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Spiritual Roles in Early Modern Scotland

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Abstract

This thesis compares how Reformed conversion-centred spirituality was articulated in sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions, with a particular focus on looking at the broad similarities across these three contexts. Drawing on religious historians' understanding of early modern Protestant conversion and sociologists' and social psychologists' scholarship on role theory, it argues that Reformed conversion can be interpreted as a process of following and sometimes internalising culturally coded spiritual roles that forced people to transform their thoughts, words and actions with the aim of reconciling with God. The thesis identifies three spiritual roles common to sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions: the unregenerate, the penitent sinner and the Christian soldier. It first considers how these roles were constructed and preached to the laity in ministers' sermons, and then moves on to examine how pious lay Scots articulated these roles in their conversion narratives. After establishing a pattern in how these roles were articulated in sermons and conversion narratives, the remainder of the thesis explores how these roles were articulated in witchcraft confessions. Supporting recent scholarship, mainly on German witchcraft, it shows how conversion-centred spirituality extended to the environment of the witch trial and how historians can use evidence from the witch trials to explore the relationship between orthodox religious culture and witchcraft, and to consider how ordinary Scots from across the central lowlands expressed Reformed spiritual ideas.

Lay Summary

This thesis looks at the similarities in how conversion was expressed in sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions. Drawing on religious historians' understanding of early modern Protestant conversion and sociologists' and social psychologists' scholarship on role theory, it argues that historians can look at conversion as a process of adopting spiritual roles that caused people to transform their thoughts, words and actions with the aim of reconciling with God. The thesis identifies three spiritual roles common to sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions: the unregenerate, the penitent sinner and the Christian soldier. The thesis first considers how these roles were constructed and preached to ordinary Scots in ministers' sermons, and then moves on to examine how pious lay Scots described these roles in their conversion narratives. After establishing a pattern in how these roles were described in sermons and conversion narratives, the remainder of the thesis explores how these roles were described in witchcraft confessions. Supporting recent scholarship, mainly on German witchcraft, the thesis shows how spiritual ideas were discussed in the environment of the witch trial and how historians can use evidence from the witch trials to explore the relationship between orthodox religious culture and witchcraft, and to consider how ordinary Scots from across the central lowlands expressed religion.

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library, London
DSL	Dictionary of the Scots Language www.dsl.ac.uk/
EUL	Edinburgh University Library
KJB	King James Bible
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NRS	National Records of Scotland
NCL	New College Library, Edinburgh
RPC	Register of the Privy Council

Editorial Conventions

Quotations from manuscript and printed material maintain original spelling, capitalisation, punctuation and italicisation, but a few words have been capitalised: for instance, 'Devil'. Letters added for sense are enclosed in square brackets, e.g. 'defend[ed]'. Abbreviated and contracted words have been silently expanded and extended. Modern punctuation, conjunctions and prepositions have been added in square brackets to allow for easier reading of quotations. Annotations of some original Scots, translated into modern English, have been added in square brackets for context and in cases of unfamiliarity.

Introduction

This thesis explores how Reformed conversion-centred spirituality was articulated in sermons, lay Scots' conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions in early modern Scotland, with an emphasis on the broad similarities between these three contexts. Reformed conversion, the internal process through which humans undergo spiritual transformation and reconcile themselves with God, was an important part of early modern, particularly presbyterian, spirituality. Ministers preached with the central aim of edifying their hearers about conversion and spiritually counselled parishioners struggling with conversion; laypeople recorded their own conversion experiences in spiritual diaries; and the system of Scottish church courts (particularly the kirk sessions and presbyteries) disciplined the wider population for ungodly behaviour in the hope of instilling conversion in true penitents. Conversion, then, was supposed to be an important part of all Scots' lives.

A central concern of this thesis is to ask how elements of Reformed conversion-centred spirituality, particularly demonic obsession, human depravity, spiritual warfare and repentance, were expressed by ordinary parishioners: that is, Scots who lived in less urban areas and who did not leave behind first-hand evidence of their engagement with Reformed spiritual ideas. It argues, drawing on modern sociologists' and social psychologists' scholarship on role theory, religious' historians arguments centred on how spiritual identity changed during conversion, and evidence from witchcraft confessions, that some parishioners possessed a substantial amount of knowledge and the ability to articulate this type of spirituality -- a spirituality which has often been discussed in the context of pious lay Scots who narrated their spiritual experiences in diaries, not ordinary parishioners. The thesis also shows that *both* pious lay Scots and ordinary parishioners articulated knowledge of conversion-centred spirituality through narratives of internal interactions with God and the Devil, arguing that such narratives can be interpreted as evidence of spiritual roles and behaviour.

I. Historiography

Religious historians of early modern Scotland have generally defined Reformed conversion as an intense emotional inner spiritual experience, in which a person had to move from a traumatic state of spiritual despair to a state of assurance of salvation. In her 1991 PhD thesis, Louise Yeoman was the first scholar to take seriously this part of Scottish spirituality. While previous historians had often downplayed or ignored the inner spiritual experiences of presbyterians – instead often highlighting their involvement in politics – Yeoman, drawing on psychotherapy theory, placed this inner spiritual experience at the heart of their spirituality. Yeoman has argued that conversion was part of "heart-work': inner-feeling, spiritual experience of great intensity, which was reached by turning the awareness inwards, stirring up the self in emotional repentance and meditation'.[1] According to Yeoman, during conversion experiences real psychological changes took place that encouraged the convert to see themselves in a new way. Concurring with Yeoman's findings, in 2000 David Mullan explored the role of conversion in the development of what he termed Scottish 'puritanism' – a spiritual culture, similar to that of England, which unified episcopalians and presbyterians from at least 1590 to the signing of the National Covenant in 1638. Mullan argued that conversion was a part of this joint spiritual culture that unified presbyterians and episcopalians. For Mullan, conversion was

> the focal point of puritan piety […] Conversion led to a soul-satisfying knowledge which came only from God and was distinguished by its affective quality—it was a light which not only shone, but also burned. The human organ addressed by this spiritual cure was the heart, the locus of the affections […] The backdrop to conversion stories is a religious schema emphatic about the need for repentance which entailed a cessation of sinning and the commencement of a reformed life.[2]

This inner emotional spiritual experience was not a singular event in one's life, but rather a gradual process that took place over time and which repeated itself.[3]

Mullan and Yeoman have speculated whether this part of presbyterian spirituality was absorbed by parishioners, particularly those who were less literate and who did not record their conversion experiences in spiritual diaries. Both have speculated that

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[1] Louise A. Yeoman, 'Heart-Work: Emotion, Empowerment and Authority in Covenanting Times' (University of St Andrews, PhD thesis, 1991), vii-ix, at ix.
[2] David George Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, *1590-1638* (Oxford, 2000), 87-88.
[3] Chapter One of the thesis discusses in more detail the Reformed conversion process and its theological contexts. Refer to pages 32-5.

parishioners probably gained some knowledge of Reformed spirituality that was preached from the pulpit. Yeoman argued that Scottish presbyterian ministers often preached about the 'universality' of conversion, that is the idea that everyone, regardless of social status, could potentially become a vehicle for the Holy Spirit.[4] However, she claimed that even though some parishioners probably engaged with this type of spirituality, nevertheless historians have to rely on more literate Scots' ideas of conversion to get a better sense of how other parts of Scottish society understood it. Yeoman wrote, 'one has to rely principally on mentions [of presbyterian spirituality] in the diaries, autobiographies and letters of their betters for indications of lower-class activity'.[5] Mullan has made a similar argument. Like Yeoman, he has argued that historians have to rely on more literate Scots' understanding, suggesting that 'one might interpret this band of pilgrims [Scots who narrated their conversions] as a kind of informal religious order, uniting clergy and laity in a shared view of the world, a shared view of conversion in all of its complexities'.[6] Yet, even though we do not have the evidence to see how other parts of Scottish society engaged with conversion-centred spirituality, nevertheless Yeoman and Mullan have claimed that this style of spirituality was open to all and did not exclude those from the lower orders of Scottish society.

Other historians have considered how parishioners received and engaged with aspects of Reformed conversion-centred spirituality by looking at the kirk session and presbytery records. Michael Graham and Margo Todd have considered the importance of Reformed godly discipline in shaping behaviour.[7] In particular, Todd, in *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland,* claimed that Scotland was not just Protestant, but also that it was 'a puritan nation'; its spirituality 'exemplary of puritan affective religion, compulsive self-scrutiny and doctrinal rigour'.[8] Ordinary parishioners' involvement in this 'puritan nation' and spirituality is probably best found in her study of public, performative acts of repentance before the minister and wider parish community, acts which incorporated Reformed understandings of conversion. Todd noted that public repentance

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[4] Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', 240-243.
[5] Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', 244.
[6] David George Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self in Early-Modern Scotland* (Farnham, 2010), 375.
[7] Michael F. Graham, *'The Uses of Reform': 'Popular Behavior' and Godly Discipline in Scotland and Beyond, 1560-1610* (Leiden, 1996); and Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, CT, 2002).
[8] Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 405. For more on public acts of repentance in early modern Scotland, refer to Nikki M. Macdonald, 'Reconciling Performance: the Drama of Discipline in Early Modern Scotland, 1560-1610' (University of Edinburgh, PhD thesis, 2013).

often required verbal acts of contrition and confession in order to reconcile the souls of sinners with the godly community:

> The proper response was in the three parts – first, a confession of 'his wicked and filthy offences' […] a 'hearty' request for forgiveness from God, the kirk and all whom by his evil example he has offended', and finally a promise 'by the grace of God to never do the like in no time coming hereafter' […] if the penitent gave the correct answers to this 'trial of repentance', the minister responded with an exhortation to 'walk holily in time to come', and the penitent in turn uttered thanks for conversion.[9]

Todd argued that such speech acts transformed the very identity of the penitent – from sinner to godly. According to her, such examples of performances of public repentance reveal more about how parishioners 'organised and displayed their multivalent understandings' of Scottish Protestantism than any number of theological treatises and sermons could.[10] While I broadly agree with Todd's argument here, the thesis takes issue with the generality of this statement, since conversion – whether performed as an act of public repentance, recorded as an internal spiritual experience in spiritual diaries, or described in witchcraft confessions – was undeniably shaped by understandings of accepted thinking, shared language and proper behaviour instilled in the population through sermons and other forms of religious instruction.

The most recent attempt in seeing how parishioners articulated and expressed Reformed spirituality can be found in Michelle D. Brock's article on covenanter self-fashioning at Ayr in 1647-8.[11] Brock, in tracing how the town responded to an outbreak of plague, has considered how the community engaged in public communal confession, which was led by the kirk session and the minister of Ayr, William Adair. Over several weeks in the autumn of 1647, some occupational groups appeared before the kirk session at Ayr and confessed their sins and professed their repentance; the town interpreted the outbreak of plague as an act of God's wrath against them. Some members of the occupational groups cited specific failings pertaining to their occupation; others confessed to breaking the covenant; most, however, 'lamented their sinfulness in familiar reformed terms' and uttered common sermonic refrains about human depravity.[12] In examining the occupational groups' confessions before the kirk session, Brock has argued that while the

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[9] Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 156.
[10] Todd, *Culture of Protestantism,* 6.
[11] Michelle D. Brock, 'Plague, Covenants, and Confession: The Strange Case of Ayr, 1647–8', *Scottish Historical Review* 97 (2018), 129–52.
[12] Brock, 'Plague, Covenants, and Confession', 142.

minister and the kirk session influenced the content and composition of the confessions, nevertheless

> the consistency in some of the confessional language points to the extent to which covenanting zeal had been absorbed and even shaped by the laity. If local inhabitants could not meet the rigorous standards set by reformed discipline, they certainly knew what those expectations were and why they mattered.[13]

While Mullan and Yeoman have argued that conversion-centred spirituality was probably received by the lower orders of Scottish society, and Graham, Todd and Brock have drawn on examples from local records, particularly kirk session and presbytery records, to show how aspects of Scottish Protestantism was implemented at a local level, a study of the ways in which parishioners articulated and expressed Reformed spirituality is needed. For the first time, this thesis attempts to use witchcraft confessions as sources to examine how parishioners, particularly those who did not put pen to paper, articulated and expressed parts of Reformed conversion-centred spirituality. The thesis asks how parishioners interrogated for witchcraft articulated conversion and Reformed ideas. What type of language did they use? Did they understand the theology that lay behind certain Reformed spiritual ideas? It also questions to what extent the legal environment of a witchcraft interrogation reflected wider spiritual culture, a topic that, as this Introduction will highlight, historians of witchcraft in Germany have dealt with at greater length.

To answer these questions surrounding the articulation of conversion across sermons, conversion narratives and especially witchcraft confessions, this thesis draws on sociological and social psychological ideas of role theory. In particular, the thesis focuses on a part of role theory that looks at the ways in which societies and cultures govern and control the behaviour of people who occupy particular statuses and social positions.[14] Overall, the thesis argues that alongside viewing Reformed conversion as an intense emotional inner spiritual experience, we should also view conversion as a process of following and sometimes internalising, whether on a conscious or subconscious level, spiritual roles preached from the pulpit that governed how people should think and behave, and which in turn shaped people's sense of self and their spiritual identities. In the sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions, one can see patterns of accepted behaviour that were articulated by all types of people, regardless of social status. Taking the above into account, this thesis is not so much about the popularity of

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[13] Brock, 'Plague, Covenants, and Confession', 142.
[14] See the theory section below for an expanded discussion of role theory, 12-19.

conversion and Reformed spirituality, or personal engagement with theology, but rather more about how conversion was communicated in similar ways by different types of people.

This thesis concentrates on religious historians' arguments concerning the transformation of identity during conversion, particularly the arguments of those historians who have worked on early modern conversion narratives.[15] Some concerned with changes in spiritual identities and behaviours have drawn on Stephen Greenblatt's theory of 'self-fashioning' – a theory to describe the process of constructing a public persona according to socially and culturally accepted standards that was common in literary circles in sixteenth-century England. Crucial to the theory of self-fashioning is the question of identity: how we define ourselves in relation to wider social and cultural forces.[16] Greenblatt argues that identity is essentially an internalisation of wider sociocultural conceptualisations of accepted thinking, conduct and behaviour, and that self-fashioning involves a radical change in a person's sense of self.[17] As Greenblatt writes, 'the act of self-fashioning is an act of self-cancellation', entailing 'simultaneous affirmation and effacement of personal identity' - in other words, there is a noticeable contrast between the old and the new.[18]

Religious historians who have studied early modern conversion narratives have drawn on Greenblatt's approach, but as Tom Webster has argued, they are less concerned with using self-fashioning to make grand arguments about the emergence of modern selfhood. Rather, religious historians have sought to explore the process of self-fashioning within the specific contexts of early modern religion and spirituality: to place the self in a Christian context.[19] In her study of the late-sixteenth-century diary of the puritan Samuel Ward, Margo Todd argued that conversion, especially the ritualistic retelling of conversion in the form of narrative, involved a purging, a complete destruction of the old self and a subsequent building of the new godly self. This self-fashioning was 'at once both constructive and destructive', and resulted in a radical change in Ward's thoughts, words and deeds, drawn from a sophisticated theological understanding of Augustine's

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[15] See Chapter Two of the thesis for examples of conversion narratives written by pious lay Scots.
[16] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (London, 1984), 1-3.
[17] Stephen Greenblatt, 'Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture' in *The Renaissance: Italy and Abroad*, ed. John Jeffries Martin (London, 2003), 124-138, at 124. See also Mark Robson, *Stephen Greenblatt* (Abingdon, 2008), 49-51.
[18] Greenblatt, *Self-fashioning*, 57, 77.
[19] This critique of Greenblatt is made in Tom Webster, 'Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journals and Early Modern Spirituality', *The Historical Journal* 39 (1996), 33-56 at 40-1.

Confessions and the Biblical stories of Christ.[20] For Todd, the radical contrast between Ward's old and new self suggests that self-fashioning of identity was 'simply another expression for what protestants call conversion'.[21] And David Mullan has argued that conversion centred on destroying the 'perverse self' and establishing 'the new self, authentic self' in its place, 'coming only by the action of grace'.[22]

For such scholars, then, spiritual transformation of the self and identity was an important part of conversion and much of this transformation took place internally in the heart and mind. Thus, while I do not claim that witchcraft confessions resemble conversion in the sense of a committed, emotional engagement with theology over a long period of time, this thesis, drawing on role theory and religious historians' arguments concerning the transformation of identity in conversion narratives, argues that witchcraft confessions also reflect the same transformation processes of spiritual identity.[23] It is this component or part of Reformed conversion - its ability to foster changes in identity - that I argue is important across sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions.

At the centre of this thesis is an examination into whether witchcraft confessions have the potential to demonstrate how parishioners engaged with and articulated Reformed spiritual ideas. Some historians have explored the relationship between wider religious or spiritual cultures and the expressions of spiritual language using sources that focus on the supernatural. Brian Levack, in his *The Devil Within*, argued that demoniacs, that is people possessed by the Devil, whether 'consciously or not' followed 'scripts that were encoded in their religious cultures'.[24] According to Levack, demoniacs, as well as those who tried to help them, were performers caught up in a religious drama which involved articulating specific words and carrying out scripted actions to make the possession seem authentic.[25] In particular, concentrating on Protestant forms of demonic possession, Levack argued that the Reformed doctrine of human depravity, that is the idea of seeing one's self as completely sinful and depraved, which was often articulated in

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[20] Margo Todd, 'Puritan Self-Fashioning: The Diary of Samuel Ward', *Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992), 236-64.
[21] Todd, 'Self-Fashioning', 262.
[22] Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self*, 361-2. For more on the self-writings of literate lay Scots and self-fashioning, refer to *Protestant Piety in Early Modern Scotland: Letters, Lives and Covenants, 1650-1712*, ed. David George Mullan (Scottish History Society, 2008), 5; and Michelle D. Brock, 'Internalizing the Demonic: Satan and the Self in Early Modern Scottish Piety', *Journal of British Studies* 54 (2015), 23–43.
[23] Chapter Six of the thesis, 150-3, explores this argument in more detail with reference to witchcraft historians' discussions of changes in spiritual identity.
[24] Brian P. Levack, *The Devil Within*: *Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West* (New Haven, CT, 2013), ix.
[25] Levack, *The Devil Within*, 29-30.

sermons, acted as a sort of script in allowing Reformed demoniacs to identify as utterly depraved and hence see themselves as an adequate vessel for the Devil to possess.[26]

Yeoman, focusing on the demonic possession of young Christian Shaw of Bargarran in 1696-7, has argued that demonic possession cases resembled Reformed conversion experiences. She has highlighted the theological similarities, arguing that a similar affective structure existed in which demonic possessions started and ended in the same ways as Reformed conversion experiences. The demoniac, like the person experiencing conversion, believed the Devil to be raging inside them, leading them to temptation and sin; in some cases, the demoniac believed that they were destined to hell. Both demonic possessions and conversion experiences ended when the demoniac or the person experiencing conversion claimed assurance of salvation, which usually involved ecstatic prayers and love for Christ, and longing for full communion and consummation with him after death. However, unlike conversion experiences, demonic possession cases in Scotland usually transitioned into accusations of witches.[27] Levack and Yeoman have explored the pervasiveness of Reformed spiritual culture beyond the confines of ministers' sermons and lay Scots spiritual diaries.

Historians of witchcraft in Germany have arguably done the most to explore how religious culture and spiritual ideas were articulated and expressed in witchcraft confessions. Thomas Robisheaux, focusing on the 1672 confession of Anna Schmieg from Langenburg, has explored the ways in which Schmieg articulated Lutheran concepts of the self and identity. In exploring these themes in Schmieg's case, Robisheaux reminds us that theological and religious ideas were never received 'in a vacuum', and that religious ideas could extend to various environments.[28] More recently, Laura Kounine, commenting on several cases of witchcraft in Württemberg, has explored how accused witches, witnesses, accusers and interrogators articulated their identifies in different ways. Part of Kounine's methodology involved comparing the ways in which Lutheran concepts were articulated and expressed by people involved in the trial process. Commenting on the witchcraft trial narratives she uses, Kounine writes that,

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[26] Levack, *The Devil Within,* 211-12.

[27] Louise A. Yeoman, 'The Devil as Doctor: Witchcraft, Wodrow and the Wider World, *Scottish Archives* 1 (1995), 93-105, at 97-99.

[28] Chapter Six of the thesis, 147-63, explores in more the detail the relationship between spiritual culture and spiritual identities. For now, refer to Thomas Robisheaux, 'Penance, Confession, and the Self in Early Modern Lutheranism', in *Ideas and Cultural Margins in Early Modern Germany*, ed. Marjory Elizabeth Plummer and Robin B. Barnes (Farnham, 2009), 117-130, at 119, 124.

> patterns and cultural elements in the texts are found not necessarily in their *content*, but in their *language*. While the content of the case studies examined here might well be unique and individual, the historian can nonetheless trace patterns in the language employed and invoked, and the ways in which cultural idioms were given meaning in the trial narratives, so that local scripts emerge which fit into larger cultural contexts and themes.[29]

She is one of the few scholars seriously to consider how ideas contained in sermons shaped accused witches' understanding of spiritual concepts and how they articulated them. Like Robisheaux, she has drawn on German witchcraft confessions to demonstrate how people accused of witchcraft articulated Lutheran spiritual ideas of repentance related to conscience and identity. This thesis builds on the German scholarship to consider how accused witches in Scotland articulated Reformed concepts related to conversion-centred spirituality, although, unlike Robiseheaux and Kounine, my focus is not so much on subjectivity, but rather on the similarities in how spiritual ideas were articulated in sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions.

Broadly, witchcraft historians of Scotland have tended to concentrate on the central and local authorities' desire to build a godly society and their emphasis on godly discipline in shaping how witchcraft was defined as a secular crime and religious sin.[30] However, the question of how far spiritual ideas were articulated in witchcraft confessions has not received much attention in Scotland. Emma Wilby has arguably done the most to connect broader Scottish spiritual culture with witchcraft interrogations. She has looked at the detailed confessions of the accused witch Isobel Gowdie and has argued that the practice of spiritual covenanting and how it was preached from the pulpit might have influenced how some accused witches, such as Gowdie, understood the demonic pact with the Devil as an inverse of the covenant with God. As Wilby writes,

> Well-expressed and passionately-delivered sermons and explanations about the importance of National Covenants, the covenant of grace and the marriage-covenant with Christ may have brought ideas about contracting with spiritual beings to such prominence in the minds of the congregaton and imbued them with such immediacy and significance, that even if men and women accused of witchcraft had not been specifically schooled in the demonic pact before they entered the coutroom they would, when it was presented to them, have responsed with an instant and deep affinity. Such a dynamic suggests that although historians have traditionally focused on covenanting theology as it influenced elite ideas

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[29] Laura Kounine, *Imagining the Witch: Emotions, Gender, and Selfhood in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford, 2018), 36. Emphasis in the original.

[30] Brian P. Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics and Religion* (New York, NY, 2008), 28-41, 126-9. See also Paula Hughes, 'Witch-Hunting in Scotland, 1649-50' in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters*, ed. Julian Goodare (Basingstoke, 2013), 85-102. See also Graham, *Uses of Reform,* 298-308.

> about the demonic pact, with regard to the history of witchcraft, the way that this theology worked in the hearts and minds of uneducated suspects like Isobel Gowdie may have been equally significant.[31]

She has also suggested that some accused witches might have internalised sermonic messages about predestination, damnation and human depravity, to such an extent that the accused thought that they were reprobate and destined for hell, which in turn justified their decision to enter into a pact with the Devil. As Wilby writes, 'Hearing such declarations, parishioners were bound to ask themselves: 'Am I a sheep, or am I a goat?' 'Am I elect or reprobate?' Am I the Lord's portion or the Devil's portion? And however reluctantly, some may have opted for the latter options'.[32] However, Wilby speculates that most parishioners did not understand religious doctrines, such as predestination and election. She points out that while they were able to participate in many church rituals, such as repentance, many did not possess 'a firm grasp of the doctrines' that underpinned them. According to Wilby, this was in a large part linked to illiteracy.[33] Like Mullan and Yeoman before her, Wilby stated that even if some parishioners were deeply pious or godly, we only have evidence of more literate lay Scots' self-writings to show how laypeople engaged with conversion-centred spirituality:

> However emotional their attachment to their faith, those who were literate and possessed leisure time to exploit this skill, would have absorbed much of their Christian doctrine systematically, statement by statement, logical step by logical step, through the pages of catechisms, theological writings and of course the Bible.[34]

In contrast, for those who were less literate, knowledge of Christian doctrine was acquired through what they heard once a week from the pulpit, or what was read to them around the fire by a more literate relative or neighbour. Wilby also states that most parishioners who received their religious knowledge from just the pulpit absorbed the 'doctrines piecemeal' – in other words, that they only remembered specific parts of what was preached to them.[35]

Wilby's comments about the relationship between wider Scottish spiritual culture and witchcraft interrogations are welcome, but it should be stated that many of her

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[31] Emma Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie: Magic, Witchcraft and Dark Shamanism in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Eastbourne, 2010), 416.
[32] Wilby, *Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 482.
[33] Wilby, *Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 468.
[34] Wilby, *Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 468.
[35] Wilby, *Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 469.

remarks are generalisations and she does not use any examples from the confessions of Isobel Gowdie's confessions to support her points about the pervasiveness of wider Reformed spiritual culture in witchcraft trials. While I agree with Wilby's broader remarks surrounding the limitations in trying to understand accused witches' personal piety, this thesis builds on Wilby's arguments to demonstrate more fully how accused witches articulated certain Reformed doctrines linked with conversion-centred spirituality. There are many examples in this thesis where we can see that accused witches certainly possessed knowledge of certain doctrines and knew how to articulate them, even if we do not know whether they fully understood the theology that informed them.

Brock also considers the similarities in how the Devil was conceptualised and described in sermons, pious lay Scots' spiritual writings and witchcraft trials.[36] Brock's main argument centres on a 'shared religious culture of demonic belief' built on the Reformed doctrines of predestination, human depravity and the sovereignty of God – a culture that, she argues, was accessible to all Scots.[37] In her chapter on witchcraft, however, Brock did not fully extend her main argument about a shared culture of demonic belief to witchcraft trials. Rather than focusing on how accused witches might have articulated Reformed ideas about the Devil, instead Brock summarised much of the secondary scholarship written on the Devil in Scottish witchcraft, which made this chapter seem isolated from the rest.[38]

As discussed above, there has been some work on seeing how parishioners from more rural towns in Scotland engaged with Reformed spiritual ideas, but this thesis posits that witchcraft confessions, despite having been produced under torture and coercion, have the potential to further our understanding about how far Scottish spiritual culture and spirituality spread to the lower orders.

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[36] Chapter Three of the thesis explores more of Brock's remarks concerning the similarities in how the Devil was described in sermons, spiritual self-writings and witchcraft confessions.

[37] Michelle D. Brock, *Satan and the Scots*: *The Devil in Post-Reformation in Scotland*, *c.1560-1610* (London, 2016), 167.

[38] Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 149-176. For a critical review of Brock's argument in relation to witchcraft, see Ciaran Jones, 'Review of *Satan and the Scots*: *The Devil in Post-Reformation Scotland*, *c.1560-1700'*, by Michelle D. Brock, *Journal of Religious History, Literature and Culture* 4 (2018), 154-56.

II. Theory

As discussed in the historiography section above, this thesis draws on religious historians' arguments centred on the ways in which Reformed conversion-centred spirituality shaped early modern people's identities and their behaviour. To demonstrate this, and to show the similarities in how conversion was articulated and expressed in sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions, this thesis uses modern sociological and social psychological ideas of role theory. According to Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets, it is agreed among all identity theorists that roles are 'a set of expectations tied to a social position [or status] that guides people's attitudes and behaviour'.[39] These are not subjective or personal expectations that a person attaches or associates with a status, but rather expectations governed by wider societies and cultures. There are two types of expectations associated with statuses and social positions. First, mental expectations, such as beliefs or cognitions, deemed appropriate for a particular status or social position, and second, behavioural expectations – the ways in which a person is supposed to conduct themself in a given position.[40] Roles have also been defined as scripts of behaviour that people should follow to fulfil these wider expectations and to give meaning to statuses or social positions that they occupy. Burke and Stets draw on the modern-day example of a university student to illustrate the function of roles. The student is the social position or status, and tied to the status or position of a student are the role expectations of 'learning new knowledge and skills, establishing an area of study, passing courses, acquiring a degree, and so forth'.[41] The scripts centre on how one achieves these expectations. For instance, to acquire a degree, a student must attend lectures, write essays and take exams. If a student does not adhere to these scripts and fulfil the expectations attached to a status, then they cannot be considered as genuinely occupying that status or position.

Role theories tend to divide into top-down approaches, which associate roles with positions in the larger social structure, and bottom-up approaches, which emphasise the interactive, performative and frequently flexible dimension of roles – how people conform to the set of expectations and follow scripts, but also how they deviate from them. Stemming from the work of early sociologists Georg Simmel and Ralph Linton, and from the social psychology of George Herbert Mead, contemporary identity theorists

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[39] Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets, *Identity Theory* (New York, NY, 2009), 114.
[40] Bruce J. Biddle, *Role Theory: Expectations, Identities, and Behaviors* (New York, NY, 1979), 115-119.
[41] Burke and Stets, *Identity Theory*, 114.

have created the concept of role identities.[42] First termed in the 1978 work of social psychologists George J. McCall and J. L. Simmons, a role identity has been defined as 'the character and the role that an individual devises for himself [or herself] as an occupant of a particular social position' – in other words, a role identity refers to the ways in which a person internalises the sociocultural expectations of roles to match their personal circumstances.[43]

McCall and Simmons also consider the ways in which role identities are improvised and negotiated and how they are performed in interaction with others. They argue that when roles are performed in front of an audience, others evaluate a person's role performance and confirm or disconfirm their idiosyncratic imaginations of themselves as well as the more established set of expectations or script that society and culture attaches to roles.[44] Role performances, then, are important in validating and legitimising role identities.

Sheldon Stryker is another social psychologist who has developed the theory of role identities. Unlike McCall and Simmons, Stryker focuses more on the normative, conventional aspect of role identities: how society and culture govern roles. He has argued, in agreement with McCall and Simmons, that even though adopting or performing a role in front of an audience affects the salience of one's role identity, nevertheless it is 'not so much the direct effect of others' expectations' during role performances that legitimises the role during interaction, but rather it is 'one's own expectations' of roles that are governed by wider sociocultural expectations and scripts. For Stryker, then, it is one's own internalised understanding of wider sociocultural expectations that legitimises role performances.[45] While I take into account both approaches to role identities, I tend to draw on Sheldon Stryker's arguments about the sociocultural expectations and scripts that make up roles, since I am more concerned with looking at the broader patterns in how early modern people articulated and expressed Reformed conversion-centred

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[42] For more on Georg Simmel and Ralph Linton, see Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. and trans. Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, IL, 1950); Alan Scott, 'Georg Simmel: The Individual and the Organization', in *The Oxford Handbook of Sociology and Organization Studies: Classical Foundations*, ed. Paul S. Adler (Oxford, 2009), 268-90; and Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man: An Introduction* (New York, NY, 1936). For more on George Herbert Mead, see *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff and Indermohan Virk, 3rd edn (Chichester, 2012), 27-29. For more on the development on identity theory and role identities, see *New Directions in Identity Theory and Research*, ed. Jan E. Stets and Richard T. Serpe (New York, NY, 2016), 15-16, and 668.

[43] Burke and Stets, *Identity Theory*, 114-15.

[44] Quoted in Burke and Stets, *Identity Theory*, 39-40, 116-17.

[45] Sheldon Stryker, *Symbolic Interactionism: A Social Structural Version* (Caldwell, NJ, 2002), 122-4.

spirituality, and how they conformed to the wider, normative sociocultural expectations and scripts that governed the spiritual roles termed in this thesis (on which more in a moment).

Though McCall and Simmons and Stryker differ in their focus on role identities, both agree that people assume more than one role throughout their lives. As well as drawing on the general sociological and social psychological concepts of roles and role identities, this thesis also draws on ideas of role change. In perhaps the best-known theoretical work on the sociological and social psychological aspects of conversion, Lewis Rambo, in *Understanding Religious Conversion*, has defined role change as the 'internalization and integration of the changes in relationships, rhetoric, and ritual'.[46] Role change thus refers to a person who experiences changes in their thoughts and behaviour when they adopt a new role; such changes foster in a person a new sense of self and identity.[47] Rambo expands on this idea of role change by discussing modern twentieth-century evangelical Protestant groups. He has argued that within modern Protestant groups, role change 'functions in the conversion process as a means for a person to see himself or herself in a new way'.[48] He gives the example of the role of the pre-convert as 'rebellious and alienated from God, seeking only the gratification of selfish desires'.[49] According to Rambo, 'conversion restores a person to the role of "child of God," who seeks to do the will of God and is a soldier for Christ'.[50] Thus, the roles of the pre-convert and child of God (post-conversion) are governed by *different* scripts of behaviour, and when a person switches following one set of scripts for another then this implies that role change has taken place and that they have experienced a transformation in their identity and sense of self.

In this thesis, I concentrate on three spiritual statuses associated with Reformed understandings of conversion: the unregenerate, the penitent sinner and the Christian

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[46] Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven, CT, 1993), 123. See also David G. Bromley and Alison Shupe, 'Affiliation and Disaffiliation: A Role-Theory Interpretation of Joining and Leaving New Religious Movements', *Thought* 61 (1986), 197-211.

[47] Daniel W. Snook, Michael J. Williams and John G. Horgan, 'Issues in the Sociology and Psychology of Religious Conversion', *Pastoral Psychology* 68 (2019), 223–40, at 231-3. See also Fenggang Yang and Andrew Stuart Abel, 'Sociology of Religious Conversion', in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. Rambo and Farhadian (New York, NY, 2014), 140-163, at 145-6; and Stuart A. Wright, 'Disengagement and Apostasy in New Religious Movements', in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. Rambo and Farhadian (New York, NY, 2014), 706-735, at 715.

[48] Rambo, *Religious Conversion*, 122.

[49] Rambo, *Religious Conversion*, 122.

[50] Rambo, *Religious Conversion*, 122.

soldier. I argue that they originated in theology, but in sermons, ministers, in order to teach their lay hearers about conversion, constructed roles which they attached to these spiritual statuses. These roles were made up of wider sociocultural expectations about how unregenerates, penitent sinners and Christian soldiers should behave. As Chapter One will demonstrate, ministers attached scripts of spiritual behaviour that formed these roles, spiritual behaviour being a combination of internal actions that people should draw on in their own lives when faced with conversion. The scripts of spiritual behaviour that formed the roles of the unregenerate, the penitent sinner and the Christian soldier, centred on a person's internal states, their thoughts and feelings, rather than their outer actions. I argue in Chapters One and Two that these roles were not metaphorical or allegorical. While ministers did discuss these roles to teach about conversion, I also argue that they intended these roles to serve as guides and markers of spiritual progress in their lay hearers' lives.

In looking at how early modern people described these three roles, this thesis also considers what I term spiritual role change: the process through which early modern people recorded experiencing changes in their spiritual behaviour when switching between any of the three roles discussed above. In describing having experienced spiritual role change, early modern people also described changes in their spiritual identities.

Modern sociological and social psychological theories, however, cannot be applied directly to early modern society. Identity theorists generally define roles as sets of expectations or scripts which can be measured through one's behaviour. As discussed above, identity theorists acknowledge that roles are governed by cognitive expectations and scripts, but in modern sociology and social psychology behaviour is normally measured by looking at a person's outer actions, such as gestures, body language and verbal expressions, which can be observed by someone else. The idea of roles being measured through external behaviour is mostly associated with the dramaturgical approach of Erving Goffman, though as noted earlier, McCall and Simmons, as well as Stryker, also consider how roles are performed through interaction with others. The dramaturgical approach of Goffman considers the various methods people use to convince others of the selves or roles that they are performing in social interaction, many of which are drawn from wider sociocultural understandings of status and proper

conduct.[51] Compared to role identities, the metaphor of the theatre is more widely used in dramaturgical theory. For Goffman, while some people assume roles by following the dominant sociocultural expectations or scripts that make up roles, in practice individuals perform and adapt roles through interacting with other actors and by choosing different props during social interaction. In Goffman's dramaturgical theory, this is known as the 'front': the part of a person's performance that serves to define a relevant context for their audience, and that involves the use of 'expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance'.[52] Borrowing the theatrical term props, Goffman argues that this equipment includes clothing and physical objects, but also language, speech patterns, facial expressions, bodily gestures and so forth that one would employ during acting.[53] Thus, while identity theorists do not draw on Goffman's dramaturgical approach, they, like Goffman, concentrate on outer actions as evidence for roles.

In contrast, as mentioned above, early modern Reformed conversions and, to a lesser extent, witchcraft confessions, too, were essentially about a person's inner states – about their thoughts and feelings in relation to God. This is not to suggest that early modern people did not or could not make external gestures: they expressed their internal states through external behaviour, such as through the action of writing or in conversation with the minister in the tolbooth. But, as this thesis argues, early modern people placed greater emphasis on a person's thoughts and feelings when defining behaviour. Thus, if modern sociological and social psychological studies generally think of roles in terms of expectations or scripts that can be measured through outer actions, how, then, can we apply modern role theory to an intensely internal and personal context such as Reformed conversion and spirituality more broadly?

Early modern people, like modern people today, expressed their internal states through external behaviour, but we need to recognise that the scripts of behaviour that made up spiritual roles were culturally coded differently. Charles Taylor, in his *A Secular Age*, famously argued that in the modern Western (secular) world we have an understanding of our self as 'buffered', that is an assumption that the self, or in Taylor's

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[51] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York, NY, 1959). For contemporary sociological scholarship on Goffman and the dramaturgical approach, see Calhoun et al., *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 46-61.
[52] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 22.
[53] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 22-30.

view, the mind, is bounded and a container full of private thoughts and feelings that are known to none but the thinker. He contrasts this with the idea that premodern individuals had a 'porous self', that is a sense that both mind and body were open to discernment and influence by supernatural forces.[54] According to Taylor, premodern people did not have an individualised, internal sense of the mind as something that exists within one's self.

Like Taylor, historians of early modern religion have noted that people did not regard their thoughts as private, bounded and unable to be discerned unless externally manifested to someone else. Rather, early modern people understood their thoughts as open and able to be observed and discerned by supernatural forces. In this sense, I argue throughout the thesis that early modern people's ideas of spiritual roles centred around expectations and scripts of thoughts and feelings. We can consider such scripts as forms of spiritual behaviour in their own right, because early modern people believed that their internal states could be observed, judged and influenced by another (supernatural) entity in a similar way to how we understand how outer actions and gestures can be observed, judged and influenced by others in social interaction today.

This is reflected in the conversion narratives of pious lay Scots, many of whom explicitly addressed God, the Devil and the Holy Spirit in their diaries when observing or influencing their thoughts and feelings. For instance, Mistress Rutherford, a godly woman in early seventeenth-century Edinburgh, once recorded a spiritual experience where the Devil made her think that she had 'committed the sin against the Holy Ghost [that she had committed a sin so gross that she was destined to hell] […] and laboured to make [her] despair of mercy'.[55] Though she wrote that her sinful thoughts appeared in her mind, Mistress Rutherford attributed them to the work of the Devil influencing her. In making this type of statement in which a supernatural entity was held partly responsible for influencing her thoughts and feelings, Mistress Rutherford described the Devil as an historical actor who interacted with her internally, and hence she described her mind as a environment for spiritual confrontation. Even more routine spiritual duties, such as prayer to God or Christ, though they were directed in the mind, involved an acknowledgement of divine agency working through a person's mind and body. In her

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[54] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), 27-42, at 38.
[55] 'Mistress Rutherford's Conversion Narrative', ed. David George Mullan, in *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society, XIII* (Scottish History Society, 2004), 146-189, at 165-6.

spiritual diary, Lilias Dunbar wrote of a period of spiritual discontent in 1691 when she was 'burdened' with sinful thoughts.[56] She recorded going to prayer and after

> I had I breathed out my case before the Lord as a poor, sinful, needy, creature, an object of great pity in his sight, I found the Lord of hosts who is strong in battle, coming with an irresistible power and impressing my spirit with a deep sense of his greatness and justice, his wisdom and goodness, so that I was made to lay down the weapons whereby I resisted his will and humbly to resign.[57]

In this somewhat theological and imaginative reconstruction of a past spiritual experience, Dunbar, like Mistress Rutherford, was not simply using metaphorical language to record this experience for posterity, although this experience was, in part, a literary construction.[58] Dunbar, like many lay Scots who narrated their conversions, drew on scripture to reconstruct and record their past spiritual experiences. But at the same time, historians should not be too quick to disregard the idea that Dunbar and Rutherford were describing an experience where the Lord and the Devil, as historical actors, influenced and shaped their internal states; they described the Lord and the Devil interacting with them and responding to them.

Accused witches also described experiences of God and the Devil discerning and influencing their thoughts and feelings. In 1644, Janet Barker was asked why the Devil appeared to her. She claimed that he appeared because 'she did not keep the kirk', and the less she went to kirk, 'the Devil come oftenest to her'.[59] Here Barker probably implied that the Devil appeared to her in physical form, but by confessing that he appeared to her because 'she did not the keep the kirk', Barker also conformed to the idea that the Devil could discern and act upon her thoughts and observe them, even when hidden from other people. And in 1657, Margaret Philp from Rathven confessed that the voice of the Devil spoke to her.[60] Chapters Three and Four explore in more detail accused witches who described themselves interacting internally with the Devil and God.

In looking at how spiritual roles were described in sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions, I am also interested in how a variety of Scots recorded

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[56] *Women's Life Writing in Early Modern Scotland: Writing the Evangelical Self, c. 1670-1730*, ed. David George Mullan (Aldershot, 2003), 174.
[57] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 174. Lord of Hosts is a Biblical term loosely meaning 'God of the armies of heaven'.
[58] See Chapter Two, 60-4, of the thesis for a discussion of autobiography and the literary contexts of conversion narratives.
[59] *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 2nd edition, ed. Brian P. Levack (London, 2015), 271.
[60] *The Church and Churchyard of Rathven*, ed. W. Cramond (Banff, 1930), 22–9. See also, P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of Witches: The Great Scottish Witch-Hunt* (Stroud, 2005), 37-8.

interactions between themselves and supernatural entities, such as God and the Devil. In other words, inner role performances between themselves and supernatural entities. This also extends to witchcraft confessions, too, where the accused sometimes confessed to internal interactions with God and the Devil. Yet in the context of witchcraft confessions there is another observer of behaviour - the witchcraft interrogator. Thus, I also consider witchcraft confessions as performances in a more traditional sense, following general sociological ideas of social interaction. As discussed below in the methodology and sources section, another reason why I consider witchcraft confessions as performances, more in line with general sociological ideas of social interaction, is because during the interrogation process accused witches were forced to describe past behaviour to speak to their *present* identities, which were being observed and shaped by those who questioned them.

Moreover, I am interested in how laypeople articulated these roles to make sense of conversion and their spiritual identities, and whether or not they repeated the scripts of spiritual behaviour that formed these roles as outlined in sermons, showing how far Reformed pietistic ideas were received by the laity. I use the terms role and behaviour interchangeably, since in sociological theory roles are a collection of behaviours associated with a particular social position or status.

By drawing on role theory, I am not suggesting that early modern people considered themselves the sole architects of their conversions. Humans had some agency, but this was a religious culture in which the divine was ultimately considered the author of conversion.[61] In using role theory, I argue that early modern people acted according to socially and culturally coded roles and scripts which considered this aspect of divine sovereignty. And, as discussed earlier, people experiencing conversion did not individually create these roles or scripts – they were created by societies and cultures – and they had little freedom of action within a narrow set of expectations. Chapter One explores in more detail the relationship between divine sovereignty, conversion and human agency.

[61] See Chapter One of the thesis, 32-5, for a discussion of the theology of Reformed conversion and human agency. See Leif Dixon, *Practical Predestinarians in Early Modern England, c. 1590-1640* (Farnham, 2014), 184-5, for a discussion on human agency and conversion in Puritan thought. See also John Von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta, GA, 1984), 80-85.

III. Methodology and sources

Taking into consideration the above historiography and theory, I argue that alongside the traditional religious historiographical idea of viewing conversion as primarily an intense emotional spiritual experience, we can interpret conversion, as it was described in conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions, as a process of adhering to culturally coded spiritual roles preached from the pulpit that caused people to change their words, thoughts and actions with the aim to reconcile with God. In viewing conversion as a process of following or adhering to spiritual roles, I argue that we can see similarities in how a variety of Scots, especially parishioners who were not able to produce their own spiritual diaries, articulated and expressed aspects of Reformed spirituality. I use witchcraft confessions as sources to demonstrate how people accused of witchcraft articulated the same spiritual roles and scripts as their more pious and perhaps more literate counterparts. In exploring this argument, I also consider how wider Scottish spiritual culture extended to witchcraft trials.

In comparing the ways in which conversion-centred spirituality was articulated in sermons, lay conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions, I tend to emphasise the similarities in the use and recording of spiritual language. In most chapters, I use a source-mining technique: using a large body of sources and quoting specific parts which contain similar language to illustrate how conversion-centred spirituality was articulated. In the last chapter, Chapter Six, I undertake a close reading and examine three witchcraft confessions in detail.

In the sources used in this thesis, I am concerned with retrospective narratives, that is narratives looking back at an earlier point in a person's life, and I am interested in how these narratives relate to issues of past and present identities in relation to Reformed conversion-centred spirituality. But what do I mean by past and present identities? I consider past identities to mean the person at the point in their life when they claimed to have had the original experience, which they later wrote (or spoke) about. And I consider present identities to mean the person at the point in their life when they wrote their conversion narrative (or spoke their confession to witchcraft).

In examining the conversion narratives of lay Scots, I am more concerned with how they described their past identities - their self at the time that they claimed to have had experienced conversion, which they later wrote about. With hindsight, some lay Sots, writing about their past conversion experiences later in life, occasionally reinterpreted

earlier events. For example, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, some lay Scots who described experiencing temptations by the Devil later reinterpreted such experiences as tests of faith by God to humble them. But overall, because I am interested in how they wrote about their past identities at the time when they had experienced conversion, I am less concerned with how their present self, writing at the time, reinterpreted past conversion experiences and spiritual events. My principal aim is to establish whether they described their past behaviour and identities drawing on the wider spiritual roles constructed in ministers' sermons and preaching.

In using witchcraft confessions, I am also dealing with retrospective narratives, since accused witches were forced to speak about their past experiences. But because accused witches were forced to speak to their present identities, since they were being interrogated for the crime of witchcraft, I am more interested in how the accused described past spiritual experiences to talk about their present identities when they were being interrogated in the tolbooth.

