

May 2021

The King of Witchcraft: Scotland's Witchcraft Crisis and Religious Politics Under King James VI

Tristan Rimmer

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses



Part of the [European History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rimmer, Tristan, "The King of Witchcraft: Scotland's Witchcraft Crisis and Religious Politics Under King James VI" (2021). *LSU Master's Theses*. 5349.

https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/5349

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.

The King of Witchcraft: Scotland's Witchcraft Crisis and Religious Politics Under King James VI

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of History

by

Tristan Rimmer

B.A., Louisiana State University, May 2018
M.A., Louisiana State University, August 2021

To Joy

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Ch. 1. <i>Scotland</i>	7
Ch. 2. <i>James</i>	42
Ch. 3. <i>The 1590s</i>	79
Bibliography.....	121
Vita.....	129

Abstract

The King of Witchcraft: Scotland's Witchcraft Crisis Under King James VI

In 1590 King James VI of Scotland was the supposed target of diabolical witchcraft; the North Berwick witches were accused of attempting to sink the ship carrying James and his new bride from Copenhagen back to Edinburgh following their marriage. This event set off a widespread witch-hunt in Scotland, one that James took a personal and vested interest in. The hunt continued through 1597, occurring across multiple Scottish locales, resulting in judicial statute rearrangements, and famously inspiring James' treatise *Daemonologie*. In addition to *Daemonologie*, James also wrote multiple treatises on the theory of divine right in the midst of the 1590s witch-hunts.

James' pursuit of witchcraft can be carefully explained through an examination of Scotland's history from 1560 to 1590. The Reformation Rebellion in 1560, which deposed the Regent Queen Mary of Guise and the subsequent failed reign of Mary Queen of Scots enabled a new Protestant Scottish Church to establish a dominant role of authority and facilitate unanswered questions over who held spiritual supremacy in Scotland. King James VI inherited a Kingdom that was rife with factionalism and a stubbornly independent Church. It was only through James' navigations of these intricate religiously political situations that he began to formulate theories of divine right and a clear opposition to his divinely appointed monarchical authority. Thus when suspected witchcraft was brought before him in 1590, he pursued it with a fervor of divine retribution. In so doing, James was able to eliminate political dissension, assert his divinely ordained authority, and settle the question of Scottish religious hierarchy.

James provides historians with three important treatises that he wrote at the end of the 1590s that idealize his role in Scottish history and thus this thesis will focus primarily on how James envisioned his own personal history, taking over a nation with a lost spiritual identity and rampant factionalism, and how his interpretation of these events transpired into two nation-wide witch-hunts.

Introduction

Early modern Europe witnessed the rise of three intertwined movements: the Reformation, the revival of divine right monarchy, and an era-long witch-hunt. These three developments are all equally exemplified by an examination of Scotland under King James VI or more specifically from 1560 to 1597. What began with a successful Reformation Rebellion in 1560 led to a complex dynamic of spiritual superiority between the new reformed Church of Scotland and the struggling Crown of young King James. This dynamic bred theories of divine right in the mind of James as he incessantly fought for authority, finally finding an opportunity to combine his spiritual authority with his theories of divine right in the witch-hunts of the 1590s. This textbook Early Modern case is accurately described by Stuart Clark that “any discussion of rulership grounded on biblical models encouraged the view that princes and magistrates should confront demonism—a link made explicitly in demonology itself, implicitly in many discussions of ideal monarchy, and metaphorically in appeals to individual rulers.”¹ This ideal was more explicitly defined by Christina Larner fifteen years earlier: “so far as political ideology goes the Scottish with-hunt coincided exactly with the period spanned by the doctrines of the divine right of kings and the godly state.”²

There is no dispute over whether or not Scotland exemplified all the basic tenets of Protestantism, theories of divine right, and a substantial European witch-hunt. However, what makes the case in Scotland exceptional is that it was primarily a result of James’ personal

¹ Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 633.

² Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-hunt in Scotland* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 198.

experiences and his interpretation of those experiences. Beyond a theological influence or a religious dogmatism, James believed in his theories of divine right on the basis that he had witnessed his Kingdom in the rejection of such ideals and this deeply influenced his beliefs which intrinsically led to his fierce prosecution of witchcraft in the 1590s. A close study of Scotland beginning in 1560 through 1585, when James began his personal rule, quickly reveals a Country ran by aristocratic factionalism and a powerful independent Church. The ideal of a ‘godly society’ was fought over between Church and Crown; a newfound responsibility for the salvation of the subjects was a tenet of the Reformation that both James and the Protestant and eventually Presbyterian led Kirk³ believed belonged to their separate jurisdictions. Naturally, however, the witchcraft trials of the 1590s were not the sole manifestation of James’ belief in divine right and his battle of spiritual supremacy.

During the late fall of 1589 and winter of 1590, King James VI married Princess Anne of Denmark but the new Queen encountered a bad storm on her voyage across the North Sea and had to dock in Oslo. Several more attempts were made by James and Anne to move the Queen to Edinburgh but they almost always encountered bad weather. Finally in late April 1590 the couple arrived together in Scotland but quickly got word that six Danish witches had been prosecuted for allegedly causing the storms that had affected the travel plans. Later in 1590, near Edinburgh, a maid servant was accused by her master of practicing witchcraft and an investigation revealed the names of a Lothian school master and several other local women, who were “reputed for as

³ Term for the Church of Scotland.

civil, honest women as any that dwelled in the city of Edinburgh,”⁴ and who had participated together in a sabbat.⁵ Eventually, accused witch Agnes Sampson revealed in her confession that James had been a target of the confessed practices and as the process went on, more of the accused confessed (under torture) to causing the storms James had encountered earlier in the year and had attempted to cause his death through rituals. What ensued was a violent witch-hunt involving torture and mass executions, until James felt that the threat had successfully been extinguished.⁶

However, inherent within the North Berwick Witch-Hunt was a long struggle for spiritual authority between Crown and the reformed Scottish Kirk. This feud dates back to 1560 when a group of Protestant rebels who called themselves ‘The Congregation,’ led in part by John Knox, the famous Calvinist reformer, successfully deposed the Queen Regent Mary of Guise. The Congregation had been supported by Elizabeth and the English and set forth to call the 1560 Reformation Parliament to impose new Protestant and anti-Catholic legislation. This consequently legitimized the dual authority of the new Kirk and government and permanently shifted authoritative roles in Scotland.

⁴ James Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland, declaring the damnable life and death of Doctor Fian a notable sorcerer, who was burned at Edenbrough in Ianuary last. 1591. Which doctor was regester to the diuell that sundry times preached at North Barrick Kirke, to a number of notorious witches. With the true examination of the saide doctor and witches, as they vttered them in the presence of the Scottish king. Discovering how they pretended to bewitch and drowne his Maiestie in the sea comming from Denmarke, with such other wonderfull matters as the like hath not been heard of at any time. Published according to the Scottish coppie*, Pamphlet (London: 1592), from Early English Books Online, Bodleian Library, (accessed December 2019).

⁵ Early modern term for a ‘gathering of witches’ or ‘witches sabbath.’

⁶ Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James VI’s Demonology and the North Berwick Witches* (Exeter, UK: Exeter Press, 2000); Carmichael, *Newes*; Brian P. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 34-54.

The issue was magnified by the short and troublesome reign of Mary Queen of Scots, daughter of Guise and King James V, who had spent most of her life at the French court. The new Queen returned to Scotland upon the untimely death of her husband, King Francis II. Mary struggled to assert a strong monarchical rule and her reign was plagued by an overpowering Protestant faction, a poor choice of a husband, and a complete lack of preparedness to rule the Kingdom. Her marriage to Lord Darnley ended in Darnley's murder, Mary's deposition, and her flight to England where she spent the rest of her days under the watchful eye of Elizabeth before being executed for a plot to overthrow the English Queen. Thus when James was crowned in 1567, a year after he was born, the situation in Scotland concerning jurisdiction over temporal and spiritual was almost unidentifiable.

The Kirk was not going to give up its independence but rather it intended to use its authority to maintain control over the monarchy. However, the Kirk was not the only group in Scotland vying for power. James' regency from 1567-1578 proves that in addition to legitimizing the power of the Church, the 1560s had also produced extensive factionalism in the Country and James' early reign was symbolized by self-interested nobles clamoring for the power of the crown. All of this was deeply influential on an impressionable young King and from an early age James began to harbor resentment towards the Kirk and the factionalism that surrounded him. This resentment later became the inspiration for James' theories of divine right and monarchical spiritual authority.

In 1585 James began his personal rule and thus the conflict of authority was now distinctly between the Crown and the Kirk. The context of this clear-cut conflict is necessary to understand the witch-hunts of the 1590s as a definitive expression of spiritual authority. For

James, the witches in Scotland represented a spiritual threat and as God's divine appointee, he believed he would be their natural enemy, as a representative of God. This logic fueled the witch-hunts in 1590-91 and again in 1597, as James emerged victorious, eliminating witchcraft from Scotland for the time being, and finally ending, in his mind, the question of who held the highest religious control or rather, spiritual supremacy in the Kingdom.

The concept of James as the natural enemy of the Scottish witches was inseparable from the idea of divine right and was commonly held by political theorists and demonic-centric theologians of the early modern period. The most important of these and one of the few who wrote on both was Frenchman Jean Bodin whose works *Les Six Livres de la République* and *De la Demonomanie des Sorciers*, published respectively in 1576 and 1580, advocated for the "judicial destruction of witches...[and] reformulated the first principles of absolute sovereignty."⁷ Bodin advocated for a cosmic order in which God stood diametrically opposed to the Devil and by default, so did God's divinely anointed monarchs. James was not alone in his understanding of this place in the divine order and was unquestionably influenced by the theologians that preceded him, but only in a secondary sense as the primary influencer of James always remained his experiences.

The progression of Jacobean Scotland through the perspective of Jacobean ideology was permanently sealed by three treatises James published in the late 1590s. *Daemonologie* (1597) was a treatise on diabolism or the nature of the demonic pact and served as a warning to readers of the dangers of witchcraft and magic while extensively exploring their intricacies. *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (1598) was an unapologetic command of the divine right of kings and

⁷ Clark, *Demons*, 670.

the responsibilities of a divine right monarchy and the *Basilikon Doron* (1599) was a royal manual for James' young son Henry on proper conduct, addressing the nature of kingship. These works represented James' understanding and perception of his rise to power and the victory over the Kirk. They portray a Jacobean Scotland strictly through James' eyes.

Thus I present a history of Scotland from 1560-1597 through the idealized perspective of King James as a key component to making sense of the witch-hunts of the 1590s. The political and religious context of early Reformation Scotland substantially contributed to James' ideals and through his experiences James began to associate his role as King with a divine order from God, equating those who stood against God as treasonously standing against him. Through this mentality, the urgency and expansiveness of the North Berwick Witch Trials and those in 1597 is better understood. Inherent within James' ideology was a victim mentality, and as he believed himself to always be struggling under threat of the Kirk, the devil, and a self-interested nobility, the witch-hunts are an effort to express unquestionable authority, putting to rest the questions that had haunted Scotland since 1560.

Chapter 1 Scotland

The key to understanding James' complex relationship between his divinely ordained place in his Scottish world and his vigorous pursuit and prosecution of witchcraft in the 1590s partially lies with an understanding of the disorderly Scotland that he was born into. From 1559 to 1573, the state of the country was in a constant flux with no definitive authority, no clear religious structure, and a diminishing role in early modern Europe. The birth of James to Mary Queen of Scots and Lord Darnley in 1566 offered a glimmer of hope in the midst of the chaos. However, James inherited a Scotland that was in desperate need of a strong and authoritative monarch to fulfill the role described by John Willock, a leader of the Scottish protestant rebellion, in his sermon to the new 'Great Council': "God hath appointed magistrates his lieutenants on earth."⁸ However, James would have disagreed with the rest of Willock's sentiment: "yet He did never so establish any but that, for just causes, they might have been deprived."⁹ This need was absolutely essential as James later developed his role of monarch and his responsibility towards the well-being of his subjects, which would include battling against external moral threats.

Far from the traditional hereditary monarchial succession, Jacobean Scotland proceeded from the very recent Scottish Reformation, asserted through a violent albeit successful rebellion that deposed the Regent Mary of Guise, yet left the country and the new Kirk with lingering questions of religious and spiritual autonomy. Nonetheless, empowered by their independent rule

⁸ John Knox, "History of the Reformation in Scotland," in *The Government of Scotland: 1560-1625*, Julian Goodare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 22.

⁹ *Ibid.*

of Scotland following the 1560 insurrection, ‘The Congregation’¹⁰ not only instituted Protestantism through a Parliament but inserted themselves into the judicial and legislative systems, further solidifying their grounds for authority. This influential insurrection also involved Elizabethan England and began the strained relationship that James often had with Elizabeth before inheriting the English throne.

This struggle for religious authority would plague James for much of his reign in Scotland, fought out between Kirk and Crown, Presbytery and Episcopate; it was a conflict that arguably never reached a solution and was instrumental in the witch-hunts of the 1590s. The constant competition between Church and State heavily influenced James’ theological assertions that he was “a little God to sit on his Throne, & rule ouer other men.”¹¹ This vision by James is what Julian Goodare describes as the “one-kingdom theory...The king had (or ought to have) authority over all his subjects, and ruled the church just as he ruled the other institutions of the kingdom.” Likewise, the Kirk envisioned its authority as being derived explicitly from God, ascending from the constituent members, and consisting of a separate kingdom from that of the secular one ruled by the king.¹²

James additionally inherited a Scotland in the wake of the tumultuous reign of his mother, Mary Queen of Scots. Mary’s roughly six year reign, a reign in which Mary was in no way prepared nor responsible for, was detrimental towards the status of the Crown in Scotland as it stood in contrast to the nobility and the Kirk, eventually instituting, once again, a Scotland ruled

¹⁰ Jane E.A. Dawson, *The Politics of Religion in the Age of Mary, Queen of Scots: The Earl of Argyll and the Struggle for Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 86-110.

¹¹ King James VI, *Basilikon Doron* (London: Wertheimer, Lea & Co., 1599), 3.

¹² Julian Goodare, *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 198.

by a regent. Mary, a devout Catholic, never repealed nor confirmed the official Protestant statutes instituted in the Parliament of 1560, leaving the door open for the newly reformed Kirk to build upon its influence and authority. Mary was inconsistent in her support of both Catholic and Protestant causes and was instead primarily focused on her place in the English succession. As a result Mary would marry Lord Darnley, to the great dismay of Elizabeth and all of Scotland; a marked beginning of the end for her reign. A Protestant faction, led by the Queen's half-brother, the Earl of Moray waged a war in the name of infant King James VI against his own mother from 1567-73¹³; a bizarre phenomenon that left the country in the hands of a religiously motivated regency. Mary's reign stood as the antithesis to James' and its legacy remained ever-present in the mind of James throughout his own reign, as he consistently attempted to govern with grace and confidence.

Finally, the Scotland of the 1560s provided James with the infrastructure necessary to prosecute, with the full force of the law and the church, the widespread witchcraft of the 1590s. Of utmost importance was the *Witchcraft Act* passed by Mary's first parliament in 1563. While James would later make some equally important changes to the judicial system, particularly in the late 1580s, it was the *Witchcraft Act* that initially allowed for widespread prosecutions. The Reformation, led by John Knox, also influenced James and his theology, placing immoral practices such as witchcraft, adultery, and blasphemy as standing in direct opposition to the monarchy of the 'Godly State,' a state Knox foresaw as the rebirth of Israel.¹⁴

¹³ Jenny Wormald, *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study in Failure* (London: George Philip, 1988).

¹⁴ Stuart Macdonald, "John Knox, the Scottish Church, and Witchcraft Accusations," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 48 (2017).

James would lead the first major witch-hunt in Scotland in 1590 but two vital situations prior presumably shaped his understanding of the immoral crime. The unsuccessful and localized witch-hunts of 1568-69, led by the Regent Earl of Moray, were sparked by the prosecution of Sir William Stewart, the Lord Lyon at the time, who was accused of using witchcraft against the Regent.¹⁵ This early witch-hunt contributed to a need for an aggressive yet carefully crafted method of dealing with the crime and eventually led James to institute a policy of *crimen exceptum* in his pursuit of witches, allowing for a more efficient conviction process.

Secondly, an alleged attack of witchcraft on his Regent Morton in 1577 when James was at the impressionable age of ten, furthered his understanding that he himself could be a target of such practices. James recalled this well when, in 1590, he was informed of the possibility of witchcraft disrupting his new queen's voyage from Denmark.¹⁶ The enormity of the 1590s witch-hunt also stemmed from the instability of religious authority, the result of which was a more decentralized state enabling locales to lead the way in many of the witchcraft prosecutions, not only in the 1590s but throughout the seventeenth century as well.

The Protestant Rebellion and the Reformation Parliament

The contextual understanding for James' reign, his strong authoritative theology, and his morally driven witch-hunts could begin with the death of James V in 1542, six days after the birth of his daughter Mary, entrenched in a bitter war with the English, and leaving Scotland to a period of regency. Or it could begin with Mary of Guise assuming the regency in 1554 from the

¹⁵ Michael Wasser, "Scotland's First Witch-Hunt: The Eastern Witch-Hunt of 1568-1569," in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters*, ed. Julian Goodare (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Earl of Arran, establishing a firm French alliance by pledging her daughter Mary Queen of Scots to the french prince Francis, and heightening political and religious concerns. While these events were vital towards the heightened tensions around the Reformation rebellion and intrinsic towards the political and religious atmosphere James was born into, it is the Rebellion itself from 1559-1561 that represents the most adequate starting point for understanding the power dynamics of Reformation and Jacobean Scotland. The decisive Protestant Rebellion and Scottish Reformation were directly responsible for shaping the religious and political atmosphere that would permeate throughout James' reign. Although the overthrow was temporary, the dynamics of authority were fundamentally altered.

The Protestant Rebellion was both religious and political and consisted of nobles and reformers. This group, often referred to as 'The Congregation' or 'Great Council,' was in the words of their enthusiastic leader John Knox: "the lawful heads and born councillors of this realm."¹⁷ Whether establishing a dominant Protestant Reformation or relieving Scotland of French influence, the rebels of 1559 believed they were acting in the best interest of Scotland. John Knox and John Willock, Protestant, or rather Calvinist, reformers represented the religious side of the rebellion. Through their powerfully articulated sermons, these men, primarily Knox, kept the fire stirred among the Protestant rebels. Widespread iconoclastic riots, such as that in Perth in May 1559, typically proceeded from Knox's preaching, which enticed the crowd to 'sound the trumpets at Jericho.'¹⁸

¹⁷ Knox, "History of the Reformation," 22.

¹⁸ John Knox, *The History of the Reformation in Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 187.

The true power and an importance source of political legitimacy came from the Earl of Arran and Earl of Moray, Moray was the illegitimate son of King James V, and his relationship with Queen Elizabeth in the Southern Kingdom was instrumental in the successful takeover. Legitimation from the rights of the nobility, endorsement of the three estates, dynastic credibility through Mary Queen of Scots, and English recognition not only ensured the rebellion's success but it carried authority over into the ensuing reigns of Mary and James.¹⁹

John Knox, born near Edinburgh at the beginning of the 16th century, was the face of the Reformation in Scotland and while often too radical for the political side of the rebellion, Knox defined the role of religion in Scotland as it came to fruition under the reign of James. As a preacher under Calvin's tutelage, Knox popularized the Presbyterian movement, with an emphasis on biblical authority and Scotland as a reincarnation of Israel, pitted in a war against Satan.²⁰ While Knox may not have lived long enough to seriously influence James personally, his rhetoric and justification of the Scottish Reformation had a resounding influence on the way James envisioned his role within the church. However, the influence was unintended. Knox believed the salvation of the Nation lay in the hands of the church and later the Presbyterian Kirk strongly opposed James' single kingdom theory and divine right.

As will become apparent in my chapter on James, Knox indirectly influenced James' personal theology through his (Knox's) religious reformation. However, in this chapter his contribution to the Reformation Rebellion, an intertwined religious and political movement, was consequential. As Knox and his followers marched around Scotland, burning down monasteries

¹⁹ Goodare, *The Government*, 23.

²⁰ Knox, *History*; Macdonald, "John Knox"; Richard Kyle, "John Knox and Apocalyptic Thought," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15 (1984).

and leading the charge against Queen Mary of Guise, the rebellion took on a new meaning. Authoritative roles began to shift and the rebellion became legitimized.

Prior to the May 10th insurrection at Perth, Protestant leaders, including Moray and Argyll, had proposed ecclesiastical reforms in the November Parliament of 1558. Mary had shut these down and in January 1559, Protestant nobles issued the ‘Beggars Summons,’ a threat to evict Friars who refused to adopt protestant practices. The Spring of 1559 saw local Protestant reforms enacted in the Highland areas of Dundee and Ayr but in the south, Mary of Guise remained steadfast in her attempts to place the Scottish Matrimonial crown on the head of her daughter Mary’s betrothed, soon-to-be King Francis II of France. By May, following a clear split between the Regent and the Protestant reformers over Easter, the window for compromise was shrinking and the Protestants believed that “further reforming action would involve direct defiance of the crown as well as ecclesiastical authority.”²¹

This change in attitude was apparent at Perth in early May when Regent Mary outlawed several ministers in the Provinces of Perth, Angus, and Mearns for failing to report to their legal summons for “preaching at Easter without a license.”²² An iconoclastic riot broke out following a sermon by Knox at Perth’s St. John’s Church and as a response, both sides began assembling troops. After Mary of Guise broke a promise that she would not station soldiers in Perth, the Earl of Argyll wrote to her, drawing battle lines: “That with safe conscience they could not be partakers of so manifest tyranny as by her was committed, and of so great iniquity as they perceived devised by her and her ungodly Council the Prelates.”²³ No more tyranny. The angry

²¹ Dawson, *Politics*, 87-9.

²² *Ibid*, 89.

²³ Knox, *History*, 180.

mob, led by none other than John Knox, headed for St. Andrews, ecclesiastical capital of the country.²⁴

At St. Andrews, Knox preached: “I cannot so fear their boast or tyranny, that I will cease from doing my duty, when of His mercy He offereth me the occasion.”²⁵ He compared the Protestant occupation of the church to that of Jesus in the temple, cleansing it of the market elements, as his followers cleansed St. Andrews of its imagery.²⁶ With this vital occupation, Mary of Guise was forced to sign a temporary truce with the rebels at Garliebank, as she awaited French aid. Unfortunately for Mary, King Henry II of France died in July and with the situation now at a standstill, the Congregation sought out Queen Elizabeth to provide the final push needed to force out the regent Mary.

Communications with the English began in June of 1559 through the Elizabethan favorite, William Cecil. The death of the French Monarch worried the English; the new King in France was married to the true Queen of Scotland and as such the English perceived a possible increased interest in the Scottish insurrection from across the channel. The Congregation then changed its tone, embraced this English hesitancy, and launched a propaganda campaign that focused on an internal French threat on the island of Great Britain. An official declaration, legitimized by the powerful Hamilton family, was announced on October 21st, 1559 deposing Mary of Guise as regent.²⁷ This moment in Scottish history would define the political and religious scene for the next thirty years, setting an important precedent for authority. From this

²⁴ Dawson, *Politics*, 93.

²⁵ Knox, *History*, 176-7.

²⁶ Dawson, *Politics*, 93.

²⁷ Dawson, *Politics*, 96-9.

point in 1559 until 1590 and 1591 when King James finally settled the question of religious and spiritual supremacy, the Kirk in Scotland would hold a substantial level of autonomy, especially prevalent through the reign of Mary Queen of Scots and James' minority. This dynamic, not uncommon in Reformation Europe, would inevitably inspire James' theories of divine right.

