

# Witchcraft Pamphlets at the Dawn of the Scottish Enlightenment

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**Abstract:** In 1563, witchcraft was established as a secular crime in Scotland and it remained so until 1736. There were peaks and valleys in the cases that emerged, were prosecuted, were convicted, and where people were executed for the crime of witchcraft, although there was a decline in cases after 1662. The Scottish Enlightenment is characterized as a period of transition and epistemological challenge and it roughly coincides with this decline in Scottish witchcraft cases. This article looks at pamphlets published in the vernacular between 1697 and 1705, either within Scotland or elsewhere, that focused on Scottish witches, witchcraft, or witch hunting. Often written anonymously, these popular pamphlets about witches, witchcraft, and witch trials reveal the tensions at play between various factions and serve as a forum for ongoing debates about what was at stake in local communities: chiefly, the state of one's soul and the torture and murder of innocents.

**Keywords:** pamphlets, Scotland, witchcraft, print, crime

**Résumé :** Entrée en vigueur en 1563 et révoquée en 1736, la loi écossaise sur la sorcellerie considère cette pratique comme étant un crime séculaire. Les affaires de sorcellerie connurent des hauts et des bas ; des personnes furent poursuivies, condamnées et parfois exécutées pour ce crime. Cependant, le nombre de procès diminue après 1662. Les Lumières écossaises, qui représentent une période de transition et de défi épistémologique, coïncident à peu près avec le déclin des procès de sorcellerie. Le présent article examine les pamphlets publiés en langue vernaculaire entre 1697 et 1705, en Écosse ou ailleurs, portant sur les sorcières écossaises, la sorcellerie ou la chasse aux sorcières. Parfois rédigés anonymement, ces pamphlets populaires sur les sorcières, la sorcellerie et les procès de sorcellerie révèlent les tensions à l'œuvre entre les diverses factions, et servent de forum pour les discussions en cours concernant ce qui constituait les enjeux au sein des communautés locales, principalement l'état de son âme, la torture et le meurtre d'innocents.

**Mots clés :** pamphlets, Écosse, sorcellerie, imprimerie, crime

In 1563, witchcraft was established as a secular crime in Scotland, and it remained so until 1736. There were peaks and valleys in the cases that emerged, were prosecuted, were convicted, and where people were executed for the crime of witchcraft, although there was a decline in cases after 1662.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 85% of accused witches were women, and most

1 For more, see Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, Joyce Miller, and Louise Yeoman's *The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft Database*. The database records 3198 accusations of witchcraft in Scotland between 1561 and 1740, and 499 trials between these dates.

accusations came from within local communities. From there, the accused witch underwent a series of hearings, assessments, and a trial prior to a sentence being passed.<sup>2</sup> These administrative procedures resulted in a series of records, some of which have survived and continue to provide fascinating insights into the accusers, accused, and the local communities from which they emerged. However, in addition to these more formal civic and religious documents, a considerable amount of popular reading material has survived, a small amount of which concerns Scottish witchcraft. Pamphlets about witches, witchcraft, and witch trials reveal the tensions at play between various factions and serve as a forum for ongoing debates about what was at stake in local communities: chiefly, the state of one's soul and the torture and murder of innocents.<sup>3</sup>

The Scottish Enlightenment is characterized as a period of transition and epistemological challenge. What was considered true and how one could be certain were debated, with proofs offered that relied on the emerging scientific method and Cartesian philosophy, often considered in opposition to spiritual truths and supernatural entities. Historian Lizanne Henderson notes that the word "superstition" was derived from the Latin *superstitio*, which suggested an "irrational religious awe or credulity," particularly as it related to "superstitious belief or practice, foreign or non-orthodox religious practice or doctrine." In Scotland, the term was commonly used as a pejorative to describe the beliefs of another when they did not conform to what was expected or considered orthodox, whether by Protestants against Catholics, by Catholics against Protestants, or against members of their own respective religious communities.<sup>4</sup> The righteous were concerned that disbelief in witches and spirits would lead to corresponding disbelief in the Christian God, which would ultimately lead to the eternal damnation of the soul. The understanding was that witches did not effect change on their own, but rather through the work of other spiritual beings, whether fairies, familiars, or demons.<sup>5</sup> Thus, if a person did not believe that the supernatural could work on Earth, this could lead to atheism. The fiery rhetoric used

2 Julian Goodare, "Witchcraft in Scotland," in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, edited by Brian Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 302.

3 Pascal Verhoest, "Seventeenth-Century Pamphlets as Constituents of a Public Communications Space: A Historical Critique of Public Sphere Theory," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 36.1 (2019): 49.

4 Lizanne Henderson, *Witchcraft and Folk Belief in the Age of Enlightenment: Scotland, 1670–1740* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 15–16.

5 Emma Wilby, "The Witch's Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland," *Folklore* 111 (2000): 283–305; Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300–1500* (London/Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), 79–80.

in these pamphlets demonstrates concern for those who doubt and aims to lead these lost souls back toward God.

The high period of the Scottish Enlightenment is often described as ranging from 1740 to 1780, but Henderson suggests that the Enlightenment may have begun earlier, a period that she describes poetically as the “dawn of the Scottish Enlightenment,” from the 1670s to the 1730s.<sup>6</sup> This article focuses on this earlier stage, as the witchcraft pamphlets that emerged during this period take on a certain character that illuminates the anxieties and tensions at play when folklore, religion, and superstition were not yet sharply delineated. By this point, prosecutions for witchcraft had largely declined, save for a brief spate of witchcraft accusations in the 1690s. The last Scottish execution for witchcraft took place in 1727, which sets a nice end point for this study.

The scope of this investigation is limited to pamphlets published in the vernacular between 1697 and 1705 either within Scotland or elsewhere that focused on Scottish witches, witchcraft, or witch hunting. To identify pamphlets that fit these criteria, the English Short-Title Catalogue was searched for items related to witchcraft in Scotland during this period, and these were cross-referenced with items listed in the Universal Short-Title Catalogue. There are limitations to this method, as these catalogues only show titles from the libraries that have decided to list them, and these lists may not necessarily be current.<sup>7</sup> The identified pamphlets and short tracts range from as brief as one sheet to forty-seven pages. All of the pamphlets under consideration were published in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and London (see Appendix).

