxford-educated Protestant scholar who was eventually appointed the Bishop of Salisbury under

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<sup>501</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, Br.

<sup>502</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, AIIr – Br.

<sup>503</sup> Towards the end of the pamphlet there is talk of a black dog and a man with cloven feet that assisted Walsh in his deeds, but the creature is never specifically described as Satan, and while Walsh did give the creatures presents, no demands were made upon him and his deeds were never described as especially demonic. The Devil worshippers in the pamphlet were Catholic religious officials. *The Examination of John Walsh*, AIIr - AIIIr.

Elizabeth I.<sup>504</sup> During his exile, Jewel traveled Europe, returning with continental ideas about the growing threat witchcraft posed to the Christian population.<sup>505</sup> In his letters home during exile, Jewel wrote of the European fear of witchcraft and “lingering Popery,” saying that “the number of witches and sorceresses had everywhere become enormous.”<sup>506</sup>

Elizabeth I appointed Jewel the Bishop of Salisbury shortly after his return to England in March of 1559, and his work to spread information about the threat of diabolical witchcraft began immediately.<sup>507</sup> Jewel vigorously advocated for strict laws against witchcraft in his letters to the Queen. The Bishop begged Elizabeth to re-enact witchcraft statutes and prescribe harsh sentences for uncovered transgressions.<sup>508</sup> In his letter, Jewel tells Elizabeth that “these eyes have seen most evident and manifest marks of their [witches] wickedness. Your Grace’s subjects pine away even unto the death, their color fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their senses are bereft.”<sup>509</sup> By 1563, Jewel’s protestations succeeded, and the laws against witchcraft in England existed once more. The 1563 *Act against Conjurations enchantments and Witchcrafts* states that people in England practiced witchcraft for “lewd intents and purposes” and destroyed the goods of their neighbors “contrary to the laws of Almighty God, to the peril of

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<sup>504</sup> John Craig, “John Jewel,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed December 15, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb.14810>.

<sup>505</sup> Parker Society, *The Zurich Letters or, the Correspondence of Several English Bishops* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846), 60.

<sup>506</sup> Parker Society, *The Zurich Letters*, 60.

<sup>507</sup> Craig, “John Jewell.”

<sup>508</sup> Before the passage of the Witchcraft Act of 1563, the last anti-witchcraft law was passed in 1542, but was repealed in 1547 under Edward VI. Scotland and England both passed witchcraft laws in 1563 that made witchcraft a felony under some circumstances, and punishable by death. The 1542 law, *The Bill against Conjurations and witchcrafts and sorcery and enchantments* was passed under Henry VIII, and outlawed acts of sorcery as a felony punishable by death. “Witchcraft,” *UK Parliament: Religion and Belief*, accessed on March 23, 2020, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/religion/overview/witchcraft/>. “33 Hen. VIII. C. 8,” in *The Statutes of the Realm, Volume III* (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1963), 837. “John Jewel, *The Works of John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury: The Second Portion*, John Hyre, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846), 1028.

<sup>509</sup> John Jewel, in Hyre, ed., *The Works of John Newel*, 1028.

their own souls.”<sup>510</sup> According to law, witches faced prison sentences or death, depending on the severity of their crimes, and they were prohibited from claiming the benefit of clergy.<sup>511</sup> The language of the act was more specific than the statute under Henry VIII. First, the 1563 statute described spirits as “evil or wicked,” where Henry’s law did not.<sup>512</sup> Next, the Elizabethan law defined witchcraft practices in stricter terms, describing how bewitchment hurt people and destroyed property.<sup>513</sup> However, while more strict and specific, the law did not directly mention Satan, and an overall understanding connecting witchcraft to the Devil was far from standard or well-known.<sup>514</sup>

Queen Elizabeth I appointed the Calvinist leaning theologian Gervase Babington to the post of Bishop of Worcester in 1591. Babington openly condemned immorality and “conjuring, witchcraft, sorcerie, charming, and such like.”<sup>515</sup> While Bishop Jewel echoed the fears of demonic witchcraft permeating continental Europe by the 1560s, Babington denounced magic, but without the demonic characteristics present in Jewel. Babington did condemn all types of magic and equated supernatural remedies with “demonism by the back door,” but his message had more to do with ensuring orthodoxy in the practice of Protestant belief than ridding the countryside of demon-obsessed witches.<sup>516</sup> According to Stuart Clark, Babington aimed to discourage the use of traditional and folk beliefs that survived under the Catholic Church and

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<sup>510</sup> “5 Eliz. 1 c. 16,” in *Witchcraft and the Act of 1604*, John Newton and Jo Bath (London: Brill, 2008), 233-236.

<sup>511</sup> “5 Eliz. 1 c. 16,” in Newton and Bath, *Witchcraft*, 234.

<sup>512</sup> “5 Eliz. 1 c. 16,” in Newton and Bath, *Witchcraft*, 234.

<sup>513</sup> “5 Eliz. 1 c. 16,” in Newton and Bath, *Witchcraft*, 234.

<sup>514</sup> The language of the 1563 witchcraft act was also muddled by statutes passed by the Elizabethan government that still depicted some aspects of magic or witchcraft as trickery. *An Act for Punishment of Rogues Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars* (39 Eliz. c. 4) states that people caught performing palmistry or telling fortunes should be stripped naked from the middle upward and openly whipped for their crimes. “39 Eliz. c. 4,” in *Statutes of the Realm, Vol. IV, part II* (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1827), 899.

<sup>515</sup> Gervase Babington, in Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 505.

<sup>516</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 505.



persisted in the sixteenth century.<sup>517</sup> His works on witchcraft provided children, adolescents, and supposedly “ill-informed adults” with the essentials for practicing “correct religion.”<sup>518</sup>

By the 1580s, English witchcraft pamphlets began to include slight connections between the diabolical and magic, but these were small in number, formatted differently than the demonological tracts coming from Europe, and provided similar accounts of bad actors caught in the act and punished for their crimes. Several foundational characteristics of continental witchcraft are missing from English pamphlets by the late sixteenth century. In 1579’s *A Rehearsall Both Strange and True of Hainous and Horrible Actes*, Elizabeth Stile was brought before Sir Henry Neville and charged with witchcraft.<sup>519</sup> In the pamphlet, Stile and several other witches allegedly obtained supernatural power from the Devil and committed acts of malefic magic against their neighbors.<sup>520</sup> However, the witches’ behaviors and the descriptions of their powers stray considerably from the six foundational characteristics usually described by continental witchcraft experts during the same period. Although Elizabeth Stile admits that other witches convinced her to renounce God and give herself to Satan, the text only implies that something resembling a demonic pact had taken place.<sup>521</sup> Furthermore, the pamphlet mentions evidence against Stile, proving she bewitched a neighbor. However, there is no mention of flight, assembly, or the ritual murder of infants, which are staples of European demonological tracts and core characteristics cited in *The Malleus Maleficarum*. For example, in 1527 the Dominican inquisitorial judge for the diocese of Geneva condemned Claudia Lyana for the “heretical

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<sup>517</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 505.

<sup>518</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 505.

<sup>519</sup> Anonymous, *A Rehearsall Both Strange and True of Hainous and Horrible Actes* (London: Sign of the Gun, 1579), AIIIIr.

<sup>520</sup> Anonymous, *A Rehearsall*.

<sup>521</sup> Anonymous, *A Rehearsall*, BIIIv.

perversity” of witchcraft because she denied God, denied the baptism, “did homage and reverence to the Devil,” and kissed his “hinder parts” during fornication at a witches’ meeting.<sup>522</sup>

Similar to the language in *A Rehearsall*, the 1579 pamphlet *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, warns readers against the use of witchcraft, calling the practice “devilish.”<sup>523</sup> The pamphlet describes the crimes of three witches accused of using their magic to harm their neighbors.<sup>524</sup> On the other hand, the pamphlet’s description of magic does not completely parallel continental witchcraft beliefs. According to the text, witchcraft was diabolical, but the accused witches, Elizabeth Fraunces, Mother Osborne, and Mother Waterhouse practiced magic independently and possessed the ability to teach each other, a contradiction to continental witchcraft practices and demonological belief.<sup>525</sup> Again, the English understanding of witchcraft lacked several core characteristics of diabolical witchcraft. In the pamphlet, Mother Osborne had “a mark in the end of one of her fingers like a pit, and another mark upon the outside of her right leg,” but the mark’s origins and meaning are unclear.<sup>526</sup> The pamphlet speaks of the Devil, and it includes evidence of unexplained physical marks on the bodies of accused witches, but without any mention of an explicit pact with Satan.

The English definition of witchcraft by the late sixteenth-century was not the same as the diabolical witchcraft in continental belief. While characteristics involving the Devil existed, it is only after the events of 1591 and the later publication of *Daemonologie* that we see a consistent, stable, and distinctly English and Scottish definition of witchcraft that relies heavily on continental belief. *Daemonologie* highlights each one of the six foundational characteristics

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<sup>522</sup> Stephanus de Guelo, “An Inquisitor’s Judgment on a Witch, 1527,” in P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, ed., *The Occult in Early Modern Europe: A Document History* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1999), 181.

<sup>523</sup> Anonymous, *A Detection of Damnable Driftes, Practiced by Three Witches* (London: 1579), 3-5.

<sup>524</sup> Anonymous, *A Detection*, 3-5.

<sup>525</sup> Anonymous, *A Detection*, 5-7.

<sup>526</sup> Anonymous, *A Detection*, 6.

attributed to witchcraft in *The Malleus Maleficarum*: the pact, demonic intercourse, flight, assembly, malefic magic, and the ritual murder of infants. Further, English and Scottish witchcraft treatises and cheap pamphlets published after 1591 define witchcraft in similar ways. For example, William Perkins's early seventeenth-century treatise *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* speaks of "a league or covenant made between the witch and the Devil," satanic ceremonies, malefic magic, and several other similar characteristics previously found only in continental publications. Perkins, a prominent theological scholar who taught at Christ's College, represents one of several English theologians who began publishing demonological tracts in the seventeenth century. Furthermore, early seventeenth-century pamphlets that dramatically described witch prosecutions began to include continental characteristics and quote James directly. *The Witches of Northamptonshire* (1612) calls witchcraft "a damnable and Devilish sinne," where the practitioners denounced God and sold their souls to the Devil.<sup>527</sup> The witches, Joane Vaughan, Agnes Browne, and Arthur Bill, displayed those characteristics in their behavior by having the Devil help them bewitch neighbors, kill livestock, and murder enemies.<sup>528</sup> Most importantly, the account contains direct evidence of James's influence on the development of witchcraft belief by quoting *Daemonologie* when explaining how Arthur Bill failed the water test.<sup>529</sup> The "water should refuse to receive them in her bosome, that have shaken from them the sacred water of baptisme..."<sup>530</sup>

The approach to and definition of witchcraft in England and Scotland changed during the last decades of the sixteenth century. These changes originated from the spread of continental witchcraft beliefs and the dissemination of stabilized characteristics, including the witch's pact

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<sup>527</sup> Anonymous, *The Witches of Northamptonshire* (London: Thomas Purfoot, 1612), A3r.

<sup>528</sup> Anonymous, *The Witches of Northamptonshire*, A3v-C2r.

<sup>529</sup> Anonymous, *The Witches of Northamptonshire*, C2v.

<sup>530</sup> Anonymous, *The Witches of Northamptonshire*, C2v. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 80-81.

with the Devil, malefic magic, and the witches' assembly. While those changes did not originate from one single source, Marian exiles returning to England in the second half of the sixteenth-century only slightly contributed to a shift in witchcraft belief. However, English understandings of witchcraft had a lack of consistency, and both treatises and pamphlets on the subject published before the last decade of the 1500s demonstrate the instability of witchcraft belief. This instability declines after the 1591 North Berwick witch-hunt, the publication of *Newes from Scotland*, and the subsequent publication of James's *Daemonologie* by 1597. In the seventeenth century, English and Scottish treatises on witchcraft more closely resemble their continental counterparts, and a distinct field of demonological scholarship begins to emerge that warns of the urgent threat diabolical witchcraft poses to the people. English and Scottish witchcraft belief remained unique, containing particular characteristics that set it apart from continental ideas, including the English and Scottish specific importance of animal familiars, who acted as intermediaries between Satan and his witches. After the publication of *Daemonologie*, English and Scottish understandings of witchcraft evolved into a more coherent and standardized set of beliefs.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In March of 1573, the Chelmsford Assizes heard the case of William Skelton, a laborer from Little Wakering, finding him guilty of witchcraft and murder.<sup>531</sup> According to the record, Skelton bewitched an infant, two women, and a sailor, with each suffering from a languishing illness, leaving all but one dead.<sup>532</sup> In December of the same year, a court in Middlesex

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<sup>531</sup> "Skelton, William," in *Calendar of Assize Records: Essex Indictments, Elizabeth I, Volume III*, J.S. Cockburn, ed. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1978), 108.

<sup>532</sup> "Skelton, William," in Cockburn, *Calendar of Assize Records: Essex*, 108.

condemned Joan Ellyse for bewitching two men and for killing a cow worth forty shillings.<sup>533</sup> Further to the north, Scottish accounts of witchcraft cases varied slightly in terms of language. In a village near the Lyne tributary, a woman named Elizabeth or “Bessie” Dunlop was accused of using “sorcery, witchcraft, and incantations, with invocation of spirits of the Devil” in November of 1576.<sup>534</sup> According to the case, Dunlop admitted to using charms and abusing people “with the devilish craft of sorcery,” but she said that she held no personal power of her own and instead had to go to a man she called Thomas Reid (described as an elderly man draped in gray clothes, a black hat, and carrying a magic wand) who performed the spells for her.<sup>535</sup> More often than not, court records provide scant detail about the nature and characteristics of witchcraft used in the crimes. However, it is notable that the English cases contained no descriptions or classifications and the Scottish cases evoked terms like “devilish” to describe magic there.

When compared to English witchcraft cases, Scottish witch-trials more often contained diabolical characteristics before the seventeenth century. Details in Scottish cases are easier to find than for England, due to resources like *The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft* in 2003.<sup>536</sup> Access to such a resource makes finding the details of Scottish cases easier. On the other hand, English court records, specifically Assize records, provide little context to a case besides names, places, and the outcome of the trial. However, while Scotland produced no published accounts of witchcraft before 1591’s *Newes from Scotland*, England had a thriving pamphlet culture

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<sup>533</sup> “11 December, 16 Elizabeth,” in *Middlesex County Records: Volume I, 1550-1603*, John Cordy Jefferson, ed. (London: 1886), 78-85.

<sup>534</sup> “Sorcery, Witchcraft, and Incantation,” in *Criminal Trials in Scotland, From A.D. M.CCCC.LXXXVIII to A.D. M.DC.XXIV, Embracing the Entire Reigns of James IV. And V., Mary Queen of Scots, And James VI: Compiled from the Original Records and Mss, Volume I, Part II*, Robert Pitcairn, ed. (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1833), 49.

<sup>535</sup> “Sorcery, Witchcraft, and Incantation,” in Pitcairn, ed., *Criminal Trials in Scotland*, 50-51.

<sup>536</sup> *The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft* covers 1563-1736 and allows researchers to search by name, place, characterization, and date. It provides detailed descriptions of several trials and is unique in that no other place involved in the witch-hunts in Europe have anything as comprehensive. Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, Joyce Miller, and Louise Yoeman, “The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft,” *The University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh, 2003), accessed on March 23, 2020, <http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/Research/witches/>.

throughout the sixteenth century, and dozens of witchcraft pamphlets from the period survive. Combined, surviving witchcraft pamphlets and witch-trial records allow us to develop an understanding of the state of witchcraft belief in England and Scotland before James's interests were peaked by the North Berwick trials. While these are two different kinds of sources, each contains kernels of witchcraft belief. A court case may only contain names, dates, and crimes, but sometimes the way the crimes are described provide insight into what the authorities of the court believed to be relevant to a witchcraft case. On the other hand, pamphlets explain belief in detail and demonstrate what authors are trying to convey to audiences, which again provides insight into prominent beliefs.

By the time James VI had his fateful encounter with Agnes Sampson and the North Berwick witches, witchcraft scholars on the European continent had synthesized an argument about the diabolical nature of witchcraft and its origins with Satan. Demonologists released publications like *On The Demon-Mania of Witches* and *An Examen of Witches* into the world during a period of religious, political, and social upheaval caused by the Protestant Reformation and Rome's response to the controversy.<sup>537</sup> The enemies of Christ ran rampant and, in reverence of their demonic master, made "various debauched disturbances" throughout Europe.<sup>538</sup> Theologians, including Luther, Calvin, and several Popes penned warnings against blasphemy, heresy, and unorthodox religious practices, but more importantly to this study, they also warned of the increased threat of Satan's converts, the witches.

Within a decade of James VI's accession to the English throne, the witchcraft laws and pamphlet literature had changed, reflecting the demonification of witchcraft belief and showing more similarities to continental ideologies. In 1612, an anonymous pamphlet, *A Brief abstract of*

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<sup>537</sup> Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, 2001. Henry Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, 2009.

<sup>538</sup> Mackay, tr., *The Hammer of Witches*, 318.

*the Arraignment of nine Witches at Northampton*, recounted the trials of Jane Lucas, Alce Harrys, Catherine Gardiner, Agnes Brown, Jone Brown, Alce Abbot, and three other defendants.<sup>539</sup> The case appeared to be a domestic disagreement with disastrous results where the family of Mrs. Belcher suspected that witches tormented the victim for over a year.<sup>540</sup> Importantly, the language of the pamphlet reflects the ideological shifts in witchcraft belief that reflect the influence of continental demonology imported in-part by *Newes from Scotland* and James's *Daemonologie*.<sup>541</sup> Testimony in the Northampton case accused the alleged witches of worshipping "the Devil their master," and spoke of physical evidence of the demonic pact in the form of "a black wart as big as fetch under [the] left arm," of Agnes Brown.<sup>542</sup> Satan ("the black ugly villain") inspired, empowered, and helped the witches in Northampton defile, maim, and murder neighbors and their innocent children.<sup>543</sup> The Northampton case contains several of the core characteristics found in foundational demonological texts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including the demonic pact, malefic magic, witch assemblies, and the ritual murder of children.<sup>544</sup> More importantly, it lacked several tenets of the pre-1600 understandings of witchcraft.

King James's 1590-1591 ordeal with the North Berwick witches had a lasting effect on the future king of England and his subjects in that his experiences opened his eyes to the study of the European witchcraft threat. That experience coincided with the continuation of religious controversy and uncertainty created by the Reformation, which on both sides of the confessional

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<sup>539</sup> "A Brief abstract of the Arraignment of nine Witches at Northampton, 1612," in *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750*, Marion Gibson, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 52-59.

<sup>540</sup> "A Brief abstract," in Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society*, 54.

<sup>541</sup> I treat *Newes from Scotland* and *Daemonologie* as sister texts because they were curated by the same person (James) and letters between Scottish and English officials during the time provide evidence of that (The Bowes and Burghley letters mentioned in Chapter Three).

<sup>542</sup> "A Brief Abstract," in Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society*, 55.

<sup>543</sup> "A Brief Abstract," in Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society*, 56.

<sup>544</sup> "A Brief Abstract," in Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society*, 53-58.

divide sparked fears of Satan's work on earth and his intention to harm humanity. A trip across the North Sea and an alleged conspiracy of witches may have lit the fire of James's fear of witchcraft, but his intellectual and theological curiosity during a period of intense religious scrutiny and debate helped fuel that fire. As a result, the king curated the creation and publication of the first Scottish witchcraft pamphlet *Newes from Scotland* in 1591. Six years later, he composed *Daemonologie*, which in time would influence a new population of subjects and influence the way the English viewed witches.



#### 4 THE DAEMONOLOGIE OF KING JAMES

*“For witchcraft, which is a thing grown very common among us. I know it to be a most abominable sin, and I have been occupied these three quarters of this year for the sifting out of them that are guilty herein.”* -King James VI of Scotland, 1591<sup>545</sup>

Mid-century shifts in Scottish and English witchcraft belief resulted in the criminalization of the practice in 1566 as chaotic political environments intensified fears of outside agitators. In England, confessional divides caused significant threats to the reign of Queen Elizabeth I from continental rival Spain. Popular uprisings, contentious earls, and the instability of the crown cultivated a political environment rife with intrigue and plots in neighboring Scotland. With hopes of securing her tenuous reign, Mary, Queen of Scots, gave birth to her only son and heir to the Scottish crown by June of the same year. James Stuart was born into instability, and within a few short years, the child monarch suffered through the exile of his mother, attempted coups, kidnappings, and the political assassination of more than one of his regents.

The political instability in Scotland had settled somewhat over the next two decades, but once again, the young king found himself caught in the middle of an alleged international assassination plot with him and his wife, Anne of Denmark, as the primary targets. Although James was no stranger to attempted coups and assassinations, the conspiracy of 1590 involved the use of witchcraft. By the outbreak of the North Berwick witch-hunt, the Scottish Witchcraft act had been in effect for twenty-five years, but it was not until he was a target that the king gave the subject any level of consideration.<sup>546</sup> James’s past experiences, combined with the new witchcraft threat and his participation in the 1590-1591 Scottish witch-hunts, led him to cultivate a serious interest in learning what he could about the subject of witchcraft.

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<sup>545</sup> James VI, King of Scotland, “The Tollbooth Speech of 1591,” in *The Demonology of King James I*, Donald Tyson, ed. (New York: Llewellyn Publishing, 2011), 304.

<sup>546</sup> There are no records of James studying or mentioning witchcraft before 1590.

Political intrigues and the constant antics of Scottish nobles jockeying for positions of power and control of the king plagued James's childhood. At sixteen, the King grew tired of the political infighting among his nobility and decided to assert his control over the crown, which resulted in an attempted coup known as the Ruthven raid.<sup>547</sup> A power grab initiated by the Earl of Gowrie, William Ruthven, the Ruthven raid involved a planned kidnapping of the king where his captors held him in Ruthven Castle for a short time in an attempt to control the Scottish government.<sup>548</sup> James managed to escape his jailors in June of 1583, quickly reasserted his authority, and had Gowrie executed.<sup>549</sup> When Scottish authorities uncovered another plot to kill the king in 1590, James immediately involved himself in the proceedings. Unlike previous attempted coups and assassination plots, the conspirators were alleged witches charged with sorcery, regicide, and treason.

Stories of diabolical witches and supernatural murder were popular in continental Europe by the time James prepared to sail from Scotland to the European continent for his wedding. In Norway and Denmark, James was in proximity to the fervor of continental witch-hunting for several months just before the outbreak of one of the largest witch-hunts in Scottish history. Rumors of witchcraft and the discovery of a conspiracy led to the composition and publication of the first two Scottish publications on witchcraft in 1591 and 1597. The first *News from Scotland* was published in Edinburgh in 1591 and described the North Berwick trials in a narrative

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<sup>547</sup> Jenny Wormland, "James VI and I (1566–1625), king of Scotland, England, and Ireland," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 28 Jan. 2020.

<sup>548</sup> Wormland, "James VI and I."

<sup>549</sup> Wormland, "James VI and I."

form.<sup>550</sup> The other, *Daemonologie*, an intellectual treatise on the dangers of witchcraft, was published in 1597 and written by King James VI.<sup>551</sup>

Religious controversy, political instability, and fears of disorder and rebellion influenced the composition of James's witchcraft treatise. Specific incidents involving James's marriage preparations in 1590 and sorcery combined with pre-existing fears of conspiracy and political plots to intensify his concern about witchcraft. The treatise is a detailed work of religious and political philosophy that warned of the threat that Satan and his minions posed to the whole of Christian society. *Daemonologie* contains biblical, theological, and contemporary examples to advocate for witch prosecution. However, by publishing the treatise as an instructional guide, James also underscored the divine authority of the monarch as the teacher and father of his people.

This chapter's primary goal is to examine the composition, context, and motivations behind James's *Daemonologie*. It examines the content of the text and the circumstances that contributed to its creation. First, it will look at James's personal and political motivations, to stress *Daemonologie*'s structural influence on seventeenth-century witchcraft belief in England and Scotland. Additionally, this chapter will explain why a series of witchcraft accusations in 1590 to 1591 made James more aware of the threat that witches posed. The chapter will analyze both the scribal manuscript and the printed edition of *Daemonologie*, noting some essential changes in the text between composition and release. The analysis is both a deconstruction of James's arguments with a breakdown of relevant outside references like biblical verses and

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<sup>550</sup> Early English Books Online lists James Carmichael as the author of *Newes From Scotland*, but the pamphlet does not contain that information. However, James Carmichael's involvement in the King's life and in the North Berwick trials does implicate his involvement in the publication of the pamphlet. James Carmichael, *Newes From Scotland* (Edinburgh: 1591).

<sup>551</sup> James VI, King of Scotland, *Daemonologie in Forme of a Dialogue* (Edinburgh, Robert Walde-Grave, 1597).

personal notes and a path to highlight characteristics present in James's work that later become staples of English and Scottish witchcraft belief.

Second, by isolating essential points in *Daemonologie* and comparing it to seventeenth-century attitudes towards witchcraft, we can determine ways James's work affected the structural transformation of belief within his sphere of influence. Intellectual and theological interest in the Devil flourished in the seventeenth century, with James being one of several scholars publishing works on the subject. James's exposition on witchcraft and the Devil explains his understandings of magic, his philosophy of kingship, and his interpretations of biblical scripture and the law. All of these elements converged as James transitioned from the Scottish king to the king of England and Scotland. Only with a comprehensive breakdown of James's influences and beliefs can we begin to untangle the reason for and influence of *Daemonologie* in integrating continental belief into English and Scottish witchcraft.

### **I. A Monarchy Threatened**

Popular and intellectual understandings of witchcraft shifted in late-sixteenth and seventeenth-century England and Scotland. King James's life experiences, his political beliefs, and his connections to England contributed to those shifts. In both *Witchcraft and Religion* and *Enemies of God*, Christina Lerner examines the role *Daemonologie* played in increasing the severity of witchcraft prosecutions in early modern Scotland.<sup>552</sup> Lerner's scholarship emphasizes the influence of an educated elite in the construction of witchcraft belief, but her analysis of the trials overlooks broader implications as to how transitions in witchcraft understandings expanded outside of Scotland and why that matters. In *Witchcraft and Religion*, Lerner argues that the

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<sup>552</sup> Christina Lerner, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief* (London: Blackwell, 1984). Lerner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (London: John Donald, 2000).

number of accused witches and the broad scope of the 1590-91 North Berwick trials led to an increase in Scottish witchcraft cases.<sup>553</sup> Larner also highlights the spread of continental beliefs by pointing to the mention of demonic pacts and witch congregations during the trials, arguing that those characteristics “became central points in many late Scottish prosecutions.”<sup>554</sup> While correct in her assertion that James was the progenitor of the integration of continental belief in Scotland, *Enemies of God*'s limited scope only scratches the surface of the breadth of James's reach and how his work altered Scottish and English understandings of witchcraft and the Devil. James's position as monarch and heir to the English throne magnified the weight of his words and the reach of his influence.

James was the only child in the tumultuous and brief marriage between Mary, Queen of Scots and Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley. Shortly after his birth on 19 July 1566, James's family fell apart.<sup>555</sup> The young Prince's life began amid chaos, a state which continued throughout his childhood. By the birth of their son, the relationship between Queen Mary and her husband was volatile at best. Before the baby's first birthday, agents connected to the Queen murdered Darnley.<sup>556</sup> Mary further alienated an already antagonistic Scottish nobility by marrying her lover James Hepburn, the Earl of Bothwell, soon after her husband's death.<sup>557</sup> The scandal culminated in Mary's imprisonment in Lochleven Castle, her forced abdication of the Scottish throne, and the crowning of King James VI at thirteen months old on 29 July 1567 at Stirling parish church.<sup>558</sup> Mary fled to England, leaving her infant son in the hands of Scottish lords vying for political supremacy, and the two never met again.

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<sup>553</sup> Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion*, 9.

<sup>554</sup> Larner, *Witchcraft and Religion*, 10.

<sup>555</sup> Wormland, "James VI and I."

<sup>556</sup> Wormland, "James VI and I."

<sup>557</sup> Wormland, "James VI and I."

<sup>558</sup> Wormland, "James VI and I."

The crowning of a new Scottish king intensified tensions between an already contentious nobility. Scottish lords from opposing political and religious factions jockeyed for positions to better control the new child-king. James took full control of royal responsibilities at only fifteen because constant power struggles and antagonisms in his court necessitated action.<sup>559</sup> Preceding his independence, no less than four separate regents oversaw the day to day operations of James's kingdom, where infighting continued to cause political difficulty and violence resulting in several raids and attempted coups before 1580.<sup>560</sup>

Though James ruled in a politically unstable and dangerous environment, he benefitted from the experience of a highly structured childhood overseen by the Scottish government and Calvinist religious advisers.<sup>561</sup> Plans for the young King's education took "top priority" and began at birth.<sup>562</sup> Government officials appointed George Buchanan as James's tutor, which had a significant influence on his approach to religion and the monarchy.<sup>563</sup> Buchanan loathed Catholics and James's mother, he openly opposed the idea of an unfettered monarch and punished his pupil physically for infractions in behavior.<sup>564</sup> James's early educational influences steered him towards Calvinism and a life-long intellectual curiosity in studying politics, philosophy, and biblical scripture.<sup>565</sup> However, James did not share Buchanan's views on governance and kingship, and his strict education did not stifle his intellectual pursuits. By sixteen, James owned a substantial personal library comprised of classical texts, history, political theory, and theology.<sup>566</sup> James resisted his tutor's "indoctrination" and cultivated a more

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<sup>559</sup> Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 17-19.

<sup>560</sup> Wormland.

<sup>561</sup> Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King: The Life of James VI and I* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 40-41.

<sup>562</sup> Stewart, *The Cradle King*, 41.

<sup>563</sup> Stewart, *The Cradle King*, 41-42.

<sup>564</sup> Stewart, *The Cradle King*, 41-43.

<sup>565</sup> Wormland, "James VI and I."

<sup>566</sup> Wormland, "James VI and I."

absolutist view of kingship, which he later expanded upon in *Basilikon Doron* and *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, two political treatises.<sup>567</sup>

By the end of the 1570s, James had successfully established his personal rule in Scotland. The king immediately began to pursue a renewed diplomatic relationship with England to increase his power and diminish the influence of the Scottish nobility.<sup>568</sup> Nonetheless, the consolidation of control in Scotland did not necessarily create an instant peace, and the king's policies met with resistance from the nobility as well as Scottish religious reformers.<sup>569</sup> In May of 1584, the Scottish government passed a set of laws described as "The Black Acts," which empowered the episcopal government and increased the authority of the Scottish parliament.<sup>570</sup> Over time, conflicts in the government and the chaos surrounding the crown enabled Presbyterian encroachment in the Scottish countryside, which included a dominance over secular and church activities in the individual kirks.<sup>571</sup> The structural make-up of the kirks allowed for dissent to fester via James's extended family repeatedly stirring up antagonism and threats of revolt in the north. Francis Stewart, the Fifth Earl of Bothwell and nephew of Queen Mary's third husband, incessantly plotted against the king. Bothwell was intelligent and powerful, but also volatile and unstable, often finding himself on the wrong side of the law and his king.<sup>572</sup> In April of 1589, Bothwell led a substantial, but failed uprising of the powerful northern Catholic

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<sup>567</sup> James I, *The True Law of Free Monarchies and Basilikon Doron: A Modernized Edition*, Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, eds. (Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1996), 83-176.

