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King James I of England
Collected Works

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The Collected Works of
KING JAMES VI AND I
(1566-1625)



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The Renaissance Collection

KING JAMES I OF ENGLAND



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Collected Works of King James I of England



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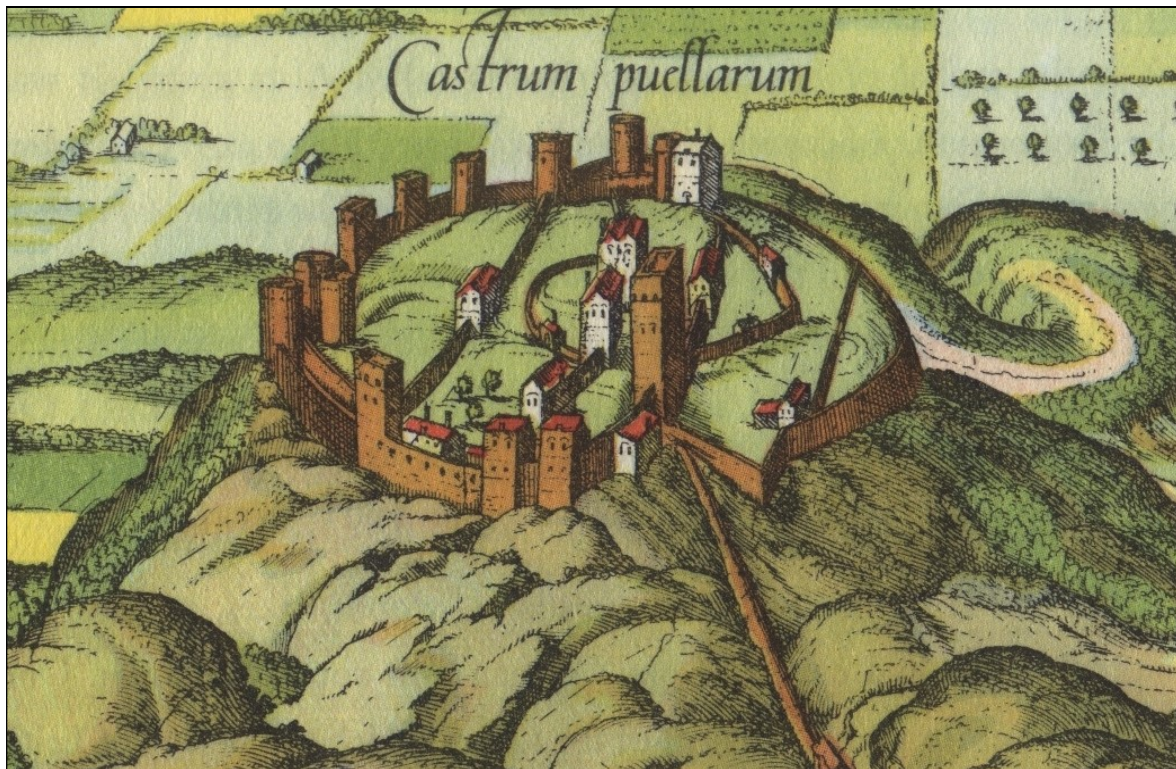
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The Prose



Edinburgh Castle, as depicted in Braun and Hogenberg's 'Civitates orbis terrarum', late sixteenth century — King James VI and I's birthplace



Edinburgh castle today



James' mother: Mary Queen of Scots, c. 1558



Portrait of James as a boy, after Arnold Bronckorst, 1574



James depicted aged 17 beside his mother, 1583. In reality, they were separated when he was still a baby. After eighteen and a half years in captivity, Mary was found guilty of plotting to assassinate Elizabeth I in 1586 and was beheaded the following year at Fotheringhay Castle.

