

→ News from Scotland

1591

The complete text of the pamphlet *News from Scotland* is printed here, with most of the original woodcuts.

TO THE READER.

The manifold untruths which is spread abroad, concerning the detestable actions and apprehension of those witches whereof this history following truly entreateth, hath caused me to publish the same in print: and the rather for that sundry written copies are lately dispersed thereof, containing, that the said witches were first discovered, by means of a poor peddler traveling to the town of Tranent, and that by a wonderful manner he was in a moment conveyed at midnight, from Scotland to Bordeaux in France (being places of no small distance between) into a merchant's cellar there, and after, being sent from Bordeaux into Scotland by certain Scottish merchants to the King's Majesty, that he discovered those witches and was the cause of their apprehension: with a number of matters miraculous and incredible: all which in truth are most false. Nevertheless to satisfy a number of honest minds, who are desirous to be informed of the verity and truth of their confessions, which for certainty is more stronger than the common report runneth, and yet with more truth I have undertaken to publish this short treatise, which declareth the true discourse of all that hath happened, and as well what was pretended by those wicked and detestable witches against the King's Majesty, as also by what means they wrought the same.

All which examinations (gentle Reader) I have here truly published, as they were taken and uttered in the presence of the King's Majesty, praying thee to accept it for verity, the same being so true as cannot be reproued.

A true discourse, Of the apprehension of sundry witches lately taken in Scotland: whereof some are executed, and some are yet imprisoned. With a particular recital of their examinations, taken in the presence of the King's Majesty.

God by His omnipotent power, hath at all times and daily doth take such care, and is so vigilant, for the weal¹ and preservation of His own, that

¹ weal: welfare, general good.

News from Scotland. Declaring the Damnable life and death of Doctor Fyem, a notable Sorcerer, who was burned at Edinburgh in January last, 1591. Which Doctor was register to the Devil that sundry times preached at North Berwick Kirk, to a number of notorious Witches. With the true examinations of the said Doctor and Witches, as they uttered them in the presence of the Scottish King. Discovering how they pretended to bewitch and drown his Majesty in the Sea coming from Denmark, with such other wonderful matters as the file hath not been heard of at any time. Published according to the Scottish Copy (London, 1591). (Kite: church.)

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Macbeth

Texts and Contexts

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Lothian, and that after they had landed, took hands on the land and danced this reel or short dance, singing all with one voice.

Commer!¹⁷ go ye before, commer go ye,
If ye will not go before, commer let me.

At which time she confessed, that this Gillis Duncan did go before them playing this reel or dance upon a small trumpet, called a Jew's trumpet,¹⁸ until they entered into the Kirk of North Berwick.

These confessions made the King in a wonderful admiration, and sent for the said Gillis Duncan, who upon the like trumpet did play the said dance before the King's Majesty, who in respect of the strangeness of these matters, took great delight to be present at their examinations.

Item, the said Agnes Tompson confessed that the Devil being then at North Berwick Kirk attending their coming in the habit or likeness of a man, and seeing that they tarried over long, he at their coming enjoined them all to a penance, which was, that they should kiss his buttocks, in sign of duty to him: which being put over the pulpit bare, every one did as he had enjoined them: and having made his ungodly exhortations, wherein he did greatly inveigh against the King of Scotland, he received their oaths for their good and true service towards him, and departed: which done, they returned to sea, and so home again.

At which time the witches demanded of the Devil why he did bear such hatred to the King, who answered, by reason the King is the greatest enemy he hath in the world: all which their confessions and depositions are still extant upon record.

Item, the said Agnes Sampson confessed before the King's Majesty sundry things which were so miraculous and strange, as that his Majesty said they were all extreme liars, whereto she answered, "she would not wish his Majesty to suppose her words to be false, but rather to believe them, in that she would discover such matter unto him as his Majesty should not any way doubt of."

And thereupon taking his Majesty a little aside, she declared unto him the very words which passed between the King's Majesty and his Queen at Oslo in Norway the first night of their marriage, with their answer each to other: whereto the King's Majesty wondered greatly, and swore by the living God, that he believed that all the Devils in hell could not have discovered the same: acknowledging her words to be most true, and therefore gave the more credit to the rest which is before declared.

¹⁷ Commer: one who comes, visitor. ¹⁸ Jew's trumpet: a small musical instrument with a metal frame and projecting steel tongue that is held between the teeth when played; also known as a Jew's harp.