In focusing on pamphlets rather than larger texts, one can get a sense of what was sold to an increasingly literate and growing middle class. Most of these tracts would have been purchased and read by audiences in the urban centres in which they were produced. Their primary audience would have been tradesmen and merchants, and they would have been of interest to educated rural inhabitants, such as the minister in Pittenweem discussed below. Pamphlets were fast and easy to print and distribute and served as one of the first means of mass communication.<sup>8</sup> They were rarely bound or collected at the time of their production, and are often extant in single copies, as they were an ephemeral form of literature.<sup>9</sup> These witchcraft

6 Henderson, *Witchcraft and Folk Belief*, 3.

7 Private collections are typically excluded from these listings, though there are a handful that are from such listings.

8 Carla Suhr, “Speaking to the Masses: Orality and Literacy in Six Early Modern Texts on Witchcraft,” *Helsinki English Studies* 2 (2002): 2.

9 Adam Fox, “‘Little Story Books’ and ‘Small Pamphlets’ in Edinburgh, 1680–1760: The Making of the Scottish Chapbook,” *Scottish Historical Review* 92.235 (2013): 210. Fortunately, many of these pamphlets have been digitized.

pamphlets were likely intended to provide more than entertainment, as they sought to stir religious passion or provoke indignity on behalf of the reader.

Carla Suhr suggests that pamphlets were likely intended to be read aloud and argues that their grammar and syntax further support this.<sup>10</sup> This certainly seems possible for the shorter pamphlets, where the features of the text further support this theory. For example, some ministers' sermons were printed and sold as pamphlets and chapbooks for the edification of their readers.<sup>11</sup> Internal rubrics appear in many of the texts under consideration below, where the font changes from a Roman type to italics; in these instances, words may be meant to be stressed for emphasis. This oral component to pamphlet reading would allow a broader audience, beyond those who had some literacy. Internal evidence in one of the pamphlets discussed below accuses a minister of reading to a witchcraft accuser from a book about another witchcraft case, suggesting that this may have influenced the accuser's fits and accusations.<sup>12</sup> This demonstrates that, on at least one occasion, one of these tracts may have been read aloud.

While figures for the number of Scottish men who went through universities in Scotland, the Netherlands, and elsewhere abroad are difficult to come by, there would have been several thousand men in Scotland with at least some university education, and therefore able to read Latin, and perhaps Hebrew and Greek as well.<sup>13</sup> Through the eighteenth century, instruction in universities became more secular in its outlook.<sup>14</sup> Despite this, religion continued to form a strong basis of authority, including governmental authority.<sup>15</sup> While witchcraft was a secular crime, in Scotland it was closely associated with the devil and witches were understood to be engaged in "an underground conspiracy against God and the community."<sup>16</sup> While in continental Europe there was a decline in the literal interpretation of biblical injunctions against those who practiced magic, in Scotland literal interpretations endured.<sup>17</sup> It was part of a minister's duty to ensure that the

10 Suhr, "Speaking to the Masses," 3.

11 Fox, "Little Story Books," 216.

12 *An Answer of a Letter from a Gentleman in Fife* (Edinburgh, 1705), 3.

13 Roger L. Emerson, *Academic Patronage in the Scottish Enlightenment: Glasgow, Edinburgh, and St Andrews Universities* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 4.

14 Emerson, *Academic Patronage*, 10.

15 Julian Goodare, *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 173.

16 Goodare, *State and Society*, 175.

17 Brian P. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion* (New York/London: Routledge, 2008), 133.

members of his community understood their religious duties and adhered to the tenets of their faith.<sup>18</sup>

All of the pamphlets under consideration were published in the vernacular, appealing to a literate middle class, although many pamphlets make use of Latin in short passages for illustrative purposes (George Sinclair and Patrick Cowper, for example). Several pamphlets also cite Greek and Hebrew words in order to demonstrate the learning of their (often anonymous) authors, as with *A Lover of Truth in Witch-Craft Proven* (1697), who traces the origins of words associated with witches, divination, and poisoning using Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.<sup>19</sup> Most of these authors elected to demonstrate their learning with judicious reference to passages from the Bible, either by quoting text or by referencing certain passages (for example, Lord Francis Grant Cullen). While the biblical passages and even some of the ecclesiastical Latin may have been familiar to a church-going audience, the Greek and Hebrew would have seemed foreign and opaque. These may have been used to further bolster the sense that these pamphlets were coming from highly educated writers, despite the anonymity of their authors.

Indeed, a good half of these pamphlets are anonymous, with authors attributed sometimes centuries after their initial publication. Anonymous pamphlets were not uncommon, whether satirical, religious, or political.<sup>20</sup> It is possible that during these periods the authors would have been known, and therefore there might have been no need to indicate who wrote a given tract, but it is just as likely that the authors wished to retain some sense of anonymity. During a period of conflicting epistemologies, where agents of Satan were understood to instil doubt in believers through the newly emerging empirical philosophies and mechanical worldviews, perhaps there was a risk in appearing old-fashioned, or on the other side, too sympathetic to the accused witches. Yet it is unclear why, if the authors felt these tracts were important enough to print and distribute, they did not attach their names to their convictions.

With an increase in education for children, university students, and adults and easier access to printed material came a subsequent increase in literacy and appetite for printed material in Scotland.<sup>21</sup> Historian Adam Fox suggests that the emergence of print for a popular audience began

18 Goodare, *State and Society*, 173, 175.

19 *A Lover of Truth, Witch-Craft Proven*, 8, 9, ff.

20 Clare Jackson, *Restoration Scotland, 1660–1690: Royalist Politics, Religion, and Ideas* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), 154.