<sup>568</sup> James received a pension from the English government and continued to cooperate after the execution of his mother in 1587, becoming the heir to the English throne. Lockyer, *James VI and I*, 219.

<sup>569</sup> Normand and Roberts, eds., 20.

<sup>570</sup> Gordon Donaldson, "The Scottish Church 1567-1625," *The Reign of James VI and I*, Alan G.R. Smith, ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1973), 48.

<sup>571</sup> Donaldson, "The Scottish Church," *The Reign of James*, Smith, ed., 50-51.

<sup>572</sup> Bothwell was involved in several plots and rebellions against James. He was also implicated in the North Berwick witch trials. Wormland, "James VI and I."

earls, which resulted in armed conflict between the king's forces and rebel troops.<sup>573</sup> Within a year, the king's attention would turn to a very different type of threat.

Ultimately, the instability of riots and uprisings cultivated in James a sense of unease and suspicion. Those attitudes helped the king to envision any number of methods available to his enemies for destroying him. Bothwell's defiant uprising in 1589 occurred right before the discovery of the North Berwick conspiracy. When captured witches began to give up the names of accomplices, Scottish authorities added Bothwell's name to the list.<sup>574</sup> Political plots and threats to James's rule affected the king's ability to process and respond to intelligence about an alleged witchcraft conspiracy.

## **II. The North Berwick Witchcraft Conspiracy**

The North Berwick witch-hunt, one of the largest and most infamous in Scottish history, began in November of 1590 with the interrogation and arrest of Geillis Duncan, a housemaid to David Seton.<sup>575</sup> Duncan confessed to practicing witchcraft following hours of intense questioning and several rounds of torture.<sup>576</sup> As part of her confession, Duncan provided her interrogators with the names of other witches known to her.<sup>577</sup> Duncan's witchcraft escalated to crimes of treason and murder perpetrated by a coven of witches. Records indicate that the accused witches raised storms, cursed neighbors, and threatened the lives of influential members of the Scottish nobility.<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Scotland*, 20.

<sup>574</sup> Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*, Br.

<sup>575</sup> Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 22.

<sup>576</sup> Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*, Br.

<sup>577</sup> Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*, Br.

<sup>578</sup> Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 22-23.



The high-profile North Berwick witchcraft trials resulted in the execution of several accused witches for both witchcraft and treason. The outbreak received increased attention because of the treasonous nature of the alleged witches' crimes and the involvement of King James as a target and investigator in the proceedings. The incident made an intellectually curious King aware of a new avenue of study, one that concerned the safety of his crown and legacy. As a result, James orchestrated the publication of Scotland's first two printed works on witchcraft, giving himself a platform to speak to his subjects about the threat of magic and allowing him to weigh in on broader political and religious topics relevant in Scotland and England.

The earliest mention of a conspiracy against King James and his new wife Queen Anne of Denmark appears in dispatches between Robert Bowes, an English envoy to Scotland, and England's William Cecil, Lord Burghley in the Summer of 1590.<sup>579</sup> Between 1577 and 1583, Bowes served as the official English ambassador to Scotland, remaining in the country reporting on politics and relaying messages between the English and Scottish courts until his death in 1597.<sup>580</sup> Correspondence from Bowes most often went to William Cecil, a member of Elizabeth I's Privy Council. According to Bowes's letters, the royal couple encountered several complications during preparations for their marriage the year before, which included severe weather and dangerous seas.<sup>581</sup> In total, it took almost a full year for the marriage to take place, and in October of 1589, the King traveled across the North Sea to retrieve his wife.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>579</sup> "Bowes to Burghley [July 23]," in *Calendar of State Papers, Scotland: Volume X, 1589-1593*, William K Boyd and Henry W. Meikle, eds. (Edinburgh: His Majesty's General Register House, 1936), 344-368, British History Online, accessed May 22, 2019, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/scotland/vol10/pp344-368>.

<sup>580</sup> C.A. McGladdery, "Bowes, Robert," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), accessed July 3, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3059>.

<sup>581</sup> During the ordeal ships were heavily damaged, Anne was forced to take refuge in Norway, and James had to sail to Denmark to marry his bride, bringing her back to Scotland in Spring of the next year. David Moysie, *Memoirs of the Affairs of Scotland: 1577-1603, From Earlier Manuscripts*, James Denistoun, ed. (Edinburgh: Ballantyne Club, 1830), 79.

<sup>582</sup> Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, eds., 38.

Soon after the couple's return to Scotland, word of a Danish conspiracy involving witchcraft to stall the marriage surfaced in official correspondence.<sup>583</sup> According to the 23 July 1590 letter, Bowes tells Burghley of an admiral in Denmark that "hath caused five or six witches to be taken in Copenhagen, upon suspicion that by their witchcraft they had stayed the Queen of Scots voyage into Scotland, and sought to have stayed likewise the King's return."<sup>584</sup> Records also indicate that the Governor of Copenhagen became involved in the case.<sup>585</sup> Authorities interrogated the alleged witches resulting in a confession in May 1590, leading to several executions.<sup>586</sup>

By November, rumors of the witchcraft plot in Denmark escalated into a wider-scoped conspiracy with operatives in Scotland as well. Beginning with the confession and testimony of Geillis Duncan, dozens of suspected witches were arrested, questioned, and later prosecuted.<sup>587</sup> The charges against the North Berwick witches included cursing, idol worship, diabolism, and treason (for crimes against the king and queen).<sup>588</sup> The court charged Agnes Sampson (one of the names given by Geillis Duncan) with fifty-three separate counts of magic spanning from healing the sick and prophesizing the future to malicious murder and making a pact with the Devil.<sup>589</sup> More importantly, Agnes Sampson personally influenced King James's reaction to the investigations.<sup>590</sup> Sampson confessed to several acts of healing and malicious magic, but she also

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<sup>583</sup> When King James married Anne of Denmark, witchcraft was defined as "maleficent magic" according to the Danish laws, *Jyske Lov*. Witchcraft executions had increased in Denmark during the sixteenth century with some mass-executions that included as many as forty accused (though that figure may be exaggerated). The first witch to confess to using sorcery against James and Anne appeared in court in April of 1590, before the Scottish party returned to Scotland. L. Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft in Early Modern Italy and Denmark* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 34. Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 38.

<sup>584</sup> "Bowes to Burghley [July 23], in Boyd and Meikle, eds., *Calendar of State*, 344-368.

<sup>585</sup> Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 38.

<sup>586</sup> Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 38.

<sup>587</sup> Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 22.

<sup>588</sup> Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 224-287.

<sup>589</sup> "The Trial of Agnes Sampson," in Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 231-246.

<sup>590</sup> "Examination and Confession of Agnes Sampson," in Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 144-145.

repeatedly recanted her testimony, which stalled prosecutions.<sup>591</sup> Sampson's difficulty as a witness and defendant prompted James to intervene and question the woman himself.<sup>592</sup> Only in front of the King did Agnes confess to entering into the service of the Devil after the death of her husband and to participating in the plot to kill James and Anne.<sup>593</sup>

In the four years following the arrest of Duncan, the North Berwick conspiracy appeared in at least thirty diplomatic correspondences between English and Scottish officials and in the memoirs of members of the Scottish court, highlighting the high level of government involvement in events.<sup>594</sup> The nature of the case and the King's close involvement would shape his religious and political ideologies moving forward. Witchcraft or not, a conspiratorial plot to murder King James and his wife Anne was treason. Not only did the witches threaten the bodies of James and his new wife, but their diabolical schemes threatened the future of the Stuart line and the stability of the Scottish state. Those reasons, combined with James's prior encounters with contentious and untrustworthy nobles, raised awareness of the episode and intensified the King's desire to understand and eradicate the threat of witchcraft in his kingdom.

### *Newes From Scotland and Daemonologie*

In a strange twist of history and happenstance, James VI was not the first Scottish monarch to be at the center of an assassination plot involving witchcraft. Three decades before

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<sup>591</sup> Like England, the Courts used trial by jury to determine guilt or innocence and it was more imperative to have evidence like a confession to secure conviction and recanted confessions did not count. "Examination and Confession of Agnes Sampson," in Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 143-149. Brian P. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 18-19, 32-33.

<sup>592</sup> "Examination and Confession of Agnes Sampson," in Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 144-145.

<sup>593</sup> "Examination and Confession of Agnes Sampson," in Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 145-146.

<sup>594</sup> *Calendar of State Papers: Scotland, Vol. X*. David Moysie, *Memoirs*, James Denistoun, ed., 79-81.

James's birth, Scottish officials charged Lady Jane Douglas and a group of conspirators with trying to murder King James V with poison and charms.<sup>595</sup> However, criminals using witchcraft to harm or kill enemies was uncommon at the time. Witchcraft accusations often appeared during instances of intrigue among the Scottish nobility.<sup>596</sup> Before the mid-sixteenth century, official mention of witchcraft in Scottish prosecution records was sparse. Punishments for crimes involving witchcraft were inconsistent, and no law explicitly dealt with the criminality of the practice. Although prosecutions did occur, most cases that included witchcraft ended with light punishments or acquittal. For example, a St. Andrews jury tried and burned three women accused of witchcraft in 1542, but around the same time, although Jonet Lindsay and her daughter Isabell provided a full confession, their case closed with only a promise from the accused to cease all their witchcraft practices.<sup>597</sup>

The Scottish government passed the Scottish Witchcraft Act in 1563, making the "superstition" a criminal act punishable by death.<sup>598</sup> The move to enact such legislation was both practical and political. George Black argued that the 1563 act "only served, as the early papal bulls had done on the continent, to confirm the people in their credulity," but his 1930's view on witchcraft history is dated and ignores essential political and religious factors at play. Continental religious figures penned several intellectual treatises condemning the practice of witchcraft and warning people of its dangers. Furthermore, as the Reformation divided Europe, Scotland by 1563 had a Catholic queen and a Protestant government. Scotland's newly established Protestant parliament under Mary, Queen of Scots (a Catholic), passed the law

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<sup>595</sup> George F. Black, "The Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft in Scotland, 1510-1727," in *Witchcraft in Scotland*, Brian P. Levack, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), 138.

<sup>596</sup> Before the case of spells and poisons involving James V, in 1479 James III's brother was accused of plotting against his king by using wax images and curses. George F. Black, *A Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft in Scotland 1510-1727* (New York: New York Public Library, 1938), 10.

<sup>597</sup> George F. Black, "The Calendar of Cases," in Levack ed., *Witchcraft in Scotland*, 149-150.

<sup>598</sup> Black, "The Calendar of Cases," in Levack ed., *Witchcraft in Scotland*, 139.

amidst concerns over lingering remnants of the Catholic faith following the Protestant Reformation.<sup>599</sup> Although called the Witchcraft Act, the law was one of several attempts by the heavily Protestant government to outlaw and eliminate any trace of Catholic belief and better legislate moral discipline among Scottish subjects. At the same time, the conviction and burning of more witches, like a Perthshire woman accused of invoking spirits, illustrate a slight increase of activity following the passage of the act, and punishment was more frequent and more extreme.<sup>600</sup>

*Newes From Scotland*'s depiction of witchcraft sheds light on the development of James's witchcraft theory and his motivations for sharing it. The method used by the regicidal conspirators exposed the King to the witchcraft threat. When proceedings began against Agnes Sampson and the other North Berwick witches, the witchcraft law was almost three decades old, and attitudes towards the witchcraft threat had begun to shift. For one, the level of public awareness and understandings of witchcraft were changing. Several characteristics contributing to the alteration of witchcraft belief in England and Scotland first present themselves in *Newes*.<sup>601</sup> The pamphlet is the first of its kind on Scottish witchcraft belief, the first to provide details of Scottish prosecutions, and the first to describe King James's interactions with witches publicly. *Newes* incorporates the king's evolving theories of witchcraft, religion, and kingship in its narrative of the conspiratorial plot, elements that will not appear fully developed until the publication of *Daemonologie* five years later.

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<sup>599</sup> Julian Goodare, "The Scottish Witchcraft Act," in *Church History* 78, no. 1 (March 2005)

<sup>600</sup> Black, "The Calendar of Cases," in Levaack ed., *Witchcraft in Scotland*, 150.

<sup>601</sup> The characteristics listed were common in continental witchcraft belief during the period, but new or rarely mentioned in Scottish and English prosecutions. Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*.

*Daemonologie*

The published explanation of James's theory of witchcraft is both complex in its make-up and simple in its message. *Daemonologie, in Form of a Dialog, Divided into three Books* is an eighty-eight-page quarto concerned with the definition and classification of magic and was first printed in 1597 by the King's printer Robert Walde-Grave in Edinburgh.<sup>602</sup> Around sixty-one copies of the early printed text survive, spread among four editions.<sup>603</sup> For the most part, differences between the original 1597 and later 1603 printings of the text are superficial, with variances in some language and illustration.<sup>604</sup> James's treatise examines different types of magic in painstaking detail with extensive commentary on each category throughout three sections, but primarily *Daemonologie* is a warning against the Devil.

The introduction of the text makes *Daemonologie*'s purpose clear. James wanted to do two things. Firstly, he wanted to bring attention to the "assaults of Satan" perpetuated by "detestable slaves of the Devil, the witches or enchanters; secondly, he aimed to establish "the proper method of prosecution for such acts."<sup>605</sup> Using witches as his earthly "instruments," the Devil waged war against God and the faithful.<sup>606</sup> To do so, Satan bestowed witches with powers to curse and torment their enemies. James evoked the bible to argue that acts of witchcraft were blasphemous and criminal, warranting the strictest of punishment for those found guilty.<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*.

<sup>603</sup> The survival of over five dozen printed copies of a sixteenth- and seventeenth-century text is significant because it provides us with clues about the popularity of such a text. A book with several editions and surviving copies (centuries later) had popularity or at least a high-level of saturation.

<sup>604</sup> The scribal manuscript is the only text with significant differences. Most of the changes made between the manuscript and first printing are minor technical alterations, but some changes are consequential to the message of the treatise. Historian Rhodes Dunlap attributes the three separate hands in the manuscript to James Sempill, James Carmichael, and King James. Normand and Roberts support this claim in *Witchcraft in Scotland*. Rhodes Dunlap, "King James and Some Witches," in *Philological Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (Winter 1975), 40. Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 328.

<sup>605</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 2v-3r.

<sup>606</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 2v.

<sup>607</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 3r-5v.

After establishing the core argument (magic was real, demonic, and warranted eradication), *Daemonologie* then separates magic into two categories, magic or necromancy and sorcery or witchcraft.<sup>608</sup> The key differences between these categories involve motivation. Necromancers or magicians succumbed to the Devil's allurements out of curiosity, and sorcerers or witches sought out magic because of revenge or greed.<sup>609</sup> Sorcerers or witches often came from the lower class of society using magic to plague neighbors and gain wealth, and magicians or necromancers were among the educated and respected members of the population seeking insight and a greater understanding of the world.<sup>610</sup> James dedicates a significant percentage of *Daemonologie* to the classification and description of magic, magic users, and their powers. However, the central point of the text maintained that ultimately, all magic was demonic.<sup>611</sup> The Devil manipulated followers of all types into believing his illusions. Satan, "the father of all lies," fooled his recruits into entering the "everlasting perdition of their soul and body," in exchange for power.<sup>612</sup>

### **III. *Daemonologie* and the Construction of Witchcraft Belief**

King James developed his theory of witchcraft because of his tumultuous political past and the supernatural nature of the events surrounding his marriage. There is no evidence of any

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<sup>608</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 7.

<sup>609</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 7-8.

<sup>610</sup> There is further evidence later in the text that James does allow for both rich and poor in the witch or sorcerer category by adding the caveat that the wealthy succumbed to the Devil out of revenge against their enemies. *Daemonologie* described the poor in the text as lazy or undeserving of wealth. The treatise places emphasis on the corruptible nature of both types of convert. Although the Bible condemns the greedy and wealthy in society, by the seventeenth-century, some offshoots of protestant belief emphasized outward success as a sign of God's favor. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 8-9.

<sup>611</sup> Much of the text in *Daemonologie* consists of an extremely long and detailed laundry list of magic types, magical abilities, and how magic operates. Likewise, James goes to great lengths to differentiate method, motivation, and result. However, the book repeatedly dismisses any difference or detail as inconsequential when compared to the underlying truth that all magic was diabolical.

<sup>612</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 17.

prior interest in witchcraft on the part of the Scottish King, and yet, by 1591, James is “one of the principal agents in keeping them [the witchcraft prosecutions] alive.”<sup>613</sup> The entire near year-long North Berwick incident exposed James to the powers and motivations of witches. Specifically, James’s interactions with Agnes Sampson during the investigations solidified his belief and contributed to the construction of his witchcraft theory.<sup>614</sup>

Agnes Sampson confessed to the King that she and several others conspired to kill James and his wife with witchcraft.<sup>615</sup> In her confession to James, Sampson admitted to conspiring with the Devil to raise storms and sink his ships.<sup>616</sup> However, James showed hesitancy and skepticism at first. In *Newes from Scotland*, James initially did not believe Sampson’s confession, calling the group of conspirators “extreme liars.”<sup>617</sup> To prove her story true, Sampson took the King aside and “declared unto him the very words which passed between the king’s Majesty and his queen at Upslo in Norway the first night of their marriage,” which put aside any of James’s doubts.<sup>618</sup> King James’s interactions with Agnes Sampson further solidified his belief in witches. The possibility of a plot to kill the King was more than plausible to James, and the discovery of a new method piqued his interests. James’s involvement in the proceedings introduced him to the study of witchcraft, but more importantly, it impressed upon him an urgency to deal with the threat.

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<sup>613</sup> Christina Larner, “James VI and I and Witchcraft,” in Smith ed., *The Reign of James VI*, 81.

<sup>614</sup> Larner, in Smith, ed., *The Reign of James VI*, 83.

<sup>615</sup> “Examination and Confession of Agnes Sampson,” in Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 145-146.

<sup>616</sup> “Examination and Confession of Agnes Sampson,” in Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 145-146.

<sup>617</sup> Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*, BIVr.

<sup>618</sup> Brian Levack presents a more complicated and plausible explanation for James’s change of heart. *Newes From Scotland* dramatized the interaction between James and Sampson, while deposition records just indicate that after speaking to Sampson, James gave more credence to the case. Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*, BIVr; “Examination and Confession of Agnes Sampson, in Normand and Roberts, eds., 145-146. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 37.



The North Berwick witch-hunt prompted King James to study the continental understandings of diabolical witchcraft, resulting in the creation of the witchcraft theory laid out in *Daemonologie*. This direct connection is not wholly evident in the published *Daemonologie* text. Although in his introduction to the treatise, James emphatically warns his readers of the dangers of witchcraft and a need to silence skeptics, he does not mention his personal experiences.<sup>619</sup> However, the original scribal manuscript of the text composed between 1591 and the publication of *Daemonologie* in 1597 contains evidence that the hunts directly inspired the composition of James's work.<sup>620</sup> Three sets of handwritten initials appear in the margins of the *Daemonologie* manuscript beside a section describing the behavioral characteristics of witches.<sup>621</sup> The initials, EM, RG, and BN, coincide with the names of three individuals accused of witchcraft and treason at North Berwick, Euphamie MacCalzean, Richie Graham, and Barbara Napier.<sup>622</sup>

Ultimately James's understanding of witchcraft closely resembled the dissemination of continental witchcraft belief, something not prevalent in England or Scotland at that time. The King's interactions with the North Berwick witches and an assumed introduction to continental belief during his stay in Denmark culminated in the construction and distribution of James's witchcraft theory.<sup>623</sup> King James's developed understanding of witchcraft hinged on two

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<sup>619</sup> The introduction to *Daemonologie* serves as a renunciation of skeptics like Reginald Scot and Johann Weyer, who both wrote lengthy treatises contesting the idea that the Devil commanded an army of witches. Scholars including Weyer argued that magic did exist and that included evil magic, but a pact with the Devil was impossible and a symptom of insanity. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 2v-3r; Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 280-281.

<sup>620</sup> Folger Shakespeare Library, V.a. 185, 39.

<sup>621</sup> Rhodes Dunlap, in an attempt to properly date the manuscript, first connected the letters in the margins to accused witches from the North Berwick trials. Folger Shakespeare Library, V.a. 185, 39; Rhodes Dunlap, "King James and Some Witches," in *Philological Quarterly*, 40-42.

<sup>622</sup> Folger Shakespeare Library, V.a., 185, 39; Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*.

<sup>623</sup> Christina Lerner argues that James was introduced to the study of demonology in Denmark where witch-hunts were more prevalent. She cites the publications of Hemmingius and James's alleged introduction to them at that time. Lerner, in Smith, ed., 83-85.

essential facts. One, that the “devilish arts” existed and were an odious sin that warranted complete eradication.<sup>624</sup> Two, all magic, regardless of intent, originated with the Devil.<sup>625</sup> The treatise itself presents an elaborate and multi-tiered explanation of magic, but ultimately the two main arguments were the most important. To push these points, James used repetition throughout the treatise, and from introduction to the final page, he continually reminds the reader that the bible provides irrefutable proof of magic’s existence and sinful nature.<sup>626</sup>

### Evidence of Sin

James VI prided himself as a learned monarch, and among other subjects, the King considered himself an expert scholar of religion, having written multiple editions of biblical commentary before the composition of *Daemonologie*.<sup>627</sup> The treatise was his only publication on witchcraft (not counting his involvement in the production of *Newes from Scotland*), but its structure and composition are strikingly similar to his other religious and political works, with the evidence used in the text leaning heavily on biblical scripture. Adopting “Calvin’s emphasis on ancient biblical examples as representing the best models for life,” the king believed biblical evidence provided the ultimate proof of his argument.<sup>628</sup>

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<sup>624</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 3r.

<sup>625</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 3r-3v.

<sup>626</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 5, 27-28.

<sup>627</sup> James’s scholarly hubris was not unwarranted. Historians and biographers including John Matusiak describe an overt intellectually curious James from early childhood on who translated latin and developed a passion for “rigorous logic and incontrovertible argument.” John Matusiak, *James I: Scotland’s King of England* (London: History Press, 2018), 33-35. James’s collected works include commentaries such as an epistle on Revelation and a meditation on the first book of Chronicles. James I, king of England and Scotland, *James I: The Workes* (London: 1616).

<sup>628</sup> Kathryn Gin, Kathryn, "Calvinist/Reformed Tradition and Heritage," In *Encyclopedia of Religion in America, Vol. 1*, Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams, ed. (Washington: CQ Press, 2010), Gale ebooks, accessed February 13, 2020, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX1725800059/GVRL?u=atla29738&sid=GVRL&xid=31d699ba>.

James equipped his subjects with indisputable evidence from the bible that witchcraft existed, was dangerous, and that God explicitly forbade it. *Daemonologie* begins with its two fictional characters having a debate about the existence of witchcraft. To convince his skeptical opponent, Epistemon (the expert) offers six specific examples of documented witchcraft from the Bible.<sup>629</sup> Biblical examples of proof include: *I Samuel 28* or “the Witch of Endor,” Exodus 7-8, Acts 8 and 16:16, and Exodus 11:18, “thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”<sup>630</sup> While Exodus 11:18 sets a clear precedent for the prohibition of witchcraft, which the entire treatise builds its argument upon, James goes further by asserting that God would not go through the trouble of outlawing a non-existent thing. “As first in the law of God, it is plainly prohibited: but certain it is, that the law of God, speaks nothing in vain, neither does it lay curses, or enjoin punishments upon shadows, condemning that to be ill, which is not in essence or being as we call it.”<sup>631</sup>

James’s evocation of biblical proof highlights the influence of continental witchcraft belief on James’s ideology. Stuart Clark argues that demonological authors consistently based their assumptions about witchcraft on biblical precedents and verses that denounced the use of sorcery.<sup>632</sup> James and his co-demonologists all cited *Exodus 22:18*, but many also used *Exodus 7*, when Moses and Aaron faced off against the Pharaoh’s magicians, or *II Kings 23:24* because Josiah sent away “workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem.”<sup>633</sup> Jean Bodin, a contemporary of James, consistently produced biblical declarations against the use of magic in

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<sup>629</sup> *Daemonologie*, 3-5.

<sup>630</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 3-5.

<sup>631</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 5.

<sup>632</sup> Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 567.

<sup>633</sup> Clark, in *Thinking With Demons*, 8-9, 567.

his witchcraft treatise *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*.<sup>634</sup> For example, in response to a witch's pact with the Devil and subsequent renunciation of God, Bodin cites *Leviticus* 24: 10-16, arguing that "the law of God states that anyone who has cursed the name of God shall be stoned, which is the cruelest death of all."<sup>635</sup> *Daemonologie* does devote an extensive amount of space to the classification and description of magic, but James's primary use for biblical evidence stays with his central two points, that witchcraft is real, and that it comes from the Devil. With his description of *I Samuel* 28, The Witch of Endor, James transforms the conjured spirit of Samuel into the Devil in disguise.<sup>636</sup> Like Bodin and his other contemporaries, James's biblical interpretations insert the demonic into scripture. The text repeatedly states that those who dabbled in the supernatural arts either by practicing magic, necromancy, sorcery, or witchcraft did so only at the behest and through the actions of Satan.<sup>637</sup> Regardless of method or motivation, *Daemonologie* employs the strength of biblical evidence to reiterate the fact that all magic was evil and originated with the Devil.<sup>638</sup>

### The Devil

The critical figure in James's interpretation of witchcraft in *Daemonologie* is the Devil. All magic, regardless of type or intention, originated with Satan. As "the enemy of man's salvation," Satan preyed upon men and women who, because of doubt and sin, proved to be more malleable to his will.<sup>639</sup> Theologians often interpreted the early modern Devil as humanity's central oppositional force, and "he was 'God's ape,' existing and understood only in

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<sup>634</sup> Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, Randy A. Scott, tr. (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2001).

<sup>635</sup> Bodin, in *Demon-Mania of Witches*, 147.

<sup>636</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 3.

<sup>637</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 7.

<sup>638</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 2r-3v.

<sup>639</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 6.

terms of what he was not [God].”<sup>640</sup> Regarding witchcraft, the practitioner only obtained power from the Devil and lost his or her soul in exchange. With his mortal servants, Satan waged war on God’s kingdom by destroying property, causing famine, conjuring illness, and outright murder.<sup>641</sup>

The correlation between diabolism and magic was a common characteristic of sixteenth-century learned witchcraft belief. Sermons and publications by clerics and theological scholars focused on the growing influence of the Devil. This popular focus caused the Devil’s involvement with witchcraft to emerge as an intellectual topic of examination. What emerged was an “elite” or “learned” theory of witchcraft that Gary Jensen describes as “official demonology.”<sup>642</sup> Demonology combined popular beliefs with notions of an “organized conspiracy of witches that were aligned with Satan.”<sup>643</sup>

Interests in the Devil’s earthly exploits increased significantly during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Jeffrey Burton Russell argues that the effects of the Reformation, along with thematic trends in theological scholarship, contributed to the rise of demonological study.<sup>644</sup> Catholics and Protestant sects responded to the threat of the Devil in different ways. While the Council of Trent and the Catholic Reformation “de-emphasized” the importance of the Devil, Protestant theology moved in the opposite direction.<sup>645</sup> Satan was an

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<sup>640</sup> Several modern historians also support the oppositional nature of the Devil including Stuart Clark in his *Thinking With Demons*, but Nathan Johnstone argues that the Devil had a more complicated role in early modern religious belief, using his acts of temptation and relationships with humans as an example. Nathan Johnstone, “The Protestant Devil: The Experience of Temptation in Early Modern England,” in *The Journal of British Studies* 42, no. 2 (April 2004), 177.

<sup>641</sup> Christina Larner, *Enemies of God* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2000), 160.

<sup>642</sup> Gary Jensen, *The Path of the Devil: Early Modern Witch Hunts* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 13.

<sup>643</sup> Jensen, *Path of the Devil*, 13.

<sup>644</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 295-297.

<sup>645</sup> Russell, *Lucifer*, 275.

emblem of evil on earth and heightened the fears and “religious despair” of Protestants who believed in a worldly and active adversary.<sup>646</sup> This focus blended with the renewed interests in Augustinianism, and Aristotelianism inspired a sort of “scholastic realism,” which appealed to Protestant theologians who interpreted the bad in the world as visible signs of the Devil’s work.<sup>647</sup> The Devil became a popular subject in Protestant writing, appearing in printed tracts, sermons, ballads, and books during a time when the publishing industry was growing, and literacy rates were on the rise.<sup>648</sup>

When King James traveled to Denmark and Norway in 1590, he entered an intellectual space where witch-hunting and demonology converged.<sup>649</sup> During the king’s extended stay, he interacted with several distinguished Danish officials in the government and clergy. Records indicate that James met the influential theologian Neils Hemmingsen, who, on more than one occasion, debated with the king on topics of religion, spirituality, and moral law.<sup>650</sup> Hemmingsen was a significant figure in the Danish Reformation and an outspoken advocate for the prosecution of diabolical witches, whom he described as dishonest “servants of the Devil.”<sup>651</sup> Associating the criminality of witchcraft with a witch’s pact with Satan, Hemmingsen considered

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<sup>646</sup> Nathan Johnstone, “The Protestant Devil: The Experience of Temptation in Early Modern England,” in *Journal of British Studies* 43, no. 2 (April 2004), 174.

<sup>647</sup> Russell, *Lucifer*, 295.

<sup>648</sup> Johnstone, “The Protestant Devil,” 175.

<sup>649</sup> Alan Macdonald, “James VI and I, the Church of Scotland, and British Ecclesiastical Convergence,” in *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 4 (2005), 886.

<sup>650</sup> There is debate about whether Hemminges influenced James’ understanding of witchcraft. On the one hand, Christina Lerner argues that James did not have any interest in diabolical witchcraft before his trip to Denmark and only upon his return did the king speak of the Devil and witches. On the other, Maxwell-Stuart points out that James’s understanding of witchcraft differed from popular Danish belief and that the topic of witches did not come up in the documented conversation between the king and Hemminges. It is likely that both Maxwell-Stuart and Lerner are both correct, and although James did not wholly adopt the Danish understanding of witchcraft, his exposure to Hemminges and the later North Berwick trials created an opportunity for James to study the topic, with impressions gained from his trip to the continent. Macdonald, 886. Christina Lerner, *Enemies of God*, 160. P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, “The Fear of the King is Death: James VI and the Witches of East Lothian,” in *Witchcraft in the British Isles and New England: New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology*, Brian P. Levack, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 370.

<sup>651</sup> Louise Nyholm Kallestrup, *Agents of Witchcraft in Early Modern Italy and Denmark (Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic)* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 40.

all acts of magic as diabolical in turn.<sup>652</sup> More importantly, while Hemmingsen's ideas associating magic and the Devil was a common theme among major Protestant thinkers in Europe, they had not spread into Scottish and English understandings of witchcraft.<sup>653</sup>

James's first exposure to witchcraft convinced the king that all magic was diabolical and that the Devil posed an immediate threat.<sup>654</sup> Documents related to the North Berwick witch-trials contain dozens of references to malefic magic, demonic ritual, and the Devil.<sup>655</sup> The accused witches admitted to working with and worshipping the Devil during interrogations and criminal trials.<sup>656</sup> In the November 1590 examination of Geillis Duncan, the accused witch confessed that her servant, "Grey Meal," practiced witchcraft and "was received in service of the devil."<sup>657</sup> Agnes Sampson, in the same examination, admitted to conspiring with the Devil to prognosticate the King's future and witnessed Satan proclaim that "it should be hard for the king to come home and that the queen should never come except the king fetched her."<sup>658</sup> North Berwick trial records show (often by the presence of his signature) that King James attended and participated in the proceedings.<sup>659</sup> During the deposition of Janet Kennedy in June of 1591, James was present when Kennedy admitted to working with the Devil to harm the king.<sup>660</sup> In other words, James's encounter with Sampson, Duncan, Kennedy, and the other accused witches exposed the King to the tangible threat of diabolical magic. His experience prompted the King to develop and

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<sup>652</sup> Kallestrup, 40-43.