This thesis draws on a range of sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions. Chapters One and Two discuss the methodological issues of using sermons and conversion narratives as sources, since these types of sources only appear in these particular chapters. For now, I would like to comment on the uses of witchcraft confessions, since this type of source dominates most of my thesis. While sermons and conversion narratives each have their own limitations, both are easy to compare, since sermons were written by ministers, and conversion narratives written by lay Scots who possessed a certain level of theological knowledge and who were more literate. Witchcraft confessions, however, are more difficult to compare with these two types of sources.

Accused witches' confessions were the product of leading questions put to them in a coercive situation that was designed to elicit certain responses. In Scotland, accused witches were often imprisoned in the tolbooth (town hall) or the church steeple and were subjected to maltreatment, such as sleep deprivation, and in some cases physical torture. They were often questioned over a period of weeks and months, during which time they were asked leading questions about any harmful magic that they had practised and their relationship with the Devil; such long interrogation sessions damaged the integrity of their mind and body.[62] Thus, any evidence of genuine spiritual experience or the use of spiritual

[62] Lauren Martin, 'The Devil and the Domestic: Witchcraft, Quarrels and Women's Work in Scotland', in *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, ed. Julian Goodare (Manchester, 2002), 73-89, at 77.

language in witchcraft confessions must always be considered as part of a broader criminal context in which it was the interrogators' aim to secure a guilty confession of witchcraft. Unlike lay Scots who recorded their own conversion narratives, accused witches did not voluntarily articulate conversion-centred spirituality for posterity.

Even in cases where one does find evidence of the use of spiritual language, one cannot be certain that such expressions came from the accused witch. For scholars working with witchcraft confessions, it is always necessary to question whose voice is being represented through the text, since witchcraft historians often agree that the confessions were the product of many different voices involved in the trial process: those of the accused's, the accuser's, the interrogator's, the scribe's.[63] For Scottish witchcraft historians it is perhaps more difficult to distinguish between the voices of the accused and the interrogator within the confessions, since the questions that were put to the accused were not often recorded - instead, what was recorded was the accused's response, through which we can infer the interrogator's original questions.

By paying close attention to the responses of accused witches, we can infer a range of different questions that the interrogators might have asked, either limiting or expanding the type of information that the accused could provide during the interrogation process. Wilby has considered the types of questions put to Isobel Gowdie. Wilby argues that her interrogators asked her a mixture of, what she terms, 'specific-closed', 'specific-open' and 'general questions'.[64] 'Specific-closed' were often precise and suggestive questions that demanded a simple yes or no answer and which required very little input from the accused. An example would be: 'did you make a pact with the Devil?'[65] In contrast, 'specific-open' questions were less precise, but still geared towards incriminating the accused as a witch. These were suggestive questions and open-ended, in the sense that they demanded a multiple-word answer and more input from the accused. An example would be: 'what did the Devil say to you?'[66] Finally, 'general-open' questions were less suggestive than the above and also delivered with less expectation of a specific kind of answer. An example

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[63] Liv Helene Willumsen, 'A Narratological Approach to Witchcraft Trial: A Scottish Case', *Journal of Early Modern History* 15 (2011), 531-60, at 533; and Willumsen, *Witches of the North*: *Scotland and Finnmark* (Leiden, 2013), 30-6. See also Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witches and Witnesses in New and Old England', in *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Stuart Clark (Basingstoke, 2001), 55-80, at 56-8; and Michael Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host: Imagining Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland* (Oxford, 2011), 152.

[64] Wilby, *Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 76-80.

[65] Wilby, *Visions of Isobel Gowdie,* 76.

[66] Wilby, *Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 76-77.

would be: 'what else did you do that night?'[67] Interrogators would usually ask a witch this type of question to make the confession seem more credible. Due to the structure and content of most Scottish witchcraft confessions, Wilby speculates that the 'specific-open' type of questions were most commonly asked during witchcraft interrogations, since these could account for both the specific concerns of the interrogators but also the idiosyncratic elements present in some confessions.[68]

This thesis concentrates on narratives of spirituality and uses of spiritual language within the confessions that are too individualised or idiosyncratic to simply be standard responses to leading questions. Following Wilby's suggestions about the types of questions interrogators put to the accused, in many of the confessions used in this thesis it seems likely that the accused also responded to 'specific-open' questions. Often the evidence of spiritual language forms part of a narrative that was likely a response to this type of question. I speculate that these individualised or idiosyncratic narratives were either the products of remembered parts of lived experiences, or fabrications during the interrogation process based on wider cultural knowledge.

Most of my argument rests on the idea that this type of spirituality originated, and was delivered to the laity, in ministers' sermons. And even though the aim of this thesis is to show how various types of people articulated Reformed conversion-centred spirituality through a discussion of spiritual roles, there are a couple of limitations to my argument where the witchcraft confessions are concerned. First, there is the question surrounding the transmission of knowledge. While lay Scots who produced their own spiritual diaries sometimes recorded where they had their conversion experiences, which sermons they attended, and what theological knowledge they learnt, the historian does not have access to the same information when looking at witchcraft trial records - one cannot trace where and when accused witches received theological knowledge prior to being investigated for the crime of witchcraft. This makes the comparison with sermons more difficult, since using sermons allows one to trace patterns in the expression of ideas and language, but sermons cannot account for what people actually heard and remembered when listening to sermons.[69] In Chapter Five, I argue that some of the accused witches might have gained knowledge of conversion-centred spirituality through

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[67] Wilby, *Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 77.
[68] Wilby, *Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 79.
[69] See Chapter One of the thesis, 29-31, for a discussion on the limitations of sermons as sources for measuring the laity's understanding of theology and religious doctrines.

spiritual counselling sessions during interrogation sessions with the minister. Moreover, most of the confessions I use come from the mid seventeenth century, a time when most parishes across Scotland had fully established kirk sessions and a permanent minister to preach to the laity.[70]

Secondly, this thesis considers how conversion-centred spirituality was articulated in *some* witchcraft confessions. I am not arguing that all accused witches expressed this type of conversion-centred spirituality or used the same spiritual language. I use over thirty witchcraft confessions in which evidence of conversion-centred spirituality can be seen; this small but specific sample of confessions can reveal much about how parishioners, especially those for whom we do not have first-hand evidence in the form of diaries or letters, engaged with wider Scottish spiritual culture. Moreover, I am not interested in questions surrounding witchcraft and witch-hunting, *per se*, but rather using the evidence generated by the witch trials to ask questions about wider spiritual culture. What I am looking at is a distinct pattern of spiritual belief and behaviour that we know already existed in wider Scottish society and in what ways this pattern of spiritual belief and behaviour was expressed in the witchcraft trial environment - an environment that has generally been interpreted as a judicial one. In addition, I am not particularly interested in viewing the people accused of witchcraft as witches, but rather - as this thesis hopes to demonstrate - as Christians of varying levels of faith who possessed and articulated some knowledge about wider spiritual culture and religious doctrines.[71]

IV. Thesis structure

The thesis is organised into six chapters, with the first two centring on sermons and conversion narratives respectively, and the remaining four concentrating on witchcraft-related material. Chapter One concentrates on the theological and pastoral importance of conversion-centred spirituality in Scottish sermons, and it introduces the reader to the three main spiritual roles as they were conceptualised and discussed by ministers in the pulpits. In this chapter, I argue that these roles served an educational function in edifying and teaching people about conversion. However, I also argue that ministers attached practical and pastoral functions to these roles, too, in the sense that

[70] McCallum, *Reformation in Fife*; see also Chris R. Langley, *Worship, Civil War and Community, 1638–1660* (London, 2015).
[71] Chapters Four and Six of this thesis explore this argument further. For Chapter Four, refer to 112-27; and for Chapter Six, refer to 147-64.

they discussed them as part of preparation for conversion and as markers of spiritual progress. Ministers fashioned scripts of spiritual behaviour that they associated with each role, and which they expected their hearers to internalise and use when they encountered conversion in their own lives.

Chapter Two goes beyond examining the theological and educational importance of these spiritual roles in preaching, to consider how they were described as being adopted in lay Scots' conversion narratives. I argue, supporting the recent scholarship on descriptions of self-fashioning of spiritual identities in conversion narratives, that we can view conversion, at least how it was described, as a process of adhering to culturally coded spiritual roles that were preached from the pulpit. In addition, through making this argument, the chapter posits that spiritual role change, that is changes in behaviour and identity when encountering a new role – was crucial to the success of conversion more generally.

The remaining four chapters in the thesis consider how these spiritual roles were articulated in the witch trials, mostly in accused witches' confessions. Chapter Three considers the how the role of the unregenerate, especially the scripts of spiritual behaviour related to human depravity and demonic obsession, were articulated in some confessions. Focusing on descriptions of the Devil's mental powers, this chapter builds on previous scholarship interested in the demonic pact and the Devil's physical presence, arguing that some accused witches drew on the Reformed emphasis of the Devil as the tempter to sin, that is the spiritualised Devil who has traditionally been associated with pious lay Scots and ministers, not parishioners accused of witchcraft. The chapter also suggests that some of the accused witches might have identified as unregenerate. Beginning with this chapter, the remainder of this thesis intends to show how accused witches and their interrogators followed established scripts of spiritual behaviour drawn from a shared Reformed culture that most Scots could access.

Chapter Four focuses on the articulation of the spiritual role of the Christian soldier and wider spiritual warfare culture. It considers the way in which the script of resisting the Devil was articulated by some accused witches in their confessions. The chapter argues that like the conversion narratives of lay Scots discussed in Chapter Two, some accused witches' confessions of resisting the Devil reflected their desire to distance themselves from the Devil and to reconcile with God.

Chapter Five concentrates on the pastoral and spiritual relationship between the accused witch and the minister during the interrogation process, arguing that we should view the minister as a spiritual counsellor who was concerned with the spiritual state and condition of the accused witch. It also considers how some penitent accused witches responded to this type of counselling and how they articulated the role of the penitent sinner in their confessions.

Finally, Chapter Six asks more fully to what extent accused witches' confessions resembled conversions. While the previous three chapters focus on how the roles of the unregenerate, the penitent sinner and the Christian soldier were articulated in some confessions, this chapter considers the importance of spiritual role change - the transformation in a person's spiritual behaviour and identity when adopting a new role. The chapter argues that like the conversion narratives discussed in Chapter Two, some accused witches' confessions resembled conversions to the extent that they demonstrate a transformation in spiritual role identity.

By focusing on the similarities in how conversion-centred spirituality was articulated through roles in the contexts of sermons, lay conversion narratives and accused witches' confessions, this thesis attempts to link wider religious historiography focused on Protestant spirituality with witchcraft scholarship.

Chapter One

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The Construction of Spiritual Roles in Sermons

For the early modern Scottish people, the sermon was the most regular form of mass communication. There were other modes of religious instruction, such as catechism sessions and local prayer groups, but the sermon was the main way in which ministers disseminated and taught Reformed spirituality to all Scots. Sermons, however, were not only meant to instruct on points of Reformed theology: they were also meant to galvanise and encourage hearers to become godly. Scholars, such as David Mullan, Louise Yeoman and Alec Ryrie, have argued that through their sermons, ministers – guided by the power of the Holy Spirit – prepared their hearers for conversion, that is the internal process through which an individual, realising their own inability to achieve salvation, came to depend on God and felt the workings of the Holy Spirit within them, leading to feelings of assurance of salvation. Though we cannot gauge the success and effectiveness of preaching for conversion, it should be made clear that the sermon was the primary means to instruct and lay the foundations for conversion.[1]

This chapter focuses on presbyterian and some episcopalian ministers' discussions of the doctrines of demonic obsession, human depravity, repentance and spiritual warfare in the applications and uses of their sermons, with a particular focus on the language ministers used in order to prepare their hearers for conversion. Applications and uses were parts of the sermon usually preached with the less literate or less educated parishioners in mind, where ministers conveyed the importance of complex Reformed doctrines and linked the doctrines to their everyday lives.[2] It was usually during these parts

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[1] For more on the idea of preaching as a means to prepare for conversion, see Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 45-84; Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', 9-11, 21-3; Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford, 2013), 352-3. Many lay Scots recorded their own conversion experiences and some claimed that their conversion began after attending and hearing a sermon. Refer to Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self*, 227-68; and *Protestant Piety in Early-Modern* Scotland, ed. Mullan, 213-80.

[2] For more on preaching and in particular the application of Reformed doctrines to everyday life, see James T. Ford, 'Preaching in the Reformed Tradition', in *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period*, ed. Larissa Taylor (Leiden, 2001), 65-88. On Scotland in particular, refer to Crawford Gribben, 'Preaching the Scottish Reformation, 1560-1707' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, ed. Hugh Adlington, Peter McCullough, and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford, 2011), 271-286; Alasdair Raffe, 'Preaching, Reading and Publishing the Word in Protestant Scotland', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c. 1530–1700*, ed. Kevin Killeen, Helen Smith and Rachel Willie (Oxford, 2015), 317–331; and Todd, *Culture of Protestantism,* 24-83.

of the sermon that ministers exhorted their hearers to become godly, to prepare them for the potential workings of the Holy Spirit within them.

Drawing on a variety of manuscript and printed sermons from across the late sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, I argue that in their applications and uses ministers constructed three main spiritual roles to help their lay hearers understand and make sense of conversion – the roles of the unregenerate, the penitent sinner and the Christian soldier. I also argue that these roles served pedagogic and pastoral functions. In constructing these roles, ministers taught their lay hearers about conversion, but I also argue that these roles, governed by wider religious expectations, provided lay hearers with sets of scripts of spiritual behaviour that they should adopt and internalise when they encountered and experienced conversion in their own lives.[3] I argue that in most cases ministers constructed scripts of spiritual behaviour that centred around one's internal relationship with God and on one's internal states, such as thoughts and feelings, rather than one's outer actions.[4]

I focus on sermons delivered by mostly presbyterian ministers, though I highlight some episcopalian examples too. The reasons are fourfold. Firstly, at least from the middle of the seventeenth century onward, presbyterians more often preached about conversion-centred spirituality than their episcopalian counterparts, since after the Restoration of Charles II doctrines associated with conversion-centred spirituality, such as human depravity, came to be attacked and scrutinised by episcopalians, some of whom were influenced by new practical theologies in England which regarded these doctrines as 'enthusiastic' and as likely to cause psychological damage.[5] Secondly, from 1638 to 1660, presbyterians controlled the Church. Thirdly, as mentioned in the Introduction to the thesis, prior to the mid-seventeenth century, conversion-centred spirituality was a staple part of both presbyterian and episcopalian preaching.[6] And finally, as this thesis shows, presbyterian ministers were more likely to be involved in interrogating accused witches and counselling soul-troubled parishioners than their episcopalian counterparts, which is

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[3] Chapter Two of the thesis explores this idea in more detail.

[4] Refer back to the Introduction to this thesis, 16-18, for a discussion of role theory and the ways in which modern sociologists and social psychologists define and measure behaviour compared to how I argue early modern Protestants defined and measured spiritual behaviour.

[5] For more on the debates between presbyterians and episcopalians, particularly over issues related to conversion-centred divinity, refer to Alasdair Raffe, *The Culture of Controversy: Religious Arguments in Scotland, 1660-1714* (Woodbridge, 2012), 121-48.

[6] Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism,* has looked at the constancies in conversion-centred divinity prior to the signing of the National Covenant in 1638.

important because during such interactions with the laity presbyterians were more likely to draw on conversion-centred spirituality as part of pastoral practice than episcopalians.[7]

The first part of this chapter considers some historiography on the topic of sermons and preaching. Secondly, it discusses the theology and process of conversion. And finally, the chapter examines spiritual roles found in a variety of sermons, discussing in more detail what scripts of spiritual cognitions and behaviour were constructed when ministers applied these roles to Scots' everyday lives. In focusing closely on ministers' exhortations and applications of roles, this first chapter acts as a framework to consider how far such ideas in sermons were articulated by lay Scots, not just those who were able to record their own subjective understandings of them, but other lay hearers too, such as those who came from the rural settlements of early modern Scotland. The thesis uses witchcraft confessions as sources to ask how far people accused of witchcraft, in conjunction with their interrogators, engaged with and articulated these spiritual roles and ideas of conversion-centred spirituality more generally.

I. Sermons and preaching

Preaching, as well as the content of the sermons being preached, has received some scholarly attention, particularly with a focus on early modern England and continental Europe.[8] Scholars have examined sermons for theology, but also as sources that can reveal more about wider religious culture and social history.[9] Arnold Hunt, in his groundbreaking *The Art of Hearing*, has done the most to link contemporary theological ideas of preaching with how sermons were received at a local level by lay hearers. Hunt, through discussing how sermons were constructed, delivered and received, demonstrates that, at least in early modern England, Reformed Protestants saw the Word preached as more powerful, even as more authentically the Word of God, than the written Word of the Bible; and he argues that preaching was not a one-way process of imparting doctrinal

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[7] See Chapter Five of the thesis.

[8] For early modern England, see Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590-1640* (Cambridge, 2010); Peter McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge, 1998); Susan Wabuda, *Preaching during the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2002); Mary Morrisey, *Politics and the Paul's Cross Sermons, 1558-1642* (Oxford, 2011). For continental Europe, see *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early modern Europe*, ed. Taylor (Leiden, 2001); John W. O'Malley, *Religious Culture in the Sixteenth Century: Preaching, Rhetoric, Spirituality, and Reform* (Aldershot, 1993); Bruce Gordon, 'Preaching and Reform of the Clergy in the Swiss Reformation', in *The Reformation of the Parishes*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (Manchester, 1993), 63-84.

[9] On preaching and the sermon as a theological text, see; Mary Morrissey, 'Scripture, Style and Persuasion in Seventeenth-Century English Theories of Preaching', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53 (2002), 686-706.

information from preacher to passive audience, but rather an 'interpretative collaboration between preacher and audience'.[10]

Surprisingly little, however, has been written on preaching in Scotland. Crawford Gribben has argued that scholarly investigation of Scottish preaching 'remains one of the most significant and surprising lacunae in the study of the history, literature, and religious culture of early modern Scotland'.[11] There have been some recent works which have improved our understanding. Including Gribben, two overview chapters which discuss preaching and sermons more generally in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have appeared in Oxford handbooks.[12] John McCallum, tracing the development of the Reformation in Fife from its outset in 1560 to 1640, discussed the importance and similarities in preaching and the sermon in the context of other forms of religious instruction, such as catechising.[13] Todd devoted a significant part of a chapter in *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* to looking at how the Word was disseminated to Scots, to consider how sermons were delivered and may have been received by lay hearers.[14] And finally, there have been two modern biographies of Scottish ministers, one on Samuel Rutherford and another more recently on Robert Baillie. Both discuss the ministers' pastoral activities, as well as their attitudes towards preaching and their sermons.[15]

Perhaps more relevant to the concerns of this chapter are works which have discussed specific themes in Scottish preaching and sermons. Both Louise Yeoman and David Mullan have considered the importance of legal preaching in Scottish theology. Legal preaching, otherwise known as lash of law, or law-work, was a certain style of preaching where ministers would remind their congregations of their natural, sinful state, and their inability to achieve salvation based on good works. This type of preaching stemmed from federal theology – the two covenants of Works and Grace (on which more later in this chapter) – and the doctrine of depravity. The point of this type of preaching was to make Scots realise that they needed Christ and to depend on him if they wanted

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[10] Hunt, *Art of Hearing*, 16, 292.
[11] Gribben, 'Preaching the Scottish Reformation, 1560-1707', 275.
[12] Raffe, 'Preaching, Reading and Publishing the Word', 317–31; and Ann Matheson, 'Preaching in the Churches of Scotland', in *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689-1901*, ed. Keith A. Francis, William Gibson, John Morgan-Guy, Bob Tennant, and Robert H. Ellison (Oxford, 2012), 152-168.
[13] McCallum, *Reforming the Scottish Parish*, 95-120.
[14] Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 24-83.
[15] John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge, 1997), 82-113, 114-45; Alexander D. Campbell, *The Life and Works of Robert Baillie (1602-1662)*: *Politics, Religion and Record-Keeping in the British Civil Wars* (Woodbridge, 2017).

to be saved; this type of preaching occasionally induced conversion in some Scots who then internally examined themselves to see if they could feel the work of the Holy Spirit within their inner being.[16] In addition, Michelle Brock has considered how the Devil was understood in early modern Scottish preaching and sermons. In particular, she has explored the importance of the doctrines of human depravity and spiritual warfare in preaching, though only commenting on what these doctrines can tell us about belief in and concern for the Devil in Scottish spirituality.[17] By focusing on the Devil in preaching, Brock has emphasised the importance Scottish ministers, and perhaps some lay hearers, placed on the applications of sermons to conversion and everyday life.

To use sermons as evidence of anything beyond theology poses its own problems. Sermons reveal, by their nature, a one-way street of ideas and speeches. Measuring the reception of these sermons by people no longer living is an elusive task. While we know that sermons were meant to spur people to godliness and undergo conversion, we will never be able to know fully the actual influence sermons had on less pious and nonliterate people's lives.[18] Equally problematic is assessing the extent to which the manuscript or printed sermon resembled the delivered version. Lee Palmer Wandel has pointed out, with regard to printed sermons, that we do not know exactly 'what any one Christian heard'.[19] Many printed sermons in Scotland, however, were transcribed from auditors' notes rather than the minister's written sermon draft, thus providing a clearer picture of what was actually heard.[20] Even if such notes reflected the hearer's own subjective interpretation of what was preached, nevertheless, as Mary Morrisey has argued with reference to early modern England, people regarded different editions of sermons as 'versions of the same oration'.[21] In other words, while the delivery might be lost, the core pedagogical and evangelical messages remained consistent across manuscript and printed editions. This can be seen in the mid-1640s, when Robert Baillie expressed few anxieties that the printed versions of his sermons would be considered an imperfect representation of his 'live performance'.[22]

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16 Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 91; Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', 9-11, 2; see also, Yeoman, 'Archie's Invisible Worlds Discovered – Spirituality, Madness and Johnston of Wariston's Family', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 27 (1997), 156-86, at 161.
17 Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 47-74.
18 Raffe, 'Preaching, Reading and Publishing the Word', 318.
19 Lee Palmer Wandel, 'Switzerland', in *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period*, ed. Taylor (Leiden, 2001), 221-48, at 222.
20 Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 50.
21 Morrisey, *Paul's Cross Sermons*, 35.
22 Campbell, *Robert Baillie*, 187.

This chapter is less concerned with trying to reconstruct what was preached at the time than it is with the more general pastoral messages that ministers wished to convey to their lay hearers. Moreover, by interpreting ministers uses and applications of doctrines as scripts of spiritual behaviour for conversion, rather than simply devices to instruct lay hearers on points of theology, we can begin to see how wider spiritual and pietistic ideas were articulated by Scots of various social statuses and religious conviction.

II. The Reformed theology of conversion

This thesis is concerned with early modern Reformed conversion, that is conversion centred on one's internal, spiritual relationship with God in the context of the salvation of the soul. Crucial to the theology of Reformed conversion was the doctrine of predestination. The doctrine specified that God decreed that a small minority of his creation would be elected to salvation, and that a larger part would be damned to the fires of hell. The former designation represented God's mercy, while the latter embodied his justice.[23]According to predestinarian theology it was impossible for men and women to know whether they were saved or damned, since election and damnation were decrees of God, and claims to possess such divine knowledge were thought to undermine the sovereignty and majesty of God. Within predestinarian theology, then, conversion preceded signs of assurance of salvation – assurance being the tentative belief that one was predestined to salvation and eternal life.[24]

Reformed conversion, however, was predicated on the idea that God initiated and controlled conversion within the convert whom he had elected. This was theologically supported through an understanding of the two covenants of works and grace in federal theology – a part of Reformed theology which explained humankind's relationship to God in terms of covenants made with God. In this theology, the covenant of works was the first covenant made between God and humankind through Adam. In this covenant, God promised to grant eternal life to those who perfectly fulfilled the demands of the law. In the covenant of works, the law was the means by which humankind could achieve salvation by performing good works and refraining from sin. However, after the Fall and Adam's revolt against God, humans became unable to observe the moral law of the covenant of works; they became corrupted and were unable to achieve salvation by

[23] For more on predestination, see Dixon, *Practical Predestinarians*, 65.
[24] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 44.

following the law. The second covenant, known as the covenant of grace, was applied to the elect. Through it Christ now fulfilled God's law, since men and women could no longer fulfil it themselves – though this theology also taught that all men and women, elect and reprobate alike, should strive to fulfil the law even though they were bound to fail. Through the covenant of grace, God granted salvation to the elect through faith in Christ and works of grace, such as sanctification, not through mortal actions.[25] Theologically, conversion was an experiential way of making sense of these two covenants. Through it one learned that salvation could not be achieved through good works, and that God, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, furnished and fashioned a myriad of changes within and without the convert.

III. The Reformed conversion process

Reformed conversion essentially involved transitioning from a state of depravity and despair, in which the convert attempted, unsuccessfully, to convince God into granting salvation through adhering to the law, to a state of election and assurance, where the convert now submitted and surrendered themselves to God through faith in Christ, and received assurance of salvation by grace. The conversion process was essentially the means through which the elect, by destroying the old, depraved self and rebuilding the new, godly self through the agency and power of the Holy Spirit, came to realise their elected status and position. The states of despair and assurance, and the old and new selves, however, represented the beginning and the end of the conversion process. And while conversion was not experienced in the same way by all converts, nevertheless ministers claimed that there were certain stages and preparations that constituted parts of conversion. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, lay Scots who narrated their conversion experiences followed these stages and preparations.

Most lay Scots recorded experiencing conversion for the first time during adolescence or young adulthood. Conversions usually started with the Scot falling into a state of despair after hearing a passing remark, normally during a sermon, that made them believe that they were damned and destined to hell. This phase, known as the 'terror phase' in Scotland, caused anxiety and distress in converts as they grappled with the

[25] Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 91; Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', xiii; Yeoman, 'James Melville and the Covenant of Grace', in *Older Scots Literature*, ed. Sally Mapstone (Edinburgh, 2005), 574-83, at 574-5; and Coffey, *Samuel Rutherford*, 130-1. For older works on federal theology, see Von Rohr, *Covenant of Grace*, 7, 21-9, 53-86; and Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God's Caress*: *The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York, NY, 1986), 47-75.

knowledge that their earthly actions would not lead to salvation.[26] It was also during this stage that converts often lamented their depraved selves, searched within themselves for past sins and described demonic obsession, that is the idea of the Devil attacking and assaulting one internally.[27] Next, after the convert had come to the realisation that they were lost and depraved, unable to alter their spiritual status through their own actions, they turned to God in humiliation and contrition, sorrowed for sin and submitted and surrendered themselves to God; this was usually described as being performed through prayer.[28]

These spiritual behaviours during the terror stage of conversion were commonly known as preparations, since they involved the convert preparing themselves for the passive reception of grace and faith.[29] However, some theologians contested whether repentance, that is sorrowing for sin, should be regarded as a preparation, since they argued that sorrow for sin, that is thoughts and feelings of shame and humiliation for past sinful behaviour, was conjured up within the convert by the Holy Spirit; some theologians claimed that labelling sorrow for sin and submission to God as preparations over-emphasised human agency in the beginnings of the conversion process and in repentance more generally.[30]

Despite theological debates over the nature of preparations, most orthodox Reformed preachers agreed that preparations during the terror stage of conversion did not guarantee faith and grace. Both the elect and reprobate alike could prepare for conversion, since preparing for conversion was not a saving act on the part of God. What differentiated the two groups, however, was whether after sorrowing for sin and surrendering to God the convert experienced effectual feelings of faith and grace within themselves – in other words, whether they recognised that their feelings resulted from

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[26] See Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', 1-41; and Yeoman, 'The Devil as Doctor', 95-7, for a discussion of the terror stage of conversion; see also Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 87-93, 106-7. For comparable on scholarship on Puritan thought, please refer to Cohen, *God's Caress*, 77-81; and D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*: *Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2005), 37.

[27] For more on the relationship between demonic obsession and conversion experiences, see Yeoman, 'The Devil as Doctor', 93-105; Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 75-97, 97-125; see also, Nathan Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2006), 107-41; Tom Webster, 'Protestantism and the Devil', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Age of Shakespeare*, ed. R. Malcolm Smuts (Oxford, 2016), 418-434.

[28] Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', 173-4. See also Coffey, *Samuel Rutherford*, 84, 133-4; and Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 317-62.

[29] Coffey, *Samuel Rutherford*, 84; Cohen, *God's Caress*, 77-86; and Von Rohr, *Covenant of Grace*, 58-62.

[30] The fine line between preparation for conversion and conversion itself in puritan thought is discussed in Dixon, *Practical Predestinarians*, 183-85; and Cohen, *God's Caress*, 106-8. See Coffey, *Samuel Rutherford*, 84, for a discussion in the presbyterian context.

the operations of the Holy Spirit within them, not their selfish desires in trying to bribe God through repentance.[31] If the convert recognised that their feelings came from the Holy Spirit, then this implied that they had faith in Christ, the cornerstone of salvation in Reformed thought. Subsequently, converts came to believe that their performance of duties in life proceeded not from themselves, as they used to think, but from God, gifting his strength to them through the Holy Spirit to perform duties and resist spiritual and earthly foes. Converts, stripped of all thoughts of self-power, and having faith in Christ, achieved assurance of salvation.

Most lay Scots who narrated their conversions described experiencing these preparations and stages multiple times, and in practice they were not not as formulaic as the theology suggested.[32] Although Reformed theologians claimed that the elect were predestined to heaven, the fact that converts could not know for certain whether they were saved or damned meant that doubt was an inherent part of faith. Preachers insisted that those who became totally convinced of their elect status, to the extent that they thought that they no longer needed to prepare, obey the law or perform spiritual duties, were most likely not elect at all; this was known as 'security' – the ill-grounded full conviction of assurance.[33] Truly godly people were to remain vigilant against the flesh and the Devil, even if they were assured of their salvation. This meant that doubts surrounding assurance of salvation and one's elect status were integral parts of conversion and godly life more broadly.[34]

Those who experienced assurance of salvation during their first conversion often went through reconversions, or 'soul troubles' as described in Scotland, where the convert experienced the same emotional stages of despair, humiliation, sorrow for sin and surrendering themselves to God in order to feel assurance again and reconfirm their election.[35] This has been described in experiential terms by Charles L. Cohen working on New England puritan thought. Cohen argues that reconversion was the way in which 'The Elect defend[ed] against spiritual deadness and raise[d] their faith to consistently higher

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[31] Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', 35-6; Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 105; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 27.

[32] See Chapter Two, esp. 64-86.

[33] Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', 13; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 23-5, 27-8; Webster, 'Writing to Redundancy', 55; and Von Rohr, *Covenant of Grace*, 8, 54.

[34] Coffey, *Samuel Rutherford*, 136-7; Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self*, 233-4; and Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 440.

[35] See Mullan's two edited collections of transcriptions of early modern Scottish spiritual self-writings for more on the term soul troubles: *Protestant Piety in Early Modern Scotland*, ed. Mullan; and *Women's Life Writing in Early Modern Scotland: Writing the Evangelical Self, c. 1670-1730*, ed. Mullan (Aldershot, 2003). Chapter Two of this thesis discusses soul troubles in more detail.

levels by *re-enacting* the actions and affections associated with coming to believe' in the first place.[36] Reconversions or soul troubles tended to be less traumatic than the convert's initial conversion, since they were less about finding signs of election, faith and God's presence for the first time. Rather, they were more about reconfirming faith, assurance and finding God's presence in times of desertion. The focus was not on trying to rectify a previous false or untrue conversion, but to authenticate and to recapture the feelings of elation associated with assurance and election during one's initial conversion, to make it more enduring. As Alec Ryrie has argued on the topic of the New England puritan conversion narrative of John Winthrop, 'What made that [Winthrop's] first conversion unsatisfactory was not its incompleteness but its inconstancy'.[37] Paradoxically, by undergoing episodic reconversions or soul troubles throughout their lives – some of which were held to be signs of assurance or grace – converts hoped to achieve an enduring conversion. This, however, as Chapter Two shows, always failed: many lay Scots who narrated their conversion experiences were unable to maintain feelings of assurance and election for long periods of time before succumbing to despair and repeating the same affective cycle as before.

IV. The role of the unregenerate

If conversion was the central aim of preaching, then ministers needed to find ways to induce it within their hearers. Legal preaching, as discussed above, encouraged lay hearers to see themselves as depraved unregenerates unable to achieve salvation through good works. This idea drew heavily on the doctrine of human depravity - the doctrine that after the Fall humankind became corrupted. The doctrine did not assert that humans were purely evil. Rather, it asserted that all human faculties, particularly the will, were to some degree corrupted, in the sense that humans were more likely to commit sin than do good.[38] In Reformed theology, this was humankind's natural, impure and unregenerate state, and the longer one stayed in this state without undergoing conversion, the more likely it was a sign that one was damned. However, ministers told their lay hearers not to concentrate on thoughts of damnation too often, since this went against God's sovereignty: humans could not discern their final spiritual destination, so to focus on thoughts of damnation

[36] Cohen, *God's Caress*, 104. My emphasis. More generally, refer to Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 106-7.
[37] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 441.
[38] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 49-50; Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 19-46, at 35-7; Coffey, *Samuel Rutherford*, 83-4.

(and election) too frequently risked trying to access divine knowledge. Preaching about human depravity was supposed to encourage Scots to subject themselves to self-examination in the hope that they would come to depend on Christ; ministers did not want them to become trapped in the initial stages of law-work.[39] But, on the whole, ministers preached about the doctrine of human depravity precisely because they thought that they were preaching to more unreformed than reformed Scots.

IV. The role of the unregenerate (i): Depravity and estrangement from God

But in what ways did ministers instruct and encourage their hearers to see themselves as unregenerate and to awaken them to their natural state? Ministers constructed several scripts of spiritual behaviour that all Scots were expected to follow and internalise in their own lives. One of the scripts that ministers impressed upon their hearers was the script that the unregenerate, due to their natural, depraved state, was more prone to commit sin and more predisposed to think and act in ways contrary to God's will. In early November 1590, Robert Bruce, minister of St Giles, preaching on the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, instructed his hearers that:

> by nature we ar earthlie myndit, as we ar gottin and borne of earthlie parentis, and our nature is haillie defylit. So by nature we can think on nothing bot the earth. By nature we can not once lift up our cogitatiounis to think on hevin, and except [unless] our nature be renewit, and maid hevinlie[,] we will nevir think on hevin.[40]

A few weeks later he reminded his hearers that in order to mortify and encourage the Holy Spirit to temper one's innate nature, the sinner must first remember that their 'consciencis ar so hardned with the delyte of sin, that nothing will taist in them bot evill and wickednes'.[41] In the early years of the seventeenth century, John Welsh, son-in-law of John Knox, similarly reminded his parishioners to see themselves as contrary to God. He lambasted his Ayr congregation, asking, 'what should be the challenge which he [God] may have against many of you, that, from the very womb, some of you has your very

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[39] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 28-45; Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 64, 108-15; Coffey, *Samuel Rutherford*, 85; Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 92; and Andrew Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge, 2010), 174-5. David Mullan, Louise Yeoman and Michelle Brock have discussed pious Scots who became trapped in the law-work stages of conversion, Scots who thought that they were damned and going to hell. See Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self*, 234-7; Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', 23-30; Yeoman, 'Archie's Invisible Worlds Discovered', 156-86; and Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 108-23.

[40] NCL, Manuscript sermons of Robert Bruce 1590-1594, MS BRU2, fo. 44v. I thank Jamie Reid-Baxter for allowing me to use his transcriptions of Robert Bruce's manuscript sermons.

[41] NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 65.

tongue set upon the very fire of hell'.[42] And in May 1628, Zachary Boyd, preaching on John 6:27 during communion in his Barony parish in Glasgow, reminded his parishioners that 'by nature we are but vile and abhominable bodies […] See how slow wee are for the obtaining of that which is good'.[43] These messages about men and women's inescapable desire to think sinful thoughts and commit sinful actions were not just rhetorical, they were grounded in the everyday thoughts and actions of all Christians. Again, as Boyd commented in the same sermon, 'Yee who shortly after the Communion begin to raile, scold, lye, and braule, beguile not your selves: these rotten words are but stinking belchs, which proceede from the *rotten meate of damnation*'.[44] Moreover, Alexander Henderson, preaching to his congregation at Leuchars in August 1638, albeit in the highly political context of the recent signing of the National Covenant, bluntly reminded his parishioners of the various sins, both earthly and spiritual, that men and women commonly thought on and committed:

> 1. They are given to sins of the body, as drunkenness, fornication, adultery, and all these sorts of sins; to speak ill and sinful words with their tongues; and so they make the members of their bodies to be weapons of unrighteousness, to fight against their own souls. 2. But besides these sins of the body, there are some sins that has their proper seat in the soul, as ignorance—this is the uncleanness of the understanding; for ane ignorant understanding, it is foul also with errours, unbelief, secret blasphemous thoughts against God, murmurings against God's secret providence. […] There are sins of the flesh; and these make us like unto beasts, because they make us beastly. […] The other sort of sins that we are given unto, they are inward sins of the spirit; and these make us like unto devils, for they are called evil spirits.[45]

Complementing this strand of legal preaching, ministers also constructed another script of spiritual behaviour: they told their hearers of their natural estrangement and distance from God, and encouraged them to compare themselves to what God was and what they were not. Again, John Welsh told his parishioners to 'compare first thy self with God, and consider what a vile worm thou miserable wretch art, and how glorious a person and majesty he is'.[46] And Robert Baillie, preaching before the House of Commons in February 1643, reminded the parliamentarians that being estranged from God and Christ 'we are

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[42] John Welsh, *Forty-Eight Select Sermons* (Edinburgh, 1786), 81.
[43] Zachary Boyd, *Two Sermons, For These Who Able to Come to the Table of the Lord* (Edinburgh, 1629), 45, 79.
[44] Boyd, *Two Sermons*, 94. Emphasis in the original.
[45] Alexander Henderson*, Sermons, Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses*, *by Alexander Henderson*, *1638*. ed. Rev. R. Thomson Martin (Edinburgh, 1867), 440.
[46] Welsh, *Select Sermons*, 84.

but lifelesse, saplesse, withered branches, fit for nothing but the fire'.[47] Baillie's sermon focused on the sinful beliefs and actions of Royalist supporters of King Charles I during the first English Civil War. But, despite the specific political messages contained in this sermon, his exhortations reinforced the rudimentary, pedagogical belief that before undergoing law-work and conversion, unregenerate men and women were naturally distanced from God.

Informing laypeople about their natural estrangement from God continued in later seventeenth-century sermons. Sometime in the mid-century, James Durham, minister of Blackfriars parish in Glasgow, preaching about unbelief, exclaimed to his parishioners that the sinner's unregenerate state involved a 'desire to his [man's] own being and to his well-being, for his natural desire to preserve himself'.[48] Some ministers were even more direct when reminding their hearers of their natural estate and estrangement from God. In the early 1650s, Hugh Binning, minister of Govan, preached that 'there can be no fellowship between God and you in your Natural Estate'.[49] At Bathgate in May 1678, John Mossman, a dissenting presbyterian preacher, exhorting his hearers about the need for law-work and to consider their own depraved state, reminded them to 'never forget how near hand Hell some Day ye were, and how little there was betwixt you and Eternal Ruine; betwixt you and everlasting Flames'.[50] And finally, James Hutchinson, minister of Killallan, known for preaching before the trial commissioners involved in the Paisley witch trials in 1697, delivered a preparation sermon before communion at Kilmacolm in August 1699, in which he told his hearers that 'when a person or people degenerats, falls back, or falls into foul & gross sins, then the Lords back is turned on them'.[51]

To help all Scots understand their unregenerate status, ministers singled out the human heart as the source of corruption and they urged their hearers to view the heart as a controlling influence over their sinful thoughts and actions. Ministers conceptualised the heart as a focal point and this allowed Scots to pinpoint where their sinful behaviour originated. While they told their lay hearers that the heart was malleable, that it could be

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[47] Robert Baillie, *Satan the Leader in Chief to all who Resist the Reparation of Sion* (London, 1643), 24.
[48] James Durham, *The Great Corruption of Subtile Self, Discovered, and Driven from its Lurking-Places and Starting-Holes* (Edinburgh, 1686), 22.
[49] Hugh Binning, *Heart-Humiliation: Or, Miscellany Sermons Preached upon some choice Texts, at several Solemn occasions* (Edinburgh, 1676), 238.
[50] John Mossman, *The Christian's Companion under Soul-Exercise* (Edinburgh, 1678), 6.
[51] NCL, Sermons of James Hutchison, minister of Killellan 1698-1699 [and others], MS HUT 1, unpaginated.

remade by God if he so wished, they should first see it in its natural state. In March 1591, Bruce urged his hearers as follows: 'everie ane of you tak head to your hairtis; for their lurkis in the hairt perpetuallie ane foull affectioun, that if thou be not warr of it, bot interteine it, it will spuilyie thee of thy calling'.[52] Again at Barony in Glasgow, Zachary Boyd, telling his parishioners of the danger of sin, stated that while some sins manifest externally, others 'are stricken in about the heart a deadly disease […] the poison of sinne lurking within about the heart'.[53] Henderson, preaching before the signing of the National Covenant at St Andrews in early April 1638, told his hearers that 'our hearts they are contrary to God; they are proud, disobedient, rebellious'. And on another occasion in early April 1638, at Leuchars, he told his parishioners that 'we cannot with our whole hearts believe God's truth […] our awin heart is ane enemy great enough to hinder any good work'.[54] Sometime in the early 1650s, Andrew Gray, minister of the Outer High Kirk in Glasgow, told his hearers that 'if your heart were left one hour to your selves to keep, you would commit more inquity, than ye can imagine or dream of'.[55] Moreover, Hugh Binning preached that 'there is a desperat wicked heart within thee, that will destroy thee by lying unto thee'.[56] And finally, Michael Bruce, a dissenting presbyterian who was exiled to the north of Ireland during the reign of Charles II, preached at Carluke in May 1672. Taking as his text Ezekiel 37: 7-8, he exhorted his hearers to look within themselves and see 'a *rattling* in your bosom about your *Unfruitfulness*, and the *Plague* of your own Heart, that ye cannot be satisfied, till ye get that taken away'.[57] For Michael Bruce and the other ministers discussed above, it was only by recognising and accepting one's inescapable desire to sin, one's natural estrangement from God, and one's heart as the source of corruption – and hence their depraved self – that one could truly feel the Holy Spirit working within and thus begin the journey to reconcile with God through conversion. Thus, these exhortations on seeing the heart as corrupt and an influence on thoughts and actions were not just pedagogical devices used by ministers to impart theological knowledge to their hearers, they formed scripts of spiritual behaviour that were to be internalised and which were to elicit change in their lay hearers' lives.

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[52] NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 154.
[53] Boyd, *Two Sermons*, 87.
[54] Henderson, *Sermons*, *Prayers*, *and Pulpit Addresses*, ed. Thomson Martin, 18, 149.
[55] Andrew Gray, *Directions and Instigations to the Duty of Prayer, How and Why the Heart is to be kept with Diligence* (Edinburgh, 1669), 94.
[56] Binning, *Heart-Humiliation*, 39.
[57] Michael Bruce, *The Rattling of the Dry Bones; Or, A Sermon Preached in the Night-time at Chapel-yard in the Parish of Carluke, Clydsdale* (Edinburgh, 1672), 29-30.

IV. The role of the unregenerate (ii): Demonic obsession

Alongside exhortations on men and women's innate depravity, ministers constructed the script of demonic obsession: that is the need to associate one's natural self, particularly one's internal states, with the Devil and hell. During the early stages of law-work and conversion, ministers stressed that the Devil should be understood as naturally linked to sinners so as to awaken them to their spiritual corruption and to the necessity of subjecting themselves to God. One way in which ministers reinforced this idea was by telling their hearers that the Devil dwelled within and had a stranglehold on the hearts of both unregenerate and regenerate Christians, whom he influenced to commit sin. As Robert Bruce told his hearers in November 1590, the Devil 'is in everie man and woman in sum power, kendling thair corruptioun, casting up foull motiounis and cogitatiounis'.[58] In the early seventeenth century, John Welsh lambasted his hearers by telling them that, 'for thee that art not yet renewed, God is not in thy heart, but only the devil'.[59] Samuel Rutherford, in his *Tryal and Triumph of Faith* (1645), encouraged his hearers to see that sinners, in their natural state, were more likely to serve the Devil because there exists 'in all men an inbred morall love of the Devill, […] There's of the Devil's seed in sinners'.[60] In the mid-century, Andrew Gray told his hearers that:

> a man that hath two hearts, a part of his heart goeth to God, and a part of his heart goeth to the Devil: And I think, if we were all well searched, it is to be feared that many of us would be found two hearted men.[61]

And sometime in the early 1660s, John Brown, the deprived minister of Wamphray, preaching in both Scotland and the Netherlands, told unregenerate, natural Christians that in place of Christ 'ye have Satan in you, working the works of darkness, blinding the mind.'[62]

Ministers also stated that unregenerate men and women were naturally more inclined to serve the Devil, since God allowed the Devil more influence over unregenerate men and women than their renewed and godly counterparts. As Bruce told his hearers in November 1590, natural men and women are in 'spirituall sclaverie and captivitie of the devill, quhairin we ar bund captivis by nature, and consaved and borne in sin'.[63] In 1607,

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[58] NCL, MS BRU2, fos. 130v-131r.
[59] Welsh, *Select Sermons*, 190.
[60] Samuel Rutherford, *The Tryal and Triumph of Faith* (London, 1645), 32.
[61] Gray, *Directions and Instigations*, 94-5.
[62] John Brown, *Christ in Believers the Hope of Glory being the Substance of Several Sermons* (Edinburgh, 1694), 71.
[63] NCL, MS BRU2, fo.112.

