Liberty University

King James VI and I: Witch-Hunter and Protector of the Realm

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by

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Witches have fascinated the modern world with their magic and mystery. They have filled the pages of fairytales and recited macabre lines in plays, but fascination with these mysterious beings has not always been so favorable. Before witches were portrayed as wicked stepmothers in children's stories, they were hunted and burned as the devil's concubines. The intrigue in witches has played a pivotal role in shaping a centuries old image into a clear-cut narrative.

Literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries supplied its eager readers with satisfying morsels of superstitious lore including magic, spells, charms, witches, and demons. A defining addition to the European witch-craze was works by demonologists and witch-hunters. The fifteenth-century contributed widely to the cause with the *Malleus Maleficarum.*[1] One of the authors of this piece of witchcraft literature, Heinrich Kramer, was so fully vested in the extermination of witches that he used his own manner of trickery to condemn innocent lives. Kramer's reputation as a fervent witch-hunter did not go unnoticed, but it did strip away his credibility. This text was essential to the literary elite of whom sought punishment for the witch. Demonologists contributed considerably to the narrative. The Frenchman, Jean Bodin, wrote a book entitled *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* in 1584. The four-part book was a cornerstone for witch-hunters as it explicitly targeted the destruction of the witch. King James VI of Scotland (later James I of England) too delivered a treatise, *Daemonologie,* published in 1597 that would become a monumental piece of witchcraft literature.

[1] The *Malleus Maleficarum* translated as the Hammer of Witches, was a popular manual for witch-hunters that had circulated around Europe since its publication in 1487. The book had the approval of Pope Innocent VIII and included a papal bull giving the authors full authority to hunt and exterminate suspected witches.

James's involvement in the witch trials demonstrates his confirmed belief in witches and the threat they posed to his sovereignty. He warned against them as an enemy of God and of himself, as James believed to be seated on his throne by almighty God. To James, witches committed sin against religion by their pact with the devil as well as treason by their intent to kill his majesty.

To understand James's fervent belief in the divine right of kings, it is essential to know the nature of his pedigree. James was the son of Mary Stuart or Mary, Queen of Scots, and was cousin to England's Elizabeth I. Mary led a tumultuous life full of controversy. It was believed that she had been conspiring against Elizabeth for the English throne. She also was caught up in a murder conspiracy. One can ascertain that James bore much trepidation about his future as the son of a woman executed on grounds of treason.

He spent years haunted by his mother's damaged reputation and it may be from this that he was determined to exercise absolute sovereignty.[2] Thus, a highly intelligent young man sought to exert power beyond his kingly duties. The witch-craze in which the king was involved was woven together through the literature of its time. Sixteenth-century folklore developed this witch persona complete with the devil's pact and the nighttime sabbat. Variations among what was accepted and what was otherwise rejected continued to be debated, although the general consensus was that the witch was primarily female whose apostasy created an overwhelming fear of what she could potentially do with her malevolent power. The European witch hunts created an era of cataclysmic consequence. Women were targeted as willing participants in witchcraft, as they were perceived as weaker and more susceptible to the guiles of the devil. The authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum* held a solid belief in the woman's culpability in the evil art of witchcraft.

[2] Absolute sovereignty is a political theory originating in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe in which monarchs held full authority over the state and therefore, answered to no man. This doctrine of sovereignty was exercised as uncontested power given directly from God to the monarch.

She was thought to be easily tempted into carnal pleasures. Using Scripture to support their theory, the authors warn: "there was a defect in the formation of the first woman,"[3] a "defect" they believed common to all women. King James shared similar views. In his treatise, he uses the Scriptures and Eve's sin to define the female sex as one which is frail and "easier to be intrapped by these grosse snares of the Devill."[4] In Scotland, eighty percent of witch trial victims were women.[5] This victimization of women was a recurring trend in witchcraft lore.

As accounts of witchcraft became ever more prevalent throughout Europe, people from all walks of life shared common beliefs in this phenomenon. Skeptics voiced their own opinions, creating a wave of uncertainty and eventual doubt about the validity of witches and witchcraft. Chapter one explores the educated views of believers and non-believers, respectively. Among noted skeptics during the reign of James VI was Reginald Scot, an Englishman whose publication, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, was published the same year as Bodin's work, although the message was quite different. Scot was a staunch opponent of the witch-craze and his book outraged the king due to its author's disbelief in witchcraft. Another noted skeptic was the physician Johann Weyer, whose works attacked the persecution of alleged witches, whom he believed were deluded victims.

[3] Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 1487, Rev. Montague Summers, translated, Reprint 1928, Wicasta Lovelace and Christie Rice, transcribed, Online Edition (Windhaven Network, Inc., 1998-2001), Part I, Question VI., www.malleusmaleficarum.org/ (Accessed December 27, 2019).

[4] King James I, *Daemonologie*, 1597 (Project Gutenberg, 2008), 35, http://www.gutenberg.org/license (Accessed May 25, 2019).

[5] Thomas Brochard, "Scottish Witchcraft in a Regional and a Northern European Context, The Northern Highlands 1563-1660*," Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* (Summer 2015): 48, 51.

What drew the king into his unwavering belief in witches and how much did he contribute to the witch hysteria that took place in Scotland in the 1590's? Witch trials were not sharply increasing in Scotland after the establishment of the Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563. Trials took place but, not at record numbers. The event that historians earmark as the beginning of Scotland's mass witch-hunts took place in 1589. In the autumn, the young king was about to embark on a new chapter in his life as monarch and husband. He was to marry the teenaged princess Anne of Denmark. The royal ships encountered months of delay as weather prohibited safe passage to Scotland. James made the voyage himself to bring home his new bride. During his stay, news of witches conjuring storms had caught his attention. The following year would launch a mass witch-hunt in Scotland as witches were the conduits that would kill the king; "the greatest enemy he [the devil] had in the world."[6]

Chapter two provides a clearer picture of the witch as she was depicted in books and pamphlets. The images found in these works gave readers a glimpse at her appearance, gender, status, and temperament. They included the cauldron, a forked instrument, bones, and even demons with all the machinations of a witch. Illustrations furthered the idea of the witch's pact with the devil and the nighttime sabbat. The image of the witch was a frightening reality for most of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe. Perhaps more frightening was the power she was believed to possess.

The king's involvement in the witch trials is an interesting chapter in the repertoire of the witch narrative. What was it that spurred his interest in witches? No monarch before had put himself in the position to interrogate and punish; there was a court for that. The reason or reasons

[6] Deborah Willis, "James Among the Witch-Hunters: Witch-Hunting in Maternal Power in Early Modern England," in *Malevolent Nurture* (Cornell University Press, 1995), 126.

that the king became enthralled with witches in the late sixteenth-century and his personal involvement in the trials may provide more insight into his political and religious ideologies.

The king broke with traditional precedent by personally attending the trials. Illustrations survive which depict the king interrogating alleged witches. The Scottish Witchcraft Act had been enacted for three decades before the mass hysteria consumed Scotland. In 1587, the king issued new reforms which would give more power to the authorities. As the 1590s got underway, the king commissioned witch-hunts, meaning the six men he appointed could, with the sanction of royal authority, examine, and torture anyone suspected of witchcraft without a formal declaration. General commissions prolonged the witch persecutions of sixteenth-century Scotland only slowing after 1597. In the same year that the king's treatise was published, the abuses of commissioning witch-hunts came to a head. Although 1597 saw another large witch-hunt, it did not have the same influence as the one which took place in 1590 and 1591. The king did not have the same urgency for involvement that he had had earlier. It has been speculated by some historians that the king may have started having doubts about witches during this time.

The witch hysteria that engulfed Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly in Scotland, has contributed immensely to the witchcraft narrative. Books, pamphlets, and treaties were written to identify and warn against witches. Artists' interpretations were realistically illustrated depicting the witch in the flesh. Laws were enacted to punish them and subsequent trials were held to determine their fate. Witch hunting was a ruthless sport and when the Scottish king, James VI, became involved in the early 1590s, no one escaped judgment. He exercised divine right kingship to justify many of his actions. Historian D. Alan Orr explains that James's experiences in the trials gave legitimacy to his role as the acting agent in the crusade

against the devil.[7] Daniel Fischlin, in his article "Counterfeiting God: James VI (I) and the Politics of "Daemonologie" suggests that the wordage used by the king in his treatise was purposeful when referencing "God" or "majesty" as they boasted "political empowerment."[8] The king's actions in the 1590s, which will be examined in the following chapters, will prove that he became involved because he had the authority to do so. In his mind, he was an absolute monarch, and as such, he was God's lieutenant on earth to do His bidding.

[7] D. Alan Orr, "God's Hangman: James VI, the Divine Right of Kings, and the Devil," *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 18, no. 2 (June 2016): 140-1.

[8] Daniel Fischlin, "Counterfeiting God": James VI (I) and the Politics of "Daemonologie" (1597), *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 26, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 4.

Chapter One: A Plot Born of the Sea

1.1 *Malleus* and the Witch

In Early Modern Europe, superstition was widespread, particularly with regard to conspiracies and pacts with the devil. The contemporary image of witchcraft was viewed as a representation of sorcery and magic since no clear distinction was made between natural and supernatural events. Anne Llewellyn Barstow, historian on European witchcraft, states that, "magic is a two-edged weapon," making claim to the fact that good intentions such as healing could have been construed as dealings with the devil.[9] In fact, one of the notorious North Berwick witches, Agnes Sampson, was also charged with healing practices. The educated elite, however, may have perceived the image of witchcraft through a biblical lens. One such illustration from 1487 represents a biblical association in which a sorceress rides on top a dragon in the company of demons as a depiction of the "witch of Endor and the Whore of Babylon." [10] The seed of this evil was planted and sowed with the literature of its time. One work in particular aroused an awakening in the persecution of witches. The *Malleus Maleficarum*, published in 1487 by German inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger, was a handbook for would be witch hunters. The three-part book detailed the detection of witches and served as a guide for their extermination. As it circulated throughout Europe, many hundreds of accused witches were tried and executed. The work was highly popularized as the holy grail in demonology.

[9] Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 116.

[10] Charles Zika, "The Transformation of Sorcery and Magic in the Fifteenth Century," in *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 2013), 50.

At the same time as the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the illustrations by Hans Vintler cast no doubt about the existence of witches, as they were frighteningly depicted in his *Buch der Tugend.*[11] Illustrations typically portrayed a sorceress surrounded by demons, a cauldron brewing while danger looms in the background, or a coven of witches in the company of the devil suggesting their diabolical pact. Although an array of publications on witches instructed Europeans in witch-detection and how they should be punished, a clear definition of one still eluded pre-Reformation Europe. Writers and artists of the sixteenth century compiled books, pamphlets, and illustrations to birth an image of the Renaissance witch. Historians argue, however, that witchcraft was something nearly impossible to prove. Jean Bodin, the French political theorist and demonologist, described the witch as "one who knowingly tries to accomplish something by diabolical means."[12] The witch, as manipulated by the devil, caused terrible atrocities within her community. Since destructive and purposeful intent to harm was not easily discernable from most superstitious occurrences, the witch became more of a threatening and terrifying figure. Miraculous healings, famine, crop failure, death of livestock, or even terrible weather were thought to be the work of witches consorting with the devil during this superstitious era. Thanks to print and the imaginative minds of the time, these unexplained phenomena were newsworthy further materializing the reality of witchcraft.

The illnesses or deaths of livestock in the sixteenth century were difficult to connect with plant ingestion, argues Sally Hickey in her article, "Fatal Feeds?" which details the connection

[11] Ibid., 45.

[12] Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, 1580, Randy A. Scott, trans., (Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2001), 45.

between the loss of livestock and witchcraft accusations.[13] Still the charge of witchcraft was ascribed to alleged witches who were thought to maim or kill a neighbor's cattle. Drowning, fevers, and starvation were also attributed to the witch. In any case, writers sought to expose the witch as a living, breathing evil enchantress whose pact with the devil equipped her with the means to do harm. Most commonly believed to be women, they were thought to conjure up spells using any manner of object. Wax images, toads, or other animals, and corpses were some of the objects that were used in spells. In the case of the attack on the king at sea in North Berwick, a cat with parts of a corpse tied to it, was cast into the sea to swiftly bring the spell to fruition.

Stuart MacDonald, author of the 2017 publication "Counting Witches," suggests that spells and charms and herbal medicines used to cure were not categorized as witchcraft. Furthermore, he claims that the population was well aware of the difference between charmers and witches, which prompted a difference in their overall treatment.[14] Sixteenth century healers may have used remedies and the use of certain herbs to heal clients of the maladies of the day such as infertility or the usual aches and pains. It was lucrative work in which many made a living using generations-old remedies to assist the day to day lives of their neighborly clientele. In the midst of a superstitious age, all it took was a single accusation; a cure gone awry, to turn the well-intended charmer into a manipulative, ill-willed witch. It can be attributed to the healing arts which sparked the North Berwick witch-hunt detailed in chapter five. A maid servant departing

[13] Salley Hickey, "Fatal Feeds?: Plants, Livestock Losses, and Witchcraft Accusations in Tudor and Stuart Britain," *Folklore* 101, no. 2 Taylor & Francis, Ltd. On behalf of Folklore Enterprises, Ltd, (1990): 131.

[14] Stuart MacDonald, "Counting Witches: Illuminating and Distorting the Shape of Witchcraft Accusations in Scotland," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 37, Iss. 1 Edinburgh University Press, (2017): 11.

in the night to use certain healing remedies was believed to be secretly indulging in the dark arts. She was tortured and forced to name other accomplices.

Over the next century, other scholars would contribute their own narratives. A legal treatise written in 1594 by William West provides a sixteenth century interpretation aiming to separate the image of charmers from that of the witch. In the second part to his treatise, *Symboleography,* West asserts that "inchaunters or charmers through certeine words pronounced and characters or images, herbs, or other things applied, thinke they can do what they list, the devil so deceiveth them." [15] West acknowledges that charmers "somewhat differ witches."[16] The witch "thinketh she can designe what maner of evil things soever, either by thought or imprication, as to shake the aire with lightnings and thunder, to cause hail and tempests."[17] This description further emphasizes the power of the devil and the use of magic no matter the varying degree of difference between witches and charmers. The comings and goings in everyday life for most women in sixteenth century Europe made her susceptible to persecution. It was this fear of what she could do with her gifts, be it from the devil, that gave her power. For the common people this was a harmful realization; for the king it was a treasonous power struggle.