Daemonologie (1597)



First published in 1597, *Daemonologie* is one of the most remarkable and politically charged texts of the Renaissance period. Written by King James VI of Scotland (who would later rule as King James I of England), it stands as the only treatise on witchcraft ever authored by a sitting monarch. Far more than a mere collection of folklore, it served as both a rigorous theological defence of the supernatural and a legal manifesto designed to inspire and guide state-sanctioned witch hunts. The text is structured as a Socratic dialogue divided into three short books. The conversation takes place between two characters: Philomathes, a rational sceptic that questions the reality of sorcery, and Epistemon, an expert that speaks with the king's voice to dismantle those doubts using biblical and philosophical arguments.

The first Book focuses on magic and necromancy, defining the nature of the Devil and his interactions with mortals, while the second Book details the mechanics of sorcery and witchcraft, outlining how individuals enter into explicit pacts with Satan and form "covens" to perform maleficium (harmful magic). The final Book classifies various types of spirits, spectres and monsters that trouble humanity, notably touching upon werewolves and vampires.

In his work, James outlines explicit practical methods for identifying witches, elevating practices like searching the accused for the "Devil's mark" (an insensitive patch of skin) and the "swimming test" (where the innocent sank and the guilty floated, rejected by the water). James injects a deep misogynistic framework into the text, arguing that women are inherently "weaker" and far more susceptible to the deceptions of Satan, tracing this vulnerability back to Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The composition of *Daemonologie* was likely triggered by James' own personal trauma and political paranoia. In 1589, James sailed to Denmark to claim his bride, Princess Anne. On their return voyage, the royal fleet was battered by violent, unnatural sea storms. James became convinced that he had been the target of a targeted assassination attempt by the forces of darkness. This conviction fuelled the brutal North Berwick witch trials (1590-1591), during which the king personally interrogated suspects. The confessions — wrung out under horrific torture — linked the alleged witches to James' political rival, the Earl of Bothwell, framing witchcraft not just as a religious sin, but as high treason against the crown. James wrote *Daemonologie* in the wake of these trials to justify the executions, standardise prosecuting laws and specifically refute European sceptics like Reginald Scot, whose 1584 text *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* had argued that witchcraft was an illusion.

For James, *Daemonologie* was an important work, as it helped legitimise his rule by the concept of the Divine Right. By positioning himself as Satan's primary earthly adversary, he reinforced his claim to the Divine Right of Kings. He argued that because the monarch was God's anointed deputy on Earth, the Devil naturally directed his fiercest assaults toward the crown. When James ascended to the English throne, *Daemonologie* was promptly reprinted in London to showcase the new king's intellectual prowess and fierce Protestant orthodoxy to his new subjects. His academic reputation as a "scholar-king" was greatly amplified by the tract. Upon arriving in England, James pushed through the severe 1604 Witchcraft Act, which made the invocation of evil spirits a capital offense and led to an exponential rise in executions across Britain. Decades later, his handbook directly inspired notorious witch-hunters like Matthew Hopkins and heavily influenced the legal frameworks of the Salem

Witch Trials in America. Perhaps the text's most visible cultural influence remains in English literature: to flatter the newly crowned king's known obsession, Shakespeare composed the tragedy *Macbeth* (c. 1606), explicitly pulling details of the Three Witches and their storm-raising magic directly from the pages of *Daemonologie*.



James in 1586, aged 20



DÆMONOLOGIE,
IN FORME
OF A DIA-
LOGVE,

Divided into three books:

WRITTEN BY THE HIGH
and mightie Prince, IAMES by the
*grace of God King of England,
Scotland, France and Ireland,
Defender of the Faith, &c.*



LONDON,
Printed by *Arnold Hatfield* for
Robert Wald-graue.
1603

Title page of a 1603 reprinting

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Newes from Scotland.

To the Reader.
Discourse.



The North Berwick Witches meet the Devil in the local kirkyard, from a contemporary pamphlet, 'Newes from Scotland'.

The Preface. To The Reader.



