

SAMUEL PARRIS: MINISTER AT SALEM VILLAGE

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## Table Of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Samuel Parris .....	15
Chapter 3: The Sermons .....	36
Chapter 4: Conclusion .....	62
Appendix – Salem Village in the Seventeenth Century: A Chronology .....	75
References.....	77
Curriculum Vitae	

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The beauty of religious mania is that it has the power to explain everything. Once God (or Satan) is accepted as the first cause of everything which happens in the mortal world, nothing is left to chance...logic can be happily tossed out the window.

-Stephen King<sup>1</sup>

In mid-January of 1691/2 two young girls in the household of Samuel Parris, the minister of Salem Village, Massachusetts, began exhibiting strange behavior.<sup>2</sup> “It began in obscurity, with cautious experiments in fortune telling. Books on the subject had ‘stolen’ into the land; and all over New England, late in 1691, young people were being ‘led away with little sorceries.’”<sup>3</sup> The young girls of Salem Village had devised their own creation of a crystal ball using “the white of an egg suspended in a glass” and “in the glass there floated ‘a specter in the likeness of a coffin.’”<sup>4</sup> Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum state that the curiosity of the girls quickly became panic. “The magic they had tried to beginning, instead, to ride them: visibly, dramatically, ominously.”<sup>5</sup> The strange ‘fits’ that started with Elizabeth ‘Betty’ Parris and Abigail Williams, the daughter and niece of Samuel Parris, escalated and spread plague-like throughout the community of Salem Village when other young girls and a few women began exhibiting signs of affliction. These afflictions were interpreted to be the signs of witchcraft. “Those who

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<sup>1</sup> King, Stephen. *The Stand*. (New York: Anchor Books A Division of Random House, Inc., 1978, 1990); p. 617.

<sup>2</sup> Norton, Mary Beth. *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 2002; p. 326. Salem Village is now known as Danvers, Massachusetts.

<sup>3</sup> Boyer, Paul and Stephen Nissenbaum. *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 1. They note that the girls wanted to know what their futures held so they “began to cast spells and to practice ‘conjunction with sieves and keys, and peas, and nails, and horseshoes.’” (p. 1)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp. 1-2.

suffered from witchcraft...were victims of a crime, not a disease.”<sup>6</sup> Witchcraft was considered to be a punishable offense. Warrants were issued for the arrest of the three women that the girls accused of causing the fits. “Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne, and Tituba herself” were arrested.<sup>7</sup> The next week brought the arrest of Martha Cory. Soon after Martha was arrested, Sarah Good’s young four year old daughter, Dorcas, was also arrested. She “was sent to Boston prison, where for nine months she remained in heavy irons.”<sup>8</sup> One of the accused was a former minister of Salem Village. “Abigail Williams had charged that George Burroughs, a former minister in the Village who had moved away to a frontier parish in Maine, was himself a wizard—indeed, that he was the mastermind behind the entire outbreak.”<sup>9</sup> In a six-month period, from March 1691/2 to September 1692, nearly 150 people were accused of witchcraft and placed in jail for examination and trial. The majority of the accused were women, some were children and a few were men. Nineteen of the accused were executed, dozens died in jail and the rest were still awaiting their day in court when the crisis came to an end on November 5, 1692, after complaints were filed against the last three ‘witches’ to be formally charged. However, legal proceedings continued through the end of May 1693.

Beginning in the decades immediately following the Salem witchcraft trials, scholars have sought explanations for this event. At first they analyzed Puritanism to understand what caused the afflictions.<sup>10</sup> After some time, interest in Puritan studies moved away from focusing on the crisis in Salem. Some scholars examined the trials as

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 5. Boyer and Nissenbaum note that Dorcas’ father declared eighteen years later that “she hath ever since been very chargeable, having little or no reason to govern herself.” (p. 5)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Brauer, Jerald C. "Reflections on the Nature of English Puritanism." *Church History*, Vol. 23.2 (1954).

a cultural movement. In more recent decades Puritanism has again been scrutinized in relation to events such as the Salem witch trials by paying close attention to the texts of sermons, diaries, and letters of New England Ministers. The focus here is on the sermons of Samuel Parris, the minister during whose tenure the witchcraft crisis occurred. The goal is to examine how his preaching affected his parishioners. Scholars have looked at sermons delivered by New England ministers in order to compare types of sermons delivered and published. Few have focused on a textual analysis of the sermons.

Since 1940, most scholars have considered Perry Miller, a historian who taught at Harvard University until his death in 1963, to be the leading authority on Puritanism. Miller wrote many books that deal with the intellectual history of the Puritans in New England. According to George Selement, in "Perry Miller: A Note on His Sources in *The New England Mind*," Miller argued that the Puritans had a coherent worldview which was firmly embedded in their religion even though economic considerations had motivated them to settle in New England.<sup>11</sup> "I am herein concerned with defining and classifying the principal concepts of the Puritan mind in New England, of accounting for the origins, inter-relations, and significances of the ideas."<sup>12</sup> Miller's introduction in *The New England Mind* is very insightful to his writing technique and to his arguments on

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<sup>11</sup> Selement, George. "Perry Miller: A Note on His Sources in the New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 1974. Selement criticized Miller's techniques for documentation. "Unfortunately Miller obstructed most historians from scrutinizing the materials he used by abandoning conventional documentation, eschewing print, and depositing his footnotes in Houghton Library of Harvard University." (p. 454). Miller indeed did not use conventional methods for documenting his sources. His books on Puritanism contain endnotes, but they do not particularly deal with the sources that he quoted, but rather the sources that he looked at when surmising his ideas. At the beginning of his 'notes' he states, "Unless otherwise indicated, works of New England authors were printed at Boston." He also mentions where the citations of Harvard theses were obtained. In his introduction, Miller is up front about his lack of proper citations. "I have assumed the power to omit such annotations, and to supply through the remaining notes only the sort of marginal comment or bibliography that may be of value to more general readers." He points out that there is an annotated copy of this publication in the Harvard College Library with a set of complete notes.

<sup>12</sup> Miller, Perry. *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1939. 1982). p. vii.