Touching this Agnes Tompson, she is the only woman, who by the Devil's persuasion should have intended and put in execution the King's Majesty's death in this manner.

She confessed that she took a black toad, and did hang the same up by the heels, three days, and collected and gathered the venom as it dropped, and fell from it in an oyster shell, and kept the same venom close covered, until she should obtain any part or piece of foul linen cloth, that had appertained to the King's Majesty, as shirt, handkerchief, napkin or any other thing¹⁹ which she practised to obtain by means of one John Kerrs, who being attendant in his Majesty's chamber, desired him for old acquaintance between them, to help her to one or a piece of such a cloth as is aforesaid, which thing the said John Kerrs denied to help her to, saying he could not help her to it.

And the said Agnes Tompson by her depositions since her apprehension saith, that if she had obtained any one piece of linen cloth which the King had worn and fouled,²⁰ she had bewitched him to death, and put him to such extraordinary pains, as if he had been lying upon sharp thorns and ends of needles.

Moreover she confessed that at the time when his Majesty was in Denmark, she being accompanied with the parties before specially named, took a cat and christened it, and afterward bound to each part of that cat, the chiefest parts of a dead man, and several joints of his body, and that in the night following the said cat was conveyed into the midst of the sea by all these witches sailing in their riddles or sieves as is aforesaid, and so left the said cat right before the town of Leith in Scotland: this done, there did arise such a tempest in the sea, as a greater hath not been seen: which tempest was the cause of the perishing of a boat or vessel coming over from the town of Burnt Island to the town of Leith, wherein was sundry jewels and rich gifts, which should have been presented to the now Queen of Scotland, at her Majesty's coming to Leith.

Again it is confessed, that the said christened cat was the cause that the King's Majesty's ship at his coming forth of Denmark, had a contrary wind to the rest of his ships then being in his company, which thing was most strange and true, as the King's Majesty acknowledgeth, for when the rest of the ships had a fair and good wind, then was the wind contrary and altogether against his Majesty: and further the said witch declared, that his Majesty had never come safely from the sea, if his faith had not prevailed above their intentions.

¹⁹ other thing: as in woodcoo, objects close to a person were thought to be equivalent to the person, and hence whatever was done to the object would be felt by the person. ²⁰ fouled: gotten dirty.



FIGURE 22 *From News from Scotland (1591). James interrogates the witches himself.*

are already executed, the rest remain in prison, to receive the doom of judgment at the King's Majesty's will and pleasure.

The said Gillis Duncan also caused Euphemia McCalzean to be apprehended, who conspired and performed the death of her godfather, and who used her art upon a gentleman being one of the lords and justices of the Session,⁸ for bearing good will to her daughter: she also caused to be apprehended one Barbara Napier, for bewitching to death Archibald, last Earl of Angus, who languished to death by witchcraft and yet the same was not suspected, but that he died of so strange a disease, as the physician knew not how to cure or remedy the same: but of all other the said witches, these two

⁸ Session: i.e., the law court.

last before recited, were reputed for as civil honest women as any that dwelled within the city of Edinburgh, before they were apprehended. Many other besides were taken dwelling in Leith, who are detained in prison, until his Majesty's further will and pleasure be known: of whose wicked doings you shall particularly hear, which was as followeth:

This aforesaid Agnes Sampson which was the elder witch, was taken and brought to Holyrood House⁹ before the King's Majesty and sundry other of the nobility of Scotland, where she was straitly¹⁰ examined, but all the persuasions which the King's Majesty used to her with the rest of his council, might not provoke or induce her to confess any thing, but stood stiffly in the denial of all that was laid to her charge: whereupon they caused her to be conveyed away to prison, there to receive such torture as hath been lately provided for witches in that country: and forasmuch as by due examination of witchcraft and witches in Scotland, it hath lately been found that the Devil doth generally mark them with a privy mark, by reason the witches have confessed themselves, that the Devil doth lick them with his tongue in some privy part of their body, before he doth receive them to be his servants, which mark commonly is given them under the hair in some part of their body, whereby it may not easily be found out or seen, although they be searched: and generally so long as the mark is not seen to those which search them, so long the parties that hath the mark will never confess anything. Therefore by special commandment this Agnes Sampson had all her hair shaven off, in each part of her body, and her head thraven¹¹ with a rope according to the custom of that country, being a pain most grievous, which she continued almost an hour, during which time she would not confess any thing until the Devil's mark was found upon her privities,¹² then she immediately confessed whatsoever was demanded of her, and justifying those persons aforesaid to be notorious witches.

