

**DEMONIZING THE FAIRIES: SCOTTISH MINISTERS AND  
PRETERNATURAL BELIEFS DURING THE SCOTTISH WITCH-HUNTS,  
1550-1700**

by

Jarrett Weston

Bachelor of Arts, Crandall University, 2016

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

**Master of Arts**

in the Graduate Academic Unit of History

Supervisor: Gary K. Waite, PhD, Department of History

Examining Board: Janet E. Mullin, PhD, Department of History  
Ross Leckie, PhD, Department of English

This thesis is accepted by the  
Dean of Graduate Studies

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

May, 2020

©Jarrett Weston, 2020

## ABSTRACT

This study argues that through sermons and their participation in trials for witchcraft, the demonizing rhetoric of the clergy was absorbed by the Scottish peasantry. Consequently, the fairy – belief in which was a major component of Scottish popular culture – went from being perceived as its own distinct entity to a type of demon. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the period between 1550 and 1700, identifying key events in the development of Scottish Protestantism. Chapter 2 builds on these terms by using the written works and sermons of Protestant theologians from Scotland, defining how each perceived the witch, fairies, and Satan as time progressed. While not every theologian during this period saw fairies as demons, the majority viewed these spirits as the Devil's agents.

Finally, chapter 3 shifts the focus to the chronological study of testimonies of men and women who were accused of witchcraft, showing how fairies and the Devil became interchangeable entities over time. This chapter affirms that, by the end of the seventeenth century, the Scottish peasantry had reinterpreted these spirits as demons. This study reminds historians of the impact of polemical discourse and its ability to shift culture, considering the demonizing of preternatural traditions changed how people from this period saw themselves and understood the world around them.

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iii
Introduction .....	1
Key Terms: Folk Belief .....	2
Key Terms: The Fairy .....	4
Key terms: Preternatural Belief and the Devil in Scotland .....	7
Geographical Context: The Scottish Highlands and Lowlands .....	13
Methodology and Structure .....	14
Chapter 1: The Scottish Reformation .....	19
Introduction .....	19
The Catholic Church: Structure and Key Beliefs .....	20
1540-1559: Tensions between Learned Protestants and Catholics .....	22
1563: The Scottish Witchcraft Act .....	33
The Presbyterian Kirk: Structure and Key Beliefs .....	34
1660-1700: The Enlightenment and the Rise of Atheism .....	42
Chapter 2: The Clergy’s Interaction with Fairy Kind .....	45
Introduction .....	45
William Hay .....	51
John Knox .....	55
King James VI .....	65
James Hutchison and David Brown .....	73
Francis Cullen .....	76
Robert Kirk and Martin Martin .....	78
Chapter 3: Demonizing the Fairy in the Scottish Courtroom .....	86
Introduction .....	86
The Testimony of Jonet Boyman .....	92
The Testimonies of Bessie Dunlop .....	95
The Testimony of Andro Man .....	96
The Testimonies of Bartie Patersoune and Elspeth Reoch .....	97
The Testimony of Issobell Haldane .....	101
The Testimonies of Isobel Gowdie .....	103

The Testimony of Jean Weir .....	108
Conclusion .....	111
Bibliography.....	115
Primary Sources .....	115
Secondary Sources .....	119
Curriculum Vitae	

## Introduction

Seventeenth century Scotland was home to Robert Kirk, who is described by the historians, Lizanne Henderson and Edward Cowan, as “The Fairy Minister”. Born in 1644, Kirk became an accomplished Gaelic scholar who sought the evangelization of the Scottish Highlands. As he worked towards this goal, he kept a notebook containing his research on Highland folk traditions, which included fairy belief. Using this notebook, he wrote *The Secret Common-Wealth*.<sup>1</sup> While this text described demons and fairies as separate entities, many of Kirk’s peers did not share his positive outlook on fairy kind.<sup>2</sup> In fact, during this period many Scottish ministers warned their congregants of the demonic nature of fairies.<sup>3</sup> How then did the Scottish peasantry’s view of the fairy and other elements of folk tradition evolve under the clergy’s influence?

To this answer this question, this thesis looks at Scottish fairy-beliefs and the evolution of popular traditions surrounding them. In doing so, it argues that Scottish preachers changed how the peasantry of Scotland understood their own beliefs, particularly traditions surrounding fairies. By the late seventeenth century, the Scottish peasantry adopted the demonology of their pastors. On the topic, Henderson and Cowan have noted instances in which the accused described the fairy in demonic terms. While discussing the case of Isobel Gowdie, who was put on trial in 1662, they argue:

Though Isobel came from Auldearn in the North of Scotland, an area slow to experience the full force of the presbyterian system, her

---

<sup>1</sup> Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 2001), 172, 174-175.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Kirk, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns & Fairies: A Study in Folk-lore*, eds. Andrew Lang (London: David Nutt, 1893), 10-11, 87.

<sup>3</sup> Canon J. A. Macculloch, “the mingling of fairy and Witch Beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth century Scotland”, in *Folklore* 32, no. 4 (1921): 231.

confession can surely be seen as indicative of the extent to which such phenomena had become assimilated into folk culture.<sup>4</sup>

This thesis builds on this point, addressing specific shifts in perspective that turned the fairy into a demon. This thesis addresses this question by arguing that, through preaching and their involvement in court trials, Scottish preachers changed how the peasantry of Scotland understood their own beliefs, particularly traditions surrounding fairies. By the late seventeenth century, the Scottish peasantry adopted the demonology of their pastors. As such, it seeks to broaden our understanding of the Scottish peasantry's view of folk belief during this period.

### **Key Terms: Folk Belief**

First and Foremost, several critical terms must be defined. Lizanne Henderson's *Fantastical Imaginings: The Supernatural in Scottish History and Culture* identifies how historians should understand folk belief. She defines "folk" in a more general sense, as referring to people or social systems created by people, such as nations.<sup>5</sup> Henderson also describes this term in a communal sense, where she states: "it is typically friendly and informal, people seen as one of themselves rather than from above or outside."<sup>6</sup> This notion is exemplified by the work of William Steward, a nineteenth-century author. In his book he prefaces a story about fairies with the disclaimer: "In support of this conclusion, we have the authority of a decent old man, whose veracity, on subjects of this description, has never been questioned in the district in which he

---

<sup>4</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 134.

<sup>5</sup> Lizanne Henderson, *Fantastical Imaginings: The Supernatural in Scottish History and Culture* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2009), xv.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

lived...’’<sup>7</sup> This connects with Henderson’s definition of “folk” as the storyteller does not stand apart from his community; rather, his beliefs are viewed with respect. This highlights how communities are social constructs, formed by shared beliefs.<sup>8</sup> The historian, Emma Wilby, builds on this point by arguing that fairy belief was: “perhaps [the] most truly folkloric of all popular belief systems by virtue of the fact that it had never been dispensed from the pulpit or systemized in texts... handed down from generation to generation at the hearth and in the workplace.”<sup>9</sup> Here, she affirms that fairies were a part of the Scottish peasantry’s identity. This point is bolstered by Henderson and Cowan, who argue that fairies: “were a part of everyday life, as real to people as the sunrise, and as incontrovertible as the existence of God.”<sup>10</sup> They affirm that oral traditions carried the same authority as doctrine expressed by the clergy.

As will be seen in chapter 3, fairies dramatically changed in the eyes of the common folk through the involvement of the Scottish clergy. This notion of popular culture being susceptible to change is explored by historian Peter Burke. While discussing literature, he argued that our understanding of culture should not solely be defined by physical symbols. Rather, a more valuable exercise for historians would be to look at how different groups defined cultural objects across time. Burke explains that different members of early modern society, from the peasantry to the clergy, used and interpreted cultural objects in different ways.<sup>11</sup> Thus, not only did folk culture have a communal element, but popular tradition was susceptible to change over time.

---

<sup>7</sup> William Stewart, *The Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlanders of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1823), 75.

<sup>8</sup> Henderson, *Fantastical Imaginations*, xv.

<sup>9</sup> Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 26.

<sup>10</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 12

<sup>11</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), xx, xxi.

## Key Terms: The Fairy

It is also important to define the fairy as an entity and its place in popular tradition. In the Lowlands of Scotland, the peasantry sometimes referred to fairies as “elves” or “fauns”. In this way, in this part of Scotland, the fairy and the elf were the same entity. In the Highlands, the peasantry used different names to identify the fairy, such as “*caiben*”, “*hubhsisgedh*”, or “*siotbsudh*”.<sup>12</sup> The historian Julian Goodare defines fairies as spirits, not unlike angels and demons.<sup>13</sup> Fairies were also invisible to the naked eye, unless one possessed the gift of “second sight”.<sup>14</sup> This ability was popular amongst folk healers, who claimed to receive otherworldly visions or dreams that granted them knowledge of the future.<sup>15</sup> If someone was not born with this gift, they could see fairies by boiling an egg, a staple of fairy magic, and rubbing the egg’s sweat into their eyes.<sup>16</sup> When not invisible, fairies were known to dress in green and they were said to inhabit conical-shaped hills. On occasion, they left their homes to dance atop them under the light of the moon. In doing so, they left rings in the grass, which were described as “fairy rings” in popular culture.<sup>17</sup> Henderson and Cowan argue that midnight was not simply a time of day. Rather, at midnight one was more likely to encounter fairies as the barriers between our world and the realm inhabited by spirits weakened. Robert Kirk

---

<sup>12</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 152; Emma Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie: Magic, Witchcraft and Dark Shamanism in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2013), 14.

<sup>13</sup> Julian Goodare, “Boundaries of the Fairy Realm in Scotland” in *Airy Nothings: Imagining the Otherworld of Faerie From the Middle Ages to the Age of Reason: Essays in Honour of Alasdair A. MacDonald*, Karin Olsen, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 139.

<sup>14</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 17.

<sup>15</sup> Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 268.

<sup>16</sup> Diane Purkiss, “Sounds of Silence: Fairies and Incest in Scottish Witchcraft Stories,” in *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* ed. Stuart Clark (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 85-86.

<sup>17</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 18.



also makes this argument, stating that fairy kind were aware of when the two worlds intersected.<sup>18</sup>

However, historian Ronald Hutton warns against identifying fairies as nature spirits. Rather, he stresses that fairies lived in an aristocratic society that was ruled by a king and queen.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, fairy kind often treated humanity unkindly. While these spirits had the capacity to be benign, their cruelty and malevolence ensured that the Scottish peasantry treated them with the utmost caution by referring to them as their “Good Neighbours”.<sup>20</sup> Were they viewed as comparable to witches? The historian, Donald Tyson, affirms that this title was used to avoid rousing the anger of these spirits.<sup>21</sup> If they were not placated, fairies were capable of inflicting harm on people and their livestock using special arrows called “elf-shot” and “witch-shot”.<sup>22</sup> However, Goodare argues that there is no evidence, both in Scotland and elsewhere through the early modern period, of this weapon being called witch-shot. Additionally, while both fairies and witches held nightly gatherings atop hills, the latter did not dwell in them. Also, while witches were known to spread sickness amongst children, fairies kidnapped them instead. Goodare also defines shapeshifting and the ability to transform into animals as a “belief about witches”, yet fairies rarely appeared visible or transformed into other creatures. Another contrasting element was flight. Witches were often depicted flying atop animals or bushels of straw. In contrast, fairies rarely employed

---

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-82.

<sup>19</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Witch, A History of Fear from Ancient Times to the Present* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), 228, 231.

<sup>20</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 14; Donald Tyson, ed., *The Demonology of King James I: Includes the Original Text of Daemonologie and News from Scotland* (Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2011), 173, 176.

<sup>21</sup> Tyson, *The Demonology of King James I*, 176.

<sup>22</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 14, 137; Alaric Hall, "Getting Shot of Elves: Healing, Witchcraft and Fairies in the Scottish Witchcraft Trials." *Folklore* 116, no. 1 (2005): 19.

flight, preferring to appear and disappear by summoning a whirlwind.<sup>23</sup> All this said, there remained within the minds of clerical elites a suspicion that fairies and witches were similar enough that they sought to convince the peasantry that fairies served Satan alongside witches.

In addition to the clergy, the fairy was also brought to life through literature. As noted by Hutton, the term “fairy” first arrived at Britain and France’s shores during the late Middle Ages.<sup>24</sup> In *Sir Orfeo*, Orfeo journeys to the realm of a nameless “Fayré” king to rescue his beloved. In this Middle English tale, the monarch traveled to the mortal realm with his retinue to hunt animals and kidnap people. In a rewrite of a twelfth century story from France, the heroine is the daughter of the fairy king who “dressed in the distinctive fairy colour of green.”<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the concept of a fairy monarchs was also popularized by William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.<sup>26</sup> The first recorded usage of the term “fairy” in Scotland was an anonymous poem written c. 1450, titled “King Berdok”. In this poem the titular character falls in love with the daughter of the fairy king.<sup>27</sup> Around 1580, a different poem regarding fairies was also recited before King James VI. This poem associated the color green with these spirits, while also describing them as demonic beings. Here, the poet was likely trying to appease his patron, who had a reputation for condemning manifestations of the fairy realm as demonic illusions.<sup>28</sup> Thus, authors wrote stories regarding fairies

---

<sup>23</sup> Goodare, “Boundaries of the Fairy Realm in Scotland”, 159-160.

<sup>24</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 228.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel M. Harms, “Hell and Fairy: The Differentiation of Fairies and Demons Within British Ritual Magic of the Early Modern Period” in *Knowing Demons, Knowing Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Brock, Michelle D, Richard Raiswell, David R Winter (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 67.

<sup>27</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 152.

<sup>28</sup> P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Satan’s Conspiracy: Magic and Witchcraft in Sixteenth-Century Scotland* (East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell, 2003), 13; Hutton, *The Witch*, 236.

that utilized elements of folk culture. However, some of these works also reflected the demonic interpretation of these beings as well.

**Key terms: Preternatural Belief and the Devil in Scotland**

Having provided a brief definition of folk belief, it is now important to see, in general terms, how Scottish Protestant clergy understood folk culture; a more detailed analysis of the Protestant church in Scotland and its theology will follow in chapter 1 below. Starting with “superstition”, Stuart Clark’s exhaustive work, *Thinking with Demons*, identifies how theologians during this period interpreted popular religious beliefs. They in fact described these as “superstitious,” implying that they were false, misguided, even stupid. Given the pejorative implications of the term, Clark suggests that historians should stop using it except when describing the views of early modern polemicists. He argues that the perception of superstition has moral dimensions that do not possess the same implications in the present as they did in the past, such as social stigma or death.<sup>29</sup> Thus, this thesis will not use this word to describe folk beliefs. Instead, it will use the word “preternatural” when describing the beliefs of those that were looked down upon by the Scottish clergy as it is a more neutral term that simply identifies the beliefs, rituals, and magical practices of people as “seeming to be beyond nature,” without implying they were false.

Learned Protestants believed that the preternatural beliefs of the folk encouraged moral vices and religious transgressions, and reforming these beliefs to conform with Protestant theology became a major component of their reform initiatives.<sup>30</sup> Clark also

---

<sup>29</sup> Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), 474, 475.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 475.

notes that they also understood these beliefs as: “a form of proscription in terms of which many of the apparently routine actions and utterances of ordinary people, together with the categories and beliefs that shaped their experience, were denounced as valueless.”<sup>31</sup> He argues that traditions, deemed valueless and dangerous by theologians, included popular beliefs regarding medicine, charming, and omens.<sup>32</sup> They also used this term to describe Catholicism as much of Catholic ritual was decried as superstitions by learned Protestants. Here, Clark affirms that medieval Catholicism incorporated pagan preternatural beliefs into the Catholic Church, a point that is explored thoroughly by the historian Valerie Flint.<sup>33</sup>

She argues that to ease conversions to Christianity in the early Middle Ages, Church leaders allowed for the retention of various elements of popular belief and ritual that became part of medieval Catholic religious culture. This, however, led to difficult choices in what to retain and what to reject. A problematic form of popular belief for the medieval church was divination, which included the use of thunder or eclipses to predict the future.<sup>34</sup> With regards to divination, the saint and medieval author, Martin of Braga, stated: “God did not order man to know the future, but that he should always live in fear of Him and ask Him for guidance and help in life God alone possess foreknowledge of events.”<sup>35</sup> The concept and practice of divination was problematic as it challenged the concept of free will by suggesting that the future was already predetermined. Second, these medieval clergymen also believed that divination undermined God’s providence.

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 475.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 477.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 475.

<sup>34</sup> Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 88.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 90.

Instead of trusting God to guide humanity, people could place their trust in the guidance of diviners. As medieval clergymen did not put stock in divination over God's providence, it was, at best, unnecessary and at worst, blasphemous to His teachings.<sup>36</sup>

Flint also refers to the medieval peasantry's reverence for trees, old stones, and fountains. The peasantry that traveled to these locations hoped to acquire supernatural aid from the spirits associated with these places, relieving themselves of their troubles in the process.<sup>37</sup> However, medieval clergymen denounced these activities, including the theologian, Caesarius of Arles, who stated:

We have heard that some of you make vows to trees, pray to fountains and practical diabolical augury... What is worse, there are some unfortunate and miserable people who are not only unwilling to destroy the shrines of the pagans but even are not afraid or ashamed to build up those which have been destroyed.<sup>38</sup>

Caesarius not only presents instances of preternatural belief as if it was a problem that was to be corrected, but he also associates these traditions with the demonic.<sup>39</sup> Demons were sometimes associated with certain activities, including the spread of disease or the spoiling of crops.<sup>40</sup> The medieval church often pitted demons and angels against each other, particularly in the realm of preternatural tradition. Here, Flint quotes Caesarius, who argued: "I exhort you, and before God and His angels I proclaim, that you should not come to those devilish banquets which are held at a shrine, or fountain or trees."<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 204, 206.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 166.

Caesarius argued that practicing preternatural traditions placed one further away from God and his supernatural servants, angels. This point is affirmed by Flint, who argues that the medieval church believed that angels and their influence might inspire their congregants to avoid the guidance of diviners.<sup>42</sup> Thus, medieval clergymen, at least initially, were defined by their hostility towards elements of preternatural belief.

This hostility was also aimed at another element of preternatural belief, namely traditions regarding “elves”. During the early Middle Ages, Anglo-Saxon sources associated elves with the spread of sickness through their use of “elfshot”, special arrows fired by these spirits.<sup>43</sup> This is noteworthy as demons were also associated with the spread of disease.<sup>44</sup> Flint builds on this point, stating that:

The idea that disease was shot through the air by malignant agencies did much to keep illness which was perhaps inexplicable within the sphere controlled by demons, and to that extent again demons... the cure of such illness might require, as a corollary, the intervention of angels – or extra special humans.<sup>45</sup>

She argues that clergymen viewed elves and demons with very little distinction, as both their efforts to spread disease were averted by angels. Thus, elements of preternatural tradition, including the belief in fairies, became embroiled in a larger conflict envisioned by the clergy between angels and demons. While elves were known as fairies in

---

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

Scotland by the late Middle Ages, the clergy's demonization of these spirits continued into the early modern period.<sup>46</sup>

Another branch of learned theology during the early modern period related to demonology. Theologians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries believed that other forms of belief, including other ancient and non-Christian religions, venerated false gods. Since Christians believed that there was only one true god, all others were demons in disguise. This meant that individuals with certain beliefs or traditions were branded as devil worshippers, including witches. For critical philosophers like Thomas Aquinas, preternatural traditions not only involved the renouncing of one's baptism to God, but also the use of a demon's services to perform feats normally beyond human means.<sup>47</sup> On this point, the sixteenth century Spanish philosopher, Pedro Ciruelo, stated on the topic of preternatural tradition: "the devil has discovered and taught men all superstitions..." Lizanne Henderson argues that while Europeans viewed the Devil as the personification of evil, prior to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries he was mainly a concern of theologians as opposed to regular people. However, following the major crises of the late middle ages, including the mass deaths caused by famine and the plague, Europe's perception of the Devil changed. For instance, by the end of the fifteenth century the Devil had many personas, as he was often associated with various forms of pagan belief and folk tradition. Additionally, by the later fourteenth century Satan was no longer a metaphorical concept in the minds of theologians; rather, many regular folks feared Satan and believed him to be real. Utilizing this fear, certain preachers encouraged a

---

<sup>46</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Witch, A History of Fear from Ancient Times to the Present* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), 228.

<sup>47</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 477-478.

strict moral code by preaching of the dangers of sin, enforcing the belief in church and state in turn.<sup>48</sup>

Christian theology taught that demons were formerly angels expelled from heaven for following the rebellion led by Lucifer, who became the Devil or Satan. While they also taught that these fallen angels had retained their supernatural powers and abilities, such as flight, speed, and great knowledge of the cosmos, writers and artists depicted them as grotesque and destructive creatures, that possessed a combination of wings, horns, and hooves. Additionally, in the text written in 1590s by the Scottish King James VI, Satan's portrayal leaned heavily on the bible's interpretation of the Devil as a fallen angel, capable of taking either the guise of a man or animal. In contrast, based on evidence used in Scottish witch trials, both demons and the Devil were often described in mundane terms. In folk belief the Devil could shapeshift into a human form or normal animals, such as dogs, cats, rats, and horses. The shade of black was also associated with Satan, much like demons found in early Scottish literature; however, this could refer to the colour of his skin, hair, or clothes.<sup>49</sup> With an awareness of how the common folk saw the Devil, the Scottish clergy warned their congregations to be wary of Satan:

Information about learned ideas of what the Devil was and what he was capable of would have been gathered from the pulpit and probably disseminated quite quickly among the populace. What they did with that

---

<sup>48</sup> Lizanne Henderson, "Detestable Slaves of the Devil': Changing Ideas about Witchcraft in sixteenth century Scotland" in *A History of Everyday Life in Medieval Scotland*, Cowan, Edward J, and Henderson, Lizanne, eds. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 231-232.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.



knowledge, or how it was incorporated within folk traditions is impossible to gauge.<sup>50</sup>

Henderson argues the clergy fashioned the common folk's understanding of Satan. Furthermore, it was through these clergymen that fears regarding him were spread throughout Scotland. As will be stressed in chapter 3, by associating the fairy with Satan, this demonic rhetoric eventually morphed the common folk's interpretation of fairies.

### **Geographical Context: The Scottish Highlands and Lowlands**

Finally, it is important to consider how the demonization of the fairy was affected by Scotland's geographic dimensions. For this point we turn to Henderson, who uses a revised study from 2003 to argue that about six percent of all witchcraft cases arose from the Scottish Highlands and islands.<sup>51</sup> Here, Henderson points to financial concerns as suspects had to be transported to specific locations where they were held prior to and during the trial. This affirms that the terrain of the Scottish Highlands made such ventures quite expensive in the long run. Additionally, it likely prohibited the fear of witches from quickly spreading as she also notes that accusations tended to be localized and very specific.<sup>52</sup>

Henderson also addresses comments made by Christina Larner in her critical work, *Enemies of God*, which was published in 1983. In this text, Larner appears to dismiss the Highlands from her study, noting that in areas controlled by the clans there

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 232-233.