The king would add to the whirlwind of scholarly contributions on witchcraft in the last decade of the sixteenth century. In her 2018 article entitled "The Malleus Maleficarum and King James: Defining Witchcraft," Elizabeth Mack argues that the king's views varied significantly from those of Kramer. She states that, "The definitions James offered in *Daemonologie* do not

[15] C. L'Estrange Ewan, *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials: The Indictments for Witchcraft from the Records of 1373 Assizes held for the Home Circuit A.D. 1559-1736*, coll. and ed. C. L'Estrange Ewen (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd, 1929), 23.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

match those written by Kramer." [18] Exactly how much of James's beliefs were in line with the esteemed *Malleus Maleficarum* published a century earlier will be discussed in chapter three.

1.2 Witchcraft: Hex or Hoax?

Pamphleteering provided a means of sharing ideas and witchcraft pamphlets were certainly no exception. Dark stories of malice inked the pages of pamphlets, books, and treatises which were intended to bring to light the danger of the dark art of witchcraft. Among the number of publications within circulation, more and more works surfaced that contradicted the widespread belief in the power of witches. Skepticism appeared as just as much a danger.

Perhaps the most notable skeptic, at least as far as James was concerned, was Reginald Scot. He published his book, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, in 1584, denouncing the existence of witches. He writes, "note also how easilie they may be brought to confesse that which they never did, nor lieth in the power of man to do; and then see whether I have cause to write as I do."[19] As will be mentioned later, a "culture of confession" was an unusual phenomenon is Scotland. Not every alleged witch confessed under torture or was tortured in an attempt to get a confession. Bodin explains that there were two kinds of confessions: voluntary and forced. Perhaps those whom confessed voluntarily did so to avoid torture, as they no doubt understood the repercussions of their situation. This is not to say that he felt any sympathy for them. He

[18] Elizabeth Mack, "The Malleus Maleficarum and King James: Defining Witchcraft," *Voces Novae* 1, Article 9 (2009), 181, https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/vocesnovae/vol1/iss1/9 (Accessed December 29, 2019).

[19] Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 1584), 10, www.eebo.chadwyck.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu (Accessed July 1, 2019).

mercilessly sought confessions using red hot instruments on alleged witches no matter their age or status.[20]

The central theme of Scot's book was contrary to the de facto superstition of the age. He concludes that "I rest upon earnest wishing, namelie, to all people an absolute trust in God the creator, and not in creatures, which is to make flesh our arme."[21] This statement demonstrates his religious leanings, but it is apparent that he rejected the superstition of the period. Scot relied on rationality to make sense of unexplained occurrences while shrugging off the possibility of witchcraft. He did, however, identify those he called witches who poisoned their victims without supernatural intervention and others he deemed frauds who preyed on the credulous.[22] Historian Philip Almond's 2009 journal, which focuses on the king's indignation of Scot's work, states that Reginald Scot had denied that witchcraft was real, contrary to the firm belief held by the king. The author maintains that "James would undoubtedly have been predisposed to destroy such a work as the *Discoverie*."[23]

In the preface to the reader in James's *Daemonolgie,* the king uses the best weapon he has against those who contradict him: his pen. James writes "wherof the one called SCOT an Englishman, is not ashamed in publike print to deny, that ther can be such a thing as

[20] Jonathan J. Moore, *Hung, Drawn, and Quartered: The Story of Execution Through the Ages (*Alabama: Sweet Water Press by arrangement with Quid Publishing, 2017), 92.

[21] Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft,* 8.

[22] Lois Martin, *The History of Witchcraft* (Great Britain: Pocket Essentials, 2016), 96.

[23] Philip C. Almond, "King James I and the Burning of Reginald Scot's The Discoverie of Witchcraft: The Invention of a Tradition*," Notes & Queries*, 254, 56 (June 2009): 210.

Witchcraft."[24] Also, scholarly assertion has it that, after ascending to the throne of England in 1603, James ordered all copies of Scot's book to be burned. Cyndia Clegg's 2004 book, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England*, confirms that James used book burning as a form of suppression.[25] She reiterates the king's outward confidence when she states that his many works, "reveal a man prominently and confidently mounting the enduring stage of the printed word to offer his self-defense as a beacon of truth."[26] Historians Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts write that, although James contradicted Scot's work, evidence shows that he relied on some of its information.[27] In less than a decade, King James would become frightfully consumed with witchcraft taking place in Scotland and had tasked himself with writing about the existence and danger of witches based on his experiences, despite skepticism. How far the king would go to prove that witches did indeed exist can be examined through his involvement in the trials, letters and other correspondence, and his experiences which materialized into the famous treatise *Daemonologie*.

Whether or not Europeans believed in the devil, witchcraft, or the witch's potency, there remained men that would defend the legitimacy of those claims with the utmost resolve. What harm was there for non-believers? Perhaps they were perceived as naïve and most likely to

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[24] King James VI, preface to Daemonologie, xi, 1597 (Project Gutenberg, 2008), http://www.gutenberg.org/license (Accessed May 25, 2019).

[25] Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (CA: Pepperdine University, Cambridge University Press, 2004), 69.

[26] Ibid., 71.

[27] Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, "Scottish Witchcraft Before the North Berwick Witch Hunt: James VI's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland* (Liverpool Scholarship Online, 2000), 330.

succumb to the inevitable folly of their ways. It could be that non-believers may have fallen victim to charges themselves as practitioners of harmful magic unable to get themselves out of their plight. Some scholars of the age perceived them as not so much foolish, but just as guilty as the witch who practices the dark arts.

1.3 A Plot Born of the Sea

The *Malleus Maleficarum* makes reference to Saint Isidore's description of witches: "They [witches] stir up and confound the elements by aid of the devil, and arouse terrible hailstorms and tempests."[28] This sixteenth-century woodcut engraving below captures the witch as she used instruments to raise a storm at sea. Victims can be seen in the water as foul beasts lay gnashing near the shore. And it would be raging storms and gales that caused a witch hysteria in Scotland in 1590.

[Image Removed to comply with copyright]

In the fall of 1589, King James VI of Scotland wed by proxy the teenaged Anne of Denmark. His anticipation over his new bride's safe passage to Scotland, however, was anything but joyous. Terrible storms drove the ships off course, preventing their happy union. After months of delay, the young king made the trip himself in all his regalia so that he could bring home his new queen. Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, leading scholars of the North Berwick trials, believe that this act of taking matters into his own hands said a great deal about

[28] Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, Part I, Question II.

James's character,[29] which would surely be put to the test in the months that followed. These unhappy events would later be recorded in a pamphlet published in 1591 entitled *Newes from Scotland*, which will be discussed in later chapters. The terrible weather that beleaguered the royal ships convinced James to do some investigating of his own in order to conclude whether witches were set on doing him harm. A threat on the king's life was treason after all. James believed in absolute sovereignty as the monarch chosen by God to restore justice on earth and James was more than willing to fulfill this duty. At the dawn of the seventeenth century the king ushered in a new era of witch persecution.

[29] Normand and Roberts, "Scottish Witchcraft Before the North Berwick Witch Hunt," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 4.

Chapter Two: The Renaissance Witch

2.1 The Plot Thickens

The year 1479 witnessed a plot to kill the king. Several accused witches were involved in the conspiracy which was orchestrated by the Earl of Mar, the king's own brother.[30] The treachery was uncovered and the guilty were put to death. This intrigue against James III of Scotland is eerily reminiscent to the malefice against another Scottish monarch, James VI, a century later. Crimes of witchcraft and treason became intertwined in a perverse attack on a Renaissance king, attributed to none other than the Renaissance witch.

When King James VI set sail for Denmark in 1589 in order to bring his new bride to Scotland, his cousin, Francis Stewart, the Earl of Bothwell and high admiral, was tasked with the responsibility of securing the safe return of the royal ship.[31] A series of failed attempts to drown the king at sea led an alleged coven of witches to other means of malice in which the earl would later be implicated. With the presence of Satan himself, the alleged witches were instructed on how exactly they could kill James whether through the use of a wax image or by poison.[32] On All Hallows' Eve in 1590, a greater number of witches convened at the North Berwick Kirk.[33] There they made a pact with the devil in which he laid claim that the king was "the greatest enemy he had in the world."[34]

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[30] Lizanne Henderson, "'Detestable Slaves of the Devil': Changing Ideas about Witchcraft in Sixteenth-Century Scotland," in *A History of Everyday Life in Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 239.

[31] Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, "The Court and Politics: James VI's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland* (Liverpool University Press, 2000), 40.

[32] Deborah Willis, "James Among the Witch-Hunters: Witch-Hunting in Maternal Power in Early Modern England," in *Malevolent Nurture* (Cornell University Press, 1995), 126.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

These events unfolded over a matter of months beginning with the marriage by proxy to Anne of Denmark on August 20, 1589. Within a month news reached Scotland of the reason for Anne's delay: a terrible storm. During these unfortunate times, James was staying with his good friend Robert, the 6th Lord Seton. From the Seton house ships could easily be spotted as they arrived from the east; Seton's location being in proximity to nearby villages where many of the accused witches resided.[35] James was fearful of Anne's detainment even before news of alleged witches reached him. The royal fleet sprung a leak while crossing Norway in early September and despite efforts to make repairs and embark on repeated voyages; the royal entourage remained in Norway.[36] Storms raged throughout Denmark and Scotland in the fall, during which time James made the decision to receive her in her homeland despite the ongoing calamity. Six months later the royal couple, now married in person, made their triumphant return to Scotland, though not without another storm. Around the same time as the king's return home, Danish authorities had conducted arrests, trials, and executions of six witches for allegedly attempting to prevent the queen's passage to Scotland.[37] The practice of sorcery and the devil's pact was already a familiar product of witch-hunting in Denmark. Soon, authorities were already accusing Scottish witches of being part of the conspiracy. Historian Brian P. Levack claims that notions of diabolism, such as a pact with the devil, was already common superstition in Scotland.[38] The

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[35] Normand and Roberts, "The Court and Politics," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 31.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Brian P. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 36.

[38] Ibid., 39.

events which unfolded in 1589-1590 may not have introduced the country to this fear of witches and power of Satan, but it did give it a reawakening.

This was just the beginning of an era of witch-panic in Scotland. Superstition was far from rare in Europe, but the king sounded the alarm on the danger that witchcraft created, in his mind, to the extent of commissioning witch hunts, interrogating suspects, sitting in on trials, and being the only monarch to write about demons and witches. The king's new pastime created panic and fear of superstitious events and of the unknown; another rung of monarchial duties to add to his already impressive kingly resume. Scotland was now ridding herself of the devil's servants with her king holding the noose.

2.2 The Renaissance Witch

The first witch trial after the recent events in Scotland took place in May of 1590.[39] As these legal proceedings commenced, the identification of the witch was anticipated in order to clarify the charge, which was not entirely clear. In the pamphlet *Newes from Scotland* dated 1591, identifying a "witch's mark" was essential to discovering the witch.[40] This was essentially proof of her diabolical pact. "The Divell doth generally marke them [witches] with a privie marke, by reason the witches have confessed themselves, that the Divell doth licke them with his tong in some privy part of their bodie, before he doth receive them, to be his servants, which marke commonlie is given them under their haire in some part of their bodie." [41] Throughout

[39] Normand and Roberts, "The Court and Politics," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern* Scotland, 38.

[40] James Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland, declaring the damnable life of Doctor Fian, a notable sorcerer, who was burned at Edenborough in Januarie last, 1591* (London: British Library, Shakespeare Press, W. Bulmer and Co., 1816), 12, https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/witchcraft-pamphlet-news-from-scotland-1591 (Accessed May 25, 2019).

[41] Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland,* 12.

many witch trials, the accused had all of their hair shaved off in order to find the mark which would seal their fate.

A common belief widely accepted was that women more than men were susceptible to the temptations of evil doing as they were believed to be the weaker sex. It was the anatomy of a woman that suggested her guilt. Anne Llewellyn Barstow claims in her book, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, that the woman's external body parts made her guilty of witchcraft, at least as far as common lore held. [42] Literature and imagery represented the witch as primarily female. Her hair, body, sexuality, and status were all enough to symbolize the sixteenth-century witch. It has been noted that in Scotland, eighty percent of accused witches were female and of low status, generally speaking.[43] Reginald Scot, the Englishman whose writings on the skepticism of witchcraft perpetuated the stereotype of old and feeble women being targeted as witches. The notion that she was an old hag, wretched in appearance, still was a familiar image defined by numerous witch-hunters, though the younger, sexually threatening married woman also fit the stereotype. In fact, many aspects of the witch were hard to pinpoint. Not only were most witches considered women, most were also poor. In cases of poor women where witchcraft accusations fell, most could not defend themselves against the widely-held suspicions of women. Barstow claims that women engaged in crimes such as infanticide; therefore, "they were capable of murder."[44] The idea that women could kill infants, poison

[42] Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 141.

[43] Thomas Brochard, "Scottish Witchcraft in a Regional and a Northern European Context, The Northern Highlands 1563-1660*," Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* (Summer 2015): 48, 51.

[44] Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts,* 40.

people and crops, and cause tempests and plagues was just as believable as women committing adultery or disobeying their husbands.

The sixteenth-century woodcut below by artist Hans Baldung Grien depicts the conventional image of the witch. Three middle-aged women on the ground are depicted practicing their spells using a small cauldron of sorts. One woman is riding backwards on a goat. The group of nude women confirms the embraced idea of the age as a witches' sabbat, complete with "familiars" that usually took the form of an animal that the witch would use for her malice, in which she would suckle with some part of her body where a teat could be found. The woodcut image gives credibility to the accepted belief in a pact with the devil, wherefore the witch would copulate with him and do his bidding. The "forked stick" has been a long-held belief for identifying the witch by the early sixteenth century. [45] Bones are strewn about hinting at an even more macabre and disturbing narrative.

