Witches DBQ

The time period of the 1480’s through the 1700’s marked a very eventful era. This was the time period when witch trials and witch persecutions where taking place for a variety of reasons. These reasons being: ageism and sexism, religious reasons, and political and economic gain. Not only did the witch trials make a remarkable impact on this time period but, the protestant reformation, catholic reformation and scientific revolution where creating a dent in the history of Europe at the same time. The reasons behind the witch persecution where all tied together in the aspect that they were driven by personal aspiration and gain.

There was a vast amount of people tried for being witches, but, the majority of these people where older women. Since political and religious leaders saw woman not as equals but as lesser beings in the mortal world it was most obvious for them to believe that woman were likely to be over taken by demons. Document one explains that in the bible it is told that the woman was formed from a “bent rib” therefore making her untrustworthy and credulous. They also say that in this scripture it is shown that since she was not made like man was, then she is imperfect which makes her deceptive and vulnerable to demons. (Doc 1) This was written by two catholic monks and was from the inquisitions. The purpose of this passage was to explain the reasoning they had as too why witches were so commonly woman. In catholic doctrine woman, cannot hold high official positons which makes them inferior to the image of a man. This is also why there was such a big difference in the sex of those persecuted. In Document 3 we can see that the difference between males and females executed as tremendous. In southwestern Germany, there is a difference of 63% and in Switzerland and part of France the difference is of 56%. (Doc 3) The evidence in this document continues to prove that there was a profuse about of sexism in the views of those convicting and putting witches on trial. There was also a whole other side to this sexism as well. Not only where woman being prosecuted but it was woman of certain ages and not open to just all woman. In Document seven we see that the median age of suspected witches was between 50 and 60 years of age. (Doc 7) This shows that villagers were very specific on the hunt for witches. Elder women have different outer appearances which could affected what was being looked for in a witch. Document six continues to prove this by stating that witches where childish old hags. (Doc 6) In part of the passage Wier calls the women being convicted of witch craft “Old”. This is a very precise word to use because he explains to readers that witches were of advanced age. John Wier also states in Document six that these old women are not capable of making sound decisions because of the size of their brain and age. (Doc 6) We know that Johan is a physician which can show bias as too his allegations and theories. Since he is a physician he is more prone to connect his reasoning to a medical reason such as that the woman’s brains are small. Therefore, document six and seven are proof that not only sexism was a motive to witch persecutions but also was the major issue of ageism against all the woman being accused.

Witch persecutions and the reasoning behind them where very much influenced by religion. The major influential religious leaders were all influenced by scripture and what the bible had to say. In Document five it is expressed that the catholic church must remove devilish people so they give permission to inquisitors to correct and punish all those with offences and who have committed a crime. (Doc 5) This passage was written Pope Innocent VIII who had much power. HE justifies his actions by giving power to the inquisitors to rid the countries of such a problem. Many popes prior and following him had been known for abusing the profuse power given to them. Pope Julius II is one example of this because he led his armies to battle while using the power of the papal estate and the large sway they had to do it. Not only was the catholic church known for abusing power but there were many protestants and Calvinist who did the same with their political power and sway. One of the leaders that started to arise was Luther after following the Protestant Reformation. In Document four it is said that scripture explains that great armies will wage war against religious people. The story of Mary Magdalene is also told in which she is possessed by a demon and the demon later return to her body. (Doc 4) This passage was written by John Calvin and has a great amount of bias as to how and why it was written. Calvin is biased because he is a Calvinist and Calvinist believe only in what is in scripture. That is why he quotes the story of Magdalen and tries to explain why it is necessary to be rid of witches. This Cristian doctrine of Protestants and Christians was very influential in the condemnation of witches. Not only did it affect the witches being tried but it also affects the daily lives of Europeans and their lifestyle.

Witch Trials were majorly affect by local charges. This made it possible for anyone to accuse a person of being a witch in order to gain political power more economic wealth. Document two says that trials were promoted by the possibility of economic gain. (Doc 2) Document two also says that this made it so no one was safe for money townspeople condemned many alleged witches. (Doc 2) This passage talks about how all those known as copyists, innkeepers and notaries were growing rich by the minute. With many wanting to watch the trials and persecutions business was starting to rise and many were growing rich. The purpose of this passage was to show that the witch trials weren’t only about ridding the world of demonic beings but also for a chance of economic gain. In Document five it is said that the catholic church hands over power to inquisitors to correct, punish and imprison all those going against the doctrine and committing offences as well as crimes. (Doc 5) This passage is Pope Innocent VIII letting all the people know that those who stray form the church will not go unpunished but will pay the price for their offence. This is also a way of reinstating and demonstrating the Papal power during that time period. The Papal states where then as much political as religious so this statements makes it clear that the pope and church have the power to correct all those who chose to disobey Cristian doctrine. The previous two passages are examples of how the witch trials were very influential to economic wealth as well as political influence.

The reality and belief of witches during the late 15th and through the early 18th century was very common. With the influence of economics and political practice, religion and as well as gender and age differences Witch trials and persecutions started to thrive and spread all throughout Europe. The witch trials and how popular they were greatly related to the holocaust. The witch trials were a time in which many people where brutally executed because of their difference in appearance. This related to the holocaust because during the holocaust a tremendous amount of people were brutally executed because they did not have the same appearance as Germans or the same beliefs. In both of these major historical events there was a major influence of politics and religion. The Europeans killed witches because they were demonic and negative in the eyes of Christians while Germans killed Jews because they had different views in the eyes of Germans and had different religious beliefs than the Germans