<sup>51</sup> Lizanne Henderson, "With-Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*" in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 99.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 96.

was no witch-hunting. Additionally, she argues that very few Gaelic names can be found in the recorded evidence of trials and that in these trial records witches were often associated with fairies.<sup>53</sup> While Henderson agrees that folk belief often tied the witch and the fairy together, especially in the Scottish Highlands, she disagrees with the notion that the Gaelic portion of the record is largely occupied by nameless individuals.<sup>54</sup> On the topic of folk belief, Hutton notes that the Scottish Highlands attributed natural disasters to local spirits and fairies, not demons or the Devil. In contrast, the Lowlands of Scotland and England placed blame on witches for instances of misfortune. In the Highlands, witchcraft was one of many forms of ritualistic belief that averted misfortune and of magic connected to the Devil. In this way, the fairy's connection to the Devil should not be understood as a consistent quality of fairy belief; rather, the perception of fairies as devils depended on location and the local beliefs of that space.<sup>55</sup>

### **Methodology and Structure**

With key terms and context established, it is now time to discuss the methodology and chapter structure for this thesis, beginning with the sources utilized. While discussing the buildup to the Scottish Reformation, chapter 1 explains key elements of Calvinism using John Calvin's seminal text, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and William Hull's useful discussion of Reformed Protestantism, entitled *On Calvinism*. In doing so, it defines doctrine that informed the Protestant movement and its demonization of Catholicism and the fairy. This chapter also cites the preamble to the Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563. Using this document, chapter 1 identifies the specific

---

<sup>53</sup> Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch Hunt – Hunt in Scotland* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 8, 80.

<sup>54</sup> Henderson, "With-Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*", 98.

<sup>55</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 246-247.

elements that Protestant reformers wished to remove from the church. In this way, the specific demands in the act and parliament's reaction to them demonstrates how the Presbyterian Church gained its footing in Scotland. Finally, this chapter also references the work of the Scottish philosopher George Sinclair. In 1685 Sinclair wrote a text that sought to challenge the arguments of some philosophers that the supernatural, namely God, was not real. Here, chapter 1 uses Sinclair to identify how learned men utilised folk belief by the late seventeenth century. In turn, this chapter concludes by affirming that the demonization of Catholicism and preternatural belief endured into the final decades of the seventeenth century.

Chapter 2 analyses the work of learned Scots who referenced the fairy. It begins with an article written by Julian Goodare on the Scottish Humanist, William Hay. This subsection explores Hay's discussion of the *Canon Episcopi* and his efforts to prove that fairies were real. He serves as an example of how learned Scots understood fairies prior to the Scottish Reformation. Utilizing his work on the history of the Scottish Reformation, this chapter also identifies how John Knox viewed folk culture, the witch, and Satan. As Knox is the father of the Scottish Reformation, his beliefs set the standard for how learned Protestants understood these topics.<sup>56</sup> This chapter concludes its look into the sixteenth century with James VI's *Daemonologie* and its depiction of fairies, witches, and the Catholic Church. In doing so, it identifies how Knox's beliefs were taken up by other learned Protestants.

This chapter also analyses the sermons of James Hutchison and David Brown, identifying how they presented the witch and magic. In doing so, it affirms that the

---

<sup>56</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 9

clergy continued to view witches and magic in a demonic context, even by this late period. After Hutchison and Brown, this chapter discusses *Sadducimus Debellatus*, which was published by Francis Cullen in 1698. Using his text, it reaffirms the notion that learned Scots continued to view the fairy, the witch, and the Catholic Church within a demonic context. After Cullen this chapter discusses *The Secret Common-Wealth* and its positive depiction of fairies. Here, Kirk's text provides a plethora of information on fairies and it affirms that not all learned Scots demonized folk culture. This chapter concludes with a discussion on the *Description of the Western Isles of Scotland*, which was written by Martin Martin in 1703. Using this source, this chapter identifies how learned Scots followed in Kirk's footsteps by chronicling folk traditions. However, due to its negative portrayal of fairies, it serves as a reminder of the learned's overwhelmingly hostile response to folk belief.

Finally, chapter 3 analyses testimonies that referenced the fairy. It utilizes *A Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft in Scotland, 1510-1727; A Source-book of Scottish Witchcraft*; and the online database, "Scottish Survey of Witchcraft". These sources helped create a chronological survey of relevant case studies. The testimonies themselves came from secondary texts, such as Henderson and Cowan's *Scottish Fairy Belief* and Wilby's *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*. Other confessions were pulled from primary works, such as *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and *Miscellany of the Maitland Club: Consisting of Original Papers and Other Documents Illustrative of the History and Literature of Scotland*. Using this material, chapter 3 identifies how the accused described the fairy and other spirits, such as Satan. In doing so, it demonstrates that the Scottish peasantry came to believe that fairies were the Devil's minions.

In terms of arguments drawn from these sources, chapter 1 provides context regarding the development and formation of Scotland's Presbyterian Church. It begins with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and its beliefs. The next subsection tackles the period between 1540 and 1559. Here, chapter 1 identifies the growing hostility between learned Protestants and the Catholic Church. It also identifies critical moments during the lead up to the Scottish Reformation and the formation of the Presbyterian Church, such as the introduction of Calvinism to Scotland and the rise of John Knox as Scotland's major Reformer. Following this is a subsection on the reforms that were introduced through the Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563. Having discussed this act, chapter 1 discusses the structure and key beliefs of the Presbyterian Church. This subsection also compares the Presbyterian Kirk to other denominations, identifying the consistency with which Catholicism was vilified. Chapter 1 concludes with an overview of the Enlightenment and the rise of Atheism during the late seventeenth century.

Chapter 2 presents a chronological survey that identifies how learned Scots understood the fairy, the witch, and the Devil. In its introduction, it identifies how learned Protestants viewed the papal church, Catholicism's relationship with Satan, and popular magic. Following this, it begins in the 1530s with William Hay. After Hay, chapter 1 moves into the mid sixteenth century with its discussion of John Knox. It then analyses *Daemonologie*, which was written by King James VI in the 1590s. Chapter 2 then delves into the seventeenth century with the sermons of James Hutchison and David Brown, who preached at a trial in 1697. A year later the Scottish judge, Francis Cullen, commented on the nature of fairies, witches, and the Catholic Church. The next subsection goes back to 1691 to discuss Robert Kirk and *The Secret Common-Wealth*.

Kirk's positive depiction of fairies makes him an outlier amongst his peers. After him, chapter 2 concludes with a discussion on the eighteenth-century writer, Martin Martin.

Chapter 3 serves as a chronological survey of witchcraft testimonies that referred to fairies. In its introduction, it provides an overview of the Scottish court system. After this, it begins with the testimony of Jonet Boyman, who was accused of witchcraft in 1572. After Boyman, chapter 3 turns to Bessie Dunlop's testimony, who was put on trial in 1576. It then concludes its look into the sixteenth century with Andro Man's trial, which was held in 1597 or 1598. Moving into the seventeenth century, chapter 3 analyses the confessions of Bartie Patersoune and Elspeth Reoch, whose trials were held in 1607 and 1616, respectively. After Reoch, this chapter looks at the testimony of Issobell Haldane, whose trial was held in 1623. It concludes with the trials of Isobel Gowdie and Jean Weir, which were carried out in 1662 and 1670, respectively.

## Chapter 1: The Scottish Reformation

### Introduction

In order to discuss testimonies that demonized the fairy, context regarding the development of Protestantism in Scotland is required. This chapter provides a broad overview of the Scottish Reformation and the Enlightenment. With regards to the former, this thesis sets the Reformation between the period of 1559 and 1690. By looking at the Reformation and the Enlightenment, it argues that the Scottish clergy's efforts to demonize folk culture arose from a desire to eliminate elements of Catholicism from Scotland. This point is echoed by the historian Julian Goodare in his discussion of the Witchcraft Act of 1563, which was introduced after the Scottish Reformation of 1560.<sup>1</sup> Here, he argues that the Act was created as a weapon to be used against the Catholic Church.<sup>2</sup> This chapter echoes this point, particularly in its exploration of the Presbyterian Church and its critique of Catholic traditions. In its discussion of late seventeenth century developments, this chapter is also informed by the research of Lizanne Henderson and Edward Cowan. They argue that George Sinclair, a seventeenth century philosopher, combated the spread of Atheism by championing the existence of spirits.<sup>3</sup> Henderson and Cowan are correct in their assessment of Sinclair; however, this chapter builds on this point further. It demonstrates that the demonization of preternatural traditions and Catholicism was a consistent element of learned discourse throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This point is critical for the later

---

<sup>1</sup> David Mullan, "Writing of the Scottish Reformation" in *Literature and the Scottish Reformation*, eds. Mullan, David, Crawford Gribben (London: Routledge, 2009), 21.

<sup>2</sup> Julian Goodare, "The Scottish Witchcraft Act." *Church History* 74, no. 1 (2005): 59.

<sup>3</sup> Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 2001), 117, 176.

chapters, which identify how the Scottish clergy and peasantry viewed the fairy during this period.

This chapter begins with an overview of the Catholic Church and the hierarchy used to structure it. The next subsection provides a chronological survey of events between 1540 and 1559. It explores the strained relationship between learned Protestants and Catholics just before the Scottish Reformation. After a brief overview of John Knox's life and leadership over the Reformation, there follows a subsection on the Witchcraft Act of 1563, which provides further details regarding the reforms that learned Protestants envisioned for the church. From there, this chapter identifies critical beliefs of the Presbyterian Kirk, its structure, and how its doctrine differed from other churches, such as the Church of England. This subsection shall also address the Presbyterian Church's criticisms regarding Catholicism by highlighting its interpretation of miracles, saints, and the pope. Finally, this chapter provides a brief overview of the Enlightenment, which shaped learned discourse surrounding the fairy in the late seventeenth century. Ultimately, this chapter identifies how the Scottish Reformation came to pass, while also providing context for the learned discourse that followed.

### **The Catholic Church: Structure and Key Beliefs**

Prior to the Scottish Reformation, the head of Scotland's churches was the pope. As the leader of Catholicism, the pope was believed to have been chosen by God to lead the church. However, the pope did not reside in Scotland; rather his seat of power was in Rome. Below the pope were the cardinals, who were appointed by the pope and responsible for electing new popes. Aware of the possibility that they might be elected as the new pope, cardinals used their political and familial connections to amass influence. In this way, church and state within early modern Rome were entwined to



some degree.<sup>4</sup> Below the cardinals were the bishops. Bishops prayed for their congregants and preached, as well as provided the essential administration of the church in its specific territories or dioceses. Bishops also “controlled the spiritual authority of the Church” as they oversaw the ordaining of new priests.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, bishops were said to have the power to heal the sick, a practice which dates back to the medieval church.<sup>6</sup> That is not to say that the medieval church treated all forms of ritual healing without caution, as it took umbrage with folk healers who: “achieved some effect greater than that which could be shown to have arisen from known natural causes...”<sup>7</sup> This concern is derived from the belief that it was only through God or the Devil that one could perform real magic. Furthermore, healing that was “neither purely natural or commanded by God” was associated with Satan.<sup>8</sup>

Tied to the use of miracles were saints, holy men and women who in their lives and especially after their deaths performed miraculous feats with the aid of God.<sup>9</sup> When they died, it was believed that saints ascended to Heaven and continued their ministry from there. The clergy claimed to hold their physical remains, which were entombed beneath places of worship in a church. By praying before these altars, it was believed that a saint provided healing, protection, or some other form of relief. Thus, their supposed physical remains were used by the church to cement the peasantry’s belief in

---

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Dell’ Antonio, *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy* (California: University of California Press, 2011), 37.

<sup>5</sup> Linda Dumbar, *Reforming the Scottish Church: John Winram (c. 1492-1582) and the Example of Fife* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 44.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Law, ed., *The Catechism of John Hamilton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884), 234-235; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), 303.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 303.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 28; Hillerbrand Hans Joachim, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4:16.

miracles. In turn, saints were depicted as intermediaries between humanity and God.<sup>10</sup> Unsurprisingly, the medieval church recontextualized pagan sites as locations of Christian worship, dedicated or related to one of the saints. As is noted by the historian Valerie Flint, this was done so that the common folk would embrace the beliefs of the Catholic Church over their folk traditions.<sup>11</sup> While later learned Protestants decried the use of saints and miracles, in 1552 the archbishop of St. Andrews, John Hamilton, continued to put stock in the abilities of his fellow clergymen to heal others.<sup>12</sup> Here, elements of preternatural belief, melded with Christianity, were a facet of the Catholic Church prior to the Reformation of 1560. Thus, the period before the Scottish Reformation cannot be understood without awareness of the Catholic Church's complex relationship with preternatural tradition.

#### **1540-1559: Tensions between Learned Protestants and Catholics**

On the eve of the Scottish Reformation, tensions between Catholic and Protestant theologians intensified. Throughout the 1540s and 1550s, Protestant clergymen penned several religious ballads, such as “The Pope, that pagan full of pride”.<sup>13</sup> This ballad defined forms of Catholic worship as idolatry, and it claimed that bishops had neglected their preaching duties.<sup>14</sup> During the sixteenth century a Protestant historian named John Row wrote that the most memorable ballads changed “old Popish

---

<sup>10</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 4:16; Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 270.

<sup>11</sup> Flint, *The Rise of Magic*, 270 – 273.

<sup>12</sup> Dunbar, *Reforming the Scottish Church*, 44; Martha McGill, “Angles, Devils, and Discernment in Early Modern Scotland” in *Knowing Demons, Knowing Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, eds., Brock, Michelle D, Richard Raiswell, David R Winter (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 246.

<sup>13</sup> Alec Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 122.

<sup>14</sup> John Wedderburn, James Wedderburn, and Robert Wedderburn. *A Compendious Book of Godly and Spiritual Songs: Commonly Known as “The Gude and Godlie Ballatis.”* (Society, 1897), 205, 207.

Songs unto Godly purposes”.<sup>15</sup> Here, learned Protestants believed that the Catholic Church did not support God or His teachings. In response to this slander, in 1547 the Scottish Parliament denounced several ballads as heretical. Efforts to stop the flow of slanderous ballads intensified in 1551 and 1552 as parliament outlawed the printing of heretical: “ballads, songs [and] blasphemous rhymes”.<sup>16</sup> Although learned Protestants utilized ballads, albeit by replacing folk elements with religious themes, this was not out of an appreciation for popular culture. Rather, as the common folk were likely to hear ballads from traveling minstrels, it was merely the vehicle for their critique of Catholicism. Henderson and Cowan affirm this point as legislation was introduced in 1548 that prohibited minstrels from plying their trade.<sup>17</sup> Here, the Scottish Parliament censored bards in order to limit the spread of ballads that criticized the Catholic Church.

In addition to legislation, in 1549 clergymen introduced reforms that sought to change how Protestant theologians saw the Catholic Church. The clergy were to refrain from secular occupations, while avoiding choices that sullied the clean and pious image they were meant to uphold.<sup>18</sup> As is noted by the historian E. Harbison, many bishops throughout Europe were nobles that had little interest in their ecclesiastical duties. Instead, they focused their time and energy on the revenue and prestige that they earned through their positions.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the reforms introduced in 1549 and throughout the 1550s were meant to reduce the amount of mockery and scorn that bishops had earned the Catholic Church. The other issue that the Catholic Church tackled was a growing

---

<sup>15</sup> Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, 122.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>19</sup> E. Harris Harbison, *The Age of Reformation* (Cornell University Press, 2013), 37.

tendency for bishops to shirk their preaching duties. To address this, all parishes were required to hold a minimum of four sermons a year. To turn monasteries and cathedrals into centers of preaching and knowledge regarding scripture, they were also required to send men to universities to learn about theology. Thus, during the 1550s the public face of the Catholic Church reflected the desire to recognize its negligent behaviour and shortcomings.<sup>20</sup>

However, that is not to say that Catholic clergymen completely rejected everything the papal church stood for. While some members of the clergy expressed a degree of indifference towards the pope, none of them completely rejected the papal office in order to appease their Protestant critics. The church also maintained its belief in saints and denounced those who were against praying to these holy men and women. Additionally, some Catholic clergymen had no qualms about describing Protestants as “the Church malignant”.<sup>21</sup> Unsurprisingly, learned Protestants continued to pursue church reform. A critical moment in the lead up to the Scottish Reformation was the introduction of Calvinism to Scotland. In 1555 John Knox, the father of the Scottish Reformation, returned from Geneva with doctrine regarding a variant of Protestantism known as Calvinism.<sup>22</sup>

Created by John Calvin, this version of Reformed Protestantism shaped the Protestant movement in Scotland. For instance, a major point of divergence between

---

<sup>20</sup> Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, 102.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-103.

<sup>22</sup> Rosalind Mitchison, *A History of Scotland*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 86; Brian Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 9, 108; Julian Goodare and Joyce Miller, “Introduction” in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 6; Brian Levack, “Demonic Possession in Early Modern Scotland” in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 172.

Protestantism and Catholicism in the sixteenth century had to do with demonic possession, which arose from specific incidences in scripture when Christ exorcized several individuals who were possessed by demons. However, eventually some church reformers began to question the nature of demonic possession, while others were undecided if the act was more spiritual or corporeal; their writings left the answer to this question ambiguous. Calvin himself did not deny the reality of demonic possession; rather, he rejected church miracles, particularly exorcisms. Calvin rejected exorcisms as he wished to remove what he considered to be a “papal relic” or the influence of Catholicism from the church.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, many Catholic priests, friars and monks, such as the Jesuits, used exorcism to prove that only the Catholic Church had power over demons, and thus was the true faith.<sup>24</sup>

Another element of Calvinism was the condemnation of idolatry: “It makes no difference whether they worship the idol simply, or God in the idol; it is always when divine honours are paid to an idol... And because God wills not to be worshiped superstitiously, whatever is bestowed upon idols is so much robbed from him.”<sup>25</sup> Idolatry involved the worship of something else other than God, and Calvinists applied that proscription to images of God or saints in churches. Here, Calvin does not mention the Devil; however, when he states, “God wills not to be worshiped superstitiously”, it suggests that the manner of worship is incorrect.<sup>26</sup> This point is emphasised further

---

<sup>23</sup> Levack, “Demonic Possession in Early Modern Scotland”, 172.

<sup>24</sup> Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London: Routledge, 2004), 2; Gary Waite, “Sixteenth-Century Religious Reform and the Witch-Hunts” in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, Brian Levack, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 493, 503.

<sup>25</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: A New Translation*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 130.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

when he states: “Let those attend to this who set about hunting for miserable pretexts in defence of the execrable idolatry in which for many past ages true religion has been buried and sunk.”<sup>27</sup> To Calvin, idolatry distracted the masses from a true faith in God, Christianity having fallen into obscurity in comparison.

Calvin’s opposition to idolatry arose from his preoccupation with divine providence. For him, God’s will was formative and determinative. This meant that God did not only know the future, but he determined it from the moment of creation. This included the doctrine of predestination, which affirmed that God alone determined the eternal fate of humans. The modern theologian William Hull adds that Calvinist predestination taught that this doctrine also affirmed that a large portion of humanity was fated for damnation.<sup>28</sup> On this topic, Calvin wrote:

Meanwhile let us remember our ruin is attributable to our own depravity, that we may not insinuate a charge against God himself, the Author of nature. It is true nature has received a mortal wound, but there is a great difference between a wound inflicted from without, and one inherent to our first condition. It is plain that this wound was inflicted by sin...<sup>29</sup>

He argued that humanity is fated for damnation due to their nature, which is depraved and inherently corrupted by sin. Hull argued that, in Calvinist doctrine, after the fall of biblical Adam his descendants lost the ability to exercise free will.<sup>30</sup> This was not due to a lack of intellect as Calvin argued that God had granted humanity the ability to discern

---

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>28</sup> William Hull, *On Calvinism* (Bedfordshire: Andrews UK Ltd., 2012), 14.

<sup>29</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 295.

<sup>30</sup> Hull, *On Calvinism*, 14.

good from evil.<sup>31</sup> Rather, the Fall had corrupted the will of humans, so it would by its fallen nature always choose evil. Due to this rather bleak outlook, learned Protestants grappled with predestination.<sup>32</sup>

In the decades leading up to 1560, learned Protestants became more aggressive in their push for church reform. For instance, every year on the first day of September, Edinburgh held a festival to honor St. Giles. When a wooden carving of the saint was carried through the town in 1557, a Sir David Lindsay denounced it as idolatry: “A dead image, carved of one tree / As it were holy should not honoured be.”<sup>33</sup> Here, one can see the influence of Calvinism as Lindsay believed that this image encouraged false forms of worship, not unlike the idols found in scripture. In 1558 Protestant saboteurs snuck into the procession that carried the replacement image and pulled it to the ground. Historian Alec Ryrie affirms that Scottish Protestants were confrontational as they felt persecuted by the Catholic Church, and they simply wished to express their beliefs without fear of being fined, banished, or executed.<sup>34</sup> As was noted earlier, the Catholic clergy’s efforts to reform the church were not without instances where clergymen associated Protestants with evil.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, Ryrie affirms that Scotland’s first public Protestant Church did not manifest until 1559.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the period between 1540 and 1559 set the stage for the Scottish Reformation, particularly in terms of the relationship

---

<sup>31</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 227.

<sup>32</sup> Michelle Brock, “Internalizing the Demonic: Satan and the Self in Early Modern Scottish Piety” *Journal of British Studies* 54 (January 2015): 42.

<sup>33</sup> Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, 125.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

between learned Catholics and Protestants. It also introduced doctrine to Scotland which became an integral part of the Protestant movement.

The major leader of this Reformation in Scotland was John Knox, whose influence over the movement in Scotland approached that of Calvin in Geneva or Luther in Northern Germany. Knox was born in either 1514 or 1515, in East Lothian, where he was also baptised at birth.<sup>37</sup> He later recounted his baptism fondly, stating: “God who from my youth has provided.”<sup>38</sup> The historian Jane Dawson explains this remark by stating that, for Knox, his baptism signified that God had extended his providential hand down to him.<sup>39</sup> In his youth, as Knox was not the eldest son, he could not inherit his family’s merchant business. However, this did not stop him from seeking employment, as he was likely educated at the song school attached to St. Mary’s church in Haddington. Under the church’s curriculum, he learned to read Latin and he gained an appreciation for scripture.<sup>40</sup> When his studies at St. Mary’s church concluded, Knox attended the University of St. Andrews. There he was inspired by the likes of Hector Boece, whose written work on the history of the Scots, *Scotorum Historia*, was first published in 1527.<sup>41</sup> It proved influential for Knox’s own version which appeared in 1559 as *The History of the Scottish Reformation*, which turned: “the story of the struggle for Protestant reformation into a dramatic narrative and helping to justify the revolt against the Queen Regent, Mary of Guise.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, Knox saw his reformation as a divinely inspired battle against Catholic abuses. For him, the scriptures were the sole

---

<sup>37</sup> Jane E. A. Dawson, *John Knox* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 12.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 – 16.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 – 17.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.



authority, and the written and preached word the means by which to transform society. Additionally, Knox's ecclesiology also helps historians understand the distinction between variations of Calvinism. Calvin argued that it was the Christian duty of lesser magistrates to oppose kings that became tyrannical. In contrast, Knox believed that this duty should extend to all citizens.<sup>43</sup> A direct reference to this can be seen in *The History of the Scottish Reformation*. Here, Knox used the struggle of the Protestant Reformation to justify a revolt against the Queen Regent, Mary of Guise.<sup>44</sup> In this way, Knox utilized new interpretations of Calvinism in his fight against forces he believed to be tyrannical.

Likewise, Mary's view of Knox and his push for Protestant reform was equally dismal. This can be seen in the period in between 1560 and 1563, as Knox was taken before the queen to answer for his recent efforts to spread Protestantism. She accused Knox of leading a movement that had split Scotland into Catholic and Protestant factions, sowing seeds of unrest in the process. In response, Knox defended his deeds by arguing that he had served God's will by exposing the "vanity of the Papistical religion" and the "tyranny of the Roman antichrist." Here, Knox attacked the Catholic Church and Mary by claiming that his efforts only helped break Scotland from Satan's clutches.<sup>45</sup> Regarding the queen's hostility towards Protestantism, the seventeenth-century French historian Louis Maimbourg argues that:

Mary was brought up in France, accustomed to see Protestants burned to death, and instructed in the maxims of her uncles, the Guises, who

---

<sup>43</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 1: 691.