[Image Removed to comply with copyright]

In the *Malleus Maleficarum,* the authors set the stage for shaping the image of the Renaissance witch. In part one of the manual, considerable depth is allocated to the woman as the fragile sex who is easily tempted by superstition. It has been argued that woman is lustful and indulges in carnal pleasures "and it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as

[45] Zika, Charles, "The Transformation of Sorcery and Magic in the Fifteenth Century," in *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 2013), 38.

if it were in a contrary direction to a man." [46] Various reprints of the book reached the superstitious population of Europe leaving little doubt that wicked women were intent on the destruction of men. This brings us back to the witch's power over men. Witchcraft and sexuality were symbolic of the female's promiscuity and gratuitous copulation with demons and the devil. The witch was believed to have the power to remove a man's genitals as was the case in Scotland in 1590 of Janet [Jonet] Clark and Janet [Jonet] Grant.[47] The women were tried for various crimes of witchcraft: destruction of cattle, murder, "and gewing and taking of power fra [from] sindrie mennis memberis [men's members]."[48] They were taken to the castle-hill of Edinburgh, tied to a stake and burnt as "commoune notorious Wichis."[49]

In *Detestable Slaves of the* Devil, historian Lizanne Henderson states that "Scotland was among one of the worst affected European nations."[50] The Protestant Reformation opened the door to increasing credulity in the reforms which were influencing Europe.[51] The printed word promoted theories about the natural and supernatural, causes of evil, and about God's divine

[46] Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 1487, Reverend Montague Summers, trans., Reprint 1928, Wicasta Lovelace and Christie Rice, transcribed, Online Edition (Windhaven Network, Inc., 1998-2001), Part I, Question VI., www.malleusmaleficarum.org/ (Accessed December 27, 2019).

[47] Nigel Camthorne, *Witches: The History of a Persecution* (London: Arcturus Publishing Limited, 2019), 64.

[48] Pitcairn, Robert, ESQ, "Criminal Trials and Other Proceedings Before the High Court of Judiciary in Scotland, Part IV.," 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. With Historical Notes and Explanations*, Vol. I, Part II, 1569-1596 (Burlington, Ontario, Canada, TannerRitchie Publishing & The University of St. Andrews, 2005), 206.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Henderson, "'Detestable Slaves of the Devil,'" in *A History of Everyday Life in Medieval Scotland*, 230.

[51] The Protestant Reformation was a religiously motivated movement that swept across Europe in the sixteenth-century. Contributing to the success of the movement was the accessibility of print which further spread ideas of reform within the Roman Catholic Church by fervent reformers.

providence. Reformers brought forth ideas of salvation through faith and predestination in events God might intervene. Were there occurrences that happened that were otherwise explained by God's wrath? Reformers presented their assumptions of these phenomena and the power of Satan. Martin Luther and John Calvin, highly influential reformers who brought about their own religious changes, Lutheranism and Calvinism respectively, fervently believed in the power of Satan therefore contributing to further widespread panic.[52] They condemned witchcraft and advocated capital punishment against witches.[53] It has been argued by the renowned historian on Scottish witchcraft, Christina Larner, that the further victimization of women was rooted in Calvinism.[54] Women were choosing their own path independent from their husband's actions and among the choices made was witchcraft.[55] This was an example of the way in which women challenged men in the gendered societal hierarchy.

It was perhaps to another reformer, John Knox, that the Witchcraft Act of 1563 can be attributed. W. H. Davenport Adams, nineteenth-century writer on King James and witchcraft, claims that Satan was an enemy of the Protestant faith; therefore, an enemy to the king which influenced his actions of ridding the world of James by witchcraft at sea.[56]

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[52] Lois Martin, *The History of Witchcraft* (Great Britain: Pocket Essentials, 2016), 33.

[53] Henderson, "'Detestable Slaves of the Devil,'" in *A History of Everyday Life in Medieval Scotland*, 234.

[54] Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, 77.

[55] Ibid.

[56] W. H. Davenport Adams, "James VI and the Witches," in *Witch, Warlock, and Magician: Historical Sketches of Magic and Witchcraft in England and Scotland, Book II The Witches of Scotland*, 1889, www.scotlandfromtheroadside.co.uk/ebooks/witchesofscotland2.htm (Accessed April 6, 2020).

Commoners accepted witchcraft as *maleficia*, or injury, to its victims, while the elite regarded it as something inhuman involving a pact with the devil.[57] The sabbat and using exhumed corpses for harmful intent too were part of the elitist impression of the witch.[58] By sixteenth century standards, a witch most likely held a pact with the devil and from this pact was given a mark on her body symbolizing her obedience. She secretly congregated in nighttime meetings with accomplices known as the sabbat. Firmly established in the fifteenth century, the sabbat was a congregation of witches practicing infanticide, carnal lusts, orgies, and copulating with one another and with demons.[59] Her ability to fly or be transported to sabbat, animals known as familiars, and her close ties with Satan were also part of the witch stereotype though not all of these ideas were accepted collectively.

Much has been explored about the belief in the devil's power over witches and his pact with them, but what else can be said about this notoriously evil and mysterious figure? Lois Martin through her research in *The History of Witchcraft*, describes the devil as a figure who was conceptualized during the Middle Ages by various references made in both the Old and New Testaments: "the rebel leader of the fallen angels and the serpent who tricked Eve in the Garden of Eden."[60] In the Book of Job, Satan, as he was called, acted with permission from God to tempt the faithful by exposing their evils and in doing so testing their loyalty.[61] Over the ages, many beliefs surrounded his existence. The belief that he needed God's permission to exert influence

[57] Robert Thurston, "Victims and Processes," in *The Witch Hunts: A History of the Witch Persecutions in Europe and North America*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 162.

[58] Julian Goodare, "Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context," in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland* (Palgrave MacMillan Limited, 2007), 40.

[59] Martin, *The History of Witchcraft*, 54.

[60] Ibid., 20.

[61] Ibid., 20-21.

or perform certain functions was still accepted. Martin Luther and John Calvin did not dismiss this despite their belief in his power. He was thought to coexist with God and to use his power to create illusions and inflict harm. The belief that he used demons in his pursuit of evil was widely believed. His abilities remained constant according to most scholars throughout the ages; however, his appearance has not. Several depictions of the devil illustrate a dark figure with horns, hooves, and a tail. From the eleventh century, the devil was described as a black man or a man dressed in black.[62] The notorious witch, Agnes Sampson, confessed to the king that the devil had come to her in the likeness of a man.[63] Whatever his appearance, he was shrouded in evil and diabolical destruction.

It was a religious tide that interpreted the reactions to witchcraft. Catholics and Protestants alike set about the destruction of those who would threaten the Christian faith through diabolism. It may have gone undetected that some clergy practiced healing divinations. Popes were known to depend on magic for healing purposes. When Pope Urban VIII was poisoned, he ordered an exorcism and a Franciscan exorcist resorted to the powers of a witch when he was struck with an illness in 1559.[64] Witch persecution thus was dictated by the religion practiced in a particular area. During the Counter Reformation, a witch could be freed by a Protestant judge, only to be rearrested by a Catholic judge years later, which was exactly what happened to a French woman, resulting in her execution after enduring a series of heinous tortures.[65] Not only was witchcraft a crime punishable by law, it too was a sin against God. The

[62] Ibid., 28-29.

[63] Pitcairn, "Criminal Trials and Other Proceedings Before the High Court of Judiciary in Scotland, Part IV.," in *Criminal Trials in Scotland, From A.D. M. CCCC.LXXXVIII TO A.D. M.DC.XXIV,* 239.

[64] Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, 112-113.

[65] Camthorne, *Witches: The History of a Persecution*, 109.

Scottish kirk regarded the crime in the periphery of the most abominable sins. Its participation in the prosecution of witchcraft; however, was minimal as trials were held in secular courts. Religion, social status, and gender roles were all part of the fabric of witch lore and the crusade against witchcraft was well underway.

Chapter Three: "Detestable Slaves of the Devil"

3.1 "Detestable Slaves of the Devil"

Enforcement of the Witchcraft Act reached its height in the last decade of the sixteenth-century under the purview of King James VI, as he began commissioning witch hunts while combatting skepticism. In 1584, Reginald Scot published his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, a book criticizing the existence of witches. The king himself was skeptical of witches and of witchcraft; however, that was all about to change in 1590. As discussed in the previous chapter, King James became convinced of witchcraft a short while after the discovery of a conspiracy plot at sea. After experiencing one of Scotland's most intense witch hunts of the 1590s, he wrote a treatise entitled *Daemonologie* to help educate and bring awareness to the existence of witchcraft and to dispel the arguments of skeptics like Reginald Scot and Johann Weyer.

Daemonologie, much like the *Malleus Maleficarum* which preceded it, engaged the elite in the persecution of witches. Reginald Scot, the Englishman, whom James despised for his obstinate contradiction of witchcraft writes, "Witchcraft and inchantment is the cloke of ignorance: whereas indeed evill humors, and not strange words, witches, or spirits are the cause of such diseases." [66] James retorts that claim and others like it in his preface to the reader when he speaks out "against the damnable opinions of two principally in our age, wherof the one called SCOT an Englishman, is not ashamed in publike print to deny, that there can be such a thing as Witch-craft." [67] Upon James's accession to the English throne he ordered all copies of

[66] Scot, Reginald, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 1584), 4, www.eebo.chadwyck.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu (Accessed July 1, 2019).

[67] King James I, *Daemonologie*, 1597 (Project Gutenberg, 2008), 1, http://www.gutenberg.org/license (Accessed May 25, 2019).

Scot's books to be burned. Writing on Jacobean propaganda, Cyndia Clegg corroborates the claim that burning books that he disapproved of was a form of censorship.[68] Nigel Camthorne, historian of witchcraft persecution, makes a quite probable assertion that if Scot had not died before the king's accession in England, he may have met the same fate, being burned at the stake.[69] Continuing his preface, James writes, "The other called VVIERVS [Weyer] a German phisition, sets out a publick apologie for al these craftes-folkes, whereby, procuring for their impunitie, he plainley bewrayes himselfe to have bene one of that profession."[70] Johann Weyer, the physician to the Duke of Cleves, spoke out against the atrocities of torturing and condemning to death supposed witches, claiming that the accused must have suffered from hallucinations by the devil's own doing.[71] Weyer's opinions would have not set well with proponents of witch persecution, as he may have utilized the delusion of the accused to justify witchcraft.

The king's treatise was comprised of three parts and written for the purpose "only to prove two things..that such develish artes have bene and are, the other, what exact trial and severe punishment they merite."[72] In the form of a dialogue, the treatise begins with an argument debated by two men, Epistemon and Philomathes, regarding the matter of evil and unlawful arts practiced. Here, James wrestles with the many doubts surrounding witches and by incorporating

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[68] Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (CA: Pepperdine University, Cambridge University Press, 2004), 69.

[69] Nigel Camthorne, *Witches: The History of a Persecution* (London: Arcturus Publishing Limited, 2019), 203.

[70] James I, *Daemonologie*. 1.

[71] Camthorne, *Witches: The History of a Persecution*, 202.

[72] James I, *Daemonologie*, 1-2.

this doubt by the ingenuous Philomathes, he very shrewdly sets the stage of the book whereby Epistemon gives his learned opinion on the matter. Philomathes asks "what thinke yee of these strange newes, which now onelie furnishes purpose to al men at their meeting: I meane of these Witches?"[73] He continues his inquiry with "no question if they be true, but thereof the Doctours doubtes."[74] Could the introductory dialogue attempt to settle the skepticism of learned men such as the physician Johann Weyer? The debate continues with Epistemon using Scripture to make clear the existence of the art of witchcraft. The dialogue settles upon the old biblical story of the Witch of Endor. James uses the knowledge that a witch has to foretell the future as he describes the story of Saul, the first king of Israel, who in disguise visited the witch of Endor seeking his fate. The witch conjured a vision of the prophet Samuel who revealed the king's ill-fated future. Arguing the reality of witches, Epistemon reasons with Philomathes "that the Divel is permitted at som-times to put himself in the liknes of the Saintes," explaining further that in the Scriptures, "Sathan can trans-forme himself into an Angell of light."[75] Could the devil transport his servants, witches, to their secret sabbat? Flying was yet another gift given to witches by their master, or at least some people believed so. Others remained skeptical, settling on the notion that it was just an illusion. The authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum* write against the errors of mere illusion. They made their case against those who would believe that witches did not perform real, but imaginary, harm. In an effort to clarify the erroneous misunderstanding of the Canon, Kramer and Sprenger describe the similarity between the women categorized as Pythons to witches: "They are entirely wrong who understand the Canon only to speak of imaginary voyages and

[73] James I, *Daemonologie*, 4.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 6.

goings to and fro in the body and who wish to reduce every kind of superstition to this illusion: for as those women are transported in their imagination, so are witches actually and bodily transported."[76]

Exodus 22:18 states "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."[77] This piece of Scripture is the basis for the king's argument, that witches did in fact exist and that they needed to be exterminated. The *Malleus Maleficarum* makes reference to this verse adding that "she shall not dwell in thy land, lest perchance she cause thee to sin."[78] This perverse idea that all women encompassed a rotten core which would poison or otherwise corrupt those around her was rooted in works such as the *Malleus Maleficarum*. It was the elite that shared the common fear of the witch's pact with the devil. It was this fear which ensnared the king in 1590 and fomented the hysteria in Scotland. The treatise then turns to the idolatry of women. Philomathes inquires "what can be the cause that there are twentie women given to that craft, where ther is one man?"[79] Staying in fashion with the witch narrative at the time, women were far more than men accused of witchcraft. James attempts to use Scripture as evidence of the wickedness of women; a glimpse into his own misogyny no doubt. Women are the weaker sex he suggests, "for as that sexe, is frailer than man is, so it is easier to be intrapped by these grosse snares of the Devill, as was over well proved to be true, by the Serpents deceiving of Eva [Eve] at the beginning, which

[76] Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 1487, Reverend Montague Summers, trans, Reprint 1928, Wicasta Lovelace and Christie Rice, transcribed, Online Edition (Windhaven Network, Inc., 1998-2001), Part I, Question I., www.malleusmaleficarum.org/ (Accessed December 27, 2019).

[77] *King James Bible Online,* Cambridge edition, 1611, https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Exodus_Chapter-22/ (Accessed January 19, 2020).

[78] Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum,* Part II, Question II, Chapter VIII.