A turning point in the English negotiations occurred when the Congregation offered assistance to Elizabeth in the Ulster region and an English fleet was dispatched in January 1560 to ward off incoming French forces. Elizabeth ratified the Anglo-Scottish alliance in March, a proposal framed around "protection, the defense of the Scots' ancient rights and liberties and the unity of the British mainland."²⁸ Another vitally important development was the legitimization of authority by the English which indebted Scotland politically that lingered throughout James' reign. By April, English troops were on the ground in Scotland and although their success was marginal, further religious insurrection in France led the French to settle. In the first week of June the already deteriorating Mary of Guise died and the Treaty of Edinburgh was signed on 6 July 1560. This treaty "provided for the withdrawal of both English and French troops, making no attempt to reverse the Protestant changes already made, and treating the Lords of the Congregation as the present and future government of Scotland."²⁹ The fate of Scotland now rested in the hands of the Presbyterian congregation, led by the Earl of Moray and the spirited John Knox.

Now wielding legitimated legislative power, the new authority in Scotland wasted little time and called a parliament two weeks after the Treaty of Edinburgh was signed. The

²⁸ *Ibid*, 101.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 102.

Reformation Parliament, in the scope of the proceeding thirty years, was consequential in name more than in deed. The Parliament met for three weeks in August and passed essential Protestant legislation: a new confession of faith, the rejection of papal authority in its full capacity, the abolition of the mass, and annulment of all acts beginning with the reign of James I (r. 1406-1437) that pertained to pre-Reformation religious establishment in Scotland.³⁰ The parliament doubled down on the terms of the July 6 Treaty, which included: “It is statut and ordainit thair sal be certan commissioneris of burrowis for the merchandis estate at every convention, at leist 6 or 8 of thame, to gif thair consent and writ to any taxation beis raisit, or weir or peax tain in hand.”³¹ The demand for representation for war, peace, and taxes was an important precedent for the Congregation to set and further extended their notions of authoritative shifts from this point forward.

Julian Goodare raises the important question of religious authority during this period: “The pope’s authority had been abolished in 1560: did that make the monarch head of the church, and if not, who or what was its head?”³² By the latter half of 1560 The Congregation had begun the transition into the official Kirk of Scotland. The Treaty of Edinburgh was signed or supported by French representatives, Sir William Cecil who represented Elizabeth, Earls of Moray, Arran, Argyll among several others, and new Protestant Burgh Commissioners and Superintendents John Knox, John Willock, and John Spottiswoode.³³ The Treaty had foreign,

³⁰ Wormald, *Mary Queen*, 105.

³¹ Julian Goodare, ed., “The Scottish Parliamentary Records: 1560-1603,” *Historical Research* 72 (1999): 252.

³² Goodare, *State and Society*, 192.

³³ Knox, *History*, 224-8.

domestic, political, and religious legitimation and this widespread approval of the overthrow paved the way for an uncontested Parliament.

The new Kirk had no intention of holding power indefinitely, in fact, Mary Queen of Scots was already preparing plans to return to Scotland by this time, but even with the foreknowledge that a quasi-religious oligarchy was impossible, the return of a Catholic monarch raised important questions about who now held religious authority and what this relationship would look like in the ensuing decades. Under a new monarch (Mary Queen of Scots arrived in Scotland in August 1561) the Reformation Parliament and Protestant legislation would require Mary's official ratification to ensure permanence. However, regardless of monarchial approval, the Kirk had established and legitimated its authority through an official Parliament and the role of the Protestant force that shadowed that Parliament was something the new Queen Mary would be hesitant to upset. The Kirk and Protestant nobility's influence was enduring.

Mary Queen of Scots

The parameters of religious and political authority for Jacobean Scotland were deeply entrenched with the Reformation Rebellion and Parliament of 1560, but the Scottish Monarchial role that James inherited had been further degraded by the unfortunate reign of Mary Queen of Scots. Mary's reign was less a direct consequence of her explicit decision making and more a result of a series of unfortunate circumstances and continued control by the Protestant faction of the Reformation Rebellion. However, Mary's religious ambiguity, her poor choice of a husband, and overall lack of preparedness to rule Scotland set an important precedent for the functionality of the Scottish monarchy moving forward through the sixteenth-century.

Retha M. Warnicke sums up the unfavorable reign of Mary Queen of Scots with precision:

During her seven years in Scotland from 1561 to 1568, she faced four armed rebellions, two unrelated abduction scares, had an intruder secrete himself in her bedchamber twice, witnessed a murderous assault on her French secretary, lost her husband to foul play, underwent abduction, rape, and a forced marriage that led to threaten suicide, faced a public attack on her honor in which she was called a whore, was imprisoned at Lochleven, and was compelled to abdicate. In the midst of these adversities, she managed to give birth to her son, who succeeded her. She also suffered from a chronic illness that left her crippled by the time she was forty years old.³⁴

For the purposes of this thesis, Mary's reign represents the widespread influence this succession of events had on the reign of James and his relationship to the Kirk and Scottish factionalism. Regardless of responsibility, the reign of Mary did little to quell the blossoming role of the Protestant faction as they transitioned into a legitimate authoritative body, and this precedent of authority carried over into James' reign. The rollover from Mary's reign, as it manifested into the factionalism and question over religious supremacy, were inherited by James' reign up through 1585 and set the stage for his idealized witch-hunts of the 1590s.

An important aspect that was intrinsic to the continued factionalism and one that Mary's French upbringing had not prepared her for was the role of the Scottish nobility, as it traditionally stood in contrast to the Scottish monarchy. John Guy explains this understanding from the perspective of the nobility: "the Scottish lords at heart rejected a centralized monarchy.

³⁴ Retha M. Warnicke, *Mary Queen of Scots* (London: Routledge, 2006), viii.

They wanted to rule themselves as a loose federation of small kings.”³⁵ This belief had roots in ancient Scottish tribalism and still existed in the Highlands, yet in 1560 something changed in the Lowlands and suddenly the new Protestant authority foresaw a more central role for themselves in government. Mary amplified this issue, appointing family or favorable factional leaders that aligned with her shifting loyalties and religious preferences over those with noble precedent, best exemplified by her bestowal of the Earldom of Moray to her half-brother James Stewart.

Elizabeth’s consistent attempts to control Marian Scotland and arrange marriages for Mary as well as her continued support of the Protestants in the Northern Kingdom also facilitated Mary’s alienation and indecision. This led to a development in which Mary “felt she needed to be recognized as Elizabeth’s successor if she was to bolster the legitimacy of her reign and curtail the insubordination of Knox and her more turbulent lords.”³⁶ Mary’s marriage to Darnley was her clearest attempt to secure the English succession and the results were disastrous but this was hardly a coincidence. The carefully orchestrated assassinations of David Rizzio, Mary’s favorite court musician, and of her husband, Lord Darnley, by the Knox and Moray led Kirk and Mary’s abduction and forced marriage to the Earl of Bothwell, sealed her fate.³⁷ Once again, the Lords of the Congregation were victorious and gained control over the new King of Scotland, King James VI.

³⁵ John Guy, *Queen of Scots: The True Life of Mary Stuart* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), 103.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 175.

³⁷ Warnicke, *Mary Queen*, 121-56.

Mary Queen of Scots was born in December, 1542. to King James V, who died a few days after Mary's birth and his French Queen, Mary of Guise. Following the death of her husband, the French-born Queen sent her daughter to the French court of King Henry II and Queen Catherine de' Medici in 1548 to be 'properly' educated while Mary of Guise served as regent for her daughter.³⁸ The timing of King James V's death was important towards French interest. Without the King in the picture, Mary of Guise became a regent for the infant Mary and the Guises held an important role in the court of King Henry II; as early as 1547 young Mary Stewart was already pledged to marry the dauphin of France, Francis.³⁹

From six years old until her return to Scotland at 18, Mary was raised in the court of King Henry II, educated by her uncle the Cardinal of Lorraine, and became, for all intents and purposes, "idiomatically and culturally"⁴⁰ French Catholic. Mary's innate French-ness was inherent for the role she was to play towards a larger French Empire; Mary was the "key to the entire Valois dynastic enterprise."⁴¹ This belief is explained by Guy:

the idea that the British Isles were part of an emerging French empire. Scotland and England were to be the provinces that France had subjugated by the dauphin's union with Mary. This notion was more tangibly expressed in July 1558, when Henry II instructed the Parlement of Paris to register an edict granting French citizenship to all Scots on account of Mary's marriage.⁴²

³⁸ E. Deanne Malpass, "Mary, Queen of Scots," Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia, 2020.

³⁹ Guy, *Queen of Scots*, 40.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 74.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 53.

⁴² *Ibid*, 87.

Further, in April of the same year she was coerced by Henry to secretly and unofficially render control of Scotland to the French king:

First, she made a free gift of Scotland, and her claim to England, to the French king, should she die without issue; second, she put her country in pawn, for the money spent by France in defending it and educating her; and third, she negated in advance any agreement between her and the Scottish Estates which ran counter to her disposal of Scotland in the interests of France.⁴³

Despite Mary's clear status as a pawn both to the French crown and to her Guise family, she fully embraced her role as the next Queen of France, articulated by a letter from Mary to her mother on Mary's wedding day (24 April 1558): "all I can tell you is that I account myself one of the happiest women in the world."⁴⁴

Mary's bliss however, was short lived. In July of 1559 King Henry II died as a result of a jousting incident and the ever-sickly then King Francis II died in December of the following year, with Queen Catherine de' Medici leaving no place in her French court for Mary Queen of Scots. So Mary was forced to return to a Scotland she had never known nor was in any way prepared to rule. A Scotland that had been taken over by a rebellious group of Protestants, who had overthrown Mary's mother, and had been legitimized through a Treaty supported and signed (by proxy) by Queen Elizabeth of England and Mary's own family, the Guises. When the new Queen landed on Scottish shores in August of 1561,⁴⁵ she "had no better option than to make

⁴³ Wormald, *Mary Queen*, 13.

⁴⁴ Guy, *Queen of Scots*, 84.

⁴⁵ Warnicke, *Mary Queen*, 68.

terms with her half-brother...Lord James already led the council of twenty-four nobles that by the Treaty of Edinburgh was the lawful government of Scotland.”⁴⁶

While Mary’s tenure in France may seem tangentially related to James’ divinely ordained fight against witchcraft, it is important to understand how the lack of relationship between Scotland and Mary during the vital late 1550s and early 1560s set the Queen up for failure when she assumed duties in 1561. This failure permeated a continuous shift in the dynamic of political and religious supremacy between the Crown and the Kirk, a dynamic that James would wrestle with for most of his reign in Scotland as will become evident in the next chapter, and as a result James began fostering his theories on divine right and his perceived role within this hierarchy of authority.

Naturally, in the wake of Protestant factional control in Scotland, the return of Catholic Mary brought up the undeniable question of religion. The Reformation, now firmly and violently (thanks to John Knox), established in Scotland was unlikely to revert back to pre-1560 in the face of a monarch who was un-authoritatively succeeding to the Scottish throne. Nonetheless, when Mary returned in 1561, Moray, Knox, Argyll, and a host of other nobles anxiously awaited a parliamentary call to handle the reforms established in the 1560 Parliament.

Almost immediately, Mary’s reluctance to call a parliament or publicly address the religion issue was reminiscent of the Elizabethan succession to the South. For the first year and a half, Mary was content to practice her Catholicism in private (although her first mass did result in a small riot) and leave the rest of the population to follow the legislation of the Reformation

⁴⁶ Guy, *Queen of Scots*, 123.

parliament, legislation that had yet to be officially ratified under the new monarch.⁴⁷ Thus the new Protestant legislation sat in limbo while Mary practiced her Catholicism privately and much of the rest of Scotland practiced their Protestantism publicly.

During this period Mary refused a papal request for representatives to the Council of Trent and had John Hamilton, Archbishop of St. Andrews, arrested for celebrating Easter Mass in the spring of 1563.⁴⁸ Outwardly, Mary was at the very least practicing toleration of the status quo, a reflection perhaps, of her disinterest. Knox believed, however, that he saw through Mary's hypocrisy: "All this was done of a most deep craft, to abuse the simplicity of the protestants, that they should not press the queen with any other thing concerning matters of religion at that parliament."⁴⁹ Goodare notes Mary's insistence of making the parliament her own through the promotion of her half-brothers Moray, John Stewart, and Robert Stewart; "making it clear that she wished to work with the Protestant church,"⁵⁰ as these men, specifically Moray, held prominent status in the Reformation insurrection occurring just prior to Mary's reentrance. Clearly lines of influence were being drawn and while Mary may have taken a stance of appeasement, recognizing the influence and degree of authority the Protestants held, she remained the Queen and would call parliament when she felt she was ready.

The 1563 Parliament further illustrated Mary's ambiguity towards the Reformation issues. Aptly demonstrated in the first act, the *Act of Oblivion* which did not ratify the 1560 Acts but rather provided them legal protection:

⁴⁷ Wormald, *Mary Queen*, 110.

⁴⁸ Julian Goodare, "The First Parliament of Mary, Queen of Scots," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36 (2005): 62-3.

⁴⁹ Knox, *History*, 322-4.

⁵⁰ Goodare, "The First Parliament," 64.

it threw a blanket of legal protection over acts done by (and also, in theory, to) the Lords of the Congregation during the recent revolution. Anyone who was being sued in any court for acts committed between 6 March 1559 and 1 September 1561 could appeal to a special commission, consisting largely of leading members of the Congregation, who had the power to dismiss the case.⁵¹

In essence, this was a forgiveness clause but it did not push through any of the Protestant legislation of the 1560 Parliament. Mary was again propping up the status quo as she had for the past year and a half by not calling a parliament and now was avoiding ratification albeit without condemning said acts. In terms of religion, and of key importance to my topic, two other acts were passed: a doubled-down act against adultery and much more importantly, the 1563 *Act Against Witchcraft*.⁵² This act will be addressed in the next section but it is undoubtedly one of Mary's most important contributions to the reign of James and quite possibly one of the only direct influences she held over his rule.

The question of Mary's religion is perhaps best exemplified by her marriage to Darnley, which had little if anything to do with religion. This disregard of the religious question towards Mary's selection of Scotland's king was interpreted by the Protestant faction as an act of 'lukewarmness,' and the ever stringent biblical Protestants were alienated by this disgraceful behavior which in turn pushed Mary further to an oppositional side. The episode of Mary's wedding in July of 1565 is explained in such terms by Warnicke:

on her wedding day Mary denied the petition of the Kirk's General Assembly to abolish the mass at court but promised that its members could continue to worship as

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 69-70.

⁵² *Ibid*.

they pleased and confirmed that only parliament would make religious changes. Unlike many of her contemporaries, she seems to have genuinely wished that people of differing faiths could live unmolested together.⁵³

Genuine or not, this example again proves Mary's insistence towards a privatization of religion and reflects the future pursuits of James as he levied far more weight towards an idealistic religious supremacy rather than a theological position. The King was always much more concerned with his role in the spiritual reality, and the issue of spiritual supremacy as it pertained to belief systems rather than getting caught up in theological debates. This was an attribute passed down from his mother which would remain a clear basis for James' blatant eradication of witchcraft in the 1590s.

As mentioned above, Mary was able to maneuver around the tricky question of religion by incorporating her family into her close and mostly French Catholic court, much to the chagrin of several Scottish noble factions. Her appointment of Moray broke a strong political precedent for the bestowal of Earldoms in the Northern Kingdom. Shortly upon her arrival in Scotland, in January 1562, Mary retracted the Earldom of Moray, an important and powerful northern magnate, from the Catholic (Catholic!) Earl of Huntly, and bestowed it upon her half-brother, leading Protestant rebel, James Stewart, now the Earl of Moray. This was not a peaceful transition of power: the Earl of Huntly holed up in his Aberdeen castle, eventually engaging in an open rebellion against the Queen and dying on the battlefield in August 1562.⁵⁴

⁵³ Warnicke, *Mary Queen*, 110.

⁵⁴ Wormald, *Mary Queen*, 128-9.

This episode is important for a few reasons. Once again, Mary showed her religious ambiguity, favoring a Protestant Earl, albeit her own flesh-and-blood, over a Catholic one, something she was clearly unafraid to shed blood over. However, more consequentially, Mary demonstrated her lack of understanding of the land-tied tradition of the Scottish nobility, explained by Jenny Wormald: “For she intruded into the north a man with no landed or personal connection with that part of the country, and set him up against a line of earls whose record of loyalty to the crown was impressive and recognized by earlier Stewart kings with the formal title of lieutenant in the north.”⁵⁵ Wormald also advances the theory that this was telling of Mary’s shifted focus to the English succession, appealing to the Protestant south, strengthening her familial ties to the Tudors.

Mary, during her six year reign, consistently refrained from an authoritative religious stance, allowing the newly reformed Kirk to dominate the religious sphere, yet keeping Calvinists and Catholics alike, at bay. The back-and-forth politics of Mary enhanced the important role of factionalism in Scotland during this period, spilling over strongly into James’ reign. Her capricious support of conflicting factions emboldened the noble belief that power and authority were up for grabs, the primary issue being, few knew how Mary might feel on any given day, outwardly expressed by her Protestant and Pro-English council coexisting in a household full of French Catholics.

However, the tide turned in Mary’s reign around the time she married Lord Darnley, an event that reunited Moray and Knox into a revived Protestant faction that was intent on taking back control from the Queen. This was crystallized by Mary’s newfound security in her

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 130.

marriage: “as a married queen with every likelihood of producing heirs, her position was more secure than at any time since her return from France.”⁵⁶ As the Protestant plan against Mary unraveled over the next year, she would in fact produce an heir, but by that time it was far too late and her heir would be ripped from her arms by the new Kirk-led regency.

Lord Darnley, to Mary, was a foothold to the English succession. If Mary did not have enough leverage herself to convince Elizabeth to name her as a successor, a King and Queen with Tudor ties would surely hold enough weight to secure the succession should Elizabeth die childless. Elizabeth had initially proposed Robert Dudley, her supposed lover, but Mary began a pursuit of the recently returned Earl of Lennox’s son Lord Darnley. The two shared a grandmother in Margaret Tudor, sister of King Henry VIII and wife to King James IV of Scotland, this was their foundational claim to England’s throne. Mary’s tumultuous marriage to Darnley in July 1565, along with her non-Parliamentary approved proclamation of Darnley as the new King of Scotland, signified the beginning of the end.⁵⁷

Darnley was equally indifferent to the issue of religion in Scotland and was far more concerned with the prospect of political influence. The loosely conjoined Protestant faction had advocated for Mary’s marriage to Dudley, Earl of Leicester, so when she married Darnley the result was a “realignment of faction.”⁵⁸ The Protestants now joined in solidarity, the religious (Knox) with the political (Moray) together again. Moray was now on the outside of political influence and the Earl of Bothwell, James Hepburn, had just returned from France to take Moray’s place, as Mary shifted her factional graces to the Catholic side as the Protestants

⁵⁶ Guy, *Queen of Scots*, 209.

⁵⁷ Warnicke, *Mary Queen*, 87-120.

⁵⁸ Wormald, *Mary Queen*, 154.

withdrew together in a formative resistance to Mary. These shifting loyalties, driven by a hopeless infatuation with Darnley, allowed Protestants once more to gain power and influence and overthrow yet another Queen.

The overthrow was not without difficulty, at least initially. Mary and the Bothwell faction gained traction before everything began to fall apart. The revolt of 1565 in the wake of Mary's marriage was one of the few occasions that Mary showed a degree of dominance over the almost infallible religious factionalism of the 1560s. Moray led the revolt against Mary for her interference with Bothwell's trial over Bothwell's prior break-out-of prison. Bothwell had supported Mary of Guise in 1560 and was the primary nemesis of Moray; they had spent the 1560s occasionally meeting up in small skirmishes. If Darnley had drawn a line in the sand between the Queen and the Kirk, Bothwell was the point of no return. However, Mary was able to mobilize an army in time and chase Moray and his allies across the border where they sought exile. This was an important development, not only because it showcased Mary's power, but also because it alienated the Queen and the Kirk. After 1565 Mary "was more powerful and popular than ever before. She had married Darnley and thereby unified their claims to the English throne. She had routed her enemies in flight, with no blood-shed. And she had two loyal and devoted advisers in Bothwell and Huntly."⁵⁹

Stemming from the Queen's alleged affair with court musician Italian David Rizzio, the Protestant faction, now up for trial in an upcoming parliament, persuaded Darnley to strike a deal with them in exchange for a Parliamentary 'crown matrimonial,' which would further legitimize Darnley's position as king. As a result, Darnley was implicated in the Protestant murder of David

⁵⁹ Guy, *Queen of Scots*, 222.

Rizzio eight days later. A very pregnant Mary, absolved Darnley and fled with him to the shelter of Bothwell's castle. For a while life returned to normal, and upon the birth of James on 19 June 1566, all factionalism seemed to subside. Darnley and Mary became further estranged for the rest of 1566 and into the new year; Mary often met with councilors to devise ways of getting rid of the problematic and often drunk Darnley. Finally, in early February, Mary visited her estranged husband and appeared to reconcile with him and persuade him to come home, but on 10 February 1567, Darnley's place of lodging, the Kirk o'Field house, was blown up and Darnley's body was found smothered to death in the garden.⁶⁰

Mary's credibility now crumbled, the Protestants had carefully calculated the death of Rizzio and Darnley, and with an heir now rightfully secure, the Queen was quickly losing ground. The Protestant faction once again realigned itself for a war with the Bothwell faction; a civil war symbolized by the infant James on one side and the destitute Mary Queen of Scots on the other. In late spring of 1567, the Earl of Bothwell, who Mary had been politically aligned with since 1565 and had sheltered Darnley and the Queen, reportedly kidnapped Mary, raped her, and then forced her into a marriage on May 15th.⁶¹ The marriage to Bothwell, to the Protestant faction, was the end of the line for Mary. Moray and the Kirk had attributed the murder of Darnley to Bothwell and thus Mary's marriage to her dead husband's murderer represented the unequivocal end of Mary's reign. Contemporary historian, James Melville, writing some decades after these events provides an insightful interpretation:

she had to marry Bothwell because he forced her to lie with him and ravished her. Shamed by the emotional and

⁶⁰ Wormald, *Mary Queen*, 162-7.

⁶¹ Warnicke, *Mary Queen*, 152-5.

physical assault, she reacted like many other early modern victims who believed their ravishment polluted them: she decided to marry the rapist and to suppress all references to the sexual violation...she chose to act politically foolish and to brave religious censure.⁶²

Following a defeat at the Battle of Carberry on 15 June 1567, Mary was forced to abdicate on 24 July. Five days later, a hardly year old King James was crowned in the Church at Holyrood, officially ushering in Jacobean Scotland and six more years of war between Marianites and Jacobean Protestants. A foreshadow of Jacobean Scotland: just after his first birthday, a war was being waged in his name against his own mother, appropriating his authority and defining the role of the monarch in Scotland at a vital transition point for the Northern Kingdom. The 1567 Parliament officially ratified the Protestant Reforms of 1560 under the new Regent Earl of Moray. Mary escaped her imprisonment in May of 1568, and after a few skirmishes she escaped to England by May 16th, never to return. The Civil War continued, almost always in James' favor until 1573 when the last Marian stronghold, Edinburgh castle, was captured by the Regent's forces. Mary was left to wallow in the hands of Elizabeth where she would spend the rest of her days involved in plots to overthrow the English Queen, eventually facing execution in 1587.⁶³

The short-lived and melancholic reign of Mary Queen of Scots reveals a tragic and misplaced Monarch. Perhaps Jenny Wormald is accurate in describing Mary as a reluctant ruler who never envisioned nor wished for a rule over Scotland.⁶⁴ However, to imply that this was a

⁶² *Ibid*, 154.

⁶³ Wormald, *Mary Queen*, 173-90.

⁶⁴ Wormald, *Mary Queen*.

deliberate decision by Mary is to vastly underestimate her French situation, Mary was reluctant to rule Scotland, yes, but only because she had been educated and brought up to serve as the Queen of France. Mary's inability to ever establish a definitive legitimate political or religious authority allowed the Protestant 'Congregation' of 1560 to remain in power and further entrench their claims to that power. James inherited a kingdom under the control of a Protestant Regency and Kirk who had successfully deposed a Queen Regent and Mary Queen of Scots and had now held power for the better part of a decade. The uphill battle for James would define his Scottish reign. Yet, questions of authority and legitimacy spelled out during the Reformation rebellion remained unanswered, and Scotland once again fought to define itself, eventually succumbing to another period of regency.