Puritanism. Selement's interpretation of Miller's idea is convincing. Miller states that "the first three generations in New England paid almost unbroken allegiance to a unified body of thought, and that individual difference among particular writers or theorists were merely minor variations within the general frame."<sup>13</sup> He clearly states that he takes the "liberty" of treating the subject as if it were a "single intelligence" and that he only cites authors who he feels "express a point most conveniently" and that he selects passages that were generally echoed by other authors.<sup>14</sup>

Puritanism is of immense historical importance: it was not only the most coherent and most powerful single factor in the early history of America, it was a vital expression of a crucial period in European development, and those who would understand the modern world must know something of what it was and of what heritages it has bequeathed to the present.<sup>15</sup>

Miller shows that the Puritans of New England were no different from other Christians with regards to spiritual answers to questions which have been asked throughout the history of religion and that their beliefs often paralleled those of St. Augustine. He states that the development of Puritanism encased it in "technical jargon" and distorted it because of social and economic issues. "Inside the shell of its theology and beneath the surface coloring its political theory, Puritanism was yet another manifestation of piety to which some men are probably always inclined and which in certain conjunctions appeals irresistibly to large numbers of exceptionally vigorous spirits."<sup>16</sup>

Selement attempts to discredit Miller by pointing out that he focused on the works of only three prominent ministers, Thomas Hooker, Thomas Shepard, and John Cotton

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. vii.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. vii; Miller state that he has researched all the Puritan ministers of the Seventeenth century and found that "all writers were in substantial agreement upon all the propositions which I am discussing in this book, even though they differed among themselves upon some of the issues." (p. ix) He believed that there were three great teachers of the "New England creed: William Perkins, William Ames, and John Preston." (p. x) He also stated that "on general theological points" that the words of John Owen and Richard Baxter could be interpreted as those of "any orthodox New Englander." (p. x) This point is very important since the ministers of New England read these scripts and referred to them when preparing their sermons.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. viii.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 4; Miller continues with this idea and adds that "Puritan theology was an effort to externalize and systematize this subjective mood. Piety was the inspiration for Puritan cruelty and justified the Puritan in his persecution of disagreement." p. 5.

who provide a narrow view of Puritanism. "One must question whether three ministers adequately reflected the thought of a complicated forty-year period, one which saw the very founding of the New England Way."<sup>17</sup> Benjamin C. Ray in "Satan's War against the Covenant in Salem Village" writes that the community was divided by church members and church goers. "What was noticed, however, is that a large majority of those villagers who were accused of witchcraft did not belong to the covenant and had refrained from joining it, thus impeding the congregation's growth."<sup>18</sup> He believes that the cause of the accusations and trials was as a result of these divisions. Ray's interpretation of Parris's sermons gives the reader the idea that he is indicating that the witch trials were intentional. He states that "Parris was motivated by an 'evangelical piety' to renew and purify religion in Salem Village."<sup>19</sup> Selement states that Miller made use of the writings of six ministers and that he does not reference those ministers' publications to support his argument. More recently, in the 1994 article "The Cultural Dynamics of American Puritanism," David Robinson disagrees with Selement and maintains that Miller was successful as an interpreter of Puritan culture because of his outstanding "ability to command a diverse audience of literary scholars, intellectual historians, and theologians."<sup>20</sup> He remarks however that in recent years, Miller's reputation as the foremost historian of Puritanism has been eclipsed by that of David Hall. In *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment*, Hall states that Puritanism adhered to set procedures in precise locations of New England. "Religion achieved system in the tight

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<sup>17</sup> Selement, "Perry Miller: A Note," p. 455.

<sup>18</sup> Ray, Benjamin C. "Satan's War against the Covenant in Salem Village, 1692." *The New England Quarterly* LXXX, no. Number 1 (2007); p. 71.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, David M. "The Cultural Dynamics of American Puritanism." *American Literary History* Vol. 6.4 (1994), p. 738.

order of catechism.”<sup>21</sup> Hall notes that when emigration began in the Massachusetts, “the new colony...attracted thousands of the godly who had previously accepted the message of the life-style we think of as Puritanism. What these people brought with them was also a deep revulsion against older customs and beliefs.”<sup>22</sup> This group of people gave up the ritualistic calendar that they had once adhered to which included holy days and saints’ days. “They rejected certain forms of play, as when men dressed up as animals or people danced around a maypole.”<sup>23</sup> The old world beliefs of All Hallows Eve and May Day were looked upon as pagan rituals. “This conscious attack on ‘pagan’ ways and ‘superstitions’ was occurring at the same time...the pace of social change was weakening folkways and ritual practices. The village feasts, the pageants..., the lore of fairies and of cunning fold—all these were being displaced in the sixteenth century by a sharper sense of how the pagan differed from the Christian, the holy from the secular.”<sup>24</sup> Miller notes that this change in religious practices is nothing new. Mankind has been changing the way that they look at religious structures since the time of St. Augustine. Man is always looking for answers to questions that have been posed for centuries. “As Puritanism developed it became more and more encased in technical jargon and increasingly distracted by economic and social issues; as it wanted it partook more of the qualities of one age and became less of a gospel for all time.”<sup>25</sup> Although Miller’s writings provide a wealth of information about Puritanism, he did not include Samuel Parris in his analyses and therefore cannot provide the appropriate context for examining the sermons of Parris.

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<sup>21</sup> Hall, David D. *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>25</sup> Miller, *New England Mind*, p. 4.

A renewed interest in Puritanism has meant the introduction to new avenues of thought. Earlier scholars wanted to understand Puritanism in order to comprehend the motivation behind their migration to the American colonies and then, also to make sense of the witchcraft trials. Recent scholars put the importance of understanding Puritanism into a different social context. “Puritanism has been displaced from the central role once accorded it as the foundational movement of American culture and increasingly understood as one of many elements of a quite diverse colonial society.”<sup>26</sup> Robinson states that this ‘displacement’ did not change the interest in studying Puritanism, but, instead, made its complexity all the more fascinating. He further contends that in order “to understand Puritanism one must recognize it as an evolving movement, struggling internally to maintain order and continuity and responding constantly to external pressures.”<sup>27</sup> According to Robinson a reassessment of Puritanism had developed among modern scholars. Robinson argues “Miller’s description of the Puritan ‘synthesis’ tends to obscure ‘the full complexity of the New England mind in the seventeenth century’.”<sup>28</sup>

Bryan F. Le Beau, a professor at Creighton University, generalizes in the foreword of Charles Upham’s book *Salem Witchcraft* that in the three centuries since the witch hunts, historians continue to write books about the causes of the Salem witchcraft trials.<sup>29</sup> He adds that “they have pointed to the economic, political, social and religious turmoil” and “to New Englanders’ belief that the turmoil from which they suffered

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 738.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 739.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 739; Robinson quoted from Philip F. Gura in, *A Glimpse of Sion’s Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620-1660*. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1984).