<sup>44</sup> Jane E. A. Dawson, *John Knox* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 17.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas M'Crie, *The Life of John Knox: Containing Illustration of the History of the Reformation in Scotland* (Edinburgh: James Clark & Co., 1840), 182, 194-197.

maintained that it was necessary to exterminate, without mercy, the pretended Reformed.<sup>46</sup>

He affirms that the queen's hostility had much to do with her upbringing. Additionally, Mary also took issue with *The First Blast*, which was written by Knox and published in 1558. This text compared the leadership female rulers to that of children.<sup>47</sup> In this way, Knox's written work did not distinguish between the Catholic Church or Catholic queens like Mary as both were capable of leading Scotland down an undesirable path.

However, Knox did not solely see the written word as a tool for change. Rather, Knox's time at university gave him an appreciation for scholarly debates as the theologian:

loved words and language as a delicate and complex tool of communication and used them to paint pictures and convey the colours of emotions... He relished argument and debate, especially when it was a contest. Like a boxer with his fists, he used words and phrases to score points and try to flatten his opponent.<sup>48</sup>

Dawson argues that Knox's time at university gave him the tools he needed to voice his criticisms against Catholicism and its practices. An example of this can be seen in 1547, when Knox held a debate regarding baptism. He argued that the Catholic Church had added several ceremonies onto this practice that were "Papistical inventions" and not ordained by God.<sup>49</sup> Knox's battle with Catholicism would not end in 1547; rather, he

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>47</sup> M'Crie, *The Life of John Knox*, 196; Stuart Macdonald, "John Knox, the Scottish Church, and Witchcraft Accusations." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 48 (2017): 641.

<sup>48</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 17.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 12.

would continue to criticize church practices instigated by the Catholic leaders of the church.

In the decades that followed, Knox emerged as the leader of Scotland's Protestant movement. For instance, he played an important role during the Perth riots of May 11, 1559, which Dawson describes as the: "designated start of the Protestant Reformation in Scotland."<sup>50</sup> As will be demonstrated below, this thesis agrees that this event played a major role in Knox's rise as a leader of the Scottish Reformation. On this day, Knox gave a sermon regarding Christ's effort to cleanse the temple. Shortly afterwards, the majority of his audience stood up from their seats to throw stones at objects related to Catholicism. Here, it is important to note that this vandalism was not random or solely instigated by Knox. Rather, the vandals were unhappy with the church's refusal to provide religious reform. Thus, the decision to destroy Catholic imagery was a pre-existing plan that Knox knew nothing about. However, considering the content of his sermon, it is likely that he also inspired these Protestants, albeit indirectly.<sup>51</sup> In that, Knox's sermon likely reaffirmed their decision to cleanse the building of Catholic imagery. Additionally, after these riots the Provost of Perth, Lord Ruthven, banned specific practices in the burgh, such as the celebration of Mass.<sup>52</sup> In this way, Knox became a leader of reform through his direct involvement in events that were critical to the growth of the Protestant movement.

In addition to his sermons, Dawson argues that Knox's *The History of the Scottish Reformation*, which was written in between 1559 and 1566, established: "the

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 180-181, 317.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 180.

concept of the ‘Scottish Reformation’.”<sup>53</sup> In this work, Knox argued that the Catholic Church served the Devil.<sup>54</sup> In this way, Knox shaped how learned Protestants understood the Devil’s influence over Catholicism. Knox’s pastoral writings also addressed alternative approaches to a number of religious practices, such as communion and the Roman Catholic Mass. In response, the Presbyterian Kirk adopted his approach to these practices, forging: “theological badges of identity for Scottish Protestantism.”<sup>55</sup> Here, Knox’s work helped his peers distinguish Scottish Protestantism from Catholicism. Thus, his writings guided Scotland’s Protestant movement, giving it a purpose and a sense of identity that persisted into the seventeenth century.

Through his reforms, Knox hoped to bring his vision of Scotland to life. He believed that Scotland had formed a covenant with God after He had delivered it from Catholicism. After forming this pact, the people of Scotland were to follow His laws, which were outlined in scripture.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Knox believed that scripture was meant to be interpreted literally. This is contrast to the medieval church, whose clergymen interpreted scripture using an allegorical lens.<sup>57</sup> In this way, Knox envisioned a Scotland that rejected Catholicism and its approach to understanding God’s wisdom. In the end, Knox’s vision for Scotland was partially realized as the Presbyterian Kirk embraced his desire to move past Catholicism and follow God’s will.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 316.

<sup>54</sup> John Knox, “History of the Reformation in Scotland” in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: J. Thin, 1895), 2: 408.

<sup>55</sup> Dawson, *John Knox*, 315-316.

<sup>56</sup> Macdonald, “John Knox, the Scottish Church, and Witchcraft Accusations.”, 642.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 640.

<sup>58</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 3: 1883.

### 1563: The Scottish Witchcraft Act

The desire to remove Catholicism from the religious life of Scotland is made most evident by the Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563. Knox drafted it to establish “Protestant discipline” and remove remnants of Catholic beliefs from the church.<sup>59</sup> Due to his efforts, parliament passed legislation that echoed elements of Protestantism, such as the outlawing of Catholic practices and a confession of faith made in a Protestant fashion. Additionally, it also enforced the rejection of the pope’s authority over the church. While these are critical changes to Scotland’s churches, parliamentary support was also limited. For instance, it did not authorize the creation of an official Protestant Church.<sup>60</sup>

Criticism aimed at the Catholic Church is found in the preamble that preceded the text of the final act, which is noted by Goodare:

Because the Queen's Majesty and three estates in this present parliament being informed that the heavy and abominable superstition used by several of the subjects of this realm, by using of witchcrafts, sorcery and necromancy, and credence given thereto in times by- gone against the law of God, *derives from the darkness of papistry from which the realm has recently been delivered*; and for preventing and suppressing all such vain superstition in times to come.<sup>61</sup>

The Witchcraft Act of 1563 was used to condemn the Catholic faith as corrupt. It suggests that the Catholic Church allowed for improper traditions and the reliance on

---

<sup>59</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 9; Julian Goodare, “The Scottish Witchcraft Act.” *Church History* 74, no. 1 (2005): 40.

<sup>60</sup> Goodare, “The Scottish Witchcraft Act.”, 40.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

magic to prosper. In the italicized text, Goodare affirms, were beliefs often expressed in the writings of Protestants during the 1560s. However, Goodare goes on to say that this part of the preamble was not included in the final version, possibly cut out by someone with the political power to do so, such as the queen. Alternatively, this portion of the preamble was omitted by someone important whose Catholic faith made them object to the accusation that the papal church had led Scotland down a dark path. In this way, the wording of the Witchcraft Act of 1563 suggests that witchcraft was part of a larger problem that needed to be exorcised from the church.<sup>62</sup> The act ensured that the negative portrayal of Catholicism and preternatural belief were facets of learned discourse as the Presbyterian Church found its footing.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Presbyterian Kirk: Structure and Key Beliefs**

The formal establishment of Scotland's first official Presbyterian Church in 1690 came only through over a century of conflict, including the civil wars that plagued England during the mid seventeenth century. A central cause of this conflict was religion as many Puritans opposed King Charles 1's decision to bring Catholic traditions to the Church of England.<sup>64</sup> In brief, puritans were English Protestants, some of them being staunch Calvinists who sought to purge society of its sinful elements with a program of moral reform.<sup>65</sup> Puritans opposed to King Charles I formed the *Solemn League and Covenant*, an alliance which to sought to preserve Protestantism within the

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 49, 54.

<sup>64</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 1: 731, 750.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 33-34; Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 70; Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 1: 692.

church.<sup>66</sup> In 1643, they enlisted the aid of Scottish Protestants, who joined the alliance in exchange for Parliament's creation of an official Presbyterian Church within Scotland.<sup>67</sup>

Unlike the Catholic Church, which had defined hierarchy with the pope at the top, the Presbyterian Church or Kirk was non-hierarchical. Positions of importance included deacons, elders, and ministers. Deacons did not have specific duties regarding the governing of the church, unlike elders and ministers. Instead, they tended to the welfare of their congregants, providing aid when needed. Elders and ministers, which were sometimes referred to as presbyters, were tasked with the governance of the church and preaching. Individual congregations were governed by an elder and ministers from that community.<sup>68</sup> Another important aspect of the Presbyterian kirk were weekly meetings called "kirk sessions", which were used to question people suspected of moral offences, such as witchcraft. This was a crucial step in securing the conviction of this crime as confessions extorted from these meetings were used to acquire a local trial. Ministers and elders were also tasked with dispensing discipline for other crimes, such as fornication and adultery.<sup>69</sup> Thus, elders and ministers held considerable influence in a community, particularly during times in which witch-hunting spiked.

Elders and deacons were elected and ordained by their local congregations. In contrast, future ministers could only be ordained by the presbyters. The Presbyterian Church created this system to ensure that one group did not possess too much power over the others. Furthermore, clergymen were encouraged to allow God to guide their

---

<sup>66</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 4: 728; J. Gordon Melton, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, Andrew Crichton, ed. (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2005), 165.

<sup>67</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 4: 728.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 1872, 1882-1883.

<sup>69</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 5, 25, 30; Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 3: 1883.

decisions. This had the potential to create schisms in the church if two groups disagreed on God's will. However, the emphasis on community also allowed for the beliefs of an individual to be tempered by the collective wisdom of their fellow Protestants.<sup>70</sup> This aligns with Calvinist ideology, particularly Calvin's belief that the church should be a "holy commonwealth united under God..."<sup>71</sup> In this commonwealth, church and state were to work together while remaining separate entities. The former used scripture to educate the masses, while the latter brought order to society and enforced conformity to Christian doctrine.<sup>72</sup> To honor God, the Presbyterian Church instructed their congregants on the importance of the Sabbath or Lord's Day. Every Sunday was to be used as a day of rest and leisure, where individuals reflected on God's teachings.<sup>73</sup> In this way, the Presbyterian Church was defined by this communal worship of God.

In addition to an emphasis on a godly commonwealth, the Kirk also reflected Calvinism's fears of idolatry. For instance, the Scottish bishop Bishop Carswell criticized the Highlanders in 1567 for enjoying stories about fairies more than scripture:

Great is the blindness and darkness of sin and ignorance and understanding among composers and writers and supporters of the Gaelic, in that they prefer and practice the framing of vain, hurtful, lying earthly stories... with a view to obtaining for themselves passing worldly gain, rather than to write and compose and to support faithful words and the perfect way of truth.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 3: 1883.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 691.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 691.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 845-846.

<sup>74</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 112-113.



To Carswell, folk belief and the activities performed at festivals were a sign of corruption, that people were being led astray from God and the Protestant church. It is these festivals, alongside the figure of the fairy, that act as representations of this supposed corruption. The historian Diane Purkiss argues that for godly Protestants, fairies were simply demons.<sup>75</sup> Emma Wilby, a historian on early modern fairy belief, builds on this point further: “the Protestant church condemned the petitioning or worshipping of any other being other than God as idolatry (a sin that contravened the first Commandment: Thou shalt not have no other gods before me)...”<sup>76</sup> Here, Wilby argues that learned Protestants justified the demonization of fairies using scripture.

Wilby also notes that saints were targeted by godly Protestants as well.<sup>77</sup> This can be seen in the writings of John Knox, who described doctrine related to saints as “erroneous” and “blasphemous”.<sup>78</sup> At best this doctrine was false and at worst it went against the teachings of God. Here, Knox drew from Calvinism as it rejected saints entirely as unscriptural.<sup>79</sup> Another component of Catholicism, church miracles, were also scrutinized by learned Protestants. For instance, in 1597 King James VI argued that: “all miracles, visions, prophecies, and appearances of angels or good spirits are ceased.”<sup>80</sup> This suggests that saint worship was outdated as the kirk had moved past unscriptural beliefs and Catholic doctrine.

---

<sup>75</sup> Darren Oldridge, “Fairies and the Devil in early modern England.” *The Seventeenth Century*, 31:1, (2016): 2.

<sup>76</sup> Emma Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie: Magic, Witchcraft and Dark Shamanism in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2013), 26.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>78</sup> John Knox, “Endmatter” in *The Works of John Knox* (Edinburgh: J. Thin, 1895), 1: 523.

<sup>79</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 4: 18.

<sup>80</sup> McGill, “Angles, Devils, and Discernment in Early Modern Scotland”, 246.

At the center of this attack on Catholicism was the belief that the pope was the antichrist.<sup>81</sup> The Catholic Church believed that the pope was appointed by God to lead the faithful.<sup>82</sup> In the Scottish kirk, the king was not the head of the church.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, as the papal church was demonized, learned Protestants identified themselves and the Presbyterian Church as God's true servants. This point will be explored further in chapter 2 as Knox believed the Catholic clergy to be demons in human form.<sup>84</sup> The Presbyterian Kirk can also be compared to the Church of England. By discussing the Anglican Church, this thesis will identify how Scotland's Presbyterian system differed from other Protestant denominations. The Church of England was formed in 1534 by England's king, King Henry VIII. When the pope refused to grant him a divorce, King Henry VIII severed England's ties with the papacy. In doing so, he became the new head of England's church, which was dubbed the Church of England. The king oversaw all aspects of religious policy that involved church life, education, and doctrine.<sup>85</sup> Beneath the king was a system that included deacons, priests, bishops, and archbishops. While the king was the head of the church, bishops played a critical role in how the church was governed.<sup>86</sup> In contrast, the kirk avoided granting too much power to individual leaders, particularly bishops. Instead of a defined hierarchy, it used a system of accountability that was enforced by the collective.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), 534.

<sup>82</sup> Antonio, *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy*, 37.

<sup>83</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 3: 1872.

<sup>84</sup> John Knox, "History of the Reformation in Scotland" in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: J. Thin, 1895), 2: 408.

<sup>85</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 1: 691-692.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 111; 1: 692.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 1883.

When King James VI took up the English throne in 1603, becoming King James I, he attempted to introduce elements of Anglicanism to Scotland. This led to the reintroduction of bishops into Scotland's churches in 1612. In the 1620's, Charles I increased the power of bishops by granting them important civil posts. Additionally, in 1637 he also imposed a new book of worship services upon Scotland's churches. This led to riots as many Protestant Scots were unwilling to abide these Anglican elements in the church. In fact, some staunch Protestants saw this push towards Anglicanism as a return to Catholicism.<sup>88</sup> Here, it is clear that politics and the machinations of kings played an important role in how Scots viewed the church and Protestantism's role within it.

Doctrine is also another point of comparison between the Presbyterian Church and the Church of England. First and foremost, they both believed that the papal church was corrupt and in dire need of reform.<sup>89</sup> Specific doctrine, such as beliefs regarding salvation, also widened the divide between the Catholic Church and other denominations.<sup>90</sup> In brief, theologians tied salvation to the Day of Judgement, when humanity would be divided between the damned and those who ascend to Heaven.<sup>91</sup> The Catholic clergy stressed that the church had the power to grant salvation. In return, its congregants were to affirm their faith in God by performing good deeds. For instance, congregants could absolve themselves of their sins by donating money to the church, a practice which was heavily criticized by other theologians, such as Martin Luther.<sup>92</sup> For

---

<sup>88</sup> Melton, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 165.

<sup>89</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 1: 111; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 534.

<sup>90</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 1: 111.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 25.

<sup>92</sup> Eric W. Gritsch, *A History of Lutheranism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 13.

learned Protestants, salvation could only be achieved through faith and God's grace alone, not through practices created by mortal men.<sup>93</sup> In contrast, other learned Protestants, namely Calvinists, argued that only a select few were elected for salvation, regardless of one's faith in God, while everyone else was doomed for damnation.<sup>94</sup> The Church of England did not encourage this bleak outlook. Like their fellow Protestants, Anglicans stressed the importance of God's grace and faith in Him. However, Anglican clergymen also taught their congregants that they, as God's elected people, were granted salvation.<sup>95</sup> Thus, while Calvinist Puritans and Anglicans did not agree on certain topics, they both saw the Catholic Church as this corrupting influence. Thus, corruption, as defined by certain denominations, was centered around Catholicism.

During the seventeenth century, the Presbyterian Kirk continued to combat the corruption supposedly spread by witchcraft and Catholicism. This was done in pursuit of a "godly state", a topic which will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 2.<sup>96</sup> In brief, such a realm describes a country that upholds a strict sense of Christian morality. To create a godly Scotland, the Presbyterian Kirk sought to eradicate sinful behaviour, such as witchcraft and Sabbath-breaking.<sup>97</sup> However, the clergy's influence over the court system was limited. In that, after they questioned an individual suspected of witchcraft, a civil magistrate took over the case. To get around this limitation, clergymen urged those in positions of power, such as the Scottish parliament and privy council, to punish

---

<sup>93</sup> Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 1: 179.

<sup>94</sup> Hull, *On Calvinism*, 14.

<sup>95</sup> Biblicus, *Is Salvation by Water Baptism the Doctrine of the Church of England? A Letter to the Rev. Dr. McNeile, Occasioned by His Letter to the Bishop of Exeter, Entitled "Baptism Doth Save."* (London: J. F. Shaw, 1852), 18.

<sup>96</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 101; Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch Hunt – Hunt in Scotland* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 192.

<sup>97</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 108.

this crime with greater intensity.<sup>98</sup> In this way, church and state were intertwined as the former's ability to reform Scotland was dependent on the support of the latter. This occasionally proved to be a hinderance, as the Scottish state promoted witch-hunting just as frequently as it placed limitations on this practice.<sup>99</sup>

Despite the clergy's dependency on the approval of the state, the clergy's push for a reformed Scotland lead to the creation of a Protestant realm in the Scottish Lowlands. As such, Catholicism completely vanished from this region and it did not return until the eighteenth century.<sup>100</sup> The Highlands also experienced the clergy's campaign of moral reform, particularly in areas that were: "relatively easy of access from the Lowlands and the north-eastern one contained a string of towns characterized by a hybrid Lowland-Gaelic culture."<sup>101</sup> However, in areas where this hybrid culture did not exist, remnants of Catholic tradition could be found.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, unlike the Lowlands, much of the Scottish Highlands did not define the fairy and the witch as demonic entities.<sup>103</sup> In this way, the clergy failed to bring their vision of reform to all of Scotland. However, the rise of Protestantism, particularly during the seventeenth century, still changed how parts of the country understood the Catholic Church and preternatural belief.

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 108-109.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>100</sup> Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, 3; Lizanne Henderson, "With-Hunting and Witch Belief in the Gàidhealtachd" in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 96-98.

<sup>101</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Witch, A History of Fear from Ancient Times to the Present* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), 245.

<sup>102</sup> Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, 3

<sup>103</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 246-247.

## 1660-1700: The Enlightenment and the Rise of Atheism

The Enlightenment also shaped how learned men from Scotland viewed preternatural belief and the Catholic Church. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the changes in scientific and philosophical discourse were becoming a distinct intellectual movement, the name of which historians trace to a comment made by the English poet, Alexander Pope, who, in 1730, praised the discoveries of the physicist, Isaac Newton. Pope claimed that Newton's discoveries or "light" created new and correct ways to understand the universe.<sup>104</sup> This fixation on light was then taken up by learned men from the eighteenth century, who claimed that they were part of a larger movement known as the "Enlightenment". This caused Enlightenment thinkers to challenge old preconceptions regarding the universe, as it was no longer enough to simply rely on the writings of Roman and Greek philosophers [and for some even Christian scripture] for answers.<sup>105</sup> While trained in humanist traditions, Enlightenment philosophers were less wedded to the ancient sources that humanists had obsessed over in their quest to comprehend the nature of humanity and the cosmos, such as the classical Greek and Roman texts, alongside the Bible in its original Hebrew and Greek.<sup>106</sup>

Enlightenment philosophers also questioned whether one should believe in the certain spirits, such as fairies.<sup>107</sup> This skepticism led to the rise of Atheism in the late seventeenth century.<sup>108</sup> Using science, philosophers also challenged the notion that God

---

<sup>104</sup> Wiesner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe*, 366-367; Alexander Pope and John Butt, *The Poems of Alexander Pope: A One-Volume Edition of the Twickenham Text with Selected Annotations* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1990), 415, 808.

<sup>105</sup> Wiesner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe*, 367.

<sup>106</sup> Alexander Broadie, *A History of Scottish Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 87-88.

<sup>107</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 177; Wiesner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe*, 367.

<sup>108</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 177.

and Satan constantly intervened in our world.<sup>109</sup> In contrast, the English philosopher, Joseph Glanvill, argued that science was not necessarily at odds with witchcraft. This can be seen in 1668, when Glanvill argued that methods used to study demonic activity and witchcraft were not distinct from other sciences.<sup>110</sup> Scottish theologians, such as Robert Kirk and George Sinclair, used the existence of fairies in 1691 and 1685, respectively, to prove that Satan was real.<sup>111</sup> Sinclair argued that fairies were simply demons in disguise, illusions which held considerable sway before: “Paganism was not dispelled by Gospel light; Spirits kept a more familiar converse with families, and even in time of Popery...”<sup>112</sup> While Sinclair’s main purpose was to combat Atheism, he did so by demonizing popular belief and the Catholic Church. Thus, even by the late seventeenth century, Protestant theologians continued to present the Catholic Church as a symbol of corruption with ties to Satan.

This chapter discussed the discourse and actions taken by learned Protestants before and after the Scottish Reformation. The pre-Reformation Catholic Church was criticized by learned Protestants. In response, Catholic clergymen reformed some elements of the church; however, they failed to completely silence their critics. After the Scottish Reformation, the Presbyterian Church began to take shape, which targeted elements of Catholicism with greater intensity. By the end of the seventeenth century, some of these elements continued to be used by theologians in their efforts to combat Atheism. Chapter 2 explores the sermons and written works of learned Protestants in

---

<sup>109</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 294.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 297-298.

<sup>111</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 175, 177.

<sup>112</sup> George Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (Edinburgh: printed by John Reid, 1685), 213.

greater detail, identifying how they understood the witch, fairies, and Satan in relation to the Catholic Church.



## Chapter 2: The Clergy's Interaction with Fairy Kind

### Introduction

This chapter will now shift its focus towards the Scottish clergy. In particular, it presents the views of critical clergymen regarding the fairy, the Devil, and the witch. In doing so, it argues that the Scottish clergy, in their efforts to combat the influence of Satan and the Catholic Church, demonized the fairy and other elements of Scottish folk tradition. This chapter draws on a number of scholarly works in its efforts to illustrate the Scottish clergy's demonization of the fairy. In a chapter from *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, the historian of Scottish witch-hunting, Julian Goodare, argues that the learned elite redefined the fairy in demonic terms, which helped encourage witch-hunting.<sup>1</sup> This point is echoed by Ronald Hutton, a specialist of pagan traditions and witchcraft, who argued that Scottish clergy did not distinguish fairies from demons in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> There were, however, exceptions, the most remarkable being the seventeenth-century Scottish minister Robert Kirk who, while as noted by historians Lizanne Henderson and Edward Cowan commented, "Initially, Kirk's beliefs may indeed appear incongruous, but when seen in the context of man determined 'to suppress the impudent and growing atheism' of his era, he was not so unusual."<sup>3</sup> Henderson and Cowan correctly noted Kirk's desire to combat Atheism; however, this chapter also argues that Kirk was unique among his peers, for while Kirk was not alone in his efforts to combat Atheism, he avoided demonizing fairies.

---

<sup>1</sup> Julian Goodare, "Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context" in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 44.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Witch, A History of Fear from Ancient Times to the Present* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), 221.