This turn of events was not lost on Mary; however, who foreshadowed her son's ideology and referred to Moray and his allies as 'republicans' who represented a "clear antithesis between monarchy and republicanism, between divine-right rule by an anointed queen and anarchy."⁶⁵ Even if Mary was unable to resist the strong force of the Protestant faction, she understood what they represented and their usurpation as an act against a divinely appointed monarch was a recurring theme throughout James' upbringing and a basis for his development of divine right and the justification in the 1590s witch-hunts.

James, from the moment he was born, represented an unforeseen political conundrum; a deposed Queen mother, a murdered father, and no true control over Scottish affairs. This development, set in motion by the Reformation Rebellion and Parliament and enhanced by the reign of Mary Queen of Scots, weighed heavily on the shoulders of James as he came of age and

⁶⁵ Guy, *Queen of Scots*, 224-5.

slowly wrestled authority away from the factionalism of his mother's reign, and grappled with religious precedent from the then defined Presbyterian movement. A clearly defined religious authority was vital following in the footsteps of Mary, a clearly defined religious theology was not. James was at first hesitant to take up this responsibility, but the 1590s presented a golden opportunity to finally squash Scottish factionalism and assert an unquestionable divinely appointed monarchy.

Witchcraft

James' reign under the regency period will be further discussed in the next chapter but one aspect of the Scottish context that set the stage for the affairs of the 1590s remains: witchcraft. The hierarchy of spiritual and political authority was an intertwined and incoherent mess when James took over and this is certainly ample enough to explain his tendency towards divine and absolute royal authority. However, James' prosecution of witchcraft served as a physical application of his personal ideologies and exemplified James' role as a supreme spiritual leader in Scotland. Without a degree of precedent preceding James' witch-hunts in the 1590s, the prosecution might have looked much different. Already mentioned is the 1563 *Witchcraft Act* but its application on two separate instances during James' minority contributed to the King's understanding of his vulnerable position relative to the threat of witchcraft, as on each of these occasions, James' regent was a central target of the purported witchcraft.

The *Witchcraft Act* of Mary's first parliament reads: "No person seek any help, response or consultation or any users or abusers of witchcraft, sorcery or necromancy, under the pain of

death.”⁶⁶ The significance of this new legislation, which went as far as designating a crime of ‘consultation,’ may have been standard in central Europe at the time but it was unprecedented in Great Britain.⁶⁷ This was a strong reflection of Knox’s adamant Calvinism and his biblical interpretation of Scotland as a chosen nation in the midst of a spiritual war. Likewise, another angle would be the continental influence of Mary who had grown up much closer to the center of the European witch-hunt and perceived a stronger threat than was previously apparent in Scotland. This also may have been a disjointed attempt for Mary to assert a degree of spiritual autonomy, something clearly picked up by James later on.

Another possibility was that the *Act* stood as a response to the Elizabethan *Act against conjurations enchantments and witchcrafts* passed earlier in the same year. Elizabeth’s act was far less severe, punished actual acts of witchcraft with a year-long imprisonment, and refrained from designating a punishment based on consultation with performers of those acts.⁶⁸ Mary’s 1563 *Act* goes on to assert that the legislation was designated against those practices that violate “the Law of God.”⁶⁹ While this language may have been typical for the time, the implication towards James’ future role as divine defender of a godly kingdom was vital and the legislation provided the necessary infrastructure for James to prosecute witchcraft when his day arrived. From 1563 forward, the perceived threat of witchcraft was always present in Scotland.

⁶⁶ Julian Goodare, “The Scottish Witchcraft Act,” *Church History* 74 (2005): 39.

⁶⁷ For more on legal proceedings see Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London: Longman, 1987).

⁶⁸ Barbara Rosen, ed., *Witchcraft in England: 1558-1618* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1969), 54-5.

⁶⁹ Goodare, “Witchcraft Act,” 39.

However, it was not until the 1590s that a large-scale witch-hunt was pursued. Nonetheless, two events in the formative years of the witchcraft act would set an important tone for the beginning of James' reign. The local witch-hunts in 1568-69 in Fife and Elgin that began with an uncovered threat of witchcraft towards the Regent Moray, and the 1577 trial of Violet Mar for attempting to use witchcraft to kill yet another, Regent Morton. James, as an impressionable ten-year-old was witness to the strong threat that witchcraft posed to the monarchy.⁷⁰ These incidents, particularly the 1577 trial, would later lead James to define the crime of witchcraft as *Crimen Exceptum* or an 'exceptional crime,' in which, often, the traditional judicial proceedings could be suspended in order, usually, to obtain a conviction. This concept is described more clearly by Michael Wasser: "a category of criminal offenses that were so serious and often so difficult to prove that they justify both irregular legal procedure — often summary — and also deserve neither Christian charity nor imperial *clementia* (clemency) in the matter of sentencing."⁷¹

The first legitimate use of the *Witchcraft Act* came in 1568. Potentially an attempt by the new Regent, the Earl of Moray, to conjure some divine favor from above and cleanse Scottish society from the abominable succession of events that preceded the end of Mary's rule; this series of attempted prosecutions was a trial run for establishing political and religious authority through a prosecution of witchcraft, a foreshadow of James' efforts twenty-five years later. Moray resumed the leadership from his Congregation days and once again sought to restore the Kingdom.

⁷⁰ Wasser, "Scotland's First," 17-33.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 24-5.

In 1568 a local commission was set up in Forfarshire to try thirty-eight accused witches in the province of Angus. Moray established the local commission and was well-represented there but did not oversee the local prosecution himself. During the witch-hunt, a nobleman, Sir William Stewart, Lord of Lyon was accused and convicted of using sorcery and necromancy towards Moray. Stewart was eventually burned at the stake for his crimes, an interesting development considering Stewart's political loyalties lay with Mary and considering Mary escaped from Lochleven in May of 1568 while Stewart was arrested in August. Even if this was purely coincidental, it created an important precedent for the role of a witchcraft accusation in the realm of politics, in particular the religiously charged politics of Sixteenth-Century Scotland.⁷²

The witch-hunt lasted through 1568 and in the following year Moray personally led a 'justice ayre,' or circuit court, up the east coast of Scotland, traveling from Fife to Elgin. This traveling court tried around eighty witches but only executed eleven, a ratio Moray complained was due to a "lack of evidence."⁷³ Overall, the witch-hunt of 1568-1569 was a relative failure, with a low conviction rate and substantial lack of a clear threat. The pursuit of moral crimes against a Godly state was still in its infancy, yet Moray and the Protestant government laid the foundation for the intense pursuit of societal purification while demonstrating their dedication to the 1563 statute, administering 'pain of death,' for the few convictions obtained. The lack of success, however, was influential towards the exceptional status the crime of witchcraft would later obtain in preparation for the much more widespread witch-hunts of the 1590s.

⁷² *Ibid*, 17-9.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 19.

Far more relevant to James and any early perception of witchcraft was the trial and execution of a Violet Mar in October 1577 for reportedly targeting the life of Regent Morton. Although details are scarce, it is clear that the widow of the recently deceased Regent Mar led the charge against Violet, as her brother-in-law held some degree of local governance where Violet was first apprehended. One of the only pieces of remaining evidence was a letter from the countess to her brother-in-law instructing him to “be in reddiness to cum hier with thair accusatiounes in write agane the tyme ye appointit...befoir the ministeris was present.”⁷⁴ The Countess presents clear evidence that the trial of Violet Mar was to be thoroughly pursued and prosecuted at the state level, adding the inclusion of ministerial testimony and influence. Not only was this an important step for the Kirk but it also demonstrated to a young King the necessity of a vigorous prosecution.⁷⁵

The Countess has been described as a stern foster mother to James, a figure that James’ lack of fondness for was made up in respect.⁷⁶ The haste with which Countess Mar pursued the witchcraft accusation against Violet was clearly adopted by James in the 1590s, laid out in chapter three. James’ persistence echoed that of his foster mother. The foundation for which James drew upon, while may have relied legislatively on the 1563 *Act*, personally relied on James’ proximity to a very real threat in 1577.

Beyond a clear model for prosecution, James was also traumatized by the threat of witchcraft to the Monarchy, or in this case, the Regency. His fears would be realized in the 1590s but one can only be left to speculate whether James’ perception of personal endangerment from

⁷⁴ Annabell Countess of Mar, in Wasser, “Scotland’s First,” 29.

⁷⁵ Wasser, “Scotland’s First,” 29.

⁷⁶ G.P.V. Akrigg, ed., *Letters of King James VI and I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 4.

witchcraft during his prominent witch-hunts would have been as clearly defined had it not been for the prosecution of Violet Mar in 1577. Unquestionable, however, was James' altered perception of the scope of witchcraft and its relative proximity to his person.

A precursor for the state's revitalized attitude towards witchcraft lay with the Reformed Kirk's, or rather, Knox's insistence on Scotland as a 'godly society.' Knox's biblical interpretation influenced James long after the trail-blazing reformer's death. As it influenced the structure for witchcraft prosecution in the 1563 statute, so did it drive the Scottish witch-hunt of the 1590s, an enduring influence and a phenomenon best described as 'instrumental Protestantism.' This Reformation rhetoric positioned Scotland as existing under a direct threat from the devil, an often typical and contemporary Protestant understanding and a major component of early modern theology on witchcraft, defined as 'diabolism.'⁷⁷

Knox's literal interpretation of scripture lent itself to an ideal that no middle ground existed, Scotland was the new Israel and Knox, a prophet, and "everything was either the work of God or the work of the devil."⁷⁸ Knox reinforced this in one of his popular treatises by reminding his readers that "Israel did universally decline from God by embracing idolatry."⁷⁹ The Reformation rebellion represented a spiritual war and parliamentary legislation, for Knox, was to reflect the ten commandments. Here we find one of the few acknowledgements Knox makes to witchcraft, in his work *Vindication of the Doctrine that the Mass is Idolatry*: "The sin of Witchcraft is not to obey his voyce, and to be stuberne is the sin of Idolatrie...the two synnis

⁷⁷ Diabolism indicates the role of the devil in witchcraft cases. The term refers to a witch's pact with the devil which was its legal definition and assumed a clear link between harmful magic and the worship of the devil; Levack, *The Witch-Hunt*, 32.

⁷⁸ Kyle, "John Knox," 458.

⁷⁹ John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, in "John Knox," Macdonald, 641.

most abominabil, Incantation and Idolatrie: so that disobedience to his voyce is very idolatrie.”⁸⁰ Knox subsumed sub-sets of sins into the larger categorization of the commandments, all of which involve a ‘disobedience to his voyce.’ Knox’s logic continued that in a nation where witchcraft or idolatry was practiced, there is a clear rebellion against God, and thus it “doe openly appertaine to the Kirk of God to punish them, as God’s word commands.”⁸¹ The question of jurisdiction is one that lingers long in the next chapter but here it is important to note that Knox’s conclusions served as a further justification for the Reformation overthrow and demonstrated the development of a hierarchal question between a Godly society, its church, and its monarch.

Another brief albeit relevant reference to witchcraft is made in Knox’s *History of the Reformation*: “Justice courts were holden; thieves and murderers were punished; two witches were burned, — the eldest was so blinded with the Devil, that she affirmed, ‘That no Judge had power over her.’”⁸² The description is dated 1563, evident in the execution of witches, yet it is unclear if this was a real event or a fantasized description by Knox to celebrate the legislation passed at Mary’s 1563 Parliament.⁸³ Regardless, this passage is relevant for two reasons: First, it reaffirms Knox’s commitment to the ten commandments by equating the sin of witchcraft to the commandment sins of ‘thievery’ and ‘murder.’ Second, the role of the Devil as holding power over the eldest witch suggests Knox’s familiarity with the doctrine of diabolism, and although it

⁸⁰ John Knox, *A Vindication of the Doctrine that the Sacrifice of the Mass is Idolatry*, in “John Knox,” Macdonald, 645.

⁸¹ John Knox, in “John Knox,” Macdonald.

⁸² Knox, *History*, 335-6.

⁸³ I have yet to come across a supporting source for an immediate witchcraft execution following the 1563 *Act*.

may also be a reflection of Knox's essential doctrine of spiritual warfare, Knox's residency in Geneva would have certainly informed him of the current theological debates as well geographically positioned him near the epicenter of the European witch-hunt.

The place of witchcraft in Scotland prior to the 1590s influenced James both from a practical standpoint and a theological one. An inheritor of the *Witchcraft Act* of 1563, the prosecution of witchcraft always lay at the King's fingertips and when he finally put it into practice, to say he 'prosecuted' might be an understatement. James would make his own alterations during the 1590s but it remains that he never needed to institute an entire legislative act for his pursuit. Likewise, James was witness to its utility as a protective measure in the case of Violet Mar, eventually implementing this utility against the Earl of Bothwell. Attacks of witchcraft on James' Regents politicized the supernatural or preternatural⁸⁴ practices of witches, sorcerers, and the devil and this categorization was essential to the King's entire argument towards his pursuit of witchcraft. The Regents and James represented both spiritual and secular authority in the realm and thus in the decades following the witch-hunt of 1568-69 and the trial of Violet Mar, it became justified to administer the full force of the law to salvage the well-being and prosperity of Scotland.

From a theoretical standpoint, Knox filled in all the gaps and reinforced the fragile state of the nation much in need of a godly leader. Knox, aside from being the driving force behind the Reformation movement in Scotland, emphasized the sinfulness of witchcraft and theorized its threat to future King James VI. Knox may have also incidentally introduced the first conception

⁸⁴ According to Fabian Alejandro Campagne "from the end of the sixteenth century the term 'preternatural order' was increasingly used to refer to the interventions of angels and demons in the material world"; Fabian Alejandro Campagne, "Witchcraft and the Sense-of-the-impossible in Early Modern Spain: Some Reflections Based on the Literature of Superstition (ca. 1500-1800)," *The Harvard Theological Review* 96 (2003): 33.

of diabolism to the Northern Kingdom, also, again, a key tenet of James' witch-hunt. The child king was well equipped to combat the divisive dangers of witchcraft in the name of his biblical and spiritual rights due in large part to the upheaval he was born into.

Conclusion

The events that transpired in Scotland prior to the birth of King James and within the first few years of his life did not merely complicate the climate James was born into, rather, the crucial period from 1560 to 1573 established a Scottish Kirk, immovable from its position of power and authority. The Reformation Rebellion, in the eyes of its governmental manifestation, saved Scotland from Catholicism, from England, from France, and from a tyrannical monarch. England needed an Act of Supremacy to gain religious independence, the Congregation simply held a parliament. The influence of the Kirk only grew under Mary's rule who, time and again, undermined herself. In 1567 Church ministers once again played the role of savior and this time, thanks to Mary's almost singular contribution of an heir, they were able to obtain the Crown's authority.

The influence over James' reign, both during the Regency and majority rule, from the power dynamics of the 1560s cannot be understated. The defining moment in James' Scottish reign was his long-overdue assertion of both his political and spiritual authority, and even then he continued to struggle with the Kirk. A vital power, invested in the obviously indispensable Church of Scotland, was a point of reckoning for the young King and on account of his

experiences, James explored ideals of divine right kingship and Erastianism,⁸⁵ a foundation for his personal doctrine. The need for spiritual supremacy and autonomy was deeply engrained within James' brain, wholly indebted to this period in Scottish history, as a consequence to the influence of Knox's dogma of morality and a handy witchcraft act; James was able to combine the two in one of Scotland's bloodiest witch-hunts.

Without a powerful Kirk and an unprepared and unequipped Queen mother, James' reign, his personal beliefs, and the history of Jacobean Scotland would have looked fundamentally different. The consequences of the 1560s formulated a Scotland, in James' perspective, that required a skillful domestic hand from a loyal and dutiful monarch. While this chapter and the next might come across as overly contextual at times, it is only through a deep understanding of the Scottish context that we make sense of James' influences and influencers and finally, his personal pursuit of witchcraft in 1590-91.

⁸⁵ Erastianism, named after Thomas Erastus, who never held it, is the belief that the state is superior to the church in ecclesiastical matters; Weldon S Crowley, "Erastianism in England to 1640," *Journal of Church and State* 32 (1990).

Chapter 2

James

James VI was declared King of Scotland on July 29th, 1567 at the Kirk in Holy Rood in Stirling, he was thirteen months old. Just short of his twelfth birthday, in March 1578, Morton was stripped of the regency and James was declared to have reached his majority. Finally, in the summer of 1585, James ousted the Earl of Arran; his formative years had ended and he embarked on his personal rule.⁸⁶ From 1567 to 1585, Scotland was ruled by religious and political factions, largely centered around the question of the Kirk's authority and independence; the nation violently transferred hands between four regents and numerous factions clamoring for power and influence at the court of a teenage king. A young James witnessed the harshness and tension of an intertwined nobility and Kirk in the midst of a usurpation and shifting power dynamic and as an impressionable child, he understood very early on that the Kirk represented a legitimate authority and his perception of this relationship was crucial to his logic in the witch-hunts of the 1590s.

One of James' four regents died a natural death, the rest met violent ends. James' very coronation rested on the basis of a civil war being declared against his deposed Queen mother. An assessment of James' minority towards his pursuit of witchcraft later in his life, for the purposes of this thesis, is focused around the divergence between the nobility and the increasingly independent Kirk, best exemplified by the rivalry between the father of presbyterianism, Andrew Melville and James' longest serving regent, the Earl of Morton.⁸⁷ This

⁸⁶ Alan R. MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk, 1567-1625: Sovereignty, Polity and Liturgy* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1998), 6-29.

⁸⁷ Akrigg, *Letters*, 4.

development further solidified the independent position of the Kirk, separate from the Crown; a dynamic which James would ideologically challenge when he presented himself as the answer to Scotland's witchcraft problem in the early 1590s.

James' first three regents served for him while he endured a stringent and forceful education under George Buchanan and remained relatively oblivious to the short terms that resulted in little progress and in the midst of much bloodshed, the Crown and Kirk retained their respective positions, reflected in the *Concordat of Leith* (1572). This was almost certainly the result of Knox's declining role and death in 1572, along with the Earl of Moray's assassination in 1570, absences that left the Kirk without a dominant figurehead and an opportunity by Regent factions to appropriate the power of the crown to bend the new Kirk to their will. Nonetheless, the Earl of Morton assumed the regency at the same time (1574) that Andrew Melville returned to Scotland from Calvinist Geneva and lines were quickly drawn between the new Presbyterian movement and Scottish Episcopacy.⁸⁸ This divergence would plague James' reign for its entirety and the religious conflicts central to my argument were framed around a balance between crown and kirk; presbytery and episcopate.

The decade immediately preceding the turbulent 1590s contributed its fair share of factional dysfunction. In 1578 James reached his majority and was more seriously included in decisions, as a now 'majority' ruler. In response, the scramble to exert degrees of authority became, in some ways, intensified. This was exemplified in the successful 'Ruthven Raid' of 1582 when the King was kidnapped by an oppositional faction, a highly traumatic event for James that spurred him into significant action against the Presbyterian faction with the 1584

⁸⁸ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 10-3.

‘Black Acts.’ This series of legislation passed by the May 1584 Parliament represented a crucial step towards James’ spiritual supremacy and silenced many of the zealous nobles and Protestants fighting over power. The ‘Black Acts’ effectively banned an independent Kirk and officially announced James’ supremacy over all things temporal and spiritual. This pre-cursor to the 1590s was an important escalation of the relationship between Kirk and Crown and was the first step towards James’ consolidation of power.⁸⁹

The 1580s also demonstrated James’ growing adherence to peace and emphasis on unity and mediation. The second half of the decade rests officially in the age of James’ personal rule and as such, 1586 through 1590 bore witness to a substantial upswing in the Kirk-State dynamic. A degree of compromise existed between the two entities in the wake of the severe legislation of 1584 and the beginning of James’ personal rule in 1585. This consisted of an allowance for annual meetings of the General Assembly⁹⁰, as well as the Crown’s consolidation of Church revenues. In essence, James maintained a strong enough hold on the Kirk and the Kirk felt that they were efficient in suppressing episcopacy. This period is also unique in that for the first time in its history, Scotland was being commanded by a Protestant, adult, ‘Godly Prince,’ and thus the 1580s in Scotland have come to symbolize a testing-of-the-waters for a “Kirk [that] felt it had the right to act as the state’s spiritual conscience, while the king believed that he had the right to intervene in any ecclesiastical matters which particularly concerned him.”⁹¹

⁸⁹ Jennifer Brown, “Scottish Politics 1567-1625,” in *The Reign of James VI and I*, ed. Alan G.R. Smith (London: Macmillan Press, 1973), 47-9.

⁹⁰ The presiding and legislative body of the Kirk.

⁹¹ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 40.

James, in most matters, took the middle road; a sentiment he rarely withheld. Thus in the aftermath of a deficient regency, a clear precedent of usurping the crown's religious authority, and a cautious policy of appeasement, what did James truly believe on the eve of the North Berwick Witch Trials? The King's doctrines are clearly laid out in his three important treatises, albeit post-1590, *Daemonologie* (1597), *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), and the *Basilikon Doron* (1599). However, in many of James' letters prior to 1590, tidbits of his future convictions are increasingly evident, an aspect I will explore below. James strongly rejected the 'constitutional' beliefs of his former tutor, George Buchanan, a student of John Mair who helped pioneer the Conciliar movement in Reformation Europe. This movement was initially organized in opposition to Papal authority, during the Western Schism, and advocated for the authority of Ecumenical councils. By the time Mair became a leading figure however, the movement proposed the more general doctrine that all rulers were subordinate to an authority vested in the state and the community. Mair further advocated for elective monarchy and rightful deposition. Mair passed these doctrines down to Buchanan and another pupil of Mair's at the time, John Calvin.⁹² James' writings in accordance with those of his tutor can largely be interpreted as reactive and his tone throughout the 1580s became increasingly impatient with the demanding Kirk.⁹³

Personal beliefs are not always evident upon an examination of someone's life or even their writings, yet, if we are to take James' writings as a reflection of his true personal beliefs, a few core ideologies become clear. James believed in an inherent duty towards his subjects; this

⁹² Jenny Wormald, "James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*: The Scottish Context and the English Translation," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 40.

⁹³ King James VI, "To Sir John Maitland (1584)," in *Letters*, ed. Akrigg, 52.

responsibility was perceived by James on a deeply spiritual level, one that transcended his political and religious preferences and this is reflected in James' tendency to abstain from theological concerns and embrace concerns over authority. Within James' inherited duty was a strong adherence to peace; this is more evident in his English reign, particularly after 1618, thirty years prior, however, James demonstrated this commitment through his relations with the Kirk, often resorting to compromise in order to maintain peace.

James and his ideology was, in part, a byproduct of the dysfunction and violence of factional late sixteenth-century Scotland. The grounds of authority laid bare in the 1560 insurrections and the amplification of such questions during his mother's short-lived reign, produced a Scotland that was ripe for James' taking yet maintained unresolved questions of supremacy that he was initially hesitant to resolve. This plague of uncertainty gave rise to the final decade of the 1500s in which James finally and authoritatively took control of the spiritual well-being of the nation and while his efforts left much to be desired, the 1590s were the culmination of stewing resentments and power struggles of James' regency and early personal rule.

Regency

King James, in an open letter to his subjects, once described his childhood as "alone, without father or mother, brother or sister, king of this realm."⁹⁴ James' earliest memories were undoubtedly violent, born on the fringe of a civil war waged against his mother. His first regent and uncle, the Earl of Moray, was assassinated when James was three and his grandfather, the

⁹⁴ King James VI, "To the People of Scotland (1589)," in *Letters*, ed. Akrigg, 98.