John Murray, minister of Leith, preaching on Galatians 5:1, explained to his hearers the importance of justification by faith. He contrasted this with humankind's natural state, where he told his hearers that by falling back into sin 'you fall backe to *bondage*, you entangle yourselves with such a heavie yoke [harness] that whither soever sinne, or Sathan leades you, you must goe'.[64] And Robert Baillie, preaching to the House of Commons in 1643, claimed that before their calling even the elect

> many be withdrawn to serve the Devill, in the most wicked employments against God […] by the violence & subtilty of a tentation, may be driven to a very evil way, and may engage themselves in the worst services of Satan, and oppose in their desires, counsells and actions the most blessed works of God.[65]

Ministers also encouraged their lay hearers to acknowledge their implicit affiliation with the Devil by comparing their natural, unregenerate identity with that of accused witches and their relationship with the Devil. In 1981 Christina Larner argued that in their sermons ministers conceptualised the witch as a different type of sinner. She argued:

> Preachers in practice divided their flock into three categories: those who had 'embraced Christ', who were often publicly indistinguishable from the second category: 'formal professors' or 'Christians within the law', and thirdly, 'sinners' or 'the reprobate' or 'the ungodly'. The term 'sinner' could technically be applied to anyone and had to be understood in context. A fourth category of 'witch', which was logically the inverse of those who had embraced Christ, was rarely included or discussed by preachers other than in the context of a witch panic or local execution.[66]

Though she rightly claimed that the term sinner could be applied to anyone in context, her thinking around the distinction between sinner and witch was informed by her wider argument that Reformed ideas of the Devil, especially ideas of demonic obsession, were not often associated with or discussed in connection with accused witches. Rather, she argued, preachers usually mentioned accused witches with reference to demonological witchcraft, such as the demonic pact, and normally at witch trials or executions.[67]

But this distinction between sinners and witches was perhaps not as rigid as Larner implied. Even when preaching about witches, ministers commented on the similarities between unregenerate sinners and accused witches, highlighting shared cognitions and

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[64] John Murray, *A Godly and Fruitfull Sermon Preached at Leith in Scotland by a Faithfull Minister of Gods Holy Gospell* (London, 1607), 12-13. Emphasis in the original.
[65] Baillie, *Leader in Chief,* 37.
[66] Christina Larner, *Enemies of God*: *The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (London, 1981), 88.
[67] Chapter Three of the thesis questions Larner's distinction between Reformed ideas about the Devil preached from the pulpit and demonological witchcraft centred on the demonic pact.

behaviours which connected the two. Robert Bruce, preaching at St Giles just a short time after the North Berwick witches, Agnes Sampson and Geillis Duncan, had been interrogated in early December 1590, told his hearers that the Devil

> hes gone oppinlie to work, he hes castin af his mask, and makis the most pairt of the cuntrie oppinlie to renunce god, visiblie manifesting himself to them, deluding their sencis, and makis them wittinglie and willinglie to renunce chryst and thair baptisme.[68]

Though Bruce was quick to highlight that his hearers were not accused witches, he followed on from this exhortation, reminding them that all unregenerate sinners shared a common depraved connection with accused witches. He told them 'ye carie ane commoun nature with miserabill cativis, ane common conditioun naturall with the miserabill bodeis of these [i.e., witches] that have bene so long sclavis to the devill, and in quhom he hes sic power'.[69] Likewise, sometime in the 1680s, James Renwick, a covenanting field preacher who travelled around Scotland preaching against the episcopal Scottish Church, delivered a lecture on Matthew 3:7-12, in which he told his hearers that

> for we have heard tell of many witches, that came to many a preaching, and have been very forward in external duties, and yet never knew what it was to have this inward Baptism of the Spirit, And we fear, that there be many here, that have a paction with the Devil, I will not say formally as witches have; but they have a paction with their lusts: and while ye keep up this paction, ye keep up with Satan.[70]

It is not clear where Renwick delivered this lecture, and we do not know whether he was referring to specific accused witches that he knew or accused witches in general demonological terms.

That accused witches and ordinary sinners shared a common sinful and depraved heritage through their connection with the Devil can also be found in the sermon of one of the ministers who preached during the trial of the Paisley witches in 1697. James Hutchinson delivered a sermon at Paisley on 13 April 1697, at which the commissioners of justiciary were present. Hutchinson, preaching to convince the prosecutors of the gravity of the crime, emphasised the witches' extraordinary sinfulness by focusing on their pact with the Devil. Yet, he also preached that though natural, unregenerate sinners do not explicitly follow the Devil's temptations, but do so out of ignorance, nevertheless 'They [both witches and unregenerates] are constructed to be worshipers of Satan selling

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[68] NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 68v. Bruce did not refer to Sampson or Duncan by name.
[69] NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 68v.
[70] James Renwick, *A Choice Collection of Very Valuable Prefaces, Lectures, and Sermons*, 3rd edition (Glasgow, 1776), 295.

themselves to do wickedly and to follow the prince of the power of the air'. According to Hutchinson, what separates the witch from the ordinary sinner is 'But when those things are done by virtue of a compact that makes the difference'.[71]

He continued, reminding his hearers that ordinary men and women can fall prey to becoming a witch due to the natural 'Blindness and perverseness that have fallen upon us by the fall of man', which makes them more 'ready to listen much more to Satans tentation then to God'.[72] In addition, over twenty years later, on 14 January 1720, John Wilkie, the minister of Uphall, preached a sermon during a fast at Mid-Calder. This was not an ordinary fast: it had been called because of an ongoing investigation into witchcraft committed against the laird's son, Patrick Sandilands of Torphichen. Two accused witches who had confessed to bewitching the lord's son were present at the fast and thus heard Wilkie preach. After chiding the accused witches for openly and explicitly betraying God by renouncing themselves to the Devil, Wilkie soon turned his attention to the wider parish community who had come to hear him. He exclaimed:

> there are Persons here, who tho' they have not renounced their Baptism in the Name of Christ, and entered into a formal Compact with the Devil, are still Enemies in their Minds by wicked Works, Children of Disobedience, in whom the Prince of the Power of the Air doth work.[73]

In demonological theory, then, and in preaching more generally, accused witches were understood to be worse than unregenerates, since they explicitly renounced their souls to the Devil and willingly turned their backs on God. Yet ministers, such as those discussed above, despite categorising accused witches as worse than unregenerates, still emphasised a shared, demonic connection between the two, even if these connections only surfaced in sermons preached in the context of a witchcraft trial or investigation itself.

Another way in which ministers taught their hearers to recognise their depraved status was to not only know their implicit affiliation with the Devil, but also to be aware of how susceptible they were to his ability to influence their thoughts and actions. Demonic temptations were considered a normal and necessary part of conversion, and they could serve both as a metric of godliness (discussed in more detail later in this

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[71] 'A Sermon on Witchcraft in 1697', ed. George Neilson, *Scottish Historical Review* 7 (1910), 390-99, at 394.
[72] 'A Sermon on Witchcraft', ed. Neilson, 394.
[73] John Wilkie, *A Sermon Preached at Mid-Calder on Thursday, January 14th, 1720. Being a Congregational Fast in that Place* (Edinburgh, 1720), 31. Note: the online copy of the printed sermon on EECO does not contain the final pages. The final pages can only be read by reading a physical copy of the printed version held in either the National Library of Scotland or the Centre for Research Collections, University of Edinburgh Library.

chapter) and as a reminder of one's innate depravity.[74] In the context of lash of law preaching, ministers more frequently discussed demonic temptation in the latter: in relation to men and women's unregenerate state, before the Holy Spirit gave them the strength to resist such temptations. In February 1591, Bruce told his hearers at St Giles that the Devil:

> knawis quhairto ane man is most inclynit, to quhat vyce he is most addictit, and quhair the wall is waikest, their he makis his assault, he knawis quhat deceavis men most, and quhairvnto they ar most easilie allured, and he setis these objectis befoir men, that by them they may be snairit.[75]

And because of men and women's natural weakness, '[if] we be not warr of him [the Devil] in this thingis that ar most pleasant to the flesche, we will die in temptatioun and be ovircum'.[76] In September 1638, Alexander Henderson, preaching on Ephesians 6 at Edinburgh, sermonised on the Devil's ability to know 'every man's disposition, how it is set […] And he knows also the complexion and constitution of man's body, according to whilk ordinarily the disposition of the mind runs; and he has tentations fitted for all these'.[77] Henderson was preaching in the context of the recent signing of the National Covenant. Indeed, this sermon, much like his sermons from earlier in the same year – and Baillie's in the next decade – served a political purpose in rallying support against King Charles I and his Royalist supporters. Nonetheless, Henderson's political messages meshed with his ministerial duty as a preacher to impress upon his hearers the doctrine of law-work and human depravity, to reaffirm that the Devil most easily preyed upon open and unguarded minds.[78]

The idea that natural men and women possessed unguarded and weak minds, allowing them to be tempted by the Devil, was reinforced in sermons from later in the century. James Durham, minister of Blackfriars parish in Glasgow, drawing on 2 Corinthians 12 in which Paul had been tempted by a servant of the Devil, told his hearers that it was Paul's natural and inbred corruption which allowed the servant of the Devil to tempt him: 'it is clear, that the quicknesse, and livelinesse of this corruption of Self, was the cause why this messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him'.[79] And in July 1699, James

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[74] Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 97.
[75] NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 136v.
[76] NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 136v.
[77] Henderson, *Sermons, Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses*, ed. Thomson Martin, 477.
[78] This point is made in Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 59, with reference to the same quote from Henderson's sermon.
[79] Durham, *Subtile Self*, 33.

Hutchinson, drawing on the same chapter, explained to his hearers at Greenock that God permits the Devil to tempt natural man partly 'for correction […] Hee hath left in them a body of sin'.[80]

These pedagogical exhortations on the doctrine of human depravity and the Devil's mental powers were not purely metaphorical or rhetorical. Nor should we interpret them simply as theological messages that were meant to intellectually support other doctrines, such as predestination and election, though to ignore this would be to misunderstand preaching in general. Ministers' discussions on human depravity and the Devil's mental temptations in the context of legal preaching, many of which were formulaic and repeated across the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, provided lay hearers with essential scripts of spiritual behaviour that they needed to internalise in order to identify as unregenerate and depraved; they expected their hearers to go away from the sermon and adhere to these scripts when they faced spiritual encounters in their own lives.

V. The role of the penitent sinner

In Reformed theology, and in preaching in particular, the doctrine of repentance was still considered important, despite its tension with the doctrines of predestination and election. The latter two doctrines, while essentially cancelling the function of repentance as a means through which one could actively gain salvation, did not completely destroy its place within the Scottish Kirk. Rather, repentance had to be underpinned by different rationales. Principally, rather than being considered a solution to salvation, repentance came to be seen as preparatory to salvation and an important part of the conversion process: by repenting the sinner showed God his or her desire to be converted, but expressing repentance could also be considered a sign that the Holy Spirit was working within him or herself, since repentance could only be enacted with the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, despite theological debates over the nature of repentance and preparations, most orthodox Reformed preachers agreed that an episode of repentance during conversion showed that the convert had undergone role change, receiving a new identity: the penitent sinner. While the unregenerate had no faith and

[80] NCL, MS HUT1, unpaginated.

wallowed in ignorance and sin, a penitent sinner realised that they could not fulfil God's law and achieve salvation through mortal actions. The penitent sinner differed from the unregenerate through sorrowing for sin and submitting themselves to Christ, who in turn affected their hearts and minds and decided whether or not to bestow grace.[81] Thus, the unregenerate and the penitent sinner had different scripts of spiritual behaviour attached to them.

The next two sections in this chapter consider the scripted ways in which ministers encouraged repentance in their hearers, and how they were supposed to engage with Christ and the Holy Spirit before and during the beginnings of conversion. In particular, it pays attention to ministers' discussions of inward or internal repentance, compared to external penitent actions, which have been discussed at greater length in the historiography.[82] The chapter identifies two key strands of preaching on repentance which we can consider as scripts of spiritual behaviour and which were meant to help lay hearers prepare for conversion: faith as surrender and submission to God, and sorrow for sin.

V. The role of the penitent sinner (i): Faith as surrender and submission to God

While lash of law preaching involved awakening people to their natural, irredeemably corrupted state, this style of preaching also aimed to instil in the sinner a need to depend on Christ, since only through faith in Christ could a sinner be saved.[83] Ministers often discussed faith as a necessary part of repentance, since faith allowed the sinner to repent. Yet, converts who had received faith and grace were considered contingent and active agents in working with the Holy Spirit to perform spiritual duties. As John Von Rohr has discussed in relation to puritan thought, 'Faith may be divinely given, but it is likewise humanly expressed. The human person is called upon to believe'.[84] Rohr also states that in puritan thought conversion was 'an act of God and, even more, of God's sovereignty. And on the other hand, it [was] an act in which the human person participate[ed] as a willing and concurring subject'.[85] Conversion was not centred on divine coercion, but

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[81] Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', 174; see also Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 87-97; and Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 49-59.
[82] Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 127-183; Macdonald, 'Reconciling Performance'; see also Brock, 'Plague, Covenants, and Confession: The Strange Case of Ayr, 1647–8', *The Scottish Historical Review* 97 (2018), 129–152; and Langley, *Worship, Civil War and Community,* ch. 2.
[83] Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', 10-11; see also Yeoman, 'Archie's Invisible Worlds Discovered', 161; Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 91.
[84] Von Rohr, *Covenant of Grace*, 149.
[85] Von Rohr, *Covenant of Grace*, 141. More generally, refer to Cohen, *God's Caress*, 92-3.

human acceptance and willingness to perform and practice divine power. Like their puritan counterparts, Scottish presbyterian ministers, equally aware of the difficulty and complexities in disseminating this type of theological message, framed faith, and its place within repentance, through the scripted spiritual behavioural message of surrendering and submitting one's self to God.

At St Giles in early autumn 1590, Robert Bruce, urged his hearers to submit and surrender to God, particularly as part of the preparation phase before communion. Bruce exclaimed that all men and women should 'haue a thrist, a gudwill and a studie to be pertaker in thy hairt of the mercie that thou seis in thy mynd'.[86] And again in sermons preached in early November and December in the same year, he exclaimed to his hearers that 'your studie sould be to crave of the living god, that he wold alter your affectioun, and mak yow to love him as earnestlie, as evir ye did anie earthlie thing of befoir'.[87] Other ministers across the seventeenth century also encouraged their hearers to turn themselves to God, wherein they would better prepare themselves for the workings of the Holy Spirit. John Welsh reminded his Ayr congregation in the first decade of the seventeenth century that it was necessary for them to 'never to rest in thine heart, until thou recover that first love again which thou hadst once to Christ'.[88] This was echoed by Zachary Boyd when he delivered a preparation sermon before communion in 1628 at his parish in Barony. Explaining the use of the doctrine that it was beneficial that all should follow Christ, he reminded his parishioners that 'The whole heart is Gods, the whole man is Gods; seeing all is his, let him have all to whom all belongeth, and who is most worthy of it'.[89] And the next day, on the communion day itself, he repeated this use of the doctrine when exhorting young children:

> All ye that are young […] Though drowsie nature would faine lye still and sleepe, up, up; from the feathers; Serve GOD in the morning of thy lyfe: Serve him first in the morning of thy dayes: let thy first part of the day bee spent into *kneeling before his footstoole*: let GOD also bee served in the morning of all thy adoes: When thou is ever goeing to any action, were it at noone, or at even, labour a little with GOD […] Before thou speake of any matter of weight, up with thy heart and eyes to the HEAVENS, saying with a sigh, *LORD direct mee in that which I am for to speake*: see that in all things thou first labour with thy GOD.[90]

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[86] NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 6.
[87] NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 63.
[88] Welsh, *Select Sermons*, 99.
[89] Boyd, *Two Sermons*, 31-2.
[90] Boyd, *Two Sermons*, 84. Emphasis in the original.

Moreover, Hugh Binning, preaching sometime in the mid-century, exhorted at Govan that his hearers should never 'expect for any good within your selves, or the helping of any evil', but should 'Look to the fountain of Life Jesus Christ', and give over their hearts to 'another hand, who can create a new heart within you'.[91] James Ferguson, preaching to his parishioners at Kilwinning in April 1665, reminded them that when motivated to mortify their sins, they should also think to 'win a Christian submissione & stouping to God quhen ye are called to sheed [i.e., to get rid] with them [sins]'.[92] And finally, David Brown, preaching at Greenock in July 1699, said at the end of his sermon that 'Finally let this inveet us all to come to Christ Jesus & lay down your weapons, & say yeel sin no more, & yeel bee for him'.[93] By turning their thoughts to God, the unregenerate became a penitent sinner.

It should be added that being a penitent sinner did not mean that one was effectually called, it only demonstrated a break from the sinner's unregenerate spiritual role identity: by turning their thoughts to God, the penitent sinner showed the divine that they were prepared, both inwardly and outwardly, to be transformed by the Holy Spirit and by faith, and that they were different from their old unregenerate self. Yet, in becoming a penitent sinner, this did not mean one's conversion had ended and that one had received assurance of salvation. It only showed that they were on the next step to reconcile with God.

Turning one's self to God as a part of repentance can also be seen in ministers' sermons on witchcraft, where they exhorted the accused to turn back to God. On 5 August 1679, Archibald Riddell, a dissenting presbyterian preacher who conducted worship at outdoor conventicles, delivered a sermon. He urged sinners to repent, 'even if thou had been a Witch, and had made an actual portion with the Devil, and would break the bargain now with the Devil, and would make a new bargain with our King Christ'.[94] His sermon addressed the topic of whether an accused witch could turn back to God.[95] This idea of faith and appearing penitent framed in a scripted way as submitting one's self to God was echoed in another sermon preached during the Paisley trials. I have already

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[91] Binning, *Heart-Humiliation*, 40.
[92] NCL, MS GRA3, Sermons by Andrew Gray (1633-1656), minister of the Outer High Kirk, Glasgow 1661-1665 [and others], 69-70.
[93] NCL, MS HUT1, unpaginated.
[94] Archibald Riddell, *Mount Moriah, Or A sermon preached at Carrick, by Mr. Riddale, August 5. 1679* (Edinburgh, 1679), 11.
[95] Chapter Five of the thesis, 137-43, explores the topic of spiritual counselling and penitent witches, questioning how the minister understood the witch's spiritual state.

referred to James Hutchinson, minister of Kilallan, in the previous theme. He preached to the commissioners of justiciary on 13 April 1697. But two months later, David Brown also preached at Paisley on 9 June, the day before the execution of the accused witches. At one point during the sermon, he preached directly to the accused and reminding them of the severity of their crime he described witchcraft as 'the highest act of rebellion against the God of heaven and earth'.[96] And he chided them on keeping company with the Devil, to the extent 'that [they] care not for Christ, heaven, or glory'.[97] Thus far the accused had refused to confess to the court, but Brown, acting in his capacity as a pastor, implored them to 'to embrace the offers of Christ': 'As long as ye are impenitent I can but threaten heavy judgments to you, but if you will confess and repent, *and come unto Christ*, I come to you with the best news ever were heard'.[98]

Brown's sermon, like Riddell, provided his hearers with the information they needed to turn to God, though unlike Riddell, Brown was preaching to convicted and unrepentant witches. In addition, like Riddell, he stated that if the witches repented and submitted themselves to God, then God might even forgive the sin of witchcraft, though they would still be executed for the crime. We can also find further evidence in John Wilkie's sermon at Mid-Calder. Unlike David Brown, Wilkie was not preaching to convicted and unrepentant witches, but suspects who had not yet been tried. Like David Brown, however, Wilkie was quick to remind the accused of the severity of their sin against God, asking, 'Do you know what you have done? You have exposed yourselves to the Wrath of God'. And he reminded them that their 'Misery is great [and]… Sin and Wickedness is inconceivably, and inexpressibly great'.[99] However, like both David Brown and Archibald Riddell's evangelical messages, Wilkie claimed that though the witches would face insufferable torment if they continued in the service of the Devil, if they repented, God might save them from eternal damnation:

> I say unless you repent; because, tho' the Repentance of Persons in your Case is right rare, yet I dare not exclude you from the *Mercy of God*, If now you will repent, and turn to God *through* Jesus Christ […] if you *submit your selves to the Lord*, if you will *break your Covenant with Hell*, and fall down at the Feet of God: He who *resisteth the Proud*, will give Grace even to you.[100]

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[96] *A History of the Witches of Renfrewshire*: *A New Edition, with an Introduction* (Paisley, 1877), 191.
[97] *Witches of Renfrewshire*, 191.
[98] *Witches of Renfrewshire*, 192-3. Emphasis added.
[99] Wilkie, *A Sermon Preached at Mid*-Calder, 29-30.
[100] Wilkie, *A Sermon Preached at Mid-Calder*, 31.

In their applications and exhortations on repentance as surrender and submission to God, ministers hoped to edify their hearers. However, these exhortations and applications were not just mere pedagogical messages. Ministers hoped to induce real change within their hearers: from naturally depraved sinner to penitent sinner; from ungodly witch to penitent witch. This was about changing one's thoughts, words and actions; this was about changing their spiritual identities.

V. The role of the penitent sinner (ii): Sorrow for sin

Turning to God and surrendering one's self to him by faith was arguably the most important and vital part of repentance, since it reinforced God's role in controlling repentance, but ministers also stressed the conditional side of repentance: sinners must *express* to God their guilt and shame at offending his majesty, sin and their natural state. As Louise Yeoman has argued, the sinner was supposed to 'sorrow as if for the first born'. And while expressing remorse and emotion was ineffectual in helping the sinner actively achieve salvation, nevertheless 'emotional catharsis was evidently believed to bring people to a point at which it was more likely that the spirit would work through them than not'.[101] And like surrendering and submitting to God, sorrow for sin could also be interpreted as a limited sign of election, since sorrow for sin could be interpreted as evidence of the Holy Spirit working through the convert.[102]

In early autumn 1590, Bruce, teaching his hearers how to prepare themselves before approaching the table at communion, reminded them that 'a humble confessioun of our sin is first and special fute that carieth us to the sicht of the living god'.[103] He added that sinners should confess their 'sins and wickednes bygaine, and of our haill sins quhairin we haue offendit him […] quhairin thy conscience testifeis to thee, that thou hes offendit his everlesting majestie'.[104] For Bruce, 'Their is no entrie in that kingdome bot by repentance. Art thow once penitent, and trewlie penitent, and from thy hairt sorrowfull? Thou may be sure of ane delyverie; their is no questioun of ane delyverie to ane penitent and trew repenting sinner'.[105] In the early seventeenth century, John Welsh exhorted his Ayr congregation to present themselves 'before the tribunal of God, with your burdens

[101] Yeoman, 'Heart-Work', 174. See also Coffey, *Samuel Rutherford*, 134.
[102] Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 105.
[103] NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 26.
[104] NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 26.
[105] NCL, MS BRU2, fos. 148-48v.

upon your backs, and with sorrowful hearts for the sins that ye have done'.[106] In 1638, Alexander Henderson said that, to reconcile with God, his hearers must appear 'before God, in true humiliation, in repentance, and sorrow for sin'.[107] In 1643, Baillie, preaching to the House of Commons, reminded his hearers that they should 'judge they self and thou shall not be judged; confesse with heartie sorrow, and the Lord shall be just to forgive […] he blesseth them that mourn now, and no mourning in a child of God more pious then for the offending of God, and grieving of his Spirit by sinne'.[108] Moreover, sometime in the mid-century, James Simpson, minister of Airth, framed repentance as a necessary part of the building the tower of salvation. He claimed that repentance 'is a necessar piece of the Superstructure of this Building: what ever your sins have been ye must be brought to this, to mourn over them, for your piercing of Christ by them'.[109] In using a metaphor of a tower to describe salvation, Simpson intended to teach his hearers about conversion and the importance of leading a godly life. But in telling them that they should sorrow for sin, Simpson also provided his hearers with a necessary spiritual behaviour to draw on in their own lives.

Again, it was not just enough to possess such knowledge that one had done wrong; lay hearers needed to *know* how to conduct themselves and enact repentance internally. Ministers sometimes framed sorrow for sin as a direct, inner spiritual confrontation between the sinner and God, where the sinner could demonstrate to God his or her desire to be saved. In his preparation sermon before communion in Glasgow in 1628, Zachary Boyd said to his hearers, 'wee must confesse them [sins], abhorre them, detest them, and *wrestle* with God in prayer, till hee seale up the pardon thereof into our hearts'.[110] Henderson provided a step-by-step guide as to how sinners should lament and express remorse before God. Reminding his hearers that once they had found 'uncleanness and filthiness both in thoughts, words, and actions', they should begin to 'purge by repentance, and to make apology'. Henderson, providing a scripted example of how the sinner should approach Christ, said:

> He [the sinner] goes to the throne of grace, and presents himself there in the name of Jesus Christ, and makes his confession, and says, I set myself to watch over my ways ; and now I have tried how I have watched, and I have found that I have failed many ways, in my affections, words, and deeds. And therefore I desire that

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106 Welsh, *Select Sermons*, 82.
107 Henderson, *Sermons, Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses*, ed. Thomson Martin, 327.
108 Baillie, *Leader in Chief*, 15, 26.
109 James Simpson, *The Building the Tower of Salvation* (Edinburgh[?], 1695?), 8.
110 Boyd, *Two Sermons*, 61.

> I may be cleansed from my guiltiness, contracted thereby, by the blood of Jesus Christ, shed upon the cross to take away the guiltiness of sin, and from my filthiness, that I sin no more for time to come, by thy holy Spirit.[111]

The idea that this was a scripted behaviour is reinforced in Henderson's exhortation after this explanation on purging and repentance, where he reminded his hearers to put 'it in practice afterwards'.[112] Moreover, in 1699, John Gray, minister of St Andrew's parish in Glasgow (formerly the Wynd Church), told his hearers that it was not enough in 'bewailing & mournfull lamenting of our ils & especially of our nature'. The sinner must communicate with God by prayer and confess 'sin to God with sorrow & regrait'.[113] These consistent and scripted exhortations on faith as surrender and submission to God, and sorrow for sin, provided lay hearers with the knowledge and behaviours they needed to present themselves before God and repent. And while exhortations on preparations and practical uses of repentance could undermine the sovereignty of God, since they emphasised human rather than divine actions, nonetheless as Leif Dixon has argued with reference to English puritan thought:

> If the exhortation was simply to use the means appointed by God through which conversion is usually actuated – attending sermons, identifying sins and sorrowing for them, and so forth – then the minister was doing no more than his duty. Only the crudest understanding of early modern predestinarian belief would suggest that exhortation was anathema to the doctrine's central meaning.[114]

By emphasising human actions involved in the conversion process, ministers were not claiming that such actions would lead to grace or salvation. Rather, they argued that the performance of human actions, that is, *trying to be saved*, gave the sinner some agency in altering their spiritual status. After all, the penitent sinner was distinct from the unregenerate, and ministers recognised the differences between the two. As John Welsh noted on unregenerates, 'thou art a drudge and bond slave to the Devil; but repentance makes thee a child of God'.[115]

Even though sorrowing for sin was very much part of the process of reconciling with God, in the sense that one could not fully undergo conversion if one did not both sorrow for sin *and* submit and surrender to God, ministers still framed sorrow for sin as a distinct, albeit related, spiritual script to encourage lay hearers to understand the practical

[111] Henderson, *Sermons, Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses*, ed. Thomson Martin, 424.
[112] Henderson, *Sermons, Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses*, ed. Thomson Martin, 424.
[113] NCL, MS HUT1, unpaginated. Emphasis added.
[114] Dixon, *Practical Predestinarians*, 185.
[115] Welsh, *Select Sermons*, 179.

importance of conversion. Indeed, as the next chapter shows, even though sorrowing for sin and submitting and surrendering to God were very much part of the same process – and the same role – lay Scots who narrated their conversion experiences tended to record sorrowing for sin and submitting themselves self to God as separate events in their lives.[116]

VI. The role of the Christian soldier

Ministers preached that the unregenerate's life centred on reconciling with God. But this would not be without struggle and conflict, known as spiritual warfare. Ministers preached that all Christians' lives centred on fighting against sin, the flesh and the Devil.[117] In the context of legal preaching and conversion, they often reminded their hearers of this spiritual warfare and encouraged them to be soldiers of Christ. In late November 1590, Robert Bruce, reminded his hearers at St Giles that to help protect their souls from damnation, they should 'Ficht againes the power of the Devill, ficht againes all thy spirituall enemeis, againes thy awin affectiounes, and slay them all rather or [than] thou slay thy saull for evir'.[118] John Welsh bluntly exhorted his parishioners at Ayr that because both God and the Devil exist within the human heart, that 'for what is your life but a continual warfare'.[119] Alexander Henderson, preaching at Edinburgh in 1638 on Ephesians 6, preached that 'We must either resolve to fight, or to be slaves for ever to Satan […] if so be that we be the soldiers of Christ, we must prepare ourselves for wrestling and fighting'.[120] Moreover, Archibald Riddell, the covenanting field preacher, exhorted his hearers at Carrick in August 1679, saying to them 'you must List your selves, either on Christs Side, or the Devils'.[121] And at Greenock in July 1699, James Hutchinson, retired minister of Kilallan, exhorting his hearers at the end of his sermon and commenting on the sinful desires of the human heart, told them, with reference to 1 Timothy 6:12, that they should 'never give away to addictedness to sense but feight the good feight of faith & live by faith'.[122] Spiritual warfare was not only discussed in the context of conversion and soteriology, but when exhorting their mainly illiterate hearers,

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116 See Chapter Two, esp. 70-4.
117 Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 240-56; Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 27-8; Yeoman, 'Heart-work', 261.
118 NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 54.
119 Welsh, *Select Sermons*, 187.
120 Henderson, *Sermons Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses*, ed. Thomson Martin, 462, 480.
121 Riddell, *Mount Moriah*, 10.
122 NCL, MS HUT1, unpaginated.

ministers often discussed spiritual warfare in the context of individuals' souls and their relationship to God.

VI. The role of the Christian soldier (i): Resisting the Devil and sin

But how was one supposed to prepare for this warfare? Key to this style of spiritual warfare preaching was the way in which ministers constructed scripts of resisting and fighting against both the Devil and sin. As I discussed above, the doctrine of human depravity decreed that humankind was entirely corrupt and this made them much more vulnerable to demonic temptation. But the Devil also played a larger role in Reformed soteriology. Humankind could only gain salvation through faith, hence the Devil's temptations were often considered a test of faith by God to humble his believers. This, however, only applied to the elect, since the Devil was only interested in tempting God's chosen. But ministers also framed this pursuit of godliness as a necessary part of all Christians' lives: everyone was prone to the Devil's temptations, and therefore everyone, including unregenerates and reprobates, should resist them. This was an important script in teaching lay hearers the difference between the unregenerate and the Christian soldier. Unregenerates succumbed to temptations, while Christian soldiers resisted them.

Humans could not resist the Devil on their own: they needed the power and the direction of Christ and the Holy Spirit to do so. Bruce, reminding his parishioners of the danger of human corruption and the Devil's temptations, exhorted that 'quhair thow hes no power to resist, eschew the occasiounis and obiectis that may kindle thy intentioun, and bow thy hairt to god, and quhair thow wantis strenth, crave strenth of him [God]. And so by resisting the devill sall flie'.[123] In 1607, John Murray, minister of Leith, preaching on Galatians 5:1, explained to his hearers that faith would help them resist the Devil's advances against them:

> So stand ye stedfast (saith the Apostle) and settle the affection of your heart fast in the liberty, wherin, as in a station, your graue, & gracious captaine Jesus hath placed you, resisting by faith that spirituall adversary the Devil, who wil strive by all meanes possible to drawe you out of that liberty.[124]

Alexander Henderson, preaching at Edinburgh in 1638, exhorted to his hearers:

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[123] NCL, M SBRU2, fo. 76. Allusion to James 4:7.
[124] Murray, *Fruitfull Sermon*, 11.

> And what is the surest way to resist him [the Devil]? Even to be steadfast in the faith; for that is sure, we must either fight against him and resist him, or otherwise we must yield ourselves to be his perpetually.[125]

Samuel Rutherford, in his *Tryal and Triumph of Faith* (1645), commented on Christ's power over the Devil, stating that 'When *Satan* Tempteth you, fear him not, resist him in the Faith'.[126] Moreover, James Durham preached that when feeling temptation, his hearers should 'give not give way to it in the least, but set your self in the strength of the Lord, to oppose and hear it down, in the first risings of it'.[127] And finally, John Wilkie, preaching at Mid-Calder in 1720, told his hearers that to resist the Devil believers should be 'stedfast in the Faith, that is stedfastly believeing the Providence of God in the World, that the Lord reigneth, that all Things *are at his* Beck'.[128] Again, this type of preaching was not just meant to edify hearers. By describing resisting the Devil through faith, ministers provided their hearers with scripts of spiritual behaviour: if they should feel the Devil striving against them, they needed to conduct themselves and respond in the correct and accepted manner. These exhortations on resisting the Devil through faith were meant to shape people's inward and outward behaviour. As I will show in Chapters Two and Four of the thesis, lay Scots who narrated their conversion experiences, and accused witches who confessed to diabolic witchcraft, described resisting the Devil through faith and sometimes framed such acts as inner, spiritual confrontations between themselves and the Devil.[129]

Alongside this discourse on resisting the Devil and his temptations through faith, ministers also preached that sinners should resist one's natural desires – the flesh – through mortification. Mortification, the control and subjugation of one's desires to sin, held an important role in Reformed theology. Mortification was an important part of law-work, since it was the duty of all Christians to mortify themselves, and like repentance, mortification could even be considered a sign of election, since it was believed that if one was able to resist one's own desires then this was a sign that God had given one the strength to do so and that the Holy Spirit was working through them.[130] Bruce, preaching before communion in early autumn 1590, exhorted his hearers:

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125 Henderson, *Sermons, Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses*, ed. Thomson Martin, 501.
126 Rutherford, *Triumph of Faith*, 323.
127 Durham, *Subtile Self*, 8.
128 Wilkie, *A Sermon Preached at Mid-Calder*, 23. Emphasis in the original.
129 See Chapter Two, 79-84; and Chapter Four, 118-22.
130 Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 60; Mullan, *Puritanism*, 111-116.

> [for] Chrystis saik sighe and sobe for your iniquiteis, pearss throw the cluddis of a dark mynd, and throw the sinis of a filthie hairt, and cast out infidelitie: For it is impossibill that ye can get a sicht of god, or of the world to cum, except ye first remove sin, and cast out infidelitie.[131]

Again, preaching in early December and encouraging introspection among his hearers, Bruce told them to 'Tak head [heed] to this for the deceat of our affectiounis is wonderfull, so that we be continowallie upone our guaird, […] Theirfoir ye sould evir crave of god, that ye be not deceaved with the flattereis of your awin lustis and affectiounis'.[132] Andrew Gray, minister of the Outer High Kirk at Glasgow, stated 'that a natural man and unregenerat man, doth mainly wrestle against these sins, that are outward and more grosse, and not so much against those sins that are inward'. But Gray preached that the godly are 'much taken up in bearing down' inward sin, such as original corruption.[133] Also in the mid-century, James Simpson, minister at Airth, impressed upon his hearers the importance of mortification in helping them to receive salvation:

> You must take up a Warfare against Corruption within you, if ye resolve to build, and als to finish. You may think to be Christian without Mortification, but you shall know it, that ye shall never build and finish this Tower without it; fight ye most, or ye shall never finish this Tower [i.e., Salvation].[134]

And at Greenock in July 1699, James Hutchinson preached an action sermon before communion, where at the end, he stated that 'Let us bewar of heart idols, it will maw [destroy] the comfort of our life, & it will mar [damage] prayer […] let us endeavour the slaughter of our idols'.[135] Such human actions of mortification were considered ineffectual, in the sense that without the assistance of the Holy Spirit humans could not actually succeeded in expelling sin, but nevertheless ministers argued that all men and women should act and behave as if they *could* control and subdue their own sins. Mortification provided lay hearers with another behaviour that separated them from their natural, unregenerate old selves, since natural and unregenerate sinners would never fully try to mortify their own sins.

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131 NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 12.
132 NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 61.
133 Andrew Gray, *The Spiritual Warfare. Or Sermons Concerning the Nature of Mortification, Right Exercise, and Spiritual Advantages Thereof* (Edinburgh 1672), 13-14.
134 Simpson, *Tower of Salvation*, 8.
135 NCL, MS HUT1, unpaginated.

VI. The role of the Christian soldier (ii): Prayer as Christian armour

Such exhortations on resisting the Devil and the flesh were supported by similar and related exhortations to improve certain spiritual duties. Ministers impressed upon their hearers the importance of prayer in their everyday lives, and they framed it as a piece of the Christian soldier's armour to use to fight against corruption and the Devil. In November 1590 Bruce reminded his parishioners that they should 'be instant in prayer quhen evir the Devill or nature assaillis thee […] Suppose it be the most bitter work to nature that can be, lat faith prevaill, and no way can it prevaill bot by prayer. So prayer is the onlie armour of ane christiane'.[136] Welsh told his hearers at Ayr that 'the last piece of armour, which ye must have for your warfare' is prayer, and that without it 'there is no deliverance out of temptations'.[137] James Durham, minister of Blackfriars parish in Glasgow, reminded his hearers of the importance of prayer as one of the weapons of the Christian soldier. He exhorted:

> Be much in prayer to God, as the Apostle was, when a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him […] So do ye, wrestle much with God by prayer against it, but study in prayer to make much use of Christ, for getting victory over it [temptation], in his strength, *who was manifested for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the Devil*.[138]

Also in the mid-seventeenth century, Andrew Gray told his hearers that 'prayer being indeed that noble and spiritual weapon by which Christians do overcome […] I think of all the weapons that almost a Christian taketh to resist temptation, this is the most effectual'.[139] Finally, in 1720, Wilkie told his hearers at Mid-Calder that 'We are also in the Exercise of Prayer to resist the Devil […] Prayer engages God in our Quarrel: If we sincerely seek it of God, he will fight our Battels for us against this Enemy, and give us Conquest over him'.[140]

Ministers constructed the spiritual role of the Christian soldier, with its focus on resisting the Devil and the unregenerate self, to help hearers make sense of spiritual warfare and conversion. But, as with their exhortations on human depravity, demonic obsession and repentance, these exhortations and applications on spiritual warfare and

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136 NCL, MS BRU2, fo. 71.
137 Welsh, *Select Sermons*, 263.
138 Durham, *Subtile Self*, 69-70. Emphasis in the original.
139 Gray, *Spiritual Warfare*, 29.
140 Wilkie, *A Sermon Preached at Mid-Calder*, 24-5.

the Christian soldier also provided lay hearers with a reservoir of spiritual behaviours that they could implement on in their own lives.

Conclusion

Scottish ministers' exhortations and applications of Reformed doctrines in Scottish sermons should not be understood as merely metaphorical or rhetorical devices. The chapter has argued that in applying doctrines to Scots' everyday lives, ministers constructed spiritual roles, consisting of scripts of spiritual behaviour which lay hearers were supposed to follow for preparation before conversion (how one was supposed to present oneself before God) and during conversion itself (how one was supposed to interpret and respond to the actions of the Holy Spirit). The following chapters in this thesis explore how these roles and their scripts of spiritual behaviour were articulated in lay Scots' conversion narratives and in the confessions of accused witches, with the aim to show how conversion-centred spirituality was articulated by parishioners - the sort who did not leave behind direct accounts of their own thoughts and feelings about conversion and Reformed spirituality more broadly.

Chapter Two

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Spiritual Roles Identities and Role Change in Lay Scots' Conversion Narratives

The previous chapter argued that in their sermons ministers constructed spiritual roles to help lay hearers make sense of conversion. This chapter goes beyond examining the pedagogical importance of the spiritual roles in preaching, to consider how they were described in lay Scots' conversion narratives. I argue, supporting the historiography of religion which has explored the ways in which early modern people described changes in their spiritual identities, that we can interpret conversion, at least how it was narrated, as a process of adhering to culturally coded spiritual roles that fostered transformation of identity within the person.[1] In addition, through making this argument, the chapter posits that spiritual role change, that is the process through which lay Scots described changes in their behaviour when adopting a new role, was an important part of Reformed conversion more broadly.

I. Conversion narratives and autobiography

This chapter draws on a range of conversion narratives between the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. For the most part, it focuses on autobiographical narratives, particularly diaries, written by lay Scots, although the chapter also discusses conversion narratives written by ministers who counselled laypeople during conversion crises. A principal question informing most studies on conversion narratives concerns how far these narratives reflected genuine conversion experiences. Are the narratives, in the words of Bruce Hindmarsh, 'the creation of a fiction or the reporting of facts?', or are they 'some kind of hybrid art that involves elements of both?'.[2] The consensus tends toward the latter: conversion narratives reflect the convert's or writer's *interpretations* of genuine experiences. For the historian, then, the original conversion experience is irrecoverable. The conversion narrative is the *de facto* account of the conversion experience. Thus, any attempt to understand the conversion experience must consider the narrative's warping

[1] Refer to pages 6-7 in the Introduction to the thesis for a discussion of religious historians' arguments concerning conversion as a means to transform a person's self and identity.
[2] D. Bruce Hindmarsh, 'Religious Conversion as Narrative and Autobiography' in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, eds. Rambo and Farhadian (Oxford, 2014), 343-368, at 359.

of that experience, even if one attempts to get beyond the narrative to look into the original experience or event recorded.

Scholars of conversion have tended to concentrate on how converts wrote about themselves when narrating their conversion experiences.[3] This idea is nowhere better expressed than in autobiographical narratives: that is narratives centred around one's own sense of self and one's own experiences, sometimes written at the time or many years later. Autobiography, however, presents many challenges. Because autobiography is first-hand testimony, one may assume that it can be considered 'innocent factual reporting: the history of a life by the one who lived it'.[4] But in fact, autobiography involves to some extent fictionalising one's own life. It demands that experience be organised and given structure. The writer becomes involved in an interpretative process of selecting what events from one's own life to write about; how to arrange such events; and how to write about themselves through language.[5] Thus, to an extent, historians can think of spiritual roles as linguistic devices, since they enabled lay Scots to articulate their spiritual experiences onto the page. However, while historians may acknowledge that some parts of lay Scots' conversion narratives were embellished or even fictionalised, nevertheless this is not to deny that some lay Scots really did believe that they had behaved in a certain way or had experienced what they had remembered and wrote down for posterity. By acknowledging that people in the past may have believed that certain things happened to them, such as communicating with the Devil or God, or feeling God and the Devil inside them, this does not mean that historians believe in the veracity of such claims.

Trying to understand early modern Protestant selfhood and identity as recorded in the form of an autobiographical narrative is challenging. Kathleen Lynch, working on Protestant autobiography in the seventeenth-century Anglophone world, has noted that 'the investigation of the self is unlike the investigation of any other object, each of which may be fully distinguishable from its observer. Selfrepresentation is an endeavor oriented around axes of separateness and wholeness' - in other words, how one thinks about one's self in everyday life may not reflect how one represents one's self in writing or other forms available to record the self; trying to interpret experience into writing is a hard and fractious process.[6] Parts of the self can become distorted through the action of recording,

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[3] Rambo and Farhadian 'Introduction', in *Religious Conversion*, ed. Rambo and Farhadian, 1-18, at 8.
[4] Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 3.
[5] Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 3; Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self*, 3-8.
[6] Kathleen Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World* (Oxford, 2012), 13.

and often what survives in conversion narratives are only fragments of a person's more complete self. In a similar vein, Tom Webster has noted the complexities of writing about the self. In the context of puritan diary-keeping in late Elizabethan and Stuart England, Webster has coined the phrase the 'technology of the self': a means 'by which the godly self was maintained, indeed constructed, through the action of writing'. According to Webster, 'The diary is a mechanism for turning the ephemerality of action and speech into an artefact […] diary-keeping produces a material site for the self which, in the case of the past self, is perhaps the only site'.[7] The self, then, is complex and how one presents one's self in writing may differ from how one thinks of one's self in everyday life. In this chapter, I am more interested in looking through the narrative, back to the point in time when the events narrated in the narrative are said to have occurred, and how the person, writing at the time, described their past self and identities when describing their spiritual experiences and encounters with God and the Devil.

Describing one's self in conversion narratives, as discussed above, involved some purposeful construction. David Mullan, who has worked extensively on early modern Scottish spiritual self-writings, has argued that 'self-imagining' is very much a part of the writing process. He argues that in writing about the self in the context of conversion, 'the genre [autobiography] depends upon a strong sense of the self as worthy of exemplification, or at least as representing a story worth telling, under the watchful eyes of a holy God'.[8] Webster has noted that the spiritual diaries of puritans reveal more than one self: there are multiple selves embedded in the narratives, along with multiple dialogues taking place, not just between God and the writer, but between the past self and the future self.[9] By highlighting the constructive elements of the self, this is not to suggest that the writers considered themselves the sole architects of conversion. On the contrary, as Hindmarsh has noted,

> Religious converts who narrate their [conversion] experience generally do so with an appreciation that their own sense of agency is only ever partial and that they have become who they are only because of and through other people, and, ultimately, through an agency more divine than human. The sense of personal agency in most conversion narratives is therefore contingent (as co-agency) rather than autonomous.[10]

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[7] Webster, 'Writing to Redundancy', 40.
[8] Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self*, 8.
[9] Webster, 'Writing to Redundancy', 49.
[10] Hindmarsh, 'Religious Conversion', in *Religious Conversion*, ed. Rambo and Farhadian, 358.

This is in keeping with the theological interpretation of Reformed conversion discussed in the previous chapter, in which converts were considered passive recipients of saving faith and grace (which must be accepted by the convert), but also contingent and active agents in working with the Holy Spirit after conversion to perform spiritual duties and repent during later spiritual experiences. The convert's agency can also be discerned when looking at preparation before conversion, in which the emphasis was placed on the convert readying themselves as much as possible for the potential reception of saving faith and grace.[11]

Thus far, I have considered arguments that identities were constructed through narratives. However, this thesis, while not challenging this established idea, is more concerned with the formulaic structure of the conversion narratives. It focuses on how the conversion process was represented in the narratives, and it asks to what extent the identities that were presented in the narratives, particularly descriptions of past identities, were based on wider sociocultural spiritual roles, especially the types discussed in the previous chapter.

I have a particular reason for considering the formulaic nature of conversion narratives. Because this thesis is concerned with comparing sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions, the aim is to establish broad similarities between them. Exploring the formulaic structure of conversion narratives and considering the importance of spiritual roles allows for generalisations to be made which can be applied to different contexts in ways in which analysing the minute, creative and literary elements of conversion narratives cannot. For instance, one cannot compare the narratological and linguistic aspects of conversion narratives with witchcraft confessions, because conversion narratives need to be understood as purposeful interpretations of conversion experiences over time in specific theological contexts. As Lynch reminds us,

> Time is a constitutive element of the written self. The autobiographical act is performed within historical time—with its inscriptions of beginnings, ends, and most significantly, explanatory turning points. The autobiographical narrative relies on memory, and appeals to the authority of experience. It seeks to assert identity by articulating coherence within the boundaries of an individual existence, and yet reaches for a beginning before individual consciousness and an end beyond narratability. It is inextricably enmeshed in—it is indeed an articulation of—the problem of being-in-time.[12]

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[11] The Reformed theological emphasis on human co-agency in the conversion process is discussed in Cohen, *God's Caress*, 92-3. Refer back to Chapter One of the thesis, 32-5, for a discussion of this idea.
[12] Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography*, 13-14.

