**The Role of King James I in Defining Witches**

Without King James, it is an open question whether the witch hunts of the 17th and 18th centuries would have reached the point that they did.

We can point to the Witchcraft Act of 1563 in Scotland; this act predated James' birth by 3 years, but it led to the foundation for the English Witchcraft Act of 1604, which followed Scotland's lead in making witchcraft in all its forms punishable by death.

The Witchcraft Act of 1604 followed two notable events in James' life. The first was his marriage to Anne of Denmark, and his exposure to the Danish court, which was at the time obsessed with witch hunts. The combination of the influence of the Danish court, the heavy storms which made difficult Anne's attempt to join James in Scotland and which came at sea as the couple was returning from Denmark likely laid the groundwork for his own fascination with witchcraft.

James wrote a book entitled *Daemonologie* in 1597. In this book, James had set out to "prove" that witchcraft was a real threat to mankind (using the Bible as an authority and final proof on the matter). The book also made the case for witches as women, and gave instruction on how to find a witch out.

Chapter V makes case:

*"What can be the cause that there are twentie women giuen to that craft, where ther is one man?"*

*"The reason is easie, for as that sexe is frailer then man is, so is it easier to be intrapped in these grosse snares of the Deuill, as was ouer well proued to be true, by the Serpents deceiuing of \_Eve\_ at the beginning….."*

James' argument is that women are frailer, weaker, and more prone to the Devil's lures. Thus, the case is made for women as witches. Later in the book, we see the basis for outlawing all witchcraft. The cure for diseases of witchcraft is

*"Onelie by earnest prayer to GOD, by amendement of their liues, and by sharp persewing euerie one, according to his calling of these instrumentes of Sathan, whose punishment to the death will be a salutarie sacrifice for the patient."*

In these two passages, we see James' case for witch hunts as valid; since the Bible proves that witches exist. We also have a case for women as the main participants in witchcraft, and the condemnation of those who practice witchcraft to death.