<sup>29</sup> Upham, Charles W. *Salem Witchcraft: With an Account of Salem Village and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects*. 1867. (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2000). Bryan F. Le Beau wrote the foreword for the reprinted edition in 2000.

resulted from their fall from grace as God's chosen people."<sup>30</sup> Le Beau notes a broad spectrum of ideas evident in these studies and adds that the variety of scholarship includes many sub-fields of study such as: gender, community, and cultural studies. Edmund Morgan, author of *The Puritan Dilemma*, believes that the same 'need' that existed for earlier scholars to study the New England settlers also attracted new generations of scholars.<sup>31</sup> Morgan states that early Puritanism studies set the groundwork for future depictions of Puritans, warping any true understanding of them. He contends that readers envision Massachusetts as a "land of witches and witch hunters, of killjoys in tall-crowned hats, whose main occupation was to prevent each other from having any fun" and that this view will never completely vanish.<sup>32</sup> Mary Beth Norton's *In the Devil's Snare* supports Morgan's idea of the 'skewed' perception of Puritans. "SALEM. The word alone evokes persistent images in the minds of twenty-first-century Americans: the misogynistic persecution of women, hysterical girls telling tales of being tormented by specters, falsely accused 'witches' bravely refusing to confess, even—erroneously—women being burned at the stake."<sup>33</sup>

Norton believes that one of the causes for the crisis in Salem was due to the strong belief by the Puritans that God was punishing the people of New England, specifically the people of Salem, for their fall from grace. The singular worldview of the inhabitants of Massachusetts that had been established sixty years earlier "taught them that they were a chosen people, charged with bringing God's message to a heathen land previously ruled

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. vii.

<sup>31</sup> Morgan, Edmund S., *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop*. Second ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. ix.

<sup>33</sup> Norton, *Devil's Snare*, p. 3.

by the devil.”<sup>34</sup> Norton points out that for Puritans in Salem all events carried messages from God. “New England’s Puritans, even in the third generation, believed themselves to be surrounded by an invisible world of spirits as well as by a natural world of palpable objects.”<sup>35</sup> According to Norton, God communicated to the Puritans through both worlds and although Satan played a major role in the invisible world, he could not overstep God’s divine authority. “Since Puritans insisted that the devil could do nothing without God’s permission, they logically decided that God bore the ultimate responsibility for the witches’ malefic activities.”<sup>36</sup>

A set of themes is dominant among modern scholars: the importance and power of religion and the influence of the minister over the people. Their Puritan beliefs motivated the early New Englanders to traverse the vast ocean in search of their new “Jerusalem”. Their desire to reside in a place where they could live by God’s laws and the opportunity to start fresh as a Bible community greatly appealed to them. In *Puritan Christianity in America* Allen Carden demonstrates the power religion had on the Puritans. “Their absolute belief in the Bible and the God of the Bible was the fundamental motivating force behind their worldview and the establishment of New England.”<sup>37</sup> In his article “Reflections on the Nature of English Puritanism” Jerald Brauer agrees that the Puritan faith was intense and that preaching played an essential

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 295; Norton adds that the people of New England believed that God spoke to them “through his providences—that is, through the small and large events of their daily lives.” (p. 295). She explains that these events included natural catastrophes (hurricanes, drought, etc.), signs in the sky (aurora borealis, comets, etc.), sudden deaths of spouses and infants, epidemics (smallpox, in particular), or unexpected good fortune.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 295.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 296; Norton states that the Puritans believed that God allowed Satan to frolic in their backyards because they had failed God. “The Lord, in short, was simultaneously punishing New England in two different ways—through the Second Indian War on the northeastern frontier and through the operations of witchcraft in Essex County.” (p. 297).

<sup>37</sup> Carden, Allen. *Puritan Christianity in America: Religion and Life in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts*. (Baker Publishing Group, 1990); p. 33.

role in promoting the power and strength of their religion. “His Word both written and preached was the primary way in which man was confronted; hence the great stress on the pulpit and on Scripture.”<sup>38</sup> Hall notes that the role of the clergy was one of influence. Pastors influenced, inspired, and spurred the Puritans to action using Scriptures. “The clergy were successful in persuading many of the colonists to adopt their understanding of religion.”<sup>39</sup> These historians show that the minister was the one person to whom Puritans looked for spiritual guidance to ensure that they maintained their covenant theology.

Michael Winship in “Weak Christians, Backsliders, and Carnal Gospellers” notes that ministers often “encouraged weak Christians to look to signs within themselves that justification had occurred” and he adds that sermonizing had changed over the years.<sup>40</sup> “Early puritan ministers shared the emphasis on ethical empowerment with later ones, but they differed in one crucial aspect.”<sup>41</sup> Winship states that early ministers tended to equate assurance and faith. He demonstrates that “moral empowerment” was the result of “assurance of salvation” but that assurance did not prove salvation.<sup>42</sup> Scholars have agreed that Puritan ministers tended to preach with great zeal. Winship explains that historians “often pointed out” that one way in which “puritan ministers developed a godly community was to encourage their followers to draw a sharp distinction between themselves and the ungodly.”<sup>43</sup> According to Winship, this line of “distinction” often led to contention among neighbors. He articulates that “as ministers adapted their preaching

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<sup>38</sup> Brauer, “Reflections”, p. 101.

<sup>39</sup> Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> Winship, Michael P. “Weak Christians, Backsliders, and Carnal Gospellers: Assurance of Salvation and the Pastoral Origins of Puritan Practical Divinity in the 1580s.” *Church History* Vol. 70.3 (2001); p. 470.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 465.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 466.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 469.

and counseling techniques to new problems, they left untouched the underlying conception of assurance that led to those problems.”<sup>44</sup>

The influence that the clergy had in regards to the interpretation of Scripture was supported by printed culture. “The books that people read, and especially the Bible, offered them conflicting messages.”<sup>45</sup> In many instances the books that people read were written by clergymen they knew, making it easier for them to readily accept a particular idea or interpretation. According to Hall, written works had an especially powerful influence on lay people. He describes the Puritans of seventeenth-century New England as the type of people who “eagerly read street ballads on sensational events, but who also treasured Bibles; who slipped off at night to sample dirty books, but who also memorized the contents of a schoolbook with its pious verse and catechism.”<sup>46</sup> A handful of ministers, such as John Cotton, John Wheelwright, Cotton Mather, Thomas Shepard, Richard Baxter, and Thomas Hooker, had become household names. Colonists enjoyed the writings of these ministers so much that they kept copies of their works in their homes where they could refer to them often. Hall notes that a number of estate inventories list a surprisingly large number of books that included Bibles, primers, and ministerial writings. Colonists enjoyed the writings of these ministers so much that they kept copies of their works in their homes where they could refer to them often. Hall points out that merchant records validates this by indicating that Boston merchants ordered and

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 471.

<sup>45</sup> Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, p. 12.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 21; Hall gives descriptions of the different types of people, both rich and poor, who owned Bibles. He shows that these people were able to read in order to support his idea that people read more than just the Bible. Hall demonstrates that young children were taught to read the Bible and ‘Readers’ in both formal and informal education.



reordered the same books which not only included Bibles and primers, but also the works of Richard Baxter and Thomas Shepard.