<sup>3</sup> Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 2001), 176.

Ultimately, this chapter highlights the Scottish clergy's overwhelmingly negative view of the fairy, while also noting the variations among individual Protestant Scots.

This chapter begins by identifying how Protestant clergymen viewed the Catholic Church, Catholicism's relationship with the Devil, and popular magic. Then, having provided this broader context, it narrows its focus to Scottish Protestant attitudes. In particular, it identifies the aims of the Scottish clergy to transform popular religious culture in line with their reform ideals, especially as these related to views on the witch and the fairy. This chapter does so by delving into the writings of Scottish Protestants who referenced the fairy in some capacity. This chronological survey begins in the sixteenth century with the writings of William Hay, John Knox, and King James VI, and continues with the works and sermons of Scottish Protestants from the seventeenth century. In particular, this chapter examines comments made by James Hutchison, David Brown, Robert Kirk, and Martin Martin regarding preternatural traditions. This chapter seeks to highlight the Scottish clergy's fairly consistent efforts, from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, to demonize the fairy and associate it with the demonic witch.

However, before this chapter can define the Scottish clergy's position on the fairy, the witch, and the Devil, a general overview of Protestant stance on these entities is required. Stuart Clark, the foremost specialist of early-modern demonology, provides a clear picture of how Protestant clergymen believed that the Catholic Church was in league with Satan, spreading Satan's influence in the form of false forms of worship.

Unsurprisingly, many staunch Protestant clergymen during this period also believed the pope to be the antichrist.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Protestants also viewed popular magic with a negative lens. This can be seen in many texts written by Protestant writers as Clark writes:

much of literature dealing with ‘witchcraft’ in early modern Europe was an attempt to demonologize the traditional resources favored by ordinary people in need; an attempt, that is to say, to broaden the application of the term ‘witch’ to include those deemed to stand in the way of the complete pastoral hegemony of clergymen.<sup>5</sup>

Protestant clergymen thus sought to exert a larger measure of control over their congregants by condemning any form of anticlerical sentiment directed against them as itself demonic. Citing the English theologian, William Perkins, Clark writes that many Protestant clergymen saw: “Diviners, Charmers, Juglers, all Wizzards, commonly called wise men and wise women” as witches.<sup>6</sup> This quotation highlights the Protestant tendency to target for condemnation elements of popular culture, such as diviners and charmers. These were indeed popular, as divination is the ability to predict the future, a practice rooted in folk tradition that dates back to the medieval period.<sup>7</sup> As for charmers, according to Goodare, members of the Scottish peasantry often distinguished magic users between “charmers” and witches. Charmers were ordinary folk who used their magic to heal their clients, for fortune telling, or love-magic, unlike witches, who simply

---

<sup>4</sup> Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), 329.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 459.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 463.

<sup>7</sup> Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 88, 162.

wished to cause pain.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, beliefs regarding witchcraft were still linked to magic, which helped the peasantry cope with the looming threat of starvation and other problems. By using magic, they envisioned transporting themselves to a land where joyous feasts, dancing, and music were always plentiful.<sup>9</sup> In this way, there is a clear divide between how Protestant clergymen and their congregates viewed popular magic.

Scottish Protestants also sought to demonize elements of popular culture.

According to Brian Levack, Protestant countries, Scotland in particular, wished to create a “godly state”. As was noted in chapter 1, this is in reference to a country that upholds a strict sense of Christian morality. In order to achieve this godly society, the reformed Protestant church identified a number of moral vices that were to be purged through the court system, which included: witchcraft, adultery, blasphemy, cursing, and breaking the Sabbath.<sup>10</sup> Included in this list of problems was Catholicism, as John Knox believed that the Catholic Church was in league with Satan.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Scottish Protestantism was defined by the desire to create the perfect Christian community by punishing deviant behavior and removing the Devil’s influence from the church.<sup>12</sup>

Peter Burke, the leading scholar of early-modern popular culture, provides further context for this program of reform. In particular, Burke argues that one way for historians to understand culture is by looking at it ‘from below’. Citing the Italian philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, Burke notes that the perspective from ‘below’ is

---

<sup>8</sup> Julian Goodare, “The Scottish Witchcraft Act.” *Church History* 74, no. 1 (2005): 54-55.

<sup>9</sup> Julian Goodare, “Flying Witches in Scotland” in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunting*, Julian Goodare, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 171.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 108.

<sup>11</sup> John Knox, “History of the Reformation in Scotland” in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: J. Thin, 1895), 2: 408.

<sup>12</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 108.

portrayed as ‘subordinate’, while the perspective from ‘above’ is viewed as ‘dominant’.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, Burke argues that Gramsci’s view of culture is limiting as it makes presumptions regarding how people from either dominant or subordinate groups viewed other people in the same group.<sup>14</sup> That is not to say that this power imbalance cannot help historians understand interactions between early modern theologians and the Scottish peasantry as Burke also states:

it seems to me that the initiative for reform came originally from an elite, more especially the upper clergy, before it spread more widely through society. It was part of what it is variously called, following the rival social theorists, Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault, a process of ‘civilising’ or ‘disciplining’, which began as an attempt by elites to control the behaviour of ordinary people...<sup>15</sup>

Burke affirms that some of the clergy from the early modern period believed that the common folk needed to be corrected in some fashion. Such a notion resonates with points made by Levack, who also argued that the Scottish clergy attempted to reform Scotland into a godly society by punishing instances of vice.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, Burke and Levack argue that the clergy’s fixation with reform informed their view of popular culture, to the point where these clergymen believed that common folk needed to be freed from corrupting forms of belief.

In an effort to create a godly society, Protestant ministers twisted the testimonies of supposed witches by turning accounts of fairies into stories regarding demons. In this

---

<sup>13</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), xvii.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

<sup>16</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 108.

demonic rendition of the accused's testimony, fairies displayed demonic behavior by forcing the accused to renounce their baptism and pledge themselves to Satan.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, Scottish Protestantism was defined by the clergy's efforts to twist folk tradition in order to create witches. With regards to the manipulation of fairy belief, Canon MacCulloch, a scholar of Scottish folklore, argues that: "the official, ecclesiastical orthodoxy of Europe had long regarded all spirits as either angelic or demoniac."<sup>18</sup> As scripture did not refer to fairies, Scottish Protestants believed that these spirits were either demons in disguise or fantastical nonsense.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, these Protestants used their pulpit to convince the common folk that fairies, spirits from folklore, were instead demons in disguise.<sup>20</sup> As such, Scottish Protestantism during this period was also defined by the clergy's refusal to see fairies as distinct entities.

Another critical element of Scottish Protestantism was the belief in the Devil's pact, as this pact was needed to convict the accused of witchcraft and brand them as a servant of Satan.<sup>21</sup> In that, Scottish Protestants believed that Satan marked his servants by placing a physical mark on their body, one that was immune to pain and could not bleed. According to Levack, this pact was not only a major facet of Scottish Protestantism, but of Protestantism throughout Europe: "Protestants emphasised the pact as the essence of witchcraft."<sup>22</sup> In this way, Scottish Protestantism emphasised the belief that witches were servants of Satan, regardless of whether or not their *maleficia* (harmful

---

<sup>17</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 221.

<sup>18</sup> Canon J. A. MacCulloch, "the mingling of fairy and Witch Beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth century Scotland", in *Folklore* 32, no. 4 (1921): 231.

<sup>19</sup> Julian Goodare, "The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland" in *Folklore* 123:2 (2012): 202.

<sup>20</sup> MacCulloch, "the mingling of fairy and Witch", 231.

<sup>21</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 221.

<sup>22</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 44.

magic) actually caused harm.<sup>23</sup> Going back as early as the fifteenth century, the Devil's pact was a consistent element of the witchcraft trials throughout continental Europe. Another consistent element of witchcraft was the witches' sabbat, nocturnal gatherings where witches worshiped Satan and performed vile acts, including cannibalism, sex with the Devil, and intercourse with other witches.<sup>24</sup> By the sixteenth century, continental depictions of the witches' sabbat had become more graphic, portraying the ritual sacrifice of unbaptised babies. However, the depiction of the witches' sabbat during this period was not consistent as Scotland's North Berwick trials omitted most of these elements. With the exception of the portrayal of the witch as the Devil's servant, Scotland's North Berwick trials omitted most of the elements common in depictions of the witches' sabbat at the time.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, a witch's servitude to Satan remained a constant, crucial element of Protestantism, despite inconsistent depictions of the witches' sabbat.

### **William Hay**

The first theologian to be discussed in this chapter is the pre-Reformation Scottish Humanist, William Hay.<sup>26</sup> After attending university in Paris, Hay returned to Scotland to teach at Aberdeen University in the 1530s.<sup>27</sup> While teaching at this university, Hay gave a series of lectures, titled *Lectures on Marriage*, in which he explored the legal dimensions of marriage by identifying whether or not impotence

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Anderson, *Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 69.

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *Edinburgh History of Education*, 69; Goodare, "The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland", 200.

nullified the marriage contract. This led to Hay's introduction of witchcraft and the *Canon Episcopi* into his lecture, as the theologian argued that demons could take on a human form and meddle with the marriages of mortals. In brief, the *Canon* was an ecclesiastical law that was likely drafted in c. 907 C. E. This law denounced the belief held by some women at the time that they met the pagan goddess Diana at night in their dreams and traveled with her.<sup>28</sup> Several other cults held similar beliefs, including a Sicilian group, whose members believed that they visited the fairy queen and her entourage at night. Goodare notes that this is not a physical visit; rather, the members of this cult believed that their bodies remained in bed while their spirit traveled to the gathering.<sup>29</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, a historian of popular belief and agrarian cults, expands upon this notion. As early as the tenth century, several individuals claimed to have experienced nocturnal gatherings that did not involve the Devil. Instead, presiding over these gatherings was a being that went by many names, including Diana. Diana was known as a fertility goddess and in late sixteenth-century Italy, people calling themselves the *benandanti* formed a cult around this being. While witches also observed nocturnal gatherings, Ginzburg noted that the *benandanti*, or "'good' witches," traveled through their dreams to these gatherings to do battle with witches and warlocks that served the Devil.<sup>30</sup> An example of this can be seen in 1580, when a *benandanti* confessed before an inquisitor that he: "dreamed of fighting witches."<sup>31</sup> Here, Ginzburg

---

<sup>28</sup> Goodare, "The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland", 200-201.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>30</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John and Anne Adeschi (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1992), xx, 4,

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



highlights the benandanti's fixation with these dream encounters during the sixteenth century.

While the *Canon Episcopi* did not involve witchcraft, Hay noted that some Scottish theologians in the fifteenth century used this law to argue that these nightly visits weren't real, but the product of demonic illusions.<sup>32</sup> In this instance, they used the *Canon Episcopi* to argue that: "witchcraft does not exist in reality but only in the estimation of men, so that when the causes of some effect are unknown, they commonly attribute the effect to the intervention of demons."<sup>33</sup> For some learned men, demons did not possess physical bodies and witchcraft was used to explain the fantastical claims made by witches.

Hay disagreed with this interpretation of demons and witchcraft, turning to the bible in support of his claim. In his efforts to demonstrate that witchcraft was real, Hay began with several bible passages that condemned it, placing these passages alongside other biblical references that described encounters between humans and demons. Additionally, he argued that the *Canon* did not deny the reality of the entire non-official supernatural world, referring to a third kind of spirit outside of fairies and demons called "celly vichtys". Hay likely used this expression due to his Scottish audience's familiarity with the phrase, Hay's inability to translate it, or both.<sup>34</sup>

In describing these spirits, or "seely wights", Goodare states that they are not fairies. Rather, Goodare defines wights as a kind of nature spirit that broadly shares similarities with fairy kind. As for how we are to understand what this term means,

---

<sup>32</sup> Goodare, "The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland", 200.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

Goodare notes that the second word, “wights”, could be translated into either “beings” or “creatures”. In contrast, Goodare notes that “seely” could be translated in a variety of ways, including: “fortunate”, “lucky”, “well-omened”, and auspicious”; the word “seely” originally deriving its etymology from an old English word that broadly translates into “lucky”. Therefore, for the modern historian, Goodare notes that these creatures can be best described as “magical beings” or “blessed beings”, if one goes with the literal translation of “seely wights”.<sup>35</sup>

However, despite his familiarity with folk belief, Hay did not believe in fairies, as they did not appear in the bible. Rather, as someone who knew that the common folk believed in fairies, Hay was willing to concede to two interpretations regarding these spirits: that fairies were either demons or they were not real. This is where Hay’s interpretation of seely wights comes in, as he distinguished between two groups of women: those that believed they traveled with the pagan goddess Diana and those that met with the seely wights in his time. Hay believed that groups of women who met with the seely wights were similar to the cult devoted to Diana, as he believed that the beliefs described in the *Canon* regarding nightly visits with this being were not overly different from the folk traditions of his time.<sup>36</sup>

However, as Hay did not believe in fairies, seely wights were not found in the imagination, but evidenced real instances of demons:

In the first various kinds of fantasies are enumerated, for there are certain women who do say that they have dealings with Diana the queen of the fairies. There are others who say that the fairies are demons, and deny

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 198-200.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 202-203.

having any dealings with them, and say that they hold meetings with a countless multitude of simple women whom they call in our tongue celly vichtys.<sup>37</sup>

Hay here argued that conversations regarding the pagan goddess Diana distracted theologians from real instances of the supernatural in the form of the wights.<sup>38</sup> This also suggests that Hay believed, with an awareness of preternatural traditions and the common folk's belief in fairies, that these individuals renamed these spirits to avoid being branded as demon worshippers.

### **John Knox**

Other Scottish theologians discussed demons as well, including John Knox, the leader of the Protestant movement in Scotland.<sup>39</sup> Knox described the Devil as: “the Prince of darknes, pride, and superstition,”<sup>40</sup> as the central antagonist to humanity by leading them astray with corrupting beliefs or “superstition”.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Knox defined idolaters or witches as the “slaves of Satan” who, after rejecting God, are destined to suffer for an eternity, alongside the Devil and other fallen angels.<sup>42</sup> In another text Knox goes into more detail regarding the nature of Satan and his followers, stating:

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 201-202.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>39</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 9.

<sup>40</sup> John Knox, “A Letter to the Queen Dowager, Regent of Scotland: Augmented and Explained by the Author” in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: J. Thin, 1895), 4: 455.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 405.

<sup>42</sup> John Knox, *The Copie of an Epistle Sent: By Iohn Knox One of the Ministers of the Englishe Church at Geneua Vnto the Inhabitants of Newcastle, & Barwike. in the End Wherof Is Added a Briefe Exhortation to England for the Spedie Imbrasing of Christes Gospel Hertofore Suppressed & Banished* (At Geneva: Publisher Not Identified, 1559), 52-53.

O brethren / is not the deuel the prince of this worlde / vanquished & cast out?.. when sathan and his adherentes Idolatours / worshippers of that blasphemous beast / fylthie personnes / and fearefull shrinkers frome the truthe of God shalbe caste in the lake burninge fyre and brimstone / which neuer shalbe quenched.<sup>43</sup>

Knox's reference to the Devil as "the prince of this worlde" affirms the Protestant position that Satan had ownership over the people of this world through his ability to pull them away from God. Additionally, this description affirms that, for Knox, countless people are enticed by Satan and pay homage to him by disobeying God's teachings.<sup>44</sup>

While discussing the Devil's temptations, Knox refers to the demonic pact, stating:

Will ye now suddanelie slyde back? Will ye refuse Christ and his truth, and mak pactioun with the Devill and his discevable doctrine? Will ye tread the maist precious blude of Chrystis Testament under your feit, and sett up an idoll befor the people? Whilk thingis assuredlie ye do as oft as ever ye present your bodies amangis ydolateris befor that blasphemous ydoll. God, the Father of all mercies, for Chryst his Sonnes sake, preserve yow frome that soir temptatioun...<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> John Knox, *A Godly Letter Sent Too the Fayethfull in London, Newcastle, Barwyke, and to All Other Within the Realme Off Englande, That Loue the Co[m]minge of Oure Lorde Iesus by Ihon Knox* (Imprinted in Rome I.e. Wesel?: By J. Lambrecht? for H. Singleton before the Castel of S. Aungel, at the Signe of Sainct Peter, 1554), 49.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>45</sup> John Knox, "An Exposition Upon The Sixth Psalm Of David, Addressed To Mrs Bowes" in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: J. Thin, 1895), 3: 210-211.

Knox presents the Devil's pact as a fall from grace, where one commits idolatry by rejecting God for the sake of worshipping Satan and false gods. The American scholar, Michelle Brock, adds to this point, arguing that the Protestant clergy encouraged their congregations to be watchful of "future evils", sinful deeds that they have yet to perform.<sup>46</sup> This suggests that Knox and Protestant clergymen believed that any kind of sinful deed, including idolatry, brought one closer to Devil. Citing Knox, the scholar Stuart MacDonald argues that the Scottish reformer described practitioners of witchcraft as being disobedient to God: "The sin of Witchcraft is to not obey his voice, and to be stuburne is the sin of Idolatrie."<sup>47</sup> Knox argued that disobedience and stubbornness were a spiritual form of witchcraft, involving the worship of the Devil.

While discussing corruption on a spiritual level, Brock provides valuable context. Following Knox's introduction of Calvinism into Scotland, Scottish Protestants grew concerned over the influence the Devil had on their lives and the innate depravity of humanity.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Brock argues that Calvinism internalized the Devil: "The contemplation of ideas about the Devil, innate depravity, and salvation resulted in powerful internal struggles and self-loathing, culminating in some individuals with internalizing the demonic."<sup>49</sup> Brock does not frame the demonic around concerns regarding witchcraft. Rather, with a view of human nature informed by Calvinist

---

<sup>46</sup> Michelle Brock, "Internalizing the Demonic: Satan and the Self in Early Modern Scottish Piety" *Journal of British Studies* 54 (January 2015): 29.

<sup>47</sup> Stuart Macdonald, "John Knox, the Scottish Church, and Witchcraft Accusations." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 48 (2017): 645; John Knox, "A Vindication of the Doctrine that the Mass is Idolatry" in *The Work of John Knox*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: 1863-64), 3:33-70, 645.

<sup>48</sup> Brock, "Internalizing the Demonic", 42.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

doctrine, Scottish Protestants believed that Satan nurtured the depravity that was an innate component of human nature.

In particular, Satan was said to hamper one's ability to find spiritual peace, reminding individuals of their personal failings.<sup>50</sup> To combat humanity's inclination towards sin, Protestant preachers throughout the anglophone world encouraged their congregations to reflect on themselves and the influence that Satan had on their lives.<sup>51</sup> However, those that engaged in introspection were often beset by despair as they: "began to fear that they were, due to their "evil hearts," in league with the Devil, even themselves demonic, and beyond the pale of salvation."<sup>52</sup> Here, the issue wasn't just Satan; rather, people believed that something was fundamentally wrong with them as well. In this instance, through these men and women the influence of Calvinist doctrine is apparent. According to Calvinism, humanity was doomed for damnation as their nature drew them towards sinful behaviour.<sup>53</sup> Here, Calvinism's belief in predestination changed how people saw themselves and their relationship with the Devil. One can see this outlook through the Scottish minister, James Fraser, who, in 1639, recounted an evening where he was unable to pray: "[I] could not get my mouth opened; there did a number of blasphemies and cursings run in my mind with great horror and against my will, which I thought was like the devil in me."<sup>54</sup> Fraser, much like Knox, emphasised the spiritual ramifications of certain deeds, be it witchcraft or other possibly sinful

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>53</sup> Hull, *On Calvinism*, 15; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 227.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 23.

actions.<sup>55</sup> It is clear that Knox and Calvinism continued to shape Protestant thought and people's perception of the demonic.

Knox also targeted the Catholic church in a text documenting the Reformation, where the reformer stated:

But I affirm yit agane, that the pestilent Papistis, quho have inflamit your Grace without caus againis those pure men at this present, ar the sonis of the devill; and thairfoir maun obey the desires of thair father, quho hes bene ane liar and ane murtherour from the begyning.<sup>56</sup>

Knox here claimed that the Catholic clergymen are not only agents of the Devil, but his offspring as well. This quotation from Knox also emphasises that he believed that Catholic priests were either external demons or humans in service to Satan. Soon after, Knox was reminded that he was not behind a pulpit; however, Knox simply stated that he had the right to speak the truth. Knox did not refer to the person who objected to his comment by name. However, it is possible that Knox was responding to a remark by the queen regent of Scotland, as he continues to address her throughout this text: "And heirunto [I add,] Madam, that honest, gentill, and meik naturis be appeirance, be wickit and corrupt counsallouris, may be convertit and alter to the direct contrair."<sup>57</sup> If it wasn't the queen, Knox may have been responding to someone of the Catholic faith who objected to Knox's portrayal of the Catholic Church. On that note, in *Literature and the Scottish Reformation*, David Mullan reminds historians that during the Scottish Reformation, much like the divide between light and darkness, Protestant clergymen saw

---

<sup>55</sup> Macdonald, "John Knox, the Scottish Church", 645.

<sup>56</sup> Knox, "History of the Reformation in Scotland", Vol. 2, 408.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 408-409.

Protestantism and Catholicism as two distinct sides.<sup>58</sup> However, unlike English Protestants, such as Anglicans, Scottish Presbyterians were quite intolerant towards Catholics.<sup>59</sup> Knox claimed that the Pope, the head of the Roman Catholic faith, was the antichrist; a tyrannical figure who in the Last Days would spread idolatry.<sup>60</sup> Here, Knox framed idolatry as the worship of Satan and Catholic images.<sup>61</sup> Thus, while Anglicanism allowed for some tolerance of the Catholic Church, Knox's framing of it strongly suggests that Catholicism's influence on Scotland was to be removed, not tolerated.

As for fairies, while Knox did not believe in them, that does not mean he never indirectly acknowledged their existence in popular folklore. More specifically, in a letter to Queen Dowager, Regent of Scotland at the time, Knox states:

As Satan by craft hath corrupted the most holie ordinances... introducing mennes dreamea, inventions, and fantasies; so hath he, abusing the weaknes of man... for now the Devill hath so blinded the senses of many, that they can not, or at the least, will not learne what apperteineth to God and what to Cesar.<sup>62</sup>

Knox does not refer to fairies directly in this passage; however, it is likely that he believed these spirits to be one of Satan's demonic illusions or fantasies, used to distract and corrupt humanity. Furthermore, while Knox did not describe fairy belief as idolatry,

---

<sup>58</sup> David Mullan, "Writing of the Scottish Reformation" in *Literature and the Scottish Reformation*, eds. Mullan, David, Crawford Gribben (London: Routledge, 2009), 22.

<sup>59</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 13.

<sup>60</sup> John Knox, "History of the Reformation in Scotland" in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: J. Thin, 1895), 1: 3, 101, 184, 194.

<sup>61</sup> Knox, "History of the Reformation in Scotland", Vol. 2, 408; John Knox, "A SERMON ON ISAIAH XXVI. 13.-21, PREACHED IN ST. GILES'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, A SERMON PREACHED BY JOHN KNOXE" in *The Works of John Knox* (Printed for The Bannatyne Club: Edinburgh, 1565), 6: 239; John Knox, "Frontmatter" in *The Works of John Knox* (Printed for The Bannatyne Club: Edinburgh, 1565), 6: xli.