As this thesis will demonstrate, accused witches did not engage in the theology of conversion which lay Scots who narrated their spiritual experiences took as the norm. Accused witches did not narrate their own spiritual experiences, nor did their confessions form part of a larger process of conversion over time. Instead, accused witches' confessions were standalone events, part of witchcraft interrogations designed to extract relevant legal information in order to build a case against them, where they were forced to speak about themselves at the moment of confession. What we can see, however, are parts of the conversion process, as it was described in conversion narratives, replicated in accused witches' confessions. It is the objective of this chapter to highlight a particular part of the process in the lay conversion narratives first in order to make the comparison with the witches' confessions later in the thesis: descriptions of spiritual roles and role change.

II. Narratives of the unregenerate role identity

The first spiritual role identity to consider is that of the unregenerate. In the previous chapter, I discussed how ministers understood this role to be a necessary part of preparation before conversion, otherwise known as law-work. The role was supposed to awaken converts to their inability to achieve salvation through good works – that they could not fulfil God's law – and to encourage them to submit and surrender themselves to God. Once converts had experienced saving faith and believed that they were effectually called, ministers framed this role as a means to remind converts of their more sinful nature, should they backslide and commit sin, and to remind them of their need to turn back to God during later soul troubles. I argued that ministers attached specific scripts which made up this role to help converts to identify as unregenerate. Scripts included seeing one's self as utterly depraved, naturally inclined to commit sin and susceptible to demonic obsession, that is the Devil's ability to tempt the human heart and mind (although as this chapter will discuss further, obsession could also be considered a sign of godliness). While spiritual roles provided lay hearers with the necessary scripts of spiritual behaviour to internalise in their own lives, they did not always internalise them in ways in which ministers intended. For example, even though most lay Scots, writing about their conversions many years later, came to see past experiences of unregeneracy as

necessary parts of conversion, at the time, when writing about their sinful identities, many interpreted their spiritual behaviour as signs of damnation.

The first script of spiritual behaviour associated with the role identity of the unregenerate that some lay Scots echoed from sermons, and described in their conversion narratives, was the failure to combat and resist the internal temptations of the Devil, who filled their minds with evil and blasphemous thoughts. While demonic temptations were supposed to be a sign of godliness, nevertheless during the terror phase of conversion or soul trouble, many understood demonic experiences to be a sign that they were one of the damned, since ministers, as discussed in the previous chapter, claimed that unregenerates were more prone to succumbing to demonic temptations.[13] Some lay Scots claimed that the Devil influenced their words, thoughts, and actions which at the time they understood as behaviours that cemented their reprobate status; it was only later, when writing their conversion and soul trouble with hindsight, that most interpreted them as part of a wider test of faith.

During her teenage years in the early seventeenth century, Mistress Rutherford, a godly woman from Edinburgh, recorded thinking that the Devil would come and take her away soon after she had lost her parents and grandmother. She also claimed on many occasions that he would 'cast into her mind' thoughts of unbelief, making her believe that 'there is no God'.[14] Later in life, she wrote that the Devil convinced her that she had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost – an unforgiveable, eternal sin by which there was no hope for salvation.[15] The Devil's temptations proved extremely taxing, to such an extent that she even considered taking her own life because she thought she was a hypocrite pretending to be godly. Mistress Rutherford wrote, 'Then Satan temted me to put violent hands in my self, making me think it so far from sin, that it would be good service to God to execut his justice on such a traitor that looked so well favoured'.[16]

For Mistress Rutherford, then, the Devil remained a constant adversary throughout her life, reminding her of the depravity of humankind. Others described similar encounters, linking demonic assaults with sinful thoughts. In his diary, Alexander Brodie of Brodie described the terrors of Catharine Hendry, a woman who lived in his

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[13] Yeoman, 'Archie's Invisible Worlds Discovered', 173.
[14] 'Mistress Rutherford's Conversion Narrative', ed. David George Mullan, in *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society*, *XIII* (Scottish History Society, 2004), 146-189, at 155.
[15] 'Mistress Rutherford', ed. Mullan, 165.
[16] 'Mistress Rutherford', ed. Mullan, 166.

parish and about whom he became concerned in May 1655. Hendry was experiencing the terrors of conversion and sight of sin, and she told Brodie that she sometimes felt 'a foul [bird] on her breast' and 'a hound at her back, a hand and words utterd to persuad her to blaspheam'.[17] She also claimed to have seen the Devil as a cat with fiery eyes. John Stevenson, a farmer in Carrick, composed a deathbed letter to his family in the early eighteenth century, which also described a similar experience of being tempted by the Devil. He described a period of soul trouble in the late 1670s, when the Devil flooded his mind with fearful thoughts:

> [The Devil] violently suggested to my soul that some time or other, God would suddenly destroy me as with a thunder clap. Which so filled my soul with fear and pain, that every now and then I looked about me to receive the divine blow, still expecting it was a coming; yea, in many nights I durst not sleep, lest I had awakend in everlasting flames.[18]

In 1710, a schoolteacher, known only as James L…k, wrote about a particularly bad period of soul trouble in February 1677, where the Devil caused him to despair. After attending church on a Sabbath, he began to 'feel a great darkness in my understanding', and the 'heart to be hard like a hard black stone', which he thought was caused by the Devil laying 'seidge against me'.[19] This fear caused a prolonged period of despair, where he felt 'the heart rebelling against God', and that 'in evry thing the heart in its imaginiations to be only evil'.[20] During this period of despair, he wrote about how the Devil suggested to him that he had 'committed the unpardonable sin, and was past recovery', and he even wrote that he thought he 'was posessed with a devil'.[21] It is unclear whether James L…k was referring to demonic obsession or characterising his own innate depravity through the phrase 'posessed with a devil', or whether he actually thought he was possessed by *the Devil*.

Thoughts and feelings of sin and unbelief were not always interpreted as coming from the Devil directly, though as I discussed in the previous chapter, ministers often emphasised the relationship between humankind and the Devil. Some lay Scots who narrated their conversion experiences parroted the sermonic script centred around

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[17] Alexander Brodie, *The Diary of Alexander Brodie of Brodie 1652-1680 and of his Son, James Brodie of Brodie*, ed. David Laing (Spalding Club, 1863), 132.
[18] *Select Biographies*: *Edited for the Wodrow Society, Chiefly from Manuscripts in the Library of the Faculty of Advocates*, ed. W.K. Tweedie, 2 vols. (Wodrow Society, 1847), ii, 426-7.
[19] Robert Wodrow, *Analecta: Or Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences mostly relating to Scotch Ministers and Christians*, 4. vols (Glasgow, 1842), i, 241.
[20] Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, 241.
[21] Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, 242.

interpreting their sinful thoughts as originating from humankind's natural, depraved state. This convinced them of their damnation. Ministers preaching the doctrine of human depravity often claimed that humans were inclined to commit, and think of, sinful acts simply because of their fallen, postlapsarian nature.[22] In 1633, an unnamed woman from Dunrobin echoed this: she complained of her 'naughty' heart as being the sole reason for her estrangement from God and her perceived damnation. She often lamented in her spiritual diary, 'o baran wreth [wretch] o misbeliveing worm o naughty pervers hart whom descevs'.[23]

Agnes Paton, daughter of Robert Paton, minister of Terregles, described how she fell into a 'time of deadness', where the Devil tempted her 'to most grievous sins, casting into my mind the vilest suggestions', which, at the time, she 'thought was just the workings of my heart'. These sinful thoughts made her 'lose all hope and to think I was utterly gone and ruined'.[24] Elizabeth Blackadder, daughter of the merchant, John Blackadder, recalled a moment of despair during her early childhood in 1665-6 where she remembered that she had 'very early convictions […] of sin and terrors of hell', which made her unable to sleep and to 'sorrow and weep under the fear of God's wrath'.[25] During her initial conversion sometime in the early 1670s, Henrietta Lindsay, Lady Campbell, recorded how, after moving to Inveraray, then under the ministry of Patrick Campbell, the Lord awoke her to law-work, where she 'was helped to see sin to be exceeding sinful, and the desert of it terrible'. With hindsight, Lindsay recorded that she saw this terror phase as part of her conversion, but she also recorded that at that time she felt 'at times to fear the earth would open and swallow up such as [one who] deserved no less'.[26] And in 1674, a seventeen-year-old Lilias Dunbar described a time during her teenage conversion experience when she had been infected with smallpox, which she interpreted as punishment from God because she 'had no religion'.[27] Later in her life, during a period of soul trouble, she would sometimes 'be tormented with thoughts that such a vile sinner as I could not but be consumed by such an infinitely holy God; for by the light of his Spirit I was convinced that the thoughts of my heart were only evil and that continually'.[28]

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[22] Refer to Chapter One of the thesis, 36-41. See also Brock, *Satan and the Scots,* 47-8, 60-2.
[23] NRS, Religious diary, wherein the writer [resident in neighbourhood of Dunrobin] bemoans her naughty deceitful heart at considerable length, GD237/21/64, fo. 2r.
[24] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 356.
[25] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 386.
[26] *Women's Life Writing,* ed. Mullan, 208.
[27] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 138.
[28] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 185.

In some conversion narratives recorded by ministers acting as spiritual counsellors to soul-troubled lay Scots, they recorded the sinful behaviour of those they counselled and described their internal states by recording their external behaviour, such as physical gestures, verbalisations and so on. However, as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, early modern people, though they sometimes recorded external behaviour, tended to concentrate on the internal states which lay behind and caused such expressions of external behaviour, since in Reformed spirituality it was the orientation of the will towards sin that mattered, less than the actual sins committed.

The unregenerate taking part in external sinful behaviour is perhaps best expressed in the conversion account of Jean Livingston, daughter to John Livingston, laird of Dunipace, who was convicted and executed for the murder of her husband, John Kincaid of Wariston, in July 1600.[29] Her account, unlike many of the others discussed in this chapter, is not a self-writing, but was recorded by the Edinburgh minister, James Balfour, who acted as a spiritual counsellor during her trial. Balfour went to visit Jean in prison shortly after she had been arrested. She was going through the terrors of conversion, but unlike most godly laypeople – who often described internal sinful thoughts and feelings – Jean was acting akin to someone suffering from demonic possession. According to Balfour, she disdainfully taunted 'every word of grace that was spoken to her […] impatiently tearing her hair, sometimes running up and down to the house like one possessed'.[30] Jean even threw his Bible against the wall. When Balfour engaged in spiritual counselling with Jean, trying to convince her that God would not give up on her, she proved unrepentant, mocking him, exclaiming that what she had been told was 'Trittle Trattle'. And when threatened with reprobation if she continued in this manner, she said 'I regard not… I will die but once. I care not what be done with me'.[31] Despite this apparent stoicism, Balfour prayed for Jean, but she continued to be unrepentant and defiant. Balfour eventually lost his professional patience, and charging her with murder, he told he that she would change tune after sentencing, and then left,

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[29] James Balfour, *A Memorial of the Conversion of Jean Livingston, Lady Waristoun, with an Account of Her Carriage at Her Execution, July 1600*, ed. C. K. Sharpe (Edinburgh, 1827). For modern studies of Jean Livingston's conversion, see Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 96-7; and Keith M. Brown, 'The Laird, his Daughter, her Husband and the Minister: Unravelling a Popular Ballad' in *People and Power in Scotland: Essays in Honour of T.C. Smout*, eds. Roger Mason and Norman Macdougall (Edinburgh, 1992), 104-125.
[30] Balfour, *Memorial*, ed. Sharpe, 2.
[31] Balfour, *Memorial*, ed. Sharpe, 3.

admitting in his memorial that he had got nowhere in helping to ease her conscience at that time. Jean, as is discussed later, eventually experienced conversion.

Similarly, what also reinforced the role of the unregenerate in the eyes of some laypeople who narrated their conversion experiences was the noticeable absence of God's presence within them. This could manifest in several ways. I have already discussed sinful behaviour, and the connections between behaviour, the Devil and the idea of human depravity, but the absence of God's presence could also be described in relation to the inability to perform certain spiritual duties. One such duty, whether interpreted as a direct assault by the Devil or stemming from man's natural state, was the inability to pray. When wrestling with the fear of unbelief, Mistress Rutherford wrote that she was 'oftimes driven from prayer, for fear it [unbelief] should seize on me, in the time of it [praying]'.[32] These thoughts proved so strong that she 'durst not read a word on my Bible, thinking that if I had thought it reading his Word, I had done with mercy'.[33] She went on to write, with hindsight, how the Lord rescued her from this despair. Moreover, in 1640, Mary Rutherford struggled with spiritual deadness on her deathbed after the death of her cousin and attender, Mary McKonnel, when she travelled from Edinburgh to London.[34] She was especially troubled with thoughts that God had deserted her, and she was convinced that she was a hypocrite who could not warrant God's attention. Throughout the terror phase on her deathbed, Mary Rutherford complained of not being able to access Christ through prayer. When her attender-turned-spiritual-counsellor, Archibald Porteous, asked her to pray, she cried 'I cannot, I dare not pray; noe access can I gett to my Lord by Prayer!'.[35] This heightened her fear of damnation.

Katharine Collace, a godly woman in Edinburgh, and daughter of Francis Collace, minister of Gordon, wrote about the problem of prayer during her conversion and soul troubles. She experienced a relatively untraumatic initial conversion experience at the age of fourteen in 1649, but was frequently afflicted with soul troubles later in life. Shortly after her initial conversion, she began to turn 'less diligent in secret prayer', which she claimed was 'an inlet to backsliding'. She achieved some fleeting sense of assurance of salvation through 'public hearing [of the Word]'. However, this sense of security did not

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[32] 'Mistress Rutherford', ed. Mullan, 162.
[33] 'Mistress Rutherford', ed. Mullan, 167.
[34] Archibald Porteous, *The Spiritual Exercise of Soul, and Blessed Departure of Dame Mary Rutherford Lady Hundaly, and Mary M'Konnel*, ed. John Breadfoot (Edinburgh, 1745[?])
[35] Porteous, *Spiritual Exercise*, ed. Breadfoot, 7.

last long, since she was 'cured of that distemper [false security]', not by thinking of Christ, but selfishly 'resting on the suitableness of the purpose to my present case, which was a notable deceit'. This caused her to 'turn as remiss in prayer as formerly', which subsequently made her 'question if I had closed with Christ'. Looking back on this period of soul trouble, she recognised that this was just a part of her conversion: 'I think all these discoveries [temptations to turn away from prayer interpreted as tests of faith] were but to lead me to him [Christ]'.[36] At the time, however, her inability to pray contributed to her understanding of reprobate behaviour. And James Nimmo recalled when in 1676 at the age of twenty-six, he fell ill with fever for eight days. After recovering, he began to contemplate the evil of his ways and desired to petition his case before the Lord, 'butt att last could not gett so much as on[e] word to speak in prayer in maney atempts'. His inability to mourn and petition before the Lord through prayer caused him to fall 'into such dreadfull terrors that was insuportabl', where he felt that 'the earth should open & swallow me up to hell qwick [alive]'.[37]

Each lay Scot recorded experiencing conversion in different ways. However, there was frequent overlap in terms of how each identified with the role of the unregenerate: the fact that nearly all identified as depraved, corrupted and described interpreting demonic obsession as signs of damnation, supports this idea. How far laypeople's descriptions of the role of the unregenerate reflected genuine conversion experiences remains irrecoverable, but lay Scots' accounts of unregeneracy demonstrates that they adopted and applied the role and its scripts in their own lives, but in ways in which ministers did not always intend.

III. Narratives of the penitent sinner role identity

The conversion process fostered total spiritual transformation in the convert; it changed their identity and sense of self; it changed their words, thoughts and deeds. As discussed in the previous chapter, ministers expected those who experienced law-work to turn to God through Christ. They wanted unregenerates to submit and surrender themselves to God and to sorrow for sin as preparation for conversion. In doing this, ministers argued

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[36] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 43.
[37] James Nimmo, *The Narrative of Mr. James Nimmo: Written for his own Satisfaction to Keep in Some Remembrance the Lord's Way Dealing and Kindness towards Him, 1654-1709*, ed. W.G. Scott-Moncrieff (Scottish History Society, 1889), 7.

that the convert became a penitent sinner: they became awakened to their natural state. The penitent sinner, however, was not confined to first-time converts only. Ministers also emphasised that the scripts of submission to God and sorrow for sin also applied to those converts who had received saving faith, but had fallen back into sinful thoughts and behaviour. Like those experiencing law-work for the first time, effectually called converts were to sorrow and surrender themselves to God through 'godly sorrow'. Godly sorrow differed from legal sorrow, in the sense that it was 'occasioned by one's sins', but 'sprang from awareness in faith of God's grace and goodness', rather than concern over one's sense of personal guilt.[38] However, by repenting, the convert who had experienced faith became a penitent sinner again and re-performed the previous scripts of sorrow for sin, and submitting and surrendering to God.

Perhaps the most important script which demonstrated a change in the role of the unregenerate to penitent sinner was expressing remorse for sin and for offending God's majesty. The ways in which lay Scots articulated this script of sorrow for sin in their conversion narratives were very much in keeping with how ministers discussed it as a behaviour in their sermons. In the conversion narratives, the lay Scot described sorrow for sin in communication with God through prayer, but such admissions could also be expressed to a minister during counselling. Balfour, for instance, noted Jean Livingston's new penitent behaviour when she wept 'sometimes for sorrow weeping'.[39] This was further evident at her execution, where she mounted the scaffold and delivered a short confession at each of the four corners to the people who watched her execution:

> The occasion of my coming here, is to shew that I am, and have been a great sinner, and hath offended the Lord's Majesty, especially of the cruell murdering of mine own husband, which, albeit I did not with mine own hands, for I never laid mine hands upon him all the time that he was in murdering, yet I was the diviser of it, and so the committer. But my God hath been alwise mercifull to me, and hath given me repentance for my sins; and I hope for mercy and grace at his Majesty's hands, for his dear son Jesus Christ's sake; and the Lord hath brought me hither, to be an example to you, that you may not fall into the like sin as I have done; and I pray God for his mercy, to keep all his faithfull people from falling into the like inconvenient as I have done; and therfore, I desire you all to pray to God for me, that he would be mercifull to me.[40]

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[38] Von Rohr, *Covenant of Grace*, 73; see more generally Cohen, *God's Caress*, 106-8.
[39] Balfour, *Memorial*, ed. Sharpe, 8.
[40] Balfour, *Memorial*, ed. Sharpe, 32-3.

In publicly repenting before her execution, Livingston demonstrated that she had become a penitent sinner and showed that she was no longer an unregenerate.

Mistress Rutherford's despair and fear of damnation became so great that she began not to linger on sinful thoughts, but rather 'the offence I had done to God'. She wrote how 'my heart brake within me for offending him'. She claimed that she had an 'unsatiable desire for faith and repentance and mercy', but conceded that she 'found none of them to my sense', that is that the Holy Spirit had not infused her with feelings of faith and mercy.[41] The unnamed woman from Dunrobin lamented about her 'naugthy wandering hart' and she petitioned that God might help to put it 'in an right fram', so that she might be 'helped how to hear and to practis'. She begged God to open her eyes so that she might 'sie the evel of sin', and to 'stand in awe and not sin and ofend the[e] as alas I have don heartofor';[42] and to smite 'her hard heart', so that she might 'wip day and night' for 'the mersis' that she felt she did not deserve.[43] By this, the unnamed woman from Dunrobin believed that, like Mistress Rutherford, she was unworthy of God's mercy and destined to reprobation.

Later during her life, Katharine Collace, after her main conversion, recorded falling into a period of soul trouble in 1667 where she fell sick and was 'to search sins both past and present'. She recalled how she 'saw sin its own colours and was bruised [i.e. hurt] under the sense of it'.[44] After hearing sermons by Alexander Moncrieff in early 1684, which opened her eyes to the necessity of law-work and to her natural sinful state, Elizabeth Blackadder claimed how sin and humankind's natural, corrupted state was 'dishonouring to a holy God'.[45] In July 1690, Lilias Dunbar claimed, after experiencing a brief period of soul trouble and subsequently surrendering herself to Christ, that she was made to 'repent that I was so discontented and unsubmissive', and she was determined 'to bow to whatever sovereignty would do with me and mine'. She wrote that 'I was made to offer up myself and mine to be a sacrifice to him in any way he pleased'.[46] She later received his mercy and achieved assurance of salvation for some time. In the above narratives, we can see how laypeople reiterated the sermonic scripts of sorrowing for sin

[41] 'Mistress Rutherford', ed. Mullan, 167.
[42] NRS, GD237/21/64, fo. 1v.
[43] NRS, GD237/21/64, fo. 3v.
[44] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 56.
[45] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 388.
[46] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 174.

and dishonouring God when describing their spiritual experiences at earlier points in their lives.

Verbally expressing an interest in Christ, either in communication with the divine or in communication with a spiritual counsellor, reflected a change in the role identity of the lay Scot: from unregenerate to penitent sinner. Jean Livingston had spent much of her early imprisonment appearing impenitent and demonstrating to James Balfour, her counsellor, unregenerate behaviour. However, her conversion began shortly after her trial on 3 July 1600, where she told a friend that 'I find… a spark of grace, and a spark of life beginning in me', after she had been found guilty. After she was taken back to the tolbooth, Balfour this time persuaded Jean to join him in prayer. She said a prayer which she would repeat hundreds of times: 'Lord, for mercy and grace at thy dear Son, Jesus Christ his sake, to the glory of thy mercy and safety of my silly [weak] soul'.[47] A further change was seen in Jean's behaviour on the following day, 4 July, when she told James Balfour as he was leaving the tolbooth after several hours of counselling, 'You will not leave me now, till you give me to my God; and I will be given out of your hands to God, in special'.[48] He departed, promising to return soon with more news. The combination of changes in language, relationships and expressions contrasted with her previous role as the unregenerate that she had performed when she had first been warded in Edinburgh two days earlier. No longer was she pacing up and down the tolbooth; no longer was she mocking God or the doctrines of Reformed theology or refusing to engage with Balfour's counselling. Now she was doing the opposite: she was demonstrating physically an internal feeling that she was ready to reconcile with God and face up to the sin and crime that she had committed.

Mary Rutherford was troubled with thoughts that she was a hypocrite who could not warrant God's attention. Archibald Porteous advised her not to worry about spiritual perfection, but to simply express an interest and want for Christ. After several days of soul troubles, Mary Rutherford's behaviour changed when Porteous overheard her verbally expressing her interest in Christ through prayer:

> Art thou nou come, sweet Love? Thou art welcome to this poor Cottage, unworthy of such a Guest. Foul, filthy, black bride am I for such a fair Lord, even the King of Glory! Long have I sought thee, and dear has thou, my Lord, bought me; and nou, seing we are mett, we shall never part again![49]

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[47] Balfour, *Memorial*, ed. Sharpe, 7.
[48] Balfour, *Memorial*, ed. Sharpe, 9.
[49] Porteous, *Spiritual Exercise*, ed. Breadfoot, 20.

In May 1655, Alexander Brodie of Brodie wrote in his diary that Catharine Hendry 'groand under the apprehension of feare and God's anger', and he claimed that she groaned 'want of Christ in the hart and desertion'.[50] In June 1677, James Nimmo wrote that during his early terrors of conversion, he got such 'joy, in the discoverie of Christ, God man & mediator', and that even during all his former experiences of despair he 'still wanted [lacked] that free & full discovery of Christ in his natur & offices, & particularlie as our brother and only mediator'.[51]

Stevenson, recalling a period of soul trouble in 1678, described how hearing the presbyterian John Cunningham preach on the subject of human depravity outside the churchyard of Kirkmichael made him 'go away longing to be reconciled to God, and resolved never to be easy till it were so'.[52] And Elizabeth Blackadder, writing in 1700, recalled a moment during a soul trouble when she was an adolescent and under 'a deep sense of sin and wrath' weeks after hearing sermons by Alexander Moncrief. During previous periods of despair and terror, she had called on the spiritual support of God, but she had always relapsed back into sinful behaviour. A change came when she went out 'alone and thus in deep soul distress', fell down before God and begged for his aid again. This time, however, she claimed that he answered her prayer which enlarged her heart to 'fully accept him as he is offered in the gospel', which caused her to cry out, 'My God, my God'. She conceded that before this experience, she 'durst not for a world dare to claim an appropriate interest in Christ'.[53] Expressing a desire to be closer to God was an important script of the penitent sinner and an important part of preparation for conversion.

Surrendering and submitting one's self to Christ was arguably the most important script of the penitent sinner, since doing so showed that they took seriously their inability to earn salvation through good works. Such expressions could be made in prayer. Jean Livingston prayed that 'O Lord, ther is no worthynes in me, but only of evil; but thou hast possessed me, O Lord, by thy holy spirit. Lord grant that I may be thine, above all things'.[54] She repeated this to Balfour, claiming that 'Ther is no temptation of the Devil

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[50] Brodie, *Diary*, ed. Laing, 133.
[51] Nimmo, *Narrative*, ed. Scott-Moncrieff, 11.
[52] *Select Biographies*, ed. Tweedie, ii, 418.
[53] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 388. The phrase 'My God, my God' can be found in the Psalms.
[54] Balfour, *Memorial*, ed. Sharpe, 18.

can now get entry in me, because the Lord possesseth me'.[55] Towards the end of her spiritual diary, the unknown woman from Dunrobin wrote of her realisation of the dangers of trying to improve her spiritual condition on her own without submitting to the Lord. She pleaded in supplication to the Lord to give her 'the continuall presans of thy blised spiret', so that

> [the] filthe hart of myn may be clenged from its polucion and that lusts and coruptions may be brunt up and al that exalts it self (in my hart) against thy majestie may ge[t] the dead strok and thy majestie only exalted ther […] O that it wer the laguish [language] of my hart non bot C[h]rist non but C[h]rist.[56]

Lilias Dunbar experienced this type of surrender during a later period of soul trouble when she had conflicting views concerning her ability to improve her spiritual state by listening to ministers preach. She contemplated the sinfulness of her natural state, and as discussed in the first section, was overcome with thoughts of reprobation. However, she decided to go without preaching for a while, in which she struggled with law-work, questioning 'how could Adam's sin ruin my soul?'.[57] It was revealed to her through prayer how she 'had forgot God' but she now realised that 'nothing proceeded from me, that nothing was done by me'. The act of surrender came when she petitioned God through prayer:

> So that when I would address God in prayer, being filled with fears, I could say nothing sometimes, but lay groaning before him, who had proclaimed himself by the name of merciful and gracious, and many times could utter no more but that word of mercy, mercy, believing that therein alone the help of my destroyed soul was to be found.[58]

Stevenson wrote of a period of soul trouble during the 1680s, where he 'found the clouds returning after the rain' and had a 'deep sense of my lost state by nature'. However, this time he knew he could not change his spiritual state himself, and he became convinced that to overcome despair 'that [there] was no other name by which I could be saved than the name of Jesus Christ'.[59] James L…k, the schoolteacher, described how his early terrors of conversion and law-work had made him realise that only Christ was able to save him, and although his terrors continued to confound him and he still felt distanced from Christ,

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[55] Balfour, *Memorial*, ed. Sharpe, 19.
[56] NRS, GD237/21/64, fo. 13r.
[57] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 186.
[58] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 187.
[59] *Select Biographies*, ed. Tweedie, ii, 421.

he wrote that 'yet I had my eye towards him as my only releife'.[60] Even though he still believed he was damned, this expression of surrender to Christ proved pivotal in James's conversion and future confrontations with the Devil: from this moment on, he described how the Holy Spirit changed his behaviour and gave him the strength to resist demonic temptations.

Another way in which laypeople could express surrender and submission to God was through making and recording a personal covenant with Christ.[61] In comparison to the expressions of surrender and submission made in prayer, the personal covenant also involved a renunciation of the self's ability to earn salvation.[62] However, it was different in three key respects. Firstly, the personal covenant was a binding contract between God and the individual and was centred on notions of allegiance and godly purpose. Secondly, personal covenants, though they could take place on the spur of the moment, and were internal dialogues between God and the individual, were considered and well thought out decisions: they tended to be recorded some time after the lay Scot had reflected on a period of spiritual despair.[63] And thirdly, the scripts of submission and surrender to God or Christ as expressed through personal covenants did not just serve as preparation for conversion, they could be interpreted as markers of spiritual progress and could give lay Scots feelings of assurance and feelings that they were a member of the elect.[64]

In 1649, Katharine Collace covenanted with God at the end of her adolescent conversion experience. After she had thoughts of despair, she recorded how on her journey from Edinburgh to Ross, her 'soul was drawn to the Lord Jesus, and I had entered into an everlasting covenant with him'.[65] She added:

> I had an heaven in my soul for three days uninterrupted, at which time I had a clear discovery of all the privileges that I enjoyed since, and as much as I was able to bear of what I should enjoy hereafter […] I was able clearly to discern an universal change wrought in my soul […] Grace was so vigorous in my soul that I thought it was a resemblance of what I should enjoy hereafter.[66]

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[60] Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, 242.
[61] See *Protestant Piety in Early-Modern Scotland*, ed. Mullan, 71-77, for primary source examples of Scots personal covenants.
[62] Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self*, 318, 338.
[63] Wilby, *Visions of Isobel* Gowdie, 404; and, *Women's Life-Writing*, ed. Mullan, 13.
[64] Yeoman, 'James Melville and the Covenant of Grace', in *Older Scots Literature*, ed. Mapstone, 576-7.
[65] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 44.
[66] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 44-5. See Hebrews 13:20, and numerous passages in the Hebrew scriptures for use of the word covenant.

Later in life she renewed her covenant when she experienced soul trouble while living in Ross. Spiritual deadness returned which caused her to believe 'all former experiences useless'.[67] However, she described how the Lord 'manifested his mercy, and gave me a breathing space', where her heart 'was made willing to close with his will, providential and revealed'.[68] As discussed, falling back into sin and experiencing soul troubles were not signs of damnation. Soul troubles were often seen as tests and trials of faith and doubt, since no one could discern for sure their final spiritual status; certainty of election tended to be a sign that one was overconfident and not elect at all. Thus, by renewing their covenant, lay Scots could gain some assurance of salvation.

At Elgin in May 1677, towards the end of her teenage conversion experience, Lilias Dunbar entered into a personal covenant with God. She recorded: 'The Lord who is the Almighty by his power made my soul to close with the Lord Jesus wholly in the terms that the gospel holdeth forth'. She added, 'I got Christ Jesus to be to me the end of the law for righteousness, to comfort me inwardly, under the disconsolate condition outwardly'. She described how this decision gave her a sense of assurance: 'Now I cannot pass by without observing the wisdom and goodness of God to me, in choosing that day and time for my deliverance out of the hands of all mine enemies, that I might serve him without fear'.[69]

Stevenson entered into a personal covenant with Christ after hearing John Welsh preach on Corinthians 2:20 at Craigdowhill. He wrote, after hearing Welsh's sermon, how he 'needed this reconciliation and day's man [i.e., Christ]'. He continued:

> I with all my heart and soul did cordially and cheerfully make the offer welcome, and without known guile, did accept and receive glorious Christ on his own terms […] and did give myself away to the Lord in a person and perpetual covenant never to be forgotten.[70]

In March 1684, towards the end of her initial conversion experience, Elizabeth Blackadder recorded making a personal covenant. She described how after being granted mercies on several occasions when she experienced despair, 'I was then convinced that it was my duty to dedicate myself to the Lord in some solemn manner'. She recorded that on 29 March 1684 she 'deliberately enter[ed] into a solemn engagement to be the Lord's', where she

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[67] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 52.
[68] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 52-3.
[69] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 141.
[70] *Select Biographies*, ed. Tweedie, ii, 418.

did 'most heartily renounce all thine own righteousness, entirely laying hold upon the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ; utterly despairing of all other wayes for salvation'.[71]

Agnes Paton's conversion and spiritual troubles revolved around her constantly renewing her covenant with Christ nearly every year to recapture feelings of assurance. Beginning in 1691, after hearing her father, Richard Paton, minister of Terregles, preach, she covenanted with Christ aged eleven or twelve. Despair, however, soon returned and she relapsed into sin.[72] This pattern continued throughout her youth, and her short spiritual diary ends with her renewing her personal covenant twice in 1697, aged seventeen or eighteen:

> Barnweel, March 19, 1697. I gave myself away to God as I could and accepted of Christ as I could on his own terms, and had a piece of sweet time as I thought. Written by me, Agnes Paton […] June 21 1697. At Craigie communion I gave myself away to God, and accepted of Christ, resolving to go through good report and ill report with him.[73]

In 1705, the schoolteacher, James L…k, wrote of an occasion at communion, where he had been suffering for some time 'in a dead, backsliding case and condition'. While previous fits of despair during earlier soul troubles had caused him to remain trapped in law-work, this time he wrote that the Lord 'in some measure stirred me up to repentance and renueing covenant with him'. His behaviour changed, where God 'in some measure loosened my bands', and caused him to make a submission of godly purpose, by praying 'doun the overthrou of Satan's kingdome, and the oposers of the kingdome of Christ'. Such an action gave him a sense of assurance, as after hearing a sermon on Luke 2:10 during the same communion, James recorded that 'at the close of that sermon (if I be not deceived) the heavens were boued doun, and a dore of access opened'.[74] Prior to this, as with most of the other individuals discussed in this chapter, he had already described himself as unregenerate, lamenting his natural estate and being preoccupied with demonic obsession. Thus, his recording and renewing of a personal covenant was not a metaphorical feeling, it was an expression that reflected a change in his role identity and behaviours.

Articulating the scripts of submission and surrender to God, either expressed through prayer, a personal covenant, or to a minister who acted as a spiritual counsellor,

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[71] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 389.
[72] See first section on the role of the unregenerate.
[73] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 357.
[74] Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, 253. James L...k does not record the first time he entered into a personal covenant.

served to demonstrate that one was fully prepared as possible to passively receive faith and grace, and to show that their spiritual identity had changed. By surrendering to God completely, the convert accepted the failure of solely human agency and instead accepted working through divine agency. Surrendering also represented a shift of 'work' from an effort to earn salvation to a symptom of salvation by grace. And, by recording a personal covenant, through which the convert made a firm obligation to surrender and submit themselves to God, they could achieve some sense of assurance and temporary confirmation of their election.

The scripts of submission and surrender to God, and sorrow for sin, that made up the role of the penitent sinner contrasted with the scripts of obsession and depravity that made up the role of the unregenerate. This contrast between the various behaviours of the unregenerate and the penitent sinner represented role change: while the unregenerate lamented their depraved nature and were primarily concerned with trying to discern their final spiritual destination without divine help, the penitent sinner turned themselves to God completely, waiting to receive sparks of faith and grace from the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, it should be stated that recording role change did not mean that one had firmly experienced conversion. As highlighted above, lay Scots were continually searching for signs of assurance throughout their lives, and many recognised feelings of assurance as temporary and fleeting.

IV. Narratives of the Christian soldier role identity

As I discussed in the previous chapter, in their sermons ministers discussed the Christian soldier: the individual, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, who actively opposes sin, the corrupted self and the Devil's temptations. I argued that exhortations in sermons were meant to encourage laypeople to undergo self-examination and prepare for conversion. But I also argued that ministers' scripts of resisting the Devil and fighting against the corrupted self and sin were not simply rhetorical strategies to motivate converts. By attaching scripts of behaviour to the role of the Christian soldier, ministers provided laypeople with practical guidance, since these scripts allowed converts to gauge how far they had converted and what stage of conversion they were currently experiencing. For example, while the failure to battle demonic obsession was to be interpreted as a sign of unregeneracy, God's condemnation and even damnation, successful attempts at resisting

the Devil were to be interpreted as signs of godliness and evidence of the Holy Spirit working through the convert.

How did lay Scots articulate these scripts in their conversion narratives? One of the behaviours which made up the role of the Christian soldier was using prayer as a weapon against the Devil's temptations.[75] While the inability to pray convinced some individuals that they were damned or still an unregenerate, successful attempts at prayer, usually petitions to God to help drive away the Devil, were interpreted as signs of God's mercy. Mistress Rutherford described many times experiencing demonic temptations, and, in some cases as discussed above, succumbing to them. However, at other times she recorded resisting demonic temptation through prayer. Mistress Rutherford, recalling a time when she was suffering from demonic temptation when listening to a sermon inside the kirk, petitioned 'God to come and deliver me from the Devil and to receive me into his favour'.[76] A short time after, she went to the kirk again, where she felt the 'Devil to have come and take me away'. However, rather than reflecting on thoughts of spiritual despair, Rutherford wrote that 'I besought the Lord to deliver me from him [The Devil] that I might have peace in his house'.[77] She claimed that for a period of time after, she was not troubled with demonic temptations. As discussed above, in her early seventeenth-century diary, an unnamed woman from Dunrobin often lamented about her depraved nature and the Devil's temptations. While much of what survives of her diary only documents her terrors of conversion and soul trouble, rather than giving us an overall sense of conversion, she writes of the need to petition God to help her transform her behaviour so that she can combat demonic temptation and thus help her move from a state of despair to a state of assurance:

> when shal I know what it is to live an lyf of fath thou knows my weaknes and how buse [i.e., busy] Sathen is sturing me up to destrust thy majestie and to despair of thy mersie; o Lord give me stranth to resist him and arme me against his tamtasions when he transformes himself as an angell of light.[78]

Katharine Collace wrote frequently about her inability to pray. One day during her adolescent conversion in 1649, she claimed that 'Satan in his usual way opposing [prayer],

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[75] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 243-7, discusses the importance of prayer in spiritual warfare; Nathan Johnstone also discusses the importance of combating the Devil through prayer. See Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism*, 3.

[76] 'Mistress Rutherford', ed. Mullan, 152.

[77] 'Mistress Rutherford', ed. Mullan, 153.

[78] NRS, GD237/21/64, fos.7r-7v.

to the breaking of my body; the Lord sensibly rebuked him, and I got the victory and present health, to the admiration [astonishment] of onlookers'. She claimed that she was 'never more troubled after that manner', but still found 'Satan a great enemy to prayer'.[79] Moreover, Henrietta Lindsay, on the road from attending a communion service at Killallan in the early 1680s, experienced 'anguish and perplexity', and doubted whether Christ was real. Seeking to overcome this terror, she described how 'I did endeavour in the forenoon […] being admitted to solicitude in seeking light and clearness'. She prayed to God: 'of his blessed presence quhich can best foil Satan's assaults and dissipate the boldest suggestions, especially quhen shining on his gracious word quhich is the best weapon of defence'.[80] Lindsay welcomed this relief, as she was spiritually rescued for a time.

Stevenson described many occasions when he used prayer to drive away the Devil. During one particularly bad period of soul trouble, when Stevenson was sorely assaulted by the Devil and confined to his bed due to sickness, he questioned his assurance. As with most spiritual turning points in conversions, rather than giving into temptation and despair, he entreated that his wife 'go out and cry to God' on his behalf, whilst he 'cried to God' in his bed, so as to request 'that Satan might neither be permitted to dwell in my heart nor distract my head'.[81] Stevenson wrote that his weapon of prayer succeeded, as 'I immediately was not only healed in spirit but in body, my fever was rebuked as well as the enemy'.[82] Terror and despair, however, soon returned.

Some individuals recorded physical confrontations with the Devil who appeared as an apparition or illusion.[83] Mistress Rutherford wrote of a time where she thought the Devil came to her in her aunt's bedroom. She wrote that she could not see him, but felt him take a 'full grip of me by the wrist'. The Devil tried to tempt her to lose faith in God by making her think that 'whatreck [i.e., what does it matter] of me that God will be dishonouered'. But the Lord 'sweetened the heart' and encouraged her to fight against the Devil's temptation, causing her to say 'The Lord hath broken thy power, Satan', and immediately 'the grip is litten go, and a noise in the floor as [if] part of the house had fallen, and was there removed'. Mistress Rutherford wrote that after this encounter, she

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[79] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 45.
[80] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 221.
[81] *Select Biographies*, ed. Tweedie, ii, 429.
[82] *Select Biographies*, ed. Tweedie, ii, 430.
[83] On the intellectual theory of apparitions, see Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford, 2007), 204-235.

was 'so void of fear' and from this time onward she was 'not troubled with those tentations'.[84]

Elizabeth Blackadder recalled a time during her early childhood terrors when she was still suffering from convictions of damnation. She described a time when she was taken ill in bed, which caused her to think that she was going to die, where she thought that the Devil appeared to her in the form of 'a great black dog'. Fearing that the Devil had come to take her away to Hell, Blackadder petitioned the Lord, saying 'I fear no enemy but thyself [i.e., God]'. The next morning the Devil had disappeared and she got an 'ease of my outward trouble and had a very deep sense of the Lord's mercy'.[85] In retrospect, Blackadder acknowledged that the apparition or being she saw was not the Devil in corporeal form, but an illusion caused by her spiritual weakness. She conceded that though this experience of God's strength in helping her to resist temptation and mercy eased her condition, she later relapsed into sinful behaviour. Henrietta Lindsay, Lady Campbell, was thought to have seen the Devil in the shape of a 'black lyon roaring', while praying. She allegedly claimed, however, that there 'appeared likewise a chain about him, which perfectly commanded him'.[86] She understood this mercy as a reward from God for persevering with prayer, which she confessed previously that the Devil had made her 'to fright [her] much from secret duty'.[87] Resistance in the face of temptation was an important behaviour of the Christian soldier.

Some directly interpreted their actions of resisting the Devil as signs of assurance. In her spiritual diary, Katharine Collace noted later in her life, after recovering from a sore sickness, how the Devil was never able to tempt 'to question my interest in [Christ]'.[88] Further adding to her list of recorded mercies, Collace wrote that no matter how hard the Devil worked to lead her astray, 'the Lord wonderfully prevented [the Devil] by his mighty power in the use of means of public and private'.[89] After James Nimmo's initial terrors of conversion in the mid-1670s, he began to try to turn away from things abhorrent to God, and assessed his spiritual growth through his ability to resist the Devil. Nimmo recalled a time when he left the service of the laird of Park for Alexander Brodie of Brodie aged

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[84] 'Mistress Rutherford', ed. Mullan, 179.
[85] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 387.
[86] Robert Wodrow, *Analecta: Or Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences mostly relating to Scotch Ministers and Christians*, 4. vols (Glasgow, 1843), iii, 196-7.
[87] Wodrow, *Analecta*, iii, 197.
[88] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 73.
[89] *Women's Life Writing*, ed. Mullan, 75.

twenty-eight in 1682, he suffered demonic obsession but was spiritually strengthened to such an extent that 'Satan did nott gett me so easelie brangled out of my peace, as sometimes befor'.[90] Later that year, dwelling in Lethen with his new spouse, Elizabeth Brodie, daughter to Alexander Brodie of Brodie, Nimmo recalled how the Devil tempted him with 'maney sore tentationes of worldly thoghts to draw my heart from God & dewtie'. He described how he was weak to resist without divine help, so he 'plead & cry[ed] to the Lord for help', whereby the Devil's assaults continued, but 'the Lord helped me to resist'.[91]

Sometime in the early 1690s, Stevenson reiterated this interpretation of resistance when faced with demonic temptation. He travelled to seek the counselling of Samuel Stewart, then minister of Girvan, Ayrshire. However, Stevenson claimed that he found none of the counselling helpful, and demonic temptation soon returned, where the Devil tempted him to think that his assurance was unfounded. However, this time, not only did he resist such temptation, he actually overcame it:

> Then I told the enemy that now I could read my evidences, and that I was in covenant with God, to which God himself was witness on Craigdowhill […] After the enemy found me assisted to read my evidences, and that God by his Spirit had let me see the grace that was freely given me, Satan departed from me for a season, and God filled my soul for some time with joy and peace in believing.[92]

On one occasion, much later in his life, when praying in the kirk at Kirkoswald, Ayrshire, Stevenson claimed that he heard 'the enemy made a noise on the loft just above'. Stevenson claimed he looked up and said to him 'he should not make me search after him any more'. He added, 'The Lord whom I served did rebuke him, and he troubled me no more'.[93] James L…k, the schoolteacher, recorded that during his initial terrors of conversion he went to see his local minister for spiritual counselling. According to James, the minister encouraged him to 'run to God by prayer' and to resist and protest to God against temptation, praying that 'God would make a Christian' of James. This advice worked, as James subsequently wrote that although his temptations were not fully removed,

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[90] Nimmo, *Narrative*, ed. Scott-Moncrieff, 21.
[91] Nimmo, *Narrative*, ed. Scott-Moncrieff, 38.
[92] *Select Biographies*, ed. Tweedie, ii, 434.
[93] *Select Biographies*, ed. Tweedie, ii, 461.

> The Lord wonderfully strengthened me to resist; the Lord made me to set my face toward himself, and Satan and my lusts and corruptions fought against me, but the Lord girded me with strenth for warr'.[94]

In 1695, much later in life, he recorded another period of soul trouble where he hoped to confirm previous thoughts of assurance when attending church. However, he recalled when he arrived how he instead questioned his previous thoughts of assurance:

> my former light was like to evanish in darkness […] and temptations come upon me thick and threefold, soe that I thought all was wrong with me […] and that instead of getting the Devil cast out, moe of them wer come in.

He described how the Lord discovered to him 'a heart-evil I did not soe weel discern before; which, indeed, was the Devill's bush under which he covered himself', wherein the Lord turned him to 'hate, and gnash my teeth upon that which was some way pleasing before'.[95] James, for much of his previous life, had been vexed by thoughts of the Devil and unbelief. This time, however, he wrote that:

> But Jesus Christ hath trod Satan under his feet, and hath triumphed over principalitys and pouers, and will tread Satan under the feet of the weakest believer; and soe, let none be discouraged to be a souldier to Jesus Christ, for their victory is win already to their hand![96]

He added that on the following Monday he heard a sermon on Philippians 1:6, which encouraged him to think that he was one of the saved: 'which sermon found me out, though I was in the deepths, and made me to hope that it would be better with me; and soe it was'.[97]

The role of the Christian soldier, unlike the two roles of the unregenerate and the penitent sinner, was not part of the preparation phase of conversion. While humans could sorrow for sin and lament on their spiritual condition, converts could not fight the Devil without faith and spiritual support from the Holy Spirit. Thus, this role served not to prepare one for conversion, but to assure one of their salvation. While some lay Scots described resisting the Devil in slightly different ways, such as Mistress Rutherford, Elizabeth Blackadder and Henrietta Lindsay – all of whom described physical confrontations with the Devil – nevertheless all described following the spiritual scripts

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[94] Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, 243. 'Girded me for strength for war'. Psalm 18:39.
[95] Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, 249.
[96] Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, 249-50. Ephesians 6:12 of the King James Bible reads, 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.
[97] Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, 250.

attached to the role of the Christian solider. This suggests a wider adherence to spiritual warfare preaching. Moreover, as with the actions of surrendering and submitting one's self to Christ, recording experiences of fighting and resisting the Devil represented role change within the layperson. Contrasting with the unregenerate, no longer did lay Scots describe themselves as completely helpless, worthless, and destined for hell - now they described themselves as warriors serving under Christ.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the descriptions of spiritual role identities in the conversion narratives allowed lay Scots to make sense of and write about conversion. Thus, to some extent we can think of them as linguistic devices, helping people to translate experience onto the page. But equally, we should not be too quick to disregard the descriptions of spiritual role identities, and the scripts of spiritual behaviour associated with them, as solely linguistic. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, while historians and literary scholars argue that some aspects of conversion narratives were constructed or embellished, they also posit that there is no reason to doubt that some lay Scots really did believe that they had behaved in the ways that they described in their narratives. In other words, that they narrated internal behavioural interaction with God and the Devil. Therefore, such descriptions of role identities in conversion narratives were not just metaphorical calls to introspection or simply linguistic devices used to explain past conversion experiences, they were perceived accounts of past spiritual behaviour that resulted in radical changes in lay Scots' understandings of themselves and their identities.