Earl of Lennox⁹⁵ succeeded to the regency but was shot in the back by Mary's supporters just over a year later, thus "one of King James' earliest memories was of himself at the age of five watching his dying grandfather being carried into Stirling Castle."⁹⁶ The Earl of Mar took over in 1571 but died of illness in 1572, the only peaceful death faced by a regent to King James VI, however there is suspicion that Mar may have been poisoned by the succeeding Regent, the Earl of Morton. Regardless, the kingdom of Scotland, bestowed upon the barely year-old James in 1567 was a nation in disrepair. The entire scope of power and authority was seemingly up for grabs upon the deposition of Mary Queen of Scots. Among those vying for power in the name of Mary were numerous self-interested factions and a waning Kirk, which was losing steam following their successful rebellion of 1560.

The first marker of James' relationship to the Reformed Kirk could be found inscribed on his first official coinage: "Pro me si mereor in me" (for me; against me if I deserve it)⁹⁷; a clear expression of his first Regent Earl of Moray. Perhaps though, the first true marker of progress towards a definitive relationship between Kirk and State⁹⁸ as it existed in 1590 was Regent Lennox's appointment of the two archbishoprics of St. Andrews and Glasgow in 1571.⁹⁹ This was in no way an illegitimate or even surprising move by the regency. The Crown, traditionally in accordance with the Pope, appointed its own Bishops, however, this was the first of any such Protestant action since the assertion of power by the Reformation faction in 1567 and almost

⁹⁵ In the 1580s, James would bestow this title upon his first, of many, notorious, 'court favorites.'

⁹⁶ Akrigg, *Letters*, 4.

⁹⁷ Jenny Wormald, "James VI and I," 43.

⁹⁸ I use State, Crown, and Regency here interchangeably as James would not rule personally until 1585.

⁹⁹ Sharon Adams, "The Conference at Leith: Ecclesiastical Finance and Politics in the 1570s," in *Sixteenth-Century Scotland: Essays in Honor of Michael Lynch*, ed. Julian Goodare and Alasdair A MacDonald (Boston: Brill, 2008).

instantaneously questions arose concerning the designation of temporal and spiritual authority.

Sharon Adams explains the strategy behind such a move:

“such a step was by no means inevitable. While the immediate pretext was provided by the execution of Archbishop Hamilton in April 1571, the process of deriving pre-Reformation and Marian bishops was already far-advanced: James Beaton, archbishop of Glasgow, was forfeited in September 1570... For a financially hard-pressed regime in the throes of a long civil war the bishoprics were more valuable vacant, their revenues diverted to reward loyal supporters or to sway those wavering in their allegiance.”¹⁰⁰

The question over episcopal authority had been a persistent issue since 1560, with certain bishops appointed by Mary, others appointed by the Kirk, and in 1571, the two archbishoprics appointed by the Regent Lennox. The appointments, as Adams points out, were a useful advantage during the civil war and demonstrates the beginnings of a separation between Kirk and State. This divergence, stemming from the Reformation Rebellion and the eventful end of Mary's reign, are intrinsic towards the development of Jacobean Scotland in terms of the political playing field under James, as well as his personal theologies. Once the Kirk began losing its grip on the Crown, the situation intensified.

Considering the state of the Kirk in the early 1570s, the metaphorical ground had begun to give way underneath it most obviously in the absence of a lack of strong leadership.

Adequately assessed by the Regent Earl of Mar with a twang of sympathy in 1571: “The polity of the Kirk of Scotland is not perfect; nor any solid conference among godly men that are well

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 132.

willed and of judgement, how the same may be helped.”¹⁰¹ In 1567 the Kirk held quasi-control over the Regency through the Earl of Moray but his untimely assassination in 1570 by a member of the deposed Queen’s supportive Hamilton family turned power over to the English backed, paternal grandfather of James, the Earl of Lennox, who at the very least, indifferent towards the Scottish Kirk and at most, a Catholic sympathizer. Another blow was dealt to the Kirk as John Knox’s health began declining in early 1572; the influence of Knox had begun to wane under the stresses of the Marian civil war and the exuberant preacher and Reformer died in November later that year. “The Kirk lamented the loss of their protector.”¹⁰²

In response to the new archbishops, John Douglas at St. Andrews and John Porterfield at Glasgow, a conference was called to meet at Leith in early 1572 between Kirk and Crown representatives. The intent from the Reformers’ side was to push through their meticulous *First Book of Discipline* which outlined an idealistic and independent Church structure, an early prototype of Presbyterianism. More broadly, the Conference was to delineate the unprecedented jurisdictions between the Church and the Crown as they entered into a new period of Scottish history. Never had Scotland maintained an independent Church, never had Scotland existed under a protestant monarch (little case could be made for Mary), and the question of what to do with pre-Reformation practices and structures weighed heavy on both sides of the early modern European coin.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Gordon Donaldson, “The Scottish Church 1567-1625,” in *The Reign*, ed. Smith, 43.

¹⁰² MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 7, 6-9; Adams, “Conference,” 123-46.

¹⁰³ Adams, “Conference,” 123-46.

Sharon Adams ascertains that “for both parties, kirk and crown, the most immediate concern was financial.”¹⁰⁴ The Crown continually collected a large income from its episcopal system and the struggling Kirk was increasingly in need of funding, however, the consequential outcome of the *Concordat of Leith* was the Crown’s maintenance of Bishop appointments, rejecting the Kirk’s proposal of ‘superintendents,’ overseers answerable to the General Assembly alone. The refusal to concede by the Regency representatives ensured that the Crown would maintain a substantial control over the direction of the church. However, the Conference of Leith was wholly representative of a strong compromise between the two sides, substantial financial compensation was granted to the Kirk and although the Crown retained control over Bishopric appointments, a requirement of confirmation of the General Assembly was granted. Further, the two sides struck a balanced system concerning jurisdictions: Bishops “were subject to the authority of the church and the assembly in spiritual matters and to the crown in matters temporal.”¹⁰⁵ How this distinction was to be made was a matter for another day, perhaps a day like that in 1591 when James proclaimed: “because God hath made me a king and judge to judge righteous judgement.”¹⁰⁶

The compromise of 1572 was a lone bright spot on Kirk-State relations for the following fourteen to sixteen years. The Kirk felt slighted by the dominance of the Crown at the Conference and these feelings of ill-will were compounded by the 1572 *Act of Supremacy*¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 135.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 139.

¹⁰⁶ King James VI, “Speech on Barbara Napier,” in Christina Larner, “James VI and I and Witchcraft,” in *The Reign*, ed. Smith, 83.

¹⁰⁷ Donaldson remains my sole source for this *Act*, I have been unable to corroborate with any other sources, including parliamentary records. Perhaps it was an imposed act passed within the General Assembly.

which required an oath from all clergy “acknowledging the King as ‘supreme governor of the realm, as well in things temporal as in the conservation and purgation of religion.”¹⁰⁸ Upon the death of the Earl of Mar in October 1572, James Douglas, the Earl of Morton, who led the group of Regent representatives at Leith, was chosen as Lennox’s successor.¹⁰⁹ This was a marked change according to Alan R. MacDonald: “Morton has been credited with directing government with an intensity and determination not seen since James V had taxed the Kirk to the full in the 1530s.”¹¹⁰ Morton’s goal was to create a dependent Kirk, in part by condensing parochial charges and centralizing religious authority; his ideal Kirk was one that operated within the jurisdiction of the state. Unsurprisingly, Morton was a strong advocate of furthering Anglo-Scottish relations. The new Regent started off strong with a final victory over Mary’s army at Edinburgh castle in 1573, bringing an end to the civil war.¹¹¹ However, he would meet his match in Andrew Melville.

In 1574, one Calvin disciple replaced the other as Andrew Melville returned to Scotland from Geneva and filled a John Knox sized hole with a mission in mind. Melville, if not the founder of Presbyterianism, certainly its greatest facilitator, set to work immediately sculpting his church structure culminating in the *Second Book of Discipline*. While the ministers of 1572 had agreed to concessions, in part to renegotiate once James had reached his majority, Melville desired complete autonomy for the Kirk. His Presbyterian church would rule independently yet in coordination with the State. This is encapsulated in his ‘Two-Kingdom’ theory: “co-ordinate jurisdictions, mutually exclusive, and that the sovereign of the State had no more authority in the

¹⁰⁸ Donaldson, “Scottish Church,” 43.

¹⁰⁹ Adams, “Conference,” 138.

¹¹⁰ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 13.

¹¹¹ Donaldson, “Scottish Church,” 47.

Church than any other member had.”¹¹² This effectively removed the King as head of the kingdom and replaced him with God, to whom Presbyterian ministers were answerable. In some sense, Melville was proposing the elevation of the General Assembly to that of a divine right Monarch. A reflection of his Calvinist and ‘Conciliar’ education, Melville was Knox reincarnated, pursuing his religious rights with the same spirit as his predecessor.

From 1574 to 1578 these conflicting ideologues and their organizations met with little to show for it and the relationship during Morton’s Regency began to crumble. Clear defined lines between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism were drawn, with Melville intending to “make a proper...division of the whole bounds of this realme”¹¹³ and begin consolidating and reorganizing the government of the Kirk. Morton did little to suppress the consolidation of Presbyterian movements so long as they did not infringe on religious authority. In 1578, Melville formally called upon Morton to present the *Second Book of Discipline* which departed strongly from its predecessor in its insistence upon Kirk independence and oversight with undertones of equality and an emphasis on the ‘Priesthood of All Believers,’ a definitive statement against episcopacy. Before the two sides could meet, however, the Convention of the Estates, a sister institution of Parliament, with more accessibility but less authority, rid Morton of the regency in March 1578, the King officially declared to have reached his majority on the eve of his twelfth year.¹¹⁴

¹¹² *Ibid*, 44.

¹¹³ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 15.

¹¹⁴ Macdonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 15-7; Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity, 1698-c. 1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

James is reported to have played a role in Morton's dismissal, a negotiation with Morton's adversaries to dismiss him from office.¹¹⁵ However, Morton was a stringent Regent, James' fourth, thus it may not be too presumptuous to presume that there was little love lost between the two. While James' efforts to dismiss Morton were likely the naïve maneuverings of an eleven-year-old it also may have reflected James' resistance to the strong religio-political theorizing and activism between Morton and Melville while simultaneously rejecting the teachings of his equally stringent tutor, George Buchanan. Unfortunately, the few writings from James during this period give no indication of his religious or political leanings. However, it cannot be denied that James bore witness to the scramble for authority which fostered first, James' desire for peace, aptly demonstrated by arguably James' most famous line: "I am euer for the *Medium* in euery thing. Betweene foolish rashnesse and extreame length, there is a middle way,"¹¹⁶ and second, his belief in the nation's need for a strong and authoritative king.

The Regency of James VI from 1567-1578 partially coincided with the final, often violent, efforts to restore a Marian throne. From his coronation to his assumption of a majority rule, Scotland was marked by violence and uncertainty. The young king was often subject to oppressive factionalism at the hands of a religiously or self-interested nobility. The Earl of Morton, ruling in the name of James, maintained an official opinion that the Crown should maintain authority over the church. James' tutor, whose influence will be discussed in the final section of this chapter, impressed upon him theories of ancient constitutionalism often referencing the justification behind Mary's deposition. All were tangible responses to an

¹¹⁵ Akrigg, *Letters*, 5.

¹¹⁶ King James VI, "A Speech to Both The Houses of Parliament, Delivered in the Great Chamber at White-Hall," in *The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), in Brown, "Scottish Politics," 291.

increasingly powerful presbytery, led by Melville, who, as will be shown, never afforded James his due respect and catalyzed the unsalvageable relationship between Kirk and Crown.

This period of James' life would never stray far from his mind, when he began his witch-hunt in the early 1590s, James envisioned his spiritual obligation as saving the Scotland of his youth. Through a powerful demonstration of unquestionable authority, James ensured that the nation finally rested in divine favor. Rejecting factionalism, James safely guarded his throne and kept the Presbyterians at a safe distance. The Regency, a byproduct of the Reformation rebellion and the downfall of Mary Queen of Scots, paved a path for James to rescue his subjects, bring peace and stability to the nation, and rule justly as a divinely appointed monarch.

Adolescence

If James' regency drew lines in the sand between Kirk and State, episcopate and presbytery, then the 1580s brought those frustrations to the fore. James, no longer a powerless child king, began the movement towards consolidating power while always attempting to manage his kingdom peacefully. For James, the regency was a precondition, a destitute situation thrust upon him and it was only through his witness to his collapsing Regency that he was able to develop his position and skillfully maneuver the trials of the 1580s. Likewise, the showdown between Crown and Kirk in the first half of the decade solidified James' monarchial ideologies and while he initially pursued a policy of unity with the Kirk in the second half of the 1580s, it was not long before an opportunity arose in the threat of diabolical witchcraft for James to fully establish his dutiful and divine appointment.

The long decade can be split almost down the middle with James' personal rule in 1585 as the divider between the turbulent first half and the peaceful second half. The seven year period between the end of Regent Morton's rule and James' personal rule was a back and forth battle between the factions.¹¹⁷ James' French cousin Esmé Stewart arrived in Scotland in 1580, soon made the Duke of Lennox and replaced the former Regent, not in title, but in authority and in position directly opposite to the ever pertinent Andrew Melville.¹¹⁸ This period was marked by the infamous Ruthven Raid in 1582, a failed Ruthven coup in 1584, and the equally infamous 1584 'Black Acts.'

By contrast, after James declared his personal rule in 1585, Scotland enjoyed the longest period of peace since 1578, or by some opinions, 1567. Relations between the Kirk and Crown settled down following the 'Black Acts' and peaceful negotiations followed in 1586. In part, the peace between the two sides can be attributed to John Maitland, James' Secretary of State who was devoutly loyal, yet maintained Presbyterian sympathies and was key to much of the concessions of the late 1580s. However, the peaceful period of James' early reign was no more and no less indebted to the simple fact that "for the first time, Scotland had a 'godly prince', an adult Protestant monarch."¹¹⁹ Gone were the days of regents and factional control over the Crown. James was keenly aware of his unique position and it was through this sense that James adopted his beliefs in his inherent duty towards his subjects.

¹¹⁷ I refer to the Crown here as a faction in the sense that it was under factional influence up until James seized full control in 1585.

¹¹⁸ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 18.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 34.

James commemorated his majority rule in March of 1578 with a new coinage that declared to his subjects, enemies, clergymen, and statesmen: “Nemo me impune lacessit’ (no one may meddle with me with impunity).¹²⁰ Quite a declaration for a King yet to reach the age of thirteen although perhaps not a surprising declaration from James who had never yet known a rule free of clamoring factionalism or dogmatic religious rivalry. Unfortunately for James, his troubles would continue to persist.

Morton’s relief of the Regency did not quell his efforts to administer control, despite his increasingly insecure position. Following the spoiled meeting with Regent Morton to discuss the *Second Book of Discipline*, the Kirk was again shut down at the Parliament of June 1578, to which they vehemently responded: “to propone it to the prince...to be confirmed, as a law proceeding from God; and it became not the prince to prescribe a policie for the Kirk.”¹²¹ Authority over the Crown was in a state of limbo during 1578 and ’79; Morton was attempting to exert control much to the chagrin of other councillors but was only having limited success. James, while no longer a minority King, was not of age to rule independently and thus the Crown found itself in a state reminiscent of the Leith Conference, except this time the Kirk jumped to action.

At the General Assembly of the summer of 1579, leading ministers implemented the first ‘Presbyteries,’ in accordance with the *Second Book of Discipline*. These organizations were comprised of a group of ministers and elders in their local parishes, possibly numbering up to twenty by 1580, and served as messengers of Melville’s polity.¹²² The General Assemblies of the

¹²⁰ Wormald, “James VI and I,” 44.

¹²¹ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 17.

¹²² *Ibid*, 18.

following summer directly attacked the office of bishops, referring to them as ‘unscriptural,’ a ‘pretendit office,’ and ‘unlawfull in the selfe.’ Further, they demanded that Parliament and the Privy Council ratify their book and in essence, ratify their authority. The increasingly erratic Kirk was further alarmed by the arrival of the new Duke of Lennox, James’ French cousin, who, above all, represented a foreign Catholic threat.¹²³

In one swift blow, Lennox arrived in Scotland and drew up a coalition against Morton for his role in the murder of Lord Darnley, Lennox’s first cousin. Morton was tried, convicted, and executed all in less than a year of Lennox’s arrival; a powerful statement by an increasingly powerful figure with whom young James had become quite close. Power was transferred to the Earl of Arran, an equally close and dependable ally of Lennox and James.¹²⁴ In April of 1581 the General Assembly reorganized Scotland’s Parish structure into 53 Presbyteries of 12 Parishes each, officially establishing a semi-independent Church. Tensions continued to rise between Kirk and Crown, finally coming to a head with the appointment of Robert Montgomery to the Archbishopric of Glasgow. Protests erupted over the course of the summer 1581, as clergy from both sides were banished and excommunicated, and Lennox, as James’ strong-arm, became a primary target.¹²⁵

The tense climate in Edinburgh prior to the Ruthven Raid of August 1582 proved the persistence of factionalism at the heart of the Court. Since James became a majority ruler, those surrounding him only grew in confidence. James’ Privy Council grew in confidence to actively resist the demands of the Kirk; the Kirk grew in confidence to begin rolling out its independent

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Akrigg, *Letters*, 48.

¹²⁵ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 20-2.

jurisdiction to the Assembly; and Lennox continued to dictate and prey on a very confused James. James' letters and writings from this period exemplify the weight he felt under the constant hostile demands. Two letters from James to his mother Mary in January 1581 and May 1582 revealed loose plans for an 'Association' between the two parties, in which she proposed to serve as a joint-sovereign to her son. The letters implicate Lennox and Arran as co-conspirators to the union with a reference to Montgomery's Archbishopric as also playing a role. These letters suggest the prevailing role of James as an important political piece for the persistent factions of his court.

For all James would stand for later in life: his sole divinely appointed authority, his role as a biblical king and shepherd of his people, a symbol of unification between Scotland and England; his power and authority was incessantly sought after from his coronation until his personal reign begin in 1585. James served an expendable purpose, he represented some distinguished notion of authority and his age allowed for a degree of infallibility, thus he was a potential scapegoat for Arran and Lennox's plans with the deposed Queen. James' constant evaluation by the nobility and the Kirk for what he could offer towards religious or political authority had facilitated a weak-minded and subservient monarch come to power in 1578. Had James or would James ever succumb to Scottish factionalism? Jennifer Brown perceived that "in politics too, where one faction was apparently working against him, his attitude was not that of an autocratic king concerned only to crush dissident magnates but rather that of a man with a balanced and sensible approach."¹²⁶ James' belief in the utility of his nobility is clarified in the *Basilikon Doron* which I explain further in chapter 3. However, in response to Brown, I suggest,

¹²⁶ Brown, "Scottish Politics," 27.

rather, that within religious authority, James found an escape from Scottish factionalism and because of his position as King, the ideology of divine right provided an immutable loophole for the infallibility of James' spiritual supremacy.

Meanwhile, corruption around James' court ran rampant and the King had yet to display an authoritative attitude. His tone in his letters to his mother is one of complete subservience and clear naïveté: "for I should be infinitely distressed if anyone should think that I was unwilling to bear you the honour and the duty that I owe you,"¹²⁷ and again, "and by the care that I shall take to execute your will that mine is above all dedicated to obey you, as it is my duty to do."¹²⁸ This would be far from the last time James indulged his perceptions of 'duty.' His letters can also be interpreted as a rejection of Mary's deposition, an event that, if James' future treaties are any indication, he would have inherently rejected. James often wrestled with the paradox of divine right and tyrannical monarchs.

Whether James had ever intended to reconcile with his mother or was merely paying lip-service to an important monarchical tenet is impossible to answer; Mary did represent yet another strong influence over James' weak disposition. Again, exemplified by a poem James wrote around this time:

Since thought is free, think what thou will,
O troubled heart, to ease thy pain.
Thought, unrevealed, can do no ill;
But words passed out come not again.
Be careful aye for to invent.
The way to get thy own intent.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ James VI, "To Mary Queen of Scots (29 January 1581)," in *Letters*, ed. Akrigg, 44.

¹²⁸ James VI, "To Mary Queen of Scots (28 May 1582)," in *Letters*, ed. Akrigg, 46.

¹²⁹ James VI, in *Letters*, ed. Akrigg, 6.

A window into James' frustrations with the veracity and unapologetic attitudes of the reformers and nobles vying for power, the young King had begun processing the type of ruler he wished to be in opposition to the factionalism that was all he knew up to that point. Finally in late 1582, James was forced to act in his own interests.

The mounting tensions of James' first four years of majority rule resulted in the Ruthven Raid of 1582. The plot to kidnap James was primarily an attempt to peacefully dispose of Lennox while maintaining factional control over James. Stuart MacDonald described the Ruthven lords, Earls of Gowrie and Mar, as "anti-Catholic...but they were primarily anti-Lennox."¹³⁰ Therefore, it is important to understand the event in factional terms rather than religious ones.

On August 22nd, 1582 James was snatched by the previously mentioned Earls and taken to Gowrie's castle near Perth. Lennox was ordered to return to France, immediately. Despite the primarily political motivations behind the act, it was praised by the Kirk as "a grait relieve...the lait actione of the Reformatione."¹³¹ A comment that implies the Kirk's sustained belief in the authority of the Reformation Rebellion and Parliament; that precedent for Church authority set down in 1560 continually haunted Jacobean Scotland.

For roughly ten months James was held by the Ruthven lords while they attempted to exercise bargaining power with the Privy Council and parliament to pass anti-Catholic and anti-French legislation, again reiterating their displeasure with France's (or Lennox's) meddling in Scottish affairs. The negotiations were entirely unsuccessful and in early July 1583 a relative of

¹³⁰ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 23.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

James and the brother of the imprisoned Earl of Arran, Colonel Steward, helped James escape, restoring order. The Earl of Arran informally assumed authority for the Stewart Faction and Crown.¹³² James had taken an important step towards his authority but it relied, ever willingly, on factionalism.

A letter to Queen Elizabeth around the time of James' escape refrains from condemning the power struggle in Scotland that resulted in the Ruthven Raid, rather asserting that "in so doing neither mind we to control nor remove any of our nobility or others that has faithfully given their dependence on us heretofore, nor prejudge them in their honours, lives, nor livings in any sort, except they give us special occasion hereafter to the contrary."¹³³ In this light, it can be surmised that James believed in a usefulness of factions, or at least the nobility, and the only way to avoid conflict and alienation of his subjects was through a process of patronization. Religion, on the other hand, James was willing to fight for.

In early 1584 the Privy Council summoned Andrew Melville on account of his offensive sermons but he fled to England before the date of his appearance. This was a big blow to the Kirk which responded in strong protest matched with another attempt by the Ruthven Lords to take back control from Arran. In response, a parliament was called in late May and passed important religious legislation which came to be known as the 'Black Acts.' These acts, in sum, ordered the following:

They declared that the king was supreme over all estates and in all matters, civil and spiritual; outlawed 'all jurisdictionis and judgementis not approvit be parliament and all assemblies and conventionis without our soverane

¹³² *Ibid*, 24.

¹³³ King James VI, "To Queen Elizabeth (2 July 1583)," in *Letters*, ed. Akrigg, 50.

lordis speciall licence,' thus effectively banning presbyteries and preventing general assemblies which were not summoned by the crown; laid down an order for the deprivation of the ministers by the state 'for worthie causis.'¹³⁴

The fallout from 1584 Parliament was considerable. A large exodus of ministers and nobles out of Scotland immediately followed the passing of the Black Acts alongside multiple student/lay protests across the country. Enforcement varied but the Privy Council and James held strong to their precedent setting legislation.