<sup>62</sup> Knox, "A Letter to the Queen Dowager, Regent of Scotland: Augmented and Explained by the Author", 441.



it is likely that he understood these traditions as idolatrous. In addition to its association with the Catholic Church, which was, according to Knox, aligned with the Devil, many members of the Scottish clergy, such as preachers and pastors, were of the firm belief that fairies were demons.<sup>63</sup> More specifically, as fairies and other woodland spirits were not angels, it only made logical sense to these pastors that these beings were demons instead.<sup>64</sup> Thus, Knox's reference to fantasies suggests that beliefs beyond those expressed by the Protestant Church, which included fairy traditions, were the work of Satan and a form of idolatry.<sup>65</sup>

Prejudice towards folk traditions by Scottish clergy even included dancing. While addressing the regent of Scotland, Knox once commented about dancing done by the common folk at festivals, stating:

And of dansing, Madam, I said, that albeit in Scripturis I fand no praise of it, and in prophane wryttaris, that it is termed the jesture rather of those that ar mad and in phrenesye then of sober men; yitt do I not utterlie dampne it, provyding that two vices be avoided: the formare, That the principall vocatioun of those that use that exercise be not neglected for the pleasur of dansing; Secoundly, That they daunse not, as the Philisteanis thair fatheris, for the pleasur that thai tack in the displeasur of Goddis people. For yf any of boyth thai do, as thai shall receive the reward of dansaris, and that willbe drynk in hell, onless thai spedilie

---

<sup>63</sup> Macculloch, "the mingling of fairy and Witch Beliefs", 231; Goodare, "The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland", 202.

<sup>64</sup> Macculloch, "the mingling of fairy and Witch Beliefs", 231.

<sup>65</sup> Knox, "A Letter to the Queen Dowager, Regent of Scotland: Augmented and Explained by the Author", 441.

repent, so shall God turn thair myrth in suddane sorow: for God will not  
 alwayes afflict his people, neither yitt will he alwayes wynk at the  
 tyranny of tyrantis.<sup>66</sup>

Knox does not think highly of dancing, identifying its dangers and how partaking in it may lead to damnation. However, he does not argue all dancing is bad; rather, he argues that dancing done under specific circumstances will damn one's soul.<sup>67</sup> On this point Henderson and Cowan remind historians that descriptions of fairy encounters sometimes included dancing and drinking. Additionally, these encounters with fairy folk were portrayed as "disorderly", while the witch's sabbat was presented in a similar fashion.<sup>68</sup>

Many theologians believed that society, after the fall of biblical Adam, was plagued with "disorder" that arose from a fixation on inversions of societal, a point which was stressed by the English theologian, Christopher Goodman:

in place of justice, he receaveth injustice, for right wronge, for virtue  
 vice, for lawe will, for love hatred, for trueth falshod, for playne dealing  
 dissimulation, for religion superstition, for true worshippe detestable  
 idolatrie: and to be shorte, for God Sathan, for Christ Antichrist.<sup>69</sup>

Clark uses Goodman to identify how learned Protestants used fears surrounding disorder to condemn the activities of their "cultural opponents", the source of disorderly conduct.<sup>70</sup> Witchcraft was a part of this as forms of worship in the witch's sabbat were, according to the Italian theologian, Paolo Grillando: "directly in opposition to that

---

<sup>66</sup> Knox, "History of the Reformation in Scotland", 2: 333.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>68</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 135.

<sup>69</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 71, 74.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 78.

reverence which it is usual for us to show.”<sup>71</sup> This includes dancing performed at the witch’s sabbat, which was also described as unusual.<sup>72</sup> As fairies were also known to partake in dancing at their gatherings, Scottish clergymen used the inversion of proper conduct to demonize the fairy.<sup>73</sup>

This inversion can also be seen through the witch’s sabbat, the antithesis to the Sabbath. As a Calvinist, Knox saw the godly Sabbath as a day of rest, where one did not work and instead used their Sunday to pray and consider God’s teachings. It was also a day where the playing of games or sports were also encouraged.<sup>74</sup> Knox refers to the Sabbath directly while discussing God’s ten commandments, arguing that we are called on by God to honor this day of rest.<sup>75</sup> In contrast, theologians from the sixteenth century defined the witch’s sabbat by immoral deeds, such as intercourse with demons and feasting on infants. The Scottish witch’s sabbat was also believed to include these activities; however, Levack notes that some Scottish trials, such as the North Berwick trials, did not include these elements. At the center of the witch’s sabbat, both in Scotland and other parts of Europe was the belief that witches gathered together to worship Satan.<sup>76</sup> In this way, the witch’s sabbat played the role of an ungodly contrast to the holy observance of the Sabbath.

While discussing the breaking of the Sabbath, Knox lists this deed alongside other sinful behavior:

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>73</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 135.

<sup>74</sup> Hillerbrand and Hans Joachim, *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4: 6.

<sup>75</sup> Knox, “History of the Reformation in Scotland”, 1: 6.

<sup>76</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 39.

That such horrible crimes as now abound within this Realme without any correction, To the great contempt of God and his Word; such as Idolatry, Blasphemie of Gods Name, manifest breaking of the Sabbath day, Witchcraft, Sorcery, Inchantment, Adultery, manifest Whoredome, maintenance of Bordals, Murther, Slaughter, Oppression, with many other detestable Crimes, may be severely punished; and Judges appointed in every Province and Diocesse, for execution thereof, with power to do the same; and that by Act of Parliament.<sup>77</sup>

Knox does not refer to the witch's sabbat; rather, its presence is implied through the reference to the "breaking of the Sabbath day".<sup>78</sup> Christina Lerner emphasises this point by portraying the witch's sabbat as the: "Black Mass or inverted Protestant celebrations, and the Demonic Pact."<sup>79</sup> As was stated in the introduction to this thesis, black was a shade associated with the Devil.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the witch's sabbat is an inversion of the regular Sabbath through its celebration of Satan over the worship of God. Regarding Knox's reference to sinful behaviour, including the breaking of the Sabbath, he does not place this sinful deed above the others. Rather, he groups together secular crimes, such as murder, with witchcraft and breaking the Sabbath. This emphasises the notion that secular crimes were a sin in God's eyes, much like witchcraft and breaking the Sabbath. Additionally, Knox's list of sinful behaviour from this paragraph outlines what kind of

---

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 410.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 410.

<sup>79</sup> Christina Lerner, *Enemies of God: The Witch Hunt – Hunt in Scotland* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 10.

<sup>80</sup> Lizanne Henderson, "Detestable Slaves of the Devil': Changing Ideas about Witchcraft in sixteenth century Scotland" in *A History of Everyday Life in Medieval Scotland*, Cowan, Edward J, and Henderson, Lizanne, eds. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 232.

reforms he wished to bring to Scotland as well. In the end, Knox's critique of witchcraft, Catholicism, and folk culture set the groundwork for the Scottish clergy's hostile stance towards preternatural traditions.

Near the end of his article on Knox, MacDonald challenges a point made by Lerner, who argues that in the 1590's King James VI played a critical role in introducing belief about demons to Scotland.<sup>81</sup> MacDonald contends this point by stating that theory regarding a pact between the Devil and witches existed prior to the Scottish king, affirming the importance of figures like Knox.<sup>82</sup> Thus, Knox is demonstrative of how folk belief was demonized by the Scottish clergy during this period. While not discussing fairies specifically, Knox's branding of Catholicism as demonic during this period arguably also condemned preternatural beliefs regarding fairies that were once tolerated by the Catholic Church.

### **King James VI**

The king of Scotland, James VI, also wrote a text that included a condemnation of fairies. Completed in the 1590s, this text, titled *Daemonologie*, came into existence due in no small part to the North Berwick trials, which began in 1590 and lasted for several years.<sup>83</sup> The North Berwick trials involved a supposed plot against the king's life and the summoning of a storm that endangered the life of his bride, instigated by people James believed to be witches.<sup>84</sup> Under torture the accused revealed that they met with Satan, who gave them instructions to summon the storm.<sup>85</sup> This plot was first revealed

---

<sup>81</sup> Macdonald, "John Knox, the Scottish Church", 650.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 650-651.

<sup>83</sup> Donald Tyson, ed., *The Demonology of King James I: Includes the Original Text of Daemonologie and News from Scotland* (Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2011), 3, 41.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 17.

by a Gilly Duncan who, after being tortured by her employer, revealed the names of other supposed witches who were a part of this plot; Duncan falling under suspicion after displaying skills as a healer.<sup>86</sup> One of the individuals identified as a witch by Duncan was Agnes Sampson, who revealed several more names to the court.<sup>87</sup>

In this instance, King James believed the barbaric treatment of these men and women was justified. Donald Tyson, the editor of this reprinted text, argues that the king, deeply troubled by the attempts on his life, saw himself as Scotland's defender against the wicked machinations of Satan and his minions, witches; James believed that the only proper response was to use his political power to disperse the "wrath of heaven".<sup>88</sup> Here, he is referencing the divine right of kings. This was the belief that monarchs were appointed by God to serve as His chief servants on earth.<sup>89</sup> This persona is made apparent by the Berwick trial evidence, when one of the accused confessed: "At which time the witches demanded of the Devil why he did bear such hatred to the King, who answered, by reason the King is the greatest enemy he hath in the world: all which their confessions and depositions are still extant upon record."<sup>90</sup> Tyson argues that this statement was not made unprompted as Sampson made this claim to end the torture she experienced.<sup>91</sup> This passage also indicates that James believed the Devil had a personal vendetta against him.

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 24 – 25.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>89</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe, 1450-1789*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge History of Europe, V. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 316-317.

<sup>90</sup> Tyson, *The Demonology of King James I*, 194.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 25.

The other plot supposedly revealed by the Berwick trials involved a plan against his life by Francis, Earl of Bothwell.<sup>92</sup> Tyson writes that Bothwell saw James as a “sniveling cleric with pretensions of scholarship and an arrogant air of superiority that was unfounded on any virtue in his nature.”<sup>93</sup> Similarly, King James also greatly disliked the earl and had no problem with hearing evidence that implicated Francis in this plot against him. For instance, Sampson testified that the earl had asked her to look into the future using her magic and familiars to discern what would happen when the king died. While Tyson affirms it was doubtful that Sampson ever met Francis, the earl would still be put on trial by King James VI in 1593.<sup>94</sup>

However, even after the Earl of Bothwell was acquitted, King James VI would continue to believe that Francis was conspiring against him. The king of Scotland was convinced that the more he persecuted those he believed to be the servants of Satan, the less power the Devil had over him.<sup>95</sup> In this instance, similarly to his belief that he must use his political power as king to protect Scotland and its people from Satan, King James VI was of the mindset that only he could stop the Devil. While Francis saw King James as a “sniveling cleric”, the Scottish king should not be ignored when looking at how the Scottish clergy influenced the common folk’s perception of witches and fairies.<sup>96</sup> The confessions made during these trials painted a clear picture of witchcraft and the witch’s sabbat, shaping the general population’s attitudes towards magic and witches in

---

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 18, 26, 27.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 23.

Scotland, England, and across the sea in New England; changing how many folk saw supernatural entities like fairies.<sup>97</sup>

King James VI's text also discussed fairies, albeit somewhat briefly. For example, the king described fairies as one of four kinds of spirits, particularly: "That kinds of the Devil's conversing in the earth, may be divided in four different kinds, whereby he frightens and troubles the bodies of men; for of the abusing of the soul..."<sup>98</sup> Fairies should not be defined by their history in folk belief, but as demons seeking to harm humans. This notion is further emphasised when King James VI describes the fairy or the fourth kind of spirit, associating them with the title of, "Good Neighbours".<sup>99</sup> While such a title may seem pleasant, Tyson notes that fairies were often given such a name in an effort to not rouse their anger and that their true nature was outlandish and alarming.<sup>100</sup>

The term, "Good neighbours" can also be found in the compendium of traditional Scottish rhymes first published in 1826.<sup>101</sup> Outside of mentioning the "seelie witcht", the rhyme explains why fairies were called the good neighbours: "Gin ye ca' me imp or elf, I rede ye look weel to yourself; Gin ye ca' me fairy, I'll work ye muckle tarrie; Gin guid neibour ye ca' me, Then guid neibour I will be..."<sup>102</sup> While Goodare does not identify when this rhyme was written and by whom, it does suggest a sort of ambivalence towards humans that all fairy kind shares. In this rhyme the spirit warns its human reader about calling it an imp or fairy, suggesting that using such names would offend them.

---

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 18, 21.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>101</sup> Goodare, "The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland", 198 – 200.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 198.



However, if humanity refers to their kind as, “good neighbours” then they will not cause any mischief and, in fact, be their friend.<sup>103</sup>

Outside of the king’s awareness of popular tradition, King James VI also stated with regards to fairies: “I think it more like Virgil’s *Campi Elysii*, than anything that ought to be believed by Christians, except in general, that as I spoke before, the Devil deludes the senses of many simple creatures...”<sup>104</sup> In addition to the reference to the Devil distracting mortals from their Christian faith, Tyson identifies that “*Campi Elysii*” likely refers to the Elysium Fields described in Vergil’s epic, the *Aeneid*.<sup>105</sup> More than just a literary reference that only the learned will understand, the king’s efforts to draw parallels between a fantastical place and fantastical beings suggests that fairies are not anymore more relevant to Christianity than the fields of Elysium. In this instance, King James VI not only questions the relevancy of fairies, but he presents these spirits as demonic illusions created by the Devil.

King James VI’s view on witches was equally bleak. In *Daemonologie* the king cites Exodus 22:18, which reads: “Thou shall not suffer a witch to live.”<sup>106</sup> At this juncture it is important to define what the Hebrew text meant by a witch. When Knox translated the bible from Hebrew the verse remained the same, but instead of referring to a witch the verse reads: “Sorcerers must not be allowed to live.”<sup>107</sup> However, that is not to say that Knox neglected the use of the word “witch” as the theologian added a footnote that stated: “In the Hebrew the word is feminine to ‘witch.’”<sup>108</sup> Here it should

---

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>104</sup> Tyson, *The Demonology of King James I*, 173.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 173, 177.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

be noted that the feminine form of the Hebrew word in question is MKShP, which roughly translates into “enchanter” or “magician”. While the various translations have offered different interpretations of this word, King James VI would not distinguish between witches and sorceress. For him, both seemed to be individuals who used their magic in service of evil as slaves and servants to the Devil.<sup>109</sup>

Other translations, namely the Vulgate, refer to witches as *maleficus* or one that does wicked deeds. This word often appeared in the titles of texts relating to the demonization of witches, including *The Malleus Maleficarum* of 1486; the Latin term, *maleficia*, translates to harmful magic. With this negative perception of popular magic, this term was sometimes used by learned men to describe harmful creatures, such as poisonous serpents. Tyson notes that the King James Bible mistranslated the word “witch” as “poisoner” or “murderer”, further adding to the negative way that supposed witches were perceived.<sup>110</sup> In this way, the translation of the bible, including that of King James VI’s own interpretation, greatly affected the Scottish clergy’s understanding of what a witch was. Thus, it is important for those studying the witch-hunts to understand how biblical passages were translated by members of the clergy, including Scottish Protestants, and how their translations may have shaped popular beliefs.

In another instance, King James VI changed how witch-trials in Scotland were conducted, as he offered insight into how one might spot a witch. Levack notes that King James VI believed that the contract between a witch and Satan left a physical mark on their body that supposedly provided empirical evidence that a witch had made a pact

---

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

with the Devil.<sup>111</sup> In addition to the physical manifestation of the pact, the king of Scotland was quite concerned over the ramifications of this pact:

and gives them hid mark upon some secret place of their body, which remains sore unhealed until his next meeting with them, and thereafter ever insensible... to give them proof thereby, that as in doing he could hurt and heal them, so all their ill and well doings thereafter must depend upon him... the intolerable distress that they feel in that place where he has marked them serves to waken them, and not let them rest until their next meeting again...<sup>112</sup>

By rejecting their baptism, a witch rejects God and enters into a new kind of relationship that creates a dependency on the Devil. Moreover, not only did this mark physically compel witches to meet with the Devil again, but the phrase, “ill and well doings”, suggests that they were also compelled to perform foul deeds in the Devil’s name.<sup>113</sup> This point is bolstered by Levack, who argues that the pact with the Devil evoked its own kind of baptism of sorts that called for the worship of Satan over God.<sup>114</sup>

To empirically prove that a supposed witch was in such a relationship with the Devil, Scottish clergymen used a process called “pricking”. According to Levack, King James VI believed that if a supposed witch was pricked in a location that did not feel pain nor bleed this was proof that they had made a pact with Satan. Clark has noted that needles were often used for this test.<sup>115</sup> Additionally, King James also advocated for

---

<sup>111</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 44.

<sup>112</sup> Tyson, *The Demonology of King James I*, 112.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>114</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 45.

<sup>115</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 44; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 591.

another method originally used by medieval communities known as swimming. In this practice, the accused was thrown into a body of water that was blessed by a member of the clergy. If the accused floated to the surface then it was believed they were guilty, as the blessed water had rejected them. Alternatively, by sinking, the accused was believed to be innocent. While there is only one recorded instance of this test in Scotland, it was frequently used by the English during the 1640's. In this way, James VI's advocacy of these tests enabled them to become more widespread during the seventeenth century.<sup>116</sup>

Following the North Berwick trials, concerns regarding the Devil intensified. In particular, the common folk of Scotland were worried about Satan as they wanted to avoid misfortune brought about by witches and being accused of witchcraft themselves.<sup>117</sup> This notion of the Berwick Trials pushing the demonization of folk belief is reiterated by Henderson and Cowan, who state, "The North Berwick trial would significantly alter both context and perception by reinforcing the concept of the demonic pact as the first phase of intensive persecution was begun and was given official approval."<sup>118</sup> This suggests that the involvement of figures like King James VI endorsed and encouraged a specific view of both witches, including healers, and popular beliefs regarding the supernatural. In this way, King James VI's efforts to combat witchcraft and forms of popular belief cannot be ignored. Coming from someone with King James VI's political authority, his critique of fairy belief and witches gives the demonization of fairies more legitimacy.

---

<sup>116</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 44-45.

<sup>117</sup> Henderson, "Detestable Slaves of the Devil", 249.

<sup>118</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 122.

### James Hutchison and David Brown

The efforts of learned men to demonize the witch continued well into the seventeenth century, as in 1697 the Scottish preacher James Hutchison took the opportunity at the Paisley witch trial, located in the town of Paisley in the Lowlands of Scotland, to define what a witch was: “By a Witch is understood a person that hath Immediat converse with the devil, That one way or other is under a compact with him acted and influenced by him in reference to the producing such effects as cannot be produced by others without this compact.”<sup>119</sup> He still believed that witches had intimate relations with Satan, gaining abilities that would allow them to do things that normally cannot be done. Hutchison blames the spread of witchcraft on the abundance of corruption and the “love of gain” within the western portion of Scotland.<sup>120</sup> Here Hutchison seems to be referring to aspects of human nature that would inspire someone to renounce God and forge a pact with Satan, citing instances of “lust” and “corruption” in the church, such as covetousness.<sup>121</sup> Here, the preacher stresses the predatory nature of Satan and the Devil’s ability to corrupt mortals.<sup>122</sup>

At the same trial another preacher by the name of David Brown also commented on the same witches as Hutchison, and his rhetoric is no less passionate. Opening his sermon, Brown takes a different approach to Hutchison as he uses scripture to decree that Christ did not arrive on earth to judge humanity, but to save their souls. Brown goes onto to say that while God’s capacity to pardon sinners is indisputable, redemption is not

---

<sup>119</sup> Geo Neilson, "A Sermon on Witchcraft in 1697," *The Scottish Historical Review* 7, no. 28 (1910): 391; Larner, *Enemies of God*, 163.

<sup>120</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 165.

<sup>121</sup> Neilson, "A Sermon on Witchcraft in 1697," 395.

<sup>122</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 164.

simply earned by knowing God and avoiding misdeeds.<sup>123</sup> In a sermon directed at the accused, Brown dramatically highlighted the dangers of witchcraft, stating:

ye have declared your denial (of Christ) in the face of the courts, and frequently since ye have done. O how dreadful your condition will be if ye die in such a case!... Ye have murdered your own souls; your time is nigh a close, your glass is nigh run.<sup>124</sup>

Larner highlights how Brown emphasised the opportunities that a sinner had to repent, emphasising that their damnation was their fault. In this way, Brown did not merely wish to terrify the accused, but appeal to the minds of peasants attending the trial who would have greatly feared the possibility of going to Hell.<sup>125</sup> Thus, the last decades of the seventeenth century were home to learned men who were using witchcraft accusations still as proof of the existence of the supernatural, and preachers who wished to protect their congregations from the threat that witchcraft and the Devil posed.<sup>126</sup> The skepticism against which Brown and Hutchison were battling regarding the existence of the magic and spirits was not shared by the common folk of Scotland, who feared the supernatural and the power it could give over others.<sup>127</sup>

Such preachers were therefore fighting a two-front battle, against learned disbelief and popular credulity. Hutton identifies that witches inspired preachers like Brown to deliver his sermon as Scotland was home to several people who supposedly could call on magic, including people known as “service magicians” and charmers or

---

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-168.

<sup>126</sup> Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting*, 186.

<sup>127</sup> Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 479.

“white witches”. For instance, in the central Lowlands of Scotland several magicians were denounced as witches for offering magical aid at a price, many of them claiming that they had derived their power from fairies. Thus, while service magicians were targeted by the witch-hunts for a variety of reasons, including political rivalries with other magicians, many of these individuals were safe as long as their clients prospered.<sup>128</sup>

In the end, preachers like Hutchison and Brown helped further define a target for those wishing to reform Scotland. In particular, their use of scripture to condemn witchcraft emphasised the bond between witches and the Devil, Levack noting that a pact with Satan was a foundational component to Scottish witchcraft.<sup>129</sup> This is reflected in preachers like Hutchison who certainly had no qualms about using the authority of the bible to call for deaths of individuals accused of witchcraft, while Brown used scripture to remind his audience of the dangers of magic.<sup>130</sup> The Presbyterian clergy’s fixation on the demonic witch and magic affirms that their efforts to define the witches’ sabbat as an inversion of the godly Sabbath continued into the late seventeenth century. As was stated in the introduction to this chapter, peasant festivity, which included feasting and dancing, was a critical element to popular beliefs surrounding witchcraft, as they allowed the common folk to escape their present worries.<sup>131</sup> This viewpoint was not shared by the likes of Harr Forbes, a Scottish minister who led the interrogation of Isobel Gowdie in 1662. As he believed himself to be a victim of maleficent magic,

---

<sup>128</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 221-222.

<sup>129</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 9.

<sup>130</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 164, 167.

<sup>131</sup> Julian Goodare, “Flying Witches in Scotland” in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunting*, Julian Goodare, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 171.

Forbes was of the firm belief that witchcraft posed a dire threat to society.<sup>132</sup> Gowdie was told that her encounter with fairies, which involved feasting and dancing with the fairy king and queen, was an inversion of the godly Sabbath.<sup>133</sup> Thus, clergymen from the late seventeenth century still used elements of popular belief to demonstrate how aspects of Protestantism were being warped by the Devil and his minions.

### **Francis Cullen**

Scotland's demonizing rhetoric would not end with Hutchison; rather, it would be expressed by others, including a Scottish judge by the name of Francis Cullen. In his discussion of witchcraft, in 1698, Cullen published a work that documented the suffering of a Christian Shaw at the hands of Satan and his minions. Cullen described the fairy in demonic terms by stating:

It is observ'd, that Satan has oftentimes chang'd his Scene in the different periods of time, and turned himself into such Shapes as he found most convenient for his purpose... Of old he appeared Devil like, and was worshiped as such by those that deprecated his Mischeif: as some of the barbarous Indians do to this day. In the darkness of Popery he was transformed into a more innocent sort of Spirit called Brounie or Fairie...<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>132</sup> Emma Wilby, "'We mey shoot them dead at our pleasur': Isobel Gowdie, Elf Arrows, and Dark Shamanism", in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunting*, ed. Julian Goodare (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2013), 141.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 142, 144.