There were, however, some exceptions. Not every lay Scot described all the roles during conversions and soul troubles. Some, during their childhood or adolescent conversion, did not record behaving as a penitent sinner until they experienced soul troubles later in life. Others, such as in the case of the unknown woman from Dunrobin, did not leave behind complete accounts of their conversions and soul troubles. A few described physically interacting with the Devil, rather than solely describing mental temptations. Despite these exceptions, lay Scots described going from unregenerate to penitent, with the Christian soldier role providing some temporary assurance at times after receiving faith, which suggests that most followed the cyclic theological and pastoral structure of conversion that ministers established in their sermons.

Historians of religious conversion have explored the bottom-up, linguistic elements of conversion narratives. This chapter has pointed to numerous examples in lay Scots' conversion narratives where the author recorded instances of spiritual behaviour that they understood as divinely given, and which caused them to experience changes in their identities. It has argued that in narrating their conversions, lay Scots followed, whether consciously or subconsciously, scripts of spiritual behaviour that made up spiritual roles that were preached from the pulpit. This is important for subsequent chapters in the thesis. Since through seeing how Reformed conversion was described through roles and scripts of spiritual behaviour, this chapter, and the one that preceded it, establishes a comparative framework to consider how the same roles and scripts were articulated by other lay Scots in Scottish society, and thus how they expressed pietistic ideas. The thesis now turns so examine accused witches' confessions, to consider how the same scripts and pietistic ideas were expressed in the environment of the witch trial. This raises interesting questions about how far historians should view witchcraft interrogations as extensions of official spiritual culture and in what ways other lay Scots, who did not record their own thoughts and feelings, articulated pietistic ideas.

Chapter Three
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The Spiritualised Devil

In her 1981 landmark work, *Enemies of God*, Christina Larner commented on what she called the 'spiritualized' Devil, that is, the Reformed theological idea of the Devil as the tempter to sin, usually discussed by ministers in their sermons and recorded in lay Scots' conversion narratives.[1] As discussed earlier in this thesis, there were two key concepts that made up the spiritualised understanding of the Devil. Firstly, obsession: the external delivery of demonic temptation, despair and general misery. In sermons and conversion narratives, demonic obsession was usually understood as the Devil's attempt to tempt the mind and heart. And secondly, human depravity: humankind's corrupted state, and its natural affiliation with the Devil.[2] Ministers usually preached on these topics when reminding lay hearers about their unregenerate state. Larner claimed that the spiritualised Devil did not apply to the Scottish witch trials, mainly because accused witches often described a physical Devil who bore no resemblance to the type of spiritualised Devil discussed in preaching and wider godly life. As Larner commented,

> Neglect of witchcraft as a regular issue [in preaching and pastoral practise] went along with a highly spiritualized view of the Devil which bore only the most *vestigial* resemblance to the meikle black man who waylaid his female followers in barns, hill tops, and cross-road gallows.[3]

For Larner, what shaped both accused witches' and the interrogators' understanding of the Devil was the demonological concept of the demonic pact - the theological inversion of the covenant with God.[4] Accused witches, sometimes facing extreme poverty and social distress, were understood to have been tempted by the Devil's promises of protection and the ability to practise harmful magic in exchange for renouncing their soul and Christian faith. The demonic pact in Scotland was believed to be formed through two key rituals. Firstly, accused witches had to renounce their baptism, which was sometimes

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[1] Larner, *Enemies of God*, 160-1.
[2] For a discussion of the theological and pastoral importance of depravity and demonic obsession, refer back to Chapter One, 36-45.
[3] Larner, *Enemies of God*, 160. Emphasis added.
[4] Larner, *Enemies of God*, 172. For further discussion on the demonic pact as an inversion of the covenant with God, see Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons*: *The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), 529; and Clark, 'Protestant Demonology: Sin, Superstition and Society, c. 1520-1630' in *Early Modern European Witchcraft*: *Centres and Peripheries*, eds. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (Oxford, 1990), 45-81.

achieved by placing one hand on the head and the other on the sole of the foot and giving everything in between to the Devil. And secondly, and only if the witch was female, the pact was normally cemented through sex. Drawing on older Scots traditions of manrent and bonding, Larner argued that the demonic pact initiated 'a standard feudal relationship, reflecting standard assumptions about all significant human bonds in this period'.[5] For Larner, then, it was notions of physicality, exchange of service and negotiation that underpinned the demonic pact, and thus accused witches' and interrogators' wider understanding of the Devil in the context of the witch trials.

Larner's 'standard feudal relationship' argument has been challenged by Lauren Martin, who argues that the demonic pact – a heterosexual, contract-like union between the witch and the Devil – was conceptually akin to 'irregular marriage' in Scots law.[6] For Martin, ideas of bonding and manrent could partially explain the pact, but they could not account for its heterosexuality. Others have supported Larner's original interpretation of the demonic pact. P. G. Maxwell-Stuart has argued, in the context of the mid seventeenth-century witch-hunts, that 'the encounter [with the Devil] is not so much one of temptation as an offer of better employment'.[7] And more recently Sierra Dye has emphasised the importance of speech and words in accused witches' verbal contracts with the Devil, arguing that by verbally contracting, that is, promising to serve the Devil, 'the woman or man *became* a witch'.[8] Though historians have revised or expanded upon Larner's original idea of the demonic pact, all have considered the witch's relationship with the Devil through ideas of physicality, exchange of service or negotiation.

Historians of Scottish witchcraft have paid little attention to exploring how Reformed ideas of obsession and human depravity were received and discussed in the context of accused witches' confessions. Though some of Christiana Larner's original arguments have been challenged or revised, her original emphasis on the importance of the demonic pact in forming the accused's and their interrogators understanding of the Devil remains unshaken. Recent scholarship, however, has begun to take seriously the reception of wider demonic belief in the witch trials. Michelle D. Brock has argued that

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[5] Larner, *Enemies of God*, 148.
[6] Lauren Martin, 'The Devil and the Domestic', 81.
[7] P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of Witches*, 226.
[8] Sierra Dye, "Devilische Wordis': Speech as Evidence in Scotland's Witch Trials, 1563-1736' (University of Guelph, PhD thesis, 2016), 249. Emphasis in the original. See also Dye, 'To Converse with the Devil? Speech, Sexuality, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland', *International Review of Scottish Studies* 37 (2012), 9-40.

even though 'cases of witchcraft may have displayed greater emphasis on the physicality of the Devil than did other contemporary sources, but this did not render them incompatible with the demonic belief found throughout the sermons, diaries, treaties and commonplace books of early modern Scotland'.[9] She has also argued that 'Scotland featured a rather composite Devil produced by the active blending of Reformed theology with traditional notions of the Devil's physicality', where 'at least by the beginning of the seventeenth century, and probably earlier, the rampant activities of the Devil in the world would have been familiar to all Scots of all sorts who were exposed to frequent and passionate sermons on the topic [of the Devil]'.[10]

More work on the reception of the Devil's ability to affect the hearts and minds of accused witches has been carried out by scholars working on early modern England and Germany. In her recent study of the Devil and emotions in early modern England, Charlotte-Rose Millar argued that even though the Devil maintained a very physical presence in witchcraft narratives, 'it is also important to remember that this same physical Devil was nearly always portrayed as a tempter'. Focusing specifically on the portrayal of English demonic familiars in witchcraft pamphlets, Millar has suggested that

> the familiar also embodies new Protestant emphases on the Devil's power, most noticeably as a source of mental temptation. […] These demonic creatures created a personal bond between themselves and the witch. Through this bond, familiars acted as personal tempters, perhaps mirroring in some ways the Protestant emphasis on a person's own individual struggle with Satan. Through the physical form of the familiar, the witch's internal struggle against the Devil and his temptations was externalised and made manifest in a small, tangible, demonic creature.[11]

Drawing on the scholarship of Darren Oldridge and Nathan Johnstone, both of whom have commented on the importance of demonic temptation in wider English Protestant spirituality, Millar has demonstrated that the Protestant emphasis on obsession was not confined to erudite godly circles, but was received in English witchcraft narratives.[12] In exploring the overlap between the demonological idea of witchcraft and the Protestant emphasis on the Devil as a source of mental temptation, Millar has argued that 'witchcraft

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[9] Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 166.
[10] Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 149, 165.
[11] Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil and Emotions*, 36.
[12] For more on demonic belief in wider English spirituality, refer to Darren Oldridge, *The Devil in Tudor and Stuart England* (Stroud, 2010); and Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism*.

narratives present a set of varied and ambiguous understandings of the Devil' that highlight both his corporeality and his ability to inflict mental temptation.[13]

More recently, Laura Kounine, examining several witchcraft cases in early modern Germany, has emphasised the importance of the Devil's mental temptations, particularly in two key case studies of accused witches' confessions. Analysing the case of Magdalena Horn, an accused witch from Cannstatt, Württemberg, in 1565, Kounine argues that Horn understood witchcraft as an 'internalized crime'. Kounine points out that she articulated her battles with the Devil as '*Anfechtungen*' (spiritual troubles).[14] In her first confession, before she was interrogated by the authorities, Horn claimed that she was 'vexed day and night', and her main focus was on internal dialogues and disputes with the Devil; it was only after she had been interrogated at length by the authorities that she started to describe the Devil in physical form, in line with stereotypical witchcraft doctrine.[15]

Kounine also examines the case of Dorothea Rieger, an elderly woman put on trial for witchcraft in 1678 in Besigheim. Her case was similar to Horn's, tried 113 years earlier. Dorothea Rieger, like Magdalena Horn, articulated her understanding of the Devil as an internal tempter of the mind and heart. Reiger claimed that the Devil had 'used her sins'; she linked suicidal thoughts to the Devil's temptations; and 'she conceived of her conscience as belonging to the Devil'.[16] Kounine argues that not only did Doroetha Rieger's confessions resemble *Anfechtungen*, but she did not confess to witchcraft, nor consider herself an accused witch. Moreover, like many of the Scottish Reformed Protestants discussed in the previous chapter, Rieger, as a Lutheran, understood the Devil's internal assaults as part of spiritual warfare: 'Rieger's confessions suggest an understanding that, as people were innately sinners, there was a constant battle to be fought against the Devil'.[17] For Rieger and Horn, and their interrogators, witchcraft was as much about one's internal relationship with the Devil, his temptations and one's own depravity, than the demonic pact and his physical presence.

This chapter builds on the recent scholarship interested in the Devil's ability to affect accused witches' hearts and minds, and argues that alongside the exchange of service and negotiation ideas of the demonic pact and the Devil's physical presence,

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[13] Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil and Emotions*, 182.
[14] Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, 141.
[15] Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, 138, 142-3.
[16] Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, 166-7.
[17] Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, 167.

accused witches and their interrogators drew on the Reformed emphasis of the Devil as the tempter to sin – the spiritualised Devil who has traditionally been associated with pious laypeople who narrated their conversion experiences and ministers, not accused witches. In making this argument, I am not suggesting that newer Protestant ideas of the Devil as the tempter to sin replaced or dominated more established ideas of the Devil and demonology in the witch hunts. As Tom Webster has argued in the context of early modern England, 'substituting a more complex and subtle spiritual understanding of the Devil for the more physical being of medieval Christianity also risked confusing unsophisticated parishioners'.[18] Nathan Johnstone has also argued that the attempt to instil a new understanding of the Devil as a spiritual tempter was not an outright attack on tradition, but involved a 'subtle religious realignment of emphasis'.[19] And in the context of colonial New England, Elizabeth Reis has suggested that although ministers and parishioners often conceptualised the Devil in different ways – with ministers 'preaching about Satan as an ethereal and intellectual presence' and parishioners perceiving 'his presence as more physical and immediate' – 'there was no rigid divide between elite and popular ideas about Satan'.[20] Ministers, parishioners and even more literate and pious laypeople, were aware of different understandings of the Devil.

Moreover, by focusing closely on how the spiritualised Devil was portrayed in the witch-hunts, I do not claim that accused witches suddenly became pious – in other words, that the accused understood the theological significance of obsession and human depravity to the same extent as the lay Scots discussed in the previous chapter, many of whom better understood the theological significance of such ideas. At best, my analysis of the confessions demonstrates that accused witches were *aware* of these pietistic ideas, and that they possessed the knowledge and language to articulate them.

My aim is not to look for pious accused witches, but to highlight more fully the connections between wider spiritual belief in sermons and diaries on the one hand with witch-hunts on the other – to show how more theological and pastoral spiritual ideas were received and discussed in the confessions. Beginning with this chapter, the subsequent chapters in this thesis intend to show how accused witches and their interrogators

[18] Webster, 'Protestantism and the Devil', 422.
[19] Johnstone, *Devil and Demonism*, 1-2.
[20] Reis, *Damned Women*, 57.

articulated established spiritual roles drawn from a shared, wider spiritual Reformed culture to which all types of Scots had access.

To begin with, the chapter first considers the script of human depravity, and it explores how accused witches articulated this in their confessions of entering into a pact with the Devil. Secondly, the chapter turns to the idea of the inferred Devil, that is the Devil as a marginal or background presence. Thirdly, the chapter turns to the importance of obsession and mental temptation in the confessions. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the blurring between demonological witchcraft and Reformed spirituality, concluding that some of the accused discussed in this chapter might have identified themselves as unregenerate and sinful.

I. Accused witches and depravity

Through regular preaching, early modern Scots were taught that they were depraved and allied with the Devil through their fallen nature. In the first two chapters of this thesis, I highlighted the importance of the doctrine of human depravity in preaching and in godly conversion narratives, arguing that the doctrine served a pastoral function in allowing laypeople to identify themselves as depraved and sinful, and that doing so was an important expectation of the unregenerate, that is, the theological and pastoral idea of one unconverted, still in a natural, corrupted state.[21]

Like the lay Scots whom I examined in the previous chapter, accused witches, particularly in the mid seventeenth century, also described and internalised this script of thinking about themselves as depraved and sinful. When interrogated about their relationship with the Devil and whether they had made a pact with him, some of the accused also told their interrogators about their depraved identities. The first case concerns Catharine Walker from Brechin, one of many accused witches investigated during the national panic of 1649-50, during which the Kirk party – a particularly radical subset of Covenanters – had seized power and sought to wipe out ungodliness.[22] Walker was named as a witch on 29 December 1649 by Janet Couper, who told the presbytery of Brechin that Walker was one of 'those who shew her the way to the Divell […] and sayes that shee saw [Catharine Walker] and the Divell together upon the watter syd besid the

[21] Refer to Chapters One, 36-46, and Two, 64-70, for a discussion of the theological and pastoral importance of depravity in preaching and conversion. See also, Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 27.
[22] For an overview of the 1649-50 witch-hunt and the Covenanting regime's involvement, refer to Hughes, 'Witch-Hunting in Scotland, 1649–1650', 85-102.

wast [i.e., west] mill'.[23] Walker was imprisoned in April 1650. Numerous attempts to bring her to confession between April and June 1650 failed, despite the Devil's mark being found on her body by infamous witch-pricker, John Kincaid. By June 1650 the town was nowhere closer to bringing Walker to confession, as on 27 June the provost and bailies told the presbytery that 'Catharin Walker suspect of witchcraft hath been delt with by the ministers of this burgh and others of the presbitrie, to the end shee might have been brought to a confession, nevertheless no confession is hade from herselff'.[24]

The presbytery recommended that Walker be investigated further. Walker never made a formal confession of witchcraft before the presbytery, but she made several confessions of her sinful behaviour, and her relationship with the Devil, to various men from the town who either guarded or had visited her at various points during her imprisonment. The men went on to inform the presbytery of what she had confessed to them. One man, John Liddell, told the presbytery that Walker had said to him that 'iff she hade not been apprehended […] it might be shee hade gone longer in the Divells service, and thanked God that shee was so soon apprehended'. And another, George Mathie, claimed that after Walker had been pricked for the Devil's mark by Kincaid, she told him that 'she thanked God that the town of Brechin had taken her f[o]r shee would have comitted m[or]e sins iff shee had not been apprehendid'.[25] According to these second-hand confessions, Walker was aware of her own innate nature and natural affiliation with the Devil.

To what extent did these second-hand confessions reflect Walker's original words? It should be noted that these men were not witchcraft interrogators, since witchcraft interrogators would have told the presbytery that Walker had made a pact with the Devil if she herself had confessed to this. However, none of the men who claimed to have heard Walker confess mentioned any stereotypical demonological material. Most of their statements to the presbytery reflected ambiguous thoughts about sinfulness and feelings of guilt. Such idiosyncratic details – not all of which were helpful in building a legal case against Walker – suggest that Liddell and Mathie did at least report back to the presbytery *some* of Walker's actual words. Walker never confessed to the demonic pact, but she did confess to murdering her two young children. By the late summer of 1650 the

[23] NRS, Presbytery of Brechin Minutes, 1639-1661, CH2/40/1, fo. 81r.
[24] NRS, CH2/40/1, fo. 93v.
[25] NRS, CH2/40/1, fo. 94r.

witch-hunts across the central lowlands were coming to an end. Her case may have been dropped and Walker integrated back into the spiritual community, her Christian identity tainted, but intact.

Two more cases demonstrate depravity interwoven into confessions of the demonic pact. The first case concerns Bessie Lacost, an accused witch interrogated during the witch-hunt at Stenton in Haddingtonshire, near the end of the Cromwellian occupation of Scotland in 1659.[26] Lacost confessed to the justices of the peace on 23 January 1659 at Dunbar that 'she was a meiserable creature and oneworthie [unworthy] to leive for leiving so long in a direct league with the Devil'; she went on to confess to making a pact with the Devil several years earlier.[27] We do not know what became of Lacost. She was investigated further by the justices of the peace, and they recommended that she be sent to Edinburgh for sentencing.

The second case concerns Elizabeth Graham, one of the Dalkeith witches accused during the national panic of 1661-2 that swept the central lowlands just after the restoration of Charles II.[28] On 11 July 1661, Graham was delated by Janet Watson as a witch. The same day, William Calderwood, the minister of Dalkeith, brought Graham to where Janet Watson was being warded to confirm the accusation. Again, Janet Watson delated Elizabeth Graham to her face as one who 'come to her in her house and desired her to goe to the meitting' – a witches' sabbath at 'newtowne dein head'.[29] Graham was warded and pricked for the Devil's mark by John Kincaid. Once pricked, she was interrogated by William Calderwood and the bailie, William Scott, the next day on 12 July. Graham confessed to them that around a year and half before, she being angry and refusing to let her son pray, the Devil appeared to her in her own house 'clothed in grein cloths', and asked her to enter into a pact with him, which she agreed to do. In typical demonological fashion, Graham confessed to 'lay[ing]' with the Devil and 'renunce[ing] her baptisme'.[30] She went on to confess that she attended the witches' sabbath at 'newtoune dein' with Watson and many others whom she also named.

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[26] For more on the witch-hunts of the late 1650s, refer to Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of Witches*, 35-158.
[27] NRS, High Court of Justiciary Processes, 1659, JC26/26/2, item H.
[28] On the 1661-2 witch-hunt, see Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 81-97; Levack, 'The Great Scottish Witch Hunt of 1661–1662', *Journal of British Studies* 20 (1980), 90-108. For more on witch-hunting in Dalkeith during the 1661-2 hunt, see Anna Cordey, 'Reputation and Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century Dalkeith', in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters*, ed. Julian Goodare (Basingstoke, 2013), 103-20.
[29] NRS, High Court of Justiciary Processes, 1661, JC26/27/9, item 10.
[30] NRS, JC26/27/9, item 10.

Graham was interrogated a further six times between 13 July and 2 August at Dalkeith, during which time she appeared penitent and often retracted and then reconfirmed her confession of making a pact with the Devil. One part of her many confessions, however, remained consistent: the Devil originally appearing to her after she had denied her son's request to pray. The day before her trial, Graham confessed on 2 August that 'she was never with the Devill, that the Devill never lay with hir, that she never entered in a paction with the Devil […] that she never renunced her baptisme'. She did confess, however, that 'she saw the Devill [in] grein cloaths, that she thought it wes the Devill, because she had refused her sones prayer'.[31] Later that day she was interrogated again where she retracted this previous confession and confessed that she *did* enter into a pact with the Devil and attended all the witches' sabbaths at Newton dam. Graham was convicted on 3 August 1661 and executed three days later.

Graham's confessions, like those discussed above, demonstrate the ability of accused witches to incorporate the sermonic script of human depravity into their confessions. While the demonic pact certainly played a larger role in the above confessions, the idiosyncratic narratives of human depravity that informed part of these confessions suggest that accused witches' understanding of the Devil was not simply imposed upon them by their interrogators, nor came completely from folk belief. Rather, their understanding of the Devil was informed more subtly by the influence of wider spiritual ideas - ideas that originated in ministers' sermons and which encouraged people to view themselves as depraved, corrupted and one of the unregenerate.

As I discussed in the last chapter, during the terror stages of conversion lay Scots who narrated their conversions sometimes internalised feelings of depravity to such an extent that they recorded attempting to take their own lives and thinking that they were reprobate. This was an example of the ways in which laypeople went off-script and internalised the role identity of the unregenerate in ways in which ministers did not intend. For ministers, while obsession and depravity were important in awakening Scots to their natural sinful condition, terror and despair were stages to be passed through, not dwelt upon and trapped in. Ministers taught that laypeople should not dwell on thoughts of reprobation.[32] Some accused witches, interrogated about their relationship with the Devil, incorporated stories of attempted suicide and depravity into their confessions, thus

[31] NRS, JC26/27/9, item 5.
[32] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 27-39.

blurring witchcraft doctrine with Reformed spirituality. Perhaps the best-known case of a suicidal witch is that of Anna Tait, her trial held at Haddington in January 1635.[33] Tait was arrested in December 1634 and detained in the tolbooth because on many occasions she had tried to take her own life by 'hanging [herself] in [her] courch [kerchief or head-dress]'.[34] While imprisoned she continued to try to take her own life 'by putting a knife [to her] throat'; even when her hands were bound and her feet put in stocks to restrain her, still she tried relentlessly to harm herself by banging her 'heid to the wall and stokkis'.[35] Her interrogators asked her why she wanted to kill herself, to which she told them that she had murdered her first husband, John Coltart and her pregnant daughter from her second marriage to William Johnstone, Elizabeth Johnstone. In the tolbooth, Tait also confessed to her interrogators to having sex with the Devil two weeks before she was arrested and having consulted with him about how to carry out her ungodly deeds.

Rab Houston has recently argued that the Devil was evoked selectively in the Scottish witch trials, and that references to demonic temptations in the context of suicide were shaped by the interrogators to fit standard legal expectations centred on the demonic pact. According to Houston, Scottish suicides did not need to act at the instigation of the Devil:

> The act of taking their own lives was sufficiently ungodly, unnatural, impious, unworthy, desperate, and unlawful. Whether Satan's temptation was held to be the ultimate cause of despair, the most commonly stated proximate reason for suicide was a wrongful personal choice.[36]

Commenting on Anna Tait's case, Houston suggests that the link between the Devil and suicide was forged by her proven witchcraft. He writes: 'the mention of the Devil was because she was indicted for witchcraft'.[37] Indeed, Tait never confessed to entering into a demonic pact, although the court ultimately thought that she had made a pact with the Devil, since they convicted her of witchcraft. I agree with Houston that what prompted Tait's suicidal thoughts were her feelings of guilt associated with the events surrounding her husband and daughter. But even though the Devil was only mentioned because she

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[33] 'Witchcraft Cases from the Register of Commissions of the Privy Council of Scotland, 1630-42', ed. Louise A. Yeoman, in *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society*, *XIII* (Scottish History Society, 2004), 223-65, at 233; see also R.A. Houston, *Punishing the Dead?: Suicide, Lordship, and Community in Britain, 1500-1830* (Oxford, 2010), 296-7.
[34] 'Witchcraft Cases', ed. Yeoman, 262.
[35] 'Witchcraft Cases', ed. Yeoman, 263.
[36] Houston, *Punishing the Dead?*, 300.
[37] Houston, *Punishing the Dead?*, 296.

was being interrogated for witchcraft, as I discussed in the previous chapter, connecting suicidal thoughts with the Devil allowed Scots of all sorts to more easily identify themselves as sinful and depraved. Perhaps telling her interrogators about her relationship with the Devil in the context of her suicidal impulses allowed Tait to identify more easily as sinful and depraved, and thus unregenerate.

The idea that by attributing suicidal thoughts to the Devil the accused could more easily identify themselves as depraved and sinful can be seen in the confession of Barbara Erskine. Erskine was involved in the witch-hunts at Alloa in Clackmannanshire between 1658 and 1659. Erskine was named as a witch by Margaret Taylor and Bessie Paton in their confessions at Alloa, made to the minister of Stirling, Matthias Simpson, in the summer of 1658. Erskine was imprisoned and interrogated eight months later on 14 March 1659, once the witch-hunt had already developed.[38] She confessed to her interrogators in the tolbooth at Alloa that she had first encountered the Devil eighteen years before, when Margaret Dutchell – the first accused witch to be investigated by the authorities in the summer of 1658 – 'brought the Devill to hir house', and where he came to 'hir bed and lay above hir heavier then two men'.[39] She went on to confess that she had been at a witches' sabbath at the 'cuning yaird' (Cuninghar, a stretch of high ground near Alloa), where the Devil asked her to enter into a pact with him:

> the Devill shooke hands with the said Barbara in the cuning yaird [Cuninghar] and said to hir, Will yow be my servant and shoe said, I will: And the Devill put his hand on hir head and the other hand on hir breast and said, I will have a promise of yow, and shoe said, quhat promise will you have of me: And he said to hir, yow must renunce your baptisme and forsaik God and Christ Jesus and be my servand: And the Devill did promise hir monye but shoe refused it and sould have none of his mony at all: And he would have hir bund to him both soule and bodie for ever, and shoe did so.[40]

Though the scribe recorded that she had confessed to accepting the Devil's offer of paction ('and shoe did so'), he also noted in the margins that Barbara Erskine 'denyed' this part of her confession. Interestingly, Erskine supplied her interrogators with an account of depravity and suicide. She confessed that after she had been named as a witch by Margaret Taylor and Bessie Paton, the Devil visited her and told her 'to drowne hir

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[38] For a recent narrative of the Alloa witches, refer Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of Witches,* 91-107, 203.
[39] I thank Julian Goodare for allowing me to use his transcription of the original MS source: British Library, Egerton MS 2879, fos. 1-16, at fo. 4r.
[40] BL, Egerton MS 2879, fo. 4r.

self in the Watter of Doven'.[41] She agreed and went 'to the watter and the Devill did goe in first and shoe after him, and plunged lyk a dog besyd hir in the watter'.[42] Her attempt was interrupted, and she was rescued by a passer-by, William Miller, who helped her get to dry land.

By consenting to the Devil's demands and acting on her suicidal impulses, Erskine internalised her own depravity. It is interesting to note that this idiosyncratic narrative about depravity, suicide and the Devil was brought to the fore through the questioning process but was not closely connected to the demonic pact when compared with Anna Tait's confession, since unlike Tait, Erskine initially confessed but later retracted, suggesting that even when interrogated for the crime of witchcraft, she was still able to provide her interrogators with different descriptions of the Devil and his temptations.

Some accused witches incorporated depravity in their confessions by highlighting the depraved natures of other accused witches whom they mentioned to their interrogators. Many claimed to have partaken in immoral acts with others at witches' sabbaths.[43] However, more specific to the concerns of this chapter are those who incorporated depravity into their confessions by claiming that they were tempted into the Devil's service not by the Devil himself, but by other men and women – men and women who performed the Devil's function as the tempter. On 8 October 1633, Alison Dick from Kirkcaldy, confessed to her minister, James Simpson, that she had been forced into a pact with the Devil by her husband, William Coke:

> The same day [8 October 1633] Alison Dick being demandit be Mr James Symson minister, whens and hows she fell in covenant with the Devil, she anserit hir husband many tymes urged hir, and she yeilded, onlie tuo or thrie years since the maner was this, He gave hir soull and bodie quick and quidderfull [alive] to the Devill, and bad hir doe so.[44]

She confessed that she reluctantly entered into the Devil's service, but 'she in hir hart said god gyde me';[45] surprisingly, the authorities did not pursue this serious confession of entering into a pact further.[46] Alison Dick gave a further penitent confession a week later on 15 October, where she prayed to God to forgive her, during which time she had been

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41 BL, Egerton MS 2879, fos. 4r-4v.
42 BL, Egerton MS 2879, fo. 4v.
43 See Laura Paterson 'The Witches' Sabbath in Scotland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 142 (2013), 371-412, for a recent discussion on witches' sabbaths in Scotland.
44 NRS, Kirkcaldy St Bryce Kirk Session Minutes and Accounts, 1614-1645, CH2/636/34, p. 284.
45 NRS, CH2/636/34, p. 284.
46 NRS, CH2/636/34, p. 284.

imprisoned within the church steeple.[47] Despite this penitent confession she remained warded. On 8 November 1633, a commission was issued by the privy council and the presbytery of St Andrews was informed on 14 November 1633 that both William Coke and Alison Dick were to be tried. Though no evidence of the trial survives, it must have taken place shortly thereafter for Alison and William are recorded in the Kirkcaldy kirk session book as being burned as witches on 19 November 1633.[48]

Confessions of this nature continued to be made throughout the seventeenth century. Another accused witch, Bessie Scott, denounced during the national panic of 1649-50, also confessed to being tempted into a demonic pact by another human. At Corstorphine in August 1649, Scott confessed that she was encouraged to enter into the Devil's service by her mother, Betty Watson, who took 'hir to the park in the gloming and said unto hir she wald take hir to hir master […] quhair she mett with the divell in the lyknes of a man cloathed in grey'.[49] In 1678 Bessie Gourlie, one of the accused witches at Fala, confessed that another accused, Sarah Cranston, tempted her to enter into the Devil's service by promising 'she wold not want' (i.e., that she would not suffer poverty); a phrase often associated being spoken by the Devil, not by accused witches.[50] In addition, some young accused witches denounced by the demoniac Christian Shaw in the 1697 witch-hunt at Bargarran, confessed that they were tempted to enter into the Devil's service by close relatives.[51] Seventeen-year-old Elizabeth Anderson confessed on 5 February 1697 at Bargarran that she was repeatedly encouraged to enter into a pact with the Devil by her grandmother, Jean Fulton, seven years prior:

> About a Month after her Grand-Mother and she being in the House together, the said Gentleman (whom she then suspected to be the Devil) appeared to them, and fell a Talking with her Grand-mother and whispering in one anothers Ears: Upon which, the Grand-mother desired her to take him by the hand, being a

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[47] The content of this penitent confession is discussed in Chapter Six of the thesis, 156-8.

[48] For a fuller discussion of the case, refer to Stuart Macdonald, *The Witches of Fife: Witch-Hunting in a Scottish Shire, 1560-1710* (East Linton, 2002), 145-153.

[49] NRS, Edinburgh, Corstorphine Kirk Session Minutes, 1646-1685, CH2/124/1, p. 34. I am grateful to Norah Carlin for her transcription of the kirk session minutes.

[50] NRS, High Court Books of Adjournal, 3 June 1678 – 4 July 1682, JC2/15, fo. 21r. The idea of the Devil tempting accused witches that they 'should not want' is discussed in Stuart Macdonald, 'In Search of the Devil in Fife Witchcraft Cases, 1560-1705' in *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, ed. Goodare (Manchester, 2002), 33-50, at 42.

[51] For an overview of the witch-hunt at Bargarran in 1697, refer to Lizanne Henderson, *Witchcraft and Folk Belief in the Age of Enlightenment: Scotland, 1670-1740* (Basingstoke, 2016), 201-13; and Michael Wasser, 'The Western Witch-Hunt of 1697-1700: the Last Major Witch-Hunt in Scotland', in *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, ed. Goodare (Manchester, 2002), 146-165. Parts of the hunt are described in Brian P. Levack, 'Demonic Possession in Early Modern Scotland', in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, ed. Goodare, Martin and Miller (Basingstoke, 2008), 166-184; and Yeoman, 'The Devil as Doctor', 93-105.

> Friend of hers; but Elizabeth refusing, her grand-mother threatened, that she should have none of the Cloaths promised her unless she would obey.[52]

Anderson also claimed that around twenty days before her interrogation on 5 February 1697, her father brought her to a witches' sabbath, where he and the Devil encouraged her to enter into the Devil's service: 'She declared, that both the Devil and her Father invited her several times to the *Devil's* service, Promising to Reward her for her paines'.[53] She also confessed that when leaving one of the witches' sabbaths, her father, and some of the accused witches present, told her that if she mentioned to anyone where she had been 'she would be Torn in pieces';[54] she confessed that she was more 'Affraied' of her father and the persons at the sabbath 'then she was of the Devil'.[55]

Anderson was interrogated again on 18 February 1697 in the nearby town of Renfrew, where she repeated much of her first confession given at Bargarran. A commission for a local trial to be held was requested by the presbytery on the same day of Elizabeth's second confession, and the privy council granted it over a month later, on 19 March 1697. Out of the roughly twenty-five people indicted, only seven were executed for witchcraft at Paisley on 10 June 1697.[56] Elizabeth Anderson, however, was not one of them. The prosecuting authorities considered her to be a star witness, mainly because they thought that she had been led astray by other witches – in other words, they did not think that she had fully adopted the identity of the witch herself.

More of the young accused witches at Bargarran confessed to being tempted to join the Devil by their close relatives. Both the Lindsay brothers, James, aged fourteen, and Thomas, aged twelve, confessed to having been tempted to enter into a pact with the Devil by their grandmother, Jean Fulton, grandmother to Elizabeth Anderson too. On 18 February 1697, at Renfew, James Lindsay confessed to his interrogators that sometime previously, when he was begging around the town of Inchinnan (a settlement in Renfewshire), he met with his grandmother, Jean Fulton, and a '*Black Grim Man*', and that his grandmother desired him 'to take the *Gentleman* by the Hand (as she term'd him)',

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[52] Quoted in *Sadducismus Debellatus*: *Or A True Narrative of the Sorceries and Witchcrafts Exercis'd by the Devil* (London, 1698), 39; and *A Relation of the Diabolical Practices Of above Twenty Wizards and Witches of the Sheriffdom of Renfrew in the Kingdom of Scotland* (London, 1697), 9-10.
[53] *A Relation of the Diabolical*, 9. Emphasis in the original.
[54] *A Relation of the Diabolical,* 8-9 & 13.
[55] *A Relation of the Diabolical*, 9.
[56] Henderson, *Witchcraft and Folk Belief*, 202; Wasser, 'The Western Witch-Hunt', 146; and Levack, 'Demonic Possession', 168.

which he agreed to do.[57] He went on to confess to making a pact with the Devil. Thomas Lindsay, his younger brother, confessed that the Devil appeared to him at night when he was asleep, where his grandmother 'awaken'd him, desiring him to take the Gentleman by the hand'. Thomas, like his brother James, agreed to enter into the Devil's service.[58] He also claimed his father was the Devil.[59]

Another young accused witch, Alexander Lyle, also confessed to being tempted to make a pact with the Devil by a relative. Lyle was a suspect in the 1699 witch-hunt, also at Paisley. Two young demoniacs, Margaret Laird and Margaret Murdoch, like Christian Shaw from Bargarran a few years earlier, claimed to having been tormented by witches whom only they could see; they named around twenty-four individuals. However, unlike the 1697 Paisley trials, none was convicted and all were released without trial in 1700.[60] Lyle was interrogated at Paisley in 1699, where he confessed that his mother, Bessie Cochrane, had sometime previously 'caused him putt ane hand to the croun of his head and the other to the sole of his foot and gave himselfe over to a blackman'.[61]

It is noteworthy that at a time when witch-hunting was in sharp decline these young accused witches had remarkably good knowledge, not only of the language of witchcraft, but also of the alleged activities of witches and Reformed ideas related to human depravity. By confessing to being tempted by humans and, in some cases, attributing the rituals of the demonic pact to humans rather than the Devil, these accused witches reaffirmed the Reformed emphasis on human depravity and its connection with witchcraft doctrine.

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[57] *A Relation of the Diabolical*, 15; and *Sadducismus*, 39. Anderson and the Lindsay brothers either used the phrase '*Black Grim Man'* or had the phrase attributed to them. This was possibly as a result of the printing of the case, since the author might have embellished the narrative. It is likely, however, that all three did describe the Devil as a black man or man in black.

[58] *A Relation of the Diabolical*, 19; and *Sadducismus*, 40.

[59] *Sadducismus*, 25.

[60] For an overview of the 1699-1700 witch-hunt at Paisley, see Henderson, *Witchcraft and Folk Belief*, 211; Wasser, 'The Western Witch-Hunt', 161-3; and Alexandra Hill, 'Decline and Survival in Scottish Witch-Hunting, 1701–1727', in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters*, ed. Goodare (Basingstoke, 2013), 215-233, at 225.

[61] EUL, Information for his Ma[jes]ties Advocate ag[ain]st Jean Wodrow 1699 and others, La. II/89 fos. 210r-220v, at fo. 217v.

II. The Inferred Devil

The current scholarship has noted the Devil's background or marginal presence in some trials. Stuart Macdonald suggested that in Fife witchcraft cases the Devil appeared 'to be more of a background character than an active participant'.[62] Commenting in particular on the 1633 Kirkcaldy case of Alison Dick and William Coke, he described the Devil as playing no more than a 'symbolic part'.[63] In these instances, Macdonald was referring to the authorities' lack of interest in pursuing confessions of demonic pacts further. Moreover, Joyce Miller has argued that the 'Devil was more often mundane and inconsequential rather than monstrous and frightening', noting a general trend in accused witches' confessions, where the accused tended to portray the Devil as a rather quotidian figure, who would partake in human affairs, such as dancing, drinking and so forth, which might account for his marginal presence in some cases.[64]

Is this the only way to consider the marginal presence of the Devil in some confessions? I argue that the Devil's marginal role or assumed presence has more to do with his spiritualised status as the tempter to sin and his spiritualised function to serve as a reminder of human depravity. He may well have been described as appearing in physical form, mainly in the form of a humanoid male, and partaking in mundane affairs. But in comparison with the godly conversion narratives discussed in the previous chapter, in the cases discussed below he appeared prodding from the sidelines as a passive observer, reinforcing the sinful nature of the accused witches.

The eight-year-old Margaret Taylor is a case in point. Taylor, daughter to Isobel Inch, was involved in the 1618 witch-hunt at Irvine. The hunt centred on four accused witches: Isobel Inch, John Stewart, Margaret Barclay and Isobel Crawford. Only Barclay and Crawford were executed. Inch died falling from a church roof, while Stewart hanged himself in prison. No original manuscript evidence of the trial survives. Details of the commission can be found in the Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, which states the names of the accused witches facing trial; the commission also provides short extracts from their confessions, presumably extracted during interrogation at Irvine before the

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[62] Macdonald, 'In Search of the Devil', 45. Also refer to Macdonald, 'Creating a Godly Society: Witch-Hunts, Discipline, and Reformation in Scotland', *Canadian Society for Church History* (2010), 5-20.
[63] Macdonald, *The Witches of Fife*, 152.
[64] Joyce Miller, 'Men in Black: Appearances of the Devil in Early Modern Scottish Witchcraft Discourse', in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, ed. Goodare, Martin and Miller (Basingstoke, 2008), 144-165 at 159.

commission was sought and granted.[65] A nineteenth century pamphlet, based on a unknown seventeenth-century manuscript, provides more details about the trial and the accused's confessions. The pamphlet, titled *Trial, Confession, and Execution of Isobel Inch, John Stewart, Margaret Barclay & Isobel Crawford*, is apparently an eyewitness account of the trial at Irvine; the original manuscript on which the nineteenth-century pamphlet is based, however, does not survive.[66]

One of the accused witches to be investigated by the local authorities, John Stewart, himself delated by Margaret Barclay, the first accused witch to be investigated, confessed to demonic witchcraft. He confessed to the authorities that one day, when he accidentally entered into Barclay's house, he saw several accused witches making 'pictures and portraittis of clay, representing the figuris of men'.[67] Even more damning, he confessed that 'the devill apperit among thame', where he asked those in the house to 'Be all my servants, and obey me, and renounce God', which, according to Stewart, they all agreed, saying 'It sall be so'.[68] At a subsequent interrogation, where the local authorities summoned several people who either lived or had recently visited Margaret Barclay's house in the presence of John Stewart, Stewart delated the young Margaret Taylor's mother, Isobel Inch, as being present at the previous witches' sabbath, which she denied. Immediately following Stewart's denunciation, Inch was warded in the 'the bell hous of the kirk';[69] Margaret Barclay, the principal accused witch and first to be interrogated, was being kept in the local tolbooth, away from Isobel. The authorities sought to gather further information about Isobel's alleged involvement at the sabbath and proceeded to interrogate Inch's eight-year-old daughter, Margaret Taylor.

The young Margaret confessed that she had sometime previously been with her mother, John Stewart and a fourteen-year-old maid at a different witches' sabbath at 'ane greit waist [i.e., empty] hous' on the outskirts of the town.[70] The young Margaret Taylor confessed that at the sabbath a black dog – possibly thought to be the Devil – watched over the event. She also confessed that a black man who had 'eyes [that] schynit lyk

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[65] RPC, 3rd ser., v. xi, 366-7, 401.
[66] *Trial, Confession, and Execution of Isobel Inch, John Stewart, Margaret Barclay & Isobel Crawford, for Witchcraft, at Irvine, anno 1618* (Ardrossan and Saltcoats, n.d. [1855]). I thank Julian Goodare for giving me access to his transcription of the pamphlet.
[67] *Witchcraft, at Irvine*, 5.
[68] *Witchcraft, at Irvine*, 6.
[69] *Witchcraft, at Irvine*, 7.
[70] *Witchcraft, at Irvine,* 8.

candills' spoke to the accused witches in the room.[71] According to Taylor's confession, at the sabbath John Stewart had sex with Margaret Barclay in the 'heigh [i.e., the top] loft', and the event was watched over by herself and the black dog. She described watching the adults as they went to practise witchcraft; first from the waste house to the sea, where John Stewart and Margaret Barclay performed an enchantment, and then to Margaret Barclay's house, all the while both the black dog and the black man following them.

By confessing to seeing the events alongside the black dog and black man, Barclay presented the Devil as both a reminder for sin and as a historical actor. By describing both the black dog and black man in physical form, Taylor reaffirmed the language of demonology and traditional ideas linked to his corporeal presence, yet by claiming that she passively watched over the events of the sabbath with the Devil, he was conceptualised to reinforce the link between human depravity and demonic belief. One immediate objection to Taylor's confession in supporting the argument concerns her young age. The author of the pamphlet may have coloured her narrative by inserting the Devil around the other events which she described, as it is not clear in the text whether Margaret Taylor actually thought that the black dog and black man were the Devil. Yet, as with many accounts retold in religious life writings, Scots were accustomed to experiencing demonic encounters when they were young, and they were used to hearing about human depravity, sin and the Devil from the pulpit. Also, the colour black, whether associated with a dog or a human man, was a popular term often used to infer the Devil's presence.[72] Therefore, we should not be dissuaded from accepting the possibility that the young Margaret Taylor voluntarily offered her own account of visualising the Devil in a variety of physical forms. But it is possible that Taylor remembered the pedagogic lessons about the Devil taught to her on a weekly or biweekly basis in the pew, linking his presence with an imagined or partly real event, watching and tempting from the sidelines.

The case of Margaret Dobson serves as another example. She confessed to the kirk session of Eyemouth on 8 July 1649 that she had been in the Devil's service for at least four years, and that she renounced her baptism to the Devil and became his servant. She also confessed that at midnight, she went with three other accused witches, Isobel Brown, Beatrix Young and Helen Taylor, with the intention of killing William Burnet – a

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[71] *Witchcraft, at Irvine,* 8.

[72] Miller, 'Men in Black', 149; Julian Goodare, 'Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context', in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, ed. Goodare, Martin and Miller, (Basingstoke, 2008), 26-50, at 34; and Goodare, *The European Witch-Hunt* (London, 2016), 127.

member of their community – and that the Devil in the 'liknes of ane foall' watched over them.[73] As with the case of Margaret Taylor from Irvine, he appears in a passive form and does not engage with the accused witches, but follows them, lurking behind.

The Devil's elusive and ambiguous presence is also referenced in further cases, including the 1659 case of Janet Miller from Tullibody in Clackmannanshire. Miller was one of the accused witches caught-up in the witch-hunt at Alloa that snowballed covering much of Stirling and Clackmannanshire. Miller never confessed to entering into a pact, but when imprisoned in the tolbooth she gave a witness statement against a fellow accused witch, Isobel Keir. On 16 March 1659, Miller told her interrogators that last December, when she visited the house of another accused witch, Margaret Gourlay's, Isobel Keir was there with 'ane blak man with thame, all siting at ane tabill covered with ane whyt cloath, and sum boyled beif and bread thairon'.[74] And finally in the 1671 case against Geillis Burnett from Aberdeen, Margaret Abernethy, another accused witch, claimed that Burnett came to visit her in prison along with 'ane little black man', where they encouraged Abernethy 'not to speak or confesse any thing thair anent'.[75] Burnett was executed; we do not know what became of Abernethy.