A year later at a border conference with England, the Earl of Arran was suspected by English and Scottish authorities of complicity over the murder of an English representative. Elizabeth released the exiled Scottish nobles to return, Arran was quickly ousted and in the late summer of 1585, nineteen-year-old James assumed his personal rule, intent on finally restoring peace to the troubled nation.¹³⁵

The Kirk and Crown, for the rest of James' Scottish reign, would continue to struggle for spiritual authority but the Black Acts effectively ended the political legitimacy of factionalism in Scotland. Beneath the surface of the claims towards religious autonomy, James was firmly reacting to the dysfunction that had plagued Scotland for nearly twenty-five years. The Kirk and Scottish factionalism were often intertwined, with the former acting as a platform for self-interested nobles. Yet, the Kirk was not envisioned as a faction; the 1560 Parliament created an irreversible sense of legitimacy and the Reformed Church, that had held Scotland together

¹³⁴ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 26.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 29.

through the tempestuous Mary years and secured the throne for James, represented a worthy foe to the Crown. As such, James had to direct his legislation towards the Kirk.

In contrast to his empathetic statements towards the nobility, in another letter James referred to the Kirk as an “unworthy sort of people...I swear they shall never fail on my side till I find anis as great proof of their obedience as I have ever had of their contemptuous rebellion.”¹³⁶ No one questioned James’ political authority and this is why political opponents often aligned themselves for or against the Church. The road to peace and unity went through the Scottish Kirk and James could only achieve full autonomy through a rhetoric of divine right. Put the church in place, close the outlet for political contestation. James would later aptly demonstrate his dual commitment to divine appointment and opposition to factionalism by eliminating his political opponent, the Earl of Bothwell by way of a witchcraft accusation.

Scottish Earls and ministers returned to Scotland from abroad silently in late 1585. Melville lamented that “the good breithring war left and deserted.”¹³⁷ A period of peace ensued under James who had appointed Sir John Maitland of Thirlstane his secretary of state two days prior to the 1584 Parliament. James during this period erred on the side of caution and compromise but it was Maitland who was largely responsible for bridging a gap between Crown and Kirk in at the start of James’ personal rule.

Compared to the first half of the 1580s, the years following 1585 were incredibly uneventful. James and Maitland stuck to a policy of stability and the King slowly consolidated authority. In 1586 the Kirk met with the Privy Council and Monarch to formulate a new

¹³⁶ King James VI, “To Sir John Maitland (1584),” in *Letters*, ed. Akrigg, 52.

¹³⁷ Andrew Melville, “Diary,” in MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 29.

constitution for the Kirk. The episcopate would remain but Presbyteries would be instituted sparsely, likewise the King's authority to appoint bishops who were answerable to the General Assembly was reinforced. James also retained his right to call the General Assembly and dictate when it would meet, to which the Kirk was granted an annual meeting.¹³⁸

James, while outwardly successful through this period, was personally afflicted with the impending conviction and execution of his mother for treason against Queen Elizabeth, a bitter reminder of all the instability James had corrected and the clinging conviction that both just and tyrannical monarchs were deemed by God to rule and "that a wicked king is sent by God for a curse to his people, and a plague for their sinnes."¹³⁹ A final attempt to save his mother's life, James pleaded to Queen Elizabeth in a letter from late January, 1587:

What law of God can permit can permit that justice shall strike upon them whom he has appointed supreme dispensators of the same under him, whom he hath called gods and therefore subjected to the censure of none in earth, whose anointing by God cannot be defiled by man unrevenged by the author thereof, who, being supreme and immediate lieutenants of God in heaven, cannot therefore be judged by their equals in earth? ¹⁴⁰

This letter opens a window into the beliefs James had begun to develop during his personal reign and would write about at length in the late 1590s. Finally free of Scotland's political strife, James

¹³⁸ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 32-4.

¹³⁹ King James VI, "The Trew Law of Free Monarchies," in *Minor Prose Works of King James VI and I: Daemonologie, The Trve Lawe of Free Monarchies, A Counterblaste to Tobacco, A Declaration of Sports*, eds. James Craigie and Alexander Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1982), 77.

¹⁴⁰ King James VI, "To Queen Elizabeth (26 January 1587)," in *Letters*, ed. Akrigg, 82.

faced new questions of monarchical authority upon the execution of Mary on February 8th, 1587.¹⁴¹

Later that year, Parliament passed three acts worthy of consideration: the 1587 *Act of Annexation*, the *Shire Election Act*, and the *Act for the Furtherance and Setting Forth of the Criminal Justice Over All the Realm*. The first two acts demonstrated James' skillful maneuverings towards consolidation of authority and revenue for the Crown. The *Act of Annexation* annexed all ecclesiastical property and its revenue to the Crown but left Church appointees alone, a white flag to the Kirk by insinuating that the Crown was uninterested in advancing episcopacy. The *Shire Election Act* formally consented to Scottish 'lairds' demands and granted them Parliamentary representation and increased Crown revenues. This Act recognized the Lairds as a formal estate in Scotland and granted privileges to the 'lesser barons.' This popularized James' reign and in essence facilitated more dependency on the Crown while stretching his influence even deeper into provincial Scotland.¹⁴²

A centralization of power was also vital to the groundbreaking legislation that fundamentally changed the judicial process of criminal prosecution. Following in the footsteps of their continental predecessors, James instituted the change from an accusatorial and private system to an inquisitorial system. The *Criminal Justice Act* centralized Royal authority as the primary overseer in criminal cases. The lord advocate now could serve the role of public prosecutor, cases of criminal activity (witchcraft) could be openly presented to him as a request

¹⁴¹ Akrigg, ed., *Letters*, 84.

¹⁴² MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 40; Julian Goodare, "The Admission of Lairds to the Scottish Parliament," *The English Historical Review* 116 (2001): 1103-1133; *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, ed. K.M. Brown (St. Andrews, 2007-2021), 1587/7/143, accessed 12 May 2021, <http://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/1587/7/143>.

for prosecution. The lord advocate could also institute prosecutions on his own accord, laying the foundation for judicial committees in the 1590s.¹⁴³ It is unclear what spurred this decision, as there were no significant criminal trials or outbreaks of witchcraft or otherwise prior to its induction. This legislative shift, nonetheless, was quickly spreading across continental Europe, following the witch-hunt.¹⁴⁴ This legislative change, intentional or not, permitted the process of the North Berwick witch-hunts to proceed in the manner that they did. Following in the footsteps of their European predecessors, James and his 1587 Parliament passed the act with witchcraft prosecution in mind, only three years removed from Scotland's largest witch-hunt to date.

In 1588 James issued another coinage that read: "florent sceptris piis regna his Iova dat numeratque" (sceptres flourish with the pious; God gives them kingdoms and numbers them).¹⁴⁵ James' personal reign was off to a strong start; peace had been established with the Kirk for the moment, the Crown was growing prosperous, and James grew confident as the divinely appointed leader of his people. Alas, it could not last. The threat of a Spanish invasion, inevitably involving Scotland as an ally of England, was very real in 1588 and tensions about Catholic sympathizers were revived.

The Kirk began pressuring James to enforce stricter anti-Catholic legislation and a commission was granted to the Kirk for purposes of rooting out Catholics. In 1589 it was revealed that the Catholic Earl of Huntly had been in communications with King Philip of Spain. He was given a slap on the wrist and reinstated to his post. Rumors began swirling that Huntly intended to march south with an army and at the end of April, James rounded up his troops to

¹⁴³ Levack, *Witch-hunting*, 19-20.

¹⁴⁴ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt*, 63-70.

¹⁴⁵ Wormald, "James VI and I, 44.

meet Huntly whose forces dissolved before James got close enough to engage in battle. Later in the year an act against exiled Scottish Catholic prelates indicated that James, likely in an effort to snuff out any and all conflict with the Kirk, was committed to the anti-Catholic cause.¹⁴⁶

However, this episode of narrowly avoided conflict provided the final push James needed to decisively and authoritatively assert his divine appointment. James did not need to look far as the perfect opportunity presented itself less than a year later.

Beliefs

Before proceeding to the climactic 1590s, it is essential to understand, as much as the sources allow, what James personally believed. Absolute truth in the realm of beliefs is an impossibility yet from what is known of James' education, his letters, and his monumental treatises of the late 1590s, one can begin to discern James' perceptions and beliefs on the eve of the North Berwick witch trials. Additionally, this chapter and the last have argued and demonstrated that James' decisive actions in the 1590s were a culmination of the dysfunctional and unique environment of post-1560 Scotland. Without the constant struggle over religious authority, a direct consequence of the Reformation Rebellion and Parliament, and the detrimental Regency and subsequent factionalism that dictated James' reign for its first nineteen years, the events of the 1590s would take on a different meaning. Only through James' idiosyncratic Scottish experience can a degree of explanation be given for his fearsome witch-hunts and taste for divine right monarchy.

¹⁴⁶ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 41-42.

The roots of James' belief and education run deep in Scotland. The King's tutor, George Buchanan, has been described as "a renowned classical scholar and a sour, mean-minded misogynist."¹⁴⁷ The rigid tutor was also a pupil of the famed John Mair. The core of Buchanan's indoctrination of James was the concept of an 'Ancient Constitution,' that existed between the monarch and his or her subjects and granted those subjects the right to depose and elect new monarchs if necessary. This was an invented notion that Buchanan borrowed from a contemporary of Mair's, one that James never took very seriously, especially considering that Buchanan often used James' mother as the textbook example while instructing him of his subservience.¹⁴⁸

James' education under George Buchanan can then be understood twofold. First, the appointment of Buchanan as James' tutor appears to have been a deliberate move by the Congregation following the usurpation of Mary Queen of Scots. Buchanan's role was to instill humility and loyalty in James; one way the Reformation faction could attempt to ensure their high position of authority established since 1560 and avoid another situation like that of 1567. Second, from James' position, the role of Buchanan's education, at least for the purposes of this argument, was reactive rather than receptive. James lost little time seeking out works such as Budé's *Institut du Prince* and Bodin's *République*,¹⁴⁹ both of which assured him of what he had already begun to process as a reaction to Buchanan: that "a king is preferred by God above all other ranks and degrees of men."¹⁵⁰ However, while James' educated beliefs towards divine right

¹⁴⁷ Akrigg, ed., *Letters*, 5; Not far off the mark, Buchanan openly insulted James' mother in front of him and was a well known opponent of Elizabeth's position as a monarch.

¹⁴⁸ Wormald, "James VI and I," 40-1.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 43.

¹⁵⁰ King James VI, "Trew Law," 81.

may have been reactive to Buchanan's education, it was only through his education, that James developed the theoretical and theological tools needed to formulate his ideologies. Thus, while the two represent opposite ends as far as their beliefs of the role of the monarchy go, it was only through Buchanan's education that James was even able to formulate his theories.

If James' formal education influenced his belief that he maintained the highest authority in the Kingdom, it was the indirect influence of John Knox that constructed the divine or biblical environment and responsibility around the King. Knox died in 1572 when James was only six years old, yet the Reformer's influence over the Kirk and subsequent Regency were enough to propose that the parallels between Knox's beliefs and those written down in James' later treatises, discussed in the next chapter, were no coincidence. The previous chapter explained the influence of Knox strictly in terms of witchcraft. Although for James in the early 1590s, there was little distinction between witchcraft and divine appointment, Knox more broadly emphasized an adherence to Godly law, the divine responsibility of a godly monarch, and the importance of loyalty over religious dogmatism.

In one of Knox's best known works, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, he upholds the superiority of God's laws: "constant and unchangeable will of God to which the gentile is no less bound than the Jew."¹⁵¹ Knox expands on God's will in a sermon from 1564: "for all those that wold draw us from God (be they Kings or Quenes) being of the Devil's nature, are enemyis unto God, and therefore will God that in such cases we declare ourselves enemyis unto them."¹⁵² While Knox speaks broadly here, the

¹⁵¹ John Knox, "The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women," in "John Knox," Macdonald, 640.

¹⁵² John Knox, in "John Knox," Macdonald, 637.

implication, specifically for James, is that his highest responsibility is to God and to be wary for that which draws one away from God. Knox references his classic black-and-white model here to illustrate that if something is pulling away from God, it must be diabolic.

In one of many interviews with Mary Queen of Scots, Knox breached the subject of divine appointment and obedience while also assuring the Queen that “ye may perceive that subjects are not bound to the religion of their princes, although they are commanded to give them obedience.”¹⁵³ Of course in this context Knox is referring to Mary’s private Catholicism but the precedent remained relevant for James’ back-and-forth relationship with the Kirk when he aptly demonstrated that his religious authority or authority in general took precedent over theology.

Knox had this to say on the divine princely duty:

If their princes exceed their bounds, madam, no doubt they may be resisted, even by power. For there is neither greater honour, nor greater obedience, to be given to kings or princes, than God hath commanded to be given unto Father and Mother...God craves of Kings that they be foster-fathers to His Church, and commands Queens to be nurses to His people.¹⁵⁴

Thirty years before James would produce essentially the same concept, John Knox had begun circulating ideas of what the monarchy entailed, who and what it was responsible for, and how godly Kings and Queens should conduct themselves. While Knox may have only exercised tangential personal influence over the infant King, his words remained relevant throughout James’ reign.

¹⁵³ Knox, *History*, 277-8.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 278-9.

For the purposes of my argument, these two figures sustained the most relevant influence over James as he crafted the spiritual and the temporal into a successful witch-hunt and defense of the kingdom. James spent most of his regency years under Buchanan and most regents were not around long enough or interested enough to exert substantial influence over James. We know that James was incredibly close with his cousin, the Duke of Lennox, however I have been unable to find sufficient evidence of Lennox's clear influence on James' beliefs with one exception. Lennox was instrumental in James reviving a relationship with his mother in the early 1580s which inevitably brought questions of deposed monarchs to the front of James' mind.

One other source on the eve of the North Berwick Witch Trials could be considered as a potential influence over the King as he reached the pinnacle of his divine right. As is pointed out above, James closely followed the prosecution and execution of his mother and grappled with this situation in the context of divine right monarchy. As a response to Mary's execution, an Elizabethan lawyer who was heavily involved in Mary's prosecution published a treatise entitled *A Short Declaration of the Ende of Traytors, and False Conspirators Against the State, and of the Duetie of Subjectes to theyr Sovereigne Governour*. Within this treatise, Richard Crompton stated the following:

they... which have thus conspired to take your Majesty from us, when they have come into your presence, meaning then to have accomplished theyr most trayterous purpose, have beene so dismayed upon the sight of your princely person, and in beholding your most gracious countenance, that they had no power to performe the thing, which they had before determined upon.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Richard Crompton, *A Short Declaration of the Ende of Traytors, and False Conspirators Against the State, and of the Duetie of Subjectes to theyr Sovereigne Governour* (London, 1587), in Clark, *Demons*, 624-5.

Regardless of who this particular sentiment was directed at, James could not deny this logic and even repeated it in *Daemonologie*: “for where God beginnes justlie to strike by his lawfull Lieutenentes, it is not in the Devilles power to defraude or bereave him of the office, or effect of his powerfull and revenging Scepter.”¹⁵⁶

Nonetheless, the fact remains that the biggest influence on James was circumstance. The Scotland he inherited, the factionalism that constantly sought to control his crown, and the unending conflict with the Kirk over religious authority all influenced James’ beliefs far more than Knox or Buchanan ever could. James came of age during the rivalry between Melville and Morton, was traumatized by the Ruthven Raid, and finally exemplified a sense of authority by way of the Black Acts.

A few letters of James’ leading up to 1590 provide further insight into the King’s beliefs in the months just before the North Berwick crisis. An open letter to his subjects upon his departure to Denmark in 1589 evinces James’ growing confidence: “I am known, God be praised, not to be intemperately rash nor concety [conceited?] in my weightiest affairs, neither use I to be so carried away with passion as I refuse to hear reason.”¹⁵⁷ This attitude is clearly evident throughout the North Berwick trials when James often came across as irrational but here the King puts a premium on his justice ‘in the weightiest affairs.’ Additionally, on the prospect of James’ return to Scotland in early 1590, a letter to Robert Bruce, a favorite minister of James who was one among a few that the King left in charge while in Denmark, echoes the biblical sentiments of Knox: “I think this time should be a holy jubilee in Scotland, and our ships should

¹⁵⁶ James VI, “*Daemonologie*,” in *Minor Prose Works*, eds. Craigie and Lawe, 35.

¹⁵⁷ King James VI, “To the People of Scotland (22 October 1589),” in *Letters*, ed. Akrigg, 97.

have the virtue of the ark in agreeing [reconciling] for a time at least *naturales inimicitias inter feras.*"¹⁵⁸

Again, the striking sentiment here is one of confidence. James, at the point he was to return to Scotland, have his voyage obstructed by violent storms and finally face a direct threat of witchcraft, was arguably at the height of his conviction as a just, godly, and divine King of Scotland. His strong reaction to the North Berwick witches was partially a result of this confidence.

The state of James' personal beliefs prior to 1590 suggest a rejection of his formal, Kirk influenced education. In a similar fashion to James' rejection of Church factionalism and inconsistent authority during his youth, the now fully independent and adult monarch entrusted his authority to a higher power. James believed he was answerable to God alone and if this is not yet clear, the next chapter will substantially support this. However, in the years between James' commencement of personal rule and the 1590-91 witch-hunt it became clear that he had gained considerable confidence in his position. The death of his mother, however regretful this may have been for the King, did officially solidify his rightful position. Further, James had secured a marriage with Danish Princess Anne, an obvious yet crucial first step to ensuring a succession.

The foundational beliefs of John Knox and George Buchanan clearly remained ever-present in James' mind. Buchanan's direct influence at a time when James was politically and religiously powerless fostered a clear resentment in James towards his tutor and thus Buchanan's influence was contrary to his instruction and resonated through James' opinions on the role of Monarchical authority. Knox indirectly provided the justification for James' construction of divine

¹⁵⁸ "Natural enmities among wild beasts"; King James VI, "To Robert Bruce (19 February 1590)," in *Letters*, ed. Akrigg, 104.

authority and while it is clear that Knox stood on the side of the Reformation Rebellion and subsequent Scottish Kirk, he nonetheless played an important role towards James' conceptions of Scotland's spiritual identity and James as its appointed leader.

The fact remains, however, that there was no role model, tutor, Regent, or otherwise who influenced James' beliefs more considerably than James' experiences from birth through 1585. James developed strong resistance and independent understandings of the degenerative and violent politics of the Regency and factional years. This, in part, led James to believe that he inherited a kingdom in need of a strong and authoritative monarch. The question of religious authority would essentially remain unsolved but it is clear, specifically through the essential 1590s, that on a personal level, James believed he held spiritual authority. This lingering question, again, the result of circumstance, was rooted in the Kirk's claim to power vis-à-vis the 1560 Parliament, and James' finely tuned statecraft and peace-oriented policies were a direct result of his constant maneuvering of his relationship with the Kirk. These experiences firmly implanted within James the personal belief that his throne was a divine appointment.

Conclusion

King James was born into this world amidst considerable chaos. The product of a failed marriage and an incompetent ruler, when James was officially coronated in 1567, the throne he inherited held considerably less influence over Scotland than it did under the previous King James V. The sizable shift of authority from Crown to Kirk and the enablement of noble factionalism through the Regency left an uphill battle for James to reconquer and reassert the

natural authority of the monarchy. This process was essential to reconcile James' theories of divine right and his witch-hunt in the 1590s.

The prosecution of witchcraft was an expression of a twenty-five year struggle to restore respectability for the crown of Scotland. Unfortunately, it is impossible to prove that the sudden presence of witchcraft at the height of James' restored confidence was anything more than a coincidence. However, it does showcase James' opportunism and while the sudden threat of witchcraft cannot be intricately linked to James' culmination of authoritative doctrine, his response, a rampant pursuit of witches from 1590 to 1591, was definitively an expression of his belief in his unquestionable authority and a metaphorical shutting-of-the-door on Scottish factionalism.

Much study has been done on the character of King James, his theories of divine right, his witch-hunts, and his religious politics. The causality behind James' decision to pursue witchcraft in the 1590s to the extent that he did and the relationship of his theories of divine right to an always precarious relationship with the Kirk has led leading scholars to differing conclusions. From famed Scottish historian Jenny Wormald to the ground breaking work of witchcraft historian Christina Larner, and the more recent work of D. Alan Orr; the variety of opinions all maintain that James' prosecution of witchcraft was an exercise in divine right. However, where that divine right originated and why James chose to utilize it how and when he did continues to divide scholars.

Daniel Fischlin suggests that the North Berwick witches presented James with an opportunity to define his absolutism and by contrast "offered proof...of his place in a necessary political and religious hierarchy, one which provided the very source and sustenance of the

absolute power on which his identity as sovereign depended.”¹⁵⁹ What constituted absolutism in the early modern period is difficult to fully justify and while James’ theories may have emitted tones of absolutism, his reign and even his pursuit of witchcraft, while very personal to James was not an exercise of absolute authority. Further, the implication that by purely existing, the witches offered a direct contrast and legitimation for James’ authority, discredits the active role James took in the witch-hunt and the deployment of his logic in so doing. James’ pursuit of witchcraft in the name of divine right was an active campaign to demonstrate his authority as a natural appointment from God, rather than a favorable happenstance.

Orr, in his article *God’s Hangman* proposes a stoic model for James who believed himself to be a model for piety and perseverant faith; an influence of Buchanan. The threat of witchcraft was a test of the nation’s faith and James’ leadership, as Orr goes on to explain: “James admonished afflicted subjects to forbear from acting, suffer with christian fortitude, and pray earnestly, either for their prince’s reformation, or for the lifting of the witch’s curse.”¹⁶⁰ This argument demonstrates the role James placed on his subjects, a relationship in which James served as a divine protector; further explained by Orr: “rebellion and witchcraft were twin evils that were utterly destructive to both king and state, and to be suppressed with every available resource.”¹⁶¹ However, within this role, the responsibility was reciprocated and as much as James maintained a responsibility to his subjects, so did they owe a responsibility to him; a important dynamic to consider.

¹⁵⁹ Daniel Fischlin, “Counterfeiting God’: James VI (I) and the Politics of ‘Daemonologie’ (1597),” *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 26 (1996): 19.

¹⁶⁰ D. Alan Orr, “God’s Hangman’: James VI, the divine right of kings, and the Devil,” *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 18 (2016): 139.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 151.

Jenny Wormald, unsurprisingly also credits James' political theories as a result of the Scottish context from a young age:

He was educated — savagely — by the man who was Mary's most outspoken and vicious critic, and whose personal attack on her had been subsumed into a political theory which made James' power ultimately dependent on the will of the community.¹⁶²

Wormald goes on to emphasize that James was Scotland's first instance of official political theorizing and more importantly, he not only theorized, but openly put his theories into practice. The influence of Buchanan, again, remains important not only through the development of James' theology but also towards James' relationship with his subjects. James was instructed on the foundation for which his authority rested according to the deposition of his mother and therefore James, again, believed in his position as a protector and deliverer of the Scottish nation in the context of the 1560s and early 1570s.

Christina Larner's evaluation of James clarifies the dual role James believed he served and how a prosecution of witchcraft was also one of treason, an incredibly important distinction that fueled James' mobilization against the accused witches. Larner believes this theory stretched as far as the role of the judiciary for whom any attempt at acquittal "was seen as a failure to take seriously the treasonable threat to the king's majesty."¹⁶³ The notion of treason is inevitable in James' theories, yet Orr and Larner both place too much emphasis on the role of the population in James' witch-hunts, of whom the majority lived in provincial towns and villages and were terrified at the prospect that local healers and diviners had become a national vice. Even further,

¹⁶² Wormald, "James VI and I," 43.

¹⁶³ Larner, "James VI and I," 83.

that any association with witchcraft, however incidental, could classify you as a public enemy. The North Berwick Witch Trials were not a Scotland versus witchcraft problem, they were a King James versus witchcraft problem.

I propose that James' enduring battle for authority in Scotland solidified his beliefs of a divine right monarchy and all that it entailed. The North Berwick Witch trials, regardless of their coincidental nature or otherwise, presented an opportunity for James to fully and unquestionably assert his spiritual and temporal authority and attempt to end the debate over spiritual supremacy once and for all. James' almost erratic pursuit of witchcraft was a manifestation of his continued frustration with the Kirk and Scottish politics and displayed a rigid belief that the King was appointed by God, as standing in opposition to the Devil, in order to protect his subjects.