<sup>653</sup> There are some English witchcraft pamphlets that mention the Devil by the 1590s, but not as explicitly as they do post-1600. Having no published works on witchcraft before 1591's *Newes*, evidence of witchcraft prosecution in Scotland depends on court records, where there is hardly any mention of diabolical magic.

<sup>654</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 47.

<sup>655</sup> Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*.

<sup>656</sup> "Witch Hunting: Examinations, Confessions, and Depositions," in Normand and Roberts, eds., 127-202. "Records of the Witchcraft Trials: Dittays," in Normand and Roberts, eds., 203-289.

<sup>657</sup> "Examination and Confessions of Geillis Duncan and Agnes Sampson," in Normand and Roberts, eds., 136.

<sup>658</sup> These predictions were in relation to the storms that threatened the lives of both King James and Queen Anne in 1589-90. "Examination and Confessions of Geillis Duncan and Agnes Sampson," in Normand and Roberts, eds., 140.

<sup>659</sup> "Examination and Confession of Agnes Sampson," in Normand and Roberts, eds., 144-145.

<sup>660</sup> "Deposition of Janet Kennedy," in Normand and Roberts, eds., 185.

publish his witchcraft theory that mingled aspects of his Calvinist belief and continental demonology.

*Daemonologie* characterized a Devil that actively used manipulation and trickery to affect the world. Apart from convincing Christians to misinterpret religious law, sermons, scripture, and providence, the Devil fostered a sense of discouragement to destroy people's faith and convictions.<sup>661</sup> "He [Satan] could introduce sinful thoughts into the mind, or take hold on man's corrupted will and turn him to sin."<sup>662</sup> In churches, ministers preached about a Devil who was busy working against the faith of Christians, "to make thee to think that sins are so many, so ugly, and so great that the Lord will never forgive them, and casteth in this or that stay before thee, to terrify thee, that thou come not to seek grace."<sup>663</sup> Similarly, James's theory of witchcraft combined the Devil of reformed belief with his newly developed understandings of magic and sorcery. Although the publication includes multiple chapters classifying and describing the different types of magic, ultimately, the practice in its entirety came from Satan.

Not only was Satan at the center of the witchcraft threat in *Daemonologie*, but he was also the enemy of God, posing a tangible threat to the king's subjects and the security of his realm.<sup>664</sup> However, even though James refers to the Devil as "God's enemy," and ultimately antithetical to the Lord, *Daemonologie* presents a version of Satan with severe limits to his powers.<sup>665</sup> Although James consistently calls the Devil "enemy" in his treatise, the king also describes Satan as "God's hangman."<sup>666</sup> Fundamentally, James subscribed to theology with a supremely powerful God, who functionally controlled every aspect of human life. With that

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<sup>661</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 160.

<sup>662</sup> Johnstone, 177-178.

<sup>663</sup> Robert Bruce, "Sermon on II Timothy," in Larner, *Enemies of God*, 160.

<sup>664</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 6.

<sup>665</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 68.

<sup>666</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 3r.



mindset, the Devil only had power because God gave it to him. Satan acted as God's instrument to manipulate, seduce, and torment the mortal flock. God used the Devil to punish the wicked for their sins and the godly for showing weaknesses in their faith.<sup>667</sup> For the "best" of men, God gave the Devil permission to test and challenge their moral strength, "for why may not God use any kind of extraordinary punishment when it pleases him; as well as the ordinary rods of sickness and adversities."<sup>668</sup> God allowed Satan to recruit witches who bewitched their neighbors, causing suffering, destruction, and death, testing the victim's resolve to stay faithful during the darkest of times.

The Devil in James's *Daemonologie* was a complex and contradictory figure who waged war against Heaven and tempted Christians away from their Savior while simultaneously operating as one of God's tools to test and punish humanity. His description of "God's enemy" mirrored depictions of Satan in sixteenth-century European demonological tracts. Manipulative, seductive, and degenerate, the Devil approached men and women during desperate times and offered them vengeance, power, or "whole mountains of gold," in exchange for their service.<sup>669</sup> James's devil was a product of the Reformation, Protestant understandings of the human condition, a fear of the unknown, and the chaotic and dangerous political environment in Scotland that allowed the king to believe in supernatural conspiracies orchestrated to remove him from power.

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<sup>667</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 47.

<sup>668</sup> God using the Devil as an agent of tribulation and trial was not exclusive to James's theory of the Devil and witchcraft. In his study of a fourteenth century witch-hunt, Fabián Alejandro Campagne illustrates that the idea of God using the Devil to test the Christian population had a long history in demonological thought, and argued that Satan "obtains permission through hidden divine intentions to act in the world quite frequently." Fabián Alejandro Campagne, "Demonology at a Crossroads: The Visions of Ermine de Reims and the Image of the Devil on the Eve of the Great European Witch Hunt," in *Church History* 80, no. 3 (September 2011), 477.

<sup>669</sup> Lambertus Danaeus, "A Dialogue of Witches, in Foretime Named Lottellers and Now Commonly Called Sorcerers," in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, Brian P. Levack, ed. (London: Routledge, 2015), 79.

### The Demonic Pact

Book One of *Daemonologie* addresses (among other things) the process of a witch entering into the Devil's service, a crucial aspect of diabolical witchcraft and the ultimate crime of a witch. Maintaining the central theme of diabolical witchcraft, *Daemonologie* argues that the only way for a person to obtain magical powers was through a pact with the Devil.<sup>670</sup> The demonic pact plays a significant role in *Daemonologie* as well as the majority of sixteenth and seventeenth-century demonological thought. For James, the pact symbolized blasphemy, treason, and rebellion, while also serving as the core component of a witch's crime.<sup>671</sup> A witch's pact with Satan was a formalized renunciation of God that bound a witch to the Devil and eternally damned their soul. The language used by James and other early modern demonological scholars also exposes that some members of the educated elite felt anxiety relating to orthodoxy, obedience, and the political environment throughout Europe. Acting in subordination to the Devil was a rejection of the laws of God and the laws of the monarch.<sup>672</sup> When the Devil is minister, master, and deity, societal order was lost or at least inverted, and the witch begins to pose a threat to the Church, the King, and the realm.

The demonic pact is both a spiritual and physical ordeal where the witch pledges themselves to Satan, the Devil takes the witch into his service, and often physically marks the witch to formalize the eternal bond between servant and master.<sup>673</sup> *Daemonologie* argues that Satan actively took advantage of a target's vulnerability by consoling him or her and feigning concern over their well-being or showing sympathy for their suffering.<sup>674</sup> The Devil found his

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<sup>670</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 19-20.

<sup>671</sup> Russell, *Lucifer*, 81.

<sup>672</sup> Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 87.

<sup>673</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 33-34.

<sup>674</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 33.

potential recruits when they were downtrodden and alone and offered them a solution. To initiate contact, disguised as an animal or a disembodied spirit, he spoke to a recruit and attempted his temptation when the target was alone.<sup>675</sup> The demonic pact bound a witch to Satan, and in turn, the witch believed they received magic powers.<sup>676</sup> In December of 1590, accused witch Agnes Sampson confessed in front of King James and other officials that she entered into a pact with Satan out of a fear of poverty and isolation following the death of her husband.<sup>677</sup>

James's approach to the demonic pact reflects the early modern demonization of magic in Europe. Stories describing a witch's pact with the Devil were common as early as the middle ages.<sup>678</sup> However, early modern European beliefs expanded to include a denial of God, the worship of Satan, and either an implicit or explicit demonic pact sometimes with the signing of the Devil's "black book."<sup>679</sup> *Daemonologie* mimicked theologians like Luther, Calvin, and Bodin, who underscored the demonic pact and increasingly associated all magic with the Devil.<sup>680</sup> The demonic pact had roots in medieval scholastic theology, and James Sharpe argues that it was Thomas Aquinas who "refined the notion of the pact" centuries before.<sup>681</sup> However, by the sixteenth century, it was commonplace for demonological tracts to emphasize the importance of the demonic pact as the ultimate sin. According to Gary Jensen, the primary reason for the intensity of institutional responses to witchcraft lies in the rebellious nature of the

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<sup>675</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 19.

<sup>676</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 19.

<sup>677</sup> "Examination and Confession of Agnes Sampson," in Normand and Roberts, eds., 145.

<sup>678</sup> C. L'Estrange-Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London: Heath Cranton Limited, 1933), 42.

<sup>679</sup> C. L'Estrange-Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 42. Kors and Peters, eds., 9.

<sup>680</sup> Martin Luther, "Decem praecepta Wittenbergensi praedicta populo," in Kors and Peters, eds., 264-265. John Calvin, "Sermon on Deuteronomy," in Kors and Peters, 267-270. Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*. Kors and Peters, eds., 9.

<sup>681</sup> James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 18.

pact.<sup>682</sup> In his *The Path of the Devil: Early Modern Witch-Hunts*, Jensen argues that the belief that witches became “contractual participants” in coordinated conspiracies led by the Devil morphed “neighborhood microproblems” into heretical sedition, which necessitated an official response.<sup>683</sup> Danish demonologists (particularly relevant to a discussion on the cultivation of James’s beliefs) widely based their condemnation of witchcraft on the demonic pact.<sup>684</sup> Sixteenth-century Danish theologians, including Peder Palladius, Hans Tausen, and most importantly, Neils Hemmingsen condemned witches’ souls to hell precisely because of the demonic pact, a sentiment reinforced by James in *Daemonologie*.<sup>685</sup>

In a further reflection of continental representations of witchcraft, King James depicts the demonic pact as an ongoing and multi-step process between the witch and his or her master. The demonic pact in *Daemonologie* was both spiritual and physical. After the witch pledged themselves to Satan, relenting to an eternity of bound servitude, a “privately sworn” oath transformed into a physical pact when Satan marked his servants on their bodies.<sup>686</sup> This marking usually took place during gatherings where the Devil required his witches to congregate, “in great numbers,” to serve and worship their master by participating in elaborate ceremonies, conversion rituals, and demeaning acts, including the reception of the Devil’s mark.<sup>687</sup> When Agnes Sampson admitted to renouncing Christ to serve Satan, she confessed that the Devil marked her body.<sup>688</sup> The depositions of Geillis Duncan and Janet Stratton contain similar

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<sup>682</sup> Gary F. Jensen, *The Path of the Devil: Early Modern Witch-Hunts* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 25.

<sup>683</sup> Gary F. Jensen, *The Path of the Devil*, 25.

<sup>684</sup> Louise Nyholm Kallestrup, “Women, Witches, and the Town Courts of Ribe,” in *Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Marianna G. Muravyeva and Raisa Maria Toivo, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 130.

<sup>685</sup> Kallestrup, in Muravyeva and Toivo, eds., 130. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 33-34.

<sup>686</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 33-34. Carmichael, *Newes*, BIIr-BIIv.

<sup>687</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 36-37.

<sup>688</sup> “Examination and Confession of Agnes Sampson,” in Normand and Roberts, eds., 145.

promises of eternal service in exchange for magic and the Devil's mark.<sup>689</sup> With the publication of *Newes from Scotland*, the concept of the pact, including the Devil's mark appeared in Scotland for the first time. It then reappeared in James's *Daemonologie*, which began to spread its inclusion into Scottish witchcraft belief.

### Proof of Guilt

The final passages in King James's *Daemonologie*, propose three methods for proving an accused witch's guilt, the confession, the discovery of a witch's mark, and "their fleeing on the water," or the water test.<sup>690</sup> Interrogators and court officials used each method as evidence in court cases against accused witches to prove guilt. The 1563 Witchcraft Act expanded the definition of criminal witchcraft and intensified the severity of punishments.<sup>691</sup> Nonetheless, criminal cases in Scotland and England depended on the decision of a jury, and an accusation of witchcraft did not necessarily result in a conviction. Witchcraft was also a complicated crime to prove. Cursing, killing, and destroying property with magic left no physical evidence linking the alleged aggressor to the victim. Witnesses had the power to discuss the reputation of an alleged witch or expose the conflict between attackers and victims, but ultimately most evidence was indirect.<sup>692</sup> James's suggested evidence provided more concrete proof of a witch's crime.

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<sup>689</sup> By the 1592 publication of *Newes from Scotland*, examiners discovered "the enemy's mark" in the fore-crag of Geillis Duncan's throat, and the pamphlet argued that "the devil doth generally mark them with a privy mark," and "the devil doth lick them with his tongue in some privy part of their body before he doth receive them to be his servants." "Examination and Confession of Geillis Duncan," in Normand and Roberts, eds., 136-237. "Deposition of Janet Stratton," in Normand and Roberts, eds., 173.

In *Daemonologie*, "their fleeing on the water" is also known as "witch dunking" or "the water test." James VI, *Daemonologie*, 65.

<sup>691</sup> "5 Eliz. I c. 16," in *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750*, Marion Gibson, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>692</sup> Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (London: Routledge, 1991), 16-17.

The confession was a well-coveted and dependable way to secure the conviction of an accused witch. If the suspect confessed, officials had irrefutable evidence to present to English and Scottish juries, which closed the case quickly.<sup>693</sup> Several of the North Berwick witches underwent intensive examinations and gave full confessions of their crimes.<sup>694</sup> Confession unburdened the sinner of their guilt and allowed them to repent and show remorse for their crimes, but it was also a way to spread witchcraft belief to the broader public through the testimonies of the perpetrators. A large percentage of surviving records with detailed descriptions of a witchcraft case come from actual confessions or printed pamphlets featuring confessions. The authors of witchcraft pamphlets often sensationalized the details of the events to sell their work, but that does not mean that authors, readers, and the courts did not take confessions seriously.<sup>695</sup>

Because confessions provided one of the “few absolute proofs of guilt” in witchcraft trials, obtaining a confession was the primary goal of authorities who investigated cases of witchcraft.<sup>696</sup> A confession had to be believable, it needed to contain verifiable details, and interrogators would use any method necessary, including torture, to get what they wanted. *Newes from Scotland* begins with the interrogation and torture of suspected witch Geillis Duncan.<sup>697</sup> Her employer David Seton (with additional help), violently tortured Duncan with the pilliwinks and

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<sup>693</sup> Officials used torture to obtain confessions in the North Berwick outbreak. Geillis Duncan endured several rounds of torture before confessing to witchcraft. “Examinations and Confessions of Geillis Duncan and Agnes Sampson,” in Normand and Roberts, eds., 136-140. Carmichael, *Newes From Scotland*, Br.

<sup>694</sup> It was not uncommon for convicted witches to recant their confessions in court or at the gallows. Both Bessie Thomas and Geillis Duncan proclaimed their innocence and denied their confessions on the date of execution. “Denial at the Scene of Execution by Geillis Duncan and Bessie Thomas to Notaries Public,” in Normand and Roberts, eds., 197-199.

<sup>695</sup> The confession remained a primary characteristic of English witchcraft cases in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Barbara Rosen’s study of witchcraft contains several examples of pre-1600 witchcraft cases that culminate in a confession including the cases of Francis Coxe and John Walsh. Furthermore, from 1600 on, the majority of witchcraft pamphlets included a description of the alleged witch’s questioning and confessions. Rosen, *Witchcraft in England*, 61-82, 344-368.

<sup>696</sup> Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 19.

<sup>697</sup> Carmichael, *Newes*, Br-Bv.

“binding or wrenching her head with a cord or rope” in efforts to obtain a confession.<sup>698</sup>

*Daemonologie* insisted that prosecutors performed their due diligence in witchcraft cases and that courts should only convict accused witches if they obtained “sufficient proof, which can stand of no law,” and confessions were difficult to dispute.<sup>699</sup> At the same time, the treatise actively supported the use of extralegal means like torture for obtaining those confessions.<sup>700</sup> James drew from personal experience in North Berwick when he witnessed Agnes Sampson recant and confess her crimes and argued that it was common for guilty parties to withhold confessions until authorities resorted to using torture.<sup>701</sup> Ultimately, although the King wanted legitimate and foolproof prosecutions, he believed in eradicating the threat of witchcraft more.

When confessions did not come, authorities prosecuting witchcraft cases searched for the physical proof of a witch’s pact with Satan, the witch’s mark.<sup>702</sup> Geillis Duncan refused to confess despite her examiners resorting to torture.<sup>703</sup> Nonetheless, when David Seton and his associates decided to examine Duncan’s body and found a suspicious mark on her neck, “she confessed that all her doings was done by the wicked allurements and enticements of the devil.”<sup>704</sup> A physical mark made by the Devil provided compelling evidence of guilt for early modern jurors. While

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<sup>698</sup> The pilliwinks are wooden thumb screws. Geillis Duncan appears in several depositions from the North Berwick trials, but none of them mention torture by Seton. However, Duncan denied her confession at the scene of her execution on 4 December 1591. Furthermore, in her denial Duncan accused Seton of forcing her to lie. Carmichael, *Newes*, Br. “Denial at the Scene of Execution by Geillis Duncan and Bessie Thomson to Notaries Public,” in Normand and Roberts, eds., 197-198.

<sup>699</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 79.

<sup>700</sup> The use of torture had a precarious position in Scotland and England. For Scotland, torture was not illegal, but had to be judicially granted. However, officials used torture when examining Geillis Duncan, Agnes Sampson, and several other of the North Berwick witches without any objection. In England, torture was illegal. Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*; James VI, *Daemonologie*, 30.

<sup>701</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 30.

<sup>702</sup> The Devil’s or Witch’s mark has many manifestations in early modern European witch belief. The version adopted by James in *Daemonologie* involves Satan marking a witch as the final step of a witch’s pact with the Devil, but later descriptions of the pact (mainly in English witchcraft pamphlets) incorporate the concept of a witch’s familiar with the Devil’s mark. These witches receive the marks when they “feed” blood to their animal familiar (the devil) in return for magic power. James VI, *Daemonologie*

<sup>703</sup> Carmichael, *Newes*, Br.

<sup>704</sup> Carmichael, *Newes*, Br.

witnesses and victims offered insight into an accused witch's reputation or examples of malicious behavior, the mark of the Devil was tangible.<sup>705</sup>

Evidence of Devil's marks is present in *Newes from Scotland, Daemonologie*, and the official records associated with the North Berwick witch-hunt. Authorities discovered marks on Geillis Duncan, Agnes Sampson, and several other men and women involved in the North Berwick conspiracy, and they confessed to receiving the marks from Satan during sexually explicit encounters or at elaborate and nefarious witch conventions.<sup>706</sup> *Newes* and *Daemonologie* both employ sexualized language to describe the marking process between witch and Devil as a way to emphasize the sinfulness of the act.<sup>707</sup> The king's description and inclusion of the mark in *Daemonologie* is an example of how he incorporated staples of continental witchcraft belief into his criminal and theological understandings of the practice.<sup>708</sup> After the publication of *Daemonologie*, the presence of a Devil's mark in English and Scottish witchcraft cases began to increase.<sup>709</sup> In *Daemonologie*, James urged court officials to rely on "the finding of their mark," as irrefutable evidence of guilt.<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 18.

<sup>706</sup> "Part 2: Texts," in Normand and Roberts, eds., 127-225.

<sup>707</sup> "The Devil doth lick them with his tongue in some privy part of their body before he doth receive them to be his servants." It is important to remember the ongoing speculation regarding the authorship of *Newes from Scotland*. While it is only attributed to James Carmichael, the pamphlet has no author listed and official correspondences between Lord Burghley and Robert Bowes mention a published version of events forthcoming as early as 1591. In the least, James provided input in the composition of the pamphlet and that is why it is vital to any discussion about *Daemonologie*, and King James's understanding of witchcraft. Carmichael, *Newes*, BIIv.

<sup>708</sup> Gary Waite's book on early modern witchcraft examines the phenomenon throughout Europe and includes several examples of cases with a Devil's mark. One case in Spain included two witches with marks skillfully hidden in their eyes. Another case in the Netherlands involved the Devil marking a girl while he was in the shape of a calf.

<sup>709</sup> Alan Macfarlane notes "slight changes" in evidential procedure between 1560 and 1680 in England. However, he also contends that the changes happened between 1560 and 1600, "the proof that a person was a witch was the same in 1680 as it had been in 1600." The famous Essex witch-hunts of the mid-seventeenth century contained several mentions of the search for a witch's mark, including in the pamphlet published by "witchfinder general" Matthew Hopkins. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 19, 138-139.

<sup>710</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 81.



*Daemonologie* also recommends the use of the “floating on the water” of an accused witch as a method of proving guilt.<sup>711</sup> While the witch’s mark represented the Devil’s pact with his servant, a physical blemish on the mortal body that symbolized her sin, the water test provided physical proof of a witch’s rejection of God’s grace. The floating or swimming of a witch consisted of a “strong man” binding an alleged witch with rope and casting him or her into a body of water.<sup>712</sup> When a suspected witch did not sink, “the water shall refuse to receive them in her bosom, that have shaken off them in the sacred water of baptism, and willfully refused the benefit thereof.”<sup>713</sup> Guilty witches failed the water test because they made a pact with the Devil; they entered into his service in exchange for power, renounced God, and rejected their baptism.<sup>714</sup>

James’s advocacy for witch swimming has both practical and theological significance in that the test physically proves guilt while also reinforcing the idea of a more severe moral failing with the witch’s blatant rejection of God. Juries needed solid proof of a criminal act, and the Devil’s mark and water test uncovered the witch’s *malefic* intentions of causing suffering in their community. On the other hand, the image of the water’s rejection of a witch embodied the irreversible condemnation of the transgression. Baptism represented the sacred cleansing power of God’s mercy, and when an alleged witch made a pact with the Devil, they cast off the baptism. The act of floating represented the water’s rejection and was an outward sign of sin,

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<sup>711</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 81.

<sup>712</sup> James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, 218.

<sup>713</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 81.

<sup>714</sup> The water test was a popular method for determining a witch’s guilt during the seventeenth century and Barbara Rosen argues that the “ordeal” was a common “pre-trial exercise” ordered by the Justice of the Peace or conducted by the community. Rosen also adds that the water test became very popular during the English Civil War when assizes were suspended. It can be assumed that authorities pulled those forced to endure the water test out of the water before drowning, as several pamphlets that include the water test contain no mention of drowning, but we cannot be positive. Rosen, ed., *Witchcraft in England*, 332-337.

blasphemy, and eternal damnation.<sup>715</sup> Unlike some uses of torture implemented in Scotland, the water test was never an official court policy in either kingdom. However, James's final thoughts in *Daemonologie* advocated for the use of physical searches for the witch's mark, torture, and the swimming test as a means of discovering an alleged witch's guilt. Furthermore, pamphlets published in England from 1600 on recommended these methods, and surviving records indicate that swimming, torture, and pervasive body searches did take place regularly.<sup>716</sup>

*Daemonologie* contained what James saw as compelling scriptural proof that witches existed and posed a considerable threat to the Christian population. The treatise included evidence and crucial details that James believed would help his subjects find and adequately deal with that threat. Each page included carefully constructed scholarly arguments based on James's study and interpretation of continental witchcraft belief, which he first encountered in Denmark during the winter of 1590. That interpretation did not necessarily introduce completely new ideas to James's English and Scottish audience, but it conveyed those ideas with a new emphasis and authority.

#### **IV. Religion and Witchcraft**

King James's understandings of witchcraft and religion are undeniably intertwined, and this is evident in the overall composition of his profoundly theological witchcraft tract. As King of his people and the head of his church, James had the responsibility to educate his subjects on orthodox Christian beliefs and behaviors. Witchcraft was the antithesis of reformed

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<sup>715</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 65.

<sup>716</sup> Matthew Hopkins (citing James) recommends the use of with swimming as a reliable way to discover witches when a Witch's mark was hard to find. Alan Macfarlane cites English diary records from 1699 that mention the dunking of an accused witch, and that although rare, as witchcraft accusations continued sparsely until the nineteenth century, people would submit suspected witches to the water test in extra-legal witch-hunts. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 87-88, 139-141.

Protestantism, and the Devil who waged war against God on earth was the direct enemy of the king, God's viceregent. James's Calvinist-influenced theology viewed witchcraft as an inversion of all the tenets of his faith. He looked at the Devil and his early servants as products of the world's failings and humanity's depravity. In witchcraft, James saw surviving remnants of the false adherence to papistry and the subsequent chaos and conflict in his realm. This, in addition to religious discord in Europe, reinforced his belief that the Earth was experiencing its final days.

### Theology and Faith

James VI, like other early modern monarchs, ruled during a time of religious conflict and transformation. James's rule began shortly after the settlement of the Scottish Reformation, where Protestant nobles pushed back against a Catholic queen and asserted dominance. Although baptized as a Catholic by his mother, James's upbringing and education led him to Calvinism, to which his adherence was both consistent and unwavering.<sup>717</sup> James's understanding of the Devil, the dangers of witchcraft, and the human role in facing those threats all derived from his religious convictions.

King James's Calvinist-influenced religious ideology is central to the construction of the argument against witchcraft in *Daemonologie*.<sup>718</sup> He considered himself a well-read and authoritative theological scholar, and the structural foundation of most of his publications relied

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<sup>717</sup> Smith argues that James remained a devout Calvinist throughout his life and cites his ecclesiastical appointments in Scotland and England to support his claim. Alan G.R. Smith, ed., 12.

<sup>718</sup> Calvinism was a version of Protestantism formulated in the sixteenth-century by the theologian John Calvin. In his 1536 *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Calvin described a style of Christianity that rested on the belief in "the absolute sovereignty, majesty, and 'otherness' of God." The Calvinist interpretation of religion offered a strict and struggle-filled understanding of mortal existence. Central to Calvinist doctrine is the TULIP, an anagram for the concepts of total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. Calvinists believed in a salvation and grace only given by God to those he chose who could neither resist that salvation or fall from it. Kathryn Gin, "Calvinist/Reformed Tradition and Heritage," in *Encyclopedia of Religion in America: Volume I*, Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams, eds. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010), 337-347. Gale ebooks, accessed on February 14, 2020.

heavily on scriptural arguments and evidence. In line with Calvinist doctrine, James VI believed that human beings lived in a state of total depravity and that the destiny of those who existed outside of God's grace was to suffer eternally in hell for the sins of man.<sup>719</sup> The king argued that "Although man in his creation was made to the image of the Creator, yet through his fall having once lost it, it is but restored again in a part by grace only to the elect."<sup>720</sup> Men and women not predestined to receive God's grace fell away from God and were delivered into "the hands of the Devil that enemy."<sup>721</sup> Weak faith caused a person to be vulnerable, and God used the Devil as a tool to torment even the "best" of humanity just as he tested Job, "for why may not God use any kind of extraordinary punishment when it pleases him; as well as the ordinary rods of sickness and adversities."<sup>722</sup>

James's interpretation of religion influenced how government and clerical officials operated within the Scottish Church. With his close relationship to God, James believed he was anointed by the Lord to rule his people and serve as the highest religious authority of the realm, which caused religious and political disagreements about the Church's authority and organization.<sup>723</sup> Less than a decade before the witch-hunts at North Berwick and the composition of *Daemonologie*, the passage of the Black Acts (1584) attempted to reign in the power of the

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<sup>719</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 6.

<sup>720</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 6

<sup>721</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 6.

<sup>722</sup> Adversity, sickness, and suffering were common characteristics in early modern life and Calvinism provided a clear answer to questions about the origin of life's difficulties. Every ailment and struggle was an act of God to test humanity. In *Daemonologie* James is able to expand the Calvinist explanation of misfortune and suffering by providing the means of that suffering, the Devil. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 47.

<sup>723</sup> Religion and politics consistently throughout Europe during this period. James's religious beliefs and political ideology cannot be untangled from each other. James Doelman argues that for the king, "the political and religious could not be separated," and the king's sovereignty was paramount. James's consistent involvement in the operations of the Church in part related to an effort to maintain political supremacy over the kirks. However, James's interpretation of religion did influence his decisions and publications. Politically the king compromised, but the language of his religious works reflected a strict adherence to Calvinist doctrine. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 53-54. W.B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9-10. James Doelman, *King James and the Religious Culture of England* (New York: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 12.

Kirk and asserted secular supremacy over the Scottish church.<sup>724</sup> However, the supremacy was tenuous until the 1590s when the King initiated reforms in the structure of the Church and controlled the meetings of the General Assembly of the Scottish Kirk, regularly attending those meetings, and pushing his religious agenda.<sup>725</sup>

In *Daemonologie*, James intertwines his religious ideology with his theory of diabolical witchcraft to construct a distinctly Calvinist view of sorcerers and witches. The king believed that according to scripture, all people were weak to witchcraft in one way or another because all mortals sinned, and God used Satan as his rod of punishment for those sins.<sup>726</sup> *Daemonologie* interprets witchcraft theologically and contains urgent scriptural-based warnings about the danger of witchcraft and the public's tepid response to the threat. Moreover, James designed the treatises' representation of witchcraft as an inversion of the orthodox reformed religion. Almost every behavioral characteristic attributed to witches in *Daemonologie* symbolized a visible and spiritual rejection of Christian worship.

### **Inversion**

Demonological studies and witchcraft belief relied on themes of inversion in sixteenth and seventeenth-century religion to highlight the seditious behaviors of witches.<sup>727</sup> The act of inversion was a representation of disorder and reflected the confessional divides created during the Reformation.<sup>728</sup> Polarized religious views most often appeared as the public demonization of

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<sup>724</sup> Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 211.

<sup>725</sup> W.B. Patterson, 9-10.

<sup>726</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 53.

<sup>727</sup> Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 14.

<sup>728</sup> Edward Bever, *The realities of witchcraft and popular magic in early modern Europe: culture, cognition, and everyday life* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 168.

theological opponents.<sup>729</sup> Catholicism was in opposition to Protestantism, the Devil was antithetical to God, and the witch served as the reversed reflection of an obedient Christian.<sup>730</sup> What resulted from the religious strife was the rise of an overall sense of skepticism and “intensified dread” in people.<sup>731</sup> Stuart Clark argues that the characterizations of Satan, hell, and witchcraft ritual exhibited “a vocabulary of misrule” that warned against disorder.<sup>732</sup>

An example of how King James used theological inversion in *Daemonologie* is his description of the witch’s convention. Common in continental demonological tracts, the witch convention was described as dirty and unnatural with a crowd of witches surrounding their demonic master and offering “to love a vile-smelling goat, to caress him lovingly, to press against and copulate with him horribly and shamelessly.”<sup>733</sup> The so-called “Black Mass,” (intentionally evoking Catholicism) was a parody of worship, with backward meaning, inverted crosses, black candles, and the desecration or stabbing of the host.<sup>734</sup> *Daemonologie*’s characterization of the sabbath was similar to continental versions where diabolical heresy was anathema to true faith, and the renunciation of God by serving the Devil was the ultimate inversion of divine worship.<sup>735</sup> James was able to both denounce witchcraft and stress orthodoxy

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<sup>729</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 81.

<sup>730</sup> Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft*, 168, Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 15.