21 Aleister J. Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade, 1500–1720: Print Commerce and Print Control in Early Modern Scotland: An Historiographical Survey of the Early Modern Book in Scotland* (East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell, 2000), 31–32.

around 1680, including pamphlets, chapbooks, and the first Scottish newspapers.<sup>22</sup> Many early pamphlets and chapbooks do not include information that would easily identify where or when they were printed. By 1703 printers were required to include their names on all tracts printed; however, this was frequently omitted.<sup>23</sup> In these instances, attributions given by earlier scholars have been retained. Similarly, a number of these pamphlets were published anonymously, and where attributions have been given by earlier scholars, these have also been retained.

In *The Scottish Book Trade*, historian Alastair J. Mann has put together tables of what records survive to give an idea of the relative wealth of printers, book binders, and book traders, as well as valuations of their stock. Books, pamphlets, ballads, and other printed material were sold by street traders who paid printers for their wares, as well as book traders, and often through the printers themselves.<sup>24</sup> In the 1680s, pamphlets and small books could cost 2d sterling in England, or up to 3s Scots.<sup>25</sup> In 1710, the prices for street vendors from printers could range from 5s per dozen story books to 7s per quire for ballads, which would then be marked up.<sup>26</sup> Pamphlets such as these may have been sold to the street vendors for a price similar to or less expensive than that of ballads, perhaps for as little as a few pence.<sup>27</sup> These pamphlets would be sold at printer's shops, bookstores, and also by paper criers (street sellers who specialized in short ephemeral works).<sup>28</sup>

John Reid worked at various print shops in Edinburgh and is credited as being "among the most prolific producers" in this period, particularly of sermons.<sup>29</sup> The title known to have been published by him concerning witchcraft, *A True and Full Relation* (1704), conforms to this type, as it relies on biblical citations and allusions to convince the reader of the real dangers of witchcraft in one's community.<sup>30</sup> This pamphlet was published while the

22 Fox, "Little Story Books," 208.

23 Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade*, 24.

24 Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade*, 202.

25 Fox, "Small Pamphlets," 208.

26 Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade*, 202.

27 Fox, "Little Story Books," 207.

28 Fox, "Little Story Books," 222.

29 Fox, "Little Story Books," 218. For an example of one of these sermons against witchcraft, though one that seems to have been unpublished when it was written, see James Hutchinson, "A Sermon on Witchcraft in 1697," in *Witchcraft in Scotland*, edited with an introduction by Brian P. Levack (New York/London: Garland, 1992), 378–391.

30 *A True and Full Relation of the Witches at Pittenweem, To Which is Added by Way of a Preface, an Essay for Proving the Existence of Good and Evil Spirits, Relating to the Witches at Pittenweem, Now in Custody, with Arguments Against Sadducism of the Present Age* (Edinburgh: John Reid Junior, 1704).

accused witches named in the text were imprisoned and awaiting trial, and it aimed to persuade the reader that the proceedings that were under way were just. Its author claimed that the safety and security of the community had been destabilized by the public declaration that witches had been living in their midst.<sup>31</sup> Where the pamphlet's author and its readers are presumed to be good Christians, the accused witches are presented in direct opposition to this, as those who have confessed to entering into a covenant with the Devil and renouncing the baptism that formerly marked them as being within the godly community.

Texts on witches, witchcraft, and the spirit world were immensely popular. Adam Fox suggests that the Scottish presses likely were influenced by English sources, and this can be demonstrated with witchcraft pamphlets.<sup>32</sup> Numerous witchcraft pamphlets were published in London leading up to the period under discussion that detailed cases abroad, as well as guides on how to spot a witch or how to distinguish whether a woman was a witch or a healer, religious tracts against witchcraft, trial narratives, ballad broadsides, and fantastical stories about witches and their nefarious activities.<sup>33</sup> These extended into full book-length treatments as well. In 1668, Joseph Glanvill (1636–1680), an English philosopher, clergyman, and member of the Royal Society in London (though not a scientist himself), published *Blow at Modern Sadducism* in 1668, which was expanded and re-published posthumously as *Saducismus Triumphatus* in London in 1681.<sup>34</sup> It was frequently expanded and reprinted over the ensuing decades. In Scotland, George Sinclar (d. 1696), a professor of mathematics and philosophy at the University of Glasgow, abridged Glanvill's text and adapted it to only include what he considered to be the best material as *Satan's Invisible*

31 Verhoest, "Public Communications Space," 49.

32 Fox, "'Little Story Books,'" 208. For more on English witchcraft literature, see Wallace Notestein, *A History of Witchcraft in England from 1558 to 1718* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), 227–253. The course that witchcraft literature traced was not a linear one in either England or Scotland, as we will see.

33 For a small selection, see Appendix. Titles were selected to show the variety of approaches to witchcraft that these London-printed tracts take. The sample is representative, but by no means exhaustive.

34 Joseph Glanvill, *Blow at Modern Sadducism: In Some Philosophical Considerations About Witchcraft. To Which is Added The Relation of the Fam'd Disturbance by the Drummer in the House of Mr. John Mompesson : With Some Reflections on Drollery, and Atheisme* (London: Printed by E.C. for James Collins, at the King's Head in Westminster-Hall, 1668); and Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus : or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions. In Two Parts. The First Treating of Their Possibility, the Second of Their Real Existence* (London: Printed for J. Collins in his Shop Under the Temple-Church, and S. Lownds at his Shop by the Savoy-Gate, 1681).