Chapter 3

The 1590s

Scottish politics reached a boiling point in the 1590s. King James VI led two sizable nation wide witch-hunts, under the moniker of God's appointed King and enemy of the devil. The thirty year culmination of widespread uncertainty surrounding the Crown and Kirk was finally put to rest, with the English succession appearing on the horizon. Finally, three very important treatises, one on demonic theology and two on divine right monarchy, were published by James. These works, the first of their kind by a European monarch, revealed all the frustrations and developments that James had faced in his rise to power, and would be widely read and widely influential across Europe, a staple of Scottish history to this day.

James' return from Denmark in mid 1590, a troublesome trip often obstructed by violent storms, was met almost immediately with rumblings of serious threats of witchcraft from North Berwick, a town twenty miles to the northeast of Edinburgh. The purported witchcraft contained a very serious and novel accusation: the practices had been directed at King James. The deeply disturbed King consequently perceived these acts as treasonous and diabolical, a spiritual transgression, and he led the charge to "put [them] to death according to the Law of God, the ciuill and imperial law, and the municipall law of all Christian nations."¹⁶⁴

Numbers surrounding the North Berwick Witch Trials vary from source to source but the consensus is that roughly sixty to one-hundred persons were accused with an estimated ninety percent execution rate however, the North Berwick witches confessed to gatherings of up to two-

¹⁶⁴ King James VI, "Daemonlogie," 53.

hundred people.¹⁶⁵ These numbers were staggering for a nation which had one localized witch-hunt to date where roughly thirty were accused and less than one-third executed.¹⁶⁶

The North Berwick trials did far more than set a precedent for witchcraft in Scotland, the efficient and widespread prosecution legitimated a government that for thirty years had suffered under ineffective authority and complete lack of leadership. This is accurately exemplified through James' prosecutorial direction towards his political opponent, the Earl of Bothwell. The witch-hunt was a reconciliation of the temporal and spiritual crisis of mid to late sixteenth century Scotland and it substantiated his claims of divine favor. In the King's mind, not only was he God's monarchial elect, he was a victorious one. James had passed the divine test, a notion he would later go on to explain: "So God, as the great judge, may justly punish his deputie, and for his rebellion against him stir up his rebels to meet him with the like."¹⁶⁷

The inter-witch-hunt period from 1592 to 1596 faced new questions of religious authority. Prior to 1590, James had laid down a precedent with the 1584 Black Acts reinforced by the 1587 *Act of Annexation*. Up through 1591 the Crown and Privy Council had managed to curb Kirk enthusiasm with the North Berwick Witch Trials leaving little question as to who truly represented spiritual authority in Scotland. Not to insinuate that the Kirk played no role in the prosecution of witchcraft during the witch-hunt; the Kirk was largely responsible for reinforcing the ideological basis of witchcraft prosecution as well representing an equal partner in the formation of the *Kirk-State Commission* of 1592 which localized judicial authority over witchcraft cases until it was overturned in 1597. Nonetheless, the rhetoric surrounding the witch-

¹⁶⁵ Levack, *Witch-hunting*, 15-33; Lerner, "James VI and I," 79.

¹⁶⁶ See Chapter 1: *Scotland*.

¹⁶⁷ King James VI, in Orr, "God's Hangman," 151.

hunt and James' unprecedented active role in the process affirmed the hierarchy of the Crown's spiritual supremacy over the Kirk.

When Mary's 1563 Parliament passed the *Witchcraft Act* a witchcraft trial proceeded as follows: it began with an accusation, either an initial accusation from a neighbor or an accusation from an additional accused witch. These were brought before the local kirk session which often proceeded with various methods of torture in order to retrieve a confession of a demonic pact, "which was regarded by the courts as the essence of witchcraft."¹⁶⁸ Once the necessary evidence was obtained, the Kirk could then appeal to the Privy Council, Parliament, or an Assize court for a commission to pursue the matter further. The commission could then decide to summon a trial by local landlords and tenants to serve in the judicial process.¹⁶⁹ However, a change occurred in 1587 when James shifted the system to include accusatory power for the Lord Advocate which may, in part, account for the size of the North Berwick trials.

The Kirk's response earned long awaited 1592 'Golden Act' which officially ratified Presbyterianism in Scotland but did little to shift much authority away from the Crown. Over the next four years the Kirk continued to put mounting pressure on James to act against the three northern Catholic earls of Huntly, Errol, and Angus for conspiring with Spain, ending in a Presbyterian riot in late 1596, essentially ruining Kirk legitimacy and ensuring James' permanent authority over the Church in Scotland. As an expression of the victory, another witch-hunt ensued in 1597 yet with a different outcome. This witch-hunt was far less documented and while the details are hazy, the end result would leave James' faith in the threat of witchcraft

¹⁶⁸ Lerner, *Enemies*, 22.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 113.

permanently shaken and possibly provide an answer to the lack of witchcraft prosecution in Jacobean England.

From 1597 to 1599 James reflected on his struggle for authority and the theology behind the dangers of witchcraft and published three treatises. *Daemonologie* in 1597 engaged in the theological debates over witchcraft and diabolism of the day but with a very personal accent from James' experiences of 1590-91. This work would affirm James' perception of the North Berwick witches and the personal threat they posed to the divine institution of the monarchy.

The Trew Law of Free Monarchies was published anonymously in 1598 likely due to its controversial and rather radical tone. Yet, while it did not enjoy as much commercial success as *Basilikon*, *Trew Law* was an almost abrasive pronouncement of James' belief in divine right. The work strongly draws on James' experiences with Scottish factionalism and the Kirk and leaves no doubt that "kinges were the authors and makers of the lawes, and not the lawes of the kings."¹⁷⁰ The *Basilikon Doron* was published in 1599; a type of training manual for James' four year old son Prince Henry. While much of the text is a practical instruction for Henry on how to conduct himself in governing the Kingdom, James utilized this format to promote his theories of divine right and assure his son and his readers that God had made kings, and in particular Henry, "a little God to sitte on his throne, and rule over other men."¹⁷¹ This text was reproduced all over Europe, making up some thirty translations, during James' lifetime alone.¹⁷²

As the final full decade of James' Scottish reign (prior to his English succession) commenced, the Kingdom would finally gain pre-Reformation stability and James unequivocally

¹⁷⁰ King James VI, "Trew Law," 70.

¹⁷¹ King James VI, *Basilikon*, 3.

¹⁷² Wormald, "James VI and I," 52.

left Scotland, or at least the state of the Scottish monarchy, better than he inherited it. Respect and authority were once again restored to the Crown, eventually compounded by the dual monarchy in 1603. Of utmost importance however, was the methods by which the King was finally able to overcome Scotland's deficiencies, the witch-hunts of 1590-91 and 1597 were an expression of this struggle for authority and their utility towards the restoration of a divine right monarchy remains an oddity in early modern European history.

The North Berwick Witch Trials (1590-1591)

The witch-hunt of 1590-91 could be perceived as highly coincidental; James' trips to and from northern Europe during an active storm season on the North Sea coinciding with a relatively common and irrelevant accusation of witchcraft by a magistrate of his maid servant. It could be read as politically motivated; increased tensions with the Earl of Bothwell in 1589 led to James' paranoia that his cousin would attempt to exercise a claim to the throne and as such Bothwell was conveniently implicated in the witch trials. Or it could be an effort on the part of James to fully assert this religious authority by stamping out a devilish threat, saving the kingdom and putting on a display that he held a divine appointment and deserved control over religion in Scotland. In fact it was likely all three of these factors that combined for a large scale witch-hunt across eastern Scotland in 1590-91 and resulted in mass executions, the authorization of torture to obtain confessions, and the *Kirk-State Commission* which transferred centralized authority to six provincial commissioners.

On August 20th, 1589 James was married by proxy to Princess Anne of Denmark, Daughter of the Protestant King Fredrick II, an important move by James in terms of his

relationship with the Kirk. In September 1589 Anne attempted to travel to Scotland but was obstructed by a bad storm and forced to stop in Oslo, Norway. Around this same time a ship traveling across Blackness Bay to Leith delivering marriage gifts to King James got caught in a violent storm, was destroyed and resulted in the death of forty people. James decided to travel to Norway in October 1589, leaving the country in the hands of a few councillors, including the Earl of Bothwell.¹⁷³ James spent the following winter and early spring in Denmark where it has been proposed he was exposed to new theological conceptions of witchcraft, through the astronomer Tycho Brahe and Lutheran theologian Niels Hemmingius, whom James cites in *Daemonologie*.¹⁷⁴

Despite yet another storm on their return journey, James and his new Queen arrived in Edinburgh in late April. From May to November 1590 a correspondence with Denmark confirmed that six witches had been prosecuted for summoning the storm that blocked Anne's first voyage and a young maidservant named Geillis Duncan was accused of magical healing practices by her employer, a local East Lothian magistrate named David Seton.¹⁷⁵ Under torture, Duncan revealed the names of other witches: Agnes Sampson, Barbara Napier, Euphame MacCalzean, and a Dr. Fian. Duncan also confessed that her healing practices were carried out by "wicked allurements and enticement of the devil."¹⁷⁶ This confirms two important misconceptions: first, the initial North Berwick witch testimony revealed nothing of a plot

¹⁷³ Levack, *Witch-hunting*, 34-35.

¹⁷⁴ Larner, "King James VI and I," 81.

¹⁷⁵ Levack, *Witch-hunting*, 36.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

against the King and Queen, and two, the concept of diabolism was clearly not introduced by James into Scotland or even into the North Berwick witch-hunt, it was already in place by 1590.

Upon the interrogation and confessions of other accused witches, notably Agnes Sampson, in late 1590, the plot against James was loosely revealed albeit without much substance. The accused listed above, for whom transcripts still exist in some form, confessed to individual demonic pacts, such as this one by Sampson:

after the death of her husband the devil appeared to her in likeness of a man who commanded her acknowledge him as her master and to renounce Christ; whereunto she granted moved by her poverty and his promises that she should be made rich that he should give her power to be avenged on her enemies.¹⁷⁷

A majority of the confessions also recalled a convention or *sabbat*¹⁷⁸ at the North Berwick Kirk led by Dr. Fian. Fian confessed to his presence at all the meetings as a clerk figure and to acting as an unequivocal link between the witches and the devil.¹⁷⁹

The testimony of Sampson, corroborated by a letter from the English ambassador to Scotland, Robert Bowes, revealed a plot to destroy the King. Sampson “[confessed] that the devil said it should be hard to the King to come home and that the Queen should never come except the King fetched her,”¹⁸⁰ and “she [confessed] that the devil foretold her of the Michaelmas storm and that great scathe would be done both by sea and land.”¹⁸¹ Sampson’s testimony

¹⁷⁷ Agnes Sampson, Confession and Examination, 4-5 December 1590, in *Witchcraft*, eds. Normand and Roberts, 145.

¹⁷⁸ Term for witch’s sabbath.

¹⁷⁹ Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft*, 318-20.

¹⁸⁰ Agnes Sampson, “Examinations and Confessions of Geillis Duncan and Agnes Sampson (December 1590),” in *Witchcraft*, eds. Normand and Roberts, 139.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 148.

remained vague, however, and despite her execution in January of 1591, James remained at a distance until April 1591, when the Earl of Bothwell was implicated.

The fifth Earl of Bothwell or Francis Stewart Hepburn, was the son of John Stewart, illegitimate son of King James V, and Jane Hepburn, sister of James Hepburn, the fourth Earl of Bothwell and Mary Queen of Scots' third and final husband. While Bothwell may have never had a potentially legitimate claim to the throne, he was a grandson of the former King and his godmother and aunt was the former deposed Queen. Any potential claim to the throne likely died with Mary in 1587 but the Earl certainly maintained a strong political presence for the earlier half of James' reign.¹⁸²

Bothwell's political entry was attributed to his wife's family. The Douglas family maintained an important role in Scottish politics and more recently held the regency through Morton. Bothwell married Margaret Douglas around 1575 and thus cut his teeth on the same factional-driven Scotland that James did. Godfrey Watson stresses, however, that Bothwell always maintained a degree of animosity towards James: "all his life, Francis was to be torn between envy and contempt for a cousin who, while younger than himself and vastly inferior in the martial virtues by which the Scottish nobility set so much store, sat on a throne he, Francis, could so well have graced."¹⁸³ Nonetheless, Bothwell often held an important place among James' courtiers while secretly paying lip service to the Kirk, or the Catholics, or the English, sometimes all simultaneously. Bothwell's foot in every factional door in early Jacobean Scotland

¹⁸² Rob Macpherson, "Stewart, Francis, first earl of Bothwell (1562-1612), courtier and politician," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep. 2004, accessed 6 May 2021, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-12999>.

¹⁸³ Godfrey Watson, *Bothwell and the Witches* (London: Robert Hale, 1975), 27-8.

perfectly exemplifies the nature of the politics that influenced James' witch-hunts, the first of which, involved Bothwell.

Bothwell was loosely involved with the Ruthven Raid and although his direct involvement was never proven, this contributed to James' lingering skepticism around the Earl. Throughout the 1580s Bothwell rose in rank, eventually becoming the Lord High Admiral and increasing in proximity to James. Around the death of Mary Queen of Scots, Bothwell joined ranks with the Catholic Earl of Huntly and was implicated in dealings with Spain against the English.¹⁸⁴ At the same time Bothwell began to develop a serious rivalry with James' productive Chancellor Maitland who was essential towards James' healthy relationship with the Kirk during the latter half of the 1580s. Despite all of this Bothwell served as James' deputy of the Privy Council during the absence in Denmark to bring Queen Anne to Scotland.¹⁸⁵ Yet, in the spring of 1591 multiple confessions reported that the Earl had been present at many of the recent 'sabbats.'

A deposition from Jane Stratton, another accused witch, recalled an account from now executed witch Agnes Sampson: "Take there the picture of James Stewart, prince of Scotland. And I ask of you, Master Mahoun¹⁸⁶, that I may have this turn wrought and done, to wrack him my Lord Bothwell's sake."¹⁸⁷ This confession coincided with the testimonies of Barbara Napier and Euphame MacCalzean that fully revealed the plot against King James. Napier confessed to participation in the "baptism of a cat"¹⁸⁸ where a desecrated cat was thrown into the ocean at

¹⁸⁴ Watson, *Bothwell*, 35-68.

¹⁸⁵ Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft*, 33-5.

¹⁸⁶ Early modern term for the devil.

¹⁸⁷ Janet Stratton, "Deposition (4 May 1591)," in *Witchcraft*, eds. Normand and Roberts, 173.

¹⁸⁸ Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft*, 210.

Leith to stir up a storm over the King's voyage. MacCalzean further revealed that at the witches' gatherings a wax image of James was constructed, and "they spake all 'James the Sixth' amongst them handling the picture"¹⁸⁹ eventually destroying the image of James. The convenient implication of Bothwell and serious evidence of a plot against the King assured James that he had been directly targeted by Scottish witchcraft and as such, James hardly missed another confession, deposition, or trial through the summer of 1591. All the convicted were charged with "denying God and religion, giving faith to and adoring the devil, recruiting new converts,"¹⁹⁰ and eventually "treasonable attendance at conventions."¹⁹¹ The second half of the North Berwick Trials can be summed up by James in a letter to Maitland from Spring 1591: "the rest of the inferior witches, off at the nail with them."¹⁹²

James demonstrated his insistence on prosecution, in the name of 'treason' by his reversal of Barbara Napier's acquittal, which she had received in part because she was pregnant. A letter from Bowes to Lord Burghley quoted King James concerning the event:

the cause that moved me to be here in person for this assize of error is the great need which I see to be in this country... condone the guilty as cleare the innocent, which are alike abominable before God, as Solomon teacheth... Therefore was I moved at this time to charge this assize of error... and this I do of conscience of that office which God hath laid upon me... I see no justice in inferior judges, they being called away either with [fade] or favor; secondly because I

¹⁸⁹ Donald Robson, "Depositions of Bessie Thomson, Janet Stratton and Donald Robson, and Confrontation of Barbara Napier and Euphame Macalzean by the Depositions of Robson, Stratton and Ritchie Graham," in *Witchcraft*, eds. Normand and Roberts, 159.

¹⁹⁰ Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft*, 207.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² King James VI, "To John Maitland, Lord Thirlestane (Spring 1591)," in *Letters*, ed. Akrigg, 114.

see the pride of these witches and their friends, which cannot be prevented but by myne owne presence.¹⁹³

Thus not only did James conceive the threat of witchcraft as a personal attack and something he had responsibility to combat, he envisioned this duty to include the correction of his inept judges when they tried to proceed with acquittals. This implies that James saw himself as an authority of more than just the church but rather of the entire political and judicial system and this is why the 1590-91 witch-hunts are so vital and so exemplary of James' belief in divine right. He clearly felt that in a time of crisis (or treason) laws and structures were abandoned in favor of his holy place upon the throne.

The accusation and trial of Bothwell represented something different however and the case is highly suspect. The episode suggests a possibly corrupt power play by King James, who was clearly threatened by Bothwell's factionalism as it stood to represent that which James sought to eliminate. James was in need of a high profile case to legitimize the threat of witchcraft, an aspect not lost on Bothwell, who stated in his plead of innocence to the Kirk ministers that he "should not have importuned them again but that he is informed that his enemies have induced the King to persuade them to proceed for his excommunication."¹⁹⁴

Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts propose that "James took advantage of Bothwell's implication in the witch-hunt of 1590-91 to assert royal authority, outmaneuvering and finally exiling his most unpredictable rival."¹⁹⁵ James did not just take advantage, however,

¹⁹³ Robert Bowes, *Robert Bowes to Burghley*, Letter (Edinburgh: June 8 1591), from State Papers Online, *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603. Vol. 10: 1589-1593*, (Accessed February 2020).

¹⁹⁴ Francis Stewart, Earl of Bothwell, *The Earl of Bothwell to the Ministers of Scotland*, (1592), from State Papers Online, *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland, 1509-1603. Vol. 2: 1589-1603*, (Accessed February 2020).

¹⁹⁵ Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft*, 39.

he planted the charge. An Anglo-Scottish correspondence, listed as *Border Papers* i 487 dated around the time of Bothwell's trial states: "Gremye did never accuse Bothwel in any thing till such tyme as he had a warrant under the councelles hands...that if he would speak simply and trewly what he knewe, his life should be preserved, and he should lyve in Sterling Castle."¹⁹⁶ Richie Graham, a local magician named by Sampson, was Bothwell's initial accuser and confessed, under apparent bribery, that "Agnes Sampson, after having made a wax image of the king, wrapped it in a linen cloth, gave it to the devil and held it up to the witches assembled there, saying that 'this is King James the Sixth, ordained to be consumed at the instance of a nobleman, Francis, earl of Bothwell."¹⁹⁷ Graham was convicted and executed shortly after but his role may have revealed a bribery system for constructed depositions and confessions, in which case the entire source base, which already demands a critical analysis, could be in jeopardy. This also reveals that at the heart of James' witch-hunt was a desire to rid himself of all competition, both political and spiritual.

Bothwell was imprisoned upon his accusation but escaped in June before a trial could take place, but James had other plans, according to a Letter from James to Maitland, three days before Bothwell's escape: "Since there can no present trial be had of the Earl Bothwell, I think best he prepare himself to depart within thirty or forty days."¹⁹⁸ James had banishment in mind but was derailed by Bothwell's escape, who attempted to gather support against the King and allegedly snuck into Holyrood Palace in December of 1591 and asked James for a pardon before

¹⁹⁶ "The Substance of a Letter From Ritchie Graham to the King," in *Witchcraft*, eds. Normand and Roberts, 177.

¹⁹⁷ Levack, *Witch-hunting*, 37.

¹⁹⁸ James VI, "To John Maitland, Lord Thirlestane (Spring 1591)," in *Letters*, ed. Akrigg, 114.

fleeing. Bothwell would spend the rest of his years in Scotland on the run until he finally departed the country in exile in 1595.¹⁹⁹

Following the North Berwick Witch-Hunt, James commissioned a wood-cut pamphlet by James Carmichael to be printed in London in late 1591 entitled *Newes From Scotland*. Carmichael was the Minister at Haddington and had developed important literary and press connections during his exile in England, following the Ruthven Raid. He was an important contact for Robert Bowes and retained a prominent role in the religious and political environments of Jacobean Scotland.²⁰⁰ Carmichael's pamphlet, a likely second hand account from James, recalled the events of the North Berwick Witch trials and drew much of its narrative from the confessions and examinations of the accused witches but with a clear agenda in mind: "to show the reality of witchcraft and the power of the magistrate to discover it."²⁰¹

The pamphlet served as a prototype for James' later writings and provides evidence for James' immediate reaction to the witch-hunt which can be summarized in a quote from *Newes From Scotland*: "that so long as God is with him [King James], he feareth not who is against him."²⁰² This biblical reference ensured readers of the imminent threat of witchcraft while reassuring them that so long as James held the throne, there was nothing to fear.

In the aftermath of the North Berwick trials James officially declared the crime of witchcraft to be *Crimen Exceptum* or an 'exceptional crime,' which suspended some judicial processes concerning evidence; in particular, James was adamant that the bar on women and

¹⁹⁹ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 46.

²⁰⁰ Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft*, 292.

²⁰¹ Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft*, 297-8.

²⁰² Carmichael, *Newes*.

children's testimonies be lifted.²⁰³ However, a more important development following North Berwick occurred that would shape the witch-hunt in 1597.

Thus, in an effort to filter the influx of cases during the North Berwick Trials, the Privy Council issued the *Privy Council Commission* in October of 1591. This order granted six commissioners, a mix of State and Kirk officials (the Lord Advocate, the Justice Clerk, two ministers, the Lord Provost, and a burgess from Edinburgh) the authority to divide up and oversee all witchcraft cases and report the legitimate cases back to both Privy Council and the King. This shifted accusatory power from the singular Lord Advocate to the six appointed commissioners.

The formation of the commission also included a recommendation from James to implement torture when necessary. This order was expanded in 1592 with the *Kirk-State Commission* that essentially localized prosecutions in every county. From 1592 till the order was reversed in 1597, witchcraft proceedings, which included confessions, interrogations, and authorized torture, were performed locally. Only the trial required a higher authority.²⁰⁴ Despite James' clear political and religious success following North Berwick, this Commission suggests that he was wholly devoted to the witchcraft cause and that the fight was far from over.

The direct attack upon the King served to justify the very core of his ideology, and was summarized by the deposition of Euphame MacCalzean, when she was asked "where would they get a King again. Euphame answered 'the realm will not want a King.'²⁰⁵ This confession

²⁰³ Levack, *Witch-hunting*, 41.

²⁰⁴ Normand and Roberts, *Witchcraft*, 92.

²⁰⁵ Euphame Macalzean, "Depositions of Bessie Thomson, Janet Stratton and Donald Robson, and Confrontation of Barbara Napier and Euphame Macalzean by the Depositions of Robson, Stratton, and Ritchie Graham," in *Witchcraft*, eds. Normand and Roberts, 162.

perfectly summarizes what James felt he was protecting his kingdom against; total anarchy would ensue should witchcraft be left to manifest itself across Scotland, and James, as God's chosen king, naturally led the charge against such a threat.

The North Berwick Witch Trials were a united effort between Kirk and Crown, against the threat of witchcraft and this made James' propagandist claims all the more persuasive. If the Kirk were to protest James' divine fight against the threat of witchcraft it risked the perception that it was somehow sympathetic towards witchcraft or even worse, witches themselves, and the ministers might end up like Bothwell. The North Berwick witches presented a perfect opportunity for James to put his divine right ideology into practice, aided in the elimination of political competition, and gave him the upper hand over the Kirk.