<sup>731</sup> Keeping with *Daemonologie*’s overall theme of orthodoxy and obedience, James’s anti-witchcraft treatise also adopted a pointedly anti-Catholic tone, which was a prevalent theme in Protestant literature. By the sixteenth century, anti-Catholicism was a central theme in English witchcraft literature as clerical authorities and Protestant reformers worked to cleanse England of its Catholic tradition. A fundamental goal of the Reformation was to “rid society” of superstitions associated with Catholic belief, which included the suppression of Catholicism’s magical elements, with reformers denouncing the Pope, mass, and priests as “the vilest witches and sorcerers of the earth.” From their conventions to their magical methodology, James’s personification of witches resembled a topsy-turvy version of Catholicism. Both Brian Levack and Robin Briggs correlate the polarization of the Reformation with an increase in witch prosecutions. Briggs argued that religious anxieties surfacing during the Reformation further intensified Christian fears of the apocalypse. Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft*, 168, 222. Stuart Clark, *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology, and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 106. Borman, *Witches*, 14-15. Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 104-106. Robin Briggs, *Witches & Neighbors*, 289.

<sup>732</sup> Stuart Clark, “Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft,” in *Past and Present*, no. 87 (May, 1980), 100.

<sup>733</sup> Tracy Borman, *Witches: James I and the English Witch-hunts* (London: Vintage Books, 2013), 167.

<sup>734</sup> Rosemary Guiley, *The Encyclopedia of Demons and Demonology* (New York: Checkmate Books, 2009), 29.

<sup>735</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 35-37.

by describing every step of the witches' sabbath as the reversal of appropriate Christian worship. *Daemonologie*, *Newes from Scotland*, and procedural records from the North Berwick witch-hunt include detailed descriptions of the highly unorthodox and heretical congregations. Sects of witches met at night and in secret to serve and worship the Devil.<sup>736</sup> During her trial in January of 1591, Agnes Sampson confessed to attending a large witch assembly of over one hundred people where they danced, worshipped Satan, and desecrated corpses.<sup>737</sup> The assembly of witches was, in every way, a manifestation of blasphemy and upside-down Christianity.

*Daemonologie* describes the appearance and organization of a congregation of witches as an inverted church service.<sup>738</sup> The assembled witches participated in group worship, they performed ceremonial rites, listened to Satan deliver a sermon from the pulpit, gave confession, and took communion.<sup>739</sup> At first glance, the men and women took part in a traditional and orthodox religious ceremony, but the proximity of blasphemy to orthodoxy is partially James's point. The witch meeting was a subversive act of mockery against God that highlighted the depravity of the human soul and the malice of the Devil. While faithful Christians attended church and exalted the Lord's grace, witches crept into the same sanctuaries in the middle of the night, defiling the sanctity of God's house.<sup>740</sup> As the pious minister instructed his flock, Satan took the pulpit at a Witch's meeting and denounced God.<sup>741</sup> The overall connection between the Devil and inverted religion was a prominent theme in Reformation Europe. On the one hand, theologians consistently described a world turned "topsy-turvy," as the Devil intensified his attacks on God and the Christian world.<sup>742</sup> Catholics and Protestants denounced confessional

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<sup>736</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 37.

<sup>737</sup> "The Trial of Agnes Sampson," in Normand and Roberts, eds., 245.

<sup>738</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 35-37.

<sup>739</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 37.

<sup>740</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 37.

<sup>741</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 37.

<sup>742</sup> Gary Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 110.

opponents as the practitioners of a “diabolical inversion of true faith,” and what James Sharpe calls “the processes of Christianization” that surfaced as a side-effect of the Reformation emphasized ideas of inversion when describing oppositional religious practices.<sup>743</sup> Furthermore, Sharpe argues that English Protestants increasingly associated witchcraft with Catholicism, viewing both as “dangerous and possibly destructive superstitions.”<sup>744</sup> As a result, worship for witches included an homage to Satan and the ceremonial congregational retelling of each witch’s malicious deeds instead of confession or remorseful prayer.<sup>745</sup>

Each facet of the witch’s meeting symbolized the systematic inversion of Christian worship and the threat of disorder and rebellion. However, James’s hedonistic depiction of the witch’s communion-like veneration of the Devil encapsulates his overall message of good versus evil, the Devil versus God, and orthodoxy versus chaos. James believed that the depraved and sinful nature of humanity only received redemption through the unselfish mercy and grace of God. As thankful recipients of that mercy and grace, Christians were to live in obedient humility and remember Christ’s sacrifice through communion.<sup>746</sup> As the opposition, witchcraft was a “countersacrament,” an upside-down reflection of proper worship.<sup>747</sup> Witches denied Christ’s sacrifice and abused the sacraments by obediently lining up before their master who “in the form of a goat-buck,” made them one by one approach, pledge loyalty, and kiss his “hinder parts.”<sup>748</sup>

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<sup>743</sup> Gary Waite, *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft*, 118. James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, 7.

<sup>744</sup> James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, 116.

<sup>745</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 37.

<sup>746</sup> *Daemonologie* contains several passages that emphasize James’s Calvinist interpretation of the scriptures. Whereas most of his religious commentary focused on scriptural evidence of his belief in the ultimate and divine authority of the king, *Daemonologie* specifically speaks of the fallacy of the Catholic sacraments. As Margo Todd points out, most Scottish Protestants rejected “any notion of inherent holiness” in communion, James’s personal beliefs were difficult to pin down. However, in the fourth chapter of Book Two, James compares the illusions of Satan to what he describes as “the little transubstantiate god in the papists’ mass,” calling it unnatural and unbelievable. Rickard, *Authorship and Authority*, 80; Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 103. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 40.

<sup>747</sup> Walter Stephen, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 197.

<sup>748</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 37.



The inverted communion evoked visions of human lechery, mocked orthodoxy, and represented a complete rejection of God manifested in sexual disorder.<sup>749</sup> The hyper-sexualized characterization of communion during a witch's assembly is a clear example of James's effort to use inverted religious worship as a means of illustrating humanity's weakness and inability to live without sin. In one of her several depositions during the North Berwick Trials, Agnes Sampson recalled a witch assembly where the Devil "carnally used" his ready and willing followers.<sup>750</sup> The witch's sexual intercourse with the Devil symbolized a corruption of the purpose of procreation, and instead of the body or blood symbolizing sacrifice, the communion was a desecration of the sacred.<sup>751</sup>

### God and Witchcraft

James delivered a speech in 1591 denouncing those who trivialized the spiritual danger witchcraft posed to society, but the reality of his theology depended on an all-powerful God whom the Devil could not overcome.<sup>752</sup> Calling witchcraft an "odious sin" punishable with death "by God's law," the king informed the crowd of his almost year-long preoccupation with witches and "for the sifting out of them that are guilty therein."<sup>753</sup> The sincerity of the King's preoccupation with magic was evident to courtly observers. Robert Bowes told Lord Burghley that the king delivered a long speech about witchcraft, "the enormity of the crime," and the

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<sup>749</sup> Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 2009), 12.

<sup>750</sup> "Examination and Confession of Agnes Sampson," in Normand and Roberts, eds., 144-149.

<sup>751</sup> James's description of a sexualized communion was meant to be unnatural. The Devil appears in the form of an animal, which intensifies the degenerate and blasphemous nature of the interaction. The behaviors of the witches taking communion resembled the felony of buggery, which was outlawed as blasphemous intercourse with animals amongst other things. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 37, 67. "Laws Mischellanies," in *Hargrave MS 146* (London: British Library, 1400-1800), 143.

<sup>752</sup> James VI of Scotland, "The Tolbooth Speech (1591) in *Demonology of King James I*, Donald Tyson (Woodbury: Llewellyn, 2011), 304-305.

<sup>753</sup> James VI, in Tyson, 304.

scriptural precedent for harsh punishment.<sup>754</sup> Legally, the severity of the crime of witchcraft depended upon the action, but the king's primary concern was spiritual because the witch's real crime was their "renunciation of God" and their dedication "wholly to the Devil."<sup>755</sup>

Despite the belief that the Devil waged a dangerous war against God and humanity, the mechanizations of the natural world were not outside of God's control, even when it came to witches. The power of God was immeasurable and unmatched, and the Devil did nothing without God's permission. The God of Calvinism was omnipotent and vengeful, as well as merciful. Though born a century after James's inheritance to the English throne, Protestant theologian Jonathan Edwards's version of the Calvinist God encapsulates the deity of James's religious ideology: "There is no fortress that is any defense from the power of God... We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; so 'tis easy for us to cut or singe a slender thread that anything hangs by; thus easy is it for God when he pleases to cast his enemies down to hell."<sup>756</sup> As it was entirely within God's power to bestow grace upon his elect, the Lord also punished the sinful and weak of faith.<sup>757</sup> God allowed the whole of humanity to be vulnerable to witchcraft because it was a method of punishment for sin.<sup>758</sup>

The theology mapped out in *Daemonologie*, worshipped an all-powerful and infallible God, and when evil operated in the world, it was because God allowed it. The depravity of the human condition and the imperfect nature of mortals made people susceptible to the Devil's tricks. As God's representative on earth, James constructed a theological argument against

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<sup>754</sup> Robert Bowes, "June 8 Edinburgh," *Calendar of State Papers, Relating to Scotland, Preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Record Office: Volume II*, John Thorpe Markham, ed (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1888), 592.

<sup>755</sup> James VI, in Tyson, 305.

<sup>756</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," in *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742* (WJE Online, Vol. 22), Harry S. Stout, ed.

<sup>757</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 48.

<sup>758</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 47.

witchcraft that espoused his Calvinist beliefs that included a Devil with the power to strike out, tempt, corrupt, and punish mortals for their failings.<sup>759</sup> In *Enemies of God*, Christina Larner argues that James's specific kind of Calvinism was a method of social control that emphasized a subject's duty to conform, obey, and follow their King's interpretation of the scriptures.<sup>760</sup>

Biblical scripture was the evidential backbone of King James's *Daemonologie*. Of its eighty-two pages, *Daemonologie* contains thirty-four biblical references in the margins alone.<sup>761</sup> Each reference in *Daemonologie* ranges from proof that witchcraft exists in *I Samuel: 28*, to the duty of the clergy and King to correctly lead their flock from *I Peter 5*.<sup>762</sup> Each scriptural reference both demonstrated the frailty of humanity and the overwhelming power of God. James's treatise depicted humanity as weak-willed, ignorant, and easy to manipulate. All of life's struggles were tests of faith, and humans by design fell short. The only protection from the Devil was divine grace, and the only weapon available to James's subjects was faith and "ardent prayer to God."<sup>763</sup>

*Daemonologie* is an example of a standardized early modern European demonological scholarship. While in no way innovative in his language, James's treatise gives his readers an urgent warning against the threat of the Devil and provides an instruction manual for ordinary people to use to combat that threat.<sup>764</sup> Intentionally repetitive, *Daemonologie* instructs James's subjects that God did not watch the world from afar, and he tested, admonished, and bestowed

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<sup>759</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 3.

<sup>760</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 41.

<sup>761</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*.

<sup>762</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 3, 30.

<sup>763</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 60.

<sup>764</sup> *Daemonologie* contains common European characteristics of witchcraft and demonological belief. He echoes Jean Bodin, Henry Boguet, and the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum*. What is important is that he synthesizes the European message and delivers it to the Scottish and English audiences who had little to no exposure to such beliefs. Jean Bodin, *On The Demon Mania of Witches*; Henry Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*; Kramer and Sprenger, *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum*, Christopher Mackay, tr.

mercy on his people daily.<sup>765</sup> Satan acted as one tool in the Lord's arsenal who sought to steal "the tinsel of their [humans] life."<sup>766</sup> Time was of the essence, and James aimed to provide his subjects with the proper guidance in orthodox religion to resist the Devil's temptation by remaining loyal to God.<sup>767</sup>

### The War on Earth and the Second Coming

The language in James's *Daemonologie* contained characteristics present in Protestant strains of apocalypticism (the belief in the impending end of days). Apocalyptic thought was common in early modern Protestant theology, and apocalypticism was a "pervasive and rational component" of seventeenth-century belief.<sup>768</sup> The popularity of the subject led to an increase in the publication of works on the apocalypse and the book of *Revelation* throughout the sixteenth century.<sup>769</sup> More importantly, and similar in some ways to James's treatise, authors of apocalyptic commentary wrote "pastoral theology," composed to teach theological truths, and marketed to the ordinary people.<sup>770</sup>

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<sup>765</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 66.

<sup>766</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 68.

<sup>767</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 68.

<sup>768</sup> Apocalypticism also hinged on the idea that either before or after a millennium of peace, Christ would return to earth. Robert Britt-Mills argues that "the writings of English theologians such as John Bale (1495–1563), John Foxe (1516–1587), and Thomas Brightman (1562–1607) all contributed to Congregationalists in England perceiving themselves as God's chosen millennial people who were still trying to figure out when and if the millennium had started. Patrick O'Banion, "The Pastoral Use of the Book of Revelation in Late Tudor England," in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 57, No. 4 (October 2006), 695. Robert Britt-Mills, "Apocalypticism," in *Encyclopedia of Religion in America*, Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams, eds. (Washington: CQ Press, 2010), Gale eBooks, accessed February 18, 2020, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX1725800032/GVRL?u=atla29738&sid=GVRL&xid=6ca62b5a>.

<sup>769</sup> O'Banion, 696.

<sup>770</sup> Protestant theologians no longer believed in the necessity of priests or bishops to guard the knowledge of faith, but theologians like Calvin did believe that religious education was important. Pastoral theology was the ministrations of religious truth to the wider population and Calvin argued that "pastors and teachers were indispensable," and while they presided over the moral discipline of the flock, they also explained doctrinal truth to the laity. O'Banion, 696. Robert S. Paul, "Ministry," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., Lindsay Jones, ed., (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2005), Gale eBooks, accessed February 18, 2020, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3424502068/GVRL?u=atla29738&sid=GVRL&xid=ef3db830>.

Acting in part as a warning against the temptations of the Devil, *Daemonologie* urges its readers to examine the chaotic world and see connections between the rise of the Devil and the end of days. The final passages of the treatise begin with, “I pray to God to purge this country of these Devilish practices. For they were never so rife in these parts as they are now.”<sup>771</sup> In response, Epistemon evokes the foreboding language of *Revelation 2:10*, which reads: “The Devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee the crown of life.”<sup>772</sup> King James attributed the increased diabolical activity and the surge in the number of witches to the “Devil’s fury” at the coming of the apocalypse and “the consummation of the world.”<sup>773</sup>

The struggles of sixteenth-century Scottish people who attempted to function in an environment with “rising prices, increasing cold, periodic war, and epidemic disease” caused an overall sense of fear, which coincided with the rise of apocalyptic thought and witch-hunts.<sup>774</sup> Protestant theologians like William Fulke preached and published sermons about the world’s instabilities, comparing them to the events described in *Revelation*.<sup>775</sup> Fulke interpreted descriptions of Babylon in the bible as the contemporary Roman Church, suffering, and famine as signs of the tribulation, and his interpretations were common as late Elizabethan religious thought took a sharp radical Puritan turn at influential centers of learning like Cambridge.<sup>776</sup> Fulke, James, and other demonological scholars were working to reveal the mysteries of the scripture to the “common sort” for spiritual nourishment and education.<sup>777</sup>

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<sup>771</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 81.

<sup>772</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 81. “Revelation 2:10,” in *The Bible and Holy Scriptures: NT* (Geneva: Rowland Hall, 1560), 115.

<sup>773</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 81.

<sup>774</sup> Jensen, 104.

<sup>775</sup> O’Banion, 697.

<sup>776</sup> O’Banion, 698.

<sup>777</sup> O’Banion, 699.

James's interest in apocalyptic thought resulted in the composition of commentary on *Revelation* in 1596, only a year before the publication of *Daemonologie*.<sup>778</sup> The text was one of several biblical commentaries published by the King during his lifetime, and it served as an expression of his devout faith, warned of the coming apocalypse, and highlighted the misdeeds of "Papists and Spaniards."<sup>779</sup> James's work in *Revelation* charged his subjects with the responsibility of arming themselves "spiritually and bodily," and to "fight against the antichrist and his upholders."<sup>780</sup> In language similar to *Daemonologie*, James warns readers that "Satan is not only content to deceive," he was also gathering his "instruments," his followers, to go into battle with "implacable or unappealing malice."<sup>781</sup> The king's foreshadowing of the rise of the antichrist mirrors his message in *Daemonologie*'s warning of the strength of the Devil, the number of witches, and Christianity's duty to destroy them.<sup>782</sup>

### **V. Conclusion: *Daemonologie* and James's Theory of Kingship**

King James consistently worked on efforts to assert his royal supremacy and diminish the power of the Scottish nobility.<sup>783</sup> James published two political treatises on the power and supremacy of the monarchy, *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598) and *Basilikon Doron* (1599).<sup>784</sup> The King's *True Law* was "a theoretical justification of the divine right of kings."<sup>785</sup>

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<sup>778</sup> King James VI of Scotland, "A Paraphrase Upon The Revelation of the Apostle St. John," in *James I: The Workes (1616)*, Bernhard Fabian, Edgar Mertner, Karl Schneider, and Marvin Spevack, eds. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1971).

<sup>779</sup> John Matusiak, *James I: Scotland's King of England* (Stroud: The History Press, 2015), 91.

<sup>780</sup> James VI, "A Paraphrase Upon the Revelation," 7-9, 80-81.

<sup>781</sup> James VI, "A Paraphrase Upon the Revelation," 80.

<sup>782</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 81. James VI, "A Paraphrase Upon the Revelation," 7-9.

<sup>783</sup> Brian P. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 99-108.

<sup>784</sup> Fischlin and Fortier, eds., 13.

<sup>785</sup> Fischlin and Fortier, eds., 13.

The “free” king, according to James, shared responsibilities with his subjects.<sup>786</sup> James argued that the duty of the subject was allegiance and obedience to the monarchy, “which form of government, as resembling the divinity, approacheth nearest to perfection, as all the learned and wise men from the beginning have agreed upon,” while the King governed, educated, and protected his people.<sup>787</sup> Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier argue that the *Basilikon Doron* was a “pragmatic guide...that distills James’s personal experiences as king of Scotland,” and laid out the characteristics of an ideal prince.<sup>788</sup> Both texts reflected James’s experience as King of Scotland and its unique political environment and were used to support his assertions about absolute rule, which appear first in *Daemonologie*.<sup>789</sup>

In James’s eyes, a monarch answered to God, and no one else.<sup>790</sup> Despite tutors like Buchanan teaching the young king that monarchs ruled with the permission of “the people,” and through cooperation with the nobility, James rejected the idea of diminished kingly power and believed that monarchs were ordained by God to rule over all their mortal subjects.<sup>791</sup> On the other hand, James’s life experience, the chaos of the Scottish court, and the continued evolution of political and religious ideology since the Reformation influenced his behaviors. Like monarchs before him, James wanted to eliminate the problem of competing powers operating within one border and to rein in the nobility while also managing the influence of the church. With the publication of *Daemonologie* in 1597, James communicated his views on kingship in less apparent ways. In *Daemonologie* James references *Luke 16*, which states, “no servant can serve two masters: for either he shall hate the one, and love the other; or else he shall lean to the

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<sup>786</sup> James I, *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, in Fischlin and Fortier, eds., 51.

<sup>787</sup> James I, *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, in Fischlin and Fortier, eds., 51.

<sup>788</sup> Fischlin and Fortier, eds., 13.

<sup>789</sup> Fischlin and Fortier, eds., 14

<sup>790</sup> Brown, 22.

<sup>791</sup> Alan Stewart, *The Cradle King: The Life of James VI & I, the First Monarch of a United Great Britain* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2003), 41-43.

one and despise the other.”<sup>792</sup> James described the practice of witchcraft as the sin of rebellion against God.<sup>793</sup>

The 1597 publication of King James VI’s *Daemonologie* altered the state of Scottish and English witchcraft belief. The treatise contained lesser-known witchcraft characteristics associated with continental witches and facilitated the spread of those ideas to a new audience. James took European witchcraft beliefs and infused them with his personal experience and confessional beliefs, publishing a singularly unique scholarly work. The king’s witchcraft treatise was the first of its kind, containing the authoritative voice of a God-anointed sovereign.

*Daemonologie* was the result of a combination of the personal and political for James. At the time of its publication, *Daemonologie* was an honest warning about the increased threat of witches. James VI’s experience in Scotland and Denmark in 1590 and 1591 had made the king examine witchcraft seriously, especially after learning that a cabal of witches attempted to murder him and his bride. The infusion of religious ideology, a tumultuous political climate, and unique personal circumstances led to the construction of an understanding of witchcraft that the king had a responsibility to share with his subjects. It was James’s duty as God’s representative on earth to make his people aware of the dangers of witchcraft and teach them the proper way to combat such a serious physical and spiritual threat.

The publication of *Daemonologie* contributed to the mass-distribution of continental witchcraft beliefs to a population that was largely unfamiliar with them. More importantly, the treatise addressed contemporary religious and political issues in Scotland, including orthodox Christian belief, the errors of Catholicism, and the meaning of kingship. Ultimately

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<sup>792</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 66. “Luke 16: 13,” *The Bible and Holy Scriptures* (Geneva: Rowland and All, 1560), NT 37.

<sup>793</sup> Brian P. Levack, *Witch Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 98.



*Daemonologie* is about witches, and the North Berwick witch-trials immersed James in the study of witchcraft and the Devil. What the king learned from European scholars, including Jean Bodin, Neils Hemmingsen, and the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, contradicted the views of notable English theological scholars like Reginald Scot, who dismissed the witchcraft threat. James exposed his audiences in Scotland and England to continental witchcraft beliefs. Printers sold copies of *Daemonologie* in both Edinburgh and London, and the status of its author ensured both its authority and popularity. By 1603, the Scottish king inherited the English throne, and the government implemented more specific and strict witchcraft laws in England. King James's treatise influenced both Scottish and English understandings of witchcraft, in turn affecting accusations and prosecutions until they began to diminish in the eighteenth century.

## 5 DAEMONOLOGIE IN PRACTICE AND PRINT

The first scene of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* begins with three mysterious figures meeting at night amidst a raging storm in the countryside of Scotland.<sup>794</sup> As the three women approach each other, one asks, "When shall we three meet again, in thunder, lightning, or in rain? When the hurly-burly's done, when the battle's lost and won, that will be ere the set of sun."<sup>795</sup>

Shakespeare describes the three figures as the "weird sisters," and the purpose of their presence is to evoke feelings of discomfort and foreboding.<sup>796</sup> Shakespeare composed the play shortly after Scotland's King James VI inherited the crown of Elizabeth I, and the English Queen's death after a forty-four-year reign intensified social anxieties in "a hurly-burly world, a violent and tumultuous place in which loyalty already seems precarious."<sup>797</sup> Stage performances of *Macbeth* began less than ten years after the North Berwick witch-hunts that had awakened James's awareness of the witchcraft threat.

To intensify old fears and distrust, the menace of conspiratorial plots followed James to England. Shakespeare published his play soon after the discovery of a botched Catholic conspiracy to assassinate the king and prominent members of the English government by blowing up Parliament in November of 1605. The exposure of The Gunpowder Plot, combined with his past experiences, made *Macbeth* all too familiar for James. Shakespeare's tragedy put a spotlight on the corruption and undoing of treacherous nobles who sinned and conspired for power. Living in a world that repeatedly reminded the king of his precarious position affected his

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<sup>794</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth: A Norton Critical Edition*, Robert Miola, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), 5.

<sup>795</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 5.

<sup>796</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 5.

<sup>797</sup> Jessie M. Lander, "Introduction to *Macbeth*," in *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2007), 5.

approach to governance in England as it did in Scotland. The King's state and religious policies reflected his lived experience, but his views on monarchy and authority were not always in sync with traditional English forms of governance. James's perception of loyalty, faith, and witchcraft influenced his method of rule and had an impact on his subjects, including playwrights like Shakespeare and the wider public.

Chapter Four illustrates the dissemination of European witchcraft belief into England and Scotland by the seventeenth century and why King James specifically serves as the main conduit for those ideas. Delving into depictions of witchcraft belief present in early modern forms of entertainment by comparing the presence of witches in two famous plays to those found in *Daemonologie*. Both William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the dramatization of an actual prosecution in *The Witch of Edmonton* contain witches who reflect characteristics underlined by James in his treatise.<sup>798</sup> Each play approaches the topic of witchcraft differently. Shakespeare's tragedy is a dark and severe glimpse at the dangers of conspiracy and greed with themes that touch on melancholy, murder, and societal ruin. On the other hand, *The Witch of Edmonton* comedically dramatized the alleged crimes and moral shortcomings of Elizabeth Sawyer, an old woman accused of witchcraft.<sup>799</sup> However divergent, each play provides clear examples of early modern witchcraft beliefs, specifically during the reign of King James. What is particularly salient in the plays' treatment of witchcraft is both the popularity of theater as entertainment and the need for audiences to have some level of personal familiarity to ideas expressed during performances so they can keep up with the plot. The spectators who filled theaters and town squares to enjoy a performance understood enough about witchcraft to identify witches in the

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<sup>798</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*. *The Witch of Edmonton* (London, 1616).

<sup>799</sup> *The Witch of Edmonton* depicts popular witchcraft and rural English life with many comedic scenes and tropes. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge, ed., *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays: The Tragedy of Sophonisba, The Witch, The Witch of Edmonton* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 21-25.

plays. Popular forms of entertainment serve as a pathway for examining the public perception of witchcraft. Still, theatric performances only offer a glimpse of how that belief intersected with daily life.

There is no doubt that James believed in witchcraft and magic, and his treatise on the subject is a serious and sincere work of early modern demonological scholarship. James associated witchcraft and magic with the Devil, his religious ideology included a diabolical enemy who actively waged war against God and all Christians, and he believed it was his duty as King to fight and lead that war. 1597's *Daemonologie* is a product of James's convictions, but the king also used the treatise as an instructional tool. James's station as the monarch gave him the ability to influence literature, art, and culture with his words while he dictated the tone and course of English law with his actions. In addition to plays, this chapter also draws upon early modern pamphlets, broadsides, plays, and trial transcripts to highlight the cultural and legal influence of James's *Daemonologie*. By examining the language used to describe criminal cases and printed accounts of witchcraft, the chapter illustrates how European characteristics of witchcraft introduced and spread by James appear more regularly in surviving trial records and several forms of cheap print published after 1597.

Cases involving accusations of witchcraft experienced a short-lived, but significant surge in seventeenth century England and Scotland. Unfortunately, actual surviving records of court-tried witchcraft cases are less common and contain only a fraction of the details when compared to printed depictions of outbreaks. However, evidence of James's influence can be found in legal prosecutions as well. James influenced English and Scottish law as the king, which is evident when examining the legal response to witchcraft before and after *Daemonologie*'s publication. Although rare, surviving records of witchcraft cases can provide some insight into witchcraft

belief by highlighting who faced witchcraft charges and why. For those reasons, the chapter examines witch prosecutions in England and Scotland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While not as robust in detail and description, surviving cases grant insight into the seriousness of witchcraft charges in early modern courts. Taken together, court proceedings, the law, and popular entertainment produce measurable evidence of the spread of European witchcraft ideology and James's influence on that spread.

### **I. James, "The Weird Sisters," and Popular Belief**

The theater was a popular form of entertainment in early modern England. Spectators from all walks of life gathered at one of London's several stages to watch the latest comedy or tragedy. Traveling troupes of actors moved from village to village performing for eager crowds in the town square. Although not one of the most respectable professions, acting afforded a good living for many, showing that plays were popular and profitable. Attending a performance, whether at a theater in the city or on a makeshift stage, was common enough. If a man possessed enough talent, ambition, and connections, he might perform for the nobility or even the king at Whitehall.

King James enjoyed and patronized the theater. On 19 May 1603 and not long after arriving in England, James named William Shakespeare and eight other prominent English actors as "The King's Men," which allowed the group to perform plays at court, at the Globe Theater, and tour the countryside under the name.<sup>800</sup> The title of "King's Men" was a significant form of patronage for actors.<sup>801</sup> "It was more than a symbolic title, Shakespeare was now a Groom of the Chamber, and he and the other shareholders were each issued four and a half yards of red cloth

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<sup>800</sup> James Shapiro, *The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 21.

<sup>801</sup> Shapiro, *The Year of Lear*, 21.

for royal livery to be worn on state occasions.”<sup>802</sup> Two years after his appointment, Shakespeare published three of his most famous plays, *King Lear*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, and *Macbeth*.

The weird sisters appear in *Macbeth* only four times, but they are central to the tragedy’s plot and Macbeth’s fate. In each appearance (save the first appearance of Hecate later in the play), the sisters deliver fragmented pieces of prophecy using witchcraft. The women foresee Macbeth obtaining three titles, Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and king.<sup>803</sup> Later, when each of the predictions has come to fruition, the sisters warn of Macbeth’s doom with references to Macduff and the Great Birnam Wood.<sup>804</sup> On some level, while the prophecies come true, they also serve as trickery that foreshadowed only pieces of the whole. The women predicted Macbeth’s rise as king but also professed “none of woman born shall harm Macbeth,” without explaining the meaning of their words.<sup>805</sup>

Although Shakespeare never explicitly describes the women as such in the original text, the sisters were instantly recognizable as witches. The sisters’ behaviors, their words, and even the natural environment emphasize the presence of magic. More importantly, the three sisters replicate several important characteristics attributed to witches in *Daemonologie*. It is not surprising that a playwright in the king’s service included ominous threats of witchcraft in a play about rebellion, betrayal, and murder in Scotland. James had published a prominent treatise on witchcraft, and Shakespeare incorporated the king’s interests into his play. *Macbeth* feels like it was written specifically for James, a Scottish king all too familiar with plotting nobles, external threats, and diabolical conspiracy.

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<sup>802</sup> Shapiro, *The Year of Lear*, 21.

<sup>803</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 61.

<sup>804</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 195-199.

<sup>805</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 195-197.

Early modern entertainment presents a novel way of examining how James's witchcraft ideology moves from treatise to script to the public. While not containing the intellectual authority of a treatise or a root in facts like pamphlets, Shakespeare's play contained political thought and reflected early modern beliefs and fears. The cultural constructs highlighted in *Macbeth* also influenced the spread of these beliefs. *Macbeth* summons *Daemonologie's* witchcraft ideology in each scene that the sisters appear. Some characteristics are blatant, but other references to witchcraft are less obvious. For example, Shakespeare uses the environment and atmosphere to remind the audience that the three sisters are witches. In all four scenes where the women appear, thunder precedes their entrance evoking the presence of foul weather and storms.<sup>806</sup> The other signs of witchcraft are also apparent, and each parallel the characteristics emphasized by James in *Daemonologie*.

The weird sisters are the first characters to appear on stage in *Macbeth*, and they help to create a dark and stormy atmosphere aesthetically by exhibiting diabolical and subversive behaviors. Apart from the foreboding thunder and lighting, the women immediately conjure signs of magic and witchcraft. At the end of Act One, Scene One, the third sister shouts, "I come Grimalkin!" and another cries, "Paddock calls anon!"<sup>807</sup> The Jacobean audience would have recognized Paddock and Grimalkin as familiar spirits, one of the forms that the Devil takes in *Daemonologie*. The Norton Critical Edition of *Macbeth* describes Grimalkin as an "attendant spirit" in the form of a gray cat and Paddock as "another familiar spirit" in the shape of a toad.<sup>808</sup>

Familiar spirits are present in *Daemonologie*, *Newes from Scotland*, and the surviving depositions from the North Berwick Witch-hunt, and by the seventeenth century, diabolical

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<sup>806</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*. (find act, scene, line)

<sup>807</sup> Shakespeare, "Act One, Scene One, *Macbeth*, 5.