[79] James I, *Daemonologie*, 35.

makes him the homelier with that sexe sensine [since then]."[80] Chapter two attests to the contemporary misogyny of the *Malleus*' authors when suggesting that "there was a defect in the formation of the first woman."[81]

According to the treatise, the art of witchcraft was a very real danger, one to which women were more likely to succumb. Those beguiled by the devil are described in the treatise as easily deceived and quick to obey Satan's demands, wherefore he requires of them to renounce God as he leaves a mark upon the witch's body.[82] This mark or teat would become a prominent staple in identifying witches. To stomp out the wretched evil of witchcraft, the authors of the *Malleus* claimed that "it is clear that all Bishops and Rulers who do not essay their utmost to suppress crimes of this sort, with their authors and patrons, are themselves to be judged as evident abettors of the crime, and are manifestly to be punished in the prescribed manner."[83] Those in society who did not adhere to the persecution of witches may have been considered a conspirator and thus guilty just the same. This was the common consensus shared by many demonologists. The *Malleus Maleficarum* supported this analogy as well, suggesting that those who did not believe in the power of the witch were guilty of hearsay. The king's treatise aimed to prove the existence of witches by casting off doubt, but once he had accomplished that, the next step was what to do with "these detestable slaves of the devil."[84]

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[80] Ibid., 35-36.

[81] Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum,* Part I, Question VI.

[82] James I, *Daemonologie,* 27.

[83] Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum,* Part II, Question I, Chapter XVI.

[84] James I, *Daemonologie*, xi.

Most demonologists universally agreed that witchcraft was a crime against God and the Christian faith; hearsay was punishable by death. French political theorist and demonologist Jean Bodin wrote of the crime of witchcraft in his book *On the Demon-Mania of Witches.* In it, he articulated most incessantly about the cruel torment inflicted upon witches by Satan himself. Bodin believed that of all sins committed, "there is none that punishes its victim more cruelly, nor longer than witchcraft, which takes revenge both on the soul and on the body."[85] Furthermore, his advocacy of the death penalty for witches aimed at ending their suffering, to absolve them of their sins and " bring an end to the wrath of God."[86]

Daemonologie also extracts the king's views on the differences between witches and necromancers. The king described witches and necromancers in his treatise *Daemonologie* as two separate offenders, just as West had distinguished between charmers and witches in chapter one. He describes witches as "servantes onelie, and slaves of the Devil, but the Necromanciers are his maisters and commanders." [87] He goes further by explaining that curiosity is what binds them to magic, but they have gained no greater knowledge, only "knowing evill, and the horrors of Hell for punishment thereof, as Adam was by eating of the forbidden tree."[88] The necromancers that he discusses are described as diabolical magicians using magic with evil intent. A difference in the nature of witches and necromancers is that the latter were generally high-ranking men. Here, James is drawing from personal experience, as the Earl of Bothwell had

[85] Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* 1580, Randy A. Scott, trans., (Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2001), 173.

[86] Ibid.

[87] King James I, *Daemonologie*, 10.

[88] Ibid., 11.

been explicitly charged as a necromancer. Once again Epestimon and Philomathes engage in conversation regarding the two practices: "magie or necromancie and sorcerie or witch-craft."[89] Epestimon attempts to clarify his meaning of separating these arts into categories when he states that those that pursue necromancy do so as they are enticed through curiosity; sorcery or witchcraft is an evil art that lures one into its practice.[90] He continues by suggesting that certain elements of the study of stars begin to be ruled by unnatural influences and is considered unlawful. Epestimon explains these unnatural phenomena as, "To fore-tell what common-weales shall flourish or decay: what persons shall be fortunate or unfortunate: what side shall winne in anie battell: what man shall obteine victorie at singular combate: What way, and of what age shall men die: what horse shall winne at matche-running; and diverse such like incredible things."[91] Bodin stated in his book that predictions and prophecies were not directed through nature or men's will, but: "by the direct inspiration of God."[92] Furthermore, he explains that some events may be deemed lawful if they are not considered absolute or guaranteed to be unchanging. A sheep farmer who foretells of his flock's sickness or a laborer's prediction of the fertility of his crop is considered lawful assumptions if they are based on the condition of the health of the animal or the cultivation of the crop.[93] Circumstances such as those in North Berwick defined the unlawful and unnatural fate of the king. That is what he sought to prove as the devilish arts at work.

[89] King James I, *Daemonologie*, 8.

[90] Ibid., 9.

[91] Ibid., 13.

[92] Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, 86.

[93] Ibid., 87.

King James VI must have had some apprehension regarding tempests at sea, for it was an event in Denmark that set his mind upon the existence of witches and their ability to conjure storms and commit murder. He vehemently warns, "They can rayse stormes and tempestes in the aire, either upon Sea or land, though not universally, but in such a particular place and prescribed boundes, as God will permitte them so to trouble."[94] James expresses the permission from God that such occurrences can take place as discussed in chapter two. William West continues his description of the witch's power by writing that she can, "shake the aire with lightnings and thunder, to cause haile and tempests, to remove greene corne or trees to another place, to be carried of her familiar, which hath taken upon him the deceitfull shape of a Goate, Swine or Calfe, into some mountaine farre distant, in a wonderfull most space of time."[95] These beliefs were common regarding the art of witchcraft. Various sources confirm her ability to raise storms. West furthers his warning that witches fly on an instrument such as a staff or fork and spends her night dancing and jesting, and enjoying her evil lusts, "and to shew a thousand such monstrous mockeries."[96]

From these sources, we can conclude that the belief in the witch's power to create storms, destroy crops, to transmute, and gather at sabbat were growing fears within the supernatural witch lore plaguing the sixteenth-century. Scripture was a formidable tool against witchcraft. The king used Scripture to secure his stance on witchcraft in his treatise. He was also using his own personal experience. He may have fallen victim to a coven of witches in North Berwick, but he

[94] Ibid, 37.

[95] William West, *Simboleography, Which may be termed the art, or description, of instruments and presidents,* 1594 (London: Printed for the Companie of Stationers, University of California Libraries, 1615), 826, https://archive.org/details/simboleographywh00west (Accessed June 12, 2020).

[96] Ibid.

certainly was not about to play one. Horrifying witch hunts have left their mark on Scotland's history and so too has King James VI, as witch hunter and protector of the realm.

Chapter Four: Scots Law vs The Witch

4.1 Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563

Witchcraft prosecutions were violently raging across Europe in the fifteenth century during a time when two Dominican Inquisitors, Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger, published the *Malleus Maleficarum*. This publication was not the only work dedicated to destroying the witch; however, it did significantly contribute to a new epoch in the witch narrative as it began to whet the appetite of the witch-crazed elite. No matter their religious leanings, Catholics and Protestants alike rose against witchcraft by the mid-sixteenth century when the Reformation swept throughout Europe. The attack on alleged witches escalated with the unrelenting and unforgiving force demonstrated by the reformers of the age. As mentioned in chapter two, among one of the most renowned reformers during the Reformation was Martin Luther. He believed that Satan preyed on individuals who were very devoted to their faith. As a devout man, Luther experienced the fear that Satan evoked in his day to day life. He believed faith alone was the way to salvation and that Christ was the way of deflecting the devil. His advocacy for the awareness of witchcraft was similar to that of the king. His personal experience and knowledge of Scripture was the basis of his diabology.[97] Throughout the Holy Roman Empire, witch hunts thrived under the auspices of the *Malleus Maleficarum* and other demonological works. As more contributions on the subject surfaced in the following decades, Protestant Scotland would soon be following a similar path.

[97] Jeffrey Burton Russell, "The Devil and the Reformers," in *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History* (London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 172.

The Reformation Parliament of 1560 would allow the legislative provisions to handle many of the criminal issues facing Scotland. Still the crime of witchcraft needed to be meted out. The Scottish Parliament passed the Witchcraft Act of 1563 during the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots. Although little is known of the act, historian and senior lecturer at Edinburgh University, Julian Goodare provides sufficient evidence to support the act's probable authorship and scope. The act provided a grave warning of the practice of the superstitious arts "of Witchcraftis, Sorcarie, and Necromancie, and credence gevin thairto in tymes bygane aganis the Law of God."[98] These alleged assaults of witches against the Law of God may reveal the ecclesiastic origins of the act.

Goodare states that the origins of the Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563 "are found in the fifth general assembly of the Protestant church, which met on December 25-31, 1562."[99] Keeping in line with the Protestant Reformation, reformers provisioned the act which would eventually pass the following year albeit without royal assent.[100] The Catholic Mary stalled for some time with the new Parliament, as she was cognizant that an official religion would need to be established and that Protestants were the presiding figures of Scotland's reformed political landscape.[101] Both religious and political motivations fueled the already hotly debated proposals being addressed. According to the wording used in the act's draft, Goodare claims that a man of the church with knowledge of Scottish law must have been responsible. Given the fact that John

[98] Julian Goodare, "The Scottish Witchcraft Act," *The American Society of Church History* (March 2005): 39.

[99] Ibid., 41.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

Knox was a church minister and radical proponent of the new Protestant movement, the possibility of his authorship of the act comes into question. Whether it can be proved or disproved that Knox was in fact the author, Goodare remains convinced "that a leading churchman drafted the witchcraft act."[102]

When the act passed in 1563, it set in motion a thirst for blood that would not be quenched for nearly two centuries until its repeal in 1736. England passed a witchcraft statute the same year; however, its penalty for the crime was much more lenient: one year in prison for the first offense and death for a subsequent offense or the result of causing another person's death. Scottish witches, on the other hand, undoubtedly faced death. From the statute passed by Elizabeth I in 1563 to the last witch execution of 1685, 500 accused witches died by English law.[103] Scotland executed witches at a rate twelve times that of its southern neighbor.[104]

It was a much crueler witchcraft act than that implemented in England. Scotland instituted capital punishment for all accused witches, even inhumane torture.[105] If the *Malleus Maleficarum* in any way contributed to Scotland's witch persecution, it should be worth mentioning that Kramer and Sprenger received a papal bull, *Summis Desiderantes* in 1484 from Pope Innocent VIII, giving them authority to hunt out and prosecute witches by any means necessary.[106]

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[102] Ibid., 45.

[103] Brian P. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 2.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Lois Martin, *The History of Witchcraft* (Great Britain: Pocket Essentials, 2016), 102.

[106] Ibid., 82.

Equipped with this new-found papal authority, Kramer began his pursuit of witches by violent torture.

Kramer's witch hunt evoked much disgust and garnered little support. Nigel Camthorne, writer of *Witches: The History of Persecution*, describes just how determined Kramer was on destroying witches: "He persuaded a dissolute woman to hide inside an oven and pretend the devil lived there."[107] It is no wonder that before the first publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, Kramer had already gained a tarnished reputation as a failed witch hunter who used cruel torture, creating and making a mockery of judicial proceedings. Setting out to exterminate witches, he tried fifty-five women and two men, but was instructed to set them free by the town's bishop.[108] Goodare corroborates the harsh reality of the act in his 2005 publication "The Scottish Witchcraft Act," stating that "few acts of the Scottish Parliament can have had such deadly consequences as the following, passed on June 4, 1563."[109]

4.2 Scots Law vs The Witch

Scots law borrowed many of its legal precedents from English law; however, the systems differed in criminal trials, which took a more severe course in the kingdom of Scotland. How did Scots law inspire a significant number of witchcraft convictions? The answer lies in the religious and political background of Scotland. Unlike England, Scots regarded witchcraft as a religious offense, one deeply rooted in a pact with the devil. This diabolical pact contributed enormously

[107] Nigel Camthorne, *Witches: The History of a Persecution* (London: Arcturus Publishing Limited, 2019), 109.

[108] Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 172.

[109] Goodare, "The Scottish Witchcraft Act," 39.

to the witch narrative. The subject denounced her Christian faith in exchange for the beguiling promises made to her by Satan.

Witch trials took place in the Justice Court in the capital, Edinburgh, or by local commissions granted by the king or Privy Council. A commission dated October 26, 1591 provides details into the examining of witches. The order of commission was granted by the king "with the advice of the Lordis of his Secrete Counsale."[110] Full power was given to the following six men at the king's behest: the justice clerk Sir John Cokburne, master advocate David McGill, ministers Robert Bruce and John Dunkieson, William Little, and John Arnott.[111] Full authority was issued to these men or any three working conjointly.

Commissions were granted as either special or general. Special commissions allowed local magistrates or other nobles to seek out named individuals and arrest and interrogate them. General commissions, on the other hand, meant that no individuals were specifically named; therefore, any person suspected of being a witch within jurisdiction could be arrested and tried without further approval.[112] Contributing to the high conviction rate was the order of commissions routinely granted in Scotland. Witch-hunters made a sizable profit through this piece of judicial authorization. Most accusations came from close neighbors in rural areas, so it is no surprise that commissions were granted in many localities. Witch prosecutions turned into

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[110] Pitcairn, Robert, ESQ, "Criminal Trials and Other Proceedings Before the High Court of Judiciary in Scotland, Part IV.," 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. With Historical Notes and Explanations*, Vol. I, Part II, 1569-1596 (Burlington, Ontario, Canada, TannerRitchie Publishing & The University of St. Andrews, 2005), 261.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Michael Wasser, "The Privy Council and the Witches: The Curtailment of Witchcraft Persecutions in Scotland, 1597-1628," *The Scottish Historical Review* LXXXII, 1, no. 213, Part I (April 2003): 22.

fanatic public spectacles drawing large crowds. Stephanie Spoto observes that witchcraft trials gave women access to the maneuverings of the legal system.[113] Women were seen throughout the trials as not only alleged witches, but as victims.

Judicial reforms were passed in 1587 giving the lord advocate the power to initiate cases. Brian P. Levack, historian of Scottish witchcraft, has argued that the high conviction rate in Scotland was due in large part to the lack of supervision of the many local trials by the central government.[114] The authority given to local magistrates and landowners to perform the duties in a witch trial were grossly negligible. Inexperienced judges with almost no supervision resulted in a conviction rate upwards to ninety-six per cent and an execution rate of ninety-one per cent.[115]

The lack of expertise and injustice in these trials caused some who had the courage to act against it. Issobell Falconner argued that the judge in her trial, the sheriff-depute of Berwick, was not fit to determine her guilt or innocence because he lacked the qualifications.[116] She steadfastly chose to be tried in Edinburgh; however, the trial never took place, a fortunate ending to her case. In 1605, another victim, Patrick Lowrie appealed his local trial and brought his case to the Justice court.[117]

The use of torture in Scotland guaranteed a much higher conviction rate than in England. The witch's mark, believed to be proof of a pact with the devil, was searched for on the accused

[113] Stephanie Irene Spoto, "Jacobean Witchcraft and Feminine Power," *Pacific Coast Philology* 45 (2010): 55.

[114] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion*, 26.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Wasser, "The Privy Council and the Witches," 33.