Item, the said Agnes Tompson was after brought again before the King's Majesty and his council, and being examined of the meetings and detestable dealings of those witches, she confessed that upon the night of All Hallow's Even¹³ last, she was accompanied as well with the persons aforesaid, as also with a great many other witches, to the number of two hundred: and that all they together went by sea each one in a riddle or sieve¹⁴ and went in the same very substantially with flagons¹⁵ of wine making merry and drinking by the way in the same riddles or sieves, to the Kirk¹⁶ of North Berwick in

⁹ Holyrood House: the royal palace in Edinburgh.

¹⁰ straitly: strictly, rigidly.

¹¹ thraven: twisted.

¹² privities: genitals.

¹³ All Hallow's Even: Hallowe'en (October 31).

¹⁴ riddle or sieve: a "riddle" is a coarse-meshed utensil that separates chaff from corn, sand from gravel, etc.; a "sieve" has the same function, but is more finely meshed.

¹⁵ flagons: large bottles.

¹⁶ Kirk: church.



FIGURE 21 *From News from Scotland (1591). Several scenes from the narrative are simultaneously depicted, such as the storm that threatened James's ship and the miraculous convergence of the peddler from Scotland to a vine collar in Bordaux.*

thereby He disappointeth the wicked practises and evil intents of all such as by any means whatsoever, seek indirectly to conspire any thing contrary to His holy will: yea and by the same power, He hath lately overthrow and hindered the intensions and wicked dealings of a great number of ungodly creatures, no better than Devils: who suffering themselves to be allured and enticed by the Devil whom they served, and to whom they were privately sworn, entered into the detestable art of witchcraft, which they studied and practised so long time, that in the end they had seduced by their sorcery a number of others to be as bad as themselves: dwelling in the bounds of Lothian, which is a principal shire or part of Scotland, where the King's Majesty useth to make his chiefest residence or abode: and to the end that their detestable wickedness which they privily² had pretended against the King's Majesty, the commonweal of that country, with the nobility and subjects of the same, should come to light: God of his unspeakable goodness did reveal and lay it open in very strange sort, thereby to make known unto

² privily: secretly.

the world, that their actions were contrary to the law of God, and the natural affection which we ought generally to bear one to another: the manner of the revealing whereof was as followeth:

Within the town of Tranent in the kingdom of Scotland, there dwelleth one David Seaton, who being deputy bailiff³ in the said town, had a maid-servant called Gillis Duncan, who used secretly to be absent and to lie forth of her master's house every other night: this Gillis Duncan took in hand to help all such as were troubled or grieved with any kind of sickness or infirmity: and in short space did perform many matters most miraculous, which things forasmuch as she began to do them upon a sudden, having never done the like before, made her master and others to be in great admiration,⁴ and wondered thereat: by means whereof the said David Seaton had his maid in some great suspicion, that she did not those things by natural and lawful ways, but rather supposed it to be done by some extraordinary and unlawful means.

Whereupon, her Master began to grow very inquisitive, and examined her which way and by what means she were able to perform matters of so great importance: whereat she gave him no answer, nevertheless, her master to the intent that he might the better try and find out the truth of the same, did with the help of others, torment her with the torture of the pillwinks⁵ upon her fingers, which is a grievous torture, and binding or wrenching her head with a cord or rope, which is a most cruel torment also, yet would she not confess any thing, whereupon they suspecting that she had been marked by the Devil (as commonly witches are) made diligent search about her, and found the enemy's mark to be in her fore-trag⁶ or fore-part of her throat: which being found, she confessed that all her doings was done by the wicked allurements and enticements of the Devil, and that she did them by witchcraft.

After this her confession, she was committed to prison, where she continued for a season, where immediately she accused these persons following to be notorious witches, and caused them forthwith to be apprehended one after another, viz. Agnes Sampson the eldest witch of them all, dwelling in Haddington, Agnes Tompson of Edinburgh, Doctor Fian, alias John Cunningham, master of the school at Saltpans in Lothian, of whose life and strange acts, you shall hear more largely in the end of this discourse: these were by the said Gillis Duncan accused, as also George Mort's wife dwelling in Saltpans, Robert Grierson skipper, and Janet Bandilands, with the porter's wife of Seaton, the smith at the Bridge Halls⁷ with innumerable others in that parts, and dwelling in those bounds aforesaid: of whom some

³ bailiff: an officer of justice under a sheriff. ⁴ admiration: astonishment. ⁵ pillwinks: thumb-screws, also known as "pinwinks". ⁶ fore-trag: front part. ⁷ Bridge Halls: market area.