*World Discovered*. This was also enlarged and reprinted numerous times. Writing in 1967, literary scholar Coleman O. Parsons catalogued fourteen distinct editions.<sup>35</sup> Sinclar noted that his text's shorter length meant that it was considerably cheaper than Glanvill's original, yet would also provide the reader with convincing proofs that would satisfy even the most skeptical person.<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, of primary concern was a perceived rise in sadducism, or the disbelief in the spirit world, in a period when the mechanical universe was gaining traction in educated circles. In *Satan's Invisible World*, Sinclar argues that "Hobbsonian and Spinosian principles" lead people to undervalue scripture, and that the mechanical view of the universe leaves little room for god, the devil, spirits, or witches. (He even goes so far as to rename "Benedictus Spinoza" to "Maledictus Spinoza.")<sup>37</sup> He also warns against Cartesian philosophy, which he concedes does not openly deny the existence of God, but does suggest it, and that this leads to a deeper skepticism of religion, the role of scripture, and the belief that philosophy is infallible, unlike orthodox spirituality.<sup>38</sup> Appeals are made to scripture, "famous persons," and arguments that are presumed to be common sense, testimonies that serve to demonstrate the truth of the argument he puts forth. The increase in skepticism is presented as dangerous, and Sinclar entreats his readers to stand firm through any ridicule they may encounter, as it is these men who are foolish, not those who believe.<sup>39</sup>

Similar tropes are at work in shorter tracts, such as *Witch-Craft Proven* (1697), by A Lover of Truth (otherwise unattributed). The pamphlet's cover includes a quotation from Deuteronomy against those who consult spirits, wizards, and necromancers and another significant selection from Exodus 22:18: "Thou shalt not suffer a Witch to live." Like Sinclair, this writer understands that a belief in spirits means a belief in God, writing "[t]hat there be Spirits, the Word of God, the light of Nature, the truth of History, and dayly experience." To believe in one is to believe in all; to deny any is to

35 Coleman O. Parsons, "Introduction," in *Satan's Invisible World Discovered (1685) by George Sinclar: A Facsimile Reproduction* (Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1969), xxv–xxviii.

36 George Sinclar, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered ; or, A Choice Collection of Modern Relations, Proving Evidently Against the Saducees and Atheists of This Present Age, That There are Devils, Spirits, Witches, and Apparitions, from Authentick Records, Attestations of Famous Witnesses, and Undoubted Verity. To All Which is Added, That Marvellous History of Major Weir, and His Sister: With Two Relations of Apparitions At Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: John Reid, 1685), xvi.

37 Sinclar, *Satan's Invisible World*, xxii.

38 Sinclar, *Satan's Invisible World*, xxiii–xxvi.

39 Sinclar, *Satan's Invisible World*, xvi–xviii, xxix.



venture into atheism.<sup>40</sup> Similar appeals to authority are made, including kings of England, France, Scotland, and “the famous Sicilian Wizard” who confirm this truth.<sup>41</sup> This is followed by a series of events and actions attributable to witches, as well as detailed accounts of the different types of witches one might encounter, the methods of divination and harmful magic they employ, and signs by which one may know a witch.<sup>42</sup> Rather than relating contemporary cases of witchcraft where these ideas might be demonstrated in practice, instead *Witch-Craft Proven* relies on appeals to authority by citing well-known people in high positions who have believed in witches, including citing cases from the Christian Bible. Contemporary cases are referred to only in broad strokes, and they appear elsewhere, in “Italie and Germany.”<sup>43</sup>

Writing against those who doubt the belief in witches, particularly in a case that emerged in a small eastern coastal town, one pamphleteer writes in 1705:

[W]hatever the Inconsiderate and Atheistical *Would-be-wit* of this Age may dream, Protestant Ministers of the Gospel, have no Temptation to be more easy than other Men in their belief, about particular stories of Which-craft, or to obrude them upon others, their Faith of the General Truth that there are Devils, and Witches, stands on no weaker Bottom, than the Faithful Word of GOD.<sup>44</sup>

The writer asserts that ministers, simply because they believe in witches and the devil, are not simple-minded and do not believe easily. Rather, their belief comes from a strong faith in God and a literal interpretation of the Bible as the word of God.

*The Tryal of Witchcraft* (ca. 1700) is composed in the form of a letter to a friend inquiring about how one knows things about witches, and a response broken into sections that take each question in turn.<sup>45</sup> The anonymous

40 A Lover of Truth, *Witch-craft Proven, Arreign'd, and Condemn'd in Its Professors, Professions and Marks, by Diverse Pungent, and Convincing Arguments, Excerpted Forth of the Most Authentick Authors, Divine and Humane, Ancient and Modern* (Glasgow: Robert Sanders, 1697), 2–3.

41 Lover, *Witch-Craft Proven*, 4.

42 Lover, *Witch-Craft Proven*, 4–15.

43 Lover, *Witch-Craft Proven*, 13.

44 [Cowper], *A Just Reproof*, 25, italics original.

45 [John Bell] *The Tryal of Witchcraft or, Witchcraft Arraign'd and Condemn'd. In Some Answers to a Few Questions Anent Witches and Witchcraft. Wherein is Shewed, How to Know If One Be a Witch, as Also When One is Bewitched : With Some Observations Upon the Witches Mark, Their Compact with the Devil, the White Witches &c.* ([Glasgow, 1700]).

author of *The Tryal* takes a more cautious approach than some of the texts we have seen previously.<sup>46</sup> It allows that there may be cases that, on the surface, appear to be the result of witchcraft, yet may in fact have natural causes. When there are doubts, the tract advises first consulting a physician, as Satan may obtain permission from God to inflict diseases upon mortals.<sup>47</sup> While appeals to religious sources remain, this text is rooted in the empirical approach that emerged from contemporary Enlightenment thinkers. Brief references are made to cases of witchcraft, but these appear to serve an illustrative purpose, rather than relitigating the merits of a contemporary case.

In contrast, several tracts published during this period do take on specific cases. Both *A Relation of the Diabolical Practice* and *A True Narrative of the Sufferings and Relief of a Young Girle* concern accusations of witchcraft from Christine Shaw, the daughter of John Shaw, Laird of Bargarran in Paisley, Renfrewshire. The first tract was published in London in 1697, the same year that the trial and executions took place, and the second in Edinburgh a year later in 1698.<sup>48</sup> While each relates the facts of the case as they were presented in trial documents, and both were written by people who were present during the trial, the prefaces are quite different in tone.