Given the general context that Puritanism provided for the crisis in Salem Village a number of particular factors deserve to be emphasized. The most important was that the Puritans came to New England with a pre-established worldview. Their belief in God and his divine control over both the visible and the invisible world was very strong. Every event was understood a message from God and it was the duty of their minister to help them interpret the meanings of those messages. The second factor was the Puritans' experience with war in their new homeland. The First Indian War, King Philip's War (1675-1678), wreaked havoc in New England, but ended in victory for the settlers. The third and final factor was the Second Indian War, King William's War (1689-1697), which broke the truce from the first war bringing fighting closer to the Massachusetts area and causing a strain on trade for New Englanders. The settlers assumed that their previous victory indicated that they would again succeed in defeating the natives. Instead they suffered devastating losses. With each loss, the New Englanders "attributed their failures not to mistakes by their military and political leaders but rather to God's providence."<sup>47</sup> Norton notes that George Burroughs "concluded that 'God is still manifesting his displeasure against this Land, he who formerly hath set to his hand to help us, doth even write bitter things against us'."<sup>48</sup> The settlers believed that God was punishing them for their many "sins of omission and commission."<sup>49</sup> Similar

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<sup>47</sup> Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, p. 296; Carol Karlsen doesn't agree with Norton's interpretation in her review of Norton's book. "Norton does herself and her readers a disservice, though, in trying to force so much uncooperative evidence into a 'Daemons in the Shape of Armed Indians and Frenchmen'." Karlsen, Carol F. "Devil's in the Shape of Good Men." *Common-place The Interactive Journal of Early American Life, Inc.*, Vol. 3, No. 2. Jan. 2003 (2003). [www.common-place.org](http://www.common-place.org)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 296.

interpretations were given for earlier setbacks. “These consequences of those beliefs never extended far beyond the walls of their meetinghouses, primarily affecting their religious attitudes.”<sup>50</sup> Puritan ministers were quick to address the many failures of their congregants and God’s dissatisfaction towards them.

Events in New England were shaping the minds of the people of Salem Village. The French and the Indians were struggling over control of the frontier in northeastern New England. Salem Village was trying to become independent of Salem. Members of Salem Village were arguing among themselves for control over land. All of these things were happening just outside of the realm of Salem Village. Keeping in mind the events that led up to the crisis in Salem village and the power the minister had in interpreting God’s messages through daily events, I will examine the role Samuel Parris, especially his sermons, played in identifying and prosecuting the witchcraft that occurred in Salem in 1692. Considering the influence that ministers had on the lives of their congregants, it is important to examine Samuel Parris’s role in the Salem crisis. What was Parris’s role in the Salem events? How did it differ from the better-known roles of the accusers and the accused? Did his sermons influence the behavior of the accusers? How did his congregants react and respond to his sermons? In chapter one I will show a pattern of belief among Puritans of New England based on experiences on the frontier. In the second chapter, I will give biographical information on Samuel Parris. Examining his life offers insight into the person he was and what might have influenced him in becoming and discharging the responsibilities of a minister. In the third chapter, I analyze Samuel Parris’s sermons. In the fourth chapter I discuss the resonance of Samuel Parris’s sermons in Salem Village. I focus on how his sermons correlated to accusations

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 296.

of witchcraft by his parishioners during the crisis. I conclude by showing that Samuel Parris provided the catalyst for the Salem witch trials through the way in which he selected and delivered his sermons. There is little evidence that Samuel Parris caused the 'hysteria' by malicious intent. Instead, his sermons clearly influenced the way in which the crisis played out in Salem.

## Chapter 2: Samuel Parris

There is only one book that details Samuel Parris's life, Larry Gragg's *A Quest For Security: The Life of Samuel Parris, 1653-1720*. Larry Gragg writes in his biography that Parris was the youngest son of Thomas and Anne Parris and was surrounded by family which was characterized by religious nonconformity and commercial success.<sup>51</sup> At the time of Samuel's birth, the English were in their second year of conflict with the Dutch in their struggle to control Atlantic trade. In the 1650s, England was in the midst of trade wars and a growing revolution in religious thought.<sup>52</sup> Thomas was a "London cloth merchant with peripheral interest in commerce and real-estate on the island colonies of Ireland and Barbados."<sup>53</sup> The Parris family also belonged to a 'radical' sect of Protestants.<sup>54</sup> Thomas's brother, John, was also in the mercantile business and held real estate interests in Barbados. In the early 1640s, John established his mercantile base of operations in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Setbacks caused him to focus his attention on property which he had acquired in Barbados. During the next decade he purchased additional property on the island. "By early 1650 he had accumulated over four hundred acres on three plantations including about 160, he explained, 'wherein I now live called Springhead'."<sup>55</sup> Labor demands were high on the island and, with few indentured servants migrating to Barbados, the need for slave labor was in great demand. John Parris took advantage of this demand and entered into slave

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<sup>51</sup> Gragg, Larry Dale. *A Quest for Security: The Life of Samuel Parris, 1653-1720*. Contributions in American History, No. 142. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990); p. 1

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 1

<sup>53</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, p. 154. Some records indicate that Thomas was a hatter as well.

<sup>54</sup> Hoffer, Peter Charles. *The Salem Witch Trials: A Legal History*. Landmark Cases & American Society. Ed. N. E. H. Hull. (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1997); p. 9

<sup>55</sup> Gragg, *A Quest for Security*, p. 3.

trade in April 1649. In 1650 he sold one-third of his holdings in Barbados to cover the expenses of his slave trade venture. Thomas had also made land purchases on the island, including properties he purchased from his brother in 1650. At the time of his death, John Parris owned one-third of his original property holdings while managing the properties owned by Thomas.

Adding to John Parris's already mounting financial problems, political changes were surfacing in Barbados. In early May of 1650 Royalists proclaimed Charles I the rightful ruler of the English empire. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May they "issued a list of planters who had to 'depart the island, on or before the second day of July now next ensuing, under paine of Confiscation of their whole Estates.'"<sup>56</sup> John was on that list. As a result, John returned to Boston where he remained until late 1651 when he made his way back to Barbados. He died in the summer of 1660. According to his will, John bequeathed to his brother "all my third part of three plantations (as above) also all my part of the stone house at Reades Bay and land at the Bridge, &c., provided he pay annuity & legacies, &c."<sup>57</sup> In 1665 Anne Parris died. In her will dated 9 June 1665 she states that she was the wife "to Thomas Parris now or late resident of Barbadoes beyond the seas merchant."<sup>58</sup> By the end of the decade Thomas' permanent residence was Barbados.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>57</sup> Waters, Henry F. *Genealogical Gleanings in England; Abstracts of Wills Relating to Early American Families, with Genealogical Notes and Pedigrees Constructed from the Wills and from Other Records. With the Addition of Genealogical Gleanings in England (New Series) a-Anyon* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1969); p. 144. There must be a separate page for John's will, that isn't shown in Water's book, which gives the information on the property which he owned at the time of his death.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 144.

<sup>59</sup> There is conflicting information available regarding when Thomas actually moved to Barbados with his family. According to Anne's will, he was in Barbados at the time of her death. It is likely that he went to Barbados to settle John's estate or attend to business regarding his properties and that Anne became ill and died in his absence. Her will clearly indicates that he was not present at the time of her death. Hoffer indicates that the Parrises moved to Barbados in the late 1660s and makes no mention of John or Anne dying.