[117] Ibid., 32.

witch's body. The mark was likely found on the neck, back, legs, thighs, or genital area, providing enough evidence of her guilt to repeatedly induce torture in order to obtain a confession. After it was found on the body, in many instances she confessed without much coercion or repeated torture. Levack claims that Scotland witnessed a "culture of confession" because of the overwhelming rate of confessions opposed to some other countries.[118] This degrading examination performed by men must have been enough for many women to have confessed in order to end the humiliation. The mark had a profound effect on witch trial outcomes because it solidified the devil's pact. It was the fuel needed to charge a witch on more serious grounds than just simply attempting to inflict harm; the mark symbolized a denunciation of Christianity in exchange of diabolism. Levack describes the seriousness of the mark as a solid charge "of apostasy."[119]

The expediency for a confession was needed to get a trial underway. Fortunately for witch-hunters, "swimming" was a method for identifying a witch. The woman was bound with rope, her thumbs tied to her toes, she was cast into the water to discover the truth. If she sank, she was innocent; if she floated, she was guilty. Levack asserts that this method was not part of Scots or English law.[120] He suggests that most demonologists regarded the practice as "worthless," though the king preferred it as evidence which would allow a trial to proceed.[121] Priests blessed bread and butter that was served to alleged witches. If she spat the food out or

[118] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion*, 11.

[119] Ibid., 88.

[120] Ibid., 45.

[121] Ibid.

vomited, she was indeed a witch.[122] The excessive brutality to Doctor Fian during the North Berwick witch trails is an extreme example of the lengths taken to obtain such a confession. If the victim's will could be broken, as well as the body, surely a confession could be taken. The unfortunate doctor's fate will be discussed in chapter five.

With authorized commissions and an overwhelming number of cases, most witchcraft trials were held in local courts. The judiciary court in Edinburgh alone simply could not try the large number of cases. This is a likely indication as to why witchcraft trials began to get out of hand. Jean Bodin, clergyman, political theorist, and demonologist, credited the success of many witchcraft trials as occurring because the usual proceedings in the prosecution of witches had not been stringently followed.[123] Had King James also acknowledged this extraordinary manipulation which allowed him to intervene in prosecuting witches as a Scottish king while acquitting witches in England?

How did witch trials compare to other crimes in early Scottish history? Just as the alleged witch was submerged in water to determine her guilt, in the Middle Ages accused criminals were subject to a trial by fire in which a red-hot metal instrument was applied to the victim's flesh. The reaction to the burn could determine his guilt or innocence.[124] Bodin was a merciless judge in France who practiced torture on young and old alike using red hot irons. Fire, water, and pricking the devil's mark were all within legal bounds in determining the guilt of a suspected

[122] Jonathan J. Moore, *Hung, Drawn, and Quartered: The Story of Executions Through the Ages* (Alabama: Sweet Water Press, 2017), 90.

[123] Camthorne, *Witches: A History of Persecution*, 58.

[124] Andrew R. C. Simpson and Adelyn L. M. Wilson, "Scottish Legal History," in *Crimes* (Edinburgh University Press 2017), 72.

criminal. These types of physical tests were used to test endurance and provide a verdict of guilt or innocence. As innocent victims were put through these criminal procedures, it was only right that they should be allowed to turn the tables on their accusers. The accusatorial system was therefore implemented and the accused could face their accusers. A new system brought forth through old Roman law was replacing the old one in Europe, whereby judges determined the guilt or innocence of suspected criminals using a variety of methods such as interrogation and collection of evidence.[125] This system came to be known as the inquisitorial system.

As mentioned, both kingdoms shared similar criminal laws, but Scotland imposed harsher penalties and had higher conviction and execution rates. This was because England was governed by common law[126] rather than Roman law and any aspect of inquisitorial procedure was absent therein.[127] It did not adopt many of the procedures of inquisitorial prosecution. England used a jury system, unlike Scotland where the Crown and Council approved commissions as well as legislative reforms that allowed local nobles and the lord advocate more power. Levack describes the evolution of Scotland's introduction to inquisitorial procedure through the reforms passed in 1587.[128] Trials could therefore proceed by the authority of the lord advocate and with no jury in place, high conviction and execution rates were highly probable.

Legal representation was an exceptional courtesy helping to bring witchcraft trials to a close by the late seventeenth century. An acquittal could be obtained in the event that witnesses

[125] Martin, *The History of Witchcraft*, 73.

[126] Common law allowed judges to make judicial decisions separate from the age-old legal codes of Roman law. Torture also was not permitted by law except in extreme cases.

[127] Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts,* 75.

[128] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion*, 19.

could rebuke the charges laid against an alleged witch. Unfortunately, many accused Scottish witches acquiesced in their fate as determined by the Scottish criminal system. Torture, a local trial, and enough in attendance to believe her pact with the devil, and the chances for an acquittal were extremely minute. Fortunately, by the turn of the seventeenth century King James began to have his own doubts about the veracity of witchcraft accusations and had several convictions overturned.

4.3 Crime and Punishment

Under Roman law, judicial authorities controlled the prosecution of crimes. Judges had the power to interrogate and torture accused criminals based on little more than hearsay.[129] Torture was practiced throughout Europe, albeit at times illegally, England permitting it only in cases of treason.[130] Scottish officials did not hesitate in the use of torture to extract witch confessions. One author in particular argues that the witch panics of the 1590s would not have been so prevalent had it not been for the practice of torture.[131] As witchcraft was perceived as a sin as well as a crime, authorities permitted the most excessive punishment: burning. The witch was strangled, a merciful act, before being burned. Burning was symbolic of hearsay. Punishment for witches was severe indeed. Her sin was a sin against God and according to the law she must be punished by death. Although witchcraft was notoriously difficult to prove, there was no escape in sixteenth-century Scotland. It was believed that God would protect the innocent from the agonizing tortures of their accusers, but it was also widely believed that the devil gave

[129] Martin, *The History of Witchcraft*, 73-4.

[130] Ibid., 80.

[131] Hugh Trevor Roper, "The European Witch-craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*: *Religion, The Reformation, and Social Change* (U.S.: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1967), *112*, Originally published: (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

his servant the power to resist pain and endure torture. If she repented the devil would no longer protect her and would let her fall to the hands of her tormentors.

The "witch pricker," as he was called in Scotland, conducted examinations in which he sought out the devil's mark.[132] When it was discovered, the mark proved undoubtedly of guilt. Various means of torture were used in Scotland such as the "boots" which crushed the wearer's legs, and the pilliwinks, a sharp device inserted into the victim's fingernails.[133] Dr. Fian of the North Berwick trials endured both. Agnes Sampson, a witch who was examined by the king himself was shaven of all her hair exposing the devil's mark. She then was tortured until she confessed to raising a storm to kill the king. Chained in a cell with a "witch's bridle," a kind of muzzle with prongs forced inside the mouth, she divulged the details of her treason and implicated others.[134] One by one, through forceful torture, her fellow conspirators implicated more witches until the Earl of Bothwell, the king's cousin, could no longer hide his guilt. The trial of 1591 "confirmed King James in his belief that he possessed a rare faculty for the detection of witches and the discovery of witchcraft."[135] Soon, Scotland competed only with Germany in witch executions.[136]

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[132] Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, 129-30.

[133] Brian Innes, *The History of Torture* (United Kingdom: Amber Books, 1998), 120.

[134] Ibid., 119.

[135] W. H. Davenport Adams, "James VI and the Witches," in *Witch, Warlock, and Magician: Historical Sketches of Magic and Witchcraft in England and Scotland, Book II The Witches of Scotland*, (1889), www.scotlandfromtheroadside.co.uk/ebooks/witchesofscotland2.htm (Accessed April 6, 2020).

[136] Ibid., 120.

Chapter Five: "God's Hangman"

5.1 The Seed of Obsession is Planted

The Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563 instituted the persecution of witches in Scotland. Even before the panicked witch trials of the 1590s, Scotland witnessed its share of cases, but it would be under the reign of King James VI that would make witch-hunting an extreme sport. During the last decade of the sixteenth century, two major witch hunts took place resulting in the publication of a witchcraft treatise, the execution of several dozen victims, and the King of Scotland sitting in attendance as God's hangman.

In late 1589, the young king embarked on a journey to bring back to Scotland his new Danish bride. Terrible storms at sea, however, threatened their lives. Superstition in Denmark ran thick and when witchcraft was suspected as the cause of his plight, James did some of his own investigating. Six witches were tried and executed by Danish authorities in May 1590 for having caused the storms at sea.[137]

It could have been expected that once the witches were executed, the book on witchcraft would finally close, but a man from Tranent was about to blow it wide open. Deputy Bailiff David Seaton began to suspect his maidservant, Geillis Duncan, of sneaking out of the home in the night to perform unlawful acts of witchery. To obtain a confession and corroborate his suspicion, Seaton "did with the help of others torment her with the torture of the pilliwinkes upon her fingers, which is a grievous torture; and binding or wrinching her head with a cord or roape, which is a most cruell torment also."[138] After unbearable and illegal torture, she was

[137] Brian P. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 36.

[138] Pitcairn, Robert, ESQ, "Criminal Trials and Other Proceedings Before the High Court of

searched for the devil's mark which was found upon her throat.[139] She confessed, was sent to prison, and there accused several other witches.[140] Those accused were apprehended and a full-blown witch hunt was now underway.

The eldest witch accused was Agnes Sampson. She was taken to Holyrood House in Edinburgh to be examined in the presence of the king and other nobles, "but all the perswaysions which the Kinges Majestie used to hir, with the rest of his Councell, might not provoke or induce her to confesse anything, but stoode stiffely in the deniall of all that was layde to her charge; where upon they caused her to be conveyed away unto prison, there to receive such torture as hath lately provided for witches in that country."[141] During her time in prison, she was subjected to heinous tortures and her entire body shaved to find proof of her guilt: the devil's mark. In the same fashion as Geillis Duncan, she too confessed after the devil's mark was discovered upon her body.[142] Whether it was a strange coincidence or something more sinister, remains unknown, but she was brought before the king to be interrogated.

In the presence of King James, she confessed to gathering at the seashore in North Berwick with many other witches including Duncan, who had danced and sang in the presence of the devil himself.[143] Records indicate that Sampson began her alleged pact with the devil

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Judiciary in Scotland, Part IV.," 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. With Historical Notes and Explanations*, Vol. I, Part II, 1569-1596 (Burlington, Ontario, Canada, TannerRitchie Publishing & The University of St. Andrews, 2005), 215.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Ibid., 216.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid., 217.

[143] Ibid.

sometime after her husband's death, whereupon she "being movit be povertie and his promesis.[144] She met the devil in secret and there he marked her body to seal the pact. This new power would give her and other witches the power to destroy their enemies. As the king was an enemy of the devil, he had to be destroyed. By the time the plot was fully investigated, a gathering of more than one hundred witches were said to have congregated at North Berwick kirk[145] and among them the king's own cousin, the high Lord Admiral of Scotland, the Earl of Bothwell.[146]

Richard Graham, a witch linked to the North Berwick trials, implicated Bothwell in April 1591, resulting in his imprisonment.[147] Bothwell was tasked with the safe voyage of the royal ship. In the king's absence, however, Bothwell appeared to have had other plans. James would not have put his trust entirely into the hands of the earl, as he had been mixed up in a conspiracy in the past[148] and deemed a traitor;[149] however, his sentence had been retracted. The charges against him therefore, may not have been surprising. The illegitimate son of James V, Bothwell had been legitimized by the pope, and may have stood to claim the throne upon James's death,[150] a prime example of the political backings motivating the conspiracy. According to his accusers

[144] Ibid., 234.

[145] Magnus Magnusson, *Scotland: The Story of a Nation* (New York: Grove Press, 2000), 394.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion*, 37.

[148] In 1589, the king faced a series of rebellions by Catholic conspirators and nobles though he warded off their forces. In the same year, Bothwell too led a rebellion against the king.

[149] Levack., *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion*, 35.

[150] M. A. Murray, "The 'Devil' of North Berwick," *The Scottish Historical Review* 15, no. 60 (July 1918): 318.

and fellow witches, Bothwell conspired to kill the king. Upon her examination in 1590, Agnes Sampson implicated both men as accomplices.[151]

If Graham's testimony implicated Bothwell, then the testimony of the elder witch, Agnes Sampson, would be damning. She confessed that she had consorted with the earl, who paid the witches in gold and silver,[152] in a conspiracy against the king through the use of a wax image bearing the liking to His Highness for which she held it up and gave it to the devil.[153] Still the king was not completely convinced of any real proof that witchcraft was afoot. Trial records prove his skepticism during the examinations in which he claimed "they were all extreame lyars."[154] Sampson would, however, convince James when she took him aside and whispered "the verye woordes which passed betweene the Kings Maiestie and his Queene at Vpslo in Norway that first night of their marriage."[155] The exact words she uttered is unknown, but it was enough to incite fear and belief in witches. The king then "swore by the living God, that he beleeved that all the Devils in hell could not have discovered the same: acknowledging her woords to be most true."[156] The seed of obsession in witch-hunting was planted and would soon yield a dark and terrifying harvest in Scotland.

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[151] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion*, 37.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Pitcairn, "Criminal Trials and Other Proceedings Before the High Court of Judiciary in Scotland, Part IV.," in *Criminal Trials in Scotland, From A.D. M. CCCC.LXXXVIII TO A.D. M.DC.XXIV,* 218.

[155] James Carmichael, "Newes from Scotland, declaring the damnable life of Doctor Fian, a notable sorcerer, who was burned at Edenborough in Januarie last, 1591," in *Daemonologie*, King James I, 72.

[156] Ibid.

5.2 The North Berwick Witch Trials

Agnes Sampson after her imprisonment, torture, and examinations confessed to witchcraft and consorting with the devil. She described the events which occurred at North Berwick and named her accomplices. She told how the devil had instructed her on when and where to go to carry out the abominable deed. More than one hundred alleged witches gathered at North Berwick, six men and several dozen women. The old woman described the roles that her accomplices played at the meeting known throughout Europe as the sabbat. The charges against her as outlined in her trial records indicate "conspiring the king's death, witchcraft, sorcery, and incantation."[157] Sampson, the good old lady of Keith, had charges laid against her pertaining to the healing arts. She was executed in January 1591.