In *A Relation of the Diabolical Practice*, the writer indicates that they have compiled the present pamphlet at the request of someone only referred to as T.M. The author goes into great detail about who participated in the case, noting who confessed, the torture methods used, and observation of torture by attendant doctors. The testimony is then presented in full, followed by a letter from Christian McGilchrist, the Lady Bargarran, describing the

46 Christina Lerner suggests that this pamphlet was in fact written by John Bell (1697–1707), and I find her evidence persuasive. She also credits Bell with writing *Discourse on Witchcraft*, first published in 1705 (Christina Lerner, “Two Late Scottish Witchcraft Tracts: *Witch-Craft Proven* and *The Tryal of Witchcraft*,” in *The Damned Art*, edited by Sydney Anglo [London/New York: Routledge, 2011]). Lerner thought it lost, but copies do survive. Unfortunately, this text has not yet been digitized.

47 Bell, *The Tryal*, 10–11.

48 T.P., *A Relation of the Diabolical Practice of Above Twenty Wizards and Witches of the Sheriffdom of Renfrew in the Kingdom of Scotland, Contain'd in Their Tryalls, Examinations, and Confessions; And for Which Several of Them Have Been Executed This Present Year, 1697* (Printed for Hugh Newman at the Grashopper in the Poultry, 1697), and [Francis Grant Cullen], *A True Narrative of the Sufferings and Relief of a Young Girle Strangely Molested, by Evil Spirits and their Instruments, in the West: Collected from Authentick Testimonies there-ament. With a Preface and Post-script Containing Reflections on What is Most Material or Curious; Either in the History, or Trial of the Seven Witches Who were Condemn'd to be Execute in that Countrey* (Edinburgh: Printed by James Watson in Craig's Closs, on the North-Side of the Cross, 1698).

attack and the fits her daughter endured. The intent seems to be to present a new and extraordinary case of witchcraft that involved the accusation and deaths of numerous people in Scotland to a London audience who had not experienced anything like it in a generation.

Appetite for this material must have been strong, as another, though more sober, testament was published a year later by Lord Francis Grant Cullen (1658–1726), who engaged in the prosecution of the witches. *A True Narrative of the Sufferings* (1698) is more circumspect in its preface to the trial documents. Cullen notes that some of the harm attributed to witchcraft may be due to natural causes, though he notes that this particular case is based in fact, as it has been argued before skeptics and proven before judges.<sup>49</sup> He cites Glanvill “and others” who suggest that the soul can be separated from the body before death, and notes that, with God’s permission, Satan can manage the task.<sup>50</sup> Following this introduction, he gives the narrative of the trial with dates, the details of the case, and what purport to be direct quotations from witnesses. It is a detailed account and is again summarized in an abbreviated report made by the commissioners of the Privy Council. While the historian Michael Wasser notes that Cullen’s religious conviction led him to prosecute witches, here Cullen seems to be equivocating somewhat.<sup>51</sup> Though present in the court and witness to the testimony given by Shaw, her co-accusers, and the accused witches, Cullen instead relies on support from noted authorities on witches to affirm their reality and the justness of the judgement.

Three tracts concern accused witches in Pittenweem, Fife, the latter two of which relate the unsanctioned death by pressing of Janet Corphat. *A True and Full Relation of the Witches at Pittenweem* opens with a rebuff to sadducism and goes on to celebrate the capture and imprisonment of six or eight witches awaiting trial.<sup>52</sup> The author cites scripture and notes that, in addition to the witches who have emerged in Pittenweem, witches have been found in “Plantations in *New-England*.”<sup>53</sup> The writer appears almost excited at the prospect of witches in their community, much as Pittenweem’s minister, Patrick Cowper, is later affirmed to be. An account of the attack on

49 Cullen, *True Narrative*, 3.

50 Cullen, *True Narrative*, 5–6.

51 Michael Wasser, “The Western Witch-Hunt of 1697–1700: The Last Major Witch-Hunt in Scotland,” in *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, edited by Julian Goodare (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 153.

52 *A True and Full Relation*. Accounts vary with the text as to how many witches there were.

53 *A True and Full Relation*, 5. Original italics. America is again referred to as an exotic locale where witches have featured lately (6).

Patrick Morton (here, “Peter Mourton”) and those he accused as witches follows in some detail. This rhetoric of the text suggests that the writer may have been a radical reformer and perhaps a minister.<sup>54</sup> A year later, one of the women accused as a witch was murdered by an angry mob, and these two letters were published in response, rebuking the mob and putting the blame squarely on the minister for stirring up trouble.<sup>55</sup> This pamphlet was published in 1705 and both letters are dated 5 February 1705, which suggests a sense of urgency and underscores the importance of their immediate publication; perhaps they were intended to serve as calls to action or agitation on the part of the nobleman to whom they are addressed and the contemporary reader. It is not clear whether the letters were published under the direction of the nobleman who received them, the gentlemen who sent them, or another party. Shortly afterward, another pamphlet appeared indignant that the good name of the minister was being besmirched and affirmed the justness of the accusations and even, to an extent, the poor woman's murder.<sup>56</sup> Given the tenor and writing style of this second pamphlet, it seems likely that it was written by Patrick Cowper, the minister in Pittenweem.

Though there are no outright denials that witchcraft existed in the pamphlets from this period, there is evidence of skepticism about the validity of some of the claims made and a greater demand for empirical proof. For example, while both the writers of *A True and Full Relation* and *A Just Reproof* take Morton at his word, both letter writers in *An Answer of a Letter from a Gentleman in Fife* stress that he is known to spread falsehoods. The first letter writer describes him as “a cheat,” characterizes Morton's accusations as a “melancholly Fancy,” and notes that he recovered his health soon after he was found to be falsely representing his illness.<sup>57</sup> In stating that Morton was previously shown to be false, these letter writers argue

54 Goodare, *State and Society*, 180.

55 Anonymous, *An Answer of a Letter From a Gentleman in Fife to a Nobleman Containing a Brief Account of the Barbarous and Illegal Treatment, These Poor Women Accused of Witchcraft, Met with from the Baillies of Pittenweem and Others, with Some few Observations Thereon. To Which is Added an Account of the Horrid and Barbarous Murder, in a Letter from a Gentlemen in Fife, to his Friend in Edinburgh, February 6th, 1705* ([Edinburgh], 1705).