Inter-Witch-Hunt Years (1592-1596)

James made a clear statement about his relationship with the Kirk when he published in *Newes From Scotland* that "his majesty had never come safely from the sea, if his faith had not prevailed above their (the witches') intentions."²⁰⁶ The Kirk had not saved James and Scotland from witchcraft, rather it was James' faith that ensured his victory. James' now clearly defined relationship with God did much to eliminate any need for Kirk approval and diminished the prospect of Kirk authoritative independence. While the two largely worked together to eliminate the 1590-91 witchcraft threat, James took full credit vis-à-vis his divine right as King. As was the natural ebb and flow of Scotland's current politics, the Kirk responded in 1592 applying a new degree of pressure onto James. A result would be the 1592 'Golden Act' which officially ratified

²⁰⁶ Carmichael, *Newes*.

Presbyterianism but maintained much of the legislation passed in the 1584 'Black Acts' and certified James' continued authority over the Kirk.

The 'Golden Act' and its relevance is described sufficiently by Julian Goodare:

explicitly ratified the existence of general assembly, synods, presbyteries, and kirk sessions, gave presbyteries powers of excommunication, and directed that presentations of ministers should...be directed to them and not to bishops. It repealed the act of 1584 giving authority to bishops, but otherwise the structure of royal supremacy was left in place; in particular the act on royal authority was not repealed...The crown also had the right to summon general assemblies.²⁰⁷

After thirty-two years, the Kirk of Scotland was officially ratified. This was, from a Kirk perspective, an important moment and the culmination of two depositions, years of factional tug-of-war, and an often rocky relationship with James. The Church was finally recognized but only after James had legislatively declared his authority over it in 1584 and exemplified his spiritual supremacy in 1590 and 1591.

The 'Golden Act' was enough to pacify the Kirk for the moment and led it to believe it had gained some ground. The Act did ensure that James' would likely never see his Episcopalian church through, finally ceding structural precedent to the Kirk and all but eliminating the remaining bishoprics or at the very least, rendering them irrelevant. At this point, though, it is increasingly evident that what James was far more concerned with, over theology or structure, was authority. He maintained his spiritual authority, bolstered by the North Berwick Witch Trials, and this authority, or rather supremacy, was something the Kirk would never obtain, at least not through 1603.

²⁰⁷ Julian Goodare, *State and Society*, 195-6

The situation drastically changed again in early 1593. In late 1592, the Earl of Arran returned to James' court; Arran was ousted from power in 1585 at the border conference where an English representative was murdered and as a partial consequence James assumed his personal rule. Arran's return spoiled the Kirk parade over the new ratification and set the stage for further outrage when in January of 1593 a ship was stopped on its way out of Scotland and revealed to be carrying letters and papers to Spain, all signed by the northern Catholic Earls of Huntly, Errol, and Angus. The obvious evidence of sedition and treason with a foreign enemy, one who in the late sixteenth-century posed a constant threat, re-launched the Kirk into a full-scale campaign for James to prosecute and pass anti-Catholic legislation.²⁰⁸

As James continued to dance around the issue, tensions rose until the Convention passed the *Act of Abolition* in November 1593 requiring the Catholic earls to 'satisfy the Kirk' in order to save themselves, which the Earls casually ignored. Pressure on James mounted, epitomized by a sermon by John Ross at Perth in February 1594 in which he referred to the King as "reprobate, a traitor and rebel to God."²⁰⁹ Ross was subsequently banished but his sentiments raise an important question: In the wake of the North Berwick Trials, was James' liberator mentality already lost on his subjects by early 1594? Or was it never there to begin with? The paradoxical nature of James' victory over witchcraft in 1591 may be that it was only envisioned in such terms by him; a self-assertion of his divinely appointed authority, given to him on account of saving a populace who did not believe in it. This is one of the problems that arises when studying James' Scottish reign and a problem I will address further at the end of this chapter. The history of

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 51-2.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 55.

Jacobean Scotland was forever altered by the publication of James' three treatises at the end of the 1590s and those works contribute to the perspective that the problem of witchcraft was one that existed primarily in contrast to James' divine right, yet the perspective leaves unanswered questions, like much of early modern European history, of what the illiterate and often unrecorded masses believed.

As the year drew on, James' inaction had begun to undermine his authority and a popular opinion grew that the Catholic earls actually ruled Scotland. Finally, in September of 1594 James decided to resort to force, prompted by the Earl of Bothwell joining the Catholic earl's resistance, a development about which Robert Bowes commented "a Bothwell and a papist shall now all be one."²¹⁰ The two sides met at the Battle of Glenlivet in late September 1594 but the Catholics drew back to their castles and after a month of besieging those castles, James went back to Edinburgh, with little accomplished. Nonetheless, something must have happened in Aberdeen in October 1594 because in February 1595 the Catholic earls Huntly and Errol left Scotland and in March 1595 James officially banished them alongside the Presbytery of Edinburgh's excommunication of Bothwell. Thus began the year of cooperation between Kirk and Crown leading James to exclaim to the General Assembly: "counting it more honour to be a Christian than a King."²¹¹

In October 1595, Chancellor Maitland died, a considerable loss for the Kirk and a foreshadow of its encroaching fall from grace. James appointed an eight man commission in his

²¹⁰ Robert Bowes, "Robert Bowes to Lord Burghley (24 September 1594)," in *Jacobean Kirk*, MacDonald, 58.

²¹¹ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 57-61.

place, led by Alexander Seton, a suspected papist.²¹² In July 1596 the Catholic earls secretly returned, possibly at James' request, although never proven, and a new wave of resistance came from the Kirk but this time it would not just be the Kirk. Lay populations all over southern Scotland lobbied against the Catholic earls and James and on a couple occasions occupied Edinburgh during Conventions of the Estates and General Assemblies. While tensions rose in the streets, relations between Kirk and Crown were not improving and the point of no return was likely Andrew Melville's admonishment of James during a meeting between the Privy Council and Kirk Commission: "Thair is twa Kings and twa Kingdomes... Thair is Chryst Jesus the King, and his Kingdome the Kirk, whase subject King James the Saxt is, and of whase kingdome nocht a king, nor a lord, nor a heid, bot a member."²¹³ Melville was removed from his post as Principal of St. Andrews in July 1597.²¹⁴

Thus the stance of the Kirk was firmly established and the disrespect to James was cemented. When minister David Black was charged with sedition on December 9th the Kirk rallied to his side. On December 17th, 1596 while James was in a private meeting with the Lords of Session, a group of ministers gathered outside and began loudly criticizing James. Soon a crowd gathered and degenerated into a full blown riot, the crowd pressing upon James' tolbooth and making calls to arms. A condensed list of the rioters' demands were:

recall of the clerical commissioners, the removal of the requirement that ministers acknowledge the King's jurisdiction in writing in order to receive their stipends, the

²¹² Maurice Lee Jr., "James VI and the Revival of Episcopacy in Scotland: 1596-1600," *Church History* 43 (1974): 52.

²¹³ Melville, "Diary," 64.

²¹⁴ Orr, "God's Hangman," 146.

expulsion of the Catholic earls and the dismissal from office of 3 of the Octavians²¹⁵, including Seton.²¹⁶

Before anyone was hurt, the crowd subdued but the damage was done. The Kirk would never regain their standing with James while he resided in Scotland. If the 1584 ‘Black Acts’ represented the end of factionalism in Scotland then the 1596 Riot represented the end of the Kirk-Crown debate and fully confirmed James’ spiritual superiority over the Kirk.²¹⁷

In 1597 James would ratify this ‘end’ at the General Assembly in Perth but the riot on December 17th unofficially settled the debate over spiritual and religious supremacy that had haunted James for the entirety of his reign and had haunted Scotland since 1560. This was the one issue that the peace-loving Monarch could never relinquish; spiritual authority was intrinsic to James’ personal belief, his entire world was constructed around the narrative that God had chosen him to rule, it was how he made sense of the dysfunction he was born into and the tumultuous late 1570s and 1580s when he was thrown around by unending factionalism. James held stringently to his divine-right complex and this conception provides the best explanation for 1590s Scotland, including, one more witch-hunt.

The Witch-Hunts of 1597

The witch-hunts of 1597 are generally classified with the North Berwick Witch Trials on the basis that there was another reported attempt on James’ life. Yet, outside of James’ active role, the witch-hunts of 1597 represent something much different than the North Berwick

²¹⁵ Name for James’ replacement Chancellor commission.

²¹⁶ Lee Jr., “James VI,” 54.

²¹⁷ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 68-70.

episode. If the 1590-91 witch-hunt was a triumph of James' spiritual authority and demonstration of divine right then the 1597 trials were his undoing and a clear sign that the *Kirk-State Commission* had been a mistake. These trials, most notably in Aberdeenshire, were much more locally confined, at least according to the little evidence that has been recovered, and involved around eighty accused and twenty-seven known executions.²¹⁸ The substantial lack of evidence likely reflects the local nature where the scribes may have been held less accountable or were simply not up to the standard of those in 1590-91. Undoubtedly, though, the 1597 witch-hunts capped off an important decade in Scottish history and largely retired James to writing about his ideologies and theories rather than acting upon them.

The witch-hunts of 1597 reunited the Kirk and Crown in the wake of the December riot and with an understanding that James now held unquestionable supremacy, the two could proceed in expelling witchcraft in Scotland. Also in the summer of 1597, the plague reemerged and combined with a few years of sub-par harvests, accusations of witchcraft could have reflected a belief on the popular level that they had fallen out of favor with God and that by ridding society of witchcraft, Scotland could regain God's favor.²¹⁹ If, in fact, witchcraft represented opposition to God, as James profoundly believed it did, then its prevalence across Scotland would certainly explain his forsaking of the Country.

The witch-hunt began in January and February near Aberdeenshire alongside a similar witch-hunt in Fife around the same time. At the town of Slains two women were prosecuted on the basis of local opinion without being given a formal interrogation; Isobel Strachan, a local

²¹⁸ Julian Goodare, "Scottish Witchcraft Panic of 1597," in *The Scottish Witch-hunt in Context*, ed. Julian Goodare (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 70.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 52-3.

charmer, and a burgess' wife named Janet Wishart. This was perhaps further evidence that local populations had begun turning on their own to rid themselves of plague. Wishart's son, Thomas Leys was brought in and questioned shortly after his mother's execution and confessed to regularly attending sabbats with other locals that he named. This began a witch-hunt snowball and by May twenty-seven executions were carried out.²²⁰

At the same time in the town of Balwearie in Fife a prominent witch-hunt was ongoing and in April a witch named Margaret Aitken was interrogated and confessed her guilt under torture, but she also confessed something else. The event is recored by John Spottiswoode in his ecclesiastical history from the 1620s:

Being examined touching her associates in that trade, she named a few, and perceiving her delations find credit, made offer to detect all of that sort, and to purge the country of them, so that she might have her life granted... That they had a secret mark all of that sort, in their eyes whereby she could surely tell, how soon she looked upon any, whether they were witches or not.²²¹

The deal was agreed upon and the local commission brought her from town to town through the end of the summer identifying which accused witches were genuine and which were not. There is no record for how many were put to death under Aitken's 'eye,' Spottiswoode simply refers to 'many.'

An interesting element of the Aitken affair was the use of the 'swimming test' in order to detect witches.²²² This process was expounded upon by James in *Daemonologie* which

²²⁰ *Ibid*, 53-5.

²²¹ John Spottiswoode, "History of the Church in Scotland," in "Panic of 1597," Goodare, 59.

²²² Goodare, "Panic of 1597," 59-60.

coincidentally would be published later in 1597. The test consisted of binding a person's hands and feet together and tossing them into a body of water and if "their fleeting on the water: for...it appears that God hath appoynted...that the water shal refuse to receive them in her bosom, that have shaken off them the sacred Water of Baptisme, and wilfullie refused the benefite thereof."²²³ In other words, if they were tossed in and floated, they were guilty, if they sank they were innocent and hopefully someone could jump in fast enough to save them from drowning.

Eventually Aitken erred by determining the same accused witch guilty one day and innocent the next. To the dismay of King James and the rest of the witchcraft prosecutors, Margaret confessed at her own trial in early August 1597 that she had fabricated her claim to be able to spot witches; a confession that called into question the numerous convictions made at her insistence.²²⁴ In one swift blow, the witch-hunt and its divinely backed authority had lost much of its credibility. James had been misled by his blind devotion to the role of protector and while his belief in the presence of witchcraft was not totally lost, his belief in the current prosecution system absolutely was.

The King suffered a crisis of conscience at so blatantly misleading his subjects and in a letter to Lord Burghley, Robert Bowes remarked that the King was troubled by the exceeding number of cases, no longer a sign of victory but of unjust malpractice.²²⁵ Another letter reported that "Sundry ministers to be chosen for these places are directed by the King to preach before him...and giving occasion to entreat of witches, wherein the King seems desirious to be well

²²³ James VI, "Daemonologie," 56.

²²⁴ Goodare, "Panic of 1597," 59-60; Levack, *Witch-hunting*, 41-2.

²²⁵ Robert Bowes, *Robert Bowes to Lord Burghley*, Letter (Edinburgh: August 15 1597), from State Papers Online, *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603. Vol. 13: Part 1: 1597-1599*, (Accessed February 2020).

resolved by the authorities of the scriptures.”²²⁶ A distressed James attempted to find some solace in scriptural justification and Bowes’ letter did not indicate whether or not he found it, but James never quite got over the debacle of the 1597 witch-hunt. The cloud of uncertainty and skepticism followed him to England and could be one reason (among many) that England never witnessed a large-scale witch-hunt under James.

In the aftermath of the Aitken incident James immediately revoked all present witch-hunting commissions and proceeded to act as an overseer to as many cases as possible.²²⁷ The withdrawal of all present commissions did not stop cases from proceeding, it just required them to appeal to a centralized authority in Edinburgh. Thus, upon catching wind of a case where “McKolme Anderson confesses that he and other witches practised to have drowned the king in his passage over the water at Dundee,”²²⁸ James was right back on the hunt. Through August and September of 1597 James spent his time jumping from case to case, ensuring adequate justice was served and while the evidence for these cases is scanty, the understanding is that James the enthusiastic witch-hunter was gone and caution was now the name of the game.²²⁹ Yet, James certainly had not seemed to have lost faith in himself and it was only by designation to others of these affairs that mistakes had been made. The Aitken affair unfortunately persuaded few that witchcraft was an imagined threat.

²²⁶ Robert Bowes, *Robert Bowes to Lord Burghley*, Letter (Edinburgh: September 8 1597), from State Papers Online, *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603. Vol. 13: Part 1: 1597-1599*, (Accessed January 2020).

²²⁷ Goodare, “Panic of 1597,” 60-1.

²²⁸ Robert Bowes, “Robert Bowes to Lord Burghley (15 Aug. 1597),” in “Panic of 1597,” Goodare, 62.

²²⁹ Goodare, “Panic of 1597,” 62.

James' recognition of a systemic problem was reflected in the 1597 Parliament held in November and December when an act was passed under the title "Anent the forme of proces against witches" that reportedly "set up a commission to make recommendations about what evidence should be received in witchcraft trials."²³⁰ This act was never officially published, and outside of James' endorsement of it in March of 1598, its original format is unknown but its timing, in the wake of the Aitken incident, is no coincidence.²³¹ The evidence for witchcraft would now go through a centralized vetting process and those most qualified would make a judgment over whether or not to pursue a case. Essentially, this was a more intricate version of the process that existed prior to 1592.

The Witch-Hunts of 1597 differed significantly from those at the beginning of the decade. The efforts by James can still be perceived as an act of spiritual authority and divinely inspired prosecution, yet the process and outcome looked very little like the North Berwick case. On the surface level, the Witch-Hunts of 1597, despite allegedly being marginally larger than North Berwick, were far less publicized. The localization of the later witch-hunt, as a result of the 1592 *Kirk-State Commission*, led to reports and threats that were not front and center in Edinburgh like in 1590-91, there was far less reporting going on in the locales and this, in part, is responsible for what seems to be a disregard for the formal process at times. If jurists and administrators were cutting corners, they did not want anyone down in Edinburgh to be aware of it and this is, in a sense, what the Margaret Aitken affair exposed.

²³⁰ *Ibid*, 69.

²³¹ *Ibid*, 68.

Additionally, *Newes From Scotland* spread word across Great Britain and on the Continent of James' successful defeat of devilish witchcraft. The trials in 1597 got no such treatment and this is clearly a response to the outcome of the trials. For James, the North Berwick witches were justly and rightfully executed, his Kingdom was successfully cleansed with no one but himself to thank. James' agenda in 1591 was to shout to the world that he was a divinely appointed monarch who had triumphed over witchcraft and set himself apart from the Scottish church and here was the evidence to prove it. In 1597, James was confused and ashamed. He felt guilty for the extensiveness of the witch-hunts and the injustice that had been administered. The divine King had misled his people and in line with his beliefs, he consequently feared divine retribution. However, the way back to favor was not through more prosecution but rather through the pen and James sat down to finish *Daemonologie* and begin work on his other two treatises.

Three Treatises

As the 1590s ended, James had reached a pinnacle of his kingship. Inheriting the monarchy through a deposition, a deposition of his mother no less, set James on a disadvantaged path. James had to fight his way to a position of authority; early on maneuvering around a forceful education and a Regency that could hardly be described as successful. The dynamics of power and authority of post-1560 Scotland elevated the Reformed Kirk above the Monarchy, a seismic shift that James would struggle against for the entirety of his reign. King James successfully defeated factionalism, witchcraft, and finally established his spiritual supremacy in the Kingdom. The fact that James, shortly before he inherited the English throne, sat back and

reflected on his Scottish experience in the form of three treatises on demonic theology, divine right monarchy, and practical kingship, seems too perfect.

These three works serve as James' interpretation of his reign up through the 1590s and provide further support for the claims made in this thesis: that the witch-hunts of the 1590s were ideological and the result of decades of factionalism and a struggle between Kirk and Crown for religious and spiritual supremacy, all of which James was either front and center for or a willing participant. The theories and ideologies exhibited in James' battle with the Kirk, in his legislation, and his grounds for witch-hunting are all collected in these treatises and further extend James' stance on diabolism, his position in relation to God, and the role of the nobility.

Daemonologie stands as an important work in the field of early modern theology and reinforces many of the ideas of James' contemporary demonologists yet with the perception of a King who has just experienced and participated in widespread prosecution efforts. The work makes several clear references to the witch-hunts of 1590-91, more obviously than those of 1597, which implies that James likely began this work in the aftermath of North Berwick. James expands his focus to more general practices of magic and the dangerous practice of necromancy while incorporating and warning of the treasonous nature of these practices. *Daemonologie* stood as a warning; in the aftermath of two big witch-hunts James felt the responsibility to educate his subjects on the danger of witchcraft and magic, specifically considering the botched situation at the end of the 1597 witch-hunts. Witchcraft cases in Scotland after James' publication closely followed the details laid out in this work.

The Trew Law of Free Monarchies was a short yet very forthright assertion of divine right monarchy. This was the uncensored release of James' long frustrations over his divine authority

in which he laid out a historical precedent for his right, a rejection of Buchanan's teachings, and a clearly defined relationship between king and God that he reinforced with biblical precedents. The work aligns with his doctrine on witchcraft and reflects much of the problems with the Kirk in the 1590s. *Trew Law* is likely the least circulated of James' works and it was published anonymously on account of the serious claims James was making.

The *Basilikon Doron* was certainly James' most famous work; Jenny Wormald refers to it as his 'bestseller.'²³² This thorough and practical work was written initially as a guide for James' young son Henry for his inheritance of the Kingdom. The work is mostly a manual for kingship, providing instruction on minute things such as food and recreation while also covering topics such as the role of the nobility and how to rule peacefully. Within the practicalness of *Basilikon* it is more difficult to discern James' experience, perhaps because he intends that Henry will not grow up in the same environment that James did. Nonetheless, James is keen to warn Henry of the Kirk and includes a small section near the beginning concerning divine right.

Daemonologie was published in 1597, almost immediately following the 1597 witch-hunts and possibly before the Parliamentary *Act* enforcing strict evidence standards. Despite the proximity to that witch-hunt, James is unwavering in his stance against witchcraft but does so through a meticulous explanation of the theology behind the acts. The work is split up into three parts: "the first speaking of Magic in general, and Necromancy in special. The second of sorcery and Witchcraft: and the third, contains a discourse of all these kinds of spirits, and specters that appear and trouble people, together with a conclusion of the whole work."²³³ The treatise is

²³² Wormald, "James VI and I."

²³³ James VI, "Daemonologie," 5.

written in Socratic style as a conversation between two characters named Philomates and Epistemon, an ode to James' classical education. Thus the format is clearly intended for the mass of his population who are unfamiliar with these topics. This is evidenced by one of James' first lines, that his work serves the purpose of "[proving] two things...the one, that such devilish arts have been and are. The other, what exact trial and severe punishments they merit."²³⁴ In the wake of wrongful justice, James is not lamenting that witches are punished but rather insisting on the importance that the guilty witches be rightfully punished.

The novelty of *Daemonologie* is its perspective from a King who was highly engaged with the religious politics of witchcraft as opposed to much of the other works in James' day written by professional theologians. This is initially evident in James' insistence on the biblical precedent for his work. Following ever in the footsteps of Knox, James writes "whereas the Scripture seems to prove Witch-craft to be...these wise men of *Pharaohs*, that counterfeited Moses' miracles...likewise that *Pythonisse* that *Saul* consulted with: and so was *Simon Magus* in the New Testament."²³⁵ These three textbook examples, reinforced by most reformed demonologists, reassured James' assertions.

James' experiences provided the material for much of this work and the examples are numerous. Perhaps the most obvious is his description of the power of witches to "rayse storms and tempestes in the aire, either upon sea or land...in such a particular place,"²³⁶ a reference to the North Berwick Trials. Another reference to the North Berwick Trials is a description of the devil's teaching "to make pictures of wax or clay: That by the roasting thereof, the persons that

²³⁴ *Ibid*, xix.

²³⁵ *Ibid*, 30.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, 32.

they bear the name of, may be continually melted or dried away by continual sickness.” A much more recent example is James’ instruction of the ‘Swimming Test’ as outlined in the last section during the 1597 Witch-Hunts. In addition to the swimming test, James also recommended “the finding of their mark, and the trying the insensible nature thereof.”²³⁷ James is describing the popular practice of ‘pricking’ the witch to find the devil’s mark which would be a place on the witch’s body that could not feel pain and would not bleed. This was often used locally but never officially authorized.²³⁸ However, it does imply the core of James’ argument which is the notion of the diabolical or demonic pact.

The demonic pact or agreement with the devil was the prevailing theory in accepted theology of the period, known as diabolism, explained in chapter 1. This theory suggests that the source of a witches’ power was exclusively from the devil and that the witch, in her essence, represented the devil. Outside of early modern theology, this theory rests perfectly among James’ theories of divine right in that if he sees himself as God’s appointee, a representative of God, and the North Berwick witches were attempting to take his life, then by definition they must represent the devil. Daniel Fischlin accurately assesses this methodical development by James suggesting that he is defined in his divine appointment through the witches: “there can be no better way to know God, then by the contrarie...God by the contrarie, draws ever out of that evill glorie to himselfe.”²³⁹

While James elsewhere does explicitly explain the nature of diabolism, this is his justification of it. James believed in the role of the devil because he believed in the role of God,

²³⁷ *Ibid*, 74.

²³⁸ Levack, *Witch-hunting*, 44.

²³⁹ James VI, “Daemonlogie,” in “Counterfeiting God,” Fischlin, 10.

he “who denyeth the power of the devil, would likewise denie the power of God.”²⁴⁰ In this way James fully realizes his reflection of the divine. He is defined by an ‘other’ or an ‘opposition,’ in the same manner that God is defined as good or divine in contrast to the evil Devil; the King’s divine right is justified through a contrast to the devil, which in the case of James, is exemplified through witchcraft.

James justification lends itself to the argument that despite giving credence to Cornelius Agrippa and Hemmingen in his introduction, his theology of diabolism and demonology were not wholly a product of continental influence from the time spent at the Danish court but rather were formulated through James’ experience and the way he envisioned his role within the realm of witchcraft. James is writing *Daemonologie* as an experience and a warning to Scotland, not to Europe, not to England, but to his subjects who also have just endured a decade of witch-hunts.