Moreover the said witches being demanded how the Devil would use them when he was in their company, they confessed that when the Devil did receive them for his servants, and that they had vowed themselves unto him, then he would carnally use them, albeit to their little pleasure, in respect of his cold nature: and would do the like at sundry other times.

As touching the aforesaid Doctor Fian, alias John Cunningham, the examination of his acts since his apprehension, declareth the great subtlety of the devil, and therefore maketh things to appear the more miraculous: for being apprehended by the accusation of the said Gillis Duncan aforesaid, who confessed he was their register, and that there was not one man suffered to come to the Devil's readings but only he, the said doctor was taken and imprisoned, and used with the accustomed pain, provided for those offenses, inflicted upon the rest as is aforesaid.

First by thraving of his head with a rope, whereat he would confess nothing.

Secondly, he was persuaded by fair means to confess his follies, but that would prevail as little.

Lastly he was put to the most severe and cruel pain in the world, called the boots,²¹ who after he had received three strokes, being inquired if he would confess his damnable acts and wicked life, his tongue would not serve him to speak, in respect wherof the rest of the witches willed to search his tongue, under which was found two pins thrust up into the head, whereupon the witches did say, "Now is the charm stunted," and showed that those charmed pins were the cause he could not confess anything: then he was immediately released of the boots, brought before the King, his confession was taken, and his own hand willingly set thereunto, which contained as followeth:

First, that at the general meetings of those witches, he was always present: that he was clerk to all those that were in subjection to the Devil's service, bearing the name of witches, that always he did take their oaths for their true service to the Devil, and that he wrote for them such matters as the Devil still pleased to command him.

Item, he confessed that by his witchcraft he did bewitch a gentleman dwelling near to the Saltpans, where the said doctor kept school, only for being enamored of a gentlewoman whom he loved himself: by means of which his sorcery, witchcraft, and devilish practises, he caused the said gentleman that once in 24 hours he fell into a lunacy and madness, and so continued one whole hour together, and for the verity of the same, he caused

²¹ boots: wooden or metal "boots," into which wedges were hammered, thus crushing the feet and lower legs of the victim.

the gentleman to be brought before the King's Majesty, which was upon the 24th day of December last, and being in his Majesty's chamber, suddenly he gave a great screech and fell into a madness, sometime bending himself, and sometime capering so directly up, that his head did touch the ceiling of the chamber, to the great admiration of his Majesty and others then present: so that all the gentlemen in the Chamber were not able to hold him, until they called in more help, who together bound him hand and foot: and suffering the said gentleman to lie still until his fury were past, he within an hour came again to himself, when being demanded of the King's Majesty what he saw or did all that while, answered that he had been in a sound sleep.

Item, the said doctor did also confess that he had used means sundry times to obtain his purpose and wicked intent of the same gentlewoman, and seeing himself disappointed of his intention, he determined by all ways he might to obtain the same, trusting by conjuring, witchcraft and sorcery to obtain it in this manner.

It happened this gentlewoman being unmarried, had a brother who went to school with the said doctor, and calling his scholar to him, demanded if he did lie with his sister, who answered he did, by means wherof he thought to obtain his purpose, and therefore secretly promised to teach him without stripes,²² so he would obtain for him three hairs of his sister's privities at such time as he should spy best occasion for it: which the youth promised faithfully to perform, and vowed speedily to put it in practise, taking a piece of conjured paper of his master to lap²³ them in when he had gotten them: and thereupon the boy practised nightly to obtain his master's purpose, especially when his sister was asleep.

But God who knoweth the secrets of all hearts, and revealeth all wicked and ungodly practises, would not suffer the intents of this devilish doctor to come to that purpose which he supposed it would, and therefore to declare that he was heavily offended with his wicked intent, did so work by the gentlewoman's own means, that in the end the same was discovered and brought to light: for she being one night asleep, and her brother in bed with her, suddenly cried out to her mother, declaring that her brother would not suffer her to sleep, whereupon her mother having a quick capacity, did vehemently suspect Doctor Fian's intention, by reason she was a witch of herself, and therefore presently arose, and was very inquisitive of the boy to understand his intent, and the better to know the same, did beat him with sundry stripes, wherely he discovered the truth unto her.