Thomas Parris was a deeply religious man, which is evident in the introduction of his will. “He stated that he was ready to resign up his soul ‘into ye hands of him that gave it me in full assurance and satisfaccon of having my sins pardoned through ye only merits of ye precious blood of Jesus Christ my Savior and Redeemer.’”<sup>60</sup> Through his deep religious connections, he met John Oxenbridge, a Puritan minister, and later introduced him to his brother’s widow, Susannah, and they later married.<sup>61</sup> In 1670 Oxenbridge and his wife moved to Boston where he accepted a position as minister at the First Church. Oxenbridge and Parris might have discussed the benefits of Samuel attending Harvard and possibly traveling with the Oxenbridges to Boston. Thomas chose to send Samuel to Harvard “rather than expose” him “to the ‘prelacy’ and ‘temptations to lewdness’ at Oxford and Cambridge.”<sup>62</sup> The exact date is unknown as to when Samuel actually enrolled at Harvard College but he ‘clearly attended Harvard, although he did not graduate.’<sup>63</sup> The cost of a Harvard College education was not cheap. It cost between £40 and £55 to attend Harvard College at that time, which was roughly about the same price of a small house.<sup>64</sup> Attendance at Harvard was an indication of considerable social status.

Knowing that Thomas Parris had strong religious convictions, it is probable that he believed that a Harvard education would be beneficial to Samuel’s future on many levels. However, Harvard might not have been as enticing to Samuel as it was for

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<sup>60</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Gragg indicates that John Oxenbridge and Susannah Parris married and relocated to Boston. There is conflicting information about Susannah. Moriarty, Jr., G. Andrews. “Genealogical Notes on Rev. Samuel Parris of Salem Village.” *The Essex Institute Historical Collection*. Ed., Vol. XLIX. (Salem: The Essex Institute, 1913); p. 354. Moriarty shows that in Thomas’ will he names John Oxenbridge as his brother-in-law, which indicates that Susannah is his sister.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 10; Gragg quoted Samuel Eliot Morison.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 11; Gragg notes that because Parris did not graduate, it is hard to pinpoint when he was actually there. However, Hoffer states that Samuel Parris went to Harvard in 1670.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, pp. 10-11.

Thomas. He would have discovered chaos at school as the institution threatened to collapse. “The number of students had declined, the buildings were in poor repair, and the students were in open rebellion against President Leonard Hoar, who tried to stem the failing college’s fortunes by strictly enforcing its rules.”<sup>65</sup> For the most part, classes lasted about 16 hours; mornings were devoted to lectures and afternoons were spent participating in discussions. A lot of stress was put on the study of the Old and New Testament. Students had to recite text to their tutors and exams covered Sunday sermons. Samuel would have had to juggle ethics, Greek, divinity, logic and Hebrew studies as well. Although he didn’t graduate, he still benefitted from his time at Harvard College. “The instructors enhanced his understanding of the reformed faith, and they provided models of the intellectual discipline and skill required to interpret scripture and function as a Puritan clergyman.”<sup>66</sup> Samuel’s time in Cambridge most likely was a new experience for the young planter. No evidence indicates that as a result of his time there Samuel had come to doubt the methods or even the values of the planter classes.<sup>67</sup>

Regardless of how demanding his studies were at Harvard, the most compelling reason Samuel might have had for not graduating was that he received word in 1673 that his father had passed away causing him to abruptly return to Barbados. Upon his return to Barbados, Samuel would have quickly learned about his father’s will. Thomas left to his son, John, “all my lands fee farm rents house and buildings whatsoever may any way belong unto me in the Kingdom of England and Ireland.”<sup>68</sup> Contrary to popular belief, Thomas was also generous to Samuel. He left Samuel “the whole Estate both reall and

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<sup>65</sup> Hoffer, *Salem Witch Trials*, p. 10-11.

<sup>66</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 12.

<sup>67</sup> Hoffer, *Salem Witch Trials*, p. 10.

<sup>68</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 12.

personnal in ye Island of Barbados.”<sup>69</sup> Once the estate was settled, “estimates suggest that Samuel inherited an estate worth about £7000. Thomas named Samuel as ‘Sole Executor,’ but named three ‘Executors in trust’ to serve “during ye minority of my said Sonne Samuel.”<sup>70</sup> This was still a small tract compared to others on the island of Barbados.<sup>71</sup> Even though the plantation may have been rather small, Samuel remained in Barbados and thrust himself into “the life of a landholding gentleman.”<sup>72</sup> Like his father, Samuel was not directly involved in sugar production. He busied himself acting as an agent for planters. In this capacity he extended credit and arranged for the sale of crops for the planters.

Samuel’s inheritance and his income provided him with a comfortable living in Barbados. The merchant landscape in Barbados experienced change shortly after Parris began running the plantations. Sugar was no longer held the same value in trade and the taxes on exportation continued to increase. Slavery had taken its place. Parris was finding it harder and harder to make a profit growing sugar due to competition in the market. Parliament placed a duty on sugar that was shipped from Barbados in 1673.<sup>73</sup> Planters also had to deal with a decline in soil fertility, erosion, and natural disaster. “The damage wrought by man, though considerable, was insignificant compared to the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 13; Gragg notes that according to the 1680 Census, the plantation that Samuel inherited included “176 acres, 3 servants, and 70 slaves.” Many scholars like Boyer & Nissenbaum, Mary Beth Norton and Charles Upham have written that Samuel Parris was a bitter man when he arrived in Salem Village. They have noted that he was angry that his brother inherited the biggest portion of their father’s estate and that he inherited very little. Larry Gragg state that documentation proves that Samuel Parris had a sizeable inheritance. Boyer and Nissenbaum state that Thomas only left Samuel a twenty acre plot in Barbados. (p. 154).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p. 13. According to [finance.yahoo.com](http://finance.yahoo.com) Parris’s inheritance was comparable at today’s rates to \$206 million dollars.

<sup>71</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, p. 155.

<sup>72</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 13. Boyer and Nissenbaum, however, state that he returned to Massachusetts. (p. 155)

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p. 14.



destruction of an awesome hurricane which struck the island in 1675.”<sup>74</sup> On August 31<sup>st</sup> a hurricane hit the island of Barbados killing about 200 people, destroying three churches and around 1000 homes, shattering storehouses and windmills, ruining sugar cane crops and destroying ships in the harbor. All of these factors led to smaller profit margins for small-scale planters.