<sup>134</sup> Francis Cullen, *Sadducimus Debellatus: Or, a True Narrative of the Sorceries and Witchcrafts Exercis'd by the Devil and His Instruments upon Mrs. Christian Shaw, Daughter of Mr. John Shaw, of Bargarran in the County of Renfrew in the West of Scotland, from Aug. 1696 to Apr. 1697. Containing the Journal of Her Sufferings, as It Was Exhibited and Prov'd by the Voluntary Confession of Some of the Witches, and Other Unexceptionable Evidence, before the Commissioners Appointed by the Privy Council of Scotland to Enquire into the Same. Collected from the Records. Together with Reflexions upon Witchcraft in General, and the Learned Arguments of the Lawyers, on Both Sides, at the Trial of Seven of Those Witches Who*



Here Cullen defines the Devil as a shapeshifter, one that takes the form of a variety of spirits, such as fairies. For Cullen, the Devil appeared in his natural form in the ancient world and among Indigenous Peoples of his own day, but he first took on the fairy guise when Catholicism controlled the Scottish church. Cullen argues that these spirits were manifestations of the Devil, but ones that appeared to be innocent, compelling, attractive, and which the Catholic Church tolerated.

In addition to serving as a criticism of Catholicism, a habit of many of his contemporaries, Cullen's critique suggests that the papal leadership of the Scottish church was also more tolerant of preternatural beliefs.<sup>135</sup> For instance, Catholic ministers reimagined wells as "holy wells", sacred sites that became a place where baptisms were held. However, the acceptance of this tradition was not out of an appreciation for folk culture, as the medieval church simply wished to avoid alienating their congregations.<sup>136</sup> Thus, perhaps with knowledge of the past, Cullen believed that Catholicism had introduced beliefs to the Scottish church that were not wholly Christian.

Cullen also takes the time to define another of the Devil's supposed tools, the witch, in his text:

Margaret Fulton was reputed a Witch, has the Mark of it; and  
acknowledged, in presence of her Husband, that she made use of a  
Charm; which appeared full of small Stones and Blood. That her

---

*Were Condemned: And Some Passages Which Happened at Their Execution* (London: printed for H. Newman and A. Bell; at the Grasshopper in the Poultry, and at the Crosse Keys and Bible in Cornhill near Stocks-Market, 1698), the preface.

<sup>135</sup> Owen Davies, "A Comparative Perspective on Scottish Cunning-Folk and Charmers" in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 189.

<sup>136</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 54.

Husband had brought her back from the Faries; and her Repute of being a Witch is of an Old Date; besides her being named often by the Bewitched Girl.<sup>137</sup>

In this instance, the reference to this physical mark affirms that Cullen saw these people as Satan's minions as this mark indicated that someone had forged a pact with the Devil.<sup>138</sup> In his final reference to fairy kind, the land of the fairies is associated with the accused, combining witches or the Devil's servants with this place. It can be suggested that Cullen believed that Satan ruled over this kingdom, as she apparently claimed: "That her Husband had brought her back from the Faries; and her Repute of being a Witch is of an Old Date..."<sup>139</sup> This passage suggests that the accused was kidnapped by the fairies and taken to their kingdom. As many Scottish Protestants associated the land of the fairies with the Devil's kingdom, the accused was identified as the Devil's servant as a result.<sup>140</sup> In this way, Cullen does not challenge the demonization of folk belief; rather, he reinforces this demonic interpretation.

### **Robert Kirk and Martin Martin**

In contrast, the Scottish minister, Robert Kirk, viewed folk traditions and witches with far more respect and a look into how folk belief was perceived and demonized over time would not be complete without discussing him. In Kirk's critical text of 1691, *The Secret Common-Wealth*, he describes fairy kind as: "These *Siths*, or Fairies, they call *Sleagh Maith*, or the Good People... and are said to be of a midle Nature betuixt Man

---

<sup>137</sup> Cullen, *Sadducimus Debellatus*, 50.

<sup>138</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 44.

<sup>139</sup> Cullen, *Sadducimus Debellatus*, 50.

<sup>140</sup> Kirk, *The Secret Commonwealth*, 87.

and Angel...”<sup>141</sup> The scholar went on to state that, according to Highland folklore, fairies exist in an aristocratic society underground; however, they do not share humanity’s preoccupation with religion. In fact, according to Highland folk belief, fairies will supposedly disappear when the name of God or Jesus is uttered, not unlike demons.<sup>142</sup> Despite fairy kind’s aversion to God, the theologian builds on their similarities to humanity as opposed to defining them as demons. For instance, Kirk notes that, much like humans, fairy kind is led astray by vice and sin.<sup>143</sup> However, this vice and sin does not make them demons as Kirk also states:

The invisible Wights which haunt Houses seem rather to be some of our subterranean Inhabitants... than evill Spirits or Devills; because, tho they throw great Stones, Pieces of Earth and Wood, at the Inhabitants, they hurt them not at all, as if they acted not maliciously, like Devils at all, but in Sport, lyke Buffoons and Drolls.<sup>144</sup>

Here Kirk’s description of fairy kind stands in contrast to other negative portrayals of these spirits, including King James VI, who refused to acknowledge fairies as separate entities from demons.<sup>145</sup> Kirk used the fairy folk’s interest in “Sport” to stress the difference between these spirits and demons. According to Kirk, fairies are capable of behavior that puts them in conflict with humans; however, the interaction between humanity and fairy kind is better described as mischief.<sup>146</sup>

---

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 59.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>145</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 166.

<sup>146</sup> Kirk, *The Secret Commonwealth*, 25.

Outside of their mischievous nature, Kirk also describes the physical appearance of fairies as well: “Their Apparell and Speech is like that of the People and Countrey under which they live: so are they seen to wear Plaids and variegated Garments in the Highlands of Scotland...”<sup>147</sup> Kirk here wished to emphasise the connection between fairies and the culture of the Scottish Highlands. Furthermore, Kirk’s humanization of fairies, including his reference to their aristocratic society and their vulnerability to sin and vice, stresses that the theologian had no interest in demonizing these spirits.<sup>148</sup>

Henderson and Cowan further articulate why Kirk did not share his fellow clergymen’s views on fairies, stating: “Kirk did not perceive a dichotomous relationship between Christian doctrine and folk belief, a polarisation that had been so rigorously asserted by the reformed church during the past century and a half. He maintained that fairy belief was not inconsistent with Christianity.”<sup>149</sup> Kirk’s appreciation for fairy belief developed thanks to his time in the Scottish Highlands, having gained an appreciation and respect for folk traditions. Hutton affirms this by arguing that the common folk of the Scottish Highlands attributed misfortune to fairies and nature spirits, not witches.<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, Henderson reminds historians that while the Devil was not completely absent from witch-trials held in the Highlands, he rarely played a significant role.<sup>151</sup> As such, it will be argued that Kirk had, after growing up in the Scottish Highlands,

---

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 25.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>150</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 246.

<sup>151</sup> Lizanne Henderson, “With-Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*” in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 100.

embraced the preternatural beliefs held by his congregation and not the demonic rhetoric that defined the witch in the Scottish Lowlands and England.<sup>152</sup>

With regards to witches, Kirk's reference to them as servants of the Devil are minimal, particularly in comparison to his contemporaries. Early on in his text, Kirk describes fairies as familiars, beings that could be summoned with a spell by a "Seer".<sup>153</sup> In a later section, when Kirk described how fairies obtain nourishment, he comments on the relationship between witches and demons: "the damnable Practice of evill Angells, their sucking of Blood and Spirits out of Witches Bodys (till they drew them into a deform'd and Leanness,) to seid their own vehicles..."<sup>154</sup> Kirk portrayed the witch as a sympathetic figure, one that provided nourishment to a familiar, but suffers in turn. In contrast, James Hutchison, used scripture at a witch trial to convince the judges that the accused were undeserving of mercy and that they should be executed without delay.<sup>155</sup>

While Kirk shared Hutchison's Christian faith, Kirk did not share his peer's contempt towards witches. This can be seen in Kirk's description of the methods used to find the physical mark that designated the Devil's pact:

leaving what we call the Witches Mark behind; a Spot that I have seen, as a small Mole, horny, and brown coloured; throw which Mark, when a large Brass Pin was thrust (both in Buttock, Nose, and Roof of the Mouth,) till it bowed and become crooked, the Witches, both Men and

---

<sup>152</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 247.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-76.

<sup>155</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 9-10.

Women, nather felt a Pain, nor did it bleed, nor knew the specific Time  
when this was adoing to them, (there Eyes only being covered.)<sup>156</sup>

Kirk did not present the witch as this diabolical agent; rather, he identifies witches as people that were put through a dehumanizing experience. Henderson and Cowan also note that Kirk created *The Secret Commonwealth* using his research on Highland folk culture. This text is another indicator of Kirk's sympathetic outlook towards witches as the scholar made very little alterations to his research notes when they were used to create *The Secret Commonwealth*.<sup>157</sup> Thus, while Kirk acknowledged aspects of Scottish demonology, such as the Devil's mark, it is clear that this Scottish minister did not personally view the witch in demonic terms.<sup>158</sup>

In the end, while Kirk's appreciation of fairies made him unique amongst his peers, his belief in the corporeal nature of spirits was shared by other learned men that combated the rise of Atheism.<sup>159</sup> A critical example can be seen in 1685, six years before Kirk completed *The Secret Commonwealth*. In 1685 the Scottish philosopher, George Sinclair, completed his *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*.<sup>160</sup> Sinclair's main desire was to prove that witches, demons, and other spirits were real; however, the Scottish philosopher also refers to the witch trial of Jean Weir, who described the fairy queen as the Devil.<sup>161</sup> Thus, unlike his Scottish peer, Robert Kirk's appreciation of folk belief did not encourage the demonization of popular tradition.

---

<sup>156</sup> Kirk, *The Secret Commonwealth*, 76.

<sup>157</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 175.

<sup>158</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 23.

<sup>159</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 176-177.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>161</sup> George Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (Edinburgh: printed by John Reid, 1685), the preface, iii-xix; Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 135.

Consequently, Kirk is critical to our understanding of the clergy's demonization of these traditions, as he reminds historians that the learned perception of the supernatural was varied. While Kirk is an outlier amongst his peers, including those that championed the existence of the supernatural, some eighteenth-century writers also shared his interest in folk belief. As this thesis' primary focus is the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it will not delve too deeply into this period. However, while looking at Kirk's legacy, it is important to identify how other learned men approached preternatural beliefs in a similar fashion. One of these writers was Martin Martin, whose work, *Description of the Western Isles of Scotland*, was completed in 1703.<sup>162</sup>

In the preface of Martin's text, the Scottish writer argued that many historians have documented the history of Western Isles, including the Scottish historian Hector Boece. However, Martin believed that such works were no longer sufficient, as it was not enough for historians to simply describe a place from second hand sources.<sup>163</sup> Rather, these texts missed details that needed to be observed firsthand, including the: "Nature of the Climate and Soil, of the Produce of the Places by the Sea and Land, and of the Remarkable Cures perform'd by the Natives..."<sup>164</sup> Martin's efforts to write a history of the Western Isles were centered around providing a clearer picture of the comings and goings of its people and their beliefs. In this instance, Martin's approach is

---

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>163</sup> Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland: Containing a Full Account of Their Situation, Extent, Soils, Products, Harbours, Bays, ... With a New Map of the Whole, ... To Which Is Added a Brief Description of the Isles of Orkney, and Schetland* (Printed for Andrew Bell, at the Cross-Keys and Bible, in Cornhil, near Stocks-Market., 1703), the preface.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., the preface.

not wholly different from Kirk's as Kirk also interacted with Scottish folk traditions for the sake of accomplishing a larger goal.<sup>165</sup>

However, unlike Kirk, Martin had little respect for the folk traditions of the Isles. Martin argued it was only through the older generation, alongside the “ignorant”, that remnants of pagan tradition remained in the Western Isles.<sup>166</sup> This perspective also colored Martin's portrayal of fairy kind, who are referenced in a ritual that he believed to be “altogether unlawful.”<sup>167</sup> According to Martin this ritual, known as the “Fire Round”, prohibited “evil Spirits” from kidnapping children.<sup>168</sup> However, if a child was kidnapped their parents were to: “dig a Grave in the Fields upon Quarter Day, and there to lay the Fairy Skeleton till next Morning; at which time the Parents went to the Place, where they doubted not to find their own Child instead of this Skeleton.”<sup>169</sup> Martin's reference to a fairy skeleton was likely a nod to a being known as a changeling.

According to Henderson and Cowan, when a fairy kidnapped a human child it left a changeling or fairy child in its place.<sup>170</sup> Thus, while Martin defined Scotland through its folk traditions, unlike Kirk he did not feel compelled to present the fairy in a positive light. Furthermore, the rise of Atheism did not discourage Martin from depicting the fairy as an evil spirit.<sup>171</sup> In this way, the common folk's acceptance of demonic rhetoric owes much to the efforts of theologians, who, from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, continued to define the fairy in demonic terms.

---

<sup>165</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 174, 176.

<sup>166</sup> Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, the preface.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 117-118.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>170</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 95.

<sup>171</sup> Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, 117-118.



This chapter has provided a rubric for the demonic rhetoric that transformed the Scottish peasantry's view of the fairy. In the sixteenth century, Knox and King James VI shaped how learned men in Scotland understood the witch, the fairy, and the Devil. Their views were upheld by Scottish clergymen in the seventeenth century, who continued to promote the link between the demonic witch and fairy. In chapter 3, we will see the impact of learned sermonizing on the beliefs of the folk in greater detail through its exploration of testimonies which discussed the fairy.

## Chapter 3: Demonizing the Fairy in the Scottish Courtroom

### Introduction

Having discussed the views of Scottish Protestant preachers, this chapter addresses how the Scottish peasantry's perception of fairy tradition, from the late sixteenth century to the final decades of the seventeenth century, evolved. This chapter argues that, by the final decades of the seventeenth century, Scotland's peasantry had come to embrace the demonic rhetoric of their pastors by redefining fairies in demonic terms. It does so by drawing heavily on the work of several scholars, such as Julian Goodare, who argues: "Fairies facilitated witch-hunting."<sup>1</sup> As was noted in the introduction, the clergy justified their program of reform through the belief that demons, disguised as fairies, held influence over the Scottish peasantry.<sup>2</sup> This chapter will therefore explore the consequences of this program of reform with regards to the ways in which the Scottish witch-hunts warped the peasantry's perception of the fairy and the witch.

Other scholars, such as Lizanne Henderson and Edward Cowan, have also shed significant light on this topic. With regards to the blending of the demonic and the fairy, Henderson and Cowan point to the confessions of Issobell Gowdie, a woman accused of witchcraft in the mid seventeenth century: "her confessions can surely be seen as indicative of the extent to which such phenomena had become assimilated into folk culture."<sup>3</sup> However, Henderson and Cowan's assertion that by 1620, the Scottish

---

<sup>1</sup> Julian Goodare, "Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context" in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 44.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Witch, A History of Fear from Ancient Times to the Present* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), 221.

<sup>3</sup> Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 2001), 134.

peasantry saw a clear divide between fairies and demons needs to be refined, for as will be seen below, it was around the 1620s when the Scottish peasantry began to blend the demonic and the fairy together.<sup>4</sup>

As the fairy is critical to our understanding of shifts in the Scottish peasantry's perception of preternatural belief, it is important to remember Christina Larner's description of folk belief as: "dreams, nightmares, and collective fantasies."<sup>5</sup> While some individuals claimed to have visited the fairy queen in their dreams, Larner's description of folk belief is broad and somewhat dismissive.<sup>6</sup> Henderson and Cowan, in fact, have argued that Larner's viewpoint provides an inadequate assessment of folk beliefs.<sup>7</sup> Following the work of the historian, Emma Wilby, this chapter argues that fairy belief was a fundamental component of the worldviews of those who were accused of witchcraft.<sup>8</sup> This chapter uses fairy belief to identify how the Scottish peasantry's view of preternatural tradition changed during the Scottish witch-hunts.

It is first important to provide contextual information regarding the Scottish court system before turning to the testimonies of men and women that were put on trial for witchcraft. This chronological survey begins in the sixteenth century with the testimonies of Jonet Boyman, Bessie Dunlop, and Andro Man. This chapter then moves onto Bartie Patersoune, Elspeth Reoch, Issobell Haldane, Isobel Gowdie, and Jean Weir, whose testimonies were given in the seventeenth century. In doing so, this

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>5</sup> Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Limited, 1983), 152.

<sup>6</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 136.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>8</sup> Emma Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie: Magic, Witchcraft and Dark Shamanism in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2013), 25.

chapter delves into Scottish peasantry's perception of the fairy and the shift in perspective that occurred by the seventeenth century.

Ordinary people were confronted with learned beliefs not only in the Kirk but also in the courtroom. Brian Levack provides a clear description of the Scottish court system during this period. Prior to 1587, court trials tended to be initiated by personal complaint or by the kin of those that were wronged by the accused. The individual who came before the court with charges against the accused became known as the “pursuer”. As the pursuer, it was their duty to act as prosecutor. Under this system, the accused was not always put on trial. Instead, the victims often either settled the dispute by some other means or they were reluctant to bring their complaints to court. However, after 1587, the courts replaced the “pursuer” with an officer of the court in the form of a public prosecutor or fiscal.<sup>9</sup>

Despite this, many Scottish witchcraft trials were conducted by the local authorities whose judicial experience was non-existent.<sup>10</sup> Trials were sometimes held by Edinburgh’s judicial court, where the accused would be judged by a legally trained judge. However, local magistrates often preferred to hold trials locally, where the accused would be judged by their neighbours and prominent members of the community, a sentiment which was expressed by the Scottish lawyer, Sir George Mackenzie: “scares ever any who were accused before a country assize [i.e. a jury] of neighbours did escape that trial.”<sup>11</sup> Levack affirms that a critical element of the Scottish

---

<sup>9</sup> Brian Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 19-20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

witch-trials was this communal element. By utilizing this communal element, magistrates took advantage of the animosity between neighbours to convict witches.

As was discussed in chapter 1, in these processes the clergy aided through the use of “kirk sessions”. According to Levack, these sessions are in reference to weekly meetings held by local clergymen. After getting reports of possible demonic activity, these clergymen would pose questions to accused regarding their recent behaviour.<sup>12</sup> The use of torture was also a common component of Scottish witch trials, which was utilized following the arrest and prior to the trial. A common form of torture was forced sleeplessness, which often left the accused delirious and more willing to admit to performing witchcraft.<sup>13</sup> After coercing a confession from the accused, the local authorities petitioned the privy council for permission to hold a trial. According to Levack, this was known as a “commission of justiciary”. Prior to 1597, commissions gave one the authority to try anyone that was believed to be a witch. As was noted in chapter 1, the privy council granted local officials, such as sheriffs or noblemen, the authority to gather a jury, which was composed of, at most, fifteen people. While a jury could secure a conviction without a confession, this did not stop local authority figures from using torture. Part of this has to do with the Scottish government’s inability to enforce its strict rules regarding the illegal use of torture. Additionally, at the local level the privy council also required a confession in order to authorize a trial. However, after 1597 the privy council decided to grant fewer commissions after several innocent people were wrongfully accused and executed for witchcraft. Thus, while it is unclear if government officials shared the Scottish clergy’s views regarding the fairy and the

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 23.

witch, clergymen took advantage of the country's legal system to demonize preternatural beliefs.<sup>14</sup>

In her chapter on the depiction of the fairy in witchcraft confessions, Diane Purkiss argues that these kirk sessions provided a public space where the accused told stories that: “expressed a powerful mixture of memory and desire, stories that are paradoxically liberating, though told under terrible duress.”<sup>15</sup> Kirk sessions could thus provide a public space where women could speak and be acknowledged by those with power and authority. Their stories sometimes included fairies, revealing how these were molded and shaped by a person's experiences and identity. For instance, the accused may tell a story that explains how fairies provided them the ability to heal others.<sup>16</sup> In turn, these stories also granted these women the opportunity to express their anxieties and desires using “transformative memories”. Purkiss describes this term as the tendency of one to derive meaning from experiences, regardless if they actually happened.<sup>17</sup> After completing their investigations, the clergymen leading the kirk session referred the accused to the magistrates so that the suspect was put on trial.<sup>18</sup>

During the trial, Scottish theologians did not distinguish between different forms of magic, as they believed that all forms of popular magic came from the Devil. Furthermore, to portray the accused as the Devil's servant, these clergymen posed questions that brought Satan into the defendant's testimony.<sup>19</sup> However, that is not to

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 16, 23-25.

<sup>15</sup> Diane Purkiss, “Sounds of Silence: Fairies and Incest in Scottish Witchcraft Stories,” in *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* ed. Stuart Clark (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 82.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>18</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 131-132.

say that these local trials always resulted in the death of a witch as: “kirk sessions in practice usually shared or deferred to their congregations' distinction between charmers—openly practicing and beneficent—and witches surreptitious and maleficent.”<sup>20</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, charmers often served communities as healers.<sup>21</sup> Charmers could be accused of witchcraft by the Scottish peasantry; however, this usually happened when the charmer’s relationship with their client fell apart. At which point, the client often claimed to be a victim of witchcraft before a court.<sup>22</sup> Thus, while it is clear that the Scottish clergy held considerable sway over the witch-trials, public opinion also played a major factor in the conviction of witches.

In addition to public opinion, the accused could also seek legal aid by acquiring a lawyer. With legal representation, many individuals were acquitted of the charge of witchcraft. That being said, many of these acquittals occurred in Edinburgh’s judicial court where someone accused of witchcraft was not guaranteed access to a lawyer. While legal representation was not guaranteed, the accused was not limited to a single lawyer. This can be seen in the trial of Geillis Johnstone, which was held in 1614. Through the aid of three advocates, Johnstone would go free. Finally, it was imperative that one acquired legal representation early on in the case. This notion is affirmed by the trial of Margaret Barclay, which was held in 1618. While Barclay’s husband hired a lawyer, by the time she gained an advocate it was already too late, because Barclay had already been made to confess to the crime of witchcraft. Not helping matters, Barclay’s trial was also held locally, as opposed to the judicial court of Edinburgh.<sup>23</sup> In this way,

---

<sup>20</sup> Goodare, “The Scottish Witchcraft Act”, 55.

<sup>21</sup> Julian Goodare, “The Scottish Witchcraft Act.” *Church History* 74, no. 1 (2005): 54-55.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>23</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 33.

while it was possible for a witch to acquire a lawyer, having legal representation did not guarantee one's safety.

By the end of the seventeenth century further changes were introduced to the Scottish court system, such as the introduction of continental "jurisprudence". According to Levack, jurisprudence involved the creation of a clear set of rules for the evaluation of evidence. While the Scottish courts did not fully embrace the rules established by European jurisprudence, the influence of this system encouraged debates regarding the relevancy of evidence. According to the evidentiary standard established by jurisprudence, the conviction of a crime like witchcraft required two eyewitnesses. In order to bring out a confession of witchcraft, a Scottish judge could have the accused tortured if this standard was not met. However, by abiding to this standard, complications arose with regards to the securing of a conviction. Levack argues that, when Scottish witchcraft was solely defined by the act of forging a pact with Satan, it was nearly impossible to obtain eyewitness accounts of this event.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, this requirement for two eye witnesses or a confession led to increased use of torture, and increased guilty verdicts.