<sup>808</sup> Shakespeare, "n. 10," *Macbeth*, 5.

familiar spirits are a staple of English witchcraft belief. For those reasons, it is easy to see why a playwright who curated a play in part for the King's pleasure, included tropes associated with James's witchcraft belief in *Macbeth*. There is further proof of *Daemonologie*'s influence in the dialog of the scene. When the third sister cries, "Paddock calls anon," although subtle, the communication between the witch and her unseen companion points directly to James's central argument in *Daemonologie*.<sup>809</sup> Witchcraft is demonic, and ultimately Satan, and not the witch, has the power and control in the relationship. The sisters do not command their familiar spirits but are at the spirits' command. The witch is pacifying her master; a behavior described several times in *Daemonologie*, which was the authority of the Devil over his earthly minions. It is the Devil's trick to manipulate his servant and make he or she believe that they are in control when, truthfully, the witch is a slave to his or her master. The weird sisters are subordinates, parceling out half-truths to Macbeth and his companions and sowing discord in the process.

In act one, scene three, the three sisters appear once more on a heath following a bloody battle as ominous thunder fills the air.<sup>810</sup> The sisters begin to gossip about private matters having nothing to do with *Macbeth*'s main plot, but the discussion serves a purpose nonetheless. One sister brags about bewitching animals, and another formulates a plan of revenge against a woman who refused to share food.<sup>811</sup> Deciding to take her revenge out on the selfish woman's sailor husband, the witch muses, "I'll drain him dry as hay. Sleep shall neither night nor day hang upon his penthouse lid; he shall live a man forbid."<sup>812</sup> Both revenge and greed were core motivations in the recruitment of witches in *Daemonologie*, and the weird sisters personified those sinful frailties with perfection.

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<sup>809</sup> Shakespeare, "Act One, Scene One," *Macbeth*, 5.

<sup>810</sup> Shakespeare, "Act One, Scene Three," *Macbeth*, 8.

<sup>811</sup> Shakespeare, "Act One, Scene Three," *Macbeth*, 8.

<sup>812</sup> Shakespeare, "Act One, Scene Three," *Macbeth*, 9.



The opening lines of Scene Three set the dramatic tone for *Macbeth*. The descriptions characterize the three sisters' identities. As spectators, the audience needs no added insight into the witches' lives to understand the plot. Nevertheless, Shakespeare includes a glimpse into the sisters' private conversations to underscore their identity as witches. The sisters' behavior, speech, and mannerisms were familiar enough for an audience to comprehend what they were. The fact that specific actions characterize the three women as witches and that those presentments follow James's description of witches in *Daemonologie* illustrates that Shakespeare included recognizable attributes for his characters when composing a play he intended for the king. The weird sisters emulated the behaviors associated with witchcraft in both *Daemonologie* and pamphlets like *Newes* with both action and appearance.<sup>813</sup> Including the witches' individual behaviors also makes clear that common English audiences knew enough about witches to identify the sisters as such on stage. *Daemonologie* argues that three passions led men and women to take up witchcraft: curiosity, greed, "and the thirst for revenge for some offense deeply held."<sup>814</sup>

Concrete evidence of a connection between *Daemonologie* and *Macbeth* occurs later in Scene Three. Banquo and Macbeth approach the women standing on a heath. Banquo's description of the women immediately calls them out as unnatural, "what are these, so withered and so wild in their attire, that look not like th' inhabitants O'th'earth..."<sup>815</sup> Instantly the women are othered, set apart, and described as unearthly and alien. The description of the women reflects characteristics associated with witches, a construction to which James contributed. The

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<sup>813</sup> The witches in *Newes from Scotland* confess to performing several types of illicit and demonic magic that the sisters in *Macbeth* also perform. One example is the supernaturally quick travel on a sieve. Shakespeare, "Act One, Scene Three," *Macbeth*, 8. *Newes from Scotland*.

<sup>814</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 8.

<sup>815</sup> Shakespeare, "Act One, Scene Three," *Macbeth*, 9.

three sisters are ancient, unnatural, and strange creatures who are difficult to identify, with beards and bizarre behaviors. These creatures are neither women or men, and their practices challenge social norms, which fails to soothe or calm Banquo's immediate apprehensions.

“All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!” the first sister cries out.<sup>816</sup> “All hail, Macbeth? Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!” shouts the second.<sup>817</sup> The third sister follows with “All hail Macbeth, that shall be king hereafter.”<sup>818</sup> Notably, each sister ascribed titles to Macbeth that were not his. Instead, the witches foretold of Macbeth's rise to power in the future. The sisters also addressed Banquo, offering insight into his own future, stating that he would be “lesser than Macbeth, and greater.”<sup>819</sup> Banquo's future was “not so happy, yet much happier,” producing a line of kings, “though thou be none.” The prophecies delivered by the sisters seemed outlandish to the two men, but they did not dismiss the women or turn away. Macbeth attempts to prod the women further, but the witches vanish “into the air and what seemed corporal melted as breath into the wind.”<sup>820</sup>

Prophecy is a central motif in *Macbeth*. Did Macbeth commit his later atrocities because of the witches' prognostications, or did he self-destruct because of his own choices? Prophecy is also a central characteristic attributed to witchcraft in *Daemonologie*. Magicians, necromancers, and witches used prophecy, which James condemns and demonizes outright.<sup>821</sup> Any knowledge acquired from magic was evil, diabolical, and prohibited.<sup>822</sup> In Book One, Epistemon argues that Satan “will make his scholars to creep in credit with princes, by foretelling them many great

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<sup>816</sup> Shakespeare, “Act One, Scene Three,” *Macbeth*, 10.

<sup>817</sup> Shakespeare, “Act One, Scene Three,” *Macbeth*, 10.

<sup>818</sup> Shakespeare, “Act One, Scene Three,” *Macbeth*, 10.

<sup>819</sup> Shakespeare, “Act One, Scene Three,” *Macbeth*, 10.

<sup>820</sup> Shakespeare, “Act One, Scene Three,” *Macbeth*, 10-11.

<sup>821</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 8.

<sup>822</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 10-29.

things, part true, part false, for if all were false, he would lose credits at all hands.”<sup>823</sup> The argument was both a reflection of belief and James’s aversion to a commonly used branch of advisement in the early modern period: court-appointed astrologists. Like the astrologers and magicians James condemned, the witches crept into Macbeth’s mind with prophecies of his rise to power, and he accepted them at their word without realizing that they told him only part of the story.

*Macbeth* echoes James’s experiences and his belief. Shakespeare used the witches as a plot device to foretell danger to come through ideas about the reliability of magic. Real prophecy, according to *Daemonologie*, ceased with the coming of Christ, and only God knew the future.<sup>824</sup> Witches who claimed to possess insight into the future only obtained fragments of a whole and half-truths at best, fed to them by their master. James witnessed the fractured prophecies of witches when investigating the crimes of Agnes Sampson and the other North Berwick witches in 1590-1591. In one of Sampson’s examinations, she admitted to prophesying by predicting several deaths and the calling up of destructive and violent storms, which hit during the previous Michaelmas.<sup>825</sup>

James directly denounced prophets and all magic users in *Daemonologie*. During her reign in England, Elizabeth I sometimes employed the famous alchemist and astrologer John Dee, but James condemned his work and refused to seek advice from Dee while King.<sup>826</sup> The predictions initially made to Macbeth and Banquo replicate the nature of prophecy in *Daemonologie*. The witches foretold Macbeth of “great things” in the future that was “part true”

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<sup>823</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 22.

<sup>824</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 65-66.

<sup>825</sup> “Examination and Confession of Agnes Sampson,” in Normand and Roberts, eds., 145-148.

<sup>826</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 22.

just as James described prophecy in the treatise.<sup>827</sup> In the same vein, the witches prophesized to Banquo that his children would inherit the crown. While accurate, this did not explain that murder and betrayal were necessary components of future accolades.

The weird sisters do not appear again until Act Three when Macbeth's life has changed considerably. Banquo (contemplating recent events) says, "Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all as the weird women promised..."<sup>828</sup> By Scene Four, as thunder rumbles again to signal the sisters' arrival, their prophecies had one by one come to fruition. Macbeth was the king and Banquo was dead, never to witness the success of his patriarchal line. The sisters stand on the heath with Hecate, a mythical goddess of classical sorcery and witchcraft.<sup>829</sup> The goddess chastises her subordinate witches for prophesizing to Macbeth without permission, calling the sisters "spiteful and wrathful."<sup>830</sup> *Macbeth* repeatedly points out that the sisters are subordinates to a higher authority, be it the Devil (in the form of familiars), or a "goddess" witch who sits higher on the ladder of power. Although the women are rugged, undefinable, knowledgeable, unnatural, and project a sense of control, when the rage of a superior threatens them, the witches become frightened and flee. Once more, the witches' behaviors emulate characteristics laid out in *Daemonologie*. Witches did not possess the power to heal, hurt, raise storms, or prophesize, and the Devil wielded power for them in exchange for their eternal service. Shakespeare

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<sup>827</sup> It is not clear if the weird sisters intentionally withheld information from Macbeth and Macduff or only repeated what they knew, but in *Daemonologie*, the Devil did not have the power to know everything because that only rested with God. *Daemonologie*, 22.

<sup>828</sup> Banquo also refers to the sisters as oracles before his murder soon after the scene. Shakespeare, "Act Three, Scene One," *Macbeth*, 48.

<sup>829</sup> Hecate was a Greek deity associated with magic and witchcraft who was worshipped by cults in Athens. Demonologists often connected classical references of magic and witchcraft to the Devil. James does this in *Daemonologie*. Albert Heinrichs, "Hecate," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), accessed May 21, 2020, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198606413.001.0001/acref-9780198606413-e-2957>.

<sup>830</sup> When Hecate describes the sisters, she is echoing language used by James in *Daemonologie* when explaining what motivates people to become witches. James VI, *Daemonologie*. Shakespeare, "Act Three, Scene Five," 49-50.

depended on popular understandings of the Devil as a manipulator and trickster who uses the weakest of sinners as his pawns.

The weird sisters surface for the final time in Act Four when they appear in front of a cauldron within a dark cavern as sounds of thunder surrounds them.<sup>831</sup> The sisters are not alone, and each of them is accompanied by a familiar spirit: a cat, a hedgehog, and one only identified by its name, Harpier.<sup>832</sup> All watch as the sisters dance around the fire and toss strange ingredients like animal entrails into the cauldron.<sup>833</sup> “Double, double, toil and trouble; fire burn and cauldron bubble,” they sing as they weave their melodic spell.<sup>834</sup> The entire atmosphere of darkness, plotting, and storms sets-up one of the play’s most pivotal scenes, and one that exhibits several behaviors James attributes to witches in *Daemonologie*. The witches prophesize once more about Macbeth’s fate, and in doing so, underline the diabolical nature of witchcraft. Every movement and behavior in the scene drips with misrule, error, and evil. From the environment to the sisters’ actions, Shakespeare is perpetuating the construction of belief and spreading those ideas to the broader population.

Amidst the chanting and spell-casting, Macbeth approaches, and one sister warns, “something wicked this way comes,” illustrating a shift in identity for Macbeth from hero to villain.<sup>835</sup> Macbeth addresses the “secret, black, and midnight hags,” accusing them of a laundry list of feats associated with witchcraft, and yet persists in asking for their assistance.<sup>836</sup> He

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<sup>831</sup> Shakespeare, “Act Four,” 52.

<sup>832</sup> Shakespeare, “Act Four,” *Macbeth*, 52.

<sup>833</sup> Shakespeare, “Act Four,” *Macbeth*, 52.

<sup>834</sup> Shakespeare, “Act Four,” *Macbeth*, 52.

<sup>835</sup> The tone of the witches’ speech insinuates that Macbeth has damaged his soul. Macbeth made the decision to listen to the words of the sisters and ask for their assistance, which according to *Daemonologie* is just as sinful as practicing witchcraft. Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 54. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 43-47.

<sup>836</sup> When addressing the weird sisters, Macbeth lists several witch-associated powers: conjuring storms, causing disease, and murder, all mentioned in *Daemonologie*. Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 53-54. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 43-47.

demands that the gathering of witches call forth spirits to foretell the future, and the sisters comply.<sup>837</sup> One by one, incorporeal and bloody apparitions appear from within the cauldron to deliver vague warnings. “Beware Macduff,” “be bloody, bold, and resolute,” “laugh to scorn the pow’r of man, for none of woman born shall harm Macbeth,” “Macbeth shall never vanquished be until Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill shall come against him.”<sup>838</sup> Unsatisfied, Macbeth desperately presses the witches further, demanding to know if Banquo’s children inherit his crown. The witches then summon an apparition or vision of sorts, “a show of eight kings,” and Banquo, the final king, stands with a glass in his hand.<sup>839</sup> Enraged at this, Macbeth lashes out at the witches, calling them “filthy hags,” which causes them to vanish for the final time.<sup>840</sup>

The witches’ actions illustrate the strong cultural influence of James’s work on witchcraft belief, both directly and indirectly. Shakespeare’s intentional insertion of familiar characters and scenarios in *Macbeth* for James’s entertainment makes perfect sense. Like many early modern men whose success depended on patronage, Shakespeare needed to appeal to his king. By 1604, James’s religious ideology, his views on authority, and his belief in the supernatural were well-documented and known to anyone in the English court or general population privy to his written works. By the time James took the English crown, he had published not only poetry, biblical commentary, and *Daemonologie* but also political tracts, including *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598) and *Basilikon Doron* (1599).<sup>841</sup>

James’s full body of work contained significant arguments concerning religious and political beliefs. Even if William Shakespeare did not study all of James’s work, the treatises

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<sup>837</sup> By this point in the scene, Hecate and other witches have joined the sisters to make a significantly larger witch congregation. Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 53-55.

<sup>838</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 54-55.

<sup>839</sup> Shakespeare, “Act Four, Scene One,” *Macbeth*, 56.

<sup>840</sup> Shakespeare, “Act Four, Scene One,” *Macbeth*, 57.

<sup>841</sup> James VI, King of Scotland, *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (Edinburgh: Robert Walde Grave, 1598); James VI, King of Scotland, *Basilikon Doron* (Edinburgh: Robert Walde Grave, 1599).

were years old by the time he composed *Macbeth* and performed it for the king. The scope of his publications points toward James's desire to spread his ideas and instruct his people. James wanted his subjects to learn from him, and printing his work enabled him to reach and educate the inhabitants of his kingdoms. Literacy rates continued to increase during the period, and innovations in print and distribution made the printed word more accessible.<sup>842</sup> The Scottish king's available and accessible views on the monarchy, power, religion, and witchcraft illustrate the correlation between his publications and the curation of works that would appeal to him. For those reasons, not only did *Macbeth* take place in Scotland and involve conspiratorial nobles set on betrayal, but the play's plot progressed through the workings of witches who prophesized evil and worked for the Devil.

The weird sisters' unnatural behavior, language, and appearance incapsulated the characteristics emphasized in James's *Daemonologie*. The performance of these attributes on stage helped to popularize James's stereotypes further. There is no better example of this process than the final appearance of the sisters in Act Four, Scene One. On top of the continual use of prophecy and hints of its diabolical nature, the scene includes two witchcraft-specific traits that increase in commonality and popularity in seventeenth-century England. Macbeth's inventory of the witches' arsenal closely resembles Epistemon's description from *Daemonologie*, where witches "can bewitch and take the life of men or women," and "can raise storms and tempests in the air, either upon sea or land."<sup>843</sup> Moreover, Agnes Sampson, Geilis Duncan, and the other

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<sup>842</sup> By the end of the sixteenth century, a larger percentage of the population had access to education. Jonathan Barry argues that "many children learned to read by age seven or so," and that by the mid-1700, at least thirty percent of the male population had some level of literacy. Jonathan Barry, "Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture: Reading and Writing in Historical Perspective," in *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850*, Tim Harris, ed. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1995), 75-76.

<sup>843</sup> Shakespeare, "Act Four, Scene One," *Macbeth*, 54-55. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 45-46.

convicted witches from the North Berwick witch-hunt confessed to conjuring destructive storms, creating rough seas, and destroying ships in efforts to kill King James and his wife.<sup>844</sup>

Mannerisms, practices, and aesthetics connected to witchcraft act as a messaging tool in *Macbeth*. Almost every word in Act Four, Scene One reinforces witchcraft ideology touted in *Daemonologie*. For example, the weird sisters repeatedly communicate with familiar spirits.<sup>845</sup> The familiar spirit is a staple of seventeenth-century witchcraft belief in England and regularly appears in witchcraft-related publications, woodcuts, and art. Familiar spirits accompanied a witch in the form of an animal or occasionally in the shape of a man. In demonological treatises, the familiar spirit took on an increasingly demonic tone, and authors, including James, indicated that spirits were the Devil in disguise.<sup>846</sup> The use of familiar spirits and the Devil taking animal forms is a central characteristic of witchcraft in *Daemonologie*. Epistemon argues that Satan appears to his servants in many ways “either in the likeness of a dog, a cat, an ape, or suchlike other beasts.”<sup>847</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century, the witch’s familiar was a common feature of published witchcraft cases in England and Scotland. For example, in the 1640s, Matthew Hopkins’s *The Discovery of Witches* emphasized the role familiars played in malefic magic.<sup>848</sup> The frontispiece of the pamphlet is a woodcut illustration of the menagerie of familiars allegedly belonging to two witches in Norfolk, England.<sup>849</sup> Matthew Hopkins, the “Witchfinder General,” stands in the center with a witch on each side of him, and on the right side, a witch sits under a word-bubble that reads, “My Imps names are...”<sup>850</sup> The animals include a cat, rabbit, dog, and

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<sup>844</sup> *Newes from Scotland* is almost equally important in messaging as *Daemonologie* simply because both documents were inspired by the same event and curated by the same people. Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*.

<sup>845</sup> Shakespeare, “Act Four, Scene One,” *Macbeth*, 53.

<sup>846</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 19.

<sup>847</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 19.

<sup>848</sup> Matthew Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches* (London, 1647).

<sup>849</sup> Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches*, frontispiece.

<sup>850</sup> Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches*, frontispiece.



two unidentified creatures named *Newes* and *Vinegar Tom* (the latter with the head of a bull and the body of a dog).<sup>851</sup>

The evocation of familiar spirits represents one of several aspects of James's witchcraft ideology on display in *Macbeth*. The sisters danced; they communed with the Devil, cast spells, and tossed random body parts into the cauldron while singing "double double toil and trouble."<sup>852</sup> Their actions mirror descriptions found in both *Daemonologie* and *Newes from Scotland*. Agnes Sampson recounted a strikingly similar incident during her confession in 1590 when she used the entrails of a toad to curse King James.<sup>853</sup> Sampson confessed to taking a black toad, hanging it by its feet for three days, and collecting the toad's "venom."<sup>854</sup>

The similarities between *Newes*, *Daemonologie*, and *Macbeth* illustrate the influence of James's experiences and beliefs on later printed works depicting witches. Shakespeare's attempt to entertain the king expanded the reach of James's concept of witchcraft. *Daemonologie*'s reach was considerable, especially as literacy and the popularity of print increased. However, Shakespeare's plays were popular in print, performed often, and provided a visual example of representation that required no literacy at all.<sup>855</sup> Thus, as *Macbeth* reflected the views of witchcraft laid out in *Daemonologie*, Shakespeare's tragedy extended James's zone of influence

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<sup>851</sup> Emma Wilby's examination of the evolution of the familiar spirit in early modern England and Scotland emphasizes the way spirits were described before and after 1600. She defines the "familiar" or "devil" as the witch's demonic spirit. These spirits appeared in human and animal form in early modern witchcraft documents and publications. However, her analysis also demonstrates a shift from the "fairy," a helpful spirit to the familiar spirits that were common after 1600. Most of the evidence she uses that feature a demonic familiar spirit are after 1600. Emma Wilby, "The Witch's Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland," in *Folklore* 111, no. 2 (October 2000), 283-284. James VI, *Daemonologie*, 19. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches*.

<sup>852</sup> Shakespeare, "Act Four, Scene One," *Macbeth*, 54-55.

<sup>853</sup> Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*, BIVr-BIVv.

<sup>854</sup> Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*, BIVr-BIVv.

<sup>855</sup> Chris Laoutaris from The Shakespeare Institute cites at least forty-five editions of Shakespeare's theatrical works in print by 1616. Furthermore, with royal patronage came higher status and increased opportunities to perform at court, in London, and throughout the countryside. Chris Laoutaris, "What's in a name?: Was William Shakespeare popular during his lifetime?," *OUPblog: Oxford University Press's Academic Insights for the Thinking World*, accessed on March 3, 2020, <https://blog.oup.com/2016/04/william-shakespeare-popular-early-modern-theatre/>.

further and provided an audio and visual manifestation of the king's structured understanding of how witches operated in the physical world.

## **II. The Tale of Elizabeth Sawyer: A Comedic Portrayal of a True Prosecution**

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* illustrates how art imitated life as his play conjured up James's personal experiences in the abstract, but his was not the only depiction of an early modern witch. Other dramatists and playwrights also borrowed from real stories circulating in cheap print to inspire their own manifestations of the witch. In 1621, minister Henry Goodcole published a tract on witchcraft titled *The Wonderful Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, A Witch*.<sup>856</sup> *Wonderful Discoverie* describes the trial and execution of Elizabeth Sawyer, a woman accused of witchcraft. Shortly after, authors William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford began performing a play *The Witch of Edmonton*, also based on Sawyer's trial.<sup>857</sup> Both works provide an account of Sawyer's alleged crimes and trial, but like several other similar cases, they also provide the only surviving accounts of the proceedings. Surviving judicial records do confirm that a session took place on the date mentioned in Goodcole's pamphlet. However, although official records note the execution of four unnamed women, we can only speculate that Sawyer was among them.<sup>858</sup>

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<sup>856</sup> Several of Goodcole's publications are reports on criminal trials. Henry Goodcole, *Heavens Speedie hue and cry sent after lust and murder* (London, 1635). Henry Goodcole, *Natures cruel step-dames: or, Machless Monsters of the Female Sex* (London: 1637). Henry Goodcole, *London's cry ascended to God, and entered into the hearts, and eares of men for revenge of bloodshedders, burglaries, and vagabonds* (London: 1630). Henry Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer* (London, 1621).

<sup>857</sup> William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton* (London, 1658).

<sup>858</sup> John Cordy, ed., "Items of the Goal Delivery Register: Temp. James I," in *Middlesex County Records: Volume 2, 1603-1625* (London: Middlesex County Records Society, 1887), 210-229, British History Online, accessed September 14, 2019, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/middx-county-records/vol2/pp210-229>.

**Goodcole's *The Wonderful Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer***

Elizabeth Sawyer's criminal trial may be lost to history, but examining the language in Goodcole's pamphlet, *The Witch of Edmonton* indicates an increase in similarities between the state of the witchcraft narrative by the 1620s and the influence of James's *Daemonologie*. By 1621, *Daemonologie* was two decades old, and James was in the final years of his reign, but the continued development of witchcraft belief during an increase in witchcraft prosecutions still reflected the king's work. According to *The Wonderful Discoverie*, on Saturday, 14 April 1621, a woman named Elizabeth Sawyer faced charges of witchcraft at the Old Bailey in London.<sup>859</sup> Sawyer was a "spinster" and was disliked by members of her community, who held a "long suspicion" that she practiced witchcraft.<sup>860</sup> In his introduction, Goodcole assures his readers that his account of Sawyer's confession and trial was without exaggeration, dismissing more fantastical rumors about the proceedings and confession that were "fitter for an ale-bench then for relation of the proceedings in a court of Justice."<sup>861</sup> Goodcole adamantly dismissed gossip he described as "ridiculous fictions," including Sawyer's alleged "bewitching corn on the ground, of a ferret and owl daily sporting before her, of the bewitched woman branding herself, of the spirits she attending in the prison [familiar spirits]."<sup>862</sup> However, even as fiction, the rumors Goodcole denounced are examples of popular belief and illustrate how continental ideas shared by James had seeped into the public discourse by the 1620s, making them difficult to dismiss.

Elizabeth Sawyer had a bad reputation among her neighbors, and the community suspected her in some recent infant deaths and the killing of local cattle.<sup>863</sup> During questioning,

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<sup>859</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, Bv.

<sup>860</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, A4r.

<sup>861</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, A3v.

<sup>862</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, A3v.

<sup>863</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, A4r.

Sawyer repeatedly referred to Satan as her master and confessed that the Devil helped her vex “Christians and beasts” to death “as oftentimes I did so bid him.”<sup>864</sup> On the stage, the actor portraying Sawyer shouts out curses upon her neighbors while communicating with invisible spirits and calling for revenge against those who tormented her.<sup>865</sup> Both play and pamphlet emphasize Sawyer’s hateful enmity towards neighbors and her use of familiar spirits to cause them harm, reflecting arguments made in *Daemonologie*, which classified revenge as a central motivation in a witch’s indoctrination.

The event that caused suspicious neighbors to take action involved an incident of domestic animosity between Sawyer and a woman named Agnes Ratcliffe.<sup>866</sup> The women (who were also neighbors) squabbled after Ratcliffe struck Sawyer’s sow when it ate Ratcliffe’s soap.<sup>867</sup> Enraged, Sawyer promised to “be revenged” for the slight. Later the same evening, Ms. Ratcliffe fell ill, was “extraordinarily vexed,” and began writhing and foaming at the mouth.<sup>868</sup> In the throes of torment and suffering, Ratcliffe “confidently spake: namely, that if she die at the time she would verily take it on her death, that Elizabeth Sawyer, her neighbor, whose sow with a washing-beetle she had stricken, and so for that cause her malice being great, was the occasion of her death.”<sup>869</sup>

Goodcole’s account once again echoes *Daemonologie* when describing official efforts to obtain a confession from Sawyer following her arrest. Sawyer’s neighbors claimed that the woman had “a private and strange mark on her body,” which led to a physical search.<sup>870</sup> In court, examiners testified to discovering “a thing like a teat the bigness of a little finger, and the length

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<sup>864</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, Cv.

<sup>865</sup> Rowley, Dekker, and Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton*, 14-15.

<sup>866</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, Bv.

<sup>867</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, B2r.

<sup>868</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, B2r.

<sup>869</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, B2r.

<sup>870</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, B3r.

of half a finger, which was branched at the top like a teat, and seemed as though one had suck it, and that the bottom thereof was blue, and the top of it was red.”<sup>871</sup> The deathbed accusation made by Ratcliffe, combined with the discovery of a Devil’s mark, proved Sawyer’s guilt and ensured her execution.

### ***The Witch of Edmonton: Real Life on the Stage***

The Dekker, Ford, and Rowley play was a popular combination of typical early modern theatrical tropes and a dramatic retelling of Elizabeth Sawyer’s fall from God.<sup>872</sup> While Sawyer begs the Devil for magical powers, her neighbors have forbidden love affairs, and several members of the community get entangled with Satan, resulting in betrayal, murder, and suicide.<sup>873</sup> Throughout the play, Satan (disguised as Sawyer’s dog-shaped familiar spirit) independently torments several characters but also acts as a trustworthy and even ‘affectionate’ companion to Sawyer, who endures ridicule and abuse from the neighbors she wants to bewitch.<sup>874</sup> After a neighbor physically and verbally abuses Sawyer for collecting sticks on his land, a gang of four or five men led by “Young Banks,” continues the abuse by accusing her of curses and calling her a witch.<sup>875</sup>

At first, *The Witch of Edmonton*’s interpretation of Elizabeth Sawyer is as a pitied and abused old woman who describes herself as “poor, deformed, and ignorant,” a harassed woman who wallows in her suffering and asks, “why should the envious world throw all their scandalous

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<sup>871</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, B3v.

<sup>872</sup> The play was performed at Court on 29 December 1621 by Prince Charles’s Company, but was not published until 1658 as a quarto that did not come from the original production “but from a revival of the play in the mid 1630s.” Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge, eds., *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays: Sophonsiba, The Witch, The Witch of Edmonton* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 20-21.

<sup>873</sup> Dekker, Ford, and Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*.

<sup>874</sup> Corbin and Douglas, eds., 24-25.

<sup>875</sup> Dekker, Ford, and Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1, 14-15.

malice upon me?”<sup>876</sup> Only after physical attacks and verbal abuse does Sawyer cry out for revenge and ask for Satan’s aid.<sup>877</sup> In response, the Dog (Satan) approaches, declares to Sawyer that “I love thee much too well,” and offers her the power to destroy her enemies in exchange for her soul and blood.<sup>878</sup> Satan (as the dog) wreaks havoc on the inhabitants of Edmonton in Sawyer’s name, which includes the bewitching of Anne Ratcliff.<sup>879</sup> By Act Four, Scene One, Anne Ratcliff enters the stage in a fit of madness. Talking nonsense, she proclaims, “Oh my ribs are made of a pained hose, and they break. There’s a Lancashire horn-pipe in my throat: hark how it tickles it, with doodle, doodle, doodle doodle. Welcome Serjeants, welcome Devil. Hands, hands; hold hands, and dance a-round, a-round, a-round.”<sup>880</sup> The scene climaxes with the Devil orchestrating Sawyer’s ultimate revenge, Ratcliff’s death by suicide as she “beat out her own brains, and so died.”<sup>881</sup>

Similar to the weird sisters in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* that mirrored James’s understandings of witchcraft, the witch in *The Witch of Edmonton* serves as a visual manifestation of early modern witchcraft belief. Elizabeth Sawyer exhibits several of the core characteristics attributed to English and Scottish witches. Mother Sawyer is a bitter and wrathful woman who gives the Devil her eternal soul in exchange for revenge against her enemies. Similarly, there are several parts in the play where other characters also perpetuate staples in witchcraft belief. These scenes mainly consist of interactions between Satan (the dog) and Sawyer’s misguided neighbors. For example, the Devil takes advantage of the amorous lusts of men. In Act Three, Scene One, the dog takes the form of a woman known as Kate to manipulate

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<sup>876</sup> Dekker, Ford, and Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1, 13.

<sup>877</sup> Dekker, Ford, and Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1, 16.

<sup>878</sup> Dekker, Ford, and Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, 2.1, 16.

<sup>879</sup> Dekker, Ford, and Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, 4.1, 44.

<sup>880</sup> Dekker, Ford, and Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, 4.1, 43.

<sup>881</sup> Dekker, Ford, and Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, 4.1, 44.

an admirer and trick him into making a demonic pact. “Thus I throw off my own essential horror, and take the shape of a sweet lovely Maid whom this fool doats on. We can meet his folly, but from his ventures must be run-aways. We’ll sport with him: but when we reckoning call, we know where to receive: th’ Witch pays for all.”<sup>882</sup> The Devil’s malicious games and Sawyer’s actions both mimic the behaviors of witches described in European demonological literature and laid out for an English and Scottish audience by James in 1597.