56 [Patrick Cowper], *A Just Reproof, to the False Reports, Bold, & Unjust Calumnies, Dropt in Two Late Pamphlets: The First Entituled, An Account of a Horrid and Barbarous Murder. In a Letter from a Gentleman in Fife, to his Friend in Edinburgh. And the other An Answer of a Letter from a Gentleman in Fife to a Nobleman, Containing a Brief Account of the Barbarous and Illegal Treatment, the Poor Woman Accused of Witchcraft Met with, from the Bailies of Pittinweem and Others* (Edinburgh, 1705).

57 *An Answer of a Letter from a Gentleman in Fife*, 2–3.

that his testimony is unreliable. Further, the letter writers enumerate their own observations of the mistreatment of the prisoners and other disgraces conducted by supposed authorities both in the Church and in secular law. The second letter accuses Morton of “pretending” and “Villany” and goes into detail about how Lord Rothes discredited Morton.<sup>58</sup> The tone of both letters is sympathetic to the plights of the women accused of being witches, in particular Janet Corphat, and disturbed by the circumstances surrounding her murder. Belief had consequences. It could result in the death of someone who may have turned out to be innocent of the crime of which she was accused.

Shortly after *An Answer of a Letter from a Gentleman in Fife* (1705) was published, a response was issued entitled *A Just Reproof* (1705). This response provides a view into the concerns of a minister in a small Scottish town, particularly as they relate to his reputation.<sup>59</sup> The author of *A Just Reproof* goes so far as to accuse the second letter writer of being “guilty of more barbarity towards the Magistrates and Minister, than they to the Women.”<sup>60</sup> Where other anti-witchcraft pamphlets place quotations against magic and witches on their covers, *A Just Reproof* presents three verses from the Bible against lying. While *An Answer* consists of two short letters and totalled eight pages, *A Just Reproof* is twenty-six pages long, and its author takes both letters apart, almost line by line, despite its claim that it is “scarce thought worth of an Answer.”<sup>61</sup> Yet, with the minister's reputation at stake, a very detailed, if sometimes confused, refutation takes place.

The author of the pamphlet is also concerned about the risks these suspected witches pose to the community, which further supports the idea that the minister in Pittenweem, Patrick Cowper, wrote this pamphlet. Reformist ministers were often focused on coercive discipline in their communities, in order to weed out the ungodly, and ensure that the community was “purged of outward sin and corruption.”<sup>62</sup> Numerous accounts are given of instances where the women accused have confessed to engaging in conversation, covenant, and sexual acts with the Devil in order to justify the actions taken against them.<sup>63</sup> The reality of these accounts is presumed to be unassailable because they are attested to by the prophets in the Bible. Indeed, the author rages against those who do not believe in devils and

58 *An Answer of a Letter from a Gentleman in Fife*, 5.

59 The minister's reputation is referred to on numerous occasions, far more than the magister's, whose reputation is also impugned. [Cowper], *A Just Reproof*, 3, 9, 10, 16.

60 [Cowper], *A Just Reproof*, 17.

61 [Cowper], *A Just Reproof*, 3.

62 Goodare, *State and Society*, 175, 180.

63 [Cowper], *A Just Reproof*, 7, 19, 21–22.

witches, discounting “these Quacks in Philosophy” whose rhetoric may lead one into atheism and a general disbelief in truth.<sup>64</sup>

The pamphlet offers specific details of the case, the treatment of the women, and their guilt. The author takes pains to refute claims made that the minister beat the women in prison, or that he took more liberty with civil authority than he was due.<sup>65</sup> The pamphlet suggests that Cowper's servants did not inform him of their plans to attack Janet Corphat, sneaking quietly out of the house so that he would not know. It is further attested that the site of the murder “lay at a great distance from Mr. Cowper's House,” and he knew nothing of her death until the next morning.<sup>66</sup> Additional details are provided that would only be known in aggregate by Cowper, such as the denial of the sacrament of communion to the accused witches and conversations with the accused witches in prison, as well as details of what was discussed between Patrick Morton and the minister.<sup>67</sup> The detailed and defensive tone confirms the author of the text to be overly concerned with the reputation of the minister, and the presumed guilt of those accused as witches suggest that Patrick Cowper likely wrote this pamphlet.<sup>68</sup>

Real world cases such as those in Paisley and Pittenweem attracted attention, as did those in more far-flung places. The Salem Trials of the 1690s were fresh and eagerly read in Scotland, perhaps because they took place in an exotic land. Numerous pamphlets concerning the trials were published in Boston and reprinted in London, and even in Edinburgh. This is attested to by the printing of Cotton Mather's *Memorable Providences, Relating to Vvitchcrafts and Possessions*, a version of which was published in Edinburgh in 1697.<sup>69</sup> Interest in a Welsh case of witchcraft is demonstrated by the 1702

64 [Cowper], *A Just Reproof*, 26, 25.

65 [Cowper], *A Just Reproof*, 9–10, 11, 23.

66 [Cowper], *A Just Reproof*, 13–14.

67 [Cowper], *A Just Reproof*, 17, 8, 10, 4.

68 In trying to discover more information about Patrick Cowper, I found a record of a Patrick Cowper born to Gilbert Cowper and Jonet Tyrie in Aberdour on 30 April 1667 in Scotland's People (<scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>, accessed November 2019). If this is the same Patrick Cowper, he would have been thirty-seven years old at the time of the trial. A Patrick Couper (an alternate spelling used in *A Just Reproof*) died on 11 March 1726 in Edinburgh. Aberdour, Pittenweem, and Edinburgh are all on the east coast and are relatively close, and these records could refer to the same Patrick Cowper, but more work would need to be done to confirm this with any certainty.