The mother therefore being well practised in witchcraft, did think it most convenient to meet with the doctor in his own art, and thereupon took

²² stripes: strokes, i.e. beating him. ²³ lap: wrap.

the paper from the boy, wherein he should have put the same hairs, and went to a young heifer which never had born calf nor gone to the bull, and with a pair of shears, clipped off three hairs from the udder of the cow, and wrapped them in the same paper, which she again delivered to the boy, then willing him to give the same to his said Master, which he immediately did.

The schoolmaster so soon as he had received them, thinking them indeed to be the maid's hairs, went straight and wrought his art upon them: But the doctor had no sooner done his intent to them, but presently the heifer or cow whose hairs they were indeed, came unto the door of the church wherein the schoolmaster was, into the which the heifer went, and made towards the schoolmaster, leaping and dancing upon him, and following him forth of the church and to what place soever he went, to the great admiration of all the townsmen of Saltpans, and many other who did behold the same.

The report whereof made all men imagine that he did work it by the Devil, without whom it could never have been so sufficiently effected: and thereupon, the name of the said Doctor Fian (who was but a very young man) began to grow so common among the people of Scotland, that he was secretly nominated for a notable conjurer. All which although in the beginning he denied, and would not confess, yet having felt the pain of the boots (and the charm stinted,²⁴ as aforesaid) he confessed all the aforesaid to be most true, without producing any witnesses to justify the same, and thereupon before the King's Majesty he subscribed the said confessions with his own hand, which for truth remaineth upon record in Scotland.

After that the depositions and examinations of the said Doctor Fian *alias* Cunningham was taken, as already is declared, with his own hand willingly set thereunto, he was by the master of the prison committed to ward, and appointed to a chamber by himself, where forsaking his wicked ways, acknowledging his most ungodly life, showing that he had too much followed the allurements and enticements of Satan, and fondly practised his conclusions by conjuring, witchcraft, enchantment, sorcery, and such like, he renounced the devil and all his wicked works, vowed to lead the life of a Christian, and seemed newly connected towards God.

The morrow after, upon conference had with him, he granted that the devil had appeared unto him in the night before, apparelled all in black, with a white wand in his hand, and that the Devil demanded of him if he would continue his faithful service, according to his first oath and promise made to that effect. Whom (as he then said) he utterly renounced to his face, and said unto him in this manner, "Avoid Satan, avoid, for I have listened too much unto thee, and by the same thou hast undone me, in respect whereof I

²⁴ stunted: ended.

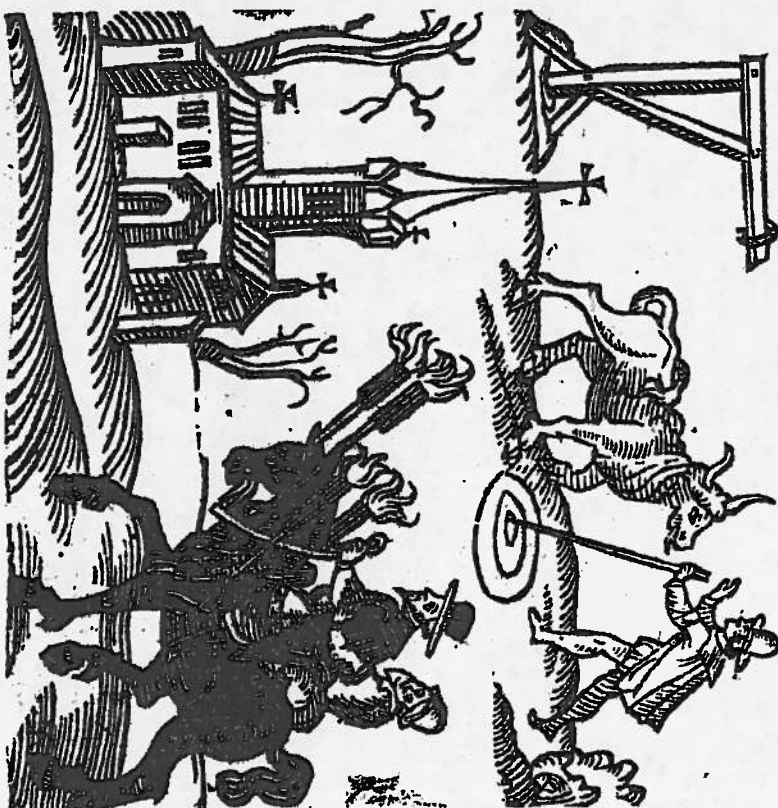


FIGURE 23 From *News from Scotland* (1591). *Scenes from Doctor Fian's life.*

utterly forsake thee." To whom the Devil answered, "That once ere thou die thou shalt be mine." And with that (as he said) the Devil brake the white wand, and immediately vanished forth of his sight.