As the witch purge instigated by the confession of Geillis Duncan raged on, the fate of the accused is described in *Newes from Scotland*, "some are alreadye executed, the rest remaine in prison, to receive the doome of judgement at the Kings Maiesties will and pleasure."[158] Agnes Tompson was brought before the king and council. Her confession corroborated Geillis Duncan's accusation that witches had met together at North Berwick. These subsequent confessions "made the king in wonderful admiration, who, in respect of the strangenes of these maters, tooke great delight to be present at their examinations."[159]

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[157] Pitcairn, "Criminal Trials and Other Proceedings Before the High Court of Judiciary in Scotland, Part IV.," in *Criminal Trials in Scotland, From A.D. M.CCCC.LXXXVIII TO A.D. M.DC.XXIV,* 230.

[158] Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*, 69.

[159] Pitcairn, "Criminal Trials," 213.

Doctor Fian, or John Cunningham as he was also known, was a schoolmaster in Saltspan. Duncan accused him in the conspiracy as being the devil's recorder in the conspiracy and Sampson named him as taking a leading role. He was put to horrific torture but, would not confess. When certain forms of torture yielded no results, he was "put to the most severe and cruell paine in the world, called the Bootes."[160] The boots is a form of torture that used wood or metal to violently wedge between boards that encased the victim's legs.[161] It was a brutal and extremely painful form of torture generally breaking or splintering the victim's legs.[162] He endured this agonizing torture before finally confessing. "He was immediately released of the Bootes, brought before the king, his confession was taken."[163] The doctor confessed to be working in league with the devil and admitted all of his sins. What sins did the doctor commit to be subjected to such extreme maltreatment?

Fian, according to the criminal records, took the lead, lighting candles near the pulpit where the devil called out to his loyal servants.[164] They were instructed to open graves and stake claim to the appendages of corpses to use in their heinous plan. The witches were going to cause a terrible storm that would prevent the new queen's safety to Scotland and would kill the king. The details were included in a letter from Fian, the devil's recorder. The doctor, Sampson, Duncan, and others used the bodily joints taken from graves to baptize a cat, tying those parts to the

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[160] James Carmicheal. *Newes from Scotland*, declaring the damnable life of Doctor Fian, a notable sorcerer, who was burned at Edenborough in Januarie last, 1591, (London: British Library From the Shakespeare Press, By W. Bulmer and Co., 1816), 17-18, https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/witchcraft-pamphlet-news-from-scotland-1591 (Accessed May 25, 2019).

[161] Brian Innes, *The History of Torture* (London: Amber Books, 2016), 131.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Carmicheal, *Newes from* Scotland, 18.

[164] Pitcairn, "Criminal Trials and Other Proceedings Before the High Court of Judiciary in Scotland, Part IV.," in *Criminal Trials in Scotland, From A.D. M.CCCC.LXXXVIII TO A.D. M.DC.XXIV,* 239.

animal and casting a spell with their words.[165] "The Dewill rasit ane ewill wind, he being vnder the schip, and causit the schip perisch."[166]

He then appeared to renounce the devil and sought to cleanse himself of his wicked ways; however, within a day he had escaped prison and was again apprehended and brought before the king. James believed that he was again in league with the devil and was subjected to another series of torture including a turkas, an instrument similar to pinchers inflicting pain on the fingernails and again thrust into the boots.[167] According to criminal trial records dated December 26, 1590, Fian was tried for "treasonably conspiring the death of the king – sorcery – witchcraft – and incantation."[168] He was strangled and burned in January 1591.

What exactly transpired on All Hallows' Eve 1590 and who else was involved? Geillis Duncan, the maidservant whose testimony started it all, was still in prison, the elder witch Agnes Sampson was executed, and the devil's clerk had met the same fate. It would appear that the time had come for the imprisoned witches to meet the king's judgment.

According to historian Brian P. Levack, Euphame MacCalzean, an accused witch with connection with the wax image of the king was, "the most susceptible to the charge of treason as well as witchcraft[169] as she was the only witch accused of performing malevolent practices for

[165] Ibid., 237.

[166] Ibid., 235.

[167] Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland*, 79.

[168] Pitcairn, "Criminal Trials and Other Proceedings Before the High Court of Judiciary in Scotland, Part IV.," in *Criminal Trials in Scotland, From A.D. M.CCCC.LXXXVIII TO A.D. M.DC.XXIV,* 209.

[169] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*: *Law, Politics, and Religion*, 38.

several years and had a rapport with the Earl of Bothwell.[170] MacCalzean was charged with conspiring against the king's life and practicing witchcraft. She was tried and executed in June 1591. She was not given the same quick death as Sampson or Fian, strangled then burned, instead she was "brunt in assis [ashes],"[171] her properties forfeited. As heiress, MacCalzean's Estates of Cliftonhall were forfeited to the king's pleasure. The Act of Rehabilitation of 1592 could have restored the forfeitures to her husband and three daughters; however, the king overlooked the act and bequeathed the Estates of Cliftonhall to his favorite, Sir James Sandelandis and his heirs.[172]

Witchcraft cases, most notably those of North Berwick, were held in the judiciary court in Edinburgh, but most were tried by commissions of judiciary in local courts.[173] Julian Goodare, in his article "The Framework for Scottish Witch-Hunting in the 1590s," claims that the general commissioners were not given the judiciary powers of holding witchcraft trials solely on their own and that the power to do so was invested in none other than the crown.[174] This suggests that the king could appoint whomever he saw fit to conduct the trials including judges, magistrates, or other nobility which he authorized in 1591. Levack explains that the king's definition of witchcraft was politically and religiously motivated. Borrowing from French demonologist Jean Bodin, witchcraft was a sin against God and according to James, it too was a crime of treason.[175]

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[170] Ibid., 38-9.

[171] Pitcairn, "Criminal Trials," 257.

[172] Ibid., 248.

[173] Julian Goodare, "The Framework for Scottish Witch-Hunting in the 1590s," *The Scottish Historical Review* 81, no. 212, Part 2 (October 2002): 140.

[174] Ibid., 248.

[175] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion,* 41.

In 1587, a judicial reform act was passed shifting the proceedings of criminal trials initiated by private accusations to formal prosecution by court officials.[176] This was also a primary difference between Scottish trials and English trials, which required a grand jury.[177] Obvious differences in legal proceedings had separated the two kingdoms regarding witch-trial outcomes. The king saw the Scottish assembly as superior, one that provided a just and enviable system of justice. According to the *Acts and proceedings of the general assembly of the Kirk of Scotland,* "his Majesty praiseth God that he was born in such a time, as in the time of the light of the Gospell, to such a place as to be King, in such a Kirk, the sincerest kirk in the world."[178]

Before the king's return to Scotland in early 1590, a document by the trial council surfaced which would serve as a central point to the North Berwick witch trials. The document stated that the appointed council listed two primary characters in the trials, God and the king.[179] In line with Levack's claim that James viewed witchcraft as a political and religious threat, Normand and Roberts describe the council's document as "a challenge to the religious and political order."[180]

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[176] Ibid., 19.

[177] Ibid., 18.

[178] T. Thompson, ed., *Acts of Parliaments of Scotland [APS], iv, Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland from the Year MDLX [BUK],* the Church of Scotland, General Assembly; Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland (1839), 771, https://archive.org/details/actsproceedingso02chur/mode/2up (Accessed April 6, 2020).

[179] Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, "Scottish Witchcraft Before the North Berwick Witch Hunt: James VI's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland* (Liverpool Scholarship Online, 2000), 82.

[180] Ibid.

The king and Privy Council commissioned witch hunts beginning in 1591. Those authorized to conduct witchcraft investigations were required to examine, interrogate and record depositions, as well as confessions taken under torture and report back to the king and Council.[181] Such was the case in early May 1591, when Barbara Napier was found guilty by a jury of her peers of consorting in witchcraft but, was not found guilty of treason.[182] Since the king's definition of witchcraft extended beyond malefice to include the crime of treason, when no sentence had been passed, a letter from the king arrived at the judiciary court on May 10 demanding to know why. A small part of the letter details his will:

"fall be tane to the castel-hill of the burcht of Edinburgh, and thair bund to ane staik besyde the fyre and wirreit pairat quhill scho be deid; and pairefter hir body brunt in the said fyre."[183]

Laura Kolb, professor and English literary author, provides a clear picture, one that places James in the path that would lead to the truth. Kolb states that "nowhere do we see this [witch's narrative] more clearly than when the king, sometime interrogator and magistrate, interferes with the legal process."[184] Four weeks after Napier's acquittal, the jury was put on trial and lectured by the king that "only evil-doers are guilty of witchcraft."[185] On June 7, John Mowbray and eleven other jurors were tried of "wilful error on assise – acquitting a witch."[186]

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[181] Goodare, "The Framework for Scottish Witch-Hunting in the 1590s," 242.

[182] Laura Kolb, "Playing with Demons: Interrogating the Supernatural in Jacobean Drama," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 43, Issue 4, (October 2007): 341.

[183] Pitcairn, "Criminal Trials and Other Proceedings Before the High Court of Judiciary in Scotland, Part IV.," in *Criminal Trials in Scotland, From A.D. M.CCCC.LXXXVIII TO A.D. M.DC.XXIV*, 243.

[184] Kolb, "Playing with Demons," 341.

[185] Ibid.

[186] Pitcairn, "Criminal Trials," 244.

The king, responsible for bringing the trial of her assizers to court, "broke legal precedent by attending the trial in person."[187] It was the king's will that Napier be executed for consorting with witches. She was to be strangled and burned at Castle Hill by order of the king.[188] It was clear that the king was not going to allow a single witch to escape justice for he was God's hangman on earth. It appears that the king took a page from Jean Bodin's book that there should be no clemency for witches or for lenient judges. Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, scholars on Scottish witchcraft, write that in the king's speech he refers to Proverbs 17:26, in which it is just as much a crime to free a guilty person than to condemn one who is innocent.[189] In James's speech, he attested to the fact that it was unusual for a king to be present at the tollbooth in a criminal trial such as that of Barbara Napier.[190] This coincides with the document which states the king should be a primary authority after God.

By the time the next witch outbreak occurred in 1597, commissions for witch-hunting began to decrease. One explanation for this change in procedure may have been the case of Margaret Aitken. Starting in Aberdeen in the spring, several dozen people were accused. Aitken reportedly attended a convention in Atholl of 2,300 alleged witches. She claimed to have had a special power allowing her to identify a witch just by looking into the eyes of the accused.[191] Aitken accused a great number of people who were otherwise innocent. As a result, the

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[187] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion*, 38.

[188] Normand & Roberts, "Scottish Witchcraft Before the North Berwick Witch Hunt," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland*, 212.

[189] Ibid., 213.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Edward J. Cowan, "Witch Persecution and Folk Belief in Lowland Scotland: The Devil's Decade," in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland* (Palgrave MacMillan Limited, 2007), 89.

government again revised procedure regarding witchcraft cases. The king did not become involved in the witch trials of 1597 until late summer when Malcolm Anderson confessed that he and a group of other witches sought to drown him through sorcery on his way to a general assembly meeting.[192] Unfortunately, many of these later trial documents have disappeared from the records.

The publication of the king's treatise *Daemonologie* coincided with the second witchcraft outbreak. James wrote the treatise to prove the existence of witches and sorcerers. He used his personal experience in the hunts to educate others about the sinful arts. *Daemonologie* was reprinted in London sometime after his accession to England in 1604. In his new kingdom, he wanted to protect the innocent and punish the guilty.

5.3 Witchcraft in England

Ascending to the English throne after Elizabeth I's death, James VI was now also James I. He brought with him to his new kingdom many Scottish practices and ideas, particularly a stricter witchcraft law. James's first Parliament in England enacted such a law in which the death penalty was employed regardless of whether or not witchcraft caused death.[193] Although the new king enforced a more severe witchcraft law, evidence suggests that during his first few years in England, he was already beginning to have doubts about the credibility about witchcraft accusations. Deborah Willis explains in her book *Malevolent Nurture* that after the king's publication, he began to doubt the evidence which convicted some witches, therefore,

[192] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion*, 42.

[193] Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 39.

overturning their convictions.[194] Testimony of children was allowed, an ironic twist attributed to *Daemonologie* that provided the convictions of some accused witches. One of England's most prominent witch trials in 1612 rested on the testimony of a nine-year old girl, condemning some of her immediate family. Witchcraft was considered an almost impossible crime to prove due to its supernatural nature. In his 2017 book *Hung, Drawn, and Quartered: The Story of Execution Through the Ages,* Jonathan J. Moore explains that many observers who may have otherwise not been very reliable, were star witnesses, including children, the elderly, paupers, and even criminals.[195] In 1616, the thirteen-year old John Smith of Leicester accused nine women of practicing witchcraft, claiming they bewitched him with demons and even feigned fits of possession. The boy's deceit, however, was discovered by the king himself. James's skepticism of Smith's possession and his own growing doubts regarding witches did manage to save the lives of a handful of suspects; unfortunately, some had already been executed. Diarmaid MacCulloch argues that by the early years of James's reign in England, the book was already "something of an embarrassment to him."[196] It is not certain to what extent the king may have become less credulous during his reign in England, but witchcraft trials still took place and given some of the circumstances surrounding the trial proceedings, it is fairly certain that his treatise was met with some approval.

In 1604, an Englishman by the name John Dee petitioned the king with a letter pleading to be cleared from the slanderous accusation of being a conjurer. Dee had been a prominent

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[194] Deborah Willis, "James Among the Witch-Hunters: Witch-Hunting a Maternal Power in Early Modern England," in *Malevolent Nurture* (Cornell University Press, 1995), 125.
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[195] Jonathan J. Moore, *Hung, Drawn, and Quartered: The Story of Execution Through the Ages* (Alabama: Sweet Water Press, 2017), 94.

[196] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 572.

figure in Elizabeth's court as a Cambridge educated alchemist. The letter survives and illustrates the king's attention and presence to witchcraft in England. Dee writes: By the grace and providence of the Almightie, you are our King, our earthly Supreme Head, and judge: so it may please your sacred Majestie, eyther in your owne royall presence and hearing: Or, of the Lordes of your Majestie's most honorable privie Counsell: Or, of the present assemble Parlament States, to cause your Highnesse sayd Servant, to be tryed and cleared of that horrible and damnable, and to him, most grievous and dammageable Sclaunder: generally, and for these many years last past, in this Kingdome raysed, and continued, by report, and Print, against him: Namely, That he is, or hath bin a *Conjurer*, or *Caller*, or *Invocator* of divels.[197] The petition fell on deaf ears, as the king ignored Dee's plea. The king may have had some early doubts about the evil art of witchcraft, but he must have felt confident enough in his conviction of Dee's guilt. An astrologer in Elizabeth's court, Dee seemed to embody the necromancer that James described in his treatise.