### Entertainment, Literacy, and the Spread of Information

England’s pamphlet culture thrived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and literacy rates increased at levels not duplicated until after 1700.<sup>883</sup> People were consuming more printed material, and although print was not in every home, Francis Dolan points out that “even wage laborers might have thought of them (cheap print) as an occasionally affordable luxury.”<sup>884</sup> Publishers “Quickly and cheaply published” some pamphlets for entertainment purposes and to “capitalize on the interest in sensational crimes.”<sup>885</sup> More importantly, the cheaply printed tracts moved around. People passed them on to neighbors or discussed the topics in public, giving a story to new audiences along the way.<sup>886</sup> In a graph of the literacy rates by social status in the cities of London and Middlesex, David Cressy illustrates that the reach of the written word had increased drastically by James’s reign.<sup>887</sup> Furthermore, Alexandra Halasz argues that out of a

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<sup>882</sup> Dekker, Ford, and Rowley, “Act Three, Scene One,” *The Witch of Edmonton*, 27.

<sup>883</sup> Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4.

<sup>884</sup> Dolan also notes that the number of surviving pamphlets from the period illustrates how widely distributed cheap print was. Francis Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), kindle e-book, loc. 200 of 5707.

<sup>885</sup> Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, loc. 200 of 5707.

<sup>886</sup> Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, loc. 200 of 5707.

<sup>887</sup> Cressy examined people who signed their names in oaths, vows, and covenants. The social groups examined include clergy, professions, gentry, apprentices, trade and craftsmen, yeomen, servants, laborers, husbandmen, and women. The smallest group sampled, women, had a twenty-four percent literacy rate out of 1794 women. Six out of

sample of over four-thousand people from varied social groups, fifty-one percent or 2074 people had some level of literacy.<sup>888</sup> Cheap print was entertaining, gossipy, and still co-existed in an environment with a vibrant and thriving oral culture, which lent to the popularity of titillating stories about murderous witches. Plays and pamphlets provide a way to understand the state of witchcraft belief during and after James's reign. As troupes of actors performed *The Witch of Edmonton* on stages across the country, Goodcole's pamphlet detailed the extent of Sawyer's crimes, both spreading a cultivated idea of demonic witchcraft.

Near the end of his tract, Goodcole includes a pre-execution confession made by Elizabeth Sawyer that influenced the production of *The Witch of Edmonton* and cleanly summed up central features of early modern witchcraft belief. From trial to pamphlet to performance, a pattern emerges that shows how ideas transformed into understanding. Sawyer confessed that Satan appeared to her in the form of a dog whom she often called Tom.<sup>889</sup> In the play, the dog/devil acts as a tempter, a conduit of revenge, and an antagonist who deals out the promised attacks in Sawyer's name in exchange for her soul.<sup>890</sup> Ultimately, the primary transgression committed by Sawyer (according to Goodcole) was her pact with Satan, who tricked her, enslaved her, and abandoned her to die at the gallows alone. Both play and pamphlet emphasize those facts (although the play offers a more performative version of events) and reflect the state of witchcraft belief by the 1620s. Witches conspired with the Devil. Common perceptions linked witchcraft with Satan, and cheap print, demonological tracts, and popular forms of entertainment mirrored popular belief. The flow of information was two ways, and as the elite influenced the

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eight groups had a sixty percent literacy rate or above. Davidy Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 121.

<sup>888</sup> Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*, 3-5.

<sup>889</sup> Goodcole, *The Wonderful Discoverie*, Cv-Dr.

<sup>890</sup> Rowley, Dekker, and Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton*.



wider populace, the uneducated influenced the learned. Carlo Ginzburg illustrates the nature of how reciprocal cultural influences were during the early modern period when he examined the way a well-read, miller interpreted and shared the written word.<sup>891</sup> On the other hand, some opinions had more reach and sway than others. King James distributed his urgent and sincere warnings about witchcraft in both England and Scotland. The words of a king published widely and interpreted in print and performance influenced the public perception of witchcraft, and *Daemonologie* changed the way people thought about witches.

### **III. “True” Depictions of Witchcraft**

Following the development of witchcraft beliefs and changes to prosecutorial methods in England and Scotland is challenging. Evidence is scant or dubious since court records provide little in the form of detailed case notes, and pamphlets contain dramatized and partially biased accounts of proceedings. To further complicate the issue, Scotland’s first printed account of witchcraft was not published until 1592, making it difficult to ascertain the state of belief before the influence of North Berwick and *Daemonologie*. Even before the North Berwick witch-hunt, Scotland’s rate of witchcraft prosecution dwarfed that of England. Between 1560 and 1700, Scotland tried at least 1887 witches in the High Court, Circuit Court, and Privy Council alone, whereas in England, courts tried an estimated 513 witches in the same period.<sup>892</sup> All the same, examining pamphlets in concert with surviving court records does provide some insight into the

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<sup>891</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), xx.

<sup>892</sup> Christina Lerner, Christopher Hyde Lee, and Hugh V. McLachlan, *A Sourcebook of Scottish Witchcraft* (Glasgow: The Grimsay Press, 2005), 238; Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1970), 61.

structural nature of witchcraft belief before and after James's encounter with Agnes Sampson and her diabolical cabal of witches.

Scotland passed its first comprehensive law concerning witchcraft in 1563 (the same year as England). Mary, Queen of Scots' parliament approved a statute that described witchcraft as "abominable" and "against the law of God."<sup>893</sup> The statutes outlawed the practice, learning, and consultation of witchcraft in any form, and recommended execution for those convicted of the crime.<sup>894</sup> Similarly, the parliament of England passed "An Act against Conjurations Inchantments and Witchcrafts" in the same year that required prison-time for the first minor offense and execution for murder and repeat offenders.<sup>895</sup> Under James, the law changed slightly, with more restrictive language and an increase in the severity of punishments. By the seventeenth century, English witchcraft law had a closer resemblance to the Scottish statute, while remaining not as severe.

### **Witchcraft in the Jacobean Courts**

The Chelmsford branch of the Assize Court began a regular session on 2 March 1612, with the honorable J. Humphrey Winch on the judges' bench overseeing a jury of local men.<sup>896</sup> During the session, the jury heard evidence in cases of theft, fraud, murder, and two cases of witchcraft.<sup>897</sup> One case heard in July involved charges against Alice Batty, a married woman from Toppesfield who allegedly bewitched John Read to death in 1608, used witchcraft to harm

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<sup>893</sup> K. M. Brown, et al eds., *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707* (St. Andrews, 2007=2019), accessed 12 September 2019, <https://rps.ac.uk>.

<sup>894</sup> K.M Brown, et al eds.

<sup>895</sup> "A.D. 1563. 5 Eliz., c. 16," Rosen, ed., 54.

<sup>896</sup> Cockburn, J.S., ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Essex Indictments, James I, Volume V* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1982), 114-120.

<sup>897</sup> Cockburn, J.S., ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Essex Indictments*, 114-120.

and mutilate the body of Christopher Reade, and murdered Martha Lover in 1610.<sup>898</sup> The records indicate no evidence of motive, method, or witnesses because surviving records are scant, but we do know that the jury found Batty not guilty.<sup>899</sup> It is hard to say why the jury did not believe the witchcraft accusations against Batty, but a verdict of not guilty was commonplace for witchcraft cases tried in England. Between 1603 and 1621, fifty-two men and women faced indictments of witchcraft across Kent, Sussex, Essex, and Hertfordshire.<sup>900</sup> The number of cases by area varied, and although the county of Kent only tried six cases involving witchcraft over eighteen years, Essex had twenty-eight.<sup>901</sup> In those same years, juries at the Assize court found only eighteen of the alleged witches guilty, including the 2 March 1612 conviction of Richard Jonn.<sup>902</sup>

Richard, a laborer, and his wife Anne allegedly “bewitched to death a horse” belonging to a neighbor named Prentisse.<sup>903</sup> The court also charged the couple with a second witchcraft-related crime, the employing, feeding, and rewarding of “several evil spirits called ‘Jockey,’ ‘Jacke,’ and ‘Will,’ to destroy the property and livestock of their neighbors.<sup>904</sup> Court records contain no further information about the charges, but the jury found Richard Jonn guilty and sentenced him to hang (Anne Jonn died before sentencing).<sup>905</sup> There are two essential details in the Jonn case that reflect popular attitudes towards witchcraft after 1600, the Jonns’s consultation with “evil spirits,” and the insinuation of a demonic pact. Familiar spirits and the demonic pact were both central characteristics of continental witchcraft in the sixteenth century, and both

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<sup>898</sup> Cockburn, J.S., ed., *CAR: Essex*, 125.

<sup>899</sup> Cockburn, J.S., ed., *CAR: Essex*, 125.

<sup>900</sup> Cockburn, J.S., ed., *Calendar of Assize Records Kent Indictments, Volume III* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1980); Cockburn, J.S., ed., *Calendar of Assize Records Sussex Indictments, James I, Volume II* (London: her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1975); Cockburn, J.S., ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Hertfordshire Indictments, James I, Volume I* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1975); Cockburn, J.S., ed., *CAR: Essex*.

<sup>901</sup> Cockburn, J.S., ed., *CAR: Kent*. Cockburn, J.S., *CAR: Essex*.

<sup>902</sup> Cockburn, J. S., ed., *CAR: Essex*, 114.

<sup>903</sup> Cockburn, J.S., ed., *CAR: Essex*, 114.

<sup>904</sup> Cockburn, J.S., ed., *CAR: Essex*, 114.

<sup>905</sup> Cockburn, J.S., ed., *CAR: Essex*, 114.

received relatively little attention in English cases before 1600. The publication of *Daemonologie*, on the other hand, contained direct references to continental belief and emphasized the criminality and decisive nature of the demonic pact in the practice of witchcraft. The three most-common crimes associated with sorcery were murder, the destruction of property, and causing sickness, but several cases prosecuted alleged witches for “entertaining” and feeding evil spirits.<sup>906</sup> Richard and Anne Johnn’s association with demonic spirits and their method of feeding the spirits with their blood reflects the process of demonic indoctrination and the creation of a Devil’s mark found in *Daemonologie* and *Newes from Scotland*.<sup>907</sup>

Apart from similarities in behavior and belief between the Jonns and witches in *Daemonologie*, the case highlights language differences in witchcraft law before and after the start of James’s reign as king. The Chelmsford Assize charged Richard and Anne John with two crimes in March of 1612. The first crime was the bewitchment and killing of a neighbor’s horse. According to witchcraft law under Elizabeth I passed in 1563, anyone who used witchcraft to destroy “any good or chattels of any person” faced a year in prison with four six-hour stints in a market town pillory during imprisonment on a first offense.<sup>908</sup> The altered 1604 statute under James I did not differ significantly from the Elizabethan law in punishment, also prescribing a year prison-term and the pillory (with death for a second offense).<sup>909</sup> That said, the language in each statute differs, and slight additions to the 1604 law increased both the punishment and the overall severity of the couples’ crimes.

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<sup>906</sup> Cockburn, J.S., ed., *CAR: Essex*.

<sup>907</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*. Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*.

<sup>908</sup> “A.D. 1563. 5 Eliz., c. 16,” in *Witchcraft in England, 1558-1618*, Barbara Rosen, ed. (Amhurst: The University of Amhurst Press, 1991), 54.

<sup>909</sup> “A.D. 1604. 1 Jac. I, c. 12,” in Rosen, ed., 58.

The Jonns's second offense involved the use of evil spirits "with the intention of destroying" the livestock and property of several neighbors.<sup>910</sup> Again, in both the 1563 and 1604 statutes, the invocation of evil spirits met with severe penalties, including execution. Still, the 1604 law contained expanded language and description that changed the nature of the statute and the crime. In 1563, the Elizabethan statute forbade "any invocations or conjurations of evil and wicked spirits," and doing so was considered a felony with the first offense carrying a death sentence.<sup>911</sup> The 1604 statute prescribed the same punishment, but considerably broadened the scope of the felonious first offense. Not only would invocation and conjuration result in a death sentence, but more specifically, the accused witch's consultation, covenant, and any attempt to "entertain, employ, feed, or reward any evil and wicked spirit to and for any intent or purpose" warranted execution. The emphasis of the law shifted. Witches were just as guilty for making a pact with the Devil as they were for the destruction of property.

The worst crime committed by Richard and Anne Jonn was not the destruction of their neighbor's horse, but instead, their employment, feeding and rewarding of three demonic spirits.<sup>912</sup> Changes to and expansions of the witchcraft statute outlawed any contact with demonic spirits, which made the Jonn's crimes immediately more severe. Nothing in the court record indicates that Richard or Anne conjured the spirits, which, before 1604, was necessary if the court included a first offense felony in the charge. However, under James, the Jonns, like Agnes Sampson less than a decade before, made a pact with Satan when they worked alongside demonic familiars and fed them blood in exchange for power. There is no solid consensus amongst historians on whether James had any influence on the changes to the witchcraft statute.

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<sup>910</sup> J.S. Cockburn, ed., *CAR: Essex*, 114.

<sup>911</sup> "A.D. 1563. 5 Eliz., c. 16," in Rosen, ed., 54.

<sup>912</sup> J.S. Cockburn, ed., *CAR: Essex*, 114.

Older sources say he did, while leaders in the field like Stuart Clark argue that James quickly lost interest in the subject after North Berwick. This is where we have to examine circumstantial evidence and make a negotiated and educated guess. First, Christina Lerner makes a solid point when she argues that a king who was losing interest in witchcraft worked pretty diligently to publish his treatise six years after the North Berwick trials. I do not see evidence of any embarrassment from James when examining his comments on the subject, and he did not stay away from witchcraft cases later in life (see the Anne Gunter case). On a circumstantial level, the witchcraft act passed within a year of James coming to the English throne, and it featured language that echoed James's arguments in *Daemonologie*. Furthermore, cases of witchcraft prosecution increased, and popular publications about witchcraft increased. James was a vocal monarch who published his opinions about the behaviors of his subjects without hesitation, and there is no evidence of a shift in view about witchcraft.<sup>913</sup>

### **Witchcraft Before North Berwick**

Combined with popular forms of written and performative entertainment, surviving court records of witchcraft cases highlight foundational components of seventeenth-century English and Scottish witchcraft belief. Still, to develop an idea of *Daemonologie*'s influence on belief, it is necessary to also examine examples of witchcraft before 1592. Comprehensive analysis of a cross-section of Scottish cases, English cases, and printed accounts of Witchcraft in England will provide an outline of the state of belief in England and Scotland before the North Berwick outbreak and James's interest in witchcraft. Although the detail and characterization present in

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<sup>913</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 19; Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*, Br, BIIv-BIVr; Normand and Roberts, eds., 106-107.

witchcraft pamphlets are painstakingly absent from English and Scottish court records, cross-referencing the sources provides a better understanding.

Scottish law strictly forbade any magical practice by the passage of the 1563 witchcraft act, but several cases involving witchcraft and other supernatural misdeeds never left the Scottish church to generate criminal charges. For example, Scottish church officials forced Isobel Annel to make “public humiliation” for consulting with witch Agnes Melvill about a cure for her sick husband Patrick Wyle at St. Andrews in 1595.<sup>914</sup> According to the 1563 statute, Annel’s life was forfeit for even speaking to Melvill, but her name does not appear in any accessible records of Scottish witchcraft prosecutions.<sup>915</sup> Moreover, even alleged practitioners of magic often escaped severe punishment and execution. In September of 1562, the courts accused mother and daughter Jonet Lindsay and Isabell Keir of witchcraft at the burgh of Stirling.<sup>916</sup> Although both women confessed to practicing witchcraft, both escaped the pyre and noose.<sup>917</sup>

Scottish witchcraft cases resulting in a guilty verdict often provided more insight into the prosecution process, allowing comparison with *Daemonologie* and broader witchcraft belief. On 29 December 1572, the High Court Justiciary in Edinburgh charged Janet Boyman with witchcraft, and according to court records, the married Boyman was tried, convicted, and executed.<sup>918</sup> *The Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft in Scotland* provides slightly more information on Boyman, who was married to William Steill.<sup>919</sup> The court charged Boyman with “diverse

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<sup>914</sup> Paul Hair, ed., *Before the Bawdy Court: Selections from Church Court Records* (London: Elek Books, 1972), 200.

<sup>915</sup> Melvill’s name does not produce any hits in the searchable database of Scottish Witchcraft or the printed *A Sourcebook of Scottish Witchcraft*. Larner, Hyde Lee, and McLachlan, eds., *A Sourcebook of Scottish Witchcraft*; Goodare, Martin, Miller, and Yeoman, eds., *A Survey of Scottish Witchcraft*, <http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/Research/witches/>.

<sup>916</sup> George F. Black, ed., *A Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft in Scotland, 1510-1727, reprint of 1938 edition* (New York: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 21.

<sup>917</sup> Black, ed., *A Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft*, 21.

<sup>918</sup> Larner, Hyde Lee, and McLachlan, eds., *Sourcebook of Scottish Witchcraft*, 3.

<sup>919</sup> Black, ed., *Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft*, 22.

crimes of witchcraft” and burnt her at the stake.<sup>920</sup> Boyman’s community charged her with witchcraft, and for predicting the death of John Erskine, the Earl of Mar and regent of Scotland.<sup>921</sup> According to records, Boyman’s witchcraft primarily consisted of healing and helping the sick with magic. She used a spiritual whirlwind, elvish wells, and a convergence of Christian, mythic, and magical language to treat her customers.<sup>922</sup> James addresses fairies, spirits, and healing in *Daemonologie*, but the king attributes all magical phenomenon to the Devil, and Boyman’s case mentions nothing about demons, Satan, or the demonic.<sup>923</sup> In Book One, *Daemonologie* argues that witches have no individual power, and they only accomplish witchcraft through Satan.<sup>924</sup> However, Boyman’s healing in the 1572 case comes from several sources, and only one method used a spirit who “came to her like a great blast of whirlwind.”<sup>925</sup> When Boyman practiced magic, she prayed, healed the sick, and learned her craft from another woman in Patterrow who once healed Boyman.<sup>926</sup> Records of Boyman’s case never mention animals, the Devil, or any type of pact in exchange for power.<sup>927</sup> In other words, the foundational characteristics of malefic, demonic, and vengeful witchcraft described in *Daemonologie* are significantly absent in Boyman’s 1572 trial.

Void of the Devil, fairies appear more prominently in Scottish witchcraft cases before 1572.<sup>928</sup> Animals and humans suffering from unexplainable illnesses often attributed them to “elf

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<sup>920</sup> Black, ed., *Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft*, 22.

<sup>921</sup> The Earl of Mar died in October of 1572, foretelling his death led to the Scottish court also charging Boyman with treason. The Boyman case resembles the North Berwick trials for that reason. “Janet Boyman 29/12/1572,” Goodare et al, eds.

<sup>922</sup> Boyman mentioned King Arthur, Queen Elspeth, spoke to spirits, and worked with fairies. “Janet Boyman 29/12/1572,” in Goodare, et al.

<sup>923</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 6-7.

<sup>924</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 12-13.

<sup>925</sup> Boyman also used prayer, holy water, and elfish wells to heal patrons. “Janet Boyman 29/12/1572,” in Goodare et al.

<sup>926</sup> “Janet Boyman 29/12/1572,” in Goodare et al.

<sup>927</sup> “Janet Boyman 29/12/1572,” in Goodare et al.

<sup>928</sup> Studies on English and Scottish belief illustrate that the belief in fairies differed in Scotland and England. Darren Oldridge argues that people maintained a “lively interest” in fairies during Tudor and Stuart England and



shot” or “elves using projectiles” to afflict targets.<sup>929</sup> Scottish court records contain evidence of accused witches using elf-shots against enemies and consulting them for help.<sup>930</sup> In the case of Bessie Dunlop, tried and executed for witchcraft in 1576, trial records contain no mention of the Devil, a pact, or diabolical magic.<sup>931</sup> Bessie claimed that a ghost named Thom Reid, who carried a white wand, taught her how to heal and use magic.<sup>932</sup> Between 1572 and 1600, at least twenty witchcraft cases in Scotland involved fairies, with six of these taking place before the North Berwick witch-hunt.<sup>933</sup> Thirty-eight witchcraft cases before 1600 had diabolical characteristics, but if we restrict the date to before the North Berwick trials, the number of relevant cases falls to four.<sup>934</sup>

Accounts of English witchcraft cases occurring before James’s encounter with the North Berwick witches illustrate a much lower prosecution rate than Scotland, but they sometimes contain more detailed accounts of witchcraft. Although dramatized for entertainment purposes, witchcraft pamphlets provide an abundant sample of witch cases from the sixteenth century with

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Ronald Hutton says that anti-Catholic literature often included the mischief of fairies. However, records illustrate a strong association between fairies and the Devil in England as early as the 1560s. For the most part though, recorded cases of witchcraft in England did not contain fairies and it was not a topic James focused on. In Scotland, the belief in fairies, elves, and other types of magical creatures maintained popularity well into the seventeenth century when ministers like Robert Kirt penned treatises about them. Darren Oldridge, “Fairies and the Devil in Early Modern England,” *The Seventeenth Century* 31, no. 1 (March 2016), 2-4. Robert Kirt, *The Secret Commonwealth: An Essay on the Nature and Actions of the Supterranean (and for the most part) Invisible People, Heretofore Going Under the Names of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2007).

<sup>929</sup> Alaric Hall, “Getting Shot of Elves: Healing, Witchcraft, and Fairies in the Scottish Witchcraft Trials,” *Folklore* 116, no. 1 (April, 2016), 19.

<sup>930</sup> Hall, “Getting Shot of Elves,” 28-31.

<sup>931</sup> “Bessie Dunlop 8/11/1576,” in Goodare, et al.

<sup>932</sup> “Bessie Dunlop 8/11/1576,” in Goodare, et al.

<sup>933</sup> *The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft* is a searchable database, this was the result of a search for fairies under characterization and the dates between 1500 and 1600.

<sup>934</sup> Some cases have little to no concrete information to work with besides names and locations. For example, the 18 August 1579 trial of Christine Douglas, authorities executed the defendant for speaking with the Devil. In the case of Marioun McLingaruch, she mentions her master as the Devil, but her fate was not recorded. Bessy Roy seems to have used the Devil as an instigator who caused her to steal from her boss, the Laird of Balquhene, and only Isobel Watson appears to have conspired with Satan, but she has connections to a North Berwick defendant, Richie Graham. “Christine Douglas 18/7/1579,” “Marion McIngaruch, 22/7/1590,” “Bessie Roy 18/8/1590,” “Isobel Watsonne 10/6/1590,” in Goodare, et al.

insight into accusations, methodology, and the outcome of trials. Official court records emphasize how the law treated men and women accused of witchcraft and illustrate how trial proceedings compared to pamphlet depictions. By examining the state of English witchcraft belief before *Daemonologie*, shifts in the structural underpinnings of early modern witchcraft belief and the English legal system become more evident.

Shifts in thinking led to changes in the legal recourse and official responses to witchcraft. Witchcraft prosecution was sporadic and often legally undefined before the reign of Elizabeth I. Until James inherited the throne after the queen's death, her 1563 witchcraft statute remained in place. The statute outlawed all types of witchcraft and classified murder via sorcery as a felony.<sup>935</sup> Though harsh, the statute (unlike its Scottish counterpart) did distinguish between murder and minor offenses. If convicted, the accused witch convicted of less-harmful acts like fortune-telling, causing illness, destroying property, or killing livestock received a sentence of a year in prison and time in the pillory on the first offense (the second resulted in execution).<sup>936</sup> Still, as evident in Scotland, the law did not always lead to enforcement.<sup>937</sup>

The number of indictments and witchcraft cases appearing in secular courts increased during the second half of the sixteenth century, most appearing in the rolls of the Assize Courts. Essex, a county northeast of London, was a hotbed of witchcraft accusations and consistently tried witches, and between 1560 and 1573, twenty-two cases of alleged witchcraft took place.<sup>938</sup> Similar to court records in Scotland, English records often provide less than satisfying details about witchcraft cases, and yet strands of information about the state of belief mingle with the

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<sup>935</sup> "5. Eliz. c. 15," in *The Statutes of the Realm IV*, 446.

<sup>936</sup> A man named Cowdale healed the sick with enchantments and after an examination he was warned and admonished, but not charged with a crime. Hair, *Before the Bawdy Court*, 176.

<sup>937</sup> Cockburn, J., ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Essex Indictments, Elizabeth I, Volume III (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1978)*.

<sup>938</sup> Peter Brown notes the county's size and location as reasons for the heightened activity. Cockburn, J., ed., *CAR: Elizabeth I*. Peter C. Brown, *Essex Witches* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2014), 60-61.

basic facts of the case. From 1560 to 1573, Essex courts tried four men and nineteen women for witchcraft.<sup>939</sup> Out of twenty-two cases, the court found ten defendants guilty with two outcomes unknown.<sup>940</sup> In nine of the cases where victims died, six of the accused charged with witchcraft were found guilty and executed (barring two women who pled pregnancy).<sup>941</sup> There is little evidence to connect the 1560-1573 cases to diabolical magic. Not a single case from Essex during the thirteen years mentions demons or Satan. Most of the witchcraft accusations contain little more than names, dates, and the specifics of the crime. However, accusations of witchcraft typically involved highly personal conflicts, highlighting longstanding conflicts between neighbors. Alan Macfarlane argues that out of 460 indictments in Essex, only fifty cases involved plaintiffs and defendants from separate villages.<sup>942</sup> In April 1564, the infant son of Robert Wadley died, and within a month, Robert followed.<sup>943</sup> Two months later, in July, Essex authorities indicted the Wodley's neighbor Elizabeth Lowys for witchcraft in connection to their Wodley's deaths and the death of three-year-old John Canell.<sup>944</sup> The details of the case contain no mention of motive, method, means, and, more importantly, no hint of diabolical magic. Two of the three deaths were young children during a period where any stage of life involved some level of undetermined fragility. How hard is it to imagine a grief-stricken parent blaming the local healer or midwife when medical treatment failed?

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<sup>939</sup> Cockburn, J., ed., *CAR: Elizabeth I*.

<sup>940</sup> Cockburn, J., ed., *CAR: Elizabeth I*.

<sup>941</sup> Cockburn, J., ed., *CAR: Elizabeth I*.

<sup>942</sup> Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (Project Heights: Waveland Press, 1970), 168.

<sup>943</sup> Cockburn, J., ed., *CAR: Elizabeth I*, 31.

<sup>944</sup> Cockburn, J., ed., *CAR: Elizabeth I*, 31.

### Filling in the Blanks

Whether examining witchcraft prosecutions before or after 1600, relying on court records alone often obscures the motive of defendants in witchcraft cases and makes it difficult to ascertain the nature of popular belief. Although most court records rarely contain more than the names, crimes, and sentences of accused witches, some cases did include descriptive language that categorized witchcraft as “devilish” or diabolical.<sup>945</sup> However, those cases were rare and reflected the characteristics of local court environments rather than the wider state of belief. Witchcraft prosecutions in Essex between 1560 and 1573 included the common crimes of murder, sickness, and the destruction of livestock, and none mentioned the Devil.<sup>946</sup> On the other hand, records of the Sessions Rolls in Middlesex from the last twenty-five years of the sixteenth-century occasionally employed words like “diabolical” and “devilish” to describe witchcraft-related crimes, while also containing no mention of demonic pacts, servitude, or evil spirits.

The prosecutorial process of English and Scottish witchcraft cases did not change much between the second half of the sixteenth-century, and the last decade of James I’s reign and records contain little to no evidence of method or motive. Conversely, cheaply printed pamphlets about witchcraft cases reconstructed prosecutions through dramatized accounts of events that provided entertainment, instruction, and at times, a formulaic moral lesson for the reader. The short and inexpensive partially-true stories fill in details obfuscated by the scantiness of official court documents. *The Examination of John Walsh* appeared on the streets of London in 1566.<sup>947</sup> It recounts the questioning and confession of Walsh to Thomas Williams, who worked for the

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<sup>945</sup> “6 February, 26 Elizabeth,” in *Middlesex County Records: Volume I, 1550-1603*, John Cordy Jeaffreson, ed. (London, 1886), pp. 145-155, British History Online, accessed February 7, 2019, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/middx-county-records/vol1/pp145-155>.

<sup>946</sup> J.S. Cockburn, ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Essex Indictments, Elizabeth I, Volume III* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1978), 16-108.

<sup>947</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh* (London: 1566).

bishop of Exeter.<sup>948</sup> During his confession, Walsh admits to learning and practicing magic for years under the tutelage of a parish priest.<sup>949</sup> The primary purpose of the pamphlet is to serve as anti-Catholic propaganda, but that does not diminish the tract's significance when examining the state of witchcraft belief at the time.<sup>950</sup> What makes the Walsh pamphlet particularly striking is that the alleged witch's confession and his practices have little to no similarity to commonly held seventeenth-century witchcraft belief. Unlike Agnes Sampson or the witches described by Matthew Hopkins, Walsh did not meet Satan; instead, he learned his magical abilities from a priest he worked for named Robert Dreiton.<sup>951</sup> Unlike later descriptions of the witch's pact, Walsh's confession involves living people teaching the magical arts without any mention of the Devil in any form initiating the lessons. At the point where the diabolical enters into witchcraft belief, the dialog depicting relatives, neighbors, and associates as supernatural teachers fades away.<sup>952</sup>

By the seventeenth-century, the link between magic and the Devil in witchcraft belief was unquestionable. For example, while John Walsh practices sorcery and witchcraft because of the sins of a priest and the evil of the Pope, within fifty years, accused witch Joan Flower was described as irreligious, diabolical, and spiteful, happily learning from the Devil her diabolical arts.<sup>953</sup> In the 1566 pamphlet, Walsh did not believe his practices were wrong, and the idea that

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<sup>948</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, AIIr.

<sup>949</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, AIIr-Br.

<sup>950</sup> Marion Gibson says that the author of the pamphlet was John Awdeley, who penned several anti-Catholic texts during his lifetime. Marion Gibson, *Early Modern Witches* (London: Routledge, 2000), 25.

<sup>951</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, AIIr.

<sup>952</sup> Most English pamphlets containing witchcraft confessions name the Devil or the Devil in some animal form as the source of a subject's magical education by 1600. There is evidence of demonic magic before 1600 in some pamphlets (specifically in the Chelmsford outbreak of 1566), but the demonic aspect is not direct and there are still family members involved in the learning process. For example, one accused witch was taught magic by her grandmother. *The Examination and Confession of Certain Witches at Chelmsford in the County of Essex before the Queen's Majesty's Judges* (London, 1566).

<sup>953</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, AIIr-AIIv. "The Wonderful Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower (London: 1618), in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook, Second Edition* (London: Routledge, 2015), 225-226.

he made a covenant with the Devil was never mentioned.<sup>954</sup> However, there are some attributes in the Walsh pamphlet that do resemble concepts in *Daemonologie*, albeit with slight but still significant differences. During the examination, Thomas Williams asked Walsh about using helpful spirits, and the man admits to encountering magical spirits during his time under the priest. However, the diabolical element is absent.<sup>955</sup> John Walsh spoke of a willful spirit who refused to do his bidding. A spirit that acted in a complementary fashion and did not necessarily facilitate his use of magic. That being said, by 1600 diabolical forces in pamphlets harm, murder, and ruin a witch's enemies in exchange for their eternal service to Satan, but John Walsh spoke of a spirit who refused to do his bidding and only delivered messages.<sup>956</sup> That is not to say that pamphlets never mentioned the Devil before *Daemonologie*. However, even those that did link witchcraft to the Devil before 1592 contained different interpretations of that relationship.