Samuel Parris was in that group of small-scale planters affected by the hurricane. His plantation was located in the area of the island that was hit hardest by the hurricane. It is probable that the damage to his plantation was extensive. Parris tried to rebuild after the hurricane.<sup>75</sup> However, he most likely re-evaluated his situation and felt that rebuilding would be futile in the face of economic uncertainty and sold “off his late father’s remaining holdings in the countryside.”<sup>76</sup> Samuel was unable to sell the 20 acres in Peter’s Parish that his father left him because it was under lease for eighty-two years. After selling what he could, Parris left Barbados for Massachusetts in 1680.

Upon his arrival in Massachusetts Parris was faced with the decision about how he would make his living as a resident. “Boston was a natural destination for Parris, for not only did the Parris family have dealings there but other Barbadian merchants used Boston as a depot for their exports.”<sup>77</sup> His experiences in Barbados allowed him to feel comfortable continuing along the path of dealing in trade. Samuel would have fit quiet well among the merchants of Boston. Massachusetts Bay Governor Simon Bradstreet wrote to the Privy Council in 1680, and in his report he stated that a man was considered

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>75</sup> Hoffer, *Salem Witch Trials*, p. 11.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p.12.

rich if he was worth £1000 to £1500<sup>78</sup> Whether Samuel was successful as a merchant in Barbados or not would not necessarily matter. By Boston standards Parris was rich, due mostly to his inheritance. Records show that by 1681 Samuel was, in fact, listed as a merchant.<sup>79</sup> In March 1682 Richard Harris sold a 2, 275 square-foot shop to Parris for £270. Records indicate that Parris borrowed £420 from Harris to get his business started. This property “gave him access to the harbor because it included a wharf.”<sup>80</sup> No records exist for the day-to-day transaction of Parris’s mercantile activities. As well as establishing his roots in the mercantile business, Parris became a member of the First Church of Boston, where his uncle John Oxenbridge was pastor. In February 1683 Samuel Parris attained freeman status. “Being a freeman, Parris became eligible to participate fully in the political life of Boston.”<sup>81</sup> He also served as a foreman of the Jury of Attaints and Appeals in 1684.<sup>82</sup>

Since arriving in Boston, Samuel Parris managed to establish himself quite well in the community. “Beyond a favorable start in his business venture, Parris was among the minority in Boston who had gained church membership and served in office.”<sup>83</sup> Shortly

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<sup>78</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 30. If Gragg is correct regarding the value of Samuel Parris’s inheritance, then he was much wealthier than historians first believed.

<sup>79</sup> Gragg states that Parris first shows up in September 1681 in a bond which he signed guaranteeing that “a family moving into Boston would not ‘become chargeable to the town.’” (p. 30). According to a transcription of Joseph Dow’s *History of Hampton* on the web site of the Hampton, NH Library, the phrase “become chargeable to the town” was a term used by residents. As a means of controlling the introduction of strangers into the community, people were asked to sign a bond stating that they would be responsible for those residing in their household. The town did not want to support ‘strangers’ who could not support themselves. For more information on this, see the Hampton, NH Library web site ([http://hampton.lib.nh.us/HAMPTON/history/dow/chap8/dow8\\_4.htm](http://hampton.lib.nh.us/HAMPTON/history/dow/chap8/dow8_4.htm)). Gragg also indicates that Parris rented a shop at first because there are no records showing that he purchased any property until 1682.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 31.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p. 32

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 32; Gragg notes that among the adult males, only about 40 percent were members of the church and only 10 percent ever held office in the political arena.

after his arrival in Boston Samuel married Elizabeth Eldridge, “an older woman.”<sup>84</sup> Their son, Thomas, was born in October 1681. Early in 1683 Parris’s good business fortune ran out.<sup>85</sup> His trade profits had fallen and soon Richard Harris filed suit against Parris for failure to repay his loan for £420. The jury found in the favor of Harris. Parris filed a counter-suit claiming that £336 from the original loan was withheld by Harris. He lost the suit and was ordered to repay the debt. Parris took his time over the next three months repaying Harris. Dissatisfied with the speed which Parris was repaying his debt, Harris filed suit against him again. The court found that he still owed £50 16s, which Parris repaid. His legal problems didn’t stop there. In 1684 Benjamin Gillam, a ship owner, filed a suit against Parris and then withdrew it. “These legal problems, the negative image of merchants, the realization that he would not gain great success as a merchant or perhaps a combination of those factors caused Parris once again to reconsider his career choice.”<sup>86</sup> After dealing with his legal issues, Parris became “suspicious of law and wary of trade.”<sup>87</sup>

Over the next two years, Parris moved toward making changes in his career. By 1686 it became clear that Parris had turned his thoughts in the direction of becoming a clergyman, despite never having earned a diploma from Harvard College. “He began in an era when almost all clergymen had a college degree and as on recent student of the ministry has noted, ‘most studied for three years after receiving their A.B. in order to earn an A.M., usually in theology.’”<sup>88</sup> In 1686 there was an abundance of ministerial

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<sup>84</sup> Hoffer, *Salem Witch Trials*, p. 13.

<sup>85</sup> Gragg indicates that Parris was involved in business lawsuits...one after another. Business began declining, as well.

<sup>86</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 32.

<sup>87</sup> Hoffer, *Salem Witch Trials*, p. 13.

<sup>88</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 33; Gragg notes that J. William T. Youngs, Jr. *God’s Messengers: Religious Leadership in Colonial New England, 1700-1750* (Baltimore, 1976) stated that ninety-six percent of the

candidates vying for the few existing positions and “between 1680 and 1689, sixty-three men obtained positions in New England and their average tenure was twenty-two years.”<sup>89</sup> The odds were against Samuel Parris securing a ministerial position. He lacked the necessary education to be considered above other men.

As a result of having to leave Harvard early, “Parris did not have the academic attainments to compete for the better pulpits, but ministers were always in demand in frontier villages and hamlets.”<sup>90</sup> Most likely because of his relationship with other church members, Samuel Parris beat the odds and secured a temporary position for the spring and summer of 1685 in the frontier community of Stow, earning fifteen shillings for every Sunday that he preached. The records indicate that by the fall Parris had vacated the position at Stow and no evidence exists to show whether or not Parris secured another ministerial position over the next three years. In April 1686 Parris attended the Council of Boston’s three churches. “The fifteen clergymen and laymen included James Allen and Joshua Moody, Parris’s pastor at First Church, in addition to men like Cotton Mather and Samuel Sewall,” who had gathered to pass judgment on the behavior of Thomas Cheever.<sup>91</sup> While pursuing his ministerial career, Parris maintained his

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clergymen during this period had degrees. He further notes that Harry Stout, “University Men in New England 1620-1660: A Demographic Analysis,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 4 (Winter 1974) had similar information regarding the number of clergymen with degrees during the colonial period.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 33; Gragg states that in 1686 John Cotton, who was the Harvard College librarian, found that “122 Ministers, of which Ten are dead, seventy-one remain still in the Country, and Forty-one are removed to England,” were products of Harvard College. (p. 33).

<sup>90</sup> Hoffer, *Salem Witch Trials*, p. 14.