In the same year that Dee petitioned the king, a young woman by the name Anne Gunter exhibited symptoms of demonic possession. She tore hair from her own head, vomited pins, and displayed all the usual symptoms one might expect of a possessed individual. Her body would swell despite going without food for long periods; onlookers described her body as "peculiar."[198] Witnesses saw her stockings, garters, and bodice unravel, leaving her body bare, another example of female sin. Anne's body was symptomatic to witchcraft. By the following year the

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[197] John Dee, *To the King's most excellent Majestie, A petition from Dee to James I, asking "to be tryed and cleared of that horrible and damnable…Sclaunder…that he is, or hath bin a Conjurer, or Caller, or Invocator of divels, Discovering Literature: Shakespeare & Renaissance, General Reference Collection C. 21.b. 25.(1)* (British Library, 1604), https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/john-dees-petition-to-james-i-asking-to-be-cleared-of-accusations-of-conjuring-1604 (Accessed May 17, 2020).

[198] James Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A horrible and true story of deception, witchcraft, murder, and the KING OF ENGLAND* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 159, ebook, file:///D:/The%20Bewitching%20of%20Anne%20Gunther.pdf (Accessed May 25, 2019).

king had become attentive to her behavior, which had already no doubt gained a wealth of attention. The girl's father, Brian Gunter, unhappy with the acquittal of the women whom Anne named in her supposed bewitchment, brought her to meet the king. Why Gunter made this dreadful decision cannot be substantiated. Perhaps it was for attention, sympathy, revenge, or status, but what is certain is that he could not have expected the result. Initially, the king was skeptical, just as he had been fifteen years earlier during the witch accusations at North Berwick. James personally interviewed Anne to judge for himself if her condition was genuine. The king and the royal family visited Oxford University in the fall and it was on this trip that he would meet with the alleged victim four times between August and October.[199] Soon after, she was left in the custody of an official specializing in demonic possession. It would not be long before she eventually confessed to faking her fits and accused her father of fabricating the story in an attempt to tarnish three women that Anne accused of causing her affliction.[200] In a letter dated the tenth day of October to the Earl of Salisbury, the king denounced Anne's supposed afflictions and even speculated to the reasons for her maladies.[201] A formal prosecution against father and daughter took place in early 1606. Throughout this ordeal, the king even exposed Anne's physician Richard Haydock as culpable in the conspiracy. The Court of Star Chamber now exercised its royal power, a practice borrowed from the Scottish king to lay judgment not on the act of witchcraft, but on the act of fraudulence.[202]

[199] Ibid., 179.

[200] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion*, 49-50.

[201] Ibid. 51.

[202] Ibid., 52.

Chapter Six: "The Politic Father"

6.1 The Divine Right of Kings

The Renaissance ushered in an age of new religious ideas and humanistic expression; however, it also birthed the era of absolute monarchy. The age of absolutism was in its infancy during the Renaissance, reaching its height in the Baroque era.[203] Absolute monarchy or divine right is a philosophy of governance wherein the monarch holds 'absolute' power. Kings and queens were not answerable to the laws, though they did enforce them with absolute control. King James VI descended from a long line of royal ancestry. He was the great-grand son of Henry VII of England, thereby establishing his ascendancy to England through his Plantagenet blood. Thanks to his great uncle, Henry VIII, he would add *Fidei Defensor* (Defender of the Faith) to his English regency. This title was bestowed upon Henry and all of his English heirs in 1521 by Pope Leo X as a glorified gift to him for his defense of the Catholic Church against Martin Luther.[204]

So strong were King James's views on the divine right of kings, he expressed his unwavering opinion to his English subjects in a speech in 1609: "(The) Estate of monarchy is the supremist thing upon earth; for kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself, they are called gods."[205] King James utilized three

[203] Professor of History Dr. Christopher J. Smith at Liberty University, interview by author, Lynchburg, VA, April 13, 2020.

[204] Alison Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and His Court* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001), 231-2.

[205] James I, *James I, Speeches to Parliament* (1609), James Harvey Robinson, *Readings in European History*, 2 Volumes (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1906), 2: 219-220, ed. Steven Kreis, The History Guide, Lectures on Early Modern European History, www.historyguide.org/earlymod/james1609.html (Accessed April 6, 2020).

important variables to illustrate monarchy. First, and probably the most indisputable to him, was that the Scriptures compared kings to gods. The second and third were that kings were compared to the father of a family and the head of the body of man. Just as the head cares for the body and gives it guidance, the king cares for and guides his subjects.[206]

Basilikon Doron, A Remonstrate for the Right of Kings, and the Independence of their Crownes, and *True Law of Free Monarchies* share similar sentiments to James's other works. In his 1598 treatise, *A True Law of Free Monarchies,* a monarch was guilty of a sin greater than witchcraft if he were not to inflict severe punishment upon a witch.[207] Clearly, here he writes of his participation in the trials. Also worth noting is the king's reference to biblical verses such as those pertaining to the punishment of witches.

Bernard Bourdin agrees that *Basilikon Doron* and *True Law of Free Monarchies* are works that justify the king's exercise of divine right over his subjects. Bourdin states in his book, *The Theological-Political Origins of the Modern State: The Controversy between James I of England and Cardinal Bellarmine*, that "both works defend the political legitimacy of a king by

[206] King James VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: or, the reciprock and mutuall dutie betwixt a free King, and his natural Subjectes* in *The Workes of the most high and mightie Prince, James…King of Great Britaine, France, and Ireland* 1598, *Discovering Literature: Shakespeare & Renaissance, General Reference Collection 91.g.11* (London: British Library, 1616), 204, https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-true-law-of-free-monarchies-by-king-james-vi-and-i (Accessed February 22, 2020).

[207] Daniel Fischlin, "Counterfeiting God": James VI (I) and the Politics of "Daemonologie" (1597), *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 26, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 10.

divine right over denominational duties."[208] So committed to his reasoning on kingship, James writes confidently "the King is above the law."[209]

A year after his treatise on kingship, James wrote *Basilikon Doron*, which was essentially an instructional guide on kingship for James's eldest son, Henry, Duke of Rothesay.

"Walk always so, as ever in His sight,

Who guards the godly, plaguing the profane,

And so ye should in princely virtues shine,

Remembering right your mighty King Divine.[210]

-The Argument of the Book Sonnet, *Basilikon Doron*

J. H. Burns, the late Scottish historian investigates influences upon the king's treatise, *The True Law of Kingship: Concepts of Monarchy in Early Modern Scotland, True Law of Free Monarchies*. He credits early absolutist writers, Adam Blackwood and William Barclay as

[208] Bernard Bourdin, "James VI of Scotland's Trew Law of Free Monarchies: A Theological-Political Hermeneutics of Scripture," in *The Theological-Political Origins of the Modern State: The Controversy between James I of England and Cardinal Bellarmine* Catholic University of America Press, (2010), 159.

[209] King James VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: or the reciprock and mutuall dutie betwixt a free King, and his natural Subjectes* in *The Workes of the most high and mightie Prince, James…King of Great Britaine, France, and Ireland* 1598, *Discovering Literature: Shakespeare & Renaissance, General Reference Collection 91.g.11* (London: British Library, 1616), 203, https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-true-law-of-free-monarchies-by-king-james-vi-and-i (Accessed February 22, 2020).

[210] King James I, "The Argument of the Book Sonnet," in *Basilikon Doron or His Majesty's Instructions to his dearest son, Henry the Prince*, (Edition of Edinburgh, 1599), http://www.christianheritagemins.org/articles/Basilikon%20Doron.pdf (Accessed June 3, 2019).
James writes to his son about following in the path of God. The king instructs his son to guard the godly and plague the profane. Once again, the king's opinion that the innocent not be condemned and the guilty punished is shown here in print. If by plaguing he insinuates 'torment,' he might be referring to witches for which he spent the early half of the decade enforcing punishment upon.

advocates of kingship when writing his famous treatise on divine right.[211] Blackwood was a political theorist whose political contributions, he dedicated to his royal patroness, Mary Queen of Scots.[212] His assertion was that "force was the basis of political power."[213] This quote is reminiscent of the belief that Blackwood had about defending divine right. Blackwood's favoring of kingship was in direct contradiction to the exiled Jesuit Robert Persons, who argued in favor of elective monarchy. James drew on the ideas of other writers as well, such as Frenchman, Jean Bodin, who wrote *De la Demonomanie des sorciers* (1580), which may have been an influential piece to the king's future work, *Daemonologie*. His political contributions helped to strengthen the king's claim to absolutism.[214] Ioannis D. Evrigenis maintains in his article, "Sovereignty, mercy, and natural law: King James VI/I and Jean Bodin," that there were obvious comparisons between Bodin's *Les six livres de la république*[215] and the king's treatises on kingship.[216] Evrigenis suggests that Bodin's "defining characteristic of sovereignty" is prominent in *Basilikon Doron* in which James "instruct[s] his son on the relationship between justice and mercy."[217]

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[211] J. H. Burns, *The True Law of Kingship: Concepts of Monarchy in Early Modern Scotland* (Clarendon Press Oxford, 1996), 232.

[212] Howell A. Lloyd, "The Political Thought of Adam Blackwood," *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 4 (December 2000): 919.

[213] Burns, *The True Law of Kingship*, 232.

[214] Ibid., 226.

[215] According to Ioannis D. Evrigenis, an inventory of James's books between 1573 and 1583 show that the king had a copy of Bodin's *Les six livres de la république* in his possession from a very early age.

[216] Ioannis D. Evrigenis, "Sovereignty, mercy, and natural law: King James VI/I and Jean Bodin," *History of European Ideas* 45, no. 8 (2019): 1082.

[217] Ibid.

In the treatise, *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, the king lists the many duties that are naturally bestowed upon a king. James explains that the duties of a true monarch are laid out in the Scriptures. As the prince takes the seat on God's earthly throne at his coronation, he must administer judgment and justice, provide advancement for the good, and establish and maintain good laws.[218] Taken from Scripture, he recites from Samuel; "And we also will be like all other Nations, and our King shall judge us, and goe out before us, and fight our battels."[219] Historian D. Alan Orr, in his 2016 article on King James and his views on divine right, explains that as God's representative on earth, James used his experiences in the witch hunts which "served to legitimize the king's role as God's chosen instrument for combatting the Devil."[220]

At the height of the North Berwick witch hunt, the king's cousin, the Earl of Bothwell, was implicated. With imminent danger looming, one could understand why James would want to play a role in the trials. Bothwell was imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle in April 1591, although he escaped soon after.[221] Fleeing the country, he avoided the king's wrath, although not before suffering the confiscation of his titles, lands, and offices. "All that ye possesse shal serve his [the king's] private use, and inordinate appetite,"[222] words spoken by James in a speech years later, are eerily reminiscent of Bothwell's downfall.

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[218] King James VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, 194.

[219] Ibid., 196.

[220] D. Alan Orr, "God's Hangman: James VI, the Divine Right of Kings, and the Devil," *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 18, no. 2 (June 2016): 140-1.

[221] Magnus Magnusson, *Scotland: The Story of a Nation* (New York: Grove Press, 2000), 396.

[222] King James VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, 198.

6.2 "The Politic Father"

Basilikon Doron elucidated James VI's views of kingship and divine right. Describing to his son, Henry, a prince had to God, he states, "He made you a little god, to sit on His throne and rule over other men."[223] This philosophy never diminished, although it created problems with Parliament, the people, and those directly opposed to a monarch obtaining such power.

Although it is known that Stuart monarchs often clashed with Parliament, Peter Marshall, historian and author of *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Reformation,* gives credibility to James's belief in the king's role as the father to his people. Marshall writes that, in 1612, James convinced Parliament to pass an act that would recognize him as "supreme governor."[224] Speaking to Parliament in 1609, James gave a dire warning to his subjects regarding the state of affairs: "Do not meddle with the main points of government, that is my craft."[225] James held that his governmental expertise was his exclusive province. His many years as the reigning monarch in Scotland gave him experience in government policy. James was aware of proper protocol in legal proceedings for criminal trials, yet he ignored them when personally questioning accused witches during the North Berwick witch trials. He justified his actions by divine right bestowed upon kings. Boasting of his many years of personal experience, James asserted, "I must not be taught my office."[226]

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[223] King James I, "Anent A King's Christian Duty Towards God," in *Basilikon Doron or His Majesty's Instructions to his dearest son, Henry the Prince,* (Edition of Edinburgh, 1599), http://www.christianheritagemins.org/articles/Basilikon%20Doron.pdf (Accessed June 3, 2019).

[224] Peter Marshall, "Britain's Reformations," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Reformation*, ed. Peter Marshall (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2015), 224.

[225] James I, *James I, Speeches to Parliament* (1609), James Harvey Robinson, *Readings in European History,* 2 Volumes (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1906), 2: 219-220, ed. Steven Kreis, The History Guide, Lectures on Early Modern European History, www.historyguide.org/earlymod/james1609.html (Accessed April 6, 2020).

[226] Ibid.

He stated in a speech to Parliament, "For a king is truly *parens patraie,* the politic father of his people."[227] As king, James believed that he was placed upon the throne by God Himself, to rule over men and in no way obligated to answer to anyone other than God. English historian Carolly Erickson writes about James's view on kingship, stating that, "The idea of a ruler turning to his people, or to their elected representatives in Parliament for approval,"[228] was contradictory to his claims to divine right. In the 1620s, when war was looming on the horizon, James was urged by his son-in-law to lend his assistance. When the Commons interjected demanding that these matters be debated in Parliament, James, in a fit of rage, "tore the written record of this protest out of the Commons' journal, dissolving Parliament."[229]

6.3 A Threat to His Reign

Threats to James's reign began in his infancy. After his mother abdicated the throne in 1567 after her supposed conspiracy,[230] her son James would be the next heir. He never knew his mother, who was imprisoned in England. James's childhood tutor, George Buchanan, had filled the boy's head with despicable ideas about her.[231] A political opponent of Blackwood, Buchanan would go on to openly oppose James's claim to divine right, but the threat did not stop there.

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[227] Ibid.

[228] Carolly Erickson, *Brief Lives of the British Monarchs: From William the Conqueror to Elizabeth II* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2007), 249.

[229] Ibid., 252.

[230] In 1567, Mary's husband and the father of her infant son, the future James VI of Scotland, was murdered. The queen was implicated in the murder and forced to abdicate on pain of death.