### **The Testimony of Jonet Boyman**

An individual important to our understanding of the Scottish witch-hunts is Jonet Boyman, a woman accused of witchcraft in 1572 after offering her services to an Allan Alexander and his family.<sup>25</sup> A healer by trade, Boyman contacted "evill spreits" by summoning them at special wells called "healing" or "holy" wells, places in folk belief

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>25</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 128.



where the natural and supernatural realms intersected.<sup>26</sup> After calling upon a spirit to reveal how Allan could be cured of his illness, Boyman told Allan's wife how her husband could be healed; however, it seemed that she failed to follow these instructions properly and the house was visited by the supernatural, as loud noises could be heard from their home, including the sounds of hammers and horses.<sup>27</sup>

As Boyman's story continues the fairies' involvement becomes more apparent. For instance, after Anderson goes to Boyman for medical help, three years later she tells him that she is unable to provide aid, as it was past Halloween and she had already spoken to the "good neighbours".<sup>28</sup> Again, Boyman's use of this term is likely her way of showing respect to fairy kind, not wishing to anger spirits that she fully believed were real.<sup>29</sup> Boyman's testimony continues, when she described one final interaction with Allan Anderson and his wife with regards to the death of their child. Boyman claimed that after being asked how she knew the child would die: "it had gottin ane blast of evill wind for the moder had not saint [blessed] it well aneuch' before leaving the house, and so the 'sillyie wychs', or seelie witchts, had found it unsainted and had given it the blast and so it was taken away."<sup>30</sup> Apparently the child's body was taken away by fairies after the owners of the house had once again failed to heed instructions, inciting the spirits' wrath.

---

<sup>26</sup> Lizanne Henderson, "Detestable Slaves of the Devil': Changing Ideas about Witchcraft in sixteenth century Scotland" in *A History of Everyday Life in Medieval Scotland*, Cowan, Edward J, and Henderson, Lizanne, eds. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 244-245.

<sup>27</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 128.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>29</sup> Julian Goodare, "The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland" in *Folklore* 123:2 (2012): 198.

<sup>30</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 128.

Here Boyman's description of the kidnapping and use of "evill wind" in her testimony suggests that she was no longer interacting with fairies.<sup>31</sup> For, while fairies may be prone to causing mischief, particularly if they are offended, these spirits were not described with the title "good neighbour".<sup>32</sup> Rather, in this instance Boyman was referring to another kind of spirit, "sillyie wychs".<sup>33</sup> As was noted in the previous chapter, Goodare argues that "seely wights" were likely another kind of spirit that shared similarities with fairies.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, prior to Halloween, Boyman supposedly conjured a: "ane grit blast" or whirlwind to find out how Allan Alexander could be cured.<sup>35</sup> Here Boyman is referring to fairies, as it was held by Scottish folk belief that one could be carried away to the land of the fairies by a whirlwind or "blast".<sup>36</sup> In this way, while Boyman interacted with a large variety of spirits, the use of "good neighbours" suggests that she believed not all of them were demons, but fairies.<sup>37</sup>

According to Carlo Ginzburg, in Northern Italy both witches and a group known as the *benandanti* had the ability to use magic to undo curses or forms of bewitchment.<sup>38</sup> However, while the *benandanti* could use magic, their power was not derived from the Devil: "We can see that the ancient antithesis between witches and *benandanti*, the former as defenders of the devil's faith, the latter as champions of Christ's faith..."<sup>39</sup> While this quotation is in reference to folk traditions from mid seventeenth-century

---

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>32</sup> Goodare, "The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland", 198; Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 128.

<sup>33</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 128.

<sup>34</sup> Goodare, "The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland", 202.

<sup>35</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 128.

<sup>36</sup> Goodare, "The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland", 206.

<sup>37</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 128.

<sup>38</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John and Anne Adeschi (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1992), 118.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

Italy, as with Boyman's own interaction with the supernatural, not all forms of magical healing drew their power from the Devil. Despite never referring to the Devil directly in her testimony, Boyman was still condemned to death for the crime of witchcraft.<sup>40</sup> However, Boyman's testimony is still valuable to historians studying the Scottish witch-hunts as it demonstrates that in 1572, fairy belief was not wholly demonized by the common folk.

### **The Testimonies of Bessie Dunlop**

A similar instance occurred in 1576 with the case of Bessie Dunlop, a healer who was also tried and executed for supposedly being a witch and associating with demons. In her testimony Dunlop claimed that she had contacted the supernatural world with the aid of a Thomas Reid, a ghost that had taken up residence in the fairy realm. It was through this ghost that Dunlop received her medical knowledge, as she claimed that Reid would give her advice on these matters. Eventually, Reid introduced Dunlop to several spirits and asked her to come with them to the land of fairies; however, she refused.<sup>41</sup> On this point Henderson and Cowan draw our attention to the reasons for her conviction, despite never mentioning the Devil, stating:

the trial record indicates that she was not guilty of actually practicing maleficium; she did not harm anyone. In other words, the mere fact that Bessie claimed to have anything to do with fairies, not to mention the ghost world, was considered criminal, regardless of her refusal to join with them in any unholy pact.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 129.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

While Dunlop did not mention the Devil, her connection to the unapproved supernatural world, namely fairy kind, was just as damning to her prosecutors. This notion is emphasised through the crimes Dunlop was charged with, “using of sorcerie, witchcraft, and incantatioune, with invocatioun of the spretis of the devil...”<sup>43</sup> Dunlop’s case demonstrates that after 1563 there was a growing trend by the Protestant clergy to demonize fairy belief. However, prior to the seventeenth century, some individuals, like Dunlop, still distinguished between fairies and Satan’s horde of demons.

### **The Testimony of Andro Man**

In either 1597 or 1598 a fellow by the name of Andro Man claimed that he was in a relationship with the fairy queen and that he spoke to an angel by the name of Christsonday. In response, Henderson and Cowan note that his judges claimed: “Christsonday was the ‘Devill, thy maister’ a statement which has been interpreted, none too plausibly, as an example of how the queen had been relegated to a position subordinate to that of Devil.”<sup>44</sup> This affirms that his judges sought to emphasise that the named fairy entity in Man’s account was simply a servant of the Devil and also a demon. However, Henderson and Cowan argue that the language of Andro’s testimony makes it clear that the fairy queen was not subordinate to the Devil.<sup>45</sup> Ginzburg brings up a similar example with the benandanti as their goddess did not serve the Devil.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Ginzburg emphasised that traditions regarding the goddess Diana were spread throughout central Europe since antiquity, traditions that did not inherently

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>45</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 133.

<sup>46</sup> Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, xx, 44.

combine Diana and the Devil.<sup>47</sup> While Ginzburg was not referring to Scottish folklore in this instance, it is clear that Man's testimony and worldview were also shaped by the preternatural traditions of his environment.

Thus, while portions of Man's account include elements of a Scottish witches' sabbat, such as feasting and dancing, it is clear that the mingling of demonic and fairy traditions came from the influence of the Scottish clergy.<sup>48</sup> As was stated in the introduction to chapter 2, peasant festivity, which included feasting, formed a critical part to popular beliefs surrounding witchcraft as they gave the peasantry a chance to escape their present worries.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the reference to sabbat-like activities, regardless of the context they were done in, was more than enough evidence for Man's prosecutors to convict him of witchcraft and consorting with the Devil. While Man did not embrace the demonic rhetoric surrounding the fairy, it is clear that his prosecutors interpreted these spirits as demonic entities. Considering that Man likely did not come to believe in fairies overnight, this difference highlights that his preternatural beliefs were likely more tolerated by the Catholic church than by the Protestant clergy.

### **The Testimonies of Bartie Patersoune and Elspeth Reoch**

This notion of the Catholic Church tolerating fairy belief can also be seen in the trial of Bartie Patersoune, which was held in 1607 at the village of Newbattle.<sup>50</sup> Patersoune was convicted of: "Dilaitit of the crime of Sorcery and Witchcraft, in abusing of the people with charms and diverse sorts of Enchantments; and ministering,

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., xx.

<sup>48</sup> Henderson and Cowen, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 133.

<sup>49</sup> Julian Goodare, "Flying Witches in Scotland" in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunting*, Julian Goodare, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 171.

<sup>50</sup> Christina Larner, Christopher Lee, and Hugh, eds. *McLachlan A Source-Book of Scottish Witchcraft* (Glasgow: The Grimsay Press, 2005), 10.

under form of medicine, of poysonable drinks ...”<sup>51</sup> From this charge, it can be seen that Patersoune was a healer, much like other supposed witches. Patersoune’s conviction also claims that he used magic on people under the guise of prescribing specific remedies to them and that this magic was harmful in the long run.

Despite his supposed nefarious intentions, a heavy emphasis is placed on ritual practices done by Patersoune that evoke the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: “I CHARME the for arrow-shot, for dor-shot, for wondo-shot, for eye-shot, for tongue-shote, for lever-shote, for lung-shote, for heart-shot, all the maist, in the name of the Father, the Sone and Holy Ghost...”<sup>52</sup> Looking first at the specific reference to the holy trinity by Patersoune, Goodare notes that evoking these three entities was a ritual often used prior to the Reformation.<sup>53</sup> This suggests that the Scottish church was initially more tolerant of individuals who combined fairy belief with theological traditions that evoked God. In that, as was noted in the introduction to this thesis, medieval Catholicism incorporated pagan preternatural beliefs into the Catholic Church.<sup>54</sup> Thus, Patersoune’s evocation of the trinity in a folk ritual suggests that he was practicing a form of healing that was passed onto him through the traditions that he grew up with.

The indirect reference to fairies can be found in Patersoune’s testimony when he refers to the “arrow-shot” while attempting to heal someone.<sup>55</sup> Emma Wilby notes that

---

<sup>51</sup> Robert Pitcairn and Scotland, *Criminal Trials in Scotland From MCCCCLXXXVIII to MDCXXIV Embracing the Entire Reigns of James IV, James V, Mary Queen of Scots and James VI: Compiled From the Original Records and Mss. With Historical Notes and Explanations* (Burlington, Ont: TannerRitchie Publishing, 2005), 535.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 536.

<sup>53</sup> Goodare, Julian, Lauren Martin, Joyce Miller, Louise Yeoman, University of Edinburgh. “Survey of Scottish Witchcraft Database,” January, 2003, <http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/Research/witches/>.

<sup>54</sup> Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), 475.

<sup>55</sup> Pitcairn and Scotland, *Criminal Trials in Scotland*, 536.

in Scottish folklore hosts of fairies would roam the countryside and attack humans using “elf arrows”.<sup>56</sup> However, while this negative portrayal of fairy folk existed in folk culture, Patersoune never described fairies as violent, nor was it stated in his testimony that the elf arrow used in the ritual was made by Satan. In fact, barring the reference to witchcraft and sorcery, the Devil does not appear in this testimony.<sup>57</sup> This detail is important as it demonstrates that Patersoune did not believe fairies were demons and that the Protestant clergy had yet to succeed in their mission to convince the common folk that these spirits were demons in disguise.

Another important detail of Patersoune’s testimony is his reference to the “Loch”, a place that the healer, according Goodare, would have gotten water from, such as a river.<sup>58</sup> This reference to the loch would appear again in the testimony of Elspeth Reoch, whose trial was held in 1616 at Orkney, Scotland.<sup>59</sup> According to records documenting her trial: “upon ane day being out in the country and returning and being at the Loch syd awaiting quhen the boit should fetch her in That there cam two men ane clad in black and the other with ane green tartan...”<sup>60</sup> Reoch was near a body of water when she met two gentlemen, one dressed in black and the other dressed in green and wearing a tartan.

---

<sup>56</sup> Emma Wilby, “‘We mey shoot them dead at our pleasur’: Isobel Gowdie, Elf Arrows, and Dark Shamanism”, in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunting*, ed. Julian Goodare (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 141.

<sup>57</sup> Pitcairn and Scotland, *Criminal Trials in Scotland*, 535-536; Goodare, Julian, University of Edinburgh. “Survey of Scottish Witchcraft Database,” January, 2003, <http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/Research/witches/>.

<sup>58</sup> Pitcairn and Scotland, *Criminal Trials in Scotland*, 536; Owen Davies, “A Comparative Perspective on Scottish Cunning-Folk and Charmers” in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 197.

<sup>59</sup> Larner, Lee, McLachlan, *A Source-Book of Scottish Witchcraft*, 180.

<sup>60</sup> Alexander Macdonald, James Dennistoun, eds. *Miscellany of the Maitland Club: Consisting of Original Papers and Other Documents Illustrative of the History and Literature of Scotland, Volume 2* (Printed at Edinburgh, 1840), 188.

The description of these two men is also important to our understanding of how the common folk's perception of folk belief changed over time as the colors used are very telling. The color green was associated with fairies; the reference to the tartan further rooting this figure in Scottish culture.<sup>61</sup> This point is also reiterated by the historian Diane Purkiss who argues that fairies were often depicted wearing green or plaids. Purkiss also provides further insight regarding Reoch's testimony. In her confession, Reoch is told by the man in green to boil an egg and then to rub her eyes with the sweat from the egg. As was stated at the beginning of this thesis, eggs were a common ingredient in fairy magic. In this case, a staple of Scottish folklore was the use of specific rituals to create fairy ointment using the sweat from boiled eggs, granting someone the ability to perceive fairies.<sup>62</sup>

Later on Reoch describes someone as a fairy directly, stating that: "the black man cam to her that first came to her at Lochquhaber And callit him self ane fairy man..."<sup>63</sup> As was noted by Henderson, the shade of black was often to describe demons and the Devil in particular in Scottish literature.<sup>64</sup> Now the fairy is directly referred to as the man, but not as the man in black, but as the black man. In this way, the Devil not only has an implied presence in Reoch's testimony, but the fairy is also given demonic characteristics. Wilby affirms that in the Scottish court records, prior to Reoch those accused of witchcraft did not describe the fairy as demons. Thus, Reoch provides a possible instance of the accused beginning to associate fairies with the Devil, but only in

---

<sup>61</sup> P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Satan's Conspiracy: Magic and Witchcraft in Sixteenth-Century Scotland* (East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell, 2003), 10-13.

<sup>62</sup> Purkiss, "Sounds of Silence", 85-86.

<sup>63</sup> Macdonald, Dennistoun, *Miscellany of the Maitland Club*, 189.

<sup>64</sup> Henderson, "Detestable Slaves of the Devil': Changing Ideas about Witchcraft in sixteenth century Scotland", 232.



an oblique fashion.<sup>65</sup> Reoch's reference to the color green suggests that her perception of fairies was, at one point, shaped by preternatural traditions regarding fairies.<sup>66</sup> While this thesis does not have access to the questions posed through her interrogation, the combination of fairies and the demonic suggests that her testimony was contaminated, to some degree, by the leading questions posed by her interrogators; questions which introduced Satan into her confession.<sup>67</sup>

### **The Testimony of Issobell Haldane**

In 1623 the common folk's interpretation of fairy kind remains not wholly demonic; however, we begin to see cases where fairies are less defined as separate entities. This can be seen in the trial of Issobell Haldane, a healer whose trial was held in Perth, Scotland. Like Patersoune, Haldane utilized water and prayer, the healer praying to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost to heal the sick.<sup>68</sup> However, Haldane's description of fairies differs from the account used in Patersoune's testimony. In Haldane's testimony, when asked if she had contact with fairies, she stated:

that ten years syne, lying in her bed, sch owes taken forth, quhidder be God or the Devill she knows not; wes caryit to ane hill side; the hill opened, and she entered in; their she stayed three days, viz. fra thursday till sunday at xij houris. She met a man with ane grey beard, quha brocht her furth agane.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 383.

<sup>66</sup> Henderson and Cowen, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 18, 59.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>68</sup> Pitcairn and Scotland, *Criminal Trials in Scotland*, 537.

<sup>69</sup> William Blackwood, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (Edinburgh: printed for William Blackwood, April – September 1817), 1: 168.

This passage demonstrates that Haldane believed she dwelt amongst the fairies from Thursday to Sunday. At some point during her visit she met an elderly gentleman with a grey beard that seemed to have some connection to the fairies.

It is intriguing that Haldane was not certain if God or the Devil had taken her to the fairies. While the uncertainty may suggest that Haldane wanted to emphasise that a powerful entity, good or bad, took her to the fairies, she seems open to the possibility that Satan was the one responsible.<sup>70</sup> This stands in contrast to earlier testimonies, such as the testimony of Bessie Dunlop from 1576, who never once mentioned the Devil.<sup>71</sup> The scholar Canon MacCulloch builds on this by arguing that fairies were “masquerading as demons through no fault of their own. Fairy-land and its denizens had become a real part of Satan's kingdom of darkness.”<sup>72</sup> Looking at the clergy’s perception of folk belief presented by MacCulloch, it is clear that Scottish theologians did not hide their demonic interpretation of fairies. Thus, Haldane’s uncertainty suggests that she likely grappled with her folk traditions, having internalized the demonic rhetoric expressed by her pastors. As was noted with Reoch’s testimony, this uncertainty may also suggest that Haladane’s testimony was contaminated by the leading questions that would have introduced the Devil into her testimony.<sup>73</sup> Without access to the questions used by her interrogators, it is difficult to tell where Haldane’s perception of the fairy begins and ends. However, as she referenced hills in relation to fairies, it is likely that her perception of these spirits, at least at one point, was constructed through the folk

---

<sup>70</sup> Blackwood, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 168.

<sup>71</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 129.

<sup>72</sup> Canon J. A. Macculloch, “the mingling of fairy and Witch Beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth century Scotland”, in *Folklore* 32, no. 4 (1921): 227, 231.

<sup>73</sup> Henderson and Cowen, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 132.

traditions of her youth.<sup>74</sup> In this way, Haldane's depiction of the fairy cannot be understood without recognizing the impact that leading questions may have had on her testimony.

### **The Testimonies of Isobel Gowdie**

Another critical individual to our understanding of the Scottish witch-hunts is Isobel Gowdie, whose testimony weaves in both the Devil and fairies into one narrative. In 1662 Gowdie gave her first testimony, where she refers to the Devil directly, stating:

as I wes goeing betuinxt the townes of drumdewin and the headis: I met w[i]th the devil and ther coventanted in a manner w[i]th him, and I promised to meet him in the night time in the kirk of aulderne q[ui]lk I id: and the first thing I ther th[a]t night I denied my baptism... and th[e]n renuncer all betwixt my two hands ower to the devil...<sup>75</sup>

Clearly the Devil played a critical role in Gowdie's status as a witch as Satan was present when she renounced her baptism. As was noted in chapter 2, Devil worship was a consistent element of the crime of witchcraft throughout continental Europe.<sup>76</sup>

Similarly, Levack argues that Scottish witches were accused of making a pact with the Devil on a routine basis, and that Satan required that his minions renounce their Christian baptism as part of their pact with him.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, Gowdie's first confessions demonstrate that by the 1660's witchcraft had become synonymous with Devil worship even amongst the Scottish peasantry.

---

<sup>74</sup> Blackwood, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 168; Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 18.

<sup>75</sup> Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 38.

<sup>76</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 7.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

However, the Devil was not the only supernatural entity found in her testimonies. In her second confession Gowdie states that the Devil and “elf boyes” worked together to create bows and arrows. Using these weapons, Gowdie supposedly shot these arrows in the Devil’s name, according to her confession.<sup>78</sup> While, in this instance, Gowdie did not outright refer to the “elf boyes” as demons in disguise, her testimony paints a picture of fairies as agents of the Devil.<sup>79</sup> Gowdie’s first confession is also home to a reference to the fairy queen and king, stating:

I wes in the downie hillis, and got meat ther from the queen of fairy mor then I could eat: the queen of fairy is brawlie clothed in whyt linens abd in whyt and browne cloathes etc and the king of fairy is a brow man weil favoured and broad faced etc there wes elf bullis crowtting and skoylling wp and down eth[e]r and affrighted me...<sup>80</sup>

In addition to the physical description of these monarchs, Gowdie notes that she was given food, suggesting the fairy monarchs were holding some kind of feast. While partaking in this feast, Gowdie was also frightened by one of their servants, an elf. The fact that Gowdie refers to elves, which were mentioned earlier as spirits that worked with Satan, in the same breath as these monarchs is quite telling. Even if elves were a distinct entity from fairies in Scottish folk belief, the combination of these spirits in the above passage arguably suggests that Gowdie also saw the fairy king and queen as subservient to the Devil; much like these elves. It will be argued that for Gowdie, elves were fairies as it is noted by Hutton that fairies were referred to as elves before it

---

<sup>78</sup> Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 43.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

became more common to refer to these spirits by their new name. This suggests that Gowdie is drawing from the traditions that were likely passed down through her community by referring to both elves and fairies.<sup>81</sup> After referring to these monarchs, Gowdie then describes several deeds done in the “devellis nam”, ensuring that the Devil’s presence remains even when he is not present.<sup>82</sup>

In her second confession Gowdie possibly refers to the Devil directly once again, stating, “the tenth spirit is named thomas a fearie etc ther wilbe many other uther divellis waiting wpon... maister divell bot he is bigger and mor awfull th[a]n the rest of the divellis and they all reverence him...”<sup>83</sup> Looking at this passage it can be seen that Gowdie made a clear connection between fairies and demons, particularly a “maister divell” that the fairies pay homage to. However, even if she didn’t believe this “maister divell” to be Satan, the wording, “the tenth spirit is named thomas a fearie etc ther wilbe many other uther divellis waiting wpon”, does little to distinguish fairies from this creature’s other demonic minions.<sup>84</sup> In her third confession Gowdie states: “both th[a]t qu[ui]ch trowbles my conscience most is the killing of several persones, with the arrows q[ui]ch I gott from the devil.”<sup>85</sup> Gowdie is likely referring to the arrows from her first confession that were made by the “elf boyes”.<sup>86</sup> However, in this instance Gowdie does not refer to these spirits at all, choosing instead to grant the Devil ownership over these weapons. Here it will be argued that as the trial continued more

---

<sup>81</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 228.

<sup>82</sup> Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 40.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 43

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

pressure was put on Gowdie to identify as a servant of Satan and to portray fairies as his minions.

All of this, Gowdie's willingness to identify herself as a servant of the Devil and the fairy's association with Satan, comes to a head in her fourth and final confession: "I acknowledge to my great grief and sham that[a]t fifteen years since I denied fath[e]r son & holie gost in the kirk of aulderne, and gave over my body and soul to the devil..."<sup>87</sup> In one instance, it is hard to judge how much this statement is Gowdie's. Gowdie may have only admitted to rejecting God and making a pact with the Devil to end the torture brought about by her interrogators. Levack reminds historians that in Scotland torture was permitted, as it was deemed the most effective way to extract a confession of a pact with Satan from a witch.<sup>88</sup> Along with clerical sermonizing, leading questions and torture proved excellent tools in shaping the testimony of accused witches when it came to fairies.<sup>89</sup>

However, in Gowdie's case we can also see that she had come to accept fairies as the minions of Satan. If we are to read Gowdie's confession at face value, then this proclamation of grief and shame may suggest that Gowdie had internalized and accepted her prosecutor's belief that she was the Devil's servant. This point is affirmed by Wilby, who stresses:

Isobel's Protestantism... incorporated into itself a variety of unorthodox, or as they were often termed by Protestants, 'superstitious' beliefs and practices. Most of the latter were rooted in residual Catholicism that was

---

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>88</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 10-11.

<sup>89</sup> Henderson and Cowen, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 132.

itself, in turn, a more or less harmonious amalgam between the teachings of the early and medieval church and the non-Christian beliefs and practices that preceded them.<sup>90</sup>

Here, Wilby argues that originally Gowdie's worldview was constructed through the residual traditions of the Catholic church and her own folk beliefs. Judging by her testimonies, this worldview did not remain sealed in a vacuum, but was modified as she internalized the demonic rhetoric that was expressed by the Protestant church.