I will conclude with James’ opinion on treason: “But in the end to spare the life, and not to strike when God bids strike, and so severely punish in so odious a fault and treason against God, it is not only unlawful, but doubtless no less sin in that magistrate.”²⁴¹

Since in a matter of treason against the Prince, may of our law serve for sufficient witnesses and proofes. I thinke surely that by a far greater reason, such witnesses may be sufficient in matters of high treason against God; for who but witches can be proofes, and so witnesses of the doings of witches.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ James VI, “*Daemonologie*,” 38.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, 54.

²⁴² *Ibid*, 55.

James published *Trew Law* in 1598 under a pseudonym, as a way of being free to relinquish his immense frustrations and his potentially radical theories. In this work, James utilizes his eye-witness history of Scotland since the 1570s as a historical basis for his claims; a reflection on the history he has been taught and the history he has experienced. In no uncertain terms James delineates the role of the King in accordance to God and the role of the subjects in accordance to their King; the hierarchy is rigid and James does not allow for any exceptions. He believes the Monarchy is a divine institution and those who oppose it, stand in opposition to God.

James' most adamant argument is a clear refutation of George Buchanan's theory of an 'Ancient Constitution,'²⁴³ an ideal discussed in chapter 2. While Buchanan was assertive in instructing James of the people's right to overthrow the monarchy, James countered with his own history in a work subtitled "The Reciprook and Mutuall Dutie Betwixt a Free King and His Naturall Subjects."²⁴⁴ James historical precedent lies with a figure named Fergus who ages ago traveled and "settled in a country 'skantly inhabited' and 'skant of civilite,' and therefore kings in Scotland 'were before any estates or rankes of men within the same, before any Parliaments were holden or lawes made; and by them was the land distributed...state erected and decerned and formes of government devised and established."²⁴⁵ Thus Kings of Scotland exist above the law because they created it. Before there were laws, or political structures, or a Kirk, there were the Kings of Scotland to whom the entire state owes its well being. Prior to even mentioning divine right, James is further cementing his innate right as King, however fabricated it may be.

²⁴³ Wormald, "James VI and I," 40-41.

²⁴⁴ James VI, "Trve Lawe," 57.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 70.

The claim of an ancient lineage is primarily a reflection on Buchanan and the government of James' youth. If this was the presiding historical and political narrative in Scotland, James' opponents, both political and religious, blatantly trampled upon it, and James, in reviving it, is also applauding himself for restoring and reviving the true nature of Scottish Monarchy.

Another reference to James' past is his biblical lineage. In part reinforced by Knox's insistence on Scotland as a new Israel, James reached back to the Old Testament Kings and their ordinance from God to rule his chosen people as a justification for his own rule, stating: "Kings are called Gods by the prophetic King David, because they sit upon God his throne in the earth."²⁴⁶ Followed by, "the election of that King lay absolutelie and immediately in Gods hand."²⁴⁷ So in addition to James' divine appointment, he holds a clear Scottish and Biblical lineage to his claim to the throne.

The bestowal of such ancient and spiritual authority is not without responsibility and James is quick to acknowledge this:

as the kindly father ought to forsee all inconuenients and dangers that may aryse towards his children, and though with the hazarde of his owne person presse to preuente the same: So ought the King towards his people. As the Fathers wrath and correction vppon any of his children, that offendeth, ought to be by a fatherly chastizement seasoned with pittie, as long as there is any hope of amendment in them: so ought the King to-/wardes any of his lieges that offendes in that measure.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 61.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 64.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 62.

An interpretation of his recent experiences with witchcraft clearly refer to a need to protect his people and punish them accordingly, as is James' divine instruction. Another reference to witchcraft, however, is not so lenient: "it may very well fall out that the head will be forced to cut off some rotten member...to keep the rest of the body in integrity."²⁴⁹ Again, a biblical reference that reassured James of his recent administering of justice and a clear cut solution for preserving the sacred kingdom. James truly left no door open, *Trew Law* is a complete argument and certifies that James has every bit of right and responsibility to be a King as he does to be a King in Scotland.

Just like God's rule, the Monarchy was infallible; a perfect representation of the divine. This is ultimately evident towards the end of James' profound work: "there is not a thing so necessarie to be knowne by the people of any land, next the knowledge of their God, as the right knowledge of their allegiance...which forme of government as resembling the divinitie, approacheth nearest to perfection."²⁵⁰ A reflection of the divinity is a bold statement in the highly religious communities of early modern Europe where the monarchy was in no way fully accepted as an untouchable institution, specifically in James' own Kingdom where a regent and a monarch had been deposed seven years apart in the 1560s. Contrarily, this is the ultimate defense; a monarch who rules on these grounds would have to be usurped by an opponent of God, a line few at the time were willing to cross. This is not to suggest that James did not wholeheartedly believe in it, although he was certainly realistic in practice and often upheld peace over what he

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 75.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 59.

believed to be his divine rights, yet he must have been confident in what he believed was an incontestability of his claims.

One question remains: what about a tyrannical king? James has an answer for that too. The answer is a very simple one: If a subjects king was wicked, they should pray for his amendment. A wicked king represented a curse on the people, a punishment for their sins for which they should pray forgiveness.²⁵¹ Alas, no door left open; no thing unwilled by God; no King without divine appointment. *Trew Law* was not published as a debate, it was published, anonymously, with assertion. If one envisions this work as James' interpretation of his role as monarch, it is clear that James did not just believe in his position as divinely appointed but rather a clear link between the divine and the institution of the monarchy, exemplified through all of James' numerous biblical references.

The *Basilikon Doron*, published in 1599 as a 'testament and latter will' for James' son and heir, Prince Henry, was published in London in March 1603 and circulated rapidly. Estimates have eight editions by early April, with sixteen thousand copies printed by the original publisher. It was later translated into Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, German, and Swedish.²⁵² Why was this work so popular? It provided an insight into the everyday life of a European monarch, a life of which only a handful were aware of and even fewer actually lived. For the English, this was an insight into their new King, a chance to survey and judge the Scottish King who united Scotland and England under a single monarchy and bridged the Tudor and Stuart periods.

²⁵¹ James VI, "Trve Lawe."

²⁵² Wormald, "James VI and I," 51-2.

In comparison to *Trew Law*, *Basilikon* was substantially scaled down. Outside of a quiet introduction on divine right, explained by James as a “glistening worldly glory of kings, is given them by God, to teach them to praise so to glister and shine before their people,”²⁵³ the work essentially serves a utilitarian purpose. James instructs Henry on the economy, on marriage, on language. This work essentially humanizes James and his son and proves that they live and learn much the same as the rest of the populace, perhaps not James’ intention, but an important distinction to be made as a charismatic leader walking into skeptical England.

Examples of humanizing everyday behavior include practical eating habits: “and vse most to eate of reasonable-grosse, and common-meates; swell for making your bodie strong and durable for trauell at all occasions either in peace or warre.”²⁵⁴ Everyday language: “in your language be plaine, honest, naturall, comely, cleane, short, and sententious, eschewing both the extremities.”²⁵⁵ Finally, maintaining honesty in everything:

but in your playing, I would have you to keepe three rules: first, or ye play, consider yee doe it onley for your recreation, and resolve to hazard the losse of all that ye play; and next, for that cause play no more yee care to case among pages; and last, play always faire and play precisely, that ye come not in use of tricking or lying in least.²⁵⁶

Not over-eating before travel, using precise and clear language, and practicing honesty in something as common as playing games and to refrain from gambling. These day-to-day

²⁵³ James VI and I, *Basilikon*, 44.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 125.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 136.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 149.

instructions undoubtedly resonated with many readers and contributed to the humanization of James and his offspring. In a sense, having an opposite effect from that of *Daemonologie* and *Trew Law*.

On princely questions, James draws more from his personal experience and his instructions strongly reveal a discontent with the Kirk, the necessity of the nobility, and the question of rebellions. James' comment on the Kirk, or rather the Melvilles in particular is quite comical: "wee are all but vile worms, and yet wil judge and give law to their king, but will be judged nor controlled by none."²⁵⁷ Clearly, James still harbored some resentment.

The King has much to say about how Henry should approach the nobility, summed up best by this quote: "consider that virtue followeth oftest noble blood...the more frequently that your court can be garnished with them, think it the more your honour...since it is, they must be your arms and executors of your laws."²⁵⁸ This was a definitive change in tone from *Trew Law* in which the King was seemingly dependent on no one but God. But in the much more practical *Basilikon*, James insists upon the utility and necessity of the nobility to Henry's success. This is an important distinction that can be applied to much of James' life, certainly into his English reign and is even exemplified in his Scottish reign. The line between practice and theory was clearly defined in his mind and although James often acted in the name of his divine right or out of a sense of spiritual authority (at least in hindsight), he knew when to concede and when to compromise. James was not an absolute ruler, his theories laid out in *Trew Law* represented an ideal and *Basilikon* represented a practicality.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 38.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 25.

James, naturally, left Henry with some imparting biblical wisdom and stressed the importance of adhering to the scriptures, quoting Proverbs: “by the right knowledge, and fear of God...ye shall know all the things necessary for the discharge of your duty, both as a Christian, and as a King.”²⁵⁹

These three vital treatises showcase the breadth of James’ conception of his reign in Scotland. An ardent theorist, James needed to conceive of his rocky climb to power in such terms in order to make sense of it. Only revealed after he had reached his zenith, James’ writings portray his life in enlightened terminology, in a similar way to that of *Newes From Scotland*. Regardless, these works are essential to understanding James’ upbringing, the intricacies of Reformation Scotland, and the origins of the Scottish Kirk-State relationship.

Through an in-depth reading of James’ treatises, a certain power dynamic becomes evident, one in which James was always relegated to the defensive; always facing a threat of usurpation and resistance to his authority, inherent in the divine ideal of being defined through an oppositional ‘other.’ This one-sided perspective potentially clouds the reality of Jacobean Scotland but it also serves as an explanation for much of it. James’ witch-hunts make more sense in the context of his belief in divine right; the legislation of 1584 and 1587 seem to fit a narrative within the context of the advent of James’ personal reign slowly pushing out the once powerful Reformation Kirk. The history cannot be separated from the man and his accounts of it, thus however biased James may have been in evaluating his own history, his voice is ultimately the most important.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 45.

Conclusion

The 1590s in Scotland closed the case on some enduring questions. Since the Reformation Rebellion and 1560 Parliament, the religious identity of Scotland existed only for those fighting over it. Despite numerous shifts in this conceived power, resulting in two depositions, significant legislative changes, and an enduring Scottish Kirk, the question remained unanswered until 1590. Beginning in 1567, James and his Kingdom witnessed a parallel and intertwined debate over his monarchical authority and what it represented in the wake of Mary and the Reformation Rebellion, until James confidently put all uncertainty to rest in the 1590s. This decisive final decade in sixteenth century Scotland cannot be understood in isolation and its formation symbolized the growing discontent and harbored resentment of the previous thirty years. In this study, the years from 1560 to 1589 can best be understood as a cause and the 1590s as an effect.

On a surface level the most apparent effect were the witch-hunts of 1590-91 and 1597. Carried out under the name of divine right and represented by a final effort for religious and spiritual authority, these large scale witch-hunts resulted in a substantial number of accusations and executions, a terrorized populace, and a newfound fear of a previously unrealized threat. The 1590s situated Scotland on the European witch-hunt map and represented a model for demonic theology and the motivations behind it. Further, the 1590s witch-hunts showcased a judicial misstep in the prosecution of witchcraft and its potentially devastating effects. A new precedent was established through James' participation both as prosecutor and potential victim, another aspect that begins to make more sense in the context of James' childhood. An accusation of

witchcraft was now unequivocally an accusation of treason, a previously unrealized development, and the result of this was a fundamental change between ruler and ruled.

Christina Larner pointed out “the development of a new system of social control by which the behavior and geographical mobility of large sections of the populace were closely monitored.” Larner attributes this new ‘system’ to an implementation of ‘Calvinist Christianity’ and a much more closely monitored religious dogma, in contrast to the previous tangential control by Rome and the Pope.²⁶⁰ This relationship, which can be applied accurately to King James and his witch-hunts, could be perceived as a form of quasi-absolutism or possibly a prototype of absolutism. This is not to insinuate that James was an absolute monarch, far from it, but his convictions were absolute and it was only through a strong opposition to his power that he formed those ideologies and was able to, at the very least, utilize them as a basis for his witch-hunts and his triumph over the Scottish Kirk.

Beneath the surface of the witch-hunt effect of the 1590s was a restoration of monarchial political power and inherent within this restoration was a newly acquired religious and spiritual authority. For the first time in Scotland’s history, a Monarch held authority over the spiritual standing and well-being of the Kingdom. Outwardly this was materialized by the witch-hunts but more importantly the 1596 December riot. The Kirk’s long struggle for power, beginning in 1560, was finally squashed in 1596. The dynamics changed again in 1603 but that is another paper for another day. For the purposes of James’ reign, the 1590s were an effective end to the

²⁶⁰ Larner, *Enemies*, 41.

spiritual supremacy question. The political authority of the Scottish crown was also solidified in the form of Bothwell's undoing in late 1591.²⁶¹

Questions over authority received one final confirmation with the production of James' three treatises. These works acted as catalyst for the meaning behind James' rise to power and provided an answer for why the 1590s occurred in the way that they did. To reiterate, regardless of how ambivalent these accounts and perceptions may have been, they stand as the final product for a Scottish regime trapped in an identity crisis. By 1597, the nation, through the lens of James, finally regained a strong idealized royal authority, defeating witches, factions, and Kirk along the way. Jacobean Scotland, by way of James, can be read like an epic, a true coming of age for the Scottish King and yet, this does not seem an appropriate answer or perhaps too adequate of an answer. The truth lies somewhere in between. Without the ideological basis, what does Jacobean Scotland represent?

James still strong-armed authority away from the Kirk after years of a combative relationship. The Presbyterian Church of Scotland still came into being, two depositions still occurred, Regents were still killed, James still inherited the throne and produced a successor, and a fateful riot still took place. Thus, what remains are the witch-hunts which have the largest stock in James' divine right and religious politics, as well represent the deadliest and most costly effect of the idealized 1590s. It is impossible to determine if the witch-hunts, specifically in North Berwick of 1590-91, would have occurred in the way they did without James' ideological justification and yet, it remains impossible to separate them from this ideology; the senseless loss

²⁶¹ MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 59.

of life demands a better explanation, a more coherent justification. Alas, if we cannot remove James from his history then we cannot remove his ideology from it either.

Historical truth is relative, our craft as historians is to discern to the highest degree what occurred in the past and to make sense of it but there will always be an obstruction, an ideology, an overarching narrative, a victorious figure who wrote it. The goal is to navigate these factors, to balance them in hopes to catch a glimpse of truth. Regardless of the meaning and reasoning behind them, the Scottish witch-hunts of the 1590s did in fact occur, people did in fact lose their lives, and King James did in fact play a central role in their administration, yet, what this represents to a history of James, to a history of Scotland, to a history of witchcraft, depends on what you choose to believe, just as it once depended upon what James chose to believe.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Anonymous. *he [H]wonderful discoverie of the vvitchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower, daughters of Ioan Flower neere Beuer Castle: executed at Lincolne, March 11. 1618 Who were specially arraigned and condemned before Sir Henry Hobart, and Sir Edward Bromley, iudges of assise, for confessing themselues actors in the destruction of Henry L. Rosse, with their damnable practises against others the children of the Right Honourable Francis Earle of Rutland. Together with the seuerall examinations and confessions of Anne Baker, Ioan Willimot, and Ellen Greene, witches in Leicestershire.* Pamphlet. London: 1619. From Early English Books Online, *British Library*. Accessed January 2020.

_____. *The witches of Northampton-shire [H]Agnes Browne. Ioane Vaughan. Arthur Bill. Hellen Ienkenson. Mary Barber. Witches. Who were all executed at Northampton the 22. of Iuly last. 1612.* Pamphlet. London: 1612. From Early English Books Online, *Bodleian Library*. Accessed December 2019.

Bowes, Robert. *Robert Bowes to Burghley.* Letter. Edinburgh: June 8 1591. From State Papers Online, *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603. Vol. 10: 1589-1593.* Accessed February 2020.

_____. *Robert Bowes to Lord Burghley.* Letter. Edinburgh: August 15 1597. From State Papers Online, *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603. Vol. 13: Part 1: 1597-1599.* Accessed February 2020.

_____. *Robert Bowes to Lord Burghley.* Letter. Edinburgh: September 8 1597. From State Papers Online, *Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603. Vol. 13: Part 1: 1597-1599.* Accessed January 2020.

Brown, K.M. ed. *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707.* St. Andrews, 2007-2021, 1587/7/143. Accessed 12 May 2021. <http://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/1587/7/143>.

Carmichael, James. *Newes from Scotland, declaring the damnable life and death of Doctor Fian a notable sorcerer, who was burned at Edenbrough in Ianuary last. 1591. Which doctor was regester to the diuell that sundry times preached at North Barrick Kirke, to a number of notorious witches. With the true examination of the saide doctor and witches, as they vttered them in the presence of the Scottish king. Discovering how they pretended to bewitch and drowne his Maiestie in the sea comming from Denmarke, with such other wonderfull matters as the like hath not been heard of at any time. Published according to the Scottish coppie.* Pamphlet. London: 1592. From Early English Books Online, Bodleian Library. Accessed December 2019.

Goodare, Julian ed. "The Scottish Parliamentary Records, 1560-1603." *Historical Research* 72 (1999): 244-267.

James VI, King of Scotland. *Basilikon Doron*. London: Wertheimer, Lea & Co, 1599.

_____. *Letters of King James VI & I*. Edited by G.P.V. Akrigg. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

_____. *The Political Works of James I*. Edited by Charles Howard McIlwaine. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918.

_____. *Minor Prose Works of King James VI and I: Daemonologie, The Trve Lawe of Free Monarchies, A Counterblaste to Tobacco, A Declaration of Sports*. Edited by James Craigie and Alexander Law. Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1982.

Knox, John. *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*. Edited by C.J. Guthrie, Q.C. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1898.

Kramer, Heinrich and Jakob Sprenger. *Malleus Maleficarum*. Translated by Rev. Montague Summers. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1970.

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Edited by Burton Raffel and Harold Bloom. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

_____. *The Tempest*. Edited by Virginia Mason Vaughn and Alden T. Vaughn, Bristol: Thomas Nelson, 1999.

Stewart, Francis, Earl of Bothwell. *The Earl of Bothwell to the Ministers of Scotland*. 1592. From State Papers Online, *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland, 1509-1603. Vol. 2: 1589-1603*. Accessed February 2020.

Secondary Sources:

Akrigg, G.P.V. ed. *Letters of King James VI & I*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Brown, Thomas. *Church and State in Scotland: A Narrative of The Struggle for Independence from 1560 to 1843*. Edinburgh: Macniven and Wallace, 1891.

Campagne, Fabian Alejandro. "Witchcraft and the Sense-of-the-Impossible in Early Modern Spain: Some Reflections Based on the Literature of Superstition (ca. 1500-1800)." *The Harvard Theological Review* 96 (2003): 25-62.

Clark, Stuart. *Thinking With Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

Crowley, Weldon S. "Erastianism in England to 1640." *Journal of Church and State* 32 (1990): 549-566.

Dawson, Jane E.A. *The Politics of Religion in the Age of Mary, Queen of Scots: The Earl of Argyll and the Struggle for Britain and Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Dye, Sierra Rose. "To Converse with the Devil? Speech, Sexuality, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland." *International Review of Scottish Studies* 37 (2012): 9-40.

Fischlin, Daniel. "Counterfeiting God: James VI (I) and the Politics of 'Daemonologie.'" *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 26 (1996): 1-29.

Flint, Valerie I. J. *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Gaskill, Malcolm. *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

- _____. *Witchfinders: A Seventeenth-Century English Tragedy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Goodare, Julian. "The Admission of Lairds to the Scottish Parliament." *The English Historical Review* 116 (2001): 1103-1133.
- _____. "The First Parliament of Mary, Queen of Scots." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36 (2005): 55-75.
- _____. *The Government of Scotland: 1560-1625*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- _____, ed. "The Scottish Parliamentary Records: 1560-1603." *Historical Research* 72 (1999): 244-267.
- _____. "The Scottish Witchcraft Act." *Church History* 74 (Mar. 2005): 39-67.
- _____, ed. *The Scottish Witch-hunt in Context*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.
- _____, ed. *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- _____. *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Goodare, Julian and Alasdair A. MacDonald, eds. *Sixteenth-Century Scotland: Essays in Honour of Michael Lynch*. Boston: Brill, 2008.
- Guy, John. *Queen of Scots: The True Life of Mary Stuart*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

- Kidd, Colin. *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity, 1689—c. 1830*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Kyle, Richard. "John Knox and Apocalyptic Thought." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15 (1984): 449-469.
- Larner, Christina. *Enemies of God*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983.
- Lee Jr., Maurice. "James VI and the Revival of Episcopacy in Scotland: 1596-1600." *Church History* 43 (1974): 50-64.
- Levack, Brian P., ed. *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- _____. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*. London: Longman, 1987.
- _____. *Witch-hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics and Religion*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- MacDonald, Alan R. *The Jacobean Kirk 1567-1625: Sovereignty, Polity, and Liturgy*. London: Ashgate Publishing, 1998.
- Macdonald, Stuart. "John Knox, the Scottish Church, and Witchcraft Accusations." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 48 (2017): 637-652.
- Macfarlane, Alan. *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study*. London: Routledge, 1970.
- Macpherson, Rob. "Stewart, Francis, first earl of Bothwell (1562-1612), courtier and politician." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed May 6 2021. <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-12999>.

Malpass, Deanne E. "Mary, Queen of Scots." Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia. 2020.

Normand, Lawrence and Gareth Roberts, ed. *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James VI's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches*. Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2000.

Orr, D. Alan. "God's hangman: James VI, the divine right of kings, and the Devil." *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 18 (2016): 137-154.

Peck, Linda Levy, ed. *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Roper, Lyndal. *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Rosen, Barbara, ed. *Witchcraft*. London: Edward Arnold, 1969.

Sharpe, J. A. *Crime in Early Modern England 1550-1750*. London: Longman, 1984.

Sharpe, James. *Instruments of Darkness*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.

Smith, Alan G. R. ed. *The Reign of James VI and I*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973.

Sommerville, J. P. *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England, 1603-1640*. London: Longman, 1999.

Thomas, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971.

Warnicke, Retha M. *Mary Queen of Scots*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Watson, Godfrey. *Bothwell and the Witches*. London: Robert Hale, 1975.

Wormald, Jenny. "James VI and I: Jenny Wormald Reviews the Career of the Man Who Was King of Scotland for Fifty-Seven Years and King of England for Twenty-Two, and Whose Great Dream Was To Create a Unified Kingdom of Great Britain." *History Today* 52 (2002): 27-33.

_____. "James VI and I: Two Kings or One?" *History* 68 (1983): 187-209.

_____. *Mary Queen of Scots: A Study in Failure*. London: George Philip, 1988.

Vita

Tristan Rimmer was born and raised in Louisiana. He attended Louisiana State University from 2014 to 2018 and received a Bachelors of Art in History in Spring 2018. After a year of substitute teaching and restaurant management, he returned to Louisiana State University for his masters degree in History. He will receive his Master's this August 2021. Tristan anticipates to continue on at Louisiana State University in the Fall of 2021 and begin working towards his doctoral degree where he hopes to continue studying early modern witchcraft but with a shifted focus to the Columbian exchange between European witchcraft beliefs and the belief systems of the multi-ethnic societies of the Colonial New World. Tristan currently serves as the social chair for the Louisiana State University History Graduate Student Association. He is an avid New Orleans sports fan and in his free time enjoys reading a good biography of Jim Morrison, Jerry Garcia, or any other 1960s or 1970s musician.