The Devil's appearance as a black man or man in black merits further discussion. Joyce Miller has argued that 'It is not clear if the term black man referred to a man in black clothing, a man with black hair or one whose skin was black', though references to a black man or man in black were likely a 'reflection of theological opinion'.[76] P.G. Maxwell-Stuart has even gone so far as to suggest that some accused witches may have been thinking of individual ministers dressed in black.[77] Early modern Scots viewed the rituals of demonology as being practised between two humans. For example, the demonic pact in Scotland was known to be cemented through sex, which therefore described intercourse between a human and the Devil in human form, in line with Scots' understandings of marital sex and marriage.[78] Moreover, based on the feudal argument established by Larner, the Devil's interactions with accused witches resembled older traditions of banding and covenanting – all of which were human interactions. It may also

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[73] RPC, 3rd ser., v. 11., 207.
[74] BL, Egerton MS 2879, fo. 12v.
[75] NRS, High Court of Justiciary Processes, 1671, JC26/38/10.
[76] Miller, 'Men in Black', 149, 159.
[77] P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Satan's Conspiracy: Magic and Witchcraft in Sixteenth-Century Scotland* (East Linton, 2001), 146.
[78] Martin, 'The Devil and the Domestic', 73-89.

be suggested that more attention has been paid to the Devil in the form of a man because people in the early modern period only understood the supernatural world by humanising it to some degree. As Julian Goodare has commented with reference to fairy beliefs as well as other supernatural phenomena, 'they [fairies] enabled people to explore their own human identity by telling stories of beings that were like humans but also unlike them.'[79]

However, as the cases discussed above demonstrate, no matter whether the Devil appeared as a black man or man in black, he was always associated with sin or an ungodly deed. Indeed, the colour black was often linked with ideas of sin. In confessions where the accused claimed to have seen the Devil with another witch, he is described as hovering on the margins, reinforcing their depraved nature. Michelle Brock has recently put forward another argument explaining why the Devil might have often appeared as a man. Brock argues that his appearance as a man may have been influenced by Reformed preaching. She writes, 'The ubiquity and peril of demonic temptation in Scottish sermons, may have also influenced reports of the Devil as a man [in Scottish witch trials], for Satan could take no form more dangerous or evasive than a human one'.[80] As I discussed in Chapter One, in their applications and uses of sermons, ministers often emphasised the shared demonic identity between humankind and the Devil, sometimes noting that his actions and demeanour were hard to distinguish from the promptings of the human ego.

When the Devil entered into a pact with the accused witch, he sometimes took centre stage. He encouraged them to renounce their baptism and become his servant. In some extreme cases, he would hit or physically beat the witch. At the very least, a hierarchical relationship established him as the master. The cases above, however, demonstrate that the Devil's appearance and his actions could be inferred or used to label and demonise someone as a witch. He appeared on the margins, tempting from the sidelines, serving as both a visual, concrete encounter and as a reminder of human depravity. In such cases, the Devil's appearance, normally as a humanoid of some kind, and his involvement in quotidian affairs, such as drinking or observing interactions and events, have been interpreted as ordinary or mundane – a reflection of everyday village life.[81] However, as I have argued in this chapter, cases in which the Devil is presented as

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[79] Julian Goodare, 'Boundaries of the Fairy Realm in Scotland' in *Airy Nothings: Imagining the Otherworld of Faerie from the Middle Ages to the Age of Reason: Essays in Honour of Alasdair A. MacDonald*, eds. Karin E. Olsen and Jan R. Veenstra (Leiden, 2013), 139-171, at 167.
[80] Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 159.
[81] Miller, 'Men in Black', 144-160.

behaving like a human shows more than just common folk drawing on real-life experiences to construct their stories of the Devil. The descriptions of the Devil taking part in everyday affairs also reflected the sermonic relationship between human depravity and the Devil, since in the confessions discussed above his actions and demeanour are hard to distinguish from the actions of ordinary humans. As ministers liked to remind their hearers during sermons: both the Devil and humans were fallen creatures, connected through their depraved nature.[82] Accused witches drew on the spiritual script of human depravity to construct their accounts of ordinary and mundane interactions with the Devil.

III. Accused witches and demonic obsession

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, while recent scholarship, focusing on Scotland, England and Germany, has begun to look at how demonic belief from wider spiritual culture was received in the witch-hunts, much of the discussion on obsession and the Devil's mental temptations has been limited to the sermons and diaries of ministers and pious lay Scots, with only speculations or fleeting remarks about the reception of such ideas in the witch-hunts.

When they confessed to interacting with the Devil, accused witches often described him in physical form. However, in some confessions where the Devil was presented as a physical tangible being, accused witches also highlighted his ability to internally tempt them and affect their mental faculties, more in line with how some lay Scots and ministers described his actions in their diaries and sermons. Returning to the case I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, in June 1650 Catharine Walker was frustrating the bailies and council members of the town of Brechin by refusing to confess to witchcraft. They requested that the presbytery investigate the matter further and use witness evidence that the town had collected to try to convince Walker to confess. The presbytery recorded sixteen male witness depositions of those who had either guarded or visited Walker once she had been imprisoned; it is not clear which of the sixteen men had guarded or simply visited her. As discussed earlier, most of the men mainly described conversations they had with Walker about her feelings of guilt. Some, however, reported to the presbytery conversations that they had with Walker about the Devil appearing to

[82] Refer to Chapter One of the thesis, 36-41.

her while she was imprisoned. One of men, John Profet, visited Walker in prison and claimed that she had told him to 'goe to the minister and shew it was her desire not to goe to the kirk becaus shee did no good their be reason ther satt a litle thing at her knie lyk a duldie schooler [i.e., a big or fat clumsy student] that lulled her a sleip and trubled her'.[83] And George Steel informed the presbytery that Walker told him that 'the Divell cam to her when shee was at her prayer like a duldie scholer'.[84] It is not clear what Walker meant by the term 'duldie scholer'; she might have been referring to his ambiguous form. However, one can see the overlap in how she understood, or at least how her male witnesses understood, the Devil as a physical being who also internally tempted people.

Barbara Erskine confessed to her interrogators on 14 March 1659 that at various points in her life 'shoe [i.e., she] was ever still trubled with him [i.e., the Devil], and hir spirit was ever caried with him, and shoe was ever still tempted with him'.[85] And on various occasions when she went to kirk, 'to heare the Word of God', the Devil was 'trubling hir and would cause hir fall on ane step *and closed hir eares that shoe heard not the Word of God at all*'.[86] As discussed earlier in the chapter, her interrogators focused more on Erskine's confession of the demonic pact, which she denied.

The influence of the Devil's internal powers can be seen in the confessions of Agnes Cairns from Kirkcudbright, read before her trial at Dumfries on 2 April 1659. Before her trial, it was made known to the presiding English magistrates that Cairns had confessed to being one of the Devil's servants since she was a child, where she 'renunce[d] [her] baptisme and ingadge[d] [her] selff to his service at ane meiting of the witches within the walls of the abbey of Dundrennan'.[87] Other parts of her previous confessions were read at her trial, including several confessions about attending witches' sabbaths, having sex with the Devil and receiving the 'witches' mark' before her imprisonment. It was made known to those at her trial that when imprisoned Cairns confessed that the Devil appeared to her in the tolbooth and offered to strangle her as he had done to another accused witch, Helen Harris. The Devil told Cairns that he could 'doe the lyk to [her] iff [she] pleased', but she refused.[88] She confessed that she alone could see the Devil because he 'rubbed

[83] NRS, CH2/40/1, fo. 94r.
[84] NRS, CH2/40/1, fo. 94v.
[85] BL, Egerton MS 2879, fo. 4r.
[86] BL, Egerton MS 2879, fo. 4r. Emphasis in the original.
[87] NRS, JC26/26/4, item 1.
[88] NRS, JC26/26/4, item 1.

something on [her] eyes'.[89] Cairns denied all the confessions read at her trial at Dumfries, but the authorities still found her guilty and she was executed three days later on 5 April 1659. By confessing that only she could see the Devil tempting her, she drew on the Protestant godly idea of the personal, individual struggle with demonic temptation.

On 4 November 1678, Margaret Souness, one of the accused witches from Fala in Haddingtonshire, confessed at her trial at the justiciary court at Edinburgh that she had been the Devil's servant for thirty years, and that she had been at many 'meitings with the Divill'.[90] She confessed that at one of the witches' sabbaths she agreed to be the Devil's servant and renounce her baptism. Souness went on to describe the Devil as an aggressive demonic master who 'many a tyme did strucke her sore'; she even described herself as the 'Divills slave'.[91] This physical description of the Devil is also accompanied by a much more ambiguous, mental description of the Devil's ability to affect her internally. Souness confessed that two years before, in 1676, on two or three occasions when she 'being so sore abused and tempted with the Divill' went to visit her minister to confess the sin of witchcraft, when she got near the minister's house 'the Divill would not permit her to come in'.[92] Again, as with the cases discussed above, we have the overlap between the Devil appearing in physical form, but also internally tempting the accused witches and affecting their heart and mind.

Some accused witches confessed that the Devil influenced their thoughts to such an extent that he would not let them confess if they were ever interrogated. On 2 March 1659, Janet Man, one the Stenton witches, told her interrogators that she could not confess to witchcraft because 'she could not get a heart to repent for the Devil was locked in her heart'.[93] She was later visited by an unnamed minister who prayed and counselled her, at which point she got 'a heart to confesse the sinne of witchcraft', and thought 'hir heart was something lifted up'.[94] Similarly, like Bessie Lacost – the principal accused witch investigated at Stenton – Man also confessed to the demonic pact, renouncing her baptism and attending a witches' sabbath at Gallowhop Hill, where she said Bessie Lacost was also present. And as with Lacost, we do not know what became of Janet Man.

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[89] NRS, JC26/26/4, item 1.
[90] NRS, JC2/15, fo. 22r.
[91] NRS, JC2/15, fo. 22r.
[92] NRS, JC2/15, fo. 22r.
[93] NRS, JC26/26/2, item H.
[94] NRS, JC26/26/2, item H.

On 3 April 1662, Bessie Henderson, one of the Crook of Devon witches, had her confessions read at her trial before Alexander Colville of Blair, justice depute of the justiciary court and a man of formal legal training. Of the many confessions read at the trial, it was made clear to those present that she had confessed to have been in the Devil's service for 40 years and attended many witches' sabbaths. At one interrogation, the minister, Alexander Ireland, asked her if she entered into a pact with the Devil, which she declined to answer, saying the Devil 'keeped [her] heart fra [from] confessing'.[95] At a later interrogation she went on to confess that she had made a pact with the Devil and had sex with him, probably as a result of further interrogation and leading questions put to her. Henderson was convicted and executed a day later, on 4 April, along with two other accused witches.

And finally, on 19 June 1704, Janet Cornfoot, one of several witches accused of tormenting a young demoniac named Patrick Morton in Pittenweem, Fife, confessed before the presbytery of St Andrews that she had entered into a 'compact with the Devil' and attended a witches' sabbath.[96] On the same day, Cornfoot also confessed that the Devil appeared to her while she was imprisoned in the tolbooth, where he told her that 'if she confessed he would tear her in pieces'.[97] Cornfoot was denounced by the principal accused witch responsible for causing the possession of the young Patrick Morton, Beatrix Laing, who claimed that Cornfoot was also involved in causing the possession.

The accused witches' confessions of the Devil preventing them from confessing can be interpreted as defence strategies on the part of the accused, perhaps in order to dissociate themselves from feelings of guilt and blame, or to resist giving in to their interrogators' demands. Nevertheless, such idiosyncratic details in these confessions, again, show how ideas of the Devil's physical presence overlapped with more theological ideas of his internal powers. And these confessions show how far Reformed theological ideas of the Devil's internal powers penetrated the minds of parishioners accused of witchcraft.

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[95] 'Notice of Trials for Witchcraft at Crook of Devon, Kinross-shire, in 1662', ed. R. Burns Begg, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 22 (1887–1888), 211–41, at 224.
[96] NRS, Presbytery of St Andrews Minutes, 1699-1705, CH2/1132/21, p. 292.
[97] NRS, CH2/1132/21, p. 292.

Conclusion

The scripts of obsession and depravity were part of the roles of the unregenerate and the Christian soldier. As I argued in the previous two chapters, lay Scots were expected to internalise their own sinful nature and experience internal temptation in order to come to terms with their unregenerate status as preparation before conversion, and they were also expected to experience internal temptation as part of the spiritual warfare phase of conversion. That is after they had received sparks of faith within them and received temporary assurance of salvation, lay Scots were expected to once again experience temptation, although not as a sign of their depraved status, but as a sign of godliness. This chapter has demonstrated that obsession and depravity – fundamental parts of conversion-centred spirituality – were articulated in accused witches' confessions. And that the accused witches examined above, while not experiencing conversion, were nevertheless following the same spiritual scripts that ministers outlined in their sermons and which lay Scots recorded in their diaries.

This chapter has also suggested that the accused witches examined above internalised the role identity of the unregenerate. The authorities most likely read or imposed demonic activities like the pact on their confessions, such as we saw in the cases of Elizabeth Graham and Barbara Erskine, both of whom initially confessed to entering into a pact with the Devil but then later retracted their confessions. However, by providing their interrogators with idiosyncratic narratives of obsession and depravity, narratives that their interrogators would not have been overly concerned with in shaping to fit demonological narratives centred on the pact, some accused witches might have identified themselves as unregenerate, sinful and depraved Christians, unrenewed and untouched by conversion. Even though demonological witchcraft concepts, such as the pact, might have also influenced how accused witches saw themselves, most lay Scots were less likely to engage with demonological ideas outside the context of witch-hunts. As I suggested in Chapter One, all Scots were likely to come into contact with ideas about the Devil's internal powers and his relationship to human depravity in preaching and religious instruction. Accused witches' confessions of obsession and depravity present snapshots of how parishioners from more rural settlements across the lowlands, navigated and articulated elements of conversion-centred spirituality.

Chapter Four

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Resisting the Devil

In Chapters One and Two of this thesis, I considered how the spiritual role of the Christian soldier was an important part of the conversion process. Sermonic exhortations on resisting the Devil through prayer and cries to the sovereignty of God were not simply metaphorical or allegorical strategies employed by ministers to motivate laypeople. These exhortations provided lay hearers with scripted behaviours and modes of thinking to internalise when experiencing conversion in their own lives, and they provided laypeople with the necessary language to make sense of their spiritual condition. Experiences of resisting the Devil were to be interpreted as signs of godliness and spiritual progress, and as evidence of role change during conversion - in other words, that they had changed their behaviour and purged themselves of their previous, unregenerate role identity, and had adopted the role identity of the Christian soldier, which was bestowed upon them by the Holy Spirit.

This chapter considers how the script of resisting the Devil was articulated in some accused witches' confessions. I argue that, like the conversion narratives of lay Scots discussed in Chapter Two, some accused witches' confessions of resisting the Devil reveal a desire on the part of the accused to purge themselves of the ungodly identity of the witch and to reconcile with God. The chapter also argues that such descriptions of resisting the Devil in witches' confessions show the pervasiveness of spiritual warfare culture among parishioners, particularly those who were less literate and who did not write about their piety.[1] First, this chapter considers the importance of prayer and calls to divine aid in some accused witches' confessions. Second, it turns to examine confessions where the accused described giving themselves over to God instead of the Devil. And finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of some confessions where the accused described mundane physical confrontations with the Devil, in which the accused considered themselves strong enough to resist the Devil without directly invoking God to aid them.

[1] Refer back to Chapter Two of the thesis, 79-85. For scholarship that has commented on spiritual warfare in wider Scottish religious culture, see Brock, *Satan and the* Scots, 47-75, 75-97; and Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 243-7.

I. Resistance in the trials

Witchcraft scholarship has explored the theme of resistance in cases of witchcraft, but mainly in the context of accused witches retracting their confessions or refusing to answer leading questions put to them by their interrogators during torture. This is most evident in German witch trials, where scholars such as Lyndal Roper, Wolfgang Behringer and more recently Laura Kounine have highlighted the prevalence of physical torture being used to extract confessions.[2] Less attention, however, has been paid to notions of resistance in the accused's confessions, especially in narratives of resisting the Devil's temptations and advances. Narratives of resistance against the Devil have normally been viewed as part and parcel of the questioning process of the demonic pact. Interrogators asked leading questions centred on how far the accused witches accepted or rejected the Devil's temptations to embellish and make the confessions seem more credible. As Liv Helene Willumsen has argued, with reference to the confessions of Bute witch Janet Morrison, narratives of resistance against the Devil – where the accused refused to obey the Devil's wishes – were part of 'the pattern of most Devil-pact confessions'.[3]

Some scholars, however, have explored the significance of these minor narratives in witches' confessions, seeing them as more than just the product of the questioning process. In the Scottish context, Lizanne Henderson has made this argument. She has argued, with reference to the case of Bessie Wilson, that 'confessing witches sometimes spoke of outright resistance to the Devil, talking back to him in ways no supposed "servant" should speak to their "master."'[4] In a wider European context, Lyndal Roper and Michael Ostling have considered how accused witches constructed narratives of resistance against the Devil as defence strategies designed to maintain some control over their Christian identity. Roper has argued, with reference to some German accused witches, that by confessing to resisting the Devil's temptations and refusing to abide by his wishes, some accused witches projected their deeds and 'hostile emotions […] on to

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[2] Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven, CT, 2004), 44-66, 56; Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1994), 205; Wolfgang Behringer, *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria: Popular Magic, Religious Zealotry and Reason of State in Early Modern Europe*, trans. J. C. Grayson and David Lederer (Cambridge, 1997), 194-6; Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, 145-158; and Rita Voltmer, 'Witch-Finders, Witch-Hunters or Kings of the Sabbath? The Prominent Role of Men in the Mass Persecutions of the Rhine-Meuse Area (Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)' in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alison Rowlands (Basingstoke, 2009), 74-99, at 77-9. On other early modern European countries, see Virginia Krause, *Witchcraft, Demonology, and Confession in Early Modern France* (Cambridge, 2015), 110-11, 125.

[3] Willumsen, 'A Narratological Approach', 550.

[4] Henderson, *Witchcraft and Folk* Belief, 135.

the Devil and dissociated from themselves'.[5] By this, Roper implies that some accused witches created narratives of resisting the Devil to be used as defence strategies: by projecting their bad actions, feelings of shame and guilt on to the Devil, the accused did not have to accept any responsibility for what they had been accused of doing.

Similarly, Ostling has argued, with reference to Polish witches, that some who refused to confess to sex with the Devil, or those who confessed reluctantly to the act, were trying to maintain some semblance of their pre-witch, Christian identity:

> The resolute refusal to declare one's own guilt in the face of unimaginable pain, or, where this proved impossible, to modify that guilt in certain directions through selected emphasis of particular demonological tropes, may be best read not as an attempt to save one's own life but rather to save the meaning of that life; to preserve one's subjectivity and to ensure that one will be remembered aright.[6]

By arguing that some Polish accused witches' statements of resistance 'may be read not as an attempt to save one's own life but rather to save the meaning of that life', Ostling goes a bit further than Roper in arguing that some of the accused were genuinely concerned about the state of their soul and Christian identity. Like Ostling, I argue that in some Scottish accused witches' confessions, one can see attempts by the accused to purge themselves of the role identity of the witch - attempts where the accused used the language of conversion and spiritual warfare to demonstrate their godliness or at the very least to present themselves as pious Christians. Therefore, narratives of resistance against the Devil should not be read solely as attempts by the accused to save their lives.

II. Prayer, divine protection and the Devil

In their confessions of entering into a demonic pact, some accused witches incorporated narratives of resisting the Devil's temptations through the use of prayer and invocations for God's aid. Charlotte-Rose Millar has highlighted this notion in some printed witchcraft pamphlets, noting that 'this method of resisting the Devil is based on a Protestant emphasis on the importance of prayer in one's struggle with Satan'.[7] This style of prayer, while not radically different from its pre-Reformation counterparts, did, however, limit the choice of supernatural entities that humans could call on to intercede on their behalf - no longer were people supposed to pray to the Saints, the Virgin Mary

[5] Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 215.
[6] Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, 220.
[7] Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions*, 37.

and angels to help them with their spiritual condition.[8] In addition, people were not allowed to use holy water and images of the cross as objects to defend themselves.

This is not to suggest, however, that Scots suddenly stopped drawing on these older traditions, though in their confessions of resisting demonic temptation, accused witches more often referred to God and Christ, reinforcing the Reformed emphasis on the notion that God alone could save a person from demonic temptation. Accused witches sometimes resisted the Devil by invoking the name of the Lord or God to intervene in their struggle. Elisabeth Crockett, in the Alloa trials, Clackmannanshire, confessed to invoking the name of God to fight off a seemingly demonic encounter. First interrogated on 6 September 1658, Crockett confessed to her interrogators that at one time, when she was lying in her bed, an unidentified supernatural entity came into her room, had sex with her and marked her on her right arm. The interrogators then seem to have persuaded her that this ambiguous supernatural entity had been the Devil. Asked about the mark on her arm, she continued: 'shoe knew not whether the Devill gave hir ane mark or not that night he lay with hir, but if it wer found wpon hir, shoe should be content to die the death of a witch'.[9] Interrogated again on 14 March 1659, she confessed:

> In Lentron last, shoe being lying in hir bed wnwell in the dawning of the day, found ane thing come on hir in the bed wnder the clothes and lay above hir very heavie, having nether armes nor legs, hot nor cold as shoe thought, clothed with old gray clothes, but shoe saying (as shoe affirmed) Christ be heir it evanished away and shoe knew not how it come nor how it went away.[10]

Crockett's confessions were short, incoherent and confusing. Margaret Dudley and Julian Goodare have argued that an episode of sleep paralysis formed the basis of Crockett's confessions, but her interrogators tried to turn this episode into a confession of having sex with the Devil.[11] However, her confession of invoking God's name to ward off the supernatural entity was totally in keeping with spiritual warfare culture, and she may have learnt how to defend herself from demonic temptation by using prayer from listening to sermons, as well receiving knowledge from local prayer groups or catechism sessions.

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[8] For more on pre-Reformation prayers, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England*, c. *1400-c. 1580*, 2nd edn (London, 2005), 243-56; and Audrey-Beth Fitch, *The Search for Salvation: Lay Faith in Scotland, 1480-1560*, ed. Elizabeth Ewan (Edinburgh, 2009), 63-70. More generally refer to Mitchell B. Merback, *The Thief, The Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (London, 1999), 143-5.

[9] BL, Egerton MS 2879, fo. 5v.

[10] BL, Egerton MS 2879, fo. 5r.

[11] Margaret Dudley and Julian Goodare, 'Outside In or Inside Out: Sleep Paralysis and Scottish Witchcraft', in *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters*, ed. Goodare (Basingstoke, 2013), 121-136, at 131-2.

Crockett might have learnt the specific prayer 'Christ be heir' from conversing with one of her neighbours.

Two accused witches involved in the Stenton trials, Haddingtonshire, confessed to invoking the name of God to help them against the Devil. The first, Bessie Lacost, whom I referred to in the previous chapter, told her interrogators on 23 January 1659 that she 'was a meiserable creature and oneworthie [unworthy] to leive for leiving so long in a direct league with the Devil'.[12] She went on to confess to her interrogators how she made a pact with the Devil, providing them with a narrative of how she resisted the Devil's temptations before succumbing to them. She first confessed that some time previously the Devil appeared to her in Agnes Angus's house, and that he 'lay with hir'.[13] Next, she confessed that he appeared to her again at the witches' sabbath at Gallowhop hill, where he told her she was 'welcome' to join him, but she said 'God mak me welcom to heaven', at which time both the Devil and those who were at the sabbath became angry at her.[14] Lacost added that the Devil encouraged her to renounce her baptism at the Gallowhop sabbath, but when he tried to give her a new name she refused, saying 'shee would not have tuo names', insisting that she keep her Christian name, Bessie.[15]

The second Stenton witch, Helen Cumming, confessed to her interrogators on 14 March 1659 that

> the first tyme ever shee saw the Devil was at Carfrae burne where the Devil was ryding on a horse and came plunging into the water [and] that shee was affrighted & cryed Lord save me wherupon she douped [i.e., stooped or bent] downe and saw him no more at that tyme.[16]

Interrogated further, she confessed that the Devil visited her next when she was in bed, and that another accused witch, Alison Fermor, invited her to a witches' sabbath at Gallowhop hill, where the Devil caused her to 'renounce her baptisme and called her Jonett'.[17] Both Lacost and Cumming constructed different narratives of how they resisted the Devil. Lacost described invoking God but also included a narrative of personal resistance in which she refused to accept the Devil's offer of a new name. Helen Cumming described invoking the Lord, which seems to have worked in preventing the Devil for a

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[12] NRS, High Court of Justiciary Processes, 1659, JC26/26/2, item H.
[13] NRS, JC26/26/2, item H.
[14] NRS, JC26/26/2, item H.
[15] NRS, JC26/26/2, item H.
[16] NRS, JC26/26/2, item H.
[17] NRS, JC26/26/2, item H.

time. Both, however, described resisting the Devil at an emotional time, in a similar manner to how lay Scots described calling on God or the Lord to help them during emotional and sudden encounters with demonic temptation.[18]

Finally, Elspeth Philip, an accused witch from Duddingston, confessed to her interrogators on 29 July 1661 that

> at Oatseedtyme [i.e., spring] last going to Leith at the place called the Marmadden hole about seven houres in the morning their appeared to her a litle man all in black, quho came to her & layd his hand on her, & shee saying Lord save me he [the Devil] at that time disappeared.[19]

Like the other accused witches discussed above, Philip went on to confess that she had entered into a pact with the Devil: 'another tyme going to Edinburgh at the place called the Latch the Divell appeared to her all in green quho promised to her shee should want nothing if shee would becom his servant and renounce her baptisme, which at that tyme she did'.[20]

These confessions of resisting the Devil through the use of prayer and invocations to God do not suggest that accused witches had a deep theological understanding of Reformed theology. The prayers were not distinctly godly. Indeed, many of the accused examined above prayed in formulaic ways, in the manner of a Catholic or Protestant saying the Lord's Prayer. And yet, as I discussed in Chapter Two, this type of prayer where a lay Scot requested God's aid against the Devil, while not particularly godly, was still an important part of conversion-centred spirituality and spiritual warfare culture. Moreover, even though some of the accused described praying or calling to God in formulaic ways, during the questioning process, some constructed narratives of dealing with demonic temptation at impromptu times, where they had to call for divine aid during what, they described, were moments of extreme emotional distress. This is certainly comparable with the descriptions of resisting the Devil in lay Scots' conversion narratives, where the lay Scot often called on God's or Jesus's aid during times of sudden emotional distress, and often in similar ways as accused witches described, such as I discussed in the conversion narrative of John Stevenson, who directed his wife to 'go out and cry to God', and

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[18] See Roper, *Witch Craze*, 93; and Goodare, *The European Witch-Hunt*, 298-303, for more on the ways in which accused witches described the emotional circumstances of their encounter with the Devil, in particular the idea that the Devil appeared at a moment of crisis, despair or disaster.
[19] NRS, JC26/27/1, item 3.
[20] NRS, JC26/26/1, item 3.

Mistress Rutherford, who described invoking the Lord's name during a direct confrontation with the Devil in her aunt's bedroom.[21]

III. Godly allegiance and spiritual strength

Some accused witches resisted the Devil by confessing that they had given themselves to God. As early as 21 April 1590, the magical practitioner Isobel Watson described a somewhat folkloric encounter with the Devil, where she claimed to have given herself to God.[22] Watson was interrogated by the presbytery of Stirling after she was accused by James Kinnaird, a man suspected of possessing several magical objects that he testified originally belonged to Watson. In order to tell her story to the presbytery, Watson travelled voluntarily, with Kinnaird, to Stirling, about 20 miles from her home in Glendevon. At the presbytery, attention soon turned away from Kinnaird to Watson herself. She told the ministers that she was a widow, about 60 years old, who had left her native Perth because of an outbreak of plague there. She was a magical practitioner and apparently a midwife, healing people and finding lost and stolen goods. What particularly attracted the presbytery's attention, however, was Watson's account of her visions of fairies and visits to fairyland – visions that, she said, she had experienced since the age of eighteen. Watson made two confessions between April and May 1590, and she was interrogated at least twice, once before the presbytery of Stirling on 21 April, and then in the tolbooth sometime in mid-May.

In her first interrogation on 21 April, she was questioned about her interactions with the 'fair folk' [fairies], and any magical harm that she had caused.[23] She was imprisoned for several weeks, before she was questioned again in the tolbooth at Stirling in mid-May, where she was interrogated about her interactions with the Devil. Watson confessed to her interrogators that sometime during her imprisonment, the Devil appeared to her as an angel in the tolbooth one evening and asked her to serve him. She confessed that she told the Devil 'that the tyme promesit be hir to serve him was run out. And that now scho hade gevin hir self to God'.[24] The interrogators did not pick up on this statement and question her further about her relationship with the Devil. After

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[21] Refer back to Chapter Two of the thesis, 81-2.
[22] A perceptive discussion of Watson's case has appeared in Maxwell-Stuart, *Satan's Conspiracy*, 115-21; see Graham, *The Uses of Reform*, 299-301, for a more detailed discussion of Watson's confessions.
[23] NRS, CH2/722/2, p. 22.
[24] NRS, CH2/722/2, p. 24.

Watson had told her interrogators that she had committed herself to God, she claimed that 'scho was swa strukin that all hir body was abost [abused], And gif scho hade bein out of the houss scho wald have gaine wod [mad]'.[25] In making this statement, she might have included her own treatment in the tolbooth in this narrative of interacting with the fairies and the Devil. Julian Goodare has recently argued, with reference to this part of Watson's confessions where she described her tortured body, that she may have experienced a somatic delusion: false beliefs about the body, which she understood as physical attacks by the fairies.[26]

There is a part of Watson's confession to meeting the Devil which needs to be discussed further. It is noteworthy that she described giving herself to God instead of the Devil. She may well have constructed this narrative as a way to dissociate herself from any guilt and trauma that she might have felt as a result of the previous rounds of questioning and interrogation. And by claiming that she had resisted the Devil by giving herself to God, Watson drew on scripted behaviour of submission and surrender to God, associated with the role of the penitent sinner, to separate herself from the identity of the witch. Again, this is not too dissimilar from the ways in which lay Scots drew on the script of submission and surrender to God. For instance, as I discussed in Chapter Two, in July 1600, Jean Livingston said a prayer to the minister, James Balfour, her spiritual counsellor. Livingston told him, 'Ther is no temptation of the Devil can now get entry in me, because the Lord possesseth me'.[27] Successful attempts at resisting the Devil, in which the individual claimed to have given themselves to God, were to be interpreted as evidence of changes in lay Scots' spiritual identities, and as a way to track the progress of their conversion.

Narratives of giving one's self to God instead of the Devil can be seen in later seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century witches' confessions too. On 23 March 1659, Janet Miller from Tullibody confessed that some time previously, as she was going to visit her father at twilight, she met a black man who asked her where she was going and laid a heavy hand on her shoulder. Janet was terrified. He left her after trying to reassure her. Two nights later she saw him again, 'but committed herself to God and the man did not

[25] NRS, CH2/722/2, p. 24.
[26] Julian Goodare, 'Away with the Fairies: The Psychopathology of Visionary Encounters in Early Modern Scotland', *History of Psychiatry* 31 (2020), 37-54, at 46.
[27] Refer to Chapter Two of the thesis, 74-5. For the quote, refer to Balfour, *Memorial*, ed. Sharpe, 19.

speak to her'.[28] Millar never confessed to the demonic pact. On 21 June 1678, Marion Veitch, one of the accused witches investigated during the late 1670s witch-hunts that swept across the presbyteries of Dalkeith, Edinburgh and Haddington, confessed to her interrogators at the parish of Keith (now known as Humbie) that she first entered the Devil's service sometime between the end of 1650 and 1651. Veitch confessed that during this time, the Devil met her at 'the Reidford', where she had 'carnal copulation' and 'renounce[d] hir baptisme' to him.[29] She confessed that the Devil gave her a new name and called her 'broadback'.[30] Interrogated further about what the Devil asked her to do, Veitch told her interrogators that at that initial meeting he asked her to 'destroy hir neighbours' and 'blaspheme His [God's] name', but she confessed 'quhich God did not permitt hir to do'.[31] She went on to confess to attending many witches' sabbaths, where she named other accused witches.

At Irvine on 10 February 1682, Margaret Dougal, a skilled magical practitioner and servant to Major-General Robert Montgomerie, was accused by her fellow servants of stealing some linens in the Montgomerie household.[32] In order to clear her name, she claimed that she had the power to summon the Devil who could tell her the location of the stolen linens. Later that day, around three in the afternoon, Dougal went to the cellar and summoned the Devil. After she had summoned him, she was taken to her bed by one of her servant friends, where, under non-judicial questioning, she confessed to a member of the household what had transpired in the cellar. Dougal confessed that she had summoned the Devil three times in order to reveal the location of the stolen linens; and that each time she summoned him, he tried to take her back to hell with him, but she resisted him by throwing feathers pulled from a recently killed black cock, uttering the phrase 'Begon you doge'. Eventually, after raising him for the third time, she managed to find out the location of the stolen linens. After she had confessed this story to her interrogator, she was asked 'if she wes not affraid least the Devell should take her away and God give her up to him, sieing shee adored and worshipped him, speaking to him so familiarly'. Dougal replied 'that though shee did such a thing, yet shee alwayes keeped her

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[28] MS unavailable for consultation. Quote taken from Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of Witches*, 136.
[29] NRS, High Court of Justiciary Processes, 1678, JC26/49/'peaston witches' bundle, item 5.
[30] NRS, JC26/49/'peaston witches' bundle, item 5.
[31] NRS, JC26/49/'peaston witches' bundle, item 5.
[32] For perceptive discussions of this case, see Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious* Self, 121; and Henderson, *Witchcraft and Folk Belief*, 136-7. For a scholarly edition of Dougal's confession, see 'An Account of a Confession of Raising the Devil on 10 February 1682', ed. Ciaran Jones, in *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society, XVI* (Scottish History Society, 2020), 143-57.

heart and trust to God'.[33] The kirk session of Irvine was alerted to her case the next day, 11 February, and the minister, John Stirling, along with some of the elders, went to the Montgomerie household to investigate the matter further.[34] No evidence, however, survives of what was said during this interrogation. The minister and the kirk session must have thought her case serious enough to pursue a criminal case, as on 2 March the privy council ordered that she be transported from Ayr to Edinburgh for trial.[35] Dougal's case was considered by the privy council committee for public affairs at Edinburgh, who, on 21 March, decided that her case should be 'dismised'.[36]

On 6 February 1701, Elizabeth Lauchlon accused Janet M'Robert as a witch to the kirk session of Kirkcudbright.[37] Lauchlon claimed that she went into M'Robert's house when she was not in and saw M'Robert's spinning wheel moving on its own. When she tried to stop it, she was 'beat back to the door' and hurt her head; she claimed nobody saw the incident.[38] Lauchlon also told the session that on another occasion when she was in M'Robert's house when M'Robert was present, the Devil appeared to her (Lauchlon) 'in the likeness of a man' and asked her to serve him, but she refused 'saying she would rather give herself to God Almighty'.[39] M'Robert begged Lauchlon not to tell anyone about what had happened. Lauchlon went on to tell the session that the Devil appeared to her again in M'Robert's house when she was alone and desired her to join him, but she refused him for a second time.

All the accused witches discussed above maintained their Christian identity by expressing their allegiance to God or confessing that God influenced them somehow which allowed them to resist the Devil. By making these statements in the context of a narrative of resisting the Devil, the accused followed the scripts of spiritual behaviour associated with the statuses of the Christian soldier and the penitent sinner, which I highlighted in the first two chapters of the thesis. Such statements in the confessions of

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[33] 'Confession of Raising the Devil', ed. Jones, 156.
[34] 'Confession of Raising the Devil', ed. Jones, 157.
[35] RPC, 3rd ser., v. 7, 350.
[36] NRS, High Court of Justiciary Processes, 1682, JC26/60/5; the exact item is unnumbered. I thank Laura Doak for bringing this reference to my attention.
[37] For more on M'Robert's case, refer to Lizanne Henderson, 'The Survival of Witchcraft Prosecutions and Witch Belief in South-West Scotland', *The Scottish Historical Review* 85 (2006), 52-74, at 61; see also Henderson, *Witchcraft and Folk Belief*, 264; Edward J. Cowan and Lizanne Henderson, 'The Last of the Witches? The Survival of Scottish Witch Belief', in *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, ed. Goodare (Manchester, 2002), 198-217, at 204.
[38] *Witchcraft and Superstitious Record in the South-Western District of Scotland*, ed. J. Maxwell-Wood (Dumfries, 1911), 83.
[39] *Witchcraft in the South-Western District*, ed. Maxwell-Wood, 83.

accused witches demonstrate the extent to which wider Reformed culture permeated the lives of ordinary parishioners, and they further reinforce a core argument of this thesis - that underlying sermonic exhortations on aspects of conversion-centred spirituality, such as spiritual warfare, were scripts of spiritual behaviour that people were to internalise and draw on in their own conversion experiences and everyday lives. Witches' confessions, though exceptional in and of themselves, and the product of coercive questioning, show how some parishioners adapted these scripts to match the circumstances they found themselves in.

IV. Physical resistance

Narratives of resistance against the Devil in which the accused articulated Reformed conversion-centred spirituality, however, were not the norm. Accused witches more frequently described mundane, physical narratives of resisting the Devil. On 7 June 1649, Agnes Clarkson, one of the Haddington witches accused during the nationwide panic of 1649-50, confessed before her interrogators in the castle of Dirleton that around eighteen weeks previously, another accused witch, known only as the 'pyper's mother in Longnidrie' – who was staying with her in Agnes's house – asked her to 'become the Devill's servant'. She declined, at which time she confessed 'a black wind and mist' filled the house and left her feeling 'verie affrayd'. The next morning, as the 'pyper's mother' left the house, she again asked Agnes to join the Devil, but Agnes refused for a second time. Interrogated further, Agnes claimed that around midnight the Devil appeared to her in her house 'in the liknesse of a black dun dogge' and 'in the liknesse of a black man'. She confessed that he had carnal copulation with her and 'desyred her to become his servant' and renounce her baptism, which she confessed she did.[40] In addition, on 2 July 1649, Isobel Brown, one of the Eyemouth witches, confessed before the kirk session that around six months earlier, as she was travelling around North Berwick, the Devil appeared to her 'in the liknes of ane great man and offered hir money iff she wald consent to be his servantt'. She refused, as she confessed 'quhilk money he laid in hir hand and shee cast it from hir'. She went on to confess that the Devil 'prevailed so much with her' and that she entered into a covenant with him during a third meeting.[41] Isobel Brown's unwillingness to do the Devil's bidding is shown in another Eyemouth witch's confession. A few days

[40] RPC, 2nd ser., v. 8, 189.
[41] RPC, 2nd ser., v. 8, 195.

later, on 8 July, Margaret Dobson confessed before the elders and minister of Coldingham, Samuel Douglas, that she, along with Isobel Brown, the Devil 'in the liknes of ane foall', and some other accused witches, attempted to kill a member of their community, William Burnet. And that as they were about to 'tak William Burnits lyff, […] Isobel Broun wold not', and that the Devil went away 'rowlling'.[42]

Sometime in April 1650, Catharine Lyell was brought before the presbytery of Brechin. She confessed to the presbytery that when the Devil, who 'appeired to her in the likeness of ane man in her own hous', tried to kiss her, 'shee withdrew herself out of his arms'. Lyell was asked by the minister, Thomas Cooper, how she was able to resist his demonic temptations 'he being spirit but she flesh and bloode', to which she replied, 'she was then strong in nature'. She told the presbytery that since that encounter she had not seen the Devil 'two yeers since'.[43] Apart from this confession, no further evidence from Lyell's case survives.

Two accused witches at Alloa, Clackmannanshire, confessed and were known to have personally struggled with the Devil. On 23 June 1658, Katharine Rainie confessed before her interrogators at Alloa that when she first met the Devil in the likeness of a 'man with the gray cloathes', he tried to get her to enter his service, which she refused to do, saying 'that she cared not'. Her interrogators questioned her further about whether the man in grey clothes was the Devil, and she confessed that she found his hand cold: 'and quhen she fand it cold, that she wes feard & took out her hand agayne'. She continued, saying that once she found his hand cold 'sche thought he wes not righteous, she thought that it wes the Divell and sche said that she sained herself [blessed herself]'.[44] Rainie went on to tell her interrogators that she had been tortured through the use 'of hott stones to her feete and putting their [her torturers'] feete on hers pressing her feete to the hot stones'.[45]

At her trial on 3 August 1658, Janet Black, the second accused witch at Alloa, told the court that the Devil appeared to her 'in the liknes of ane blak dog with ane sowis [i.e., a female pig's] head', which she looked after for a period of time. At her trial, witnesses claimed that on several occasions they heard Black resisting and struggling with the Devil. William Morison and John Stenkirk claimed that Janet Black 'know of the black dog as

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[42] RPC, 2nd ser., v. 8, 196.
[43] NRS, CH2/40/1, fo 83v.
[44] NRS, Presbytery of Stirling Minutes, 1654-1661, CH2/722/6, p. 93.
[45] NRS, CH2/722/6, p. 96.

weall as hir self', and they told the court that 'sche banished the black dog from hir sex weikis'. Further witnesses, James Meldrum and David Keir, claimed that Black kept a dog that 'lay with hir in hir bed all last winter', and that she told them that the dog 'was the Divell'.[46] Finally, David Ferguson claimed that, one night when he was staying in Black's house, he awoke to hear her shouting 'Satan get out of my bed […] com out foull thieff and mak me quhyt of you'.[47]

In January and February 1662, some of the Bute witches confessed to resisting the Devil through physical confrontation.[48] The principal witch to be investigated, Janet Morrison, confessed to her interrogators in her own home on 15 January that, around Halloween the previous year, she met with a 'black rough fierce man' who enticed her with promises of a better life, for he claimed she was a poor woman 'begging amongst harlots and uncharitable people'. The Devil promised he would 'make thee a Lady'. He tried to take her hand, but she refused, saying she would meet him again 'that same night eight nights at Knockanrioch', a local hill.[49] Interrogated further about who the black rough fierce man was, she confessed 'she knew him to be the Divill and at the first she grew eyry [i.e., afraid].[50] After this confession, Morrison was imprisoned in the tolbooth at Rothesay, where, subjected to further questioning and interrogation, she repeated much of her former confession. She also added that she had entered into a covenant with the Devil, and that the Devil called himself 'Klareanough [clear enough]', indicating that he expected her to know who she was.[51] In one particular interrogation session, on 18 January, Morrison confessed that the Devil had asked her to kill two prominent members of the community, William Stephen and Walter Stewart, but she refused.[52]

Morrison went on to name others whom the authorities subsequently interrogated. On 28 January, Margaret McLevin confessed to her interrogators that,

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[46] NRS, JC26/26/3, item 21.
[47] NRS, JC26/26/3, item 20.
[48] See Lizanne Henderson, 'The Witches of Bute', in *Historic Bute: Land and People,* ed. Anna Ritchie (Scottish Society of Northern Studies, 2012), 151-161; Henderson, 'Witch-Hunting and Witch Belief in the Gàidhealtachd' in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, ed. Goodare, Martin and Miller (Basingstoke, 2008), 95-118; and Willumsen, 'A Narratological Approach', 531-60, for a more detailed discussion of the confessions of the Bute witches.
[49] *Highland Papers,* ed. J.R.N. Macphail, 4 vols. (Scottish History Society, 1920), iii, 20.
[50] Macphail, *Highland Papers*, iii, 20. The scribe wrote that she was interrogated on 19 January, although this is most likely an error, since Morrison was arrested and imprisoned in the tolbooth on 18 January.
[51] Henderson, 'The Witches of Bute', in *Historic Bute: Land and People*, ed. Ritchie, 158. Also, the phrase 'Klareanough' might have been a scribal error, in the sense that Morrison, being asked who the Devil was, told her interrogators that it was clear enough who he was, but which the scribe mistook as Morrison attributing the phrase to be the Devil's name. See Willumsen, 'A Narratological Approach', 551.
[52] Macphail, *Highland Papers*, iii, 23.

sometime previously, the Devil appeared to her in the 'lyknes of a man' while she was staying in a room in Balichtarach. She told them that he desired her to go with him, but she refused. McLevin went on to confess that the Devil reappeared and asked her to take his hand, which again she refused. This time, however, she claimed that he grew forceful and 'took hir by the midle finger of the rycht hand quhich he had almost cutt off hir and therwith left hir'. McLevin told her interrogators that the Devil dragged her by her right leg, and that her finger hurt for around a month after this confrontation. Interrogated further about her dealings with the Devil, she continued, saying that he appeared to her for a third time 'in a very ugly shape' when she was working in a barn, and that he again desired her to go with him. She refused for the third time, and the Devil replied 'I will either have thy self or then thy heart'.[53] Such a confession did not seem to satisfy her interrogators, since she went on to confess that, on the condition that the Devil heal her painful finger, she would enter into a covenant with him. She went on to confess to partaking in acts of *maleficium* and attending several witches' sabbaths. Finally, Margaret NcWilliam confessed to her interrogators on 14 February that, a 'spreit in the lyknes of a litle browne dog desyred her to goe with it', but, like Morrison and McLevin, she confessed that she refused his initial advance.[54] She went on to confess that he appeared to her again, and that she entered into a covenant with him.

All these narratives of physical resistance against the Devil were still in keeping with the role of the Christian soldier and wider messages of spiritual warfare. All Scots were taught to resist all manner of mundane temptations. And, as I explored in Chapter Two, even some pious lay Scots recorded physical confrontations with the Devil which parallel how some of the accused witches discussed above claimed to have physically resisted him. For instance, in their spiritual diaries, Mistress Rutherford and Elizabeth Blackadder described resisting the Devil in physical form. Rutherford described how the Devil gripped her by the wrist, and Blackadder described seeing the Devil as a black dog in her bedroom. Moreover, both described verbally confronting the Devil through prayer.[55] Thus, witches' narratives of resisting the Devil through physical confrontation, although mundane and not especially spiritual, were nonetheless part of this wider pietistic culture.

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[53] Macphail, *Highland Papers*, iii, 6.
[54] Macphail, *Highland Papers,* iii, 18.
[55] Refer to Chapter Two of the thesis, 81-2.

Conclusion

Accused witches' confessions of resisting the Devil demonstrate how far the Reformed culture of spiritual warfare was articulated by parishioners. All these narratives reveal the extent to which they engaged with the discourse of spiritual warfare and the scripts of spiritual behaviour attached to the role of the Christian soldier, that is the Christian person actively opposed to the Devil and his temptations. What set the Christian soldier apart from the unregenerate and the ungodly was his or her recognition of the sovereignty of God, articulated through spiritual resistance and directed through the power of the Holy Spirit. By resisting the Devil and acknowledging God's power, accused witches reinforced the role of the Christian soldier and the culture of spiritual warfare.