In the 1566 *Examination and Confession of Certain Witches at Chelmsford*, accused witches Elizabeth Francis, Mother Waterhouse, and Joan Waterhouse performed harmful magic, fed an animal familiar, and killed both animals and neighbors.<sup>957</sup> On the surface, the pamphlets include behaviors that James warns against in *Daemonologie* like blasphemy, instruction, and indoctrination. However, the text also contradicts the central argument put forth by James: that all magic and witchcraft are evil, the only source of witchcraft is Satan, and only through a pact with the Devil can a witch (by trickery) acquire power. Francis's grandmother, not the Devil, taught her how to use magic when she was only a twelve-year-old girl.<sup>958</sup> Furthermore, Francis later passed on her knowledge and her familiar spirit to other women in her confidence, who also

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<sup>954</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, AIIIr.

<sup>955</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, AIIIv-Br.

<sup>956</sup> *The Examination of John Walsh*, Br-Bv.

<sup>957</sup> "The Examination and Confession of Certain Witches at Chelmsford," in Levack, ed., 243-249.

<sup>958</sup> "The Examination and Confession of Certain Witches at Chelmsford," in Levack, ed., 243-249.

used magic to harm their neighbors and destroy enemies.<sup>959</sup> The diabolical witches of *Newes from Scotland* and James's *Daemonologie* learned nothing from each other because human beings possess no capacity to act as conduits for supernatural power. In contrast, Elizabeth Francis and John Walsh performed magic on their own.

Sixteenth-century manifestations of witchcraft belief transformed over time, and there is no doubt that Satan appeared in English depictions of witchcraft before the publication of *Daemonologie*.<sup>960</sup> Joan Cunny testified that when Mother Dumfrys taught her witchcraft in 1589, the woman instructed Cunny to fall to her knees and pray to Satan, "Chief of the devils."<sup>961</sup> However, by 1604, the characterization of witchcraft went from a subject where the diabolical was one of several causes or aspects of the craft to the Devil and the demonic becoming the primary cause and focus. In Scotland, the connection to *Daemonologie* is evident as there is no record of demonological tracts or belief before the publication of *Newes from Scotland* and James's involvement in witch prosecutions. For England, the path between belief and *Daemonologie* is not as clear, but the connection is there nonetheless.

### Shifts in Law, Practice, and Belief

In 1604, The English government under James replaced Elizabeth I's 1563 "Act Against Conjurations Inchantments and Witchcrafts." The new statute, "The Act Against Conjuracion Witchcraft and Dealing with Evil and Wicked Spirits," increased the number of witchcraft offenses that carried a death sentence and included more detailed and specific language when

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<sup>959</sup> "The Examination and Confession of Certain Witches at Chelmsford," in Levaack, ed., 243.

<sup>960</sup> The same cannot be said for Scotland. *Newes from Scotland* was the country's first witchcraft publication and the demonic pact was an inherent part of the text.

<sup>961</sup> *The Apprehension and Confession of Three Notorious Witches* (London: 1589), AIIIr-AIIIv.

describing the crime.<sup>962</sup> More importantly, the law directly addressed aspects of James's interpretation of diabolical witchcraft, (which he had borrowed from continental belief). In 1604, people were guilty by association alone; they were guilty for merely entertaining or feeding "evil spirits," and for using the severed parts of corpses in rituals and spells.<sup>963</sup> Each infraction warranted a sentence of death without the benefit of clergy, meaning that even visiting a witch led to the possibility of a violent, painful, and public execution.<sup>964</sup> Immediate changes to the laws of a realm were not uncommon with the accession of a new monarch, but the speed by which the witchcraft law changed illustrates James' influence on the subject. While some historians argue that James quickly tired of his witchcraft interests, the alteration and continued increase in prosecutions contradicts the idea that the subject was the passing fancy of an intellectually curious king.<sup>965</sup>

*Daemonologie*'s influence expands beyond legal statutes and criminal prosecution and altered the English perception and reaction to witchcraft during the seventeenth century. The North Berwick witch-hunt and the resulting publication of *Newes from Scotland* and *Daemonologie* led to the release of continental witchcraft belief to the broader English and Scottish audience. Witchcraft accusations increased during the period, and with Parliament revisiting the laws and an increase in publications on the subject, it is likely that the laws, prosecutions, and publications illustrate an overall increase in concern about the threat of witches. *Daemonologie* repeatedly stressed that every part of magic was diabolical and came only from Satan who, "may delude our senses, since we see by common proof, that simple

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<sup>962</sup> "I. Jac. I. c. 12," *The Statutes of the Realm*, IV, Part II, 1028-1029.

<sup>963</sup> "I. Jac. I. c. 12," *The Statutes of the Realm*, IV, Part II, 1028-1029.

<sup>964</sup> "I. Jac. I. c. 12," *The Statutes of the Realm*, IV, Part II, 1028-1029.

<sup>965</sup> We could also entertain the idea that even if James's interest in witchcraft waned, it does not mean that the ideas he presented in *Daemonologie* lost any significant sway.



jugglers will make an hundredth things seem both to our eyes and ears other ways then they are.”<sup>966</sup> It became increasingly difficult to untangle any use of magic from an association with Satan and the renunciation of God.

James’s emphasis on the threat of witchcraft coincided with a surge in prosecutions in Scotland and parts of England. While the Scottish courts heard sixty-eight cases between 1560 and 1599, a total of 442 cases appear in records between 1600 and 1629, with numbers remaining relatively steady until the 1680s.<sup>967</sup> English statistics are harder to pin down. Home circuit assize records show that English courts indicted 513 men and women for witchcraft between 1560 and 1700, with spikes in the last decade of the sixteenth century and mid-seventeenth centuries.<sup>968</sup> What is certain is that the punishment for witchcraft strengthened in severity, and the act of magic itself became demonic in nature and intent.

Similar to cases that took place before the publication of *Daemonologie*, accusations of witchcraft tried in the English Assize courts after 1600 provide little evidence in the way of method or motive. Fifty-two men and women appeared at the combined Assize sessions of Kent, Sussex, Essex, and Hertfordshire between 1604 and 1618, and none of the cases specifically mention the Devil, although three cases did include the feeding of familiar spirits. Nevertheless, other records do show an uptick in the affiliation between magic and the Devil in seventeenth-century England. A woman named Rose Mersam who lived at Whitecrosse Street in Middlesex allegedly practiced witchcraft against her neighbor James Thompson “at the instigation of the Devil,” in May of 1606.<sup>969</sup> Several other cases prosecuted after 1600 included language that

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<sup>966</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 23.

<sup>967</sup> Larner, Hyde Lee, and McLachlan, 238.

<sup>968</sup> England’s prosecution rates never reached the numbers reported in Scotland or on the European continent. Macfarlane, 61-63.

<sup>969</sup> “Middlesex Session Rolls, 1606,” in *Middlesex County Records: Vol. 2*, John Cordy Jefferson, ed. (London: 1887), 15-25, accessed March 9, 2020,

indicates demonic influence by calling the act of witchcraft hellish, devilish, or diabolical. On May 19th, 1611, Anne Beaver of Edmonton stood before the Middlesex court charged with practicing “certain evil and devilish arts, called witchcrafts enchantments charms and sorceries upon and against Edward Boulton.”<sup>970</sup> Boulton fell ill on 1 April and “languished of the said evil practice” until his death nineteen days later, but Boulton was not Anne Beaver’s only victim.<sup>971</sup> The court also charged Beaver with the deaths of John Baylie, Thomas Coleman, Josias Boswell, Richard Frisby, and Susan Mason and although Beaver pled “not guilty” and was acquitted of all charges, the language in the indictment mentions evil and “devilish arts” several times, a characteristic that was not prevalent before 1600.<sup>972</sup>

Scottish cases with a higher percentage of relevant details referenced the Devil openly in the seventeenth century. The case against Isobel Young in 1629 charged the alleged witch with killing livestock, murdering neighbors, destroying property, and serving as a “special commander at the Devil’s meeting.”<sup>973</sup> Young’s case references gatherings with the Devil and other characteristics present in both *Newes from Scotland* and *Daemonologie*. In 1649, Margaret Dickson confessed to practicing witchcraft and serving the Devil.<sup>974</sup> Dickson allegedly consulted with the Devil in efforts to heal a sick child, and according to her confession, Satan assisted.<sup>975</sup> Although Dickson’s intention in the case was to heal and not harm and did not involve hurting people or property, her crime was consulting with the Devil about magic. Margaret Dickson’s use of magic required communication with the Devil, which was the central tenet of witchcraft as a crime.

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<sup>970</sup> “Middlesex Session Rolls, 1611,” in *Middlesex County Records: Vol. 2*, John Cordy Jefferson, ed., (London: 1887), 70-78, accessed March 9, 2020, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/middx-county-records/vol2/pp70-78>.

<sup>971</sup> Jefferson, ed., “Middlesex Session Rolls, 1611.”

<sup>972</sup> Jefferson, ed., “Middlesex Session Rolls, 1611.”

<sup>973</sup> “Isobel Young (5/2/1629),” in Goodare, et al, eds., [witches.shca.ed.ac.uk](http://witches.shca.ed.ac.uk).

<sup>974</sup> “Margaret Dickson (2/7/1649),” in Goodare, et al, eds.

<sup>975</sup> “Margaret Dickson (2/7/1649),” in Goodare, et al, eds.

### The Study of Diabolical Witchcraft

The association between magic and the Devil was the foundation of James's *Daemonologie*, and the evocation of Satan occurred with increased frequency after the publication of the treatise, demonstrating a spread of continental belief in both England and Scotland. The language in court cases (and stories depicted in popular pamphlets leave no doubt that James's subjects were familiar with their king's work. Surges in prosecution rates, dozens of surviving pamphlets, as well as plays and stage performances based on witch trials or about witches, all point towards a shift in the popularity of witchcraft belief in the seventeenth century.

As the sixteenth century ended, several newly self-proclaimed witchcraft and demonological experts published treatises on witchcraft and magic that echoed arguments in *Daemonologie*. Richard Barnard was an Anglican preacher turned demonologist who published his demonological tract *A Guide to Grand Jury-Men* in 1630.<sup>976</sup> His treatise provided instructions for juries in finding evidence of witchcraft, but it also emphasized the sin of the demonic pact.<sup>977</sup> Bernard (like James) describes how Satan approached prospective converts and "leaveth not them till he get them to make express league with him."<sup>978</sup> Bernard (like James) argues that all witches make a covenant with the Devil, renounce God, and enter into his service in exchange for assistance with acts of revenge or greed.<sup>979</sup> Bernard (repeating James's message in *Daemonologie*) states that all witches are evil, "and none good," and that these men and women lived lives of vulgarity and sin, with evil natures and a wicked disposition.<sup>980</sup> Bernard's words

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<sup>976</sup> Richard Bernard, "A Guide to Grand Jury-Men," in Levack, ed., 113.

<sup>977</sup> Richard Bernard, "A Guide to Grand Jury-Men," in LEvack, ed., 113.

<sup>978</sup> Bernard, in Levack, ed., 113.

<sup>979</sup> Bernard, in Levack, ed., 113.

<sup>980</sup> Bernard, in Levack, ed., 113.

mimicked James and described witches as spiteful, malicious, and dangerous “with the aid of their new master.”<sup>981</sup>

Like Richard Bernard, other theological authorities of the seventeenth century, including William Perkins, Cotton Mather, and James Huchinson, incorporated language unmistakably similar to James’s arguments and interpretations of witchcraft into their works, representing witches as irredeemably diabolical.<sup>982</sup> William Perkins’s 1608 witchcraft treatise described a witch as “a magician who either by open or secret league wittingly and willingly consenteth to use the aid and assistance of the Devil in the working of wonders.”<sup>983</sup> Much of Perkins’s treatise appears in the style and cadence of *Daemonologie* by associating all magic with Satan, describing all witches, even the “good” as servants of the Devil, and using biblical verses to justify the use of capital punishment for all crimes associated with witchcraft.<sup>984</sup> The diabolical tone continued, and almost a century later, the Colonial American theologian and famed Salem authority Cotton Mather echoed demonological thought in his work on demonic possession and witchcraft.<sup>985</sup>

The English colonies in North America also prosecuted and executed men and women for the crime of witchcraft during the seventeenth century. Colonial Massachusetts’ 1692 witch-hysteria resulted in the arrest of hundreds of colonists and the execution of nineteen people.<sup>986</sup>

Reflecting the sentiments of theologians who published their demonological works almost a

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<sup>981</sup> Bernard, in Levack, ed., 113.

<sup>982</sup> William Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (London: 1608). James Huchinson, “A Sermon on Witchcraft,” in Levack, ed., 129-130. Cotton Mather, *A Discourse on the Wonders of the Invisible World* (Boston, 1692).

<sup>983</sup> Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art*, 167.

<sup>984</sup> Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art*, 168-185.

<sup>985</sup> Cotton Mather, “The Wonders of the Invisible World,” in *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750*, Marion Gibson, ed., 217. Cotton Mather, “Memorable Providences Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions,” in Levack, ed., 330.

<sup>986</sup> Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society in England and America*, 207.

century before the outbreak, authorities responsible for the prosecutions in Salem, Massachusetts, blamed the torment of witches on the Devil.<sup>987</sup> Confessions contained clandestine meetings and pacts with Satan, who took the form of man, beast, even a “streaked snake” who crept over the shoulder and bosom of his servant.<sup>988</sup> Cotton Mather was an educated and renowned theologian who participated in the Salem trials as an authority on the Devil. Mather adamantly believed that colonists should vigorously pursue and prosecute witches because the Devil opposed their pious attempt to create a godly settlement in the Americas.<sup>989</sup> Mather’s theological works warned American colonists against the encroachment and work of the Devil and his witch-servants who “made a dreadful knot of Witches in the country, and by the help of Witches has dreadfully increased that Knot...setting up...a more gross Diabolism, than ever the World saw before.”<sup>990</sup> Three-quarters of a century after his death, James’s initial employment of continental witchcraft belief in *Daemonologie* continued to resonate with theologians studying witchcraft.

#### **IV. Conclusion: Witchcraft in Practice**

Mapping the development of popular thought and intellectual ideology over time comes with a unique set of complications. Examining early modern sources to underscore how witchcraft belief shifted proves problematic when the Devil is truly in the details and details are scant. Court cases provide the most realistic account of how and for what reasons English and Scottish authorities tried witches but provide little evidence of the beliefs of the victims,

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<sup>987</sup> Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society in England and America*, 207-209.

<sup>988</sup> “Susannah Sheldon, evidence against Bridget Bishop and others,” in Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society in England and America*, 215-216.

<sup>989</sup> Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society in England and America*, 218.

<sup>990</sup> Mather, “The Wonders of the Invisible World,” in *Witchcraft and Society in England and America*, Gibson, ed., 219.

defendants, jurors, and judges. Pamphlets provide considerably more as they contain the author's understanding of a subject as well as highlight popular conceptions of witchcraft. Stage production and dramatized pamphlets blur the lines between reality and fantasy. Pamphlets are some of the only surviving documents that give agency and a voice to both victims and the accused, but the voices are filtered and choreographed.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the lines between medicine, natural philosophy, and the supernatural continued to blur. Doctors used nativity charts with astrological markers to assist in understanding a patient's medical history and observed the movements of the planets and the stars to diagnose and treat illness. Simon Forman and Richard Napier were two physician astrologers who practiced medicine during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Their comprehensive medical records include cases of several men and women who sought their assistance for bewitchment and magical ailments.<sup>991</sup> Casebooks kept by both Forman and Napier contains details often absent from court documents and were less fabricated than those featured in pamphlets. The casebooks include twenty-seven records of suspected witchcraft illustrating the prevalence of belief as patients and family members told physicians that they suspected bewitchment as the cause of their ailments.<sup>992</sup> The physicians treated symptoms associated with witchcraft, the unexplained, and the Devil in the same manner that they treated a toothache or other physical illnesses, allowing historians to catch a glimpse of belief 'in the wild.'

In some of the medical cases, kernels of belief appear as the physicians themselves describe the mental and physical state of their patients. Mr. and Mrs. Edmunds sought help in

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<sup>991</sup> Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>992</sup> Lauren Kassell, Michael Hawkins, Robert Ralley, and John Young, 'Teaching and Research with Casebooks,' *A Critical Introduction to the Casebooks of Simon Forman and Richard Napier, 1596-1634*, <https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk/using-the-casebooks/teaching-and-research-with-casebooks>, accessed 12 September 2019.

1622 when their seventeen-year-old daughter was “haunted as her father thinks with some ill creature,” and appeared extremely ill, feeble, and “lies as one in a trance & will strike out for half an hour. They think she will die.”<sup>993</sup> Apart from the family’s claim that a creature afflicted the Edmunds’s daughter, there is an additional note indicating that “witchery [was] suspected.”<sup>994</sup> The Edmunds case only mentions witchery as a suspected cause and an example of haunting by a creature, but other cases in the journals mention Satan specifically. After attempting to drown herself in 1618, Agnys Butresse claimed to have an unexplained mark and claimed that “a great black Dog came to her & lay in her lap.”<sup>995</sup>

Joan Spark of Blunnam was a thirty-two-year-old mother of six when she entered the casebooks in October of 1604, exhibiting unexplained symptoms after giving birth to a healthy son.<sup>996</sup> Casebook notes on Spark describe her behavior as “sometimes well,” but Joan also “talks idly of the devil altogether & says fondly that she has given herself to the devil & would make herself away.”<sup>997</sup> The casebook notes offer more than an interpretation of a subject’s behaviors. Comments recorded by the doctors or their scribes reflect medical observations and the thoughts and assumptions of the afflicted person’s family and neighbors. While court cases rarely provide anything beyond the barest of essential information and pamphlets supply ample amounts of unreliable details cultivated and commodified for entertainment, the medical records offer a bridge between the two.

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<sup>993</sup> “Case 53759 – Selected Cases in Full – Devil, Haunted, Possessed,” in Lauren Kassell, Michael Hawkins, Robert Ralley, and John Young, ‘Teaching and Research with Casebooks,’ *A Critical Introduction to the Casebooks of Simon Forman and Richard Napier, 1596-1634*, <https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk/using-the-casebooks/teaching-and-research-with-casebooks>, accessed 12 September 2019.

<sup>994</sup> “Case 53739,” in Kassell, et al, *A Critical Introduction*.

<sup>995</sup> “Case 46806,” in Kassell, et al, *A Critical Introduction*.

<sup>996</sup> “Case 21595,” in Kassell, et al, *A Critical Introduction*.

<sup>997</sup> “Case 21595,” in Kassell, et al, *A Critical Introduction*.

The physicians' notes were neither meant for public consumption or legal recourse, but to assist in the determination of a diagnosis, not unbiased by any means, but by nature more accurate. Jane Spark's behavior ranged from bouts of despondent silence to periods of paranoia where she was unable to sleep and spoke of a "bad woman" cursing her. Her experiences do not appear in any pamphlet or sensationalized case of witchcraft, and yet in the notes, a doctor records specific mention of the Devil, a pact with Satan, and servitude. In hindsight, circumstantial medical evidence points towards plausible reasons for Spark's behavior as her illness occurred directly after giving birth, and she more likely suffered from unseen complications coinciding with the birth of her child. However, seventeenth-century medicine intermingled with magic, and the physicians recorded Spark's evocation of the Devil as legitimate characteristics of her illness.<sup>998</sup> Jane Spark admitted to communicating and covenanting with the Devil, and her behaviors (according to *Daemonologie*) were enough proof for legally condemning an accused witch to death. Spark allegedly bewitched two calves to death, cursed her neighbors, and burst into manic fits, characteristics commonly attributed to witches in popular belief and directly defined by the king in *Daemonologie*. In other words, pamphlets, dramatic representations, and medical records all indicate that James' interpretation of witchcraft was conventional within a few decades of the publication of his treatise.

James's understanding of how witchcraft worked spread into English society, beginning with the release of *Daemonologie* in 1597 and the earlier publication of *Newes from Scotland*. While assumptive and circumstantial, the number of surviving editions of James's treatise in print contrasts with the multitude of cheap print material that does not survive. The survivability of a text can serve as an indicator of a work's popularity and influence. Pamphlets were cheap

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<sup>998</sup> "Case 21595," in Kassel et al., *A Critical Introduction*.



print and less likely to survive, but we have dozens of examples of seventeenth-century witchcraft beliefs to examine. James's *Daemonologie* affected the state of popular witchcraft belief after its publication and the cohesion in characterization, perception, and language between *Daemonologie* and Jacobean plays, laws, court procedure, pamphlets, and other forms of documented expressions of that belief illuminates threads of James's influence.

The scope of *Daemonologie*'s influence on witchcraft belief moved beyond a rise in demonological pamphlets or changes to secular law. James's obsession with witches affected the lives of men and women for decades after his reign. England's most extensive witch-hunt took between 1645 and 1647 amid the English Civil War. Matthew Hopkins, the self-proclaimed "witchfinder general" traveled from county to county with his partner John Stearne on a mission to purge the threat of demonic witchcraft from the land.<sup>999</sup> Over two years, Hopkins was responsible for the arrest, prosecution, and execution of over 150 men and women across southern England.

*The Discovery of Witches*, Hopkins's published account of the 1645-1647 witch-hunt, includes several prominent characteristics associated with witchcraft in James's *Daemonologie*.<sup>1000</sup> The pamphlet's explanations of motive, method, detection, and punishment mimic that of James's treatise and place particular emphasis on the criminality of the demonic pact and magic's diabolical nature.<sup>1001</sup> *Discovery* also echoed the urgent need to eradicate the threat of witchcraft found in James's treatise, quoting *Exodus 22:18* on the title page, "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."<sup>1002</sup> Matthew Hopkins's pamphlet is an undeniable example of James's influence on witchcraft belief. When discussing the appropriate means for detecting a witch's

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<sup>999</sup> Levack., ed., *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 273.

<sup>1000</sup> Matthew Hopkins, *A Discovery of Witches* (London, 1647), 1-10.

<sup>1001</sup> Hopkins, *A Discovery of Witches*, 1-10.

<sup>1002</sup> Hopkins, *A Discovery of Witches*.

guilt, Hopkins suggests the water test, citing *Daemonologie* as his source: “King James in his Demonology saith, it is a certain rule, for (Saith he) Witches deny their baptism when they covenant with the Devil, water being the sole element thereof, and therefore saith he, when they be heaved into the water, the water refuseth to receive them into her bosome.”<sup>1003</sup>

Clear distinctions exist between the state of witchcraft belief before and after the publication of James’s *Daemonologie*. Diabolical characteristics associated with magic moved to the forefront of witchcraft belief following the outbreak of the North Berwick witch trials, the publication of *Newes from Scotland*, and *Daemonologie*. Where fairies and unspecified spirits previously assisted witches in less malicious feats of magic and sorcery, the Devil’s manipulation of weak-minded sinners, revenge, and murder dominate seventeenth-century ideas of witchcraft in both England and Scotland. As the “weird sisters” reminded theater crowds about the dangerous predictions of witches and *The Witch of Edmonton* mixed comedy with commonly understood witch characteristics, ballads and songs like *The Damnable Practises of three lincolne-shire witches* warned of the Devil’s pursuit of servants “in pretty forms, of dog, of cat, or rat,” and spread witchcraft belief in the alehouse.<sup>1004</sup>

Court cases, pamphlets, treatises, and forms of entertainment reflect the shift in understandings of witchcraft in both evident and understated ways. John Walsh, admitting to sorcery, witchcraft, and healing before the publication of *Daemonologie*, was admonished and corrected for his failures, but within a few decades, Elizabeth Sawyer was tried, convicted, and executed for similar behaviors, now described as diabolical witchcraft. The havoc wreaked

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<sup>1003</sup> Hopkins, *A Discovery of Witches*, 8.

<sup>1004</sup> The song is about the case of Joan Flower and her family who were accused of witchcraft and executed in 1619. The ballad not only mentions familiar spirits, but includes the demonic pact, murder, livestock destruction, and the Devil trying to enlarge his kingdom. “Damnable Practises of Three Lincolne-shire Witches, London: 1619,” *University of California Santa Barbara English Broadside Ballad Archive*, accessed February 22, 2019, <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20058/xml>.

throughout the English countryside during the Civil War by an over-zealous witchfinder encapsulates the power and danger of *Daemonologie*'s influence. Matthew Hopkins held no official title but was able to manipulate the chaotic environment, public fear, and prominent belief to enter villages and townships arresting and prosecuting innocent men and women with the authority of a king.

## 6 CONCLUSION

James VI composed *Daemonologie* to confront doubts about the existence and threat of witches. The treatise instructed his subjects on detecting witches and provided the appropriate methods for their eradication. Spreading the beliefs of several European ministers, court officials, and scholars, *Daemonologie* expressed concern about the danger witches posed to the English and Scottish people. James's work contributed to shifts in belief, law, and prosecution rates, and his status as king amplified the impact of his words. King James's view of the monarchy, the duty of his subjects, and the unique political, social, and religious climate each contributed to the tone, weight, and influence of his argument and helped facilitate the spread of continental witchcraft belief. There is no better example of that spread than the work of the Puritan witch-hunter Matthew Hopkins.

Hopkins emerged as the self-proclaimed "Witch-Finder General" in the 1640s when political strife between King Charles I and radicals in the English Parliament continued to upend the lives of English subjects through a violent civil war.<sup>1005</sup> By 1641, fierce fighting between royalist and pro-Parliament forces contributed to the cultivation of a volatile social climate.<sup>1006</sup> The rise in collective anxiety helped perpetuate ominous rumors of devil worship and witchcraft throughout the English countryside.<sup>1007</sup> Whispers of Catholic plots intertwined with reports of clandestine sorcerer-led orgies caused the number of witchcraft accusations to increase.<sup>1008</sup> Hopkins was a devout Puritan who believed the Lord gave him "an unwavering duty to God and

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<sup>1005</sup> James Sharpe, "Hopkins, Matthew," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (September 2004), accessed April 3, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13751>.

<sup>1006</sup> Malcolm Gaskill's monograph *Witchfinders* is the best academic source on Hopkins's life and his exploits in Essex. Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 35.

<sup>1007</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 35.

<sup>1008</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 35.

a heartfelt calling to serve the commonwealth.”<sup>1009</sup> As he saw it, Hopkins fulfilled that duty by working to root out dangerous witches in the towns and villages of Essex.<sup>1010</sup> Stalwart in his convictions, but also described by contemporaries as a “callow” and “vainglorious” son of a minister, Hopkins’s career began in his home village of Manningtree.<sup>1011</sup>

Similar in experience to James before him, Matthew Hopkins immersed himself into the world of diabolical magic because of a personal encounter with malefic witches. In 1644, he claimed to have witnessed and earned the ire of an assembly of witches gathered in a field and performing satanic rites near his home.<sup>1012</sup> Of this experience, Hopkins later wrote that he watched as the witches presented “several solemn sacrifices” to the Devil, summoned familiar spirits, made demonic pacts, received the Devil’s mark, and bewitched their helpless neighbors.<sup>1013</sup> As alleged occurrences of witchcraft increased, Hopkins and his like-minded partner, John Stearne, began to travel from village to village in efforts to rid Essex of Satan’s minions. Hopkins’s published account of his witch-hunting experience, *The Discovery of Witches*, follows the (by that time) dominant formula found in most seventeenth-century witchcraft pamphlets. After providing several examples of scriptural evidence to prove that witches existed, he used much of his work to advocate for the necessary eradication of such a subversive and dangerous creature.<sup>1014</sup>

Essex was a hotspot of witchcraft activity even before Matthew Hopkins, but his publicized hunts increased awareness and prosecution rates exponentially.<sup>1015</sup> Eventually,

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<sup>1009</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 38.

<sup>1010</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 38-39.

<sup>1011</sup> Manningtree is a village in Essex, about eighty miles northeast of London off the coast of the River Stout. Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 3.

<sup>1012</sup> Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 4.

<sup>1013</sup> Matthew Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches* (London: 1647), 2.

<sup>1014</sup> Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches*.

<sup>1015</sup> Hopkins and Stearne were responsible for the prosecution of dozens of men and women in a relatively short period of time, around twenty-four months. Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, 4-7.

Hopkins and Stearne published written accounts of their exploits, both to spread the “truth” about the dangers of witchcraft and to justify the severity of their actions.<sup>1016</sup> Shortly after the publication of Hopkins’s *Discovery*, Stearne released *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witchcraft* in 1648.<sup>1017</sup> In his view, witches were “ignorant people whose eyes are blinded by Satan and held captive by him...”<sup>1018</sup> Like the Hopkins pamphlet, *A Confirmation* employs stylistic and linguistic techniques that are strikingly similar to James’s *Daemonologie*, with biblical evidence, eye-witness accounts of diabolical witchcraft, and an impassioned plea for all Christians to hunt and exterminate witches.<sup>1019</sup> The Stearne and Hopkins pamphlets demonstrate how language and belief associated with the characterization of witches had shifted by the 1640s. Both Stearne and Hopkins mimic James’s arguments and reasoning, emphasizing the importance of the demonic pact, witch assemblies, and malefic intent in all forms of magic. For example, in *The Discovery of Witches*, Hopkins argues that the witch’s or Devil’s mark was concrete proof of a witch’s covenant with Satan: “He seeks not their blood, as if he could not subsist without the nourishment, but he often repairs to them, and gets it, the more to aggravate the witch’s damnation, and to put her in mind of her covenant.”<sup>1020</sup>

Matthew Hopkins’s presentation of witchcraft in *Discovery* included several critical elements emphasized in *Daemonologie*, which was common in seventeenth-century English witchcraft pamphlets. King James synthesized two centuries of continental European witchcraft and demonological belief. *Daemonologie* depicted witchcraft as a sacrilegious and diabolical act with no tolerance for any notion of “good” or helpful magic. As the words of the king,

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<sup>1016</sup> There is no record of Hopkins or Stearne holding any legal position of authority.

<sup>1017</sup> John Stearne, *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witchcraft* (London: 1648).

<sup>1018</sup> Stearne, *A Confirmation and Discovery*, 12.

<sup>1019</sup> Stearne, *A Confirmation and Discovery*, 2-3.

<sup>1020</sup> Hopkins, *A Discovery of Witches*, 6.

*Daemonologie* carried particular weight and resonance. Furthermore, James amplified his reach by making use of the increasingly popular and accessible medium of print to communicate to his Scottish and English subjects his views on authority, religion, and the urgent need to rid the world of witches. Ultimately, the king was successful in delivering his message and his text influenced witchcraft belief, law, and prosecutions in seventeenth-century England and Scotland.

Medieval interpretations of witchcraft were diverse and less-structured with no standardized connection to the Christian Devil or widespread calls for prohibition. Until around the fifteenth century, the church did little to condemn or curtail the use of magic. This pre-1400 depiction of magic use discussed in chapter one was not void of evil or the Devil, but its overall diversity illustrates a lack of cohesion or any form of an official and organized response to magical practices. The second chapter examines the emergence of a European idea of diabolical witchcraft. With roots in medieval Christianity, the transformation of magic into a threat was a slow process, and by the mid-fifteenth century, church scholars more frequently associated magic with Satan. However, the religious conflicts of the sixteenth century helped usher in a stark linguistic and official approach to magic. Scholars and the clergy incorporated their anxieties relating to the Reformation to find answers, reasons, and those responsible for the theological split in magic, the Devil, and his army of witches. The antagonisms of a present and active Devil manifested themselves in the malefic work of witches. It is in this environment that James VI of Scotland encountered the witchcraft conspiracy at North Berwick when witches like Agnes Sampson attempted to bewitch their sovereign to death at the behest of Satan. It is in this environment that the scholarly king immersed himself in the European study of witchcraft and composed *Daemonologie*.