Alternatively, as it was noted by Larner, the Scottish peasantry during this period were very much afraid of where their souls went after they died.<sup>91</sup> Thus, Gowdie's fear could have come from the realization that she had damned her soul by associating with the Devil and his fairy minions. This perspective once again places an emphasis on how the common folk's perception of their own preternatural beliefs, with the help of Protestant clergymen, changed over time. As Wilby also notes, fairy belief was perhaps the most "folkloric of all belief systems" as it was passed orally from generation to generation.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, the realization that fairies were not actually separate entities, but demons, would have had a considerable effect on someone who grew up with these preternatural beliefs. Gowdie's confessions are demonstrative of the common folk's growing acceptance of the Devil's ownership over fairy motifs and fairies themselves as demonic entities.

---

<sup>90</sup> Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie* 25.

<sup>91</sup> Larner, *Enemies of God*, 168.

<sup>92</sup> Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 26.

### The Testimony of Jean Weir

This growing concern regarding fairies can also be seen with the trial of Jean Weir. Weir, whose trial took place at Edinburgh in 1670, was the wife of Thomas Weir, a farmer who later became known as “Major Weir” for his military service to Scotland.<sup>93</sup> In addition to her supposed pact with the Devil, Jean Weir, according to her testimony, rejected God. More specifically, Henderson and Cowan note that Weir stated that she met a “tall woman”, that asked her to: “speak on her behalf to the ‘queen of ferrie, meaning the devell’”.<sup>94</sup> According to her testimony, Weir met an individual who claimed that the fairy queen was in fact the Devil. The next day Weir’s home was visited by a “little woman”, who sought to help her by giving Weir “the root of some herb or tree”. This root would supposedly grant Weir her wish if she followed a list of instructions that culminated in Jean placing her hand on the crown of her head, at which point she was to repeat three times: “All my cross and trubles goe to the door with thee”.<sup>95</sup> This suggests that Weir needed to exchange something in order to gain this gift, the “cross” perhaps referring to her connection or faith in God. This point is emphasised when Weir discovers that she has become quite skilled in weaving, more than was humanly possible; however, Weir was more confused than excited as she took this newfound gift as a sign that she had been made to her renounce her baptism.<sup>96</sup>

While it is unclear if the second visitor was a fairy in cahoots with the Devil, this testimony does place fairies in a story about Satan making people renounce their baptism. Before she renounced her baptism, Weir was visited by a woman who referred

---

<sup>93</sup> Larner, Lee, McLachlan, *A Source-Book of Scottish Witchcraft*, 40, 261.

<sup>94</sup> Henderson and Cowen, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 135.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.



directly to fairies.<sup>97</sup> We see a similar instance of this in 1697 in the sermons of James Hutchison, who defines a witch as someone who renounces God and who uses their demonic gifts to accomplish impossible deeds.<sup>98</sup> Thus, Weir's testimonies highlight to historians what the Scottish clergy deemed sufficient evidence to convict someone of witchcraft, namely the rejection of God and the use of magic. More importantly, Weir's testimony provides another direct example of the accused defining fairies as demonic entities.

Additionally, Weir was also sentenced to death for possessing a "familiar spirit".<sup>99</sup> Hutton notes that the fairy as the witch's familiar was not exclusive to Weir's testimony, as the reverend Robert Law also described fairies as the witch's familiar in 1677, suggesting that this portrayal of fairy folk would endure past Weir's trial.<sup>100</sup> Thus, Weir's testimony was shaped to emphasise her pact with Satan.<sup>101</sup> In this way, much like Gowdie's confessions, Weir's reference to the Devil and fairies suggests that she had accepted the demonic rhetoric expressed by her Protestant prosecutors.

This chapter identified the Scottish peasantry's acceptance of the Demonic rhetoric of their pastors. Prior to 1623, the accused saw a clear divide between fairies and demons. However, testimonies given after this date blended these entities together and by the mid seventeenth century, the accused framed the fairy as Satan's servant. This thesis will now move on to the conclusion, which identifies the difficulties that arose while researching this topic, such as the limitations of the sources. In doing so, the

---

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>98</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 222.

<sup>99</sup> George Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (Edinburgh: printed by John Reid, 1685), xii.

<sup>100</sup> Hutton, *The Witch*, 222; Robert Law, *Memorialls*, ed. Charles Sharpe (Edinburgh, 1818), 1xxv.

<sup>101</sup> Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, xii.

conclusion will highlight possible pathways that future historians may follow with regards to research on this topic. Finally, this thesis identifies the ways which it adds to the larger discourse surrounding the Scottish Reformation and its depiction of preternatural tradition.

## Conclusion

This thesis tracked the evolution of the Scottish peasantry's perception of fairy belief. It affirmed that they continued to believe in these spirits; however, the fairy was redefined in demonic terms. Chapter 1 provided context regarding the Scottish Reformation and the clergy's demonization of Catholicism and preternatural belief. Prior to the establishment of the Scottish Reformation, tensions between the Catholic Church and learned Protestants intensified as the Catholic clergy failed to introduce religious reforms that appeased their Protestant congregants.<sup>1</sup> With the growth of the Presbyterian Kirk, Protestant clergymen attacked preternatural belief and instances of moral deviance with greater intensity.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, their demonic rhetoric also helped redefine how parts of Scotland, namely the Lowlands, understood elements of preternatural belief.<sup>3</sup> In that, Protestant clergymen argued that the Catholic Church was responsible for the spread of false beliefs, such as traditions regarding fairies.<sup>4</sup> Thus, this

---

<sup>1</sup> Alec Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 102-103, 125.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 108.

<sup>3</sup> Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 101; Julian Goodare, "The Scottish Witchcraft Act," *Church History* 74, no. 1 (2005): 49; Ronald Hutton, *The Witch, A History of Fear from Ancient Times to the Present* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), 247; Lizanne Henderson, "Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the Gàidhealtachd" in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 96.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Cullen, *Sadducimus Debellatus: Or, a True Narrative of the Sorceries and Witchcrafts Exercis'd by the Devil and His Instruments upon Mrs. Christian Shaw, Daughter of Mr. John Shaw, of Bargarran in the County of Renfrew in the West of Scotland, from Aug. 1696 to Apr. 1697. Containing the Journal of Her Sufferings, as It Was Exhibited and Prov'd by the Voluntary Confession of Some of the Witches, and Other Unexceptionable Evidence, before the Commissioners Appointed by the Privy Council of Scotland to Enquire into the Same. Collected from the Records. Together with Reflexions upon Witchcraft in General, and the Learned Arguments of the Lawyers, on Both Sides, at the Trial of Seven of Those Witches Who Were Condemned: And Some Passages Which Happened at Their Execution* (London: printed for H. Newman and A. Bell; at the Grasshopper in the Poultry, and at the Crosse Keys and Bible in Cornhill near Stocks-Market, 1698), the preface.

thesis highlights the impact that fairy belief had on the rise of Scottish Protestantism, particularly in regards to the clergy's pursuit of a godly Scotland.

Chapter 2 focused on the Scottish clergy and their depiction of preternatural belief. Using the lectures of William Hay, it explored how learned men grappled with the nature of fairies.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, it identifies how these Scots understand the fairy prior to the Scottish Reformation. Chapter 2 then explored how John Knox and King James VI defined and legitimised the clergy's negative stance on Catholicism and folk tradition.<sup>6</sup> Here, this thesis reaffirmed that, by the end of the sixteenth century, the groundwork was set for the demonization of preternatural belief. Learned Protestants from the seventeenth century, such as Francis Cullen, also vilified Catholicism and elements of folk culture.<sup>7</sup> However, the late seventeenth-century theologian, Robert Kirk, did not define the fairy in demonic terms.<sup>8</sup> As his positive stance on fairies was not picked up by other learned Scots, Kirk is an outlier amongst his peers.<sup>9</sup> Thus, this thesis uses Kirk to illustrate that while the dominant clerical motif was the demonising of popular preternatural belief, there were exceptions.

Chapter 3 analysed witchcraft confessions that referenced the fairy. In the sixteenth century, the confessions of Jonet Boyman, Bessie Dunlop, and Andro Man

---

<sup>5</sup> Julian Goodare, "The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland" in *Folklore* 123:2 (2012): 201-202.

<sup>6</sup> John Knox, "History of the Reformation in Scotland" in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: J. Thin, 1895), 2: 333, 408; Donald Tyson, ed., *The Demonology of King James I: Includes the Original Text of Daemonologie and News from Scotland* (Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2011), 173; Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 44-45.

<sup>7</sup> Cullen, *Sadducimus Debellatus*, the preface.

<sup>8</sup> Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 2001), 176; Robert Kirk, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns & Fairies: A Study in Folk-lore*, eds. Andrew Lang (London: David Nutt, 1893), 87.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland: Containing a Full Account of Their Situation, Extent, Soils, Products, Harbours, Bays, ... With a New Map of the Whole, ... To Which Is Added a Brief Description of the Isles of Orkney, and Schetland* (Printed for Andrew Bell, at the Cross-Keys and Bible, in Cornhil, near Stocks-Market., 1703), 117-118.

made little reference to the fairy as Satan's servant.<sup>10</sup> Rather, it was through the clergy that the Devil was introduced into these testimonies.<sup>11</sup> The peasantry's demonization of the fairy began in 1623 with Issobell Haldane's testimony, which allowed for the possibility of a link between fairies and Satan.<sup>12</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century, witchcraft confessions, such as the one given by Jean Weir, redefined the fairy as the Devil's servant.<sup>13</sup> Thus, this thesis identifies specific shifts in the peasantry's perception of fairy belief that resulted in the demonization of these spirits.

Unfortunately, researching this topic was not without its difficulties. For instance, some court records were difficult to acquire. *A Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft in Scotland, 1510-1727* and *A Source-book of Scottish Witchcraft* reduced this issue to some degree; however, they did not always provide a transcript of the accused's confession. Additionally, the "Scottish Survey of Witchcraft" proved invaluable for finding confessions that mentioned fairies. From there, this thesis utilized other sources to identify how the accused framed the fairy. However, they did not always provide enough details regarding these spirits. Finally, reading the primary sources sometimes proved difficult. In that, they were written in a variant of English that is significantly harder to read due to the spelling and unusual letters. As such, some primary documents took longer to analyse than others.

While this thesis covers a lot of information, more can be done with this topic. One could do a comparative study and identify how the Scottish peasantry's view of the

---

<sup>10</sup> Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 128, 129, 133.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-132.

<sup>12</sup> William Blackwood, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (Edinburgh: printed for William Blackwood, April – September 1817), 1: 168

<sup>13</sup> Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie: Magic, Witchcraft and Dark Shamanism in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2013), 43; Henderson and Cowen, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 135.

fairy differed from their peers in England, particularly by the late seventeenth century. Furthermore, it could be expanded to different kinds of folk spirits, such as brownies and ghosts. In this way, it could affirm whether the peasantry saw little nuances that separated the demonic fairy from demonic variants of other spirits. Additionally, there are gaps that future historians could fill regarding the Scottish clergy's perception of witches and fairies. For instance, this chapter briefly mentioned Harr Forbes, a minister who, in 1662, led the interrogation of Isobel Gowdie. Here, future historians could identify how Forbes viewed fairies and the specific ways his rhetoric influenced Gowdie's perception of these spirits. In doing so, historians would provide a clearer picture regarding the clergy's efforts to shape Scotland into a "godly state".<sup>14</sup> More also needs to be done regarding Scottish poetry or plays and how their framing of the fairy influenced the common folk's perception of these spirits. By filling in these gaps, this study could provide a clearer picture of the clergy's demonization of fairies. Ultimately, this research explored the Scottish peasantry's gradual acceptance of demonic fairies, pinpointing when they embraced the demonic rhetoric of their pastors.

---

<sup>14</sup> Emma Wilby, "We may shoot them dead at our pleasur': Isobel Gowdie, Elf Arrows, and Dark Shamanism", in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunting*, ed. Julian Goodare (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2013), 141, 142, 144; Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 108.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Biblicus. *Is Salvation by Water Baptism the Doctrine of the Church of England? A Letter to the Rev. Dr. McNeile, Occasioned by His Letter to the Bishop of Exeter, Entitled "Baptism Doth Save."* London: J. F. Shaw, 1852.
- Black, George F. *A Calendar of Cases of Witchcraft in Scotland, 1510-1727.* New York: New York Public Library, 1938.
- Blackwood, William. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 1. Edinburgh: printed for William Blackwood, April-September, 1817.
- Brown, David. "Sermon given at the Paisley witch trial" (1697). In *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland*, Christina Larner. London: Basil Blackwell, 1983.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion: A New Translation.* Translated by Henry Beveridge. Edinburgh: printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1845.
- Chambers, Robert. *The Popular Rhymes of Scotland: With Illustrations.* Edinburgh: London, 1870.
- Ciruelo, Pedro. *A treatise reprovng all superstitions and forms of witchcraft very necessary and useful for all Christians zealous for their salvation.* Translated by E. A. Maio and D'O. W. Pearson. Edited by D'O. W. Pearson (London, 1977).
- Cullen, Francis Grant, Lord. *Sadducimus Debellatus: Or, a True Narrative of the Sorceries and Witchcrafts Exercis'd by the Devil and His Instruments upon Mrs. Christian Shaw, Daughter of Mr. John Shaw, of Bargarran in the County of Renfrew in the West of Scotland, from Aug. 1696 to Apr. 1697. Containing the Journal of Her Sufferings, as It Was Exhibited and Prov'd by the Voluntary*

*Confession of Some of the Witches, and Other Unexceptionable Evidence, before the Commissioners Appointed by the Privy Council of Scotland to Enquire into the Same. Collected from the Records. Together with Reflexions upon Witchcraft in General, and the Learned Arguments of the Lawyers, on Both Sides, at the Trial of Seven of Those Witches Who Were Condemned: And Some Passages Which Happened at Their Execution.* Early English Books, 1641-1700/ 1864:06. London: printed for H. Newman and A. Bell; at the Grasshopper in the Poultry, and at the Crosse Keys and Bible in Cornhill near Stocks-Market, 1698.

Hull, William. *On Calvinism*. Bedfordshire: Andrews UK Ltd., 2012.

Kirk, Robert. *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns & Fairies: A Study in Folklore*. London: David Nutt, 1893.

Knox, John. "A Letter to the Queen Dowager, Regent of Scotland: Augmented and Explained by the Author." In *The Works of John Knox*, Vol. 4. Edinburgh J. Thin, 1895.

———. *A Godly Letter Sent Too the Fayethfull in London, Newcastle, Barwyke, and to All Other Within the Realme Off Englande, That Loue the Co[m]minge of Oure Lorde Iesus by Ihon Knox*. Imprinted in Rome I.e. Wesel?: By J. Lambrecht? for H. Singleton before the Castel of S. Aungel, at the Signe of Sainct Peter, 1554.

———. "A SERMON ON ISAIAH XXVI. 13.-21, PREACHED IN ST. GILES'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, A SERMON PREACHED BY JOHN KNOXE." In *The Works of John Knox*, Vol. 6. Printed for The Bannatyne Club: Edinburgh, 1565.

———. "A Vindication of the Doctrine that the Mass is Idolatry." In *The Works of John Knox*, Vol. 3. Edinburgh, 1863-64.



- . “An Exposition Upon The Sixth Psalm Of David, Addressed To Mrs Bowes” in *The Works of John Knox*, Vol. 3. Edinburgh: J. Thin, 1895.
- . “Endmatter.” In *The Works of John Knox*, Vol. 1. Edinburgh: J. Thin, 1895.
- . “Frontmatter” in *The Works of John Knox*, Vol. 6. Printed for The Bannatyne Club: Edinburgh, 1565.
- . *The Copie of an Epistle Sent: By Iohn Knox One of the Ministers of the Englishe Church at Geneua Vnto the Inhabitants of Newcastle, & Barwike. in the End Wherof Is Added a Briefe Exhortation to England for the Spedie Imbrasing of Christes Gospel Hertofore Suppressed & Banished*. At Geneva: Publisher Not Identified, 1559.
- . “The History of the Reformation in Scotland.” In *The Works of John Knox*, Vol. 1-2. Edinburgh: J. Thin, 1895.
- Larner, Christina, Christopher Lee, and Hugh McLachlan, eds. *A Source-Book of Scottish Witchcraft*. Glasgow: The Grimsay Press, 2005.
- Law, Robert. *Memorialls*. Edited by Charles Sharpe. Edinburgh, 1818.
- Law, Thomas, ed. *The Catechism of John Hamilton*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884.
- Macdonald, Alexander, James Dennistoun, eds. *Miscellany of the Maitland Club: Consisting of Original Papers and Other Documents Illustrative of the History and Literature of Scotland, Volume 2*. Printed at Edinburgh, 1840.
- Martin, Martin. *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland: Containing a Full Account of Their Situation, Extent, Soils, Products, Harbours, Bays, ... With a New Map of the Whole, ... To Which Is Added a Brief Description of the Isles of Orkney, and Schetland*. Printed for Andrew Bell, at the Cross-Keys and Bible, in Cornhil, near Stocks-Market, 1703.

- M'Crie, Thomas. *The Life of John Knox: Containing Illustration of the History of the Reformation in Scotland*, edited by Andrew Crichton. Edinburgh: James Clark & Co., 1840.
- N., J. R. *Highland Papers*, Vol. 1. Edinburgh: University Press, 1920. Neilson, Geo. "A Sermon on Witchcraft in 1697." *The Scottish Historical Review* 7, no. 28 (1910): 390-99.
- Pitcairn, Robert, and Scotland. *Criminal Trials in Scotland From MCCCCLXXXVIII to MDCXXIV Embracing the Entire Reigns of James IV, James V, Mary Queen of Scots and James VI: Compiled From the Original Records and Mss. With Historical Notes and Explanations*. Burlington, Ont: Tanner Ritchie Publishing, 2005.
- Pope, Alexander, and John Butt. *The Poems of Alexander Pope: A One-Volume Edition of the Twickenham Text with Selected Annotations*. London: Taylor & Francis, 1990.
- Sinclair, George. *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*. Edinburgh: printed by John Reid, 1685.
- Stewart, William. *The Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlanders of Scotland*. Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1823.
- T. P. *A Relation of the Diabolical Practices of above Twenty Wizards and Witches of the Sherifffdom of Renfrew in the Kingdom of Scotland, Contain'd in Their Tryalls, Examinations, and Confessions, and for Which Several of Them Have Been Executed This Present Year, 1697*. Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 508:09. London: Printed for Hugh Newman ..., 1697.
- Tyson, Donald, ed. *The Demonology of King James I: Includes the Original Text of*

*Daemonologie and News from Scotland*. Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2011.

Wedderburn, John, James Wedderburn, and Robert Wedderburn. *A Compendious Book of Godly and Spiritual Songs: Commonly Known as "The Gude and Godlie Ballatis."* Edinburgh: printed by William Blackwood and Sons, 1897.

### **Secondary Sources**

Anderson, Robert. *Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.

Antonio, Andrew. *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy*. California: University of California Press, 2011.

Broadie, Alexander. *A History of Scottish Philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

Brock, Michelle. "Internalizing the Demonic: Satan and the Self in Early Modern Scottish Piety" *Journal of British Studies* 54 (January 2015): 23–43.

Burke, Peter. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

Clark, Stuart. *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1997.

Davies, Owen. "A Comparative Perspective on Scottish Cunning-Folk and Charmers." In *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, edited by Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Dawson, Jane E. A. *John Knox*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.

Dumbar, Linda. *Reforming the Scottish Church: John Winram (c. 1492-1582) and the Example of Fife*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

- Elmer, Peter. *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Ferber, Sarah. *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Flint, Valerie I. J. *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Translated by John and Anne Adeschi. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1992.
- Goodare, Julian. "Boundaries of the Fairy Realm in Scotland." In *Airy Nothings: Imagining the Otherworld of Faerie From the Middle Ages to the Age of Reason: Essays in Honour of Alasdair A. MacDonald*, edited by Karin Olsen. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- . "Flying Witches in Scotland." In *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunting*, edited by Julian Goodare. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- . "Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context." In *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, edited by Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- . "The Cult of the Seely Wights in Scotland." *Folklore* 123:2 (2012): 198-219.
- . "The Scottish Witchcraft Act." *Church History* 74, no. 1 (2005): 39-67.
- Goodare, Julian, Lauren Martin, Joyce Miller, Louise Yeoman, University of Edinburgh. "Survey of Scottish Witchcraft Database," January, 2003, <http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/Research/witches/>.
- Gritsch, Eric W. *A History of Lutheranism*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

- Hall, Alaric. "Getting Shot of Elves: Healing, Witchcraft and Fairies in the Scottish Witchcraft Trials." *Folklore* 116, no. 1 (2005): 19-36.
- Harbison, E. Harris. *The Age of Reformation*. Cornell University Press, 2013.
- Henderson, Lizanne. "Detestable Slaves of the Devil': Changing Ideas about Witchcraft in sixteenth century Scotland." In *A History of Everyday Life in Medieval Scotland*, edited by Cowan, Edward J and Lizanne Henderson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.
- . *Fantastical Imaginations: The Supernatural in Scottish History and Culture*. Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2009.
- . "With-Hunting and Witch Belief in the Gàidhealtachd." In *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, edited by Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Henderson, Lizanne and Edward J. Cowan. *Scottish fairy Belief*. John Donald: Edinburgh, 2007.
- Hillerbrand, Hans Joachim, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Hutton, Ronald. *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.
- Larner, Christina. *Enemies of God: The Witch Hunt – Hunt in Scotland*. London: Basil Blackwell, 1983.
- Levack, Brian. *Witch – Hunting in Scotland*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- MacCulloch, Canon J. A. "The Mingling of Fairy and Witch Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Scotland." *Folklore* 32, no. 4 (1921): 227-44.
- Macdonald, Stuart. "John Knox, the Scottish Church, and Witchcraft Accusations."

*Sixteenth Century Journal* 48 (2017): 63-52.

Maxwell-Stuart, P. G. *Satan's Conspiracy: Magic and Witchcraft in Sixteenth-Century Scotland*. East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell, 2003.

McGill, Martha. "Angles, Devils, and Discernment in Early Modern Scotland." In *Knowing Demons, Knowing Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, edited by Brock, Michelle D, Richard Raiswell, David R Winter. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Melton, J. Gordon. *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2005.

Mitchison, Rosalind. *A History of Scotland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. London: Routledge, 2002.

Mullan, David. "Writing of the Scottish Reformation." In *Literature and the Scottish Reformation*, edited by David Mullan and Crawford Gribben. London: Routledge, 2009.

Oldridge, Darren. "Fairies and the Devil in early modern England." *The Seventeenth Century*, 31:1, (2016) 1-15.

Ryrie, Alec. *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006.

Simpson, Jacqueline, Stephen Roud, and Oxford University Press. *A Dictionary of English Folklore*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Thomas, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. London: Penguin Books, 1971.

Waite, Gary. "Sixteenth-Century Religious Reform and the Witch-Hunts". In *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, edited by Brian Levack. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Wiesner, Merry E. *Early Modern Europe, 1450-1789*. Second ed. Cambridge History of

Europe, V. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Wilby, Emma. “‘We mey shoot them dead at our pleasur’: Isobel Gowdie, Elf Arrows, and Dark Shamanism.” In *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunting*, edited by Julian Goodare. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

———. *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie: Magic, Witchcraft and Dark Shamanism in Seventeenth-Century Scotland*. Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2013.

## **Curriculum Vitae**

Candidate's full name: Jarrett Oscar Weston

Universities attended:

- Crandall University: Bachelor of Arts: Double Major in English and History  
(May 2016)

Publications: None

Conference Presentations: one