<sup>91</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 34; Gragg explains that Thomas Cheever had graduated from Harvard College in 1677 and had been preaching at Malden, Massachusetts since 1680. He was charged with adultery and using obscene speech by his congregation. He was found guilty by the council and a six month suspension from the Malden church was suggested as punishment. The Malden church complied with the suggestion and Cheever was later dismissed as minister. He further notes that Parris was not part of the council and that it was not known why he attended the council. Gragg suggests that Parris was acquainted with Cheever and that he could have been there out of concern for a friend or that he simply “wished to further acquaint himself with his new profession and wanted to see first hand how such councils operated.” (p. 34).

mercantile business in Boston. Parris was among the relatively large group of successful shopkeepers, artisans, and sea masters and enjoyed moderate prosperity.<sup>92</sup>

In 1688 a committee consisting of Francis Nurse, John Putnam and Joshua Rea, Sr., set out to find a minister with the assurance from the Salem Church that they would be granted an ordained minister and a covenanted congregation. The committee approached Samuel Parris and negotiations began on November 15, 1688. Parris preached a sample sermon to the Salem Village congregation “on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November, ‘after the services in the afternoon, the audience was stayed, and, by a general vote, requested Mr. Parris to take office.’”<sup>93</sup> Parris refused to give them an answer explaining that “the work was weighty” and that the congregation would have their answer in “due time.”<sup>94</sup> Parris held out and “negotiations with Salem Village deputations took on the characteristics of a business deal, for Parris wanted his new parishioners to bind themselves to support him.”<sup>95</sup> Negotiations continued between the villagers and Parris for months. A new five-man committee met with Parris and invited him back to Salem Village renewing their offer to pay him sixty pounds annually and two-thirds of his salary would be in provisions. Parris responded to the offer with a conditional acceptance. “Remarkably thorough, the list of terms which Parris presented to the committee for approval was far better than the contract of any of his predecessors.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 34; According to Gragg, Parris was in a tax category which paid two and three shillings. He notes that there were only five men in Parris’s ward who paid a higher tax rate than he did. However, he surmises that this might have been enough to convince Parris that he would never attain that type of wealth. Gragg shows that the August 1688 tax assessment does not list Samuel Parris. Gragg indicates that Parris was actually doing well in his business. Perhaps what Gragg was trying to convey earlier was that Parris was looking to change careers because he was tired of dealing with lawsuits. It’s possible that when he said his ‘good fortune had run out’ he was referring to the large number of lawsuits that Parris a party.

<sup>93</sup> Upham, *Salem Witchcraft*, p. 191.

<sup>94</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 46.

<sup>95</sup> Hoffer, *Salem Witch Trials*, p. 14.

<sup>96</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 46

Parris finally agreed to accept the offer of “a salary of sixty pounds a year, part in money, part in kind, and ‘when money be more plenteous, the money part to be paid me shall accordingly be increased.’”<sup>97</sup> He also requested a price freeze be placed on foodstuff for “what is needful at the price now stated” and that “none of the provisions were ‘to be brought in without first asking whether needed,’ for which he would decide which provisions were needed by his family ‘unless the person is unable to pay in any sort but one.’”<sup>98</sup> In addition, Parris asked that contributions from anyone living outside of the village not be included as part of his salary of sixty pounds, that his firewood be free every year and that he wanted “two men chosen each year as special collectors to ensure that he was fully paid.”<sup>99</sup> Parris stated that if “God shall please to bless the place” economically, he expected a “proportionable increase” in salary and if God should “diminish the substance of said place,” and he anticipated “proportionable abatements” of his salary.<sup>100</sup> Not all of Parris’s conditions were met. One condition to bring an objection was his request for free firewood because there was no way that everyone would be able to contribute equally to his ration of firewood. The villagers instead offered to allot extra pay in order for Parris to purchase his own firewood from whomever he chose. “When Parris asked that one of the villagers be responsible for taking the extra pay and securing the wood, no one volunteered.”<sup>101</sup> Another item that the villagers had objections about was his request that contributions made by

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>98</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 47; Clearly Parris realized that an increase in the cost of foodstuff would cut into his pay if he were to pay higher costs for those goods via exchange.

<sup>99</sup> Hoffer, *Salem Witch Trials*, p. 15.

<sup>100</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 47; Gragg notes that Parris’s demands show that he shared the same concerns as other “clergymen about the diminishing economic security of the ministry.” (p. 47). He also points out that Parris must have done research into what his predecessors’ arrangements had been with the village. The committee had not offered him the same concession that had been offered to Deodat Lawson which was that all money contributed by strangers would belong to the minister.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p. 48.

nonresidents not be counted as part of his salary because they felt that there were many nonresidents that were regulars and their contributions should be considered as part of his salary. The committee in Salem Village met again to finalize their agreement with Parris. “He neither attended this meeting nor (he later claimed) knew about it.”<sup>102</sup> The record shows that:

It was agreed and voted by a general concurrence that for Mr. Parice’s encouragement and settlement in the work of the ministry one-third part in money, the other two-third parts in provision at the prices following: wheat at four shillings per bushel, rye and barley malt at three shillings per bushel, Indian corn at two shillings per bushel; and beef at three half-pence per pound, port at two pence per pound, and butter six pence per pound; and Mr. Parice to find himself firewood, and Mr. Parice to keep the ministry house in good repair. And that Mr. Parice shall also have the use of the ministry pasture and the inhabitants to keep the fence in repair, and that we will keep up our contribution; and our inhabitants to put their money in papers, and this to continue so long as Mr. Parice continues in the work of the ministry amongst us. And all provisions to be good and merchantable, and if it please God to bless the inhabitants, we shall be willing to give more and we expect that if God shall diminish the estate of the people, that then Mr. Parice do abate of his salary according to proportion.<sup>103</sup>

There was one unexpected benefit Parris enjoyed and it was that the villagers left the rate for various provisions the same as they were in the 1680 contract with George Burroughs.<sup>104</sup> Parris’s contract with the villagers also guaranteed him an abundance of

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p. 48; Other authors such as Charles Upham, Mary Beth Norton, Steven Nissenbaum and Paul Boyer have mention that this meeting took place while Parris was in Boston settling his affairs and collecting his family for the move to Salem Village. Whether the scheduling of this final meeting intentionally omitted Parris or not is still unknown.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, pp. 48-49; Gragg notes that the condition that Parris requested of the cash part of salary increase when money was available was omitted from the agreement, as well as addressing the issue of nonresident contributions. However, it could be argued by the information provided in the quote that “we shall be willing to give more” could be understood as meaning that he would indeed receive more pay if the economy improved.

<sup>104</sup> Gragg indicates that Parris did not receive the same compensation that Deodat Lawson received, but he was also offered the same rate for goods that George Burroughs received. Ministers relied heavily on the charity of others. The ‘package deal’ that Parris received must have been sufficient for him to support

food since he was to receive two-thirds of his salary in wheat, rye, corn, butter, beef and pork.