These narratives, however, do not demonstrate that accused witches were deeply pious. But equally, they demonstrate more than people accused of witchcraft simply being aware of the Devil and God. Commenting on the topic of spiritual warfare in Scotland, Emma Wilby has suggested that, while parishioners 'would have been cognisant of the Devil's ongoing conflict with God', some 'may not have conceptualized this battle, as did the educated godly, as the ultimate metaphysical conflict between the spiritual principals [principles] of good and evil, wherein the human conscience was the primary arena and the human soul the prize'.[56] This chapter has shown that some accused witches, such as Isobel Watson or Margaret Dougal, who claimed to have given themselves over to God rather than the Devil, *did* understand spiritual warfare as the metaphysical war between God and the Devil over the war for the human soul. And even in cases where the accused did not understand the theological significance of spiritual warfare, this chapter has shown that some of these less pious accused witches were able to articulate similar spiritual concepts. In other words, there is perhaps very limited evidence of accused witches who genuinely believed that they were Christian soldiers, but more evidence of those who were able to articulate the role and present themselves, to God and their interrogators, as Christian soldiers.

Did these narratives of resistance against the Devil resemble Reformed conversion? To some extent they did. Some of the accused's narratives of resistance against the Devil represented an attempt to purge themselves from the identity of the

[56] Wilby, *Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 473.

ungodly witch that had been forced upon them during the questioning process. Faced with an insistent demand during their interrogation that they acknowledge their depravity and produce a narrative of the demonic pact, some of the accused witches told narratives of resistance which left them with some self-respect and separated them spiritually from the ungodly identity of the witch. Furthermore, the accused may have told these narratives in order to salvage their Christian identity that had been replaced by the identity of the witch during interrogation.

The narratives of resistance examined above, however, did not resemble conversion in one key respect. They reinforced the culture of spiritual warfare and showed the extent to which the role of the Christian soldier was articulated by parishioners--certainly fundamental components of conversion-centred spirituality. However, the accused witches examined above did not confess to spiritual role change, a process, which I have argued elsewhere in this thesis, was fundamental to how Scots of all sorts understood and articulated Reformed conversion. During the interrogation process, many of the accused confessed that their resistance against the Devil failed and that they succumbed to his temptations - in other cases, the confessions are simply not detailed enough to argue that they underwent role change. In all the confessions looked at in this chapter, it is clear that they did not achieve the same type of spiritual relief and subsequent role identity changes that perhaps more pious Scots described in their conversion narratives. In the last chapter of the thesis, Chapter Six, I focus on confessions showing processes of role change and where the accused formed narratives and role identities of themselves as penitent sinners - confessions where there is clearer evidence of changes between different role identities.

Chapter Five

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Spiritual Counselling, Ministers and Witches

During an interrogation for witchcraft, ministers sometimes questioned accused witches about their meetings with the Devil and about any harmful magic that they were thought to have practised. Some ministers went further than formally questioning the accused: they tortured them or became personally involved in searching for and apprehending suspects. Alongside these judicial duties, the minister performed a spiritual role. He counselled the accused, hoping to produce a tangible conversion experience that would enable the accused to reconcile with God. This chapter explores the spiritual side of the witchcraft interrogation: spiritual counselling in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Scottish witch trials.

The chapter considers four themes. Firstly, the chapter examines the minister's role as a pastor in wider Scottish society, detailing how he was supposed to provide support to soul-troubled parishioners. Secondly, the chapter examines the role of the minister in the trials and explores how and in what ways ministers counselled accused witches during the interrogation process. Thirdly, it considers how accused witches received and responded to the pastoral counselling. And finally, it examines some confessions of penitent witches, considering how they articulated the role of the penitent sinner. Overall, the chapter argues that historians should view the minister involved in the trials as an interrogator and a spiritual counsellor caught up in the legal and administrative operations of witch-hunting, and who might have provided the accused with the spiritual language they needed to articulate conversion-centred spirituality.

I. The minister as pastor

To help the sinner understand and navigate their spiritual journey, there was a demand for the minister to become a pastor. But what was a pastor? Neal Enssle, describing the pastor in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English thought, argues that 'He was to be a "shepherd to his flock", a mentor and a teacher, a healer of social and spiritual wounds,

a preacher, a peacekeeper, a judge, a counselor, and a confessor'.[1] The English counsellor thus had several roles, and many Scottish ministers fulfilled the same roles. The minister's role as a pastor had been established since the *Second Book of Discipline* (1578), which instructed that 'the pastor pray for the people, and namely, for the flock committed to his charge; and to blesse them in the name of the Lord', and to 'watch over the manners of his flock, that the better he may apply the doctrine to them, in reprehending the dissolute persons, and exhorting the godlie to continue in the feir of the Lord'.[2] In 1645, *The Directory of Publick Worship* expanded on the pastor's role in much more detail, stating that the minister was

> to admonish, exhort, reprove, and comfort them [his parishioners], upon all seasonable occasions… to prepare for death; and, for that purpose, they [the parishioners] are often to confer with their minister about the estate of their souls; and, in times of sickness, to desire his advice and help, timely and seasonably, before their strength and understanding fail them.[3]

The pastor was to bring people to their knees in despair only to raise them up in the knowledge and experience of a merciful God. He would threaten his hearers with the pains of hell, hoping that they would collapse in terror as they contemplated the abyss. Thus, reduced to nothing, they would become malleable in the hands of the skilled physician of the soul, who would help them to find solace and, hopefully, assurance of salvation.[4]

But how and in what ways were ministers supposed to counsel sinners? And what type of spiritual services did they offer? Ministers normally provided counselling to those on their deathbeds who suffered from religious despair, that is fear of damnation. It was the job of the minister in this situation to help the afflicted individual overcome their feelings of despair. William Livingston, pastor of Lanark, counselled Bessie Clarkson for more than three years until her death in April 1625. Bessie struggled with unbelief. She said to Livingston, 'I finde the wrath of an angrie God, of a crabbed [angry] God […] I finde him dayly coming against mee', and claimed that 'I find the Devill, the world, & the flesh fighting against me, *I* feele both Satans assaults, and *I* lye under Gods wrath'.[5] She

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[1] Neal Enssle, 'Patterns of Godly Life: The Ideal Parish Minister in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century English Thought', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997), 3-28, at 4.
[2] David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. Thomas Thomson, 8 vols. (Wodrow Society, 1842-9), iii, 536.
[3] 'On visitation of the Sick', in *The Directory of Publick Worship* (Edinburgh, 1645).
[4] Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism, 1590-1638*, 101; Yeoman, 'Heart-Work, 21.
[5] William Livingston, *The Conflict in Conscience of a deare Christian, named Bessie Clarkson* (Edinburgh, 1632), 1, 19. Emphasis in the original.

also implored him to call her 'thou wretched, sinfull and wicked woman'.[6] Bessie was crying out for a relationship with God that she felt she could not get, no matter how many times Livingston exhorted her and prodded her heart to recognise that her experiences of despair were but a part of the journey to receive God's mercy. He encouraged her to lean on Christ, to wait for the Lord to come and lift her spirits, no matter how badly she felt she had sinned. He then went on to quote to her the example of sinful Old Testament saints like David who was saved despite terrible sin.[7] Bessie recognised what Livingston was doing and thanked him for his counsel, but she did not believe that it helped her. Nevertheless, Livingston continued to counsel and help Bessie, his constant support reinforced in this statement: 'I haue a warrand to mourne with them that mourne: and to pittie and pray for all that are in trouble, chiefly of my owne flocke'.[8] At one point, when Bessie showed some improvement, he said 'Seeke on, and I will pledge my soule for yours, that you shall bee safe'.[9] Bessie never showed an outward sign of her assurance, although on her deathbed 'her hands and eyes were heaved to the heavens, and so giving the signe of victorie, she randered her spirit'.[10] Livingston was sure that Bessie had undergone a conversion at the point of her death. He published his experience of counselling, perhaps to show wider Scottish society how people who faced terror and 'unbeliefe' should be treated: as sinners, not eternally damned.

Another notable example of deathbed counselling is found in the account of John, Viscount Kenmure's conversion. He was counselled by the pastor Samuel Rutherford between early August and September 1634. Kenmure confessed to Rutherford that he feared dying and feared the amount of bodily pain he was experiencing at the time. Rather than devoting himself to introspection, Kenmure focused on worldly things, such as his own health and recovery. Rutherford, not satisfied with the level of soul-searching, chided Kenmure and stated:

> My Lord, you are not aware of a deep and fearfull temptation of the Devil, by the which your soul is dangerously ensnared, you have conceived hope to return back again to this life, but I tell you my Lord, ere it be long, you shall be presented before the Judge of quick and dead, to receive doom and sentence according to your works, I have warrant for me to say this, therefore I beseech you my Lord, as you tender your own souls salvation, be not deceived ere it be long, time will

[6] Livingston, *The Conflict in Conscience*, 2.
[7] Livingston, *The Conflict in Conscience*, 9-10
[8] Livingston, *The Conflict in Conscience*, 10.
[9] Livingston, *The Conflict in Conscience*, 33.
[10] Livingston, *The Conflict in Conscience*, 41.

> be no more with you eternity is drawing on, your glass is shorter then you are aware of, *Satan* would be glad to steal your soul out of this life sleeping.[11]

Kenmure's self-constructed idea of godly security was shattered, and he was even reduced to contemplating reprobation, claiming '*Is there no hope of mercy*?'[12] This, however, was precisely what Rutherford wanted: to make Kenmure aware of his insecurity, to probe his soul for grievous sins that he had committed, and to make him understand the need to depend on Christ. After Kenmure had revealed all, Rutherford, in true pastoral fashion, threatened him with the terrors of hell and God's wrath:

> [he] told him what everlasting burning was; and with that the Pastor turned his back upon him, and said now my Lord, I have not one word of mercie, from my Lord to say to you, God hath sealed up my lips that I dare speak nothing to you but one thing, the wrath and ire of God Almighty [...] my Lord, you are extreamly pained, I know now both in body and minde, what think you of the lake of fire and Brimstone, of everlasting burnings, and of utter darknesse with the Devil and his Angels.[13]

Rutherford's aim was to push Kenmure into a state of terror where he could purge his self-perceived unregenerate identity, and in the process nurture a new, purer identity that was devoid of all concern for worldly things and was solely committed to the sovereignty of God through Christ. This is exactly what happened: Kenmure began to cast aside his fear of death and started to depend on Christ, as he said to Rutherford:

> God knoweth I durst not challenge him, yea howbeit he should not love me, yet I will still love him, yea though the Lord should slay me, yet I will trust in him, I will lie down at Gods feet; let him trample upon me, I will die if I die at Christs feet.[14]

He cast aside concern for earthly matters and instead turned inward, to examine his self. Rutherford and Kenmure discussed the merits of Christ's embrace and the sweet joys of God's grace, with Kenmure coming to a sense of assurance of his salvation as his death grew closer. He spoke to friends and those in his household, reconciled past grievances, and reminded them of his example. On 12 September 1634 Kenmure died while Rutherford prayed for him. He was observed 'joyfully smiling, and looking up with glorious looks, as was observed by the beholders, and with a certain beauty, his visage was

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[11] Samuel Rutherford, *The Last and Heavenly Speeches, and Glorious Departure of John Viscount Kenmuir* (Edinburgh, 1649), 8. Emphasis in the original.
[12] Rutherford, *Heavenly Speeches*, 10. Emphasis in the original.
[13] Rutherford, *Heavenly Speeches*, 10-11.
[14] Rutherford, *Heavenly Speeches,* 11.

beautified, as beautifull as ever he was in his life; he expired with loud and strong fetches and sobs, being strong of heart and body'.[15] He died convinced of his salvation.

Deathbed counselling was just one category among several. Another concerned those who suffered from the terrors of conversion, a phase of spirituality that was generally experienced by young Protestants. Their terrors not only included feeling estrangement from God, but also demonic temptation.[16] During this time, the minister worked hard to induce a conversion in the afflicted, to help them overcome temptation and to reconcile with God. In 1624 Robert Blair, then minister of Bangor in County Down, Northern Ireland, counselled one of his parishioners who felt that the Devil wanted him to commit murder by stabbing Blair 'in exchange for a purse of silver'.[17] Rather than give up on the man, Blair helped him. He ordered the elder to convene the people of the village to pray and sustain him, and during the night he agreed to stay in the house of the distraught man:

> I began with prayer, and thereafter expounded the doctrine of Christ's temptations, closing with a prayer and singing of a psalm […] In the morning he took great courage to himself, defying Satan and all his works. Thereafter he recovered, behaving himself better.[18]

Blair, in his capacity as a pastor, helped the man's soul, and the Devil never troubled him again. This type of soul saving work is also exemplified by the nonconformist, covenanting minister, Donald Cargill. In 1668, Cargill visited a woman from Rutherglen who experienced the terrors of conversion. One day, she was milking her cows when 'two or three of them dropt dead down at her feet, and Satan, as she conceived, appeared unto her; which cast her under sad and sore exercises and desertion', so much so that she was brought to 'question her interest in Christ'.[19] Cargill, however, took her plight in his stride and counselled her by taking out his Bible. He named her and said, 'I have this day a commission from my Lord and Master, to renew the marriage contract betwixt you and him'. After some initial resistance toward his counselling, the woman eventually found divine comfort and cried out, 'O! salvation is come unto this house'.[20]

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[15] Rutherford, *Heavenly Speeches*, 30.
[16] Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, chs. 3, 4; Brock, 'Internalizing the Demonic', 23-43; and Yeoman, 'The Devil as Doctor', 93-105.
[17] Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 396.
[18] *The Life of Mr Robert Blair, Minister of St Andrews: Containing his Autobiography, from 1593 to 1636*, ed. Thomas *M'Crie* (Woodrow Society, 1848), 68.
[19] *The Life and Wonderful Prophecies of Donald Cargill* (Glasgow, 1840[?]), 10.
[20] *The Life and Wonderful Prophecies*, 11.

In June 1698, Henry Duncan, minister of Dunsyre, went to help a woman in his parish who had fallen into 'dreadful despair', so much so that Duncan said that her condition resembled demonic possession: 'she is roaring and gaping, frowning, foaming, and belching forth language of dreadful despair; she is tossing her head from side to side indevouring to knock herself dead'.[21] The woman was suicidal, claimed that she was damned and denied God, and demanded that the ministers should not pray for her. Duncan counselled the woman over several weeks, trying to convince her that evidence of God's love could be discerned through the fact that he had prevented her from taking her own life, and that her condition was but the work of Satan's temptations. At one point, Duncan even took her into his own home to help mend her soul, writing 'At length I took her into my family, caused my wife hold her in work. I myself prayed with her and caused her to pray, spoke to her often in private, and thus dealt with her the space of fourteen days'. Her condition, however, still did not improve, but rather 'relapsed again as bad as ever'.[22] The woman was sent away to her 'natural relations', and after several months of being dealt with by her friends, she eventually experienced conversion. She visited Duncan and thanked him for his care, 'sorrowing deeply and with tears that [she] should have provoked God so to desert her'. According to Duncan, writing in 1710, she continued in 'perfect delivery to this day'.[23]

The minister, acting as a pastor, formed an intimate and deep relationship with the afflicted persons he counselled. His commitment to the welfare of their souls is shown in the cases discussed above. In all of them, the minister faced resistance from the soul-troubled individuals – in some cases on more than one occasion. Rather than abandoning or giving up on the afflicted, he endeavoured to comfort them, going to such lengths as welcoming them into his home. Such examples of pastoral care demonstrate the need for a minister who could support his parishioners, both emotionally and spiritually. And in the witch trials, the minister performed such feats of pastoral care.

II. The minister as pastor in the witch trials

The interrogation process involved negotiation between the accused and the minister. The main priority of the minister was to uncover whether the accused had made a pact with the Devil. This involved questioning the accused and getting them to answer

[21] *Protestant Piety in Early-Modern Scotland,* ed. Mullan, 234.
[22] *Protestant Piety in Early-Modern Scotland*, ed. Mullan, 236.
[23] *Protestant Piety in Early-Modern Scotland,* ed. Mullan, 237.

questions relating to circumstantial evidence of when and where they had made a pact; it was their job to secure a confession of guilt. The scholarship on the Scottish witch trials has generally paid attention to his role in the administrative and governmental operations of witch-hunting, often emphasising his bureaucratic role on the kirk sessions and presbyteries. Christina Larner emphasised the lairds' responsibility for witch-hunting, though she also discussed the minister's role in searching for suspects, obtaining confessions and giving evidence at the trials.[24] Stuart Macdonald, in his regional study of witch-hunting in Fife, further discussed the minister's role on the kirk sessions, whose responsibility it was to investigate cases of witchcraft in the communities. Macdonald argued that the kirk sessions were important in the initial stages of witch-hunting, as they were the first governmental organisations to interrogate the accused and question accusers and witnesses.[25]

Although lay elders dominated the kirk sessions in sheer numbers, it was usually the minister who led the interrogation sessions against accused witches. Some historians, while quick to note that ministers were not solely responsible for witch-hunting, have nevertheless discussed at length ministers' interrogatory methods. Macdonald has discussed the methods of John Wilson, minister of Dysart, who was known to have contributed to the illegal execution of three witches (Janet Brown, Isobel Gairdner and Janet Thompson) by passing a long iron wire into their heads; he was also known to have personally tortured some of them and refused to release friends and family from prison.[26] Louise Yeoman has discussed the actions of Walter Bruce, minister of Inverkeithing, who personally petitioned the Scottish parliament for a commission to try witches in July 1649. He also tried to apprehend twenty-three suspects.[27] And in her PhD thesis, Paula Hughes commented on the involvement of some ministers from the presbytery of Peebles during the 1649-50 witch-hunt. Focusing on the cases of Janet Coutts and Marion Tweedy, Hughes noted that Alexander Dickson, minister of Kirkurd, and Robert Elliott, minister of West Linton, were part of a committee set up to investigate the accusations of witchcraft in Peebles. In particular, Hughes has noted that Dickson gathered 'a beig

[24] Larner, *Enemies of God*, 70-1, 73-5, 84-6.
[25] Macdonald, *The Witches of Fife*, 173-5, 175.
[26] Macdonald, *The Witches of Fife*, 83-4. I discuss Wilson further in the next chapter.
[27] Yeoman, 'Hunting the Rich Witch in Scotland: High-status Witchcraft Suspects and their Persecutors, 1590-1650', in *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, ed. Goodare (Manchester, 2002), 106-121, at 119.

scrowl of enformatiouns' against Marion Tweedy which he had obtained from parishioners in Kirkurd and Newlands.[28]

Even contemporaries commented on the zealous nature of some ministers. Writing in 1678, Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh claimed that when he was a young justice depute involved in the examination of some witchcraft suspects during the 1661-2 national witch-hunt, he spoke with an accused witch who told him that a minister forced her to confess by claiming that 'the Devil would challenge a right to her […] and would haunt her'.[29] This led Mackenzie to conclude that some ministers 'are oft-times in-discreet in their zeal'.[30]

Clerical figures could be concerned for the well-being of those whom they counselled. Brad S. Gregory has argued, with reference to Christian martyrdom in early modern Europe, that clerical figures involved in the interrogation and execution of heretics, as well as other criminals, did not take delight in their actions, 'they wanted to save souls and thought that every executed heretic was a political defeat, not a victory'.[31] And although some ministers involved in witch-hunts were zealous and desired to see the accused executed, others could be genuinely concerned for the accused's spiritual welfare. Historians working on German witch trials have done the most to highlight the interrogators' pastoral and spiritual role. As Lyndal Roper has argued,

> It is tempting to presume the interrogators had no human fellow feeling with the witch; that they regarded her as less than human […] Certainly the beliefs of the interrogators led them to view the witch as a member of the Satanic sect, sworn to do harm to her fellow Christians […] Yet this would be to miss the degree of moral commitment required of a witchcraft investigator. The interrogator had a high view of his sacred office, which was to save the soul of the witch by bringing her to renounce Satan and confess her sins […] The interrogator's role was like that of a priestly confessor.[32]

Thomas Robisheaux, commenting on the witch trial of Anna Schmieg in the German town of Langenburg between 1672-6, has reconstructed the intimate, albeit strained, spiritual relationship that developed between Schmieg and her pastor and interrogator, the court preacher of Langenburg, Ludwig Casimir Dietzel. Robisheaux has argued that

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[28] Paula Hughes, 'The 1649-50 Scottish Witch-Hunt, with Particular Reference to the Synods of Lothian and Tweeddale' (University of Strathclyde, PhD thesis, 2008), 104-6.
[29] George Mackenzie, *The Lawes and Customes of Scotland in Matters Criminal* (Edinburgh, 1678), 87.
[30] Mackenzie, *Laws and Customes*, 87.
[31] Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*: *Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), 80-1.
[32] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 57. Roper makes a similar argument in *Oedipus and the Devil*, 204-5. More generally, refer to Goodare, *The European Witch-Hunt*, 212-13, 219.

Dietzel was primarily concerned with leading Schmieg back to God and that fundamentally he saw witchcraft 'not as a crime, but a pastoral concern, a sin, an immoral and impious act barring the way to true Christianity'.[33]

The case for seeing the minister involved in witchcraft interrogations as a spiritual counsellor has been made for Scotland, too. Brian Levack has stated that in cases where ministers got the accused to confess to witchcraft and appear repentant without torture then this reflected 'a culture of confession' within witchcraft interrogations which was primarily concerned with getting the accused to 'acquire an assurance of salvation'.[34] Levack has also pointed out that confession also 'served the essential legal purpose of giving the privy council the grounds for granting a commission of justiciary'.[35] Emma Wilby has commented on the interrogation of Isobel Gowdie at Auldearn in 1662, by Hugh Rose, minister of Nairn, and suggests that he was concerned with comforting her soul. Wilby speculates on Rose's mindset when interrogating Gowdie:

> he [Rose] was similarly rigorous on Isobel's behalf, working hard to peel away her layers of response, as he did with his own conscience on a daily basis, attempting to uncover layer upon layer of increasingly subtle sins in order to reach the kernel of naked truth and true remorse at their core.[36]

And P.G. Maxwell-Stuart has argued that, 'efforts by the clergy who visited the imprisoned suspect witches was to get them to confess so they might free themselves from the Devil and so reconcile themselves with God, a role perfectly in tune with his duty as a pastor'.[37] While Scottish historians have generally noted that the minister performed a spiritual role during interrogations, less work has been done on the ways in which ministers counselled accused witches.

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[33] Thomas Robisheaux, *The Last Witch of Langenburg: Murder in a German Village* (London, 2009), 178-192, at 185.
[34] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 36.
[35] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 36.
[36] Wilby, *Visions of Isobel Gowdie*, 105-6.
[37] Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of Witches*, 143.

III. Spiritual counselling in the trials

In the first part of this chapter, I discussed how ministers were supposed to bring people to conversion, arguing that they told laypeople how to undergo conversion. But how were ministers supposed to bring accused witches to confession and thus conversion? What were the types of questions they asked and what did they expect the accused to say in response?

The minister drew on a structure of counselling – a structure not too different from the one examined earlier. First, like the pastor treating the soul-sick individual, he would reprove or admonish the witch, reminding them of the severity of their sin: in order for the accused to be reconciled with God, this involved the minister getting the accused to recognise their depraved state and to acknowledge the sin that they had committed. If they did not confess and acknowledge their guilt – if they did not assume the role identity of the witch – then they would not be able to repent properly and hence undergo conversion. During this time, he would exhort the accused to confess, reminding them of the need to repent sincerely and submit themselves to God. Second, he would comfort the accused, nurturing their spiritual state before execution. In all, the minister hoped that the accused would confess to the crime of witchcraft in the most honest and sincere manner possible.

This general structure of admonish, exhort, and comfort was used in the witch trials, and it is likely that the minister wanted to induce feelings of repentance – possibly accompanied by weeping – but Scottish scribes rarely recorded the spiritual dialogue between the minister and the witch, opting to include pertinent legal information directly relating to case. The main surviving evidence of counselling, however, details the minister's attempt to exhort the accused to confess in God's name and repent during interrogation – this is perhaps because the exhortation process, that is getting the accused to confess to sin in the general sense, was closely associated with his legal duty to get the accused to confess to the demonic pact – in other words, the minister melded his judicial and spiritual roles, pursuing a single line of questioning that fulfilled both purposes of getting the accused to repent and to confess to the demonic pact. It is also in these exhortations to repentance where we can see the minister reminding the accused of the role of the penitent sinner: the scripts of sorrowing for sin and submitting and surrendering to God.

David Dickson, who was involved in the witch-hunt at Irvine in 1618, counselled the accused witches John Stewart, Margaret Barclay and Isobel Crawford. In the first instance, Dickson was called by the justiciary court to visit John Stewart – who had confessed to meeting the queen of the fairies – and to 'exhort him to call on his God for mercie for his bygane [bygone] wicked and evil lyf'. He visited Stewart and encouraged him to confess, in the hope that 'God wold of his infinite mercie, lowis him out of the handis of the Devil quhom he had servit thir mony years by gane'. Stewart accepted the minister's offer of counselling, but was later found by the burgh officers, 'stranglit and hangit be the cruik of the dur'. He had taken his own life with 'the help of the Devill his maister'.[38] Sometime after, Margaret Barclay requested Dickson, along with four other ministers, and the Earl of Eglinton, to visit her while she was detained in the tolbooth. Once there, they exhorted Margaret Barclay to confess '[in] God's name by ernest prayer being called upon for opining of hir lipis, and causing of hir hairt that she by rendering of the truth miht glorifie and magnifie his holie name, and disappoynt the enemy of hir salvation'.[39] Dickson also visited Isobel Crawford, who refused to confess, and 'maid ernest prayeris to God for oppnyng hir obdurit and closit hairt, and that God wold caus hir out of her awin mouth reveill the secret of that matter'.[40] Dickson wanted Stewart, Barclay and Crawford to confess to witchcraft in accordance with the trial procedures, but also so he could lay the foundations for their conversion.

There is evidence of the minister exhorting the accused to confess in one of the late seventeenth-century Renfrewshire trials. The accused, John Reid, was implicated in the bewitching of the Laird of Bargarran's daughter, Christian Shaw. After the sentencing and trial of the seven witches at Paisley on 21 May 1697, Patrick Simpson, minister of Renfrew, visited Reid in the tolbooth. After some initial spiritual prodding, Reid confessed to meeting and covenanting with the Devil, renouncing his baptism, and attending a witches' sabbath in the back garden of the Bargarran house, where the Devil promised to protect him if he was ever caught.[41] Simpson, counselling Reid, asked:

> If he did now wholly renounce the Devil (for he had now formerly told how Satan had not performed his promise) and give himself to Jesus Christ, and desire to find mercy of God though Him.[42]

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[38] *Witchcraft, at Irvine*, 11.
[39] *Witchcraft, at Irvine,* 12.
[40] *Witchcraft, at Irvine,* 15.
[41] *Sadducismus*, 43.
[42] *Sadducismus*, 43.

Reid assented to the minister's work on his soul, but, like John Stewart, later committed suicide in the tolbooth.

To be sure, exhorting the accused to confess was a psychologically brutal process, but some ministers became personally invested in maintaining the spiritual wellbeing of the accused. During the 1658 witch-hunt at Alloa, Clackmannanshire, Margaret Duchell was visited by a minister who pleaded with her to repent and forgive her neighbours. The minister's identity is unknown, but he may well have been either John Craigengelt, the minister of Dollar, or Matthias Simpson, minister of Stirling. When he visited her, 'not as a witch bot as a dying woman', he asked 'if nou shoe would forgive all them who had wronged hir'.[43] She accepted and agreed that she would. He asked her more particularly if she would forgive another accused witch, Elizabeth Black. This time she refused. Again, he exhorted her, asking 'how shall then God forgive you, if ye will not forgive your neightbour'.[44] Again, she refused. Margaret Dutchell proved stubborn, but we can see how this minister – like some of the ministers who counselled wider members of Scottish society – did not give up in his spiritual duty, and his continual desire to exhort her to confess probably came from the best of motives. Dutchell died in prison in June 1658, but if she had survived until her execution she might have conformed to the minister's exhortations.

The spiritual role of the minister could extend to other witchcraft interrogators, too. In 1659, David Lindsay, an elder on the session of Kirkliston, visited the obstinate accused witch, Janet Miller. Initial attempts to get Miller to confess had failed, and Lindsay, visiting her in the tolbooth, took on the pastoral responsibilities of the minister:

> aftir she was put in prisoun I was apoynted by the session to be vpon the watch I was speiking to hir annent the sin of witchcraft I desyrid hir that she wed confes hir sin of witchcraft & gat merciy she said she had soumthing to say but she could not gat libirtty [i.e., that she struggled in conscience to bring herself to confess].[45]

He did not browbeat her, nor torture her. He took an opportunity to elicit a confession, but he also helped to ease her conscience, to help her reconcile with God. Like the ministers discussed above, he may even have seen himself as a spiritual counsellor, helping to win back her soul for God. And while we cannot deny the awful circumstances that

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[43] BL, Egerton MS. 2879, 15r.
[44] BL, Egerton MS. 2879, 15r.
[45] NRS, JC26/27/9, 'Janet Miller' bundle.

surrounded this type of counselling, we should not lose sight of the minister's altruistic aims.

The structure of counselling in the witch trials reflected the structure of everyday counselling prominent in cases of deathbed conversion and religious despair as I highlighted earlier in this chapter. In both instances, the minister's pastoral role centred on nurturing and controlling the afflicted individual's spiritual experiences and inducing a tangible conversion experience that would better prepare the soul-troubled individual for the reception of God's grace. In the witch trials we can see a similar structure that, like standard counselling, focused on repentance, reconciliation and the sovereignty of God. In highlighting this structure, we can see the minister in his role as a spiritual counsellor. Yet, due to the type of environment that the minister operated in when interrogating the witch, this counselling formed part of a broader demonological aim of securing a confession of guilt. To understand more about the dynamics of counselling in a predominantly legal environment, we must turn to examine how the accused themselves experienced and received the minister's attempts to comfort their soul.

IV. The reception of spiritual counselling in the trials

The intense spiritual pressure that ministers could bring to bear during counselling would have required a great deal of conviction to resist. So we must ask how this manner of counselling was received by the accused themselves. While there are many examples of accused witches who refused to answer the ministers questions, there are some examples of the accused who welcomed the minister's attempts to comfort their soul. The cases that follow suggest that the accused received this counselling positively, even in cases where they refused to confess and appeared impenitent till the end.

Some welcomed the direct spiritual support of the minister. At Stenton, Haddingtonshire, on 2 March 1659, the accused witch, Janet Man, confessed to covenanting with the Devil, renouncing her baptism and attending a witches' sabbath at Gallowhop Hill. Yet, she also confessed that 'she could not get a heart to repent for the Devil was locked in her heart', until a minister – possibly Richard Waddell, minister of Stenton, who was also involved in the interrogation of the main Stenton witch, Bessie Lacost – prayed and counselled her, where 'she got freedome to confess her other sinnes'

and thought 'hir heart was something lifted up'.[46] On 18 July 1661, one of the Dalkeith witches, Janet Painstoun, after being pricked for the Devil's mark by John Kincaid, 'out of the remorse of her consience did earnestlie send for the minister [of Dalkeith] William Calderwood' to pray for her before she made a confession.[47] On 2 January 1662, the Forfar witch, Isobel Smith, confessed to adultery and to entering into a pact with the Devil. She allegedly cried to the minister 'with tears and cryes for mercie and the help of their prayers'.[48] And in 1691, Janet Fraser from Closeburn also called on the ministers for support. Janet recorded falling into trances and having visions since November 1684. She appeared, however, before the presbytery of Penpont on 22 July 1691 and confessed that she thought she was possessed by an evil spirit, and desired that the ministers 'would commiserate her miserable & deluded condition, & would intreat God by earnest prayer that she may see the evil of her ways & may obtain repentance unto life'.[49]

Lillias Adie, the main accused witch in the persecutions at Torryburn, Fife, also expressed a desire for the ministers to help her soul. On 20 August 1704, after making a series of confessions about her involvement with the Devil, she appeared before the congregation on Sunday where the minister asked her to reiterate her confession. Adie stated that she had come 'to confess her sins, and to get her renounced baptism back again', and 'to express repentance for her sins […] She desired that all had power with God to pray for her'.[50] Adie died in prison on 29 August that year. Janet Cornfoot, an accused witch involved in the bewitching of Patrick Morton at Pittenweem, confessed on 28 June 1704 that, like Adie, she was 'very desirous' to have her baptismal vows renewed.[51] Cornfoot was beaten and killed by a crowd on 30 January 1705. Both Adie and Cornfoot may have believed that if they engaged with the minister's pastoral demands, they would be welcomed back into godly society; they may have found the minister's spiritual support emotionally liberating.

Not all the accused conformed to the counselling process as the minister intended: some refused to confess and appeared impenitent but became convinced of their own

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[46] NRS, JC26/26/2, item H.
[47] NRS, JC26/27/9, item 22.
[48] 'The Confessions of the Forfar Witches (1661), From the Original Documents in the Society's Library', ed. Joseph Anderson, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 22 (1887-88), 241-62, at 256.
[49] NRS, Presbytery of Penpont Minutes, 1690-1706, CH2/298/1, 14. Janet Fraser's visions have been discussed by Louise Yeoman. See Yeoman, 'Away with the Fairies' in *Fantastical Imaginations: The Supernatural in Scottish History and Culture*, ed. Lizanne Henderson (Edinburgh, 2009), 29-46.
[50] NRS, Torryburn Kirk Session Minutes, 1695-1717, CH2/355/2, p. 75.
[51] NRS, Presbytery of St Andrews Minutes, 1699-1705, CH2/1132/21, p. 295.

assurance of salvation through their interactions with the minister. In George Sinclair's *Satans Invisible World Discovered*, there is an extract from the diary of the minister of Kilwinning, James Ferguson.[52] Ferguson counselled the suspect witch, Elizabeth (Bessie) Graham. Her case first came to the attention of the authorities in August 1649, when she was accused by a neighbour for cursing a drink. Ferguson was subsequently summoned by the presbytery of Irvine to investigate and decide whether she was a witch. She was imprisoned for thirteen weeks and during this time Ferguson counselled her. Our first recorded instance is dated 15 November 1649, when Ferguson visited her in the tolbooth. She refused to confess to witchcraft but underwent conversion:

> Vpon *Munday* [15 November] before noon […] I posed her, what grounds of confidence she had, if it would be well with her Soul? She answered, *she had no grounds yet; for she had lived a wicked woman, and had not yet repented; but she hoped, she would get Heaven, and get repentance, and a change wrought in her: and though she was to live but a short while, she was sure of it, and that I* [James Ferguson] *would soon see it.*

Later that afternoon Ferguson was informed that Graham had 'fallen to pray, and had many gracious words, expressing her own vileness, and the sense she had of GODS Mercy, and with tears'. He went to visit her, where she continued:

> in aggreging [i.e., addressing the severity of] her sin, and guilt, and shewing her hopes of Salvation, and her desire to die, and all alongs she had such pithy expressions, and *Scripture* so often, and plentifully cited, that I was put to wonder; considering that I had ever found her altogether ignorant of the grounds of Religion, both before and after she was put into Prison.[53]

He continued to counsel her on points of repentance, salvation and God's mercy and she engaged with his counselling attempts, but she still refused to confess to witchcraft, knowing 'well enough her own innocency'.[54] Writing on 30 November 1649, Ferguson recorded that she remained obstinate; she was executed in early April 1650.[55]

At Ayr in April 1658, Janet Sawyer (Saers) became convinced before her execution that she was one of God's elect. Like Bessie Graham, she refused to confess to witchcraft and died impenitent. She had been accused by various members of her community, including a kirk session searcher, Adam Dalrymple, who claimed that he had seen her

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[52] George Sinclair, *Satans Invisible World Discovered* (Edinburgh, 1685), Relation XV, 109-20. Sinclair was notorious for copying material from old histories, however this narrative was corroborated by Wodrow and is based on the actual witch trial. See Wodrow, *Analecta*, i, 65; see also, NRS, Presbytery of Irivine Minutes, 1646-1650, CH2/197/1.
[53] Sinclair, *Invisible World*, 118-19.
[54] Sinclair, *Invisible World*, 119.
[55] Sinclair, *Invisible World*, 120.

with 'a devill out of hell', and a neighbour, Agnes Murdoch, who claimed to have seen her with the Devil as 'ane man with his face and neck covereit with blak & his wholl boddie cled in blak'.[56] Janet denied all these accusations. The assize, however, still found her guilty. A letter from an English official, Colonel Robert Sawrey, dated 26 April 1658, records her alleged execution speech, where she again denied all accusations and claimed to a minister that she was innocent: 'Sir, I am shortly to appear before the Judge [God] of all the earth, and a lye may damne my soule to hell. I am clear of witchcraft, for which I am presently to suffer'.[57]

While there is less evidence documenting the accused's own views about the counselling they received, nevertheless during the interrogation of both Elizabeth Graham and Janet Sawyer, the ministers' admonitions and exhortations influenced how they internalised their own sense of innocence and worthiness of God's mercy, even if the ministers did not explicitly counsel them toward complete spiritual security. In this sense, although both refused to confess to witchcraft, we can consider the ministers' counselling a success: they helped both Graham and Sawyer find signs of assurance of salvation. The positive reception of counselling in the witch trials shows that there was demand among the common folk for the minister to provide spiritual and pastoral support.

V. Articulating repentance

Even in cases where we cannot gauge the pastoral relationship between the minister and the accused because the questions or accused witches' responses to counselling do not survive, witches' confessions, in which the accused made penitent statements, can be used to highlight the influence of the minister's counselling and the accused's ability to articulate the role of the penitent sinner. Like lay Scots who narrated their conversion experiences, some accused witches who confessed to the crime of witchcraft appeared remorseful and lamented their sinful behaviour, suggesting that the minister's efforts at counselling influenced their responses. At Stenton, Haddingtonshire, in March 1659, Marion Angus confessed to her interrogators that 'about tuo years since or thairby' she went to a witches' sabbath at Gallowhop hill and entered into a pact with the Devil. At a

[56] NRS, JC26/25, 'Ayr roll'.
[57] *Scotland and the Protectorate: Letters and Papers Relating to the Military Government of Scotland from January 1654 to June 1659*, ed. C.H. Firth (Scottish History Society, 1899), 382.

later interrogation she reiterated this confession, but this time she appeared remorseful, saying 'which paction with the Divell sche repentis from hir heart, for which sin of witchcraft she confesses deserves and desyres to dye'.[58]

Two accused witches from Dalkeith also described the role of the penitent sinner during their interrogations. In July 1661, Elizabeth Graham, one of the Dalkeith witches, whom I discussed in Chapter Three of the thesis, articulated the role.[59] After her initial confession of witchcraft and entering into a pact with the Devil on 12 July, the next day Graham told her interrogators that she 'craved Gods mercie' and stated that her confession was true.[60] Eight days later, on 21 July, Graham repeated her former confessions to the minister at Dalkeith, William Calderwood, adding that 'schoe doubted of mercie through the great of her sins' and that she wanted 'her soule saved, for she had bein too long the Devils servant'.[61] On the next day, 22 July, she confessed how she had broken the Ten Commandments by committing herself to the Devil. And finally, on 27 July, her last interrogation before the beginning of her trial, she told her interrogators – before confessing to attending a witches' sabbath – that 'if shoe should hyde any things that shoe know shoe wold not get mercie'.[62] And on 21 July 1661, Marjory Wilson, who being exhorted 'severall tymes' earlier by William Calderwood and the bailie, William Scott, 'to confess and repent of her sins', confessed to entering into a pact with the Devil, and did so 'out of the remorse of conscience and sorrow for her sins'.[63] Wilson and Graham's trial took place on 3 August. Both were executed a few days later on 6 August.

Isobel Adam, another of the accused witches involved in the bewitching of Patrick Morton at Pittenweem in 1704, appeared repentant during her interrogations. Two anonymous pamphlets printed between 1704 and 1705 claimed to provide accurate details of Adam's confessions.[64] The first, titled *A True and Full Relation of the Witches at Pittenweem* (1704) – and printed while the witch-hunt was ongoing – sought to convince sceptical readers of the reality of witchcraft; and the second, titled *A Just Reproof, To the False Reports, Bold & Unjust Calumnies Dropt in two late Pamphlets* (1705), was a response to two earlier

[58] NRS, JC26/26/2, item H.
[59] Elizabeth Graham from Dalkeith is different from the Bessie Graham from Kilwinning discussed above.
[60] NRS, JC26/27/9, item 10.
[61] NRS, JC26/27/9, item 1.
[62] NRS, JC26/7/9, item 1.
[63] NRS, JC26/27/9, item 22.
[64] For a general discussion of the pamphlets, refer to Henderson, *Witchcraft and Folk Belief*, 217; and Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 267-76.

sceptical pamphlet which criticised the actions of the authorities during the witch-hunt, particularly their treatment of Janet Cornfoot.

Both pamphlets alleged that Adam appeared repentant before and after making her confession of entering into a pact with the Devil, which she told her interrogators while detained in the Pittenweem tolbooth in June 1704. In *A True and Full Relation*, the author claimed that Adam 'seems to be Penitent, and under great remorse', adding that after she had confessed to entering into a pact with the Devil, she 'seems Ingenious [ingenuous] in her Acknowledgements, and very penitent for her Wickedness'.[65] Another author gave a fuller account of Adam's confession in January 1704 in *A Just Reproof,* where he also commented on Adam's repentant behaviour. Again, as in the previous pamphlet, the author of *A Just Reproof* claimed that before she made her confession in the tolbooth of Pittenweem, Adam 'with Tears and more than ordinary Concern, made a free and large Confession'.[66] And, quoting part of a letter from the Lord Advocate, after she made her confession she allegedly felt remorseful having 'freely own'd her Guilt before him [the Lord Advocate]'.[67]

The author of the two pamphlets may well have embellished parts of Adam's confessions, attributing words to Adam that she never said, though some parts appear to be paraphrased from the original kirk session or presbytery records. And as Levack has noted with reference to the original presbytery records, there can be no doubt that Adam did articulate sorrow for sin, since it is recorded in the presbytery book that she 'renewed her confession "before many in prison, before the presbytery, and before thousands, and did it with tears"'.[68] Presumably, like Lillias Adie from Torryburn, Isobel Adam at one point appeared before the congregation and repented.

Conclusion

The minister performed two roles when interrogating an accused witch. On the one hand, he served as a representative of local authority: as a witchcraft interrogator, his job was to secure a confession of guilt from the accused. The Scottish witchcraft scholarship has tended to highlight his activities in the tolbooth, paying close attention to those who were

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[65] *A True and Full Relation of the Witches at Pittenweem* (Edinburgh, 1704), 11.
[66] *A Just Reproof, to the False Reports, Bold & Unjust Calumnies Dropt in Two Late Pamphlets* (Edinburgh, 1705), 21.
[67] *A Just Reproof*, 22.
[68] Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 36.

either zealous or used the witch-hunt to further their own political ambitions. Yet, on the other, as this chapter has shown, he also served as a spiritual counsellor, hoping – indeed praying – that the accused would confess and appear penitent for their crimes, trying to induce a conversion within them so that they might be better prepared for death. Not all the accused, however, were receptive to acts of counselling, and even in the face of stubborn or obstinate suspects, the minister still endeavoured to comfort their souls. Thus, in this sense, the minister's legal duty to secure a confession of guilt intertwined with his duty to tend to the welfare of the soul.

But how did this intertwining happen in practice? This chapter has suggested that it can be seen in the types of spiritual questions put to the accused. The minister asked a set of spiritual questions centred on nurturing the accused's spiritual condition that fulfilled both his roles as a witchcraft interrogator and spiritual counsellor – the most common question being whether or not the accused would repent in God's name. In asking this question, the minister fulfilled not only his function as a pastor, but also his legal duty to get the accused to confess to the crime of witchcraft. In asking this type of spiritual question, we can see how the practice of counselling in the witch trials served as an extension to, rather than a departure from, the minister's everyday pastoral role in wider Scottish society. In counselling soul-sick parishioners and accused witches, the minister's main aim was to induce feelings of repentance and repentant behaviour, but in counselling accused witches the minister also understood that they would still need to be executed if convicted.

The accused sometimes welcomed the ministers' attempts to counsel them. As I showed in some cases, the accused called on the spiritual support of the minister to help them confess their sins. In some of the same cases, the ministers' counselling convinced the accused that they were one of God's elect. And in other cases, we saw some accused witches who articulated their repentance as part of their confessions. Counselling, then, was not just a one-way street, with the minister browbeating the accused into submission, it required participation from the accused as well: for the counselling to be successful, the witch needed to demonstrate remorse and a genuine commitment to the sovereignty of God - they needed to know how to articulate repentance and appear penitent.

Chapter Six

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Confession as Conversion? Spiritual Role Identities and Role Change in the Confessions of Penitent Witches

In the previous three chapters, I have explored how the roles of the unregenerate, the Christian soldier and the penitent sinner were articulated in some accused witches' confessions, showing the extent to which people accused of witchcraft described and engaged with parts of conversion-centred spirituality. This chapter asks more fully whether accused witches really experienced spiritual role change when they were interrogated in the tolbooth, in a similar way to how some pious lay Scots described spiritual role change at various points in their conversion narratives. The chapter also asks: what were accused witches converting from and to? And what did the process entail?

Drawing on my discussion of roles, role identities and role change throughout the thesis, and through a close reading of three detailed confessions of penitent witches, Margaret Barclay (1618), Alison Dick (1633) and John Corse (1657-8), I argue that Scottish witchcraft confessions resemble Reformed conversion narratives in one particular way: they reveal narratives of spiritual role change where the accused described changes in their spiritual behaviour and role identities with the aim to reconcile with God. The first part of the chapter considers how some historians have discussed the topic of transformation of spiritual identity in execution speeches of penitent murderers and witchcraft confessions. The second and final part of the chapter turns to the key question of spiritual role change in the three detailed confessions. This chapter is not so much focused on whether witchcraft confessions *were* conversions, but rather considers what parts or components of Reformed conversion-centred spirituality one can see in witchcraft confessions; the focus here is more about resemblance than ontology.