[231] Magnusson, *Scotland: The Story of a Nation*, 391.

In 1582, the teenaged king was captured while on a hunting trip through the trickery of the Earl of Gowrie who had changed his allegiance.[232] James was held at Ruthven Castle for ten months while leaders of the Kirk of Scotland were major players in the plot.[233] In 1584, ready to prevent another coup, the king was ready with a large army. The earl was shown no clemency and was executed on grounds of treason.[234] More conspiracies, aside from witchcraft, would target James at the dawn of the next century. The Gowrie conspiracy was rooted in the events which occurred in 1582. The execution of Lord Gowrie, the conspirator and captor of the king during the Ruthven raid was to be avenged. Gowrie's son invited the king to come to Perth where he could make claim to a substantial amount of gold coins which were found in the possession of a suspicious man.[235] This was the ruse used to trick the king into gaining his trust and getting him into his home. Once there, Gowrie drew a dagger attempting to assassinate James.[236]

In November of 1605, a plot was uncovered that otherwise would have killed the king and his successor while attending Parliament. Resentment against James's reenactment of the penal laws and anti-Catholicism, the Gunpowder Plot was hatched. Guy Fawkes and others planned to blow up Parliament on November 5, killing the king and bringing about a Catholic revolution.[237]

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[232] Ibid., 386.

[233] Ibid., 387.

[234] Ibid.

[235] Ibid., 398.

[236] Ibid.

[237] Ibid., 409.

The Gowrie conspiracy of 1600 and the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 were frightening threats to his sovereignty, as was the murder of the Earl of Moray. In an ill-fated alliance with the Earl of Bothwell came the murder of James Stewart, the second Earl of Moray. He was promised a pardon by the king if he severed ties with Bothwell.[238] Unfortunately, against the king's orders, the Earl of Huntly stormed the castle in Fife where Moray was staying while awaiting his summons from the king and was murdered in the raid by Huntly and his men.[239] Soon after, Bothwell resurfaced breaking into the king's bedchamber before escaping. The murder of the "Bonnie Earl o' Moray" struck fear in the king prompting more safety precautions and attention to stricter law and order.

Exiled Jesuit Robert Persons threatened James's title through the publication of a controversial and salacious treatise titled *A Conference about the Next Succession for the Croun of Ingland* (1594/95). Persons's claim was that James's succession was not divinely sanctioned, therefore he could be deposed and furthermore, Persons claimed that James was not the rightful heir in the first place.[240] Persons took the task of tracing back the royal lineage quite meticulously. His supposition was that James was not a true Lancastrian. He argued against hereditary monarchy, championing an elective system. His candidate was Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, daughter of King Phillip II of Spain.[241] This no doubt was an enormous insult to James.

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[238] Ibid., 396.

[239] Ibid.

[240] Rei Kanemura, "Kingship by Descent or Kingship by Election? The Contested Tide of James VI and I," *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 2, Cambridge University Press on behalf of the North American Conference on British Studies (April 2013): 320.

[241] Christian Schneider, "A Kingdom for a Catholic?: Pope Clement VIII, King James VI and I, and the English Succession in International Diplomacy (1592-1605)," *The International History Review* (January 2015): 122.

This publication could have damaged his reputation further and discredited any claim that he had for the realm of England. Christian Schneider states in his 2004 article "A Kingdom for a Catholic?" that after Phillip's death, his son, Phillip III, argued that the "candidacy of his sister required more consideration."[242] James had formally declared that the country be purged in 1587, "against all Jesuites, Seminarie Priests, Idolaters, and mantainers therof."[243] Even in exile, Persons was a dangerous threat to the king's ascendancy to the English throne.

Once James became the first of his name to rule England, he set about becoming the first monarch of the kingdom of Great Britain in 1604. The king believed it was in the best interest of both Scotland and England to join them as a united-kingdom, though Parliament steadfastly denied the king's attempts. James defied Parliament and on October 20, 1604 gave himself the royal title "King of Great Britain."[244] His proclamation declaring his intentions states "Upon all which considerations we doe by these presents, by force and our kingly power and prerogative, assume to our selfe by the cleerenesse of our Right, the name and stile of KING OF GREAT BRITTAINE, FRANCE, AND IRELAND, DEFENDOR OF THE FAITH, &c. as followeth in our just and lawfull stile."[245]

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[242] Ibid.

[243] T. Thompson, ed., *Acts of Parliaments of Scotland [APS], iv, Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland from the Year MDLX [BUK],* the Church of Scotland, General Assembly; Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland (1839), 704, https://archive.org/details/actsproceedingso02chur/mode/2up (Accessed April 6, 2020).

[244] Charles Phillips*, The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Royal Britain* (New York: Fall River Press, 2009), 138.

[245] King James VI and I, *By the King, A Proclamation declaring the King's intention to "assume …the name and stile of King of Great Brittaine, France, and Ireland, Discovering Literature: Shakespeare & Renaissance, C. 112.h.1.(44.)* (London, 1604), https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/royal-proclamation-declaring-james-vi-and-i-to-be-king-of-great-britain (Accessed June 3, 2020).

6.4 The Power Struggle

King James was an absolute monarch. This theory of governance justified his actions as absolute head of the Scottish state. His authority spanned over his subjects, the church, the nobility, and law to which he had astutely stated he was not subject. James believed that God had given him all that he possessed as king; it was God's will that he be put on the throne to rule. It was therefore God's power that gave James his authority as an earthly king. Daniel Fischlin explores the many facets of sovereignty in his article "Counterfeiting God": James VI (I) and the Politics of "Daemonologie." He asserts the use of "God" and "majesty" as used in such works as the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the king's *Daemonologie* as non-accidental, as they boast "political empowerment."[246] It was not just differences of opinion between the king and the nobility or even Parliament for that matter threatening his position; the king was in a power struggle with the devil's servants. Fischlin constructs the imaginative powers held by witches. Here he explores the way in which the imagination creates a transformation of the subject whether by appearance or words spoken. He emphasizes his meaning by indicating that the witch was "the locus of a particular kind of gendered and imaginary power seen as threatening."[247]

The female witch was thought to possess the power to cause death and destruction. She could raise storms, kill her enemies, kill or maim animals, cause illnesses, and inflict fear in her community. The influence that she had, though negative, elevated her in society. It gave her power and authority which was a threat to people across all walks of life. In her article "Jacobean Witchcraft and Feminine Power," Stephanie Spoto describes the practice of magic and witchcraft

[246] Daniel Fischlin, "Counterfeiting God": James VI (I) and the Politics of "Daemonologie" 1597, *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 26, no. 1, *Journal of Narrative Theory* (Winter 1996): 4.

[247] Ibid.

as a form of rebellion against James's authority as king.[248] It has been stated in chapter three that the king believed in witchcraft and the culpability of women to that crime. Her promiscuity, loose tongue, body and devil's mark gave her power. Why did Geillis Duncan and Agnes Sampson confess so precipitously after the mark was discovered on their bodies? Was this a form of female power, one that gave her status in a man's world? This female power was of a sexually threatening nature that gave the witch the power to dominate men.

The witch countered the different aspects of the monarch's duties creating a power struggle. Fischlin describes this connection when stating, "witches incarnate the lost dimensions of absolutism."[249] Just as the king exercised power through God's intervention by divine right, witches too exerted supernatural power. The monarch held the power to make decisions aimed at protecting his people and provide for the common good. The witch countered that by using her power to kill, maim, or destroy her neighbors. The king defended and upheld the church and religion while the witch blasphemed. She joined in a pact with the devil in which she denounced her Christian faith. Her diabolic pact threatened the sanctity of the church and the practices within it. The authors of *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland,* Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, use Queen Anne's coronation as a symbolic reference to power and authority. What is suggested is the process of Anne's participation in the ritual practice of queenship. She changes into her majestic robes, takes an oath, and through the ceremony has transformed herself into a "consecrated queen."[250] This ritual suggests that, just as Anne took an oath of consecration with

[248] Stephanie Irene Spoto, "Jacobean Witchcraft and Feminine Power," *Pacific Coast Philology* 45 (2010): 55.

[249] Fischlin, "Counterfeiting God": James VI (I) and the Politics of Daemonologie," 8.

[250] Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, "The Court and Politics: James VI's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland* (Liverpool University Press, 2000), 38.

God as earthly queen, witches made a ritual pact with Satan as his loyal servants therefore proving their existence and legitimacy.

The king's sovereignty therefore was threatened by the enormity of witchcraft development and expansion in Scotland. Brian P. Levack clearly defines royal absolutism as a policy involved with state-building.[251] The state's authorization in the witch hunts, trials, and executions gave it credibility as functioning absolutely.

James's deep-rooted philosophy of divine right would act as the justification for his neglect of his royal duties, lavish spending, flamboyant lifestyle, and his damaged relationship with the queen and Parliament. It was also his defense against those who sought to cause him harm. A paranoid king in constant fear of attack wielded the weapon most suited to his person: his pen. His long reign was chronicled by combating his greatest fears into print: constant threats to his sovereignty.

[251] Brian P. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 100.

Conclusion

King James VI and I lived in a remarkable time which accounted for many of his exuberant qualities. Inheriting the Scottish throne at thirteen months, James is often referred to as the "cradle king." His kingly status was all he ever knew, regarding that position as an inherent gift from almighty God. From his aristocratic youth to the status as of divine right monarch, James was regarded as persistent, indulgent, flamboyant, and intelligent, though he would spend most of his reign elucidating his sovereignty. With his legitimacy threatened by his opponents, he used his pen to destroy opposition through the publication of his treatises on kingship, *The True Law of Free Monarchies* and *Basilikon Doron.* He defined kingship and a God-given right in which the king "sit[s] upon God's throne."[252]

A year before the publication of *The True Law of Free Monarchies,* the king released his treatise on witchcraft entitled *Daemonologie.* Like his forceful English uncle, King Henry VIII, he wrote best-selling publications in Europe to promote his cause, whether on kingship or witchcraft and took by force titles and properties he thought he deserved. In his youth, James felt perplexed by the dangers surrounding his well-being. His mother had been executed on charges of conspiracy to murder forcing her abdication to the throne, his childhood tutor had doubts about James's legitimacy, resulting in a crippled relationship, and before the king came of age there were already conspiracies afoot to cause him harm. He did manage to thwart some of the dangers on his life with experience and due diligence.

[252] James I, *James I, Speeches to Parliament* (1609), James Harvey Robinson, *Readings in European History,* 2 Volumes (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1906), 2: 219-220, ed. Steven Kreis, The History Guide, Lectures on Early Modern European History, www.historyguide.org/earlymod/james1609.html (Accessed April 6, 2020).

By the time of James's marriage to Anne of Denmark, he would feel the infectious hand of diabolical treachery called witchcraft closing in. A highly intelligent man with an overwhelming fear of the devil, James began to believe that his life was again in peril unleashing a mass witch hunt. Witchcraft, although, hard to prove, was a serious crime. In Scotland, it was also a religious offense. The pact between the devil and the witch was already a part of witch-lore when the king became convinced that witches were trying to kill him. The Reformation set the tone for more perceptions about the complexities of life. New thoughts flourished regarding salvation, predestination, causes of evil, and female transgression. Reformers presented their interpretations of God's providence and Satan's power. Women challenged the gender hierarchy through Calvinism as they were making their own independent choices.

In the early 1590's, the king bypassed legal precedent directly interrogating, examining, commissioning, and judging Scottish witches. Through his 1587 reform, prosecution of witches could proceed without a formal complaint; however, this was an abuse of power. Just as the author of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, Heinrich Kramer, had used excessive force and deceit to obtain confessions, James used divine right to bend the rules of legal proceedings. Suspects were examined to find proof of guilt, usually a mark upon the body signifying a pact with the devil. A confession allowed for a trial to get underway. The application of torture in Scotland gave authorities ample opportunity to secure a confession and in doing so acquiring an overwhelmingly high conviction rate when compared to England where torture was not generally accepted.

The brutal torture inflicted upon Dr. Fian during the North Berwick witch hunt was excessive, yet it did yield a confession. Afterward when the doctor escaped prison, he was brought before the king and once again subjected to torture because James believed he was again

in the devil's service. A few months later the king used his royal authority to put Barbara Napier's judges on trial for their supposed ineptitude, believing it a sin to let the guilty go free. James's participation in the examinations and trials supported his power as a divine right king. As discussed in the previous chapter, a power struggle between the witch and the king was a further threat to James's status. As the early theorist of absolutism, Adam Blackwood, asserted, "force was the basis of political power."[253] James was all too familiar with the power struggle between himself and Parliament, Catholics, opponents of his divine right, his own kin, and of course, Scottish witches. He was on a perpetual cycle of defense protecting himself either by way of speaking out or writing against his opponents. When that failed to satisfy him, he resorted to another way of defense: by force.

The king steadfastly believed that warning against witches was his duty, as was seeking punishment for their sins. He shared the convictions of other demonologists and intellectuals regarding the crime of witchcraft. His 1597 publication, *Daemonologie*, encompassed religious and political elements regarding the nature of the witch's pact with the devil and the power she possessed to do harm. The king, however, tackled the crime with a secret weapon: his divine right. He regarded Scripture as a support network; each of his beliefs on sovereignty linking back to him: kings were gods and judges on earth who were above the law. If he could tear the pages and burn the works of those who disagreed with him, he could have those whom he suspected of endangering his life incinerated to ash.

[253] Howell A. Lloyd, "The Political Thought of Adam Blackwood," *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 4 (December 2000): 919.

Author and historian on Scottish witchcraft, Brian P. Levack, claims that witches whom were found guilty by the king personally or by central judicial authorities "was negligible."[254] What else can be said of the king's "negligible" acts? His taste for extravagant clothing was not only negligible, but costly. His indulgent drinking was repugnant. His preference for handsome young men was irresponsible and dangerous. As the king aged, he became more reckless and less dutiful. He may have changed his views on the subject of witchcraft, but that of divine right was as hard as stone. Why then, did King James spend excessively, drink carelessly, cast aside his wife for the company of other men, take titles and properties he thought he deserved, and personally take part in one of the largest witch hunts in Scotland's history? The answer is simple: He believed he had the authority to do so vested in him as God's lieutenant on earth. He reigned supreme. A 'divine' power that he bestowed upon his son, Charles I. How could James have known how far his son and heir would fall, his head severed from his shoulders, leaving the legacy of absolute kings as nothing more than a pool of blood at the feet of a common people.

[254] Brian P. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 104.

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