69 Cotton Mather, *Memorable Providences, Relating to Vvitchcrafts and Possessions: A Faithful Account of Many Wonderful and Surprising Things, That have Befallen Several Bewitched and Possessed Persons in New-England. Particularly, a Narrative of the Marvellous Trouble and Relief, Experienced by a Pious Family in Boston, Very Lately and Sadly Molested with Evil Spirits. Whereunto is Added, a Discourse*

printing in Glasgow of *A Sad and Lamentable Account of One Mary Jawson, Born in Kirkcowl in Breaknack Shire [sic] in Wales. Who Wickedly Sold Her Self to the Devil.*<sup>70</sup>

The seventeenth century saw an increase in accusations of witchcraft within family units, and increasingly witches were identified by their association with the Devil.<sup>71</sup> If the godly feared that Christians were losing faith in witches, and therefore God, perhaps the threat of Satanic involvement would stir interest in their cause. Consequently, the malice of witches becomes predicated on their involvement with the devil, which is imagined in great detail in some of these pamphlets. *Witch-Craft Proven* relates the mass-like celebration that wizards and witches attend with their lord, “the devil and his Creatures.” There they meet up with others of their kind in order to discuss their evil deeds, feast, “serve to satisfie the lust of the Witches ... and the lust of the Wizzards” and “perform lewd and wicked deeds.” Witches are then anointed with ointment, which allows the spirit to leave their bodies and be carried through the air.<sup>72</sup> This is made possible because they have renounced their Christian faith, and given their body and soul to Satan, forming a league and covenant with him.<sup>73</sup> These abstract traits of the witch form the basis of testimony and confessions given by Christina Shaw’s witnesses and defendants in *A Relation of the Diabolical Practice*.<sup>74</sup> From Lord Francis Grant Cullen we learn that the devil can assume a corporeal shape, as is attested in the Bible, with the serpent and Eve, and Satan and Christ.<sup>75</sup> However, this same language and imagery can in turn be used against those who make accusations. In *An Answer of a Letter From a Gentleman in Fife*, one letter writer describes Mr. Cowper, the minister who attended these torture sessions with the bailies, as “hardened in the Devil’s Service,” which

*Delivered Unto a Congregation in Boston, on the Occasion of that Illustrious Providence. As Also, a Discourse Delivered Unto the Same Congregation; On the Occasion of an Horrible Self-Murder Committed in the town. With an Appendix, in Vindication of a Chapter in a Late Book of Remarkable Providences, from the Calumnies of a Quaker at Pen-silvania. Written by Cotton Mather, minister of the Gospel. And recommended by the ministers of Boston and Charleston (Edinburgh: 1697).*

70 *A Sad and Lamentable Account of one Mary Jawson, Born in Kirkcowl in Breaknack Shire [sic] in Wales. Who Wickedly Sold Her Self to the Devil* (Glasgow: 1702). Sadly, this text has not been digitized, and the only two known copies are in the National Library of Scotland and at Cornell University, neither of which was accessible to the author.

71 Deborah Willis, “The Witch-Family in Elizabethan and Jacobean Print Culture,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 13.1 (2013): 13.

72 Lover, *Witch-Craft Proven*, 4–5.

73 Lover, *Witch-Craft Proven*, 5, 11.

74 T.P., *A Relation of the Diabolical Practice*, 3, 11.

75 Cullen, *A True Narrative*, 3.

provides a striking contrast to the association of witches and witchcraft we find in this period with a man of God and men of the law.<sup>76</sup>

At the dawn of the Scottish Enlightenment, witchcraft was a secular crime, although witch hunting was first under the purview of the local kirk session before escalating to the Privy Council, when warranted.<sup>77</sup> Local witch hunters understood that it was the local community that had to be convinced of an accused witch's guilt, and pamphlets describing the urgency with which one can discover and identify a witch could provide guidance for those concerned about evil in their communities.<sup>78</sup> However, it was usually members of the elite whose works were published, and so their anxieties are those that survive.<sup>79</sup> Witchcraft pamphlets that inveighed against witches expressed a deep concern for disbelief in spirits and witches, which they correlated with a rejection of God. By associating witches with Satan, these authors heightened the spiritual stakes. These pamphlets served as an intellectual battleground where their authors emphasized scripture and theological authorities, while denouncing the new philosophies that they felt alienated parishioners. Through the tracts that have survived, we can get a sense of the public discourse surrounding witches, witchcraft, and witch trials, which demonstrates that the debate was not yet settled about whether witches were active in the community, or whether these women and men were innocent of the accusations levied against them.

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- 76 *An Answer of a Letter from a Gentleman in Fife*, 2; Stuart MacDonald, "In Search of the Devil in Fife Witchcraft Cases, 1560–1705," in *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, edited by Julian Goodare (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 44.
- 77 Julian Goodare, "Witch-Hunting and the Scottish State," in *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, edited by Julian Goodare (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 124.
- 78 Goodare, "Witch-Hunting," 33.
- 79 Stuart MacDonald *The Witches of Fife: Witch-Hunting in a Scottish Shire, 1560–1710* (Edinburgh: Tuckwell, 2002), 8.



APPENDIX: TIMELINE OF TEXTS

Date	Location	Publisher	Length	Author	Title
1619	London	George Eld for John Barnes	1 ff.	[John Barnes]	Damnabll practises of three Lincolne-shire witches, Joane Flower, and her two daughters, Margret and Philip Flower, against Henry Lord Rosse, with others the children of the Right Honourable the Earle of Rutland, at Beauer Castle, who for the same were executed at Lincoln the 11. of March last. To the tune of the Ladies fall.
1622	London	John Dawson for Bartholomew Downes and William Sheffard	12 pp.	Anonymous	The 30. of August. A discourse of nevves from Prague in Bohemia, of an husband who by witchcraft had murdered xvij. wiues; and of a wife who had likewise murdered xix. husbands. with the entercourse of one infernall spirit betwixt them, vnder two severall names, and vnder two severall shapes. And in conclusion, how this devill did kill the man, and for what causes he spared the woman. Faithfully translated out of the Dutch and French coppies.
[1630]	London	George Purslowe for Henry Gosson	1 ff.	Robert Guy	Sure my nurse was a witch, or, the merry night-wench. Who when her child doth cry, merry to make him, doth sing unto it, come take him beggar, take him. To the tune of See the golding, or Watton townes end.
1635	London	Miles Flesher for Thomas Lambert	24 pp.	Anonymous	VVitchcrafts, strange and vvonderfull: discovering the damnabll practices of seven witches, against the lives of certaine noble personages, and others of this kingdome, as shall appeare in this lamentable history. With an approved trial how to finde out either witch, or an apprentice to witch-craft.