THE FEAREFULL ABOUNDINGE at this time in this countrie, of these detestable slaues of the Deuill, the Witches or enchaunters, hath moved me (beloued reader) to dispatch in post, this following treatise of mine, not in any wise (as I protest) to serue for a shew of my learning & ingine, but onely (mooued of conscience) to preasse thereby, so farre as I can, to resoluē the doubting harts of many; both that such assaultes of Sathan are most certainly practized, & that the instrumentes thereof, merits most severely to be punished: against the damnable opinions of two principally in our age, wherof the one called SCOT an Englishman, is not ashamed in publike print to deny, that ther can be such a thing as Witch-craft: and so mainteines the old error of the Sadducees, in denying of spirits. The other called VVIERVS, a German Phisition, sets out a publick apologie for al these craftes-folkes, whereby, procuring for their impunitie, he plainly bewrayes himselfe to haue bene one of that profession. And for to make this treatise the more pleasaunt and facill, I haue put it in forme of a Dialogue, which I haue diuided into three bookes: The first speaking of Magie in general, and Necromancie in special. The second of Sorcerie and Witch-craft: and the thirde, containes a discourse of all these kindes of spirits, & Spectres that appeares & troubles persones: together with a conclusion of the whol work. My intention in this labour, is only to proue two things, as I haue already said: the one, that such diuelish artes haue bene and are. The other, what exact trial and seuer punishment they merite: & therefore reason I, what kinde of things are possible to be performed in these arts, & by what naturall causes they may be, not that I touch every particular thing of the Deuils power, for that were infinite: but onelie, to speak scholasticklie, (since this can not bee spoken in our language) I reason vpon *genus* leauing species, and *differentia* to be comprehended therein. As for example, speaking of the power of Magiciens, in the first book & sixt Chapter: I say, that they can suddenly cause be brought vnto them, all kindes of daintie disshes, by their familiar spirit: Since as a thiefe he delightes to steale, and as a spirite, he can subtille & suddenlie inough transport the same. Now vnder this *genus* may be comprehended al particulars, depending thereupon; Such as the bringing Wine out of a Wall, (as we haue heard oft to haue bene practised] and such others; which particulars, are sufficientlie proved by the reasons of the general. And such like in the second booke of Witch-craft in speciall, and fift Chap. I say and proue by diuerse arguments, that Witches can, by the power of their Master, cure or cast on diseases: Now by these same reasones, that proues their power by the Deuil of diseases in generally is aswell proued their power in speciall: as of weakening the nature of some men, to make them vnable for women: and making it to abound in others, more then the ordinary course of nature would permit. And such like in all other particular sicknesses; But one thing I will pray thee to obserue in all these places, where I reason vpon the deuils power, which is the different ends & scopes, that God as the first cause, and the Deuill as his instrument and second cause shootes at in all these actiones of the Deuil, (as Gods hang-man:) For where the deuilles intention in them is euer to perish, either the soule or the body, or both of them, that he is so permitted to deale with: God by the contrarie, drawes euer out of that euill glorie to himselfe, either by the wracke of the wicked in his justice, or by the tryall of the patient, and amendment of the faithfull, being wakened

vp with that rod of correction. Hauing thus declared vnto thee then, my full intention in this Treatise, thou wilt easelie excuse, I doubt not, aswel my pretermittting, to declare the whole particular rites and secretes of these vnlawfull artes: as also their infinite and wondrous practises, as being neither of them pertinent to my purpose: the reason whereof, is giuen in the hinder ende of the first Chapter of the thirde booke: and who likes to be curious in these thinges, he may reade, if he will here of their practises, BODINVS Dæmonomanie, collected with greater diligence, then written with judgement, together with their confessions, that haue bene at this time apprehended. If he would know what hath bene the opinion of the Auncientes, concerning their power: he shall see it wel described by HYPERIVS, & HEMMINGIVS, two late Germaine writers: Besides innumerable other neoterick Theologues, that writes largelie vpon that subject: And if he woulde knowe what are the particuler rites, & curiosities of these black arts (which is both vnnecessarie and perilous,) he will finde it in the fourth book of CORNELIVS Agrippa, and in VVIERVS, whomof I spak. And so wishing my pains in this Treatise (beloued Reader} to be effectual, in arming al them that reades the same, against these aboue mentioned erroures, and recommending my good will to thy friendly acceptation, I bid thee hartely fare-well.

IAMES R^x.

First Booke.

ARGUMENT.



THE EXORD OF the whole. The description of Magie in speciall.



End of Sample