Parris began preaching to the village in early July. “At the same time, he apparently began to lobby for possession of the ministry house and land.”<sup>105</sup> By October 10<sup>th</sup> a meeting was held in which the villagers voted to give Parris the ministry house, two acres adjoining the house, and a barn despite the fact that it was voted on and agreed upon in December 1681 that it would be unlawful to convey the ministry house and lands to anyone. Nothing was recorded by these villagers to indicate why they chose to overturn the 1681 decision to award the house, barn and land to Parris.<sup>106</sup> “The attitude was articulated in a 1695 petition composed by Parris’s supporters to counter an ouster movement against the clergyman. In the petition is this revealing line: ‘we have had three Ministers removed already, and by every removal our differences have been rather aggravated.’”<sup>107</sup>

On November 19, 1689, the community of Salem Village gathered in the meetinghouse to pray, fast and witness the ordination ceremony for Samuel Parris. Magistrates from Salem, Nicholas Noyes, John Hathorn, Jonathan Corwin, and Bartholomew Gedney, were present and sanctioned the service. Ministers, such as John Hale and Samuel Phillips, came from other neighboring communities, like Beverly. Nicholas Noyes was the magistrate who presided over the service and ordained Samuel

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himself and his family because he was not destitute. In fact, Parris also managed to persuade the committee to sign over the ministerial home and the land to him the following year.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

<sup>106</sup> Upham, *Salem Witchcraft*, p. 197.

<sup>107</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 49; Gragg also states that the men responsible for the decision to allow Parris to have the property were either Putnams or Putnam supporters and were leaders in the move to separate Salem Village from Salem proper. He believes that they chose to transfer the property to him because they were looking for an ally, which would have been a possibility since ministers were important in the formation of public opinion. He also suggests that the villagers saw Parris as their key to religious stability and that their position was articulated in the 1695 petition.



Parris as the pastor for Salem Village. Once ordained, Parris delivered his first sermon to the community of Salem Village. “Most appropriate for the sermon he would deliver on this occasion, Parris believed, was the ninth verse of the fifth chapter of Joshua: ‘This day have I rolled away the Reproach of Egypt from off you.’”<sup>108</sup> At the close of the sermon twenty-five of those in attendance, Parris, and his wife, Elizabeth, entered into the covenant, which was necessary in order to create the congregation and allow Parris to fully assume his role as the spiritual leader for Salem Village.

Over the next two years Parris’s congregation grew by sixty-one members, twenty-six men and thirty-five women. “In addition, three men, nine women, and seventy-four small children had been baptized.”<sup>109</sup> These totals only represent a very small portion of the village whose residents numbered nearly five hundred. Regardless, this still revealed steady growth in membership.<sup>110</sup> The small meetinghouse, which measured twenty-eight feet by thirty-four feet, was barely large enough for all the members and their families when they gathered for worship. The summers were hot and filled with mosquitoes and the winters were unbearably cold. “Parris even shortened some of his sermons because of the chill.”<sup>111</sup> He delivered at least two sermons each week to his congregation. Worship service on Sunday lasted two hours, followed by a short break for refreshments, and then another sermon in the afternoon. “In addition, each Thursday Parris offered a weekly lecture for those willing to attend.”<sup>112</sup> Parris prepared hundreds of sermons during his time at Salem Village. Only fifty-two survive, some of which are just partial sermons. “Within his bound sermon book, he recorded

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 50.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

sermons given between his 1689 ordination and May 1694 (although at times he included only an abstract of a sermon).”<sup>113</sup>

The parsonage Parris acquired was a two-story home and large, at 1680 square feet, by comparison to others at the time. “There were ‘two main rooms downstairs with a cellar under one of them, tow upstairs rooms, garret space, and a lean-to off the back. It certainly had sufficient room to accommodate Parris; his wife and children, Elizabeth, Susannah, and Thomas; his niece, Abigail Williams; and his two slaves Tituba and John Indian.”<sup>114</sup> An archaeological dig of the site where the parsonage stood revealed that wine was also available to Parris. “One of the fragments even has a seal with Parris’s initials.”<sup>115</sup> Parris even spoke about the benefits of wine in one of his sermons on the communion wine. He told his congregation that wine was good for the heart, would lift a person’s spirits, and that it prevented disease.

Parris’s family structure was much like that of other families in the community, which meant that there was no equality between husband and wife. “Men were, first of all, physically superior...women eternally suffered the signs of committing the first sin.”<sup>116</sup> Although this was a standard belief of contemporary marriages, Parris still believed that a wife was a companion and that the relationship between the husband and wife should be sensual and tender. “In a sermon on reconciliation in which he mentioned husbands and wives, Parris emphasized the importance of affection, ‘Let me see, let me

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p. 83. In “That Child, Betty Parris: Elizabeth (Parris) Barron and the People in Her Life.” *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 124.1 (1988), Marilyn K. roach states that the Parris’s had three slaves with them when they arrived in Salem Village. She names Tituba and John Indian, noting that they are both adult slaves described as ‘Spanish Indians’ native to the South American and Caribbean regions. The third slave is described as a fourteen year old Negro boy whose “name is lost.” (p. 4)

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p. 83.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p. 84; Hoffer, *Salem Witch Trials*, p. 15.

feel, let me sense thy love.”<sup>117</sup> There is not much evidence to detail the relationship of Parris and his wife. When Elizabeth died, “Samuel extolled her as ‘Best Wife, Choice Mother, Neighbor, Friend.’”<sup>118</sup> No evidence exists to determine the type of relationship that Parris had with his children or niece. One can only assume what his attitude was towards the children in his household based on clues from his sermons. Parris frequently spoke about the importance of children obeying their parents. “The Fifth Commandment required it but more dramatically the example of Christ’s youth illustrated it. Even though Jesus was the Son of God and ‘full of business for his heavenly Father, but yet he neglected not obedience to his Parents.’”<sup>119</sup> Obedience was an important lesson that children were expected to learn. Puritans believed that children were of a naturally rebellious nature and that corporal punishment was often necessary to aid in the lesson of obedience. Yet, Parris spoke to his congregation about being careful when disciplining their children, and that they should follow the Lord’s example. “When he corrected his wayward followers God used not ‘wrathful blows, but strokes issuing from parental love.’”<sup>120</sup> Parris delivered sermons about not having unrealistic expectations of their children which was unorthodox for a Puritan minister. His sermons indicate he wanted his congregation to pull away from strict or stern parenting and that he believed that God would not prevent children from “entering heaven” which reveals “a hopeful modification of harsh Calvinist doctrine.”<sup>121</sup> His sermons do not reveal a loving, affectionate approach to parenting.

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid, p. 84.

<sup>118</sup> Hoffer, *Salem Witch