Thus all the day this Doctor Fian continued very solitary, and seemed to have care of his own soul, and would call upon God, showing himself penitent for his wicked life, nevertheless the same night he found such means, that he stole the key of the prison door and chamber in the which he was, which in the night he opened and fled away to the Saltpans, where he was always resident, and first apprehended. Of whose sudden departure when the King's Majesty had intelligence, he presently commanded diligent inquiry to be made for his apprehension, and for the better effecting thereof, he sent public proclamations into all parts of his land to the same effect. By means of whose hot and hard pursuit, he was again taken and brought to

prison, and then being called before the King's Highness, he was reexamined as well touching his departure, as also touching all that had before happened.

But this doctor, notwithstanding that his own confession appeareth remaining in record under his own handwriting, and the same therunto fixed in the presence of the King's Majesty and sundry of his council, yet did he utterly deny the same.

Whereupon the King's Majesty perceiving his stubborn willfulness, conceived and imagined that in the time of his absence he had entered into new conference and league with the Devil his master, and that he had been again newly marked, for the which he was narrowly searched, but it could not in any wise be found, yet for more trial of him to make him confess, he was commanded to have a most strange torment which was done in this manner following.

His nails upon all his fingers were riven²⁵ and pulled off with an instrument called in Scottish a *Turkas*,²⁶ which in England we call a pair of pin-cers, and under every nail there was thrust in two needles over even up to the heads. At all which torments notwithstanding the doctor never shrunk any whit, neither would he then confess it the sooner for all the tortures inflicted upon him.

Then was he with all convenient speed, by commandment, conveyed again to the torment of the boots, wherein he continued a long time, and did abide so many blows in them, that his legs were crushed and beaten together as small as might be, and the bones and flesh so bruised, that the blood and marrow spouted forth in great abundance, whereby they were made unserviceable forever. And notwithstanding all these grievous pains and cruel torments he would not confess any thing, so deeply had the Devil entered into his heart, that he utterly denied all that which he had before avouched, and would say nothing therunto but this, that what he had done and said before, was only done and said for fear of pains which he had endured.

Upon great consideration therefore taken by the King's Majesty and his council, as well for the due execution of justice upon such detestable malefactors, as also for example sake, to remain a terror to all others hereafter, that shall attempt to deal in the like wicked and ungodly actions, as witchcraft, sorcery, conjuration, and such like, the said Doctor Fian was soon after arraigned, condemned, and adjudged by the law to die, and then to be burned according to the law of that land, provided in that behalf. Whereupon he was put into a cart, and being first strangled, he was immediately put into a great fire, being ready provided for that purpose, and there burned in the Castle Hill of Edinburgh on a Saturday in the end of January last past 1591.

²⁵ riven: split, torn apart. ²⁶ *Turkas*: pincers; the name may derive from the ethnic stereotype of the Turks, legendary in Elizabethan England for their cruelty.

The rest of the witches which are not yet executed, remain in prison, till further trial, and knowledge of his Majesty's pleasure.²⁷

This strange discourse before recited, may perhaps give some occasion of doubt to such as shall happen to read the same, and thereby conjecture that the King's Majesty would not hazard himself in the presence of such notorious witches, lest thereby might have ensued great danger to his person and the general state of the land, which thing in truth might well have been feared. But to answer generally to such, let this suffice: that first it is well known that the King is the child and servant of God, and they but servants to the Devil; he is the Lord's anointed, and they but vessels of God's wrath: he is a true Christian, and trusteth in God, they were then infidels, for they only trust in the Devil, who daily serve them, till he have brought them to utter destruction. But hereby it seemeth that his Highness carried a magnanimous and undaunted mind, not feared with their enchantments, but resolute in this, that so long as God is with him, he feareth not who is against him. And truly the whole scope of this treatise doth so plainly lay open the wonderful providence of the Almighty, that if he had not been defended by His omnipotence and power, his Highness had never returned alive in his voyage from Denmark, so that there is no doubt but God would as well defend him on the land as on the sea, where they pretended their damnable practice.

FINIS.

²⁷ According to the trial records, all the other accused witches, except Barbara Napier, were burned to death.

➤ KING JAMES I

From *Daemonology, In Form of a Dialogue* 1597

I. FROM THE PREFACE

The fearful abounding at this time in this country, of these detestable slaves of the Devil, the witches or enchanters, hath moved me (beloved reader) to dispatch in post, this following treatise of mine, not in any wise (as I protest) to serve for a show of my learning and ingine,¹ but only (moved of conscience) to press thereby, so far as I can, to resolve the doubting hearts of many, both

¹ ingine: genius, intellect.

King James VI, *Daemonology, In Form of a Dialogue* (Edinburgh, 1597) A2-A2v, D3v-D4, Ga-Gay, G3-G4, Hiv, K4-K4v, La, L3-L3v.

that such assaults of Satan are most certainly practiced, and that the instruments thereof, merits most severely to be punished: against the damnable opinions of two principally in our age, whereof the one called Scot, an Englishman, is not ashamed in public print to deny, that there can be such a thing as witchcraft. . . . The other called Wierus,² a German physician, sets out a public apology for all these craftfolks, whereby, procuring for their impunity, he plainly betrays himself to have been one of that profession.

II. MIRACLES

EPISTEMON:³ For that is the difference betwixt God's miracles and the Devil's, God is a creator, what He makes appear in miracle, it is so in effect. As Moses' rod being casten down, was no doubt turned in a natural serpent whereas the Devil (as God's ape) counterfeiting that by his magicians, made their wands to appear so, only to men's outward senses.

III. WOMEN AS WITCHES

PHIOMATHES: What can be the cause that there are twenty women given to that craft, where there is one man?

EPISTEMON: The reason is easy, for as that sex is frailer than man is, so is it easier to be entrapped in these gross snares of the Devil, as was over well proved to be true, by the serpents' deceiving of Eve at the beginning.

IV. THE POWERS OF WITCHES

EPISTEMON: They can make men or women to love or hate other. . . . They can lay the sickness of one upon another. . . . They can be-witch and take the life of men or women, by roasting of the pictures. . . . They can raise storms and tempests in the air, either upon sea or land, though not universally, but in such a particular place and prescribed bounds, as God will permit them so to trouble. . . . They can make folks to become frantic or manic. . . . They can make spirits either to follow and trouble persons, or haunt certain houses, and affray⁴ oftentimes the inhabitants. . . . And

² Wierus: Johann Weyer (1515-1588) — the Continental predecessor of Reginald Scot — author of *De praestigis daemonum* (1563), an encyclopedic compendium of witchcraft lore, which exposes superstition and deceit, but also credits many beliefs that Scot, the greater skeptic, rejected: hence James's reference to Wierus as parallel to Scot but still "one of that profession" himself. Scot made direct use of Wierus's book. ³ Epistemon: as in most dialogues, one speaker (here, Philomathes) represents the reasonable (but mistaken) point of view, asking questions that the other speaker (Epistemon), representing the author's point of view, easily and completely answers. ⁴ affray: frighten.

likewise they can make some to be possessed with spirits, and so to become very demonsiacs.

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PHIOMATHES: But what is their power against the magistrate?
EPISTEMON: Less or greater, according as he deals with them. For if he be slothful towards them, God is very able to make them instruments to waken and punish his sloth. But if he be the contrary, he according to the just law of God, and allowable law of all nations, will be diligent in examining and punishing of them: God will not permit their master to trouble or hinder so good a work.

IV. ON THOSE POSSESSED

EPISTEMON: It is known so many of them to be counterfeit, which while the [Catholic] clergy invents for confirming of their rotten religion.⁵ The next is, that by experience we find that few, who are possessed indeed, are fully cured by them, but rather the Devil is content to release the bodily hurting of them, for a short space, thereby to obtain the perpetual hurt of the souls of so many that by these false miracles may be induced or confirmed in the profession of that erroneous religion.

V. ON PROPHECY

PHIOMATHES: But what say ye to their fore-telling the death of sundry persons, whom they allege to hath seen in these places? That is, a sooth-dream (as they say) since they see it walking.

EPISTEMON: I think that either they have not been sharply enough examined, that gave so blunt a reason for their prophecy, or otherways, I think it likewise as possible that the Devil may prophecy to them when he deceives their imaginations in that sort, as well as when he plainly speaks unto them at other times for their prophesying, is but by a kind of vision, as it were, wherein he commonly counterfeits God.

V. ON THE PUNISHMENT OF WITCHES

PHIOMATHES: What form of punishment think ye merits these magicians and witches? For I see that ye account them to be all alike guilty?