The final chapter of this dissertation examines the impact of James's work by highlighting the usage of ideas emphasized in *Daemonologie* in seventeenth-century English and Scottish laws, prosecutions, cheap print, and entertainment. The weird sisters of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and depictions of accused witch Elizabeth Sawyer on stage and in print are continental manifestations in England and proof of James's influence.

Just as secular and religious controversies plagued England and Scotland, those same problems followed colonists who emigrated to the Americas and contributed to one of the most well-documented early modern witch-hunts in Salem, Massachusetts. Settled by Protestant separatists that were unhappy with the level of reform in the Church of England, Massachusetts had a theocratic and strict local government based on austere Puritan spiritual and moral codes. Salem was founded in 1626 about fifty miles north of the original settlement in Plymouth, and quickly became a thriving center of trade and agricultural production. By the end of the century, political, social, and religious conflicts contributed to a community-wide panic over witches that resulted in hundreds of arrests and at least twenty deaths.

By the 1670s, strained community relations in Salem centered on disagreements and power struggles between two prominent families, the Putnams and Porters, which eventually resulted in the creation of two separate locales, Salem Town and Salem Village.<sup>1021</sup> Both Town and Village operated under the umbrella of a single civil government, legally joined and financially dependent.<sup>1022</sup> Finally, in 1689, the increased conflict resulted in the establishment of the Salem Village Church overseen by the newly hired minister Samuel Parris, a thirty-six-year-

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<sup>1021</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, xvii.

<sup>1022</sup> Richard Godbeer, "Witchcraft in British America," in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, Brian P. Levack, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 403.



old from Boston who recently returned from Barbados.<sup>1023</sup> The appointment of Parris only intensified tensions, and the minister often delivered pointed sermons that vilified opposing factions in the community.<sup>1024</sup>

The threat of witchcraft reached Salem in December of 1691 when rumors began to circulate that local girls gathered for clandestine meetings in the woods.<sup>1025</sup> A month later, the sudden and unexplained illness of Parris's nine-year-old daughter appeared as a legitimization of those fears, and within days, Parris's niece Abigail and eight more village girls between the ages of twelve and nineteen appeared to suffer from similar ailments suspected to be witchcraft.<sup>1026</sup> Massachusetts' legal code defined a witch in terms reminiscent of James's *Daemonologie*, stressing a pact with the Devil, spiritual covenants, and harmful magic.<sup>1027</sup> As the girls of Salem, one by one, succumbed to unexplained violent fits, they began to name their attackers as witches.<sup>1028</sup> The witches allegedly met regularly in Salem "upon a green piece of ground near the minister's house," targeting the family inside.<sup>1029</sup>

Accusations of conspiracy and malefic attacks that began in February resulted in several arrests, including the detention of Tituba, the Parris family's slave from Barbados.<sup>1030</sup> By June,

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<sup>1023</sup> The familial divisions in Salem are apparent in covenant documents for the Church of Christ in Salem Village that was established in 1689. Among the twenty-eight signatures on the Covenant, eleven were members of the Putnam family with no members of the Porter family present. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 61, 154-155; Samuel Parris, *Church Book Belonging to Salem Village* [electronic resource], Benjamin C. Ray and Maurta L. Ray, tr. (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Library, 2015), accessed on March 29, 2020, <http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/villgchurchrcrd.html>.

<sup>1024</sup> Parris described naysayers as servants of the Devil on multiple occasions. Richard Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt* (New York: St. Martin's Trade, 2011), 20.

<sup>1025</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 2-3.

<sup>1026</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 2-5.

<sup>1027</sup> Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 5; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 3.

<sup>1028</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 3.

<sup>1029</sup> Community divisions are apparent in the earliest of accusations because the disputed minister and his family were targets. Witnesses claimed that during these meetings, Parris's niece Abigail suffered from violent fits inside the Parris home. "Confession of William Barker Sr., in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 146; "Deodat Lawson's Account," in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 54.

<sup>1030</sup> Tituba and her husband John Indian were accused of performing counter magic against alleged witchcraft against the Parris family. Furthermore, in Deodat Lawson's account, the witness claimed that the afflicted girls wear

authorities packed the jail in Boston with alleged witches of all ages accused of bewitching their neighbors.<sup>1031</sup> For example, William Allen claimed that Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne, and Tituba could fly and interacted with “a strange and unusual beast.”<sup>1032</sup> Witness depositions further charged defendants with violent attacks, torture, and coercion to join the Devil’s cause.<sup>1033</sup> Accusers and witnesses alleged that the defendants used *poppets*, destroyed their property, executed violent spiritual attacks, all at the behest of Satan.<sup>1034</sup> Juries condemned convicted witches Sarah Good and Bridget Bishop to death in June, and by the last execution in September, Massachusetts courts convicted twenty-eight people of diabolical magic, executing all but eight for their crimes.<sup>1035</sup>

The witch trials in Salem provide an example of how shifts associated with witchcraft belief in the early seventeenth century continued to influence English, Scottish and colonial understandings of witchcraft. The language used to describe the trials coincided with that in *Daemonologie* and prominent characteristics of seventeenth-century English and Scottish belief. Deodat Lawson wrote that the Devil sought to afflict people as a way to divide and weaken the Christian faith.<sup>1036</sup> More importantly, he later compared the Salem trials to English cases,

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also attacked for refusing to join the Devil and become witches. “Deodat Lawson’s Account,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 59-60.; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 3.

<sup>1031</sup> A child by the name of Dorcas Good was the youngest witch arrested in Salem. Officials fitted the four-year-old with irons and kept her incarcerated for nine months. Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 5.

<sup>1032</sup> Sarah Osborne was the first casualty of the Salem hunts, dying in prison before trial. “William Allen, John Huges, William Good, and Samuel Braybrook against Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne, and Tituba,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 72-73. Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 185.

<sup>1033</sup> Both Elizabeth Hubbard and Ann Putnam Jr. accused Tituba of violent attacks of malefic witchcraft, again illustrating the charges sticking to communal divisions. “Elizabeth Hubbard against Sarah Good,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 71. “Ann Putnam Jr. against Sarah Good,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 72; “Elizabeth Hubbard against Tituba,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 90; “Ann Putnam Jr. against Tituba,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 91.

<sup>1034</sup> A *poppet* was a small doll hidden and stuck with pins. Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 101-102.

<sup>1035</sup> One convicted witch pled pregnancy, six evaded execution by confessing, and one defendant escaped prison. “William Stacy against Bridget Bishop,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 105-106; “Sarah Churchill and Mary Warren against Bridget Bishop and Others,” in Godbeer, ed. *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 107; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 7-9.

<sup>1036</sup> “Deodat Lawson’s Account,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 60.

claiming “several things used in England at the trial of witches, to the number of fourteen or fifteen, which are wont to pass instead of or in concurrence with witnesses, at least six or seven of them are found in these accused.”<sup>1037</sup> Depositions, personal accounts, and court documents from the trials contain nomenclature directly linked to *Daemonologie* in the form of familiar spirits, wax figures, witch assemblies, marks, and demonic pacts.

Trials in Salem illustrate how seventeenth-century demonological characteristics imported by James continued to influence law, religion, and popular culture. Late-century theological scholars like Cotton Mather were the American-born counterparts to Perkins, Giffords, and others who penned detailed and researched treatises the demonic threat of witches that were influenced by James. In a 1692 letter to John Foster, Mather (an active participant in the Salem trials) discussed the cases at length, explaining that the Devil was actively working in Salem to destroy its godly people.<sup>1038</sup> Mather’s intellectual curiosity in witchcraft mirrored his royal predecessor in that he stressed witchcraft’s existence and emphasized the necessity of strict guidelines for evidence and convictions. Mather disagreed with Massachusetts’ reliance on spectral evidence and advocated for the admission of concrete judicial proof of a witch’s guilt like the Devil’s mark or a confession.<sup>1039</sup> Mather argued that “when there is no further evidence against a person but only this, that a specter in their shape does afflict a neighbor, that evidence is not enough to convict a person of witchcraft.”<sup>1040</sup>

Cotton Mather was a prolific Puritan scholar raised by an equally educated and well-known minister and Harvard president Increase Mather.<sup>1041</sup> His form of Puritanism depicted a

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<sup>1037</sup> “Deodat Lawson’s Account,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 60.

<sup>1038</sup> Cotton Mather, “Letter from Cotton Mather to John Foster,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 154-155.

<sup>1039</sup> Cotton Mather, “Letter from Cotton Mather to John Foster,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 154-155.

<sup>1040</sup> Cotton Mather, “Letter from Cotton Mather to John Foster,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 154-155.

<sup>1041</sup> Marion Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 220.

world where illness and misfortune were God's punishment for sin. It was no surprise that he thought that "God sent these 'afflictions' to test, warn, and punish."<sup>1042</sup> Mather published several works of theology and treatises on the supernatural, witchcraft, and demonic possession. A year after the conclusion of the Salem Trials, Mather published his major demonological work, *Wonders of the Invisible World*, which was partially a biographical anecdote, partially a compilation of prominent witchcraft theory and belief, and a summation of Mather's own witchcraft theory. Referencing the Salem outbreak, Mather writes that "we have now with horror seen the discovery of such witchcraft? An army of devils is horribly broke in upon the place which is the center, and after a sort, the first-born of our English settlements: and the houses of the good people that are fill'd with the doleful shrieks of their children and servants..."<sup>1043</sup> Like European and English demonologists before him, Mather warned his readers to avoid Satan's temptations and implores magistrates and ministers to follow in England's footsteps and "execute the laws upon profane offenders."<sup>1044</sup>

Mather's significance lies in the language he employs ninety-five years after the publication of *Daemonologie*. The American theologian equated magic with devilry and warned Christian communities in New England to maintain faith and prayer against an enemy who "made a dreadful knot of witches in the country and buy the help of witches has dreadfully increased the knot."<sup>1045</sup> *Wonders of the Invisible World* contains prominent characteristic markers of late-seventeenth-century witchcraft belief. The demonic pact, witch assemblies, the Devil's mark, and malefic magic (by the 1690s) were well-established traits by Mather's time.

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<sup>1042</sup> Richard Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 27.

<sup>1043</sup> Cotton Mather, *Being the Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693) (New York: Bell Publishing Company, 1974), 15.

<sup>1044</sup> Cotton Mather, *Being the Wonders of the Invisible World*, 77-78.

<sup>1045</sup> Cotton Mather, *Being the Wonders of the Invisible World*, 16.

Side by side, *Wonders of the Invisible World* and *Daemonologie* present witchcraft in strikingly similar ways and Mather's treatise from beginning to end is an example of how theologians depicted witches by the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>1046</sup> Mather's depiction of the Salem trials illustrates the synthesis and standardization of witchcraft belief. While *Wonders of the Invisible World* does not mention *Daemonologie* specifically, Mather reiterates several of the ideas posited by demonologists like William Perkins and Matthew Hopkins, who, in turn, borrowed from James.

Nearly a century before Cotton Mather participated in the prosecutions in Salem, King James VI believed that a group of Satan worshipping witches planned his murder in 1591. The encounter with the North Berwick witches changed the course of the king's life and shaped his belief in the nature and origins of magic. Likewise, what people heard, read, and witnessed about witchcraft influenced personal and popular beliefs in England and Scotland. For Matthew Hopkins and the people involved in the Essex witch hunts, the threat of malefic magic combined with the disruptions of war led to the virulent pursuit, torture, and prosecution of men and women believed to have made a formal pact with Satan.<sup>1047</sup> Similar fears gripped the residents of Salem a half-century earlier as political instability, violent conflict with native groups, and the threat of spiritual decline moved across New England.<sup>1048</sup>

Whether by torture, extralegal threats, social pressure, manipulation, or leading questions, hundreds of men and women confessed to practicing witchcraft in England, Scotland, and the American colonies during the seventeenth century. Those confessions justified societal dread and

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<sup>1046</sup> Mather's scholarship and language echo the development of witchcraft belief throughout the seventeenth century and even mentions the Essex outbreak popularized by Hopkins in *A Discovery of Witches*. Cotton Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, 28-29, 73.

<sup>1047</sup> Matthew Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches*, 4-9.

<sup>1048</sup> Richard Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 37-38, 17-19.

substantiated stories about witchcraft that appeared in popular pamphlets, were performed on stage or spread by word of mouth. From playwright and poet to minister and king, all parts of society contributed to the cultivation of early modern witchcraft belief. Ideas associated with the origins of magic, the source of a witch's power, and a witch's primary motivation spread through popular and intellectual sources, becoming a part of the collective discourse on magic.

When a colonial judge interrogated the imprisoned slave Tituba on charges of witchcraft, his leading and repetitive questions contained common characteristics of English demonological belief, including the demonic pact and eternal service to the Devil.<sup>1049</sup> However, only a century before Tituba's arrest, surviving English accounts of witchcraft prosecutions depict magic use in very different ways. Beliefs are changeable and malleable because they are the product of human imagination and experience, shifting as societies shift. War, famine, illness, and the sheer unpredictable nature of everyday life affect the ways people perceive the world around them. For the English and Scottish subjects of James VI and I, the king's fears of conspiracy and instability manifested in his work on witchcraft and passed to them in his words, how he ruled, and what he perceived as a threat. The confessions of Agnes Sampson, Geilis Duncan, and other North Berwick witches led to the publication of *Newes from Scotland* and *Daemonologie*. Both treatise and pamphlet described magic as satanic, violent, and threatening while including examples of ritualized murder, clandestine assemblies, and demonic pacts to validate fears. As king, James sought to guide and instruct his people, attempting to persuade and alter belief with intentional language and using the popularity of print to reach out and communicate with his subjects in new ways.

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<sup>1049</sup> "First Examination of Tituba," in Richard Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 84-87; "Second Examination of Tituba," in Richard Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 87-90.

The 1597 treatise on witchcraft published by king James disseminates prominent European understandings of magic and the Devil with the backing of a king's authority. *Daemonologie's* claims spread when other scholars, authorities, poets, and playwrights shared the king's claims, which were cultivated by his study of European witch beliefs. James openly cites his sources throughout *Daemonologie*, specifically pointing towards ideas presented in earlier works like *The Malleus Maleficarum* and Jean Bodin's *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*.<sup>1050</sup> Both were highly influential texts in early modern continental witchcraft theory, and both were instrumental in the development of James's ideology. However, *The Malleus* and *Demon-Mania* traveled through a limited sphere of influence in England and Scotland, especially outside the purview of the educated elite.

Although English translations of Jean Bodin's political works like *The Six Books of the Commonwealth* existed in the seventeenth century, his work on witchcraft did not receive an English translation until 2001.<sup>1051</sup> Some English theologians did reference Bodin's ideology before the publication of *Daemonologie*. For example, Reginald Scot, the English witchcraft skeptic rebuked by James in *Daemonologie*, mentioned continental theory and Bodin as early as 1584 but denounced it as deceptive Popish lies.<sup>1052</sup> However, discussion of Bodin's work on witchcraft was rare and did not appear outside of lengthy intellectual treatises. Similarly, the 1487 *Malleus Maleficarum* was popular throughout Europe, with an estimated thirty to fifty

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<sup>1050</sup> Christopher Mckay, tr., *The Malleus Maleficarum*; Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*.

<sup>1051</sup> Bodin and James held similar beliefs on the role of the monarch in government and on the threat of witches and while concepts of divine and absolute royal authority were not uncommon in England by the 1600s, Bodin's views on witchcraft were. The English Short Title Catalogue lists two seventeenth century printings of Bodin's political works translated into English. Jean Bodin, *The Six Bookes of the Common-Weale* (London, 1606). Jean Bodin, *The Necessity of Absolute Power of All Kings* (London, 1635). Randy A. Scott, Tr., "Introduction," *On The Demon-Mania of Witches* by Jean Bodin (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 2001), 9-11.

<sup>1052</sup> Marion Gibson also mentions George Giffords's 1593 witchcraft treatise containing some aspects of continental thought, but Giffords's popularity is undetermined, and his work does not mention European demonologists specifically like James does. Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 61-72, 74-84. James VI, *Daemonologie*, .

thousand copies printed in Frankfurt, Lyon, Paris, and Venice by the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>1053</sup> That being said, the text's popularity did not extend to England, and the *Malleus* was not translated into English until 1928.<sup>1054</sup> A lack of translations did not wholly prevent the *Malleus* from reaching English readers. Again, Reginald Scot mentions the text's arguments and dismisses them as Catholic lies.<sup>1055</sup> Furthermore, John Cotta, in his 1616 *The Trial of Witchcraft*, cites the *Malleus* as a reference.<sup>1056</sup> However, both Scot and Cotta worked among the educated elite who published extensive treatises on witchcraft. Their work was less likely to spread outside of an insulated circle of intellectual readers.

The significance of James's use of continental witchcraft ideology and its spread into English and Scottish belief is the king's influence over a broad percentage of the population. James was king, and his ideology appeared in his treatise and the pamphlet *Newes from Scotland. Daemonologie* addressed the king's subjects directly, and evidence proves that his subjects took notice. Out of forty-three works printed in the seventeenth century that involved witchcraft and mentioned King James, sixteen referenced *Daemonologie*.<sup>1057</sup> Several of the printed texts were, like *Daemonologie*, extensive intellectual treatises on witchcraft. Furthermore, they resembled or mimicked the form and style of the king's work. For example, George Sinclair's *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (1685) referenced classical texts, biblical evidence and used *Daemonologie* as proof of the existence of witches.<sup>1058</sup>

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<sup>1053</sup> Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 8.

<sup>1054</sup> Montague Summers, tr. *The Malleus Maleficarum*, reprint (New York: Dover Publications, 2012).

<sup>1055</sup> Gibson, ed. *Witchcraft and Society*, 80-82.

<sup>1056</sup> John Cotta, *The Triall of Witchcraft* (London: George Pruslowe, 1616).

<sup>1057</sup> The publications were all sourced at *Early English Books Online*.

<sup>1058</sup> George Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (London, 1685), A2v.



James's *Daemonologie* is listed within the surviving published catalogs of the libraries belonging to five men between 1678 and 1695.<sup>1059</sup> Among the printed catalogs were two members of the English nobility, a reverend, and a bookseller.<sup>1060</sup> Although finding *Daemonologie*'s influence in other intellectual works and the wealthy elite libraries are significant, it is more important to trace James's influence on common belief. Cheap print such as ballads, plays, and sensationalized accounts of witch-trials referenced the king's work on the subject, illustrates his ideology's spread. Apart from Matthew Hopkins, several other pamphleteers published tales of witchcraft and the Devil that paid homage to James.<sup>1061</sup> In the 1682 *A True Impartial Relation of the Informations Against Three Witches*, the anonymous author tells his readers to "consult the learned Monarch King James, in his *Daemonologia*" for proof of witches.<sup>1062</sup> In 1663, Robert Filmer cited James's *Daemonologie* to prove that witches can commit murder and support James's advocacy of using the water test to detect witches.<sup>1063</sup>

Not all references to *Daemonologie* were in support of the king's witchcraft ideology. John Webster's 1677 work of skepticism, *The Display of Supposed Witchcraft*, argued that James's claims in *Daemonologie* had "no rational ground of probability at all."<sup>1064</sup> Also, Thomas Ady's *A Perfect Discovery of Witches* (1661) said James "defiled [his] pen" with the "groundless phantastical doctrines" that he learned from European demonologists like the "Popish bloud-sucker" Bodin.<sup>1065</sup> Ultimately, when examining the scope and weight of James's influence on English and Scottish witchcraft belief, all press is good press. Even Ady's rebuke

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<sup>1059</sup> cite all libraries.

<sup>1060</sup> Cite again.

<sup>1061</sup> Matthew Hopkins, *A Discovery of Witches*.

<sup>1062</sup> Anonymus. *A True and Impartial Relation of the Information Against Three Witches* (London: Freeman Collins, 1682), 1.

<sup>1063</sup> Robert Filmer, *An Advertisement to the Jury-Men, of England, touching Witches* (London, 1663), 7-11.

<sup>1064</sup> John Webster, *The Display of Supposed Witchcraft* (London, 1677), .

<sup>1065</sup> Thomas Ady, *A Perfect Discovery of Witchcraft* (London, 1661), 139.

of *Daemonologie* highlights the texts' overall significance. Ady's denials relating to witchcraft had to address the evidence put forth by King James decades after *Daemonologie's* publication.<sup>1066</sup> The theologian felt compelled to refute the belief in demonic witchcraft and, in doing so, had to contend with the English authority on the subject alongside the continental heavyweights. James's ideas about witches, influenced by Bodin and the *Malleus*, appeared on the English stage, in pamphlets about witch trials, and the most publicized witch-hunt in English history. While he was not the only conduit of continental witchcraft ideology in England and Scotland, he most definitely had the most influence.

The ideas and characteristics *Daemonologie* associated with witchcraft was not the sole creation of James's research and imagination. *Daemonologie* is an example of a curated combination of the king's theology, continental witchcraft theory, and an expression of absolute authority. James used the works of theological scholars and demonologists (Protestant and Catholic) to explain that witchcraft was real, it was demonic, it necessitated destruction, and it was an essential part of Christian duty to stop it. From St. Augustine to the *Malleus Maleficarum*, James took characteristics associated with witchcraft commonly found in continental works and incorporated them into his related theory. According to James's European-influenced understanding of magic, witches were soul-bound servants of Satan, and all witchcraft was diabolical, evil, and forbidden. *Daemonologie* refuted older ideas that separated good and bad magic and dismissed comedic, trickster, or harmless depictions of the Devil as lies and fantasy. By 1603, England inherited a monarch who adamantly believed that he was the ultimate authority on all things. As a result, James's authority accompanied his views on witchcraft as they entered the public consciousness. More importantly, the beliefs he espoused were consumed

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<sup>1066</sup> Thomas Ady, *A Perfect Discovery*, B1r.

and disseminated by government officials, theological scholars, lawyers, ministers, poets, authors of cheap print, and playwrights.

Pope Alexander V's warning against "practitioners of nefarious and forbidden arts" found its way into the personal writings of George Wyatt in the seventeenth century when he renounced magic as demonic and condemned witches who let the Devil "take them in the snare of his vengeance."<sup>1067</sup> Between the written warnings of an early fifteenth-century Pope and the unpublished theories of a seventeenth-century English noble, sit two centuries of witch hunts, shifts in perception and beliefs, and dozens of published works on the nature of witchcraft. One treatise, in particular, James's *Daemonologie*, bridged a gap between prominent continental understandings of witchcraft and the state of English and Scottish belief at the time of its publication. That is not to say that connections between witchcraft and the Devil did not exist in England and Scotland before *Daemonologie*. The Scottish courts tried a considerable number of witches before the conspiracy of the North Berwick witches caught James's attention.<sup>1068</sup> While there are no published pamphlets from Scotland to compare, what records we do have contain scant references to diabolical magic or Satan until the publication of *Newes* in 1592. In England, European trends in intellectual thought peppered the work of English authors as religious controversy, and the successive reigns of Henry VIII's children exiled oppositional religious leaders into Europe for years at a time, exposing them to the continental witchcraft craze. Brian Darcy, a Justice of the Peace in Essex, helped publish *A True and Just Recorde* in 1582 that

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<sup>1067</sup> Pope Alexander V, "To Pontus Fougeryon on New Sects," in Kors and Peters, eds., *Witchcraft in Europe*, 153; "34 FF. 416-423, A Treatise By George Wyatt on Witchcraft," in *Wyatt Papers Vol. I: A Collection of Documents by and Relating to Members of the Wyatt Family*, 1496- early 18<sup>th</sup> century, ADD 62135, British Library, Department of Manuscripts (London, England).

<sup>1068</sup> Scottish court records contain at least 272 mentions of witchcraft in cases between 1560 and 1599. "Table 5: Cases broken down by decade and type of court," in *A Source-book of Scottish Witchcraft*, Christina Larner, et. al., 239.

cautioned readers against using magic because witches worshipped Satan.<sup>1069</sup> However, despite his ominous introduction, none of the accused witches mentioned in Darcy's account had any interactions with demons or the Devil.<sup>1070</sup> In fact, the witches featured in *A True and Just Recorde* admitted to practicing both good and bad magic, they learned magic from relatives or neighbors, and their spirit helpers acted as servants and not masters, which significantly contradict seventeenth-century demonological depictions of magic.<sup>1071</sup>

The 1597 publication of King James's *Daemonologie* had considerable influence over the structure of those shifts by contributing to the dissemination of a pre-existing framework of witchcraft belief prominent in Continental Europe. James re-packaged those ideas, combined them with his knowledge of faith, scripture, authority, and responsibility, and published *Daemonologie* with the authoritative backing of a scholarly monarch who personally addressed his subjects with the printed word. Witches served as sworn servants to Satan who wanted "the tinsel of their life (their souls)," and demanded their renunciation of God in exchange for the power to enrich themselves and wreak havoc on their enemies.<sup>1072</sup> A century later, remnants of those warnings survived, and as the embattled minister of Salem Village Church sought answers about the origins of his sick daughter's mysterious affliction, he looked to God and dwelled on the Devil. In his notes for a sermon on *John 6:70*, Samuel Parris's words embodied the same message that James delivered in *Daemonologie* as he came to believe that the Devil was responsible for his community's suffering.<sup>1073</sup> Parris believed that the Devil was working in Salem, hiding among the "sincere converts and sound believers," to torment and destroy his

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<sup>1069</sup> Anonymous, "A True and Just Recorde," in *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750*, Marion Gibson, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 26.

<sup>1070</sup> Anonymous, "A True and Just Recorde," in Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society*, 28-42.

<sup>1071</sup> Anonymous, "A True and Just Recorde," in Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society*, 28-41.

<sup>1072</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie*, 63-64.

<sup>1073</sup> "Samuel Parris on the Outbreak of Witch Accusations in Salem Village," in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 61-62.

community from the inside.<sup>1074</sup> The minister denounced witches, he warned his congregation, and he pronounced that all magic, regardless of its intent, was demonic and equated counter magic as “going to the Devil for help against the Devil.”<sup>1075</sup> The main focus of the witch trials in Salem was the Devil. He whispered in his servants’ ears, he gathered them for false worship and inverted rites, he claimed their souls, abused their bodies, and sought to “pull down the kingdom of Christ and build his own.”<sup>1076</sup> Cotton Mather, Matthew Hopkins, Shakespeare, and dozens of men who wrote and published about witchcraft in the seventeenth century perpetuated an understanding of witchcraft where the Devil was the foundation. Between 1600 and 1700, England and Scotland prosecuted more witches under stricter laws, and those cases reflected an emphasis on diabolical and malefic magic. Cases from Kent to Lancashire and York tried before 1600 included bewitchment, even murder, but rarely did they contain any mention of the Devil.<sup>1077</sup> James’s treatise made a difference. The king used print and position to spread his ideas, and those ideas caught on in a meaningful way.

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<sup>1074</sup> “Samuel Parris on the Outbreak,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 62-63.

<sup>1075</sup> “Samuel Parris’s Statement to his Congregation about Mary Sibley’s Use of Countermagic,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 64.

<sup>1076</sup> “Samuel Parris on the Outbreak,” in Godbeer, ed., *The Salem Witch Hunt*, 61-63.

<sup>1077</sup> The 1582 *A True and Just Recorde* mentioned the Devil in the introduction, but the cases themselves contained no diabolical magic. Cases from the national archives, other book collections, and assize records failed to produce barely any reference to Satan before 1600. Anonymous, *A True and Just Recorde*, in Gibson, ed., *Witchcraft and Society*, 27-41. Accusation of witchcraft against Agnes Mills, 1558-1579, C 3/8/85-113, The National Archives (Kew, England). G.B. Harrison, *The Trial of the Lancashire Witches* (London: Davies, 1929), 320-321.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Timeline of Events<sup>1078</sup>

- 1563 - Both Scotland and England pass laws criminalizing witchcraft.
- 1566 - 19 June – Prince James Stuart born to Mary, Queen of Scots.
- 1567 - Feb. – James’s father, Lord Darnley assassinated.
- 1567 - May – Mary, Queen of Scots marries James Hepburn, Fourth Earl of Bothwell.
- 1567 - Jul. – Mary, Queen of Scots, forced to abdicate throne following a conflict with Scottish nobility.
- 1567 - 29 Jul. – King James VI of Scotland crowned at thirteen-months old.
- 1567 - Hostilities erupt between Protestant and Catholic factions in Scotland following Mary’s abdication results in Mary fleeing to England.
- 1570 - Assassination of Regent to King James, Earl of Moray.
- 1571 - King James’s grandfather and Regent, Earl of Lennox, killed.
- 1578 - King James ends the regency period assuming full authority as King of Scotland.
- 1578 - Attempted coup against the King, James is taken prisoner, fails.
- 1582 - Attempted coup against the King by the Ruthven Raiders, James kidnapped but escapes.
- 1584 - Passage of the “Black Acts,” which gives King James supremacy over the Scottish church.
- 1586 - Treaty of friendship signed between Scotland and England.
- 1587 - Mary, Queen of Scots, executed in England for plotting the murder of Queen Elizabeth I.
- 1589 - August – After successful negotiations with Denmark, King James VI marries Princess Anne of Denmark via proxy at Kronborg Castle in Denmark.
- 1589 - Sept. – Anne leaves Denmark for Scotland, but storms impede the journey. Moreover, the company forced to land in Norway.
- 1589 - Oct. – James plans to go to Denmark to bring Anne back to Scotland.

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<sup>1078</sup> Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, ed., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James VI’s Demonology and the North Berwick Witches* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 17-19. Roger Lockyer, *James VI and I* (London: Longman Publishing, 1988), 218-219.

- 1589 - Dec. – James and Anne finally meet in Norway, go to Denmark for the winter.
- 1590 - Apr. – King James and Queen Anne set sail for Scotland and arrive in Leith on 1 May.
- 1590 - May – Accused witches prosecuted and executed for cursing Queen Anne’s voyage.
- 1590 - Nov. – North Berwick witch accusations begin with Geillis Duncan and others interrogated. King James involves himself in the investigations.
- 1590 - Dec. – Trial and conviction of North Berwick witch Dr. Fian who is strangled and burned on Castle Hill.
- 1591 - Jan. – Trial and conviction of Agnes Sampson who is strangled and burned on Castle Hill.
- 1591 - Feb. – Several witches convicted and burned in connection with the North Berwick conspiracy, dozens more imprisoned.
- 1591 - Apr. – Fifth Earl of Bothwell implicated in North Berwick witchcraft investigations.
- 1591 - May – Barbara Napier convicted of witchcraft.
- 1591 - June – Witchcraft trial of Euphame McKenzie, she is convicted and burnt on Castle Hill.
- 1591 - Oct. – Privy Council in Scotland creates a commission to investigate witchcraft.
- 1592 - Feb. – Richard Graham tried and convicted of witchcraft, strangled and burned.
- 1593 - May – An attempted coup by Fifth Ear of Bothwell, gains control of James for a short period.
- 1596 -97 - Large witchcraft outbreak in Aberdeen and Fife, King James again involved.
- 1597 - Daemonologie published in Scotland.
- 1603 - Mar. – King James VI of Scotland also crowned King James I of England.
- 1603 - Daemonologie published in England.
- 1604 - King James and Parliament pass new witchcraft laws in England.

## Appendix B

Figures

*Figure 1 - Saul: At Endor / Bible Historiale*



*Figure 2 - Saul and the Witch of Endor / van Oostsanen*



Figure 3- Frontspiece *A Discovery of Witchcraft* 1647