(Continued)

Date	Location	Publisher	Length	Author	Title
1647	London	Printed for Richard Royston	10 pp.	Matthew Hopkins	The discovery of vvitches: in answer to severall queries, lately delivered to the judges of assize for the county of Norfolk. And now published by Matthevv Hopkins, witch-finder. For the benefit of the whole kingdome.
1648	London		18 pp.	Mary Pope	Heare, heare, heare, heare, a vvord or message from heaven; to all Covenant breakers (whom God hates) with all that hath committed that great sinne, that is, as the sinne of witch-craft. The great God that is most high and infinite, that hath the command.
1668	London	Printed by E.C. for James Collins, at the King's Head in Westminster-Hall		A Member of the Royal Society [Joseph Glanvill]	Blow at Modern Sadducism: In Some Philosophical Considerations About Witchcraft. To Which is Added The Relation of the Fam'd Disturbance by the Drummer in the House of Mr. John Mompesson: With Some Reflections on Drollery, and Atheisme.
1681	London	Printed for J. Collins in his Shop Under the Temple-Church, and S. Lownds at his Shop by the Savoy-Gate	328 pp.	Joseph Glanvill	Saducismus Triumphatus : or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions. In Two Parts. The First Treating of Their Possibility, the Second of Their Real Existence.
1685	Edinburgh	John Reid	286 pp.	George Sinclar	Satan's Invisible World Discovered; or, A Choice Collection of Modern Relations, Proving Evidently Against the Saducees and Atheists of This Present Age, That There are Devils, Spirits, Witches, and Apparitions, from Authentick Records, Attestations of Famous Witnesses, and Undoubted Verity. To All Which is Added, That Marvellous History of Major Weir, and His Sister: With Two Relations of Apparitions At Edinburgh.

1697	Glasgow	Robert Sanders	16 pp.	A Lover of Truth	Witch-craft proven, arreign'd, and condemn'd in its professors, professions and marks, by diverse pungent, and convincing arguments, excerpted forth of the most authentick authors, divine and humane, ancient and modern. By a Lover of the truth.
1697	Edinburgh		102 pp.	Cotton Mather	Memorable Providences, Relating to Vvitchcrafts and Possessions: A Faithful Account of Many Wonderful and Surprising Things, That have Befallen Several Bewitched and Possessed Persons in New-England. Particularly, a Narrative of the Marvellous Trouble and Relief, Experienced by a Pious Family in Boston, Very Lately and Sadly Molested with Evil Spirits. Whereunto is Added, a Discourse Delivered Unto a Congregation in Boston, on the Occasion of that Illustrious Providence. As Also, a Discourse Delivered Unto the Same Congregation; On the Occasion of an Horrible Self-Murder Committed in the town. With an Appendix, in Vindication of a Chapter in a Late Book of Remarkable Providences, from the Calumnies of a Quaker at Pen-silvania. Written by Cotton Mather, minister of the Gospel. And recommended by the ministers of Boston and Charleston
1697	London	Printed for Hugh Newman at the Grashopper in the Poultry	24 pp.	T.P.	A Relation of the Diabolical Practice of Above Twenty Wizards and Witches of the Sherifffdom of Renfrew in the Kingdom of Scotland, Contain'd in their Tryalls, Examinations, and Confessions; And for Which Several of Them Have Been Executed This Present Year, 1697.

*(Continued)*

Date	Location	Publisher	Length	Author	Title
1698	Edinburgh	James Watson Craig's Closs	in 46 pp.	[Francis Cullen]	Grant A true narrative of the sufferings and relief of a young girle; strangely molested, by evil spirits and their instruments, in the west: collected from authentick testimonies there-anent. With a preface and post-script containing reflections on what is most material or curious; either in the history, or trial of the seven witches who were condemn'd to be execute in that countrey.
[1700]	[Glasgow]		23 p.	[John Bell]	The Tryal of Witchcraft or, Witchcraft Arraign'd and Condemn'd. In Some Answers to a Few Questions Anent Witches and Witchcraft. Wherein is Shewed, How to Know If One Be a Witch, as Also When One is Bewitched : With Some Observations Upon the Witches Mark, Their Compact with the Devil, the White Witches &c.
1702	Glasgow		12 pp.	Anonymous	A Sad and Lamentable Account of one Mary Jawson, Born in Kirkcowl in Breaknack Shire [sic] in Wales. Who Wickedly Sold Her Self to the Devil
1704	Edinburgh	John Reid Junior	12 pp.	Anonymous	A true and full relation of the witches at Pittenweem. To which is added by way of preface, an essay for proving the existence of good and evil spirits, relating to the Witches at Pittenweem, now in Custody, with Arguments against the Sadducism of the Present Age.
1705	[Edinburgh]		8 pp.	Anonymous	An answer of a letter from a gentleman in Fife, to a nobleman, containing a brief account of the barbarous and illegal treatment, these poor women accused of witchcraft, met with from the baillies of Pittenweem and others, ... To which is added an account of the horrid and barbarous murder, in a letter from a gentleman in Fife, to his friend in Edinburgh, February 5th. 1705.

[1705]	Edinburgh		26 pp.	[Mr Cowper, Minister in Pittenweem]	A just reproof, to the false reports, bold, & unjust calumnies, dropt in two late pamphlets the first entituled, An account of a horrid and barbarous murder. In a letter from a gentleman in Fife, to his friend in Edinburgh. And the other An answer of a letter from a gentleman in Fife to a nobleman, containing a brief account of the barbarous and illegal treatment, the poor woman accused of witchcraft met with, from the bailies of Pittinweem and others.
1705	[?]	N/A	50 pp.	[John Bell]	An Ingenious and Scientific Discourse of Witchcraft
1705	London	N/A	47 pp.	[John Bell]	Discourse on Witchcraft

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Note: This article has received the Linda F. Dietz Prize, awarded annually to the winning entry in our graduate essay competition.