⁵ rotten religion: James was suspicious of most claims of the power of exorcism, as here, even before he turned more skeptical about witchcraft beliefs in general. Like most Protestant writers, he invariably associated fraudulence and superstition with Catholic practices.

EPISTEMON: They ought to be put to death according to the law of God, the civil and imperial law, and municipal law of all Christian nations.

PHILOMATHES: But what kind of death, I pray you?

EPISTEMON: It is commonly used by fire, but that is an indifferent thing to be used in every country, according to the law or custom thereof.

PHILOMATHES: But ought no sex, age nor rank to be exempted?

EPISTEMON: None at all (being so used by the lawful magistrate), for it is the highest point of idolatry, wherein no exception is admitted by the law of God.

PHILOMATHES: Then bairns⁵ may not be spared?

EPISTEMON: Yea, not a hair the less of my conclusion. For they are not that capable of reason as to practise such things. And for any being in company and not revealing thereof, their less and ignorant age will no doubt excuse them. . . . But in the end to spare the life [of an adult], 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.

⁵ bairns: children.

→ An Act against Conjuratiōn, Witchcraft, and Dealing with Evil and Wicked Spirits

1604

Be it enacted by the King our sovereign Lord, the Lords spiritual and temporal, and the Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, That the Statute made in the fifth year of the reign of our late sovereign lady of most famous and happy memory Queen Elizabeth, entitled "An Act against Conjuratiōns, Enchantments and Witchcrafts,"¹ be from the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel next coming,² for crafts, and concerning all offences to be committed after the same Feast, utterly repealed. And for the better restraining the said offences, and more severe punishing the same, be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That if any person or persons, after the said Feast of St. Michael the Archangel next coming, shall use, practise, or exercise any invocation or conjuration of any

¹ 5 Eliz., c.16 (1563). ² Feast . . . coming: i.e., the next September 29 (many documents were dated by reference to saint's days or other holidays).

An Act against Conjuratiōn, Witchcrafts, and dealing with evil and wicked Spirits. Jac. I., c.12 [in the first year in the reign of James I., chapter 12] (London, 1604).

evil and wicked spirit, or shall consult, covenant with, entertain, employ, feed, or reward any evil and wicked spirit to or for any intent or purpose; or take up any dead man, woman, or child out of his, her, or their grave, or any other place where the dead body resteth, or in the skin, bone, or any other part of any dead person, to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment; or shall use, practise, or exercise any witchcraft, enchantment, charm, or sorcery, whereby any person shall be killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed in his or her body, or any part thereof; that then every such offender or offenders, their aiders, abettors and counsellors, being of any [of] the said offences duly and lawfully convicted and attainted, shall suffer pains of death as a felon or felons, and shall lose the privilege and benefit of clergy and sanctuary.

And further, to the intent that all manner of practise, use, or exercise of witchcraft, enchantment, charm, or sorcery, should be from henceforth utterly avoided, abolished and taken away, Be it enacted by the authority of this present Parliament, That if any person or persons shall, from and after the said Feast of St. Michael the Archangel next coming, take upon him or them by witchcraft, enchantment, charm, or sorcery, to tell or declare in what place any treasure of gold or silver should or might be found or had, in the earth or other secret places, or where goods or things lost or stolen should be found or become; and to the intent to provoke any person to unlawful love, or where any chattel or goods of any person shall be destroyed, wasted, or impaired, or to hurt or destroy any person in his or her body, although the same be not effected and done; that then all and every such person and persons so offending, and being thereof lawfully convicted, shall for the said offence suffer imprisonment by the space of one whole year, without bail or mainprise,³ and once in every quarter of the said year, shall in some market town, upon the market day, or at such time as any fair shall be kept there, stand openly upon the pillory⁴ by the space of six hours, and there shall openly confess his or her error and offence. And if any person or persons being once convicted of the same offence as is aforesaid, do afterwards⁵ perpetrate and commit the like offence, that then every such offender, being of any the said offences the second time lawfully and duly convicted and attainted⁶ as is aforesaid, shall suffer pains of death as a felon or felons, and shall lose the benefit and privilege of clergy and sanctuary. Saving to the wife of such person as shall offend in any thing contrary to

³ mainprise: suretyship; responsibility or obligation of one person undertaken on behalf of another. ⁴ pillory: a wooden framework on a post, with holes for the head and hands, in which offenders were locked to be exposed to public scorn as punishment. ⁵ afterwards: again, soon after. ⁶ attainted: proven guilty.