I. Criminals, conversion and spiritual identity

This chapter adds to an existing body of scholarship which has explored the function of confession in criminal contexts as a means to transform one's self and identity.[1] Historians of late medieval and early modern Protestant spirituality, focusing on penitent criminals,

[1] For a general idea of the function of confession as a means to transform one's spiritual state, refer to Michel Foucault, *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling: The Function of Avowal in Justice*, ed. Fabienne Brion and Bernard E. Harcourt, trans. Stephen W. Sawyer (Chicago, IL, 2014), 203-9.

have often highlighted how confession before execution presented the criminal with an opportunity to transform their spiritual identity. Mitchell B. Merback, focusing on late medieval spirituality in Europe, has argued that confession before execution gave the criminal 'an opportunity to confess his [or her] sins to an attending priest or friar, who provided spiritual solace, implored repentance, heard confession and focused the condemned person's mind on the salvation which awaited'.[2] According to Merback, this practice was a part of 'rehumanising criminals' before death, since to die repentant and 'firm in the belief that one's soul would be vouchsafed in perpetuity' was to die a 'good death'.[3] And this was not just to the benefit of the criminal: to die repentant and assured of salvation set an example to all those who witnessed the good death, as Merback writes:

> far from being a damned wretch, the prisoner who accepts being sacrificed becomes, in the eyes of the public, a holy victim whose suffering and death make him into an intercessor for all, someone who can placate God's wrath; at the moment of death, he has the power to save, through a communion based Grace.[4]

The need to restore the criminal's soul, therefore, was not the sole responsibility of the criminal or the clerical figure counselling the criminal before execution. The entire community also played a part to ensure that the 'poor sinner's conversion and repentance was complete and satisfying', since all people, criminals or otherwise, were expected to die a good death.[5]

The preoccupation with transforming the soul and spiritual identity of the criminal was not confined to late medieval spirituality; it continued with Protestant spirituality, too. James Sharpe, the first scholar to work on recorded 'gallows speeches' and executions in early modern English murder pamphlets, argued that confessions made by criminals before their execution were 'of central importance'.[6] The confessions of such criminals served to remind spectators about the pervasiveness of ungodliness and what happens when natural, sinful humans act upon their basest desires. Sharpe notes that the confessions were 'usually forthcoming, seem to have been generally unforced, and were not merely an admission of guilt for the specific offence which led to execution, but rather a general account of past sinfulness and delinquency' - in other words, one's past sinful

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[2] Merback, *The Thief, The Cross, and the Wheel*, 148.
[3] Merback, *The Thief, The Cross, and the Wheel*, 144.
[4] Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel*, 157; Merback quotes from Lionello Puppi, *Torment in Art*: *Pain, Violence and Martyrdom* (New York, NY, 1991), 54.
[5] Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel*, 145.
[6] J. A. Sharpe, '"Last Dying Speeches": Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past & Present*, 107 (1985), 144-67, at 150.

self.[7] In making these confessions, the criminal was also supposed to repent and to be reconciled to their eventual death. Similarly, Sharpe, like Merback after him, claimed that in confessing to their crime and repenting, the criminal not only demonstrated that they accepted their fate, but also by confessing and repenting the criminal showed that they wished to die 'well'.[8] This involved making sure the criminal left the world in the most spiritually healthy way possible: ministers wanted to produce an 'active and convinced godliness' in the criminal.[9]

Sharpe also understood these confessions or last speeches as part of the state's attempt to foster ideological conformity among those who witnessed the execution. Through the criminal's confession, the state could promote the values it wanted wider society to adhere to. Peter Lake and Michael Questier have also considered the importance of puritan divines counselling criminals before their execution. And like Sharpe, they have highlighted the spiritual role of the minister and his attempt to bring the criminal to conversion. While Sharpe sees evidence of the state's attempt to impose ideological control, Lake and Questier argue that we should see 'the prisons and the gallows as the site or sites for a variety of ideological and emotional struggles, waged between a number of ideological fragments or factions, both Catholic and Protestant, clerical and lay'.[10]

Accused witches were serious criminals, too, and their statements of repentance during confessions were rather like the confessions of penitent murderers and other serious criminals, in the sense that accused witches' confessions were also expected to elicit some type of spiritual change. However, they were different in one key respect. The last speeches or confessions of penitent murderers and other criminals were made publicly, and as Merback, Sharpe, Lake and Questier demonstrate in their own way, there was a public dimension to the confessions of penitent murderers and criminals. Last speeches of penitent murderers and other serious criminals were to some extent staged to project certain values and ideologies to the spectators who witnessed the executions. This is not to downplay the sincerity of the religious authorities' counselling in these last speeches, but to recognise that they had a political and polemical undertone to them,

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[7] Sharpe, "'Last Dying Speeches'", 150.
[8] Sharpe, "'Last Dying Speeches'", 160.
[9] Sharpe, "'Last Dying Speeches'", 160.
[10] Peter Lake and Michael Questier, 'Agency, Appropriation, and Rhetoric under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the State in Early Modern England', *Past & Present* 153 (1996), 64-107, at 95-6.

especially if the accounts of the execution were published afterward. Accused witches' confessions, however, were usually made when they were being interrogated by the authorities in the tolbooth or local kirk. For certain, the authorities interrogated the accused with the intention to foster ideological conformity and to get the accused to adopt the spiritual values of the state and the wider godly community, but due to the lack of a public audience, there is a sense that witches' confessions were not staged or managed in the same way. Indeed, there are very few recorded examples of accused witches' last speeches before their execution, and those records that do survive tend to come in unofficial and unusual sources, such as the Irvine pamphlet discussed earlier in the thesis (and to be discussed later in this chapter).

II. Accused witches, conversion and spiritual identity

Witchcraft historians, focusing on penitent witches, have often concentrated on the accused witch's personal experience of spiritual transformation. They have highlighted how confessing to witchcraft allowed penitent witches to experience a transformation of spiritual identity, and they have argued that such transformations could be spiritually liberating for the accused. Christina Larner argued that for those accused witches who confessed and were penitent this 'represented a second revolution in their sense of personal identity and their relationship to community and to its God'.[11] Historians working on German witch trials have done the most to highlight the transformations of spiritual identity during the interrogation process. Laura Kounine has argued, with reference to Lutheran spirituality, that 'by procuring a confession from the accused, the person took on the identity of the witch, but also, simultaneously, by confessing their sins, the accused became a Christian once again'.[12] Focusing on the confession of Dorothea Rieger, Kounine has argued that 'the witch trial was predicated on *conversion* and a transformation of identity: from witch to penitent sinner, who deserved – in theory – a Christian burial'.[13] Thomas Robisheaux, examining the case of Anna Schmieg from Langenburg, has argued that by confessing to witchcraft 'her identity underwent a

[11] Larner, *Enemies of God,* 151.
[12] Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, 128.
[13] Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, 174. Emphasis in the original. It is interesting to note that in Scotland convicted witches did not get such a burial, no matter how penitent they were.

transformation'.[14] A first transformation occurred when she confessed to being a witch, and a second transformation occurred when she "'converted" […] and became a penitent and devout Christian, a "poor sinner"'.[15] Even though Kounine and Robisheaux's comments on confession and spiritual identities form part of broader arguments about how early modern German people understood their selves and articulated their identities in different ways, their discussions of confession and spiritual identities highlight that scholars should pay more attention to the spiritual dynamics of witchcraft confessions.

How complete were conversions of spiritual identity in witch trials? Kounine and Robisheaux argue that some witches really became penitent, that they really did experience changes in their spiritual identities. Referring back to the case of Dorothea Rieger, Kounine argues that by confessing to witchcraft, Rieger became a penitent sinner.[16] And Robisheaux has suggested that Schmieg really thought that confessing to witchcraft would 'cleanse and purify her' and shatter her sense of self.[17] Moreover, Lyndal Roper, focusing on the 1689 case of Juditha Wagner from Ravensburg, has argued that,

> By accusing herself of witchcraft, she committed suicide by proxy. Just as a case of witchcraft could be resolved by executing the witch, purifying the community, and offering the witch the chance of salvation and return in death to the fellowship of Christians, so Juditha secured her chance of going to heaven by having herself put to death.[18]

Recently, however, Rita Voltmer, commenting on the role of emotions during German witchcraft interrogations, has argued that recorded displays of repentance and sorrow, along with other documented displays of emotion or emotive behaviour, were no more than carefully constructed emotionological scripts dictated and controlled by the interrogators. Voltmer has argued that, forced to confess under torture, some German accused witches adopted the role of the penitent sinner because the trial process forced them to do so. By playing the part of the penitent sinner and expressing thanks to their interrogators for being brought to conversion and confession, the accused 'praised the harsh eradication of witches and demanded even more intense witch hunting'.[19] For Voltmer, then, the role of the penitent sinner – with its scripted emotive behaviours of

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[14] Robisheaux, 'Penance, Confession, and the Self', 126. See also Robisheaux, *The Last Witch of Langenburg*, 286-309.
[15] Robisheaux, 'Penance, Confession, and the Self', 127.
[16] Kounine, *Imagining the Witch*, 166.
[17] Robisheaux, *The Last Witch of Langenburg*, 293.
[18] Roper, *Witch Craze*, 196.
[19] Rita Voltmer, 'The Witch in the Courtroom: Torture and the Representations of Emotions', in *Emotions in the History of Witchcraft*, eds. Laura Kounine and Michael Ostling (Basingstoke, 2017), 97-115, at 107.

sorrow and remorsefulness – was simply intended to justify the entire trial process. But what about those accused witches who voluntarily appeared penitent or at least appeared penitent without torture being applied? Voltmer claims that such accused witches simply 'adopted' the role of the penitent sinner because 'it gave them at least the possibility to stage themselves as martyrs and blood witnesses'.[20] According to Voltmer, then, surviving trial records do not show that conversions of spiritual identity took place.

I disagree with Voltmer's argument. While trial records need to be read with care, to view penitent witches as simply the products of the interrogation process, as judicial instruments meant to reinforce the need for witch-hunting, is to downplay the possible existence of a genuine spiritual culture in witchcraft interrogations, a culture which Kounine, Robisheaux and Roper have shown was prevalent in some German trials. Moreover, in arguing that most trial records are too stereotypical to display genuine information about individuals, and that what is stated in such records only reflects the voices of the judges and interrogators, Voltmer claims that the witch trial records do not reveal the agency of the accused, and that historians must use 'other sources'.[21] Thus, she sidesteps entertaining the idea that the trial records, particularly the confessions, can show, for instance, religious redemption of the accused person. I argue that in some of the Scottish witchcraft confessions, even when following spiritual roles and scripts of spiritual language, the accused still possessed some agency in how they used those scripts to articulate their spiritual identities, and that witchcraft confessions can reveal this type of information.

The argument that Scottish witchcraft confessions resemble conversions has recently been made by Louise Yeoman. In a book chapter exploring the similarities between conversion experiences, demonic possession cases, prophetic visionary narratives and witches' confessions of meeting fairies, Yeoman has argued that each shared a 'narrative of transformation'.[22] In both conversion experiences and demonic possession cases, Yeoman argues that the sufferer and demoniac described a 'terror phase', which involved experiencing visions and apparitions of the Devil, and sometimes witches.[23] In both cases, the suffering layperson and the demoniac usually believed that

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[20] Voltmer, 'The Witch in the Courtroom', 108.
[21] Voltmer, 'The Witch in the Courtroom', 108-9.
[22] Yeoman, 'Away with the Fairies', 29-46. For Yeoman's discussion on the similarities between conversion experiences and demonic possession cases, see her older article, 'The Devil as Doctor', 93-105.
[23] See Yeoman, 'Devil as Doctor', 95; she reiterates this argument in 'Away with the Fairies', 38-9.

they were damned and going to hell. The transformation came when the torments ended, and the layperson and the demoniac reached a state of assurance of salvation. In comparison, Yeoman argues that in witchcraft confessions involving narratives of meeting fairies, the terror phase was characterised by either sickness or loss of power from the body. The transformation came when the accused described being visited by a fairy or spirit who healed them and gifted them with the power of prophecy or some other preternatural ability. Although narratives of meeting fairies in witchcraft confessions were more folkloric than conversion experiences and demonic possession cases, nevertheless Yeoman has argued that 'the similarities of structure may in fact be more important than the differences'.[24] Supporting Yeoman's general comparison between these three contexts, I argue that witchcraft confessions resemble conversions in the sense that one can see transformations of spiritual identity.

III. Margaret Barclay (1618)

Some accused witches' confessions reveal a process of spiritual role change that parallels the transformation of role change described in lay Scots' conversion narratives. In the summer of 1618, Margaret Barclay, an accused witch interrogated at Irvine, Ayrshire, appeared penitent after a long series of interrogations in which she retracted and then reaffirmed her confession of witchcraft.[25] Barclay was brought to the attention of authorities at the end of April 1618, after John Stewart, the initial suspect to be interrogated by the authorities, confessed that Barclay, along with himself and several others, cursed a ship belonging to her brother-in-law, John Dein, which sank off the coast of England in December 1617. Stewart told his interrogators that he visited Barclay's house around the end of November, and that there he saw Barclay, along with several others, making 'pictures and portraittis of clay, representing the figuris of men […] [and] ane meikill schip and ane litle boat of clay'.[26] What attracted the interrogators' attention even more was Stewart's confession that

> the devill apperit among thame in the similitude and lyknes of ane black litle quhalp, lyk unto ane lady's bonny black messen, as he termit it, and spack unto thame, saying, Be all my servants, and obey me, and renounce God, and I assure

[24] Yeoman, 'Away with the Fairies', 39.
[25] For a general discussion of the witch-hunt at Irvine in 1618, refer to Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland*, 42-6.
[26] *Witchcraft, at Irvine,* 5.

> you ye and ilk ane of you sall have ritches and gear aneuch and your hartis desyr in all thingis both be sey and land, and that thay all answerit – It sall be so.

He went on to confess that a short while after they all went to an abandoned house to participate in a witches' sabbath, and then travelled to the sea where they cast the clay effigies into the sea:

> cuist in the sey the schip of clay, and little boat of clay, […] with the foresaid muill figures and pictures of men, together also with sum litle reid stones the cullour of orangeirs.

Stewart then took his interrogators to Margaret Barclay's house and showed them where she raised the Devil. The local authorities swiftly apprehended Barclay and interrogated her about the curse she uttered before the ship set sail, and the various diabolical activities that Stewart had confessed that she had participated in. Barclay denied all at first, but later during the interrogation she confessed that she had uttered the curse 'spoken be hir in the grat graiff and malice of hir hairt, &c'; she maintained that she did not participate in any of the diabolical activities.[27]

Sometime soon after, possibly around June 1618, Stewart took his own life in prison. At this point during the witch-hunt, a commission had been granted for the trial of Stewart and Barclay, but since Stewart had taken his own life, Barclay became the only prime suspect left. Frustrated with the progress of the investigation, and since she had not yet confessed, the local authorities sought permission to use torture in order to get her to confess. The use of torture, however, proved unsuccessful: she continued to deny the accusations of witchcraft against her.

A breakthrough came when Barclay requested that David Dickson, the minister of Irvine, four other ministers and the Earl of Eglinton visit her in the tolbooth, where she would make a confession but only if torture was not applied. After being counselled by Dickson and some of the other ministers, she confessed that she conspired with Stewart and others to help make the magical clay effigies that caused the ship to sink.[28] She also confessed that she was present at the witches' sabbath at the abandoned house. Dickson, cross-examining her confession with that of another suspect, questioned her again. Barclay then confessed that she had lied because she did not want to die obstinate (unrepentant). She appeared remorseful and 'prayit ernestlie [to] the ministrie to pray to

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[27] *Witchcraft, at Irvine,* 6.

[28] See Chapter Five of the thesis, 138, for a more detailed discussion of the counselling of David Dickson.

God to pardonn hir, hir great and hynous offence'.[29] Barclay, however, later retracted her confession, claiming that 'all that I haif confest was in tortour, and befoir God all that I haif spoken is fals and untrue.'[30]

The assize, however, found her guilty, mainly due to the sincere efforts of counselling by David Dickson and the fact that Barclay had repeated her original confession at a moment when torture was not applied. As they noted,

> it was earnestlie knowin to the assessor that hir confession was maid ingeneously, being releivit out of all tortour with tearis, greit humilitie, and submissioun of mynd, and that she proceedit sua ordurlie in hir confessioun in mony poyntis […] and found hir worthie of death, conform to the Laws of the Realm.

After hearing that she was convicted of witchcraft, Barclay once again denied her former confession, saying 'Now ye haif fyllit me; befoir God I am innocent, and all that I haif spokin is fals'. Up to this point in the interrogations, Barclay had switched between confessing and then retracting. And even though she appeared repentant in one of her earlier interrogations, it is likely that her statement of repentance served part of a wider defence strategy rather than reflecting genuine spiritual belief; it seemed that Barclay was to be executed professing her innocence.

However, as her execution drew closer, the ministers counselled her again. This time she ratified her former confessions of witchcraft, stating 'I tak it betwixt me and God and be the death I am going to, all that I haif spockin is trew, and pray for me all'. She sought amends with those she had wronged, including her husband and several members of her parish, and she petitioned David Dickson to state publicly that all she had confessed was true. Barclay also told the authorities that she did not want another accused witch, Isobel Crawford, executed, since her confession about Crawford being a witch was false. Just before her execution Barclay cried, holding her hands up to heaven, 'God's blessing and myne be among you all, and pray for me […] Lord ressave my saull in his mercie'.[31] In the end, Barclay went to her death a penitent sinner.

What are we to make of Barclay's case? It is clear that, for the most part of the interrogation process, she struggled against those who sought to impose the role identity of the witch on her. Barclay sometimes professed her innocence, while at other times she acknowledged her sinfulness and the actions of witchcraft that she had participated in.

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[29] *Witchcraft, at Irvine,* 13.
[30] *Witchcraft, at Irvine,* 14.
[31] *Witchcraft, at Irvine*, 14.

The most dramatic and evident spiritual role change came towards the end of Barclay's trial, where she stuck to her confession of witchcraft and went to her death a penitent sinner. How genuine was this role change, considering that, on a at least two occasions, she had retracted her confession? There is a case to be made that she did truly become a penitent sinner, at least toward the end of her trial. Confessions and last speeches before execution presented the final opportunity for the accused to confess to their true beliefs with only the destination of their immortal souls to consider. Barclay framed her identity, not around herself as she had done several times before, but around God. Her public utterance 'Lord resave my saull in his mercie' shows that she submitted and surrendered herself to God – a type of spiritual behaviour that was expected of all genuine penitents and those who sought conversion. This is not to suggest that this was Barclay's only *true identity* before she was executed. After all, she had, on two previous occasions, retracted her confession of witchcraft and thought of herself as innocent rather than guilty. But there is no reason to doubt that she certainly thought of herself as repentant and guilty, and that this was a genuine identity *at the time* of her death.

IV. Alison Dick (1633)

Spiritual role change did not just take place before executions, it could happen during earlier interrogations too. In the confessions of Alison Dick, whom I discussed in Chapter Three, we can see a process of spiritual role change.[32] Accusations against Dick and her husband, William Coke, began in 1621, when the kirk session of Kirkcaldy investigated them concerning 'sundry poynts of witchcraft', which they denied.[33] They were imprisoned in 1623, but due to a lack of people willing to come forward to provide information against them, they were released upon a bond of caution. Although they had escaped punishment this time, they had been publicly exposed to the community as troublemakers, their reputations clearly damaged.

A decade later they again found themselves before the session of Kirkcaldy, once more accused as witches. Dick was the first to appear before the session on 17 September 1633, when she was accused of some activities 'tending to witchcraft'.[34] She denied the charges, but this time witnesses came forward who explicitly accused her of witchcraft,

[32] The case of Alison Dick and her husband William Coke is discussed in Macdonald, *Witches of* Fife, 145-153.
[33] Macdonald, *Witches of Fife*, 145.
[34] Macdonald, *Witches of Fife*, 145.

notably the use of curses against members of the community and the sinking of a ship. Since at least 2 October, Alison had been imprisoned in the church steeple, and on 8 October she was interrogated by the minister of Kirkcaldy, James Simpson, who asked her about how she entered into a pact with the Devil. Dick confessed to him that

> hir husband many tymes urged hir, and she yeilded, onlie tuo or thrie years since the maner was this, He gave hir soull and bodie quick and quidderfull (alive) to the Devill, and bad hir doe so, bot she in hir hart said God gyde me, and then she said to him I sal doe my thing that thee bid me and so she gave hir self to the Devill in the forsaid words this she confesit about four hours at even frielie without persuasion befoir Mr James Symson minister.[35]

By confessing to making a pact with the Devil, Dick assumed the role identity of the witch and acknowledged her own unregenerate status. But even within this single confession, we can see a process of spiritual role change. Yes, Dick confessed to entering into a pact with the Devil, but she did so unwillingly. First, as discussed in Chapter Three of the thesis, she blamed her husband for making her give her soul to the Devil. And secondly, the phrase 'she in hir hart said God gyde me' suggests that she continued in allegiance to God. As demonstrated in Chapter One of the thesis, in their sermons ministers constantly reminded their lay hearers that despite their earthly actions if they kept their thoughts true to God then this would help them prepare for conversion, and that they should interpret such thoughts as signs of godliness or at least as evidence that they were penitent and willing to reconcile with God. By acknowledging the sovereignty of God and confessing to entering into a pact with the Devil unwillingly, Dick started to adopt the role identity of the penitent sinner, but she may have also been experiencing the beginnings of genuine spiritual transformation. In Chapter Four, I highlighted this type of articulation in the confession of Margaret Dougal, who, when asked by her interrogator about justifying her interactions with the Devil, articulated her personal, Christian identity by stating that 'shee alwayes keeped her heart and trust to God'.[36]

Alison Dick made a second confession a week later on 15 October, where she became penitent. It was noted in the session book that 'Alisone Dick haveing ane great combat with hir self and even at the poynt of confession, she was thought confessit that she had renunced God and prayed to God to forgive hir all hir witchcrafts […] and said she hoped God wald yit drawe hir home to him'.[37] Dick, who had just recently confessed

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[35] NRS, CH2/636/34, p. 284. See also Macdonald, *Witches of Fife*, 148, for a paraphrased transcription.
[36] Refer back to Chapter Four of the thesis, 120-1. See also 'An Account of a Confession', ed. Jones, 156.
[37] NRS, CH2/636/34, p. 285.

to being a witch in league with the Devil, now cemented her role identity as a penitent sinner through formally sorrowing for sin and surrendering and submitting herself to God. Across her two confessions there is a clear desire to purge herself from being identified as in league with the Devil.

As with Barclay, we must ask did Alison Dick experience spiritual role change, or did she merely present herself in a certain way to appease her interrogators? There are a couple of points that support the idea that Dick experienced spiritual role change. Firstly, it should be noted that unlike Barclay, Dick never retracted her confession or professed her innocence: she remained repentant across both her confessions. Secondly, Alison's interrogators were not particularly interested in questioning her further about the Devil beyond her confession on 8 October. They did not ask her about where she had made the pact, whether she cemented it through carnal copulation, or if she had been at a witches' sabbath. In Macdonald's view, her interrogators were more concerned with punishing her alleged actions of *maleficium* rather than trying to uncover a demonic conspiracy. It is thus possible that her interrogators did not go to extreme lengths to shape her confession of entering into pact with the Devil. This supports the idea that while she may have been asked standard leading questions, the more idiosyncratic elements of her confession, such as her comment about the sovereignty of God and her husband's role in forcing her to join the Devil, were provided by Dick herself. And finally, as I discussed in relation to Margaret Barclay's last speech before her execution, sorrowing for sin and submitting one's self to God were expected behaviours of true penitent sinners. By confessing to sorrowing for sin and submitting herself to God, Dick directed her confessions not only to her interrogators but also to God.

V. John Corse (1657-8)

Spiritual role change can also be seen in the confessions of John Corse from the parish of Dysart in Fife, interrogated in December 1657 and January 1658.[38] His case came to light on 25 October 1643 when an accused witch, Isobel Prop, confessed to her interrogator that Corse and his wife, Margaret Beveridge, were 'witches'.[39] Both were thrown into the tolbooth, but nothing seems to have come of it, for their names appear

[38] For a general discussion of the confessions of John Corse and Margaret Beveridge, refer to Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of Witches*, 22-30. All these confessions appear as extracts from the Dysart kirk session minute book, copied and signed as documents to be presented at the Justiciary Court in Edinburgh.
[39] NRS, JC26/24/7, item 1.

again in a confession given by Grissell Rankin on 16 December 1647, where she 'declared openlie & plainlie Johne Cors and his wyfe Margret Baverage were witches'.[40] Prop and Rankin were both executed, but Corse and Beveridge escaped punishment. However, like Alison Dick and William Coke discussed above, having been previously accused of witchcraft was sure to leave a taint on how the community perceived them.

Almost a decade later, on 12 December 1657, Corse appeared before the session of Dysart and 'confest himself to be a witch'.[41] He also claimed that his wife, Beveridge, and a neighbour, Margaret Williamson, were witches too. A few days later, on 16 December, Corse appeared again before the session and after 'exhortation and prayer' made by the minister, James Wilson, Corse told his interrogators how he became a witch.[42] He confessed that in 1639, two men had approached him at Balbirnie mill in Glenrothes, and that one of the men carried a book in his hand. Corse asked one of the men to put his name in their book, to which one of the men replied, 'he would not till he saw whatt gate [i.e., which way] I would goe'.[43] They went away and appeared ten days later in the same place; this time they 'sought sundrie things' of Corse, but he refused them.[44] Corse confessed that the Devil was there and told him that 'flesh and blood had not given that'.[45] This statement seems to be reported speech, made up of an amalgamation of theological language and vernacular expression, which I discuss below.

There are a couple of points that need to be discussed further. Firstly, there is the mention of the Devil's sudden appearance. It is not clear whether Corse identified one of the two men as the Devil or whether the Devil was there at the meeting when the two men came back to ask Corse to help them. The text suggests that the scribe imposed the Devil in Corse's confession, but it is more likely that one of the interrogators asked Corse whether the Devil was present, to which Corse confessed he was, but the question was not recorded. And secondly, there is the phrase 'flesh and blood had not given that'. Maxwell-Stuart argues that the phrase in Corse's confession is similar to two Biblical verses, Matthew 16:17 and Ephesians 6:12.[46] Maxwell-Stuart suggests that Corse may have

[40] NRS, JC26/24/7, item 1.
[41] NRS, JC26/24/7, item 1.
[42] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7.
[43] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7.
[44] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7.
[45] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7.
[46] In the KJB, Matthew 16:17 reads 'And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven'. Ephesians 6:12 reads, 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*'. Emphasis in the original.

remembered fragments of one of these verses and incorporated them into his confession, or that the phrase may have originated with the minister, James Wilson.[47] While Maxwell-Stuart's interpretation is interesting, I find his citations to the Bible unnecessary. 'Flesh and blood' was a vernacular expression meaning human being; examples can be seen in the *Dictionary of the Scots Language*.[48] In the context of Corse's retrospective narrative, the Devil appeared angry at Corse for refusing the two men's request to do 'sundrie things'. Thus, the Devil's reply, 'flesh and blood had not given that', could loosely translate to 'no human being had given that'. The word 'that' in the context of Corse's narrative possibly refers to the Devil commenting on Corse's mortal status - in other words, as a corrupted, fallen human, Corse should not have had the power to refuse the two men's request.

Questioned further, Corse confessed that sometime after the encounter with the two men and the Devil at Balbirnie mill, he saw Margaret Williamson, Agnes Halket and the Devil 'lyke a black man', sitting inside his house with the front door barred shut.[49] Corse told his interrogators that sometime thereafter Williamson transported him to 'the 3 trees' to meet the Devil. Once there, the Devil asked Williamson 'what is that yee have brought me now[?]'.[50] She replied, 'a man that was counted ane good man upon the earth'.[51] Corse confessed that the Devil appeared angry at Williamson for bringing Corse, as he confessed that the Devil said that 'he [Corse] will returne back againe […] carie him back the way he come, for he would shame them all'.[52] Corse confessed that Williamson encouraged the Devil to mark him and he went on to confess that he entered into a pact with the Devil.

In this first confession, we can see a process of spiritual role change beginning. On 12 December he appeared before the session of Dysart and voluntarily confessed that he was a witch. In making this declaration, Corse took on the role identity of the witch. But in this confession on 16 December, Corse began to present himself as a good Christian, adopting the behaviours associated with the role of the Christian soldier. For sure, Corse told his interrogators that he had confessed to the demonic pact, but like Alison Dick discussed above, and some of the accused witches discussed in Chapter Four, he said that had done so unwillingly. In his narratives, albeit inconsistent and confusing,

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[47] Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of Witches*, 29.
[48] See DSL, www.dsl.ac.uk/
[49] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7.
[50] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7.
[51] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7.
[52] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7.

Corse frequently tried to separate himself from the Devil. He refused to do the two men's bidding in helping them at Balbirnie mill, which Corse confessed made the Devil angry; and in his confessions of meeting the Devil at the '3 trees' witches' sabbath, Corse presented himself as the 'good man' whom the Devil did not want as a servant but was forced to accept by the other witches present. In all, we can see how Corse drew on the role of the Christian soldier in his narrative, particularly the behavioural scripts of resisting the Devil, to present himself as a Christian and to separate himself from the role identity of the witch.

Corse was interrogated again three weeks later on 7 January 1658, where he reaffirmed to the minister, James Wilson, that his wife, Margaret Beveridge, was a witch, and he confessed to entering into a pact with the Devil on a different occasion at Auchtermutchy some time in 1651. He confessed that one night his wife, Margaret Williamson, Agnes Halket and the Devil appeared to him at his 'bed syd', where he entered into a pact with the Devil. After, Corse confessed that the Devil asked him 'what will yee have for this gift you have gevin me [i.e. his soul]'.[53] Corse replied, 'nothing', although his wife insisted that he ask for money.

Corse appeared two more times before the session of Dysart. On 17 January, he retold his original confession of meeting the Devil at Balbirnie mill at Glenrothes and at the '3 trees', albeit with some slight alterations. Firstly, he claimed that there were more witches present at the '3 trees' meeting. Secondly, he incorporated his previous statement about the Devil offering him a gift for his soul into this reaffirmed confession of meeting the Devil at the '3 trees'. Thirdly, that several of the witches at the meeting asked him to dance, to which replied he 'could not'.[54] And finally, he altered his account of entering into the pact with the Devil. He confessed that he entered into a pact, but that this time he was forced to receive the Devil's mark: 'Divell cast him [Corse] downe at his foot & markit him'.[55]

The process of spiritual role change can be seen in his last interrogation on 22 January, where he told the session that he wanted to 'convence his wyfe Margret Bevarage of her sin of witchcraft'. Further, he told the session of a time in 1656 when Margaret Beveridge invited her good brother (brother-in-law) into their house and that she asked

[53] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7.
[54] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7.
[55] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7.

Corse to lie with him all night. Corse told the session that he tried to convince her that 'it wair not her good brother but the evill man and he had once sein him before at ane evill turne when they were tempting him'.[56] He further declared that 'he desyred his wife to confess that shoe might gett here soule saved'.[57] Corse was tried on 2 February, and he was executed sometime soon after. No evidence survives concerning the fate of Margaret Beveridge, Margaret Williamson and Agnes Halket.

Corse's confessions reveal a process of spiritual role change similar to orthodox conversion narratives, a process which compelled him to question his personal spiritual identity, and how he was perceived by his interrogators and God. On 12 December he voluntarily presented himself as a witch to the session of Dysart, but with each subsequent interrogation he experienced role change – radical changes in his thoughts and behaviour – culminating with him presenting himself as a penitent sinner by the end of his last interrogation on 22 January 1658. Throughout his confessions, Corse adopted the roles of the Christian soldier and the penitent sinner, telling his interrogators of his godly and repentant behaviour. But, as with Margaret Barclay and Alison Dick's cases, we must ask did Corse experience spiritual transformation, or did he merely present himself in a certain way as part of a defence strategy or to satisfy his interrogators' demands?

Compared to Barclay and Dick's confessions, Corse's are the more inconsistent and convoluted, and it is hard to discern whether he really thought of himself as a penitent sinner. Most witchcraft confessions tend to document how the person became a witch. Corse's confessions do indeed document how he became a witch, but it is not exactly clear when he entered the Devil's service. He described making a pact with the Devil on two separate occasions – one time at the unspecified '3 trees' meeting; the other time in Auchtermuchty in 1651. Corse also modified his confession of the '3 trees' meeting during subsequent interrogations. Maxwell-Stuart has also questioned the sincerity of Corse's repentant behaviour, particularly in his last interrogation on 22 January where he wanted to convince his wife to confess. As Maxwell-Stuart states,

> it is not clear whether Margaret Beveridge was present at the session and John Corse was addressing her directly, or whether he was explaining to the minister or elders why he was apparently so keen to 'convince' her of her sin.[58]

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[56] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7. The plural 'they' probably refers to the previous confession in which Corse claimed that he was approached by two men.
[57] NRS, JC26/24/6, item 7.
[58] Maxwell-Stuart, *An Abundance of* Witches, 26.

Corse and Beveridge were clearly not on the best of terms. Throughout his confessions, Corse described an unhappy relationship between him and his wife, which raises questions about his motivation to help her spiritually. Indeed, he may well have presented himself to the session as repentant to spite his wife, who, the records tell us, had retracted her confession of witchcraft. In showing the session that he was the more amicable and cooperative of the pair, he may well have thought that the session would be more lenient with him. Nevertheless, whether Corse experienced spiritual transformation or whether he consciously presented himself as a penitent sinner for ulterior motives, this chapter has highlighted that ultimately Corse drew on the same spiritual roles as Barclay and Dick in order to fashion his Christian identity.

Conclusion

The confessions examined above cannot be interpreted as complete Reformed conversion experiences, at least not in theological terms. None of the accused witches examined above reached a state of assurance of salvation, and none specifically interpreted their transformations as the direct work of the Holy Spirit. But while one cannot argue that these witchcraft confessions were complete conversion experiences, they do resemble Reformed conversion in one way: spiritual role change.

While one needed a certain level of theological knowledge to articulate conversion, crucial to understanding Reformed conversion was the idea of spiritual role identities and role change. Conversion, at least how it was recorded, caused people to adopt spiritual roles that transformed their behaviour with the aim of reconciling with God; it caused them to experience a spiritual transformation of identity. How, then, do the descriptions of spiritual role change in the witchcraft confessions examined in this chapter compare with the descriptions of spiritual role change as recorded in pious lay Scots' conversion narratives discussed in Chapter Two of the thesis?

Like the lay Scots who documented their struggles with internalising their unregenerate role identity, in their confessions the accused witches examined above faced a similar situation in which they, too, had to confront human sin and come to terms with a similar, albeit even more ungodly, role identity: the witch. As in pious lay Scots' conversion narratives, role change took place when the accused described behaving differently. We started to see this type of conversion early on in Alison Dick and John Corse's confessions when they adopted the role of the Christian soldier, drawing on the

scripts of spiritual warfare to construct past interactions of resisting the Devil. In both their confessions, role change surfaced again when they described themselves as penitent sinners. In Margaret Barclay's confessions, this type of change appeared much later. She separated herself from the role identity of the witch by behaving as a penitent sinner before her execution. In all cases, these types of changes happened when they described new behaviours, thus articulating a new role identity which contrasted or appeared incompatible with the role identity of the witch.

But even though there were many similarities between lay Scots' conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions when we consider conversion as a process of spiritual role change, nevertheless there were two key differences. Firstly, conversion narratives of lay Scots tended to document role change over long periods of time: changes in role identities could take place over weeks, months or even years. They were constantly judging themselves and presenting and articulating their spiritual role identities over time, as we saw in practically all the conversion narratives discussed in Chapter Two. By contrast, in witchcraft confessions, role identity changes primarily took place during the interrogation process, because accused witches were forced to present and articulate their identities – even descriptions of past identities – at the precise moment of confession; they were to speak to their present selves. Hence, to an extent, we can think of witchcraft confessions more closely representing damascene conversions, with spiritual transformation taking place over a short amount of time in the tolbooth. And secondly, lay Scots who narrated their conversion experiences understood their role changes as the direct work of the Holy Spirit, while it is unclear whether accused witches interpreted role change as divinely given.

Overall, these three close readings of witchcraft confessions show how people accused of witchcraft engaged with aspects of conversion-centred spirituality – a spirituality that the Scottish religious historiography has argued was mainstream, but whose source-base has mainly focused on those who were able to leave behind first-hand accounts of their own conversion experiences and engagement with Reformed spirituality. This chapter has shown that a few accused witches really did experience spiritual role change during the interrogation process, and that they, like their more literate and perhaps more erudite counterparts, possessed a certain level of theological knowledge and ability to articulate spiritual roles and incorporate them into their own identities, even when placed in judicially demanding and coercive environments.

Conclusion

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Spiritual Roles in Early Modern Scotland

This thesis has compared how Reformed conversion-centred spirituality was articulated in sermons, lay Scots' conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions, with a particular focus on looking at the broad similarities across these three contexts. Overall, it has argued that, alongside viewing conversion as an emotional inner spiritual experience, historians can interpret Reformed conversion as a process of internalising culturally coded spiritual roles preached from the pulpit that forced people to transform their behaviour and identities with the aim of reconciling with God. Rather than focusing primarily on the theological dynamics of Reformed conversion, this thesis has built on religious and witchcraft historians' focus on conversion as a practical process, drawing on their discussions of the transformative powers of conversion to shape and alter identities and behaviour.

For the most part, it has concentrated on the articulation of spiritual roles in the confessions of accused witches to show how parishioners - many of whom did not leave behind first-hand accounts of their own conversion experiences - expressed the same type of spirituality as other parts of Scottish society. The accused, like their lay counterparts who narrated their own conversions, internalised their depraved statuses and commented on the Devil's ability to attack their mind and heart; they invoked God to fight off the Devil and in some cases described resisting the Devil by giving themselves to God in faith; they sorrowed for sin and surrendered themselves to God during repentance; and some even experienced changes in their spiritual identity during interrogation. All recognised that the Devil and God could interact with their internal states - in other words, their thoughts and feelings.

In the Introduction to this thesis, I discussed Yeoman and Mullan's speculation that Reformed conversion-centred spirituality was probably expressed by the lower orders of Scottish society. Through showing how frequently spiritual roles were described across parts of early modern Scottish society, this thesis has affirmed Yeoman and Mullan's earlier speculation, and it has implied that the Scottish Reformation, as a process, succeeded in instructing a significant part of the population on the doctrines of obsession, depravity, spiritual warfare and repentance, particularly, as this thesis has shown, in the

second half of the seventeenth century.[1] And even if we will never know whether parishioners fully understood the theological significance of such ideas or engaged with them to the same extent as those who put pen to paper, still this thesis has shown that a variety of lay Scots possessed the knowledge and language to articulate Reformed spiritual ideas and that they were certainly aware of how such ideas affected their identities.

In focusing on the similarities in how conversion-centred spirituality was articulated and expressed across these sources, the thesis has also contributed to the scholarship on Scottish witchcraft by showing that this type of spiritual culture extended to the environment of witch-hunting - an environment that has been viewed by historians primarily in its legal and judicial contexts. From the spiritual roles the accused described in their confessions, to how they were counselled by the minister in the tolbooth, it has shown that a witchcraft interrogation was not simply predicated on the judicial need to obtain a guilty confession and to confer the identity of the witch onto the accused person. Rather, paradoxically, a witchcraft interrogation was also a battleground to try to salvage the Christian identity of the accused person.

Although this thesis has focused on the similarities in how conversion-centred spirituality was articulated in sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions, there is one notable difference that merits further discussion: the extent to which the ministers, lay Scots who narrated their conversions and accused witches understood the spiritual roles of the unregenerate, the penitent sinner and the Christian soldier as a part of theology. In Chapters One and Two, I argued that ministers and lay Scots who narrated their conversions understood that spiritual roles were bestowed upon them by God or Christ, and that such roles were crucial to overcoming religious despair and achieving assurance of salvation. In the conversion narratives, I showed that role change was important in helping identify as one of the elect - since role change, particularly from unregenerate to Christian soldier, could be interpreted as evidence of the Holy Spirit working within the believer. In some accused witches' confessions, such as those of Margaret Dougal or Alison Dick discussed in Chapters Four and Six, I suggested that they, and some others, may well have understood the theological significance of spiritual

[1] For works that have discussed the Scottish Reformation as a complex process over time, rather than an event, see Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*; Langley, *Worship, Civil War and Community*, 1-5; McCallum, *Reforming the Scottish Parish*, 4-5; see also Langley, "A Sweet Love-Token betwixt Christ and His Church': Kirk, Communion and the Search for Further Reformation, 1646–1658' in *Scotland's Long Reformation: New Perspectives on Scottish Religion, c. 1500–c. 1660*, ed. John McCallum (Leiden, 2016), 87-111, at 88; and McCallum, 'Introduction' in *Scotland's Long Reformation*, ed. McCallum (Leiden, 2016), 1-26, at 18-22.

roles. Thus, we can think of some accused witches as genuinely pious. However, in the vast majority of witches' confessions examined in this thesis, there is evidence of knowledge of religious doctrines and the language to articulate them, but not necessarily personal piety. Most of the accused, for instance, did not explicitly describe spiritual roles in relation to concerns about salvation of the soul, nor did they frequently draw on Biblical stories or scripture to help explain their spiritual experiences. Overall, it seems that lay Scots who produced conversion narratives attached more theological importance to spiritual roles than people accused of witchcraft.

In the Introduction I briefly highlighted one limitation of my argument: trying to trace the transmission of knowledge of conversion-centred spirituality, especially in relation to accused witches. I have argued that the spiritual roles that accused witches expressed in their confessions originated in ministers' sermons, but this argument cannot account for how some accused witches examined in this thesis actually gained knowledge of these roles and other spiritual ideas. For example, the spiritual role of the Christian soldier and the attendant script of resisting the Devil through prayer originated in ministers' sermons, particularly in sermons centred on spiritual warfare, but accused witches may have encountered spiritual roles and scripts of spiritual behaviour beyond the context of preaching too. In Chapter Five, I suggested that some accused witches might have gained knowledge of spiritual roles when they were being counselled by the minister.

In exploring how conversion-centred spirituality was articulated across sermons, conversion narratives and witchcraft confessions, this thesis has raised possible avenues for future research. Much of this thesis engaged with the scholarly debate surrounding the Devil's role in the witch trials and wider Scottish society. As discussed throughout this thesis, Michelle Brock has argued that Scotland featured a 'shared spectrum' of demonic belief that centred on the Reformed doctrines of human depravity, predestination and the sovereignty of God.[2] I have generally supported Brock's argument. For instance, in Chapter Three, I considered how accused witches drew on the Reformed doctrine of human depravity and the Reformed emphasis on demonic obsession to describe the Devil, demonstrating that, to some extent, parishioners accused of witchcraft had absorbed some of what was preached from the pulpit. One avenue for further research could be to build on Christina Larner's idea of the 'new popular demonic' – an idea that

[2] Brock, *Satan and the Scots*, 8.

has not received much scholarly attention since she first wrote about it in *Enemies of God* in 1981.[3] According to Larner, the new popular demonic was a set of beliefs about the Devil which Scottish parishioners had internalised and understood, and which became part of popular culture in Scotland by the middle of the seventeenth century. She argued that witchcraft confessions allow historians to understand how the Devil was described, but because confessions were coerced responses to leading questions, they do not represent the accused person's real beliefs. Instead, Larner identified witness statements and accusations as potential sources for the new popular demonic, mainly because witnesses and accusers were not questioned as severely as suspected witches and they were not imprisoned and subjected to torture. She stated that in some witness statements and accusations, witnesses and accusers claimed to have seen the accused witch 'trafficking' with the Devil, normally in the form of a man in black or dull coloured clothes. Larner, however, did not question why witnesses and accusers described the Devil in these ways. Rather, she was more concerned about how their statements fitted in with the wider legal process of building up evidence against an accused witch. Julian Goodare has commented on Larner's idea of the new popular demonic and has suggested that some idiosyncratic accounts of accused witches giving themselves over to the Devil, 'by placing one hand on one's head and the other on the sole of one's foot, and swearing everything in between to the Devil' could be included as part of this new popular demonic. Goodare has highlighted, however, that the 'question of what Scottish peasants learned about the Devil from Protestant indoctrination remains open'.[4]

While this thesis has not focused specifically on Larner's idea of the new popular demonic, it has shown that Scots accused of witchcraft certainly incorporated Reformed understandings about depravity, humankind's sinful connection with the Devil and demonic obsession into their own worldviews. Therefore, any new study of the new popular demonic should include witches' confessions where the accused provided idiosyncratic narratives of their own depraved status and the Devil's mental temptations, alongside accusations, witnesses statements and more stereotypical parts of witches' confessions where the accused described entering into a pact with the Devil. A more thorough study of what ordinary people said about the Devil beyond the context of witch-

[3] Larner, *Enemies of God*, 144-5.
[4] Goodare, 'Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context', 34.

hunting, such as in cases of minor moral offences brought before the kirk sessions, would also help build on Larner's original idea of the new popular demonic.

This thesis has demonstrated the potential of using evidence from the witch trials to ask and answer questions about lay spirituality. Nevertheless, our understanding of lay spirituality in early modern Scotland would also be broadened by the use of comparative studies of elsewhere in Europe. This type of research has recently been demonstrated by Louise Yeoman. In a recent chapter, Yeoman has continued her research on aspects of seventeenth-century presbyterian spirituality by exploring the similarities between conversion experiences and divine possessions, that is possessions that resembled demonic possessions in which the afflicted person lost control of their mental faculties and physical body, but experiences in which God or Christ controlled the afflicted person rather than the Devil. Building on Sarah Ferber's work on possession in Catholic regions of early modern France, Yeoman argues that Ferber's idea of a sliding scale of conversion ranging from demonic to divine can be applied to Reformed Scotland.[5] In making this comparison, Yeoman has shown that there were other forms of 'ecstatic spirituality' in Reformed Scotland that were perfectly in keeping with more Calvinist orthodoxies and which were not thought to be associated with Catholic performances of exorcism.

Similarly, witchcraft trial records can be studied comparatively and could be incorporated into broader studies of lay spirituality. As this thesis has shown, there are similarities in how some Scottish and German accused witches drew on Reformed and Lutheran ideas respectively to articulate their spiritual identities. Alison Dick, Margaret Dougal, Magdalena Horn and Dorothea Rieger, just to name a few of the accused discussed in this thesis, referred to ideas of demonic obsession, depravity, spiritual warfare and repentance to fashion themselves as good Christians. Witchcraft trial records, then, also have the potential to broaden our understanding of the similarities between *different* early modern spiritual cultures, and to show what people learnt from decades of religious instruction.

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[5] Louise A. Yeoman, 'A Godly Possession? Margaret Mitchelson and the Performance of Covenanted Identity' in *The National Covenant in Scotland, 1638-1689*, ed. Chris R. Langley (Woodbridge, 2020), 105-123. For more on possession in early modern France, refer to Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (Abingdon, 2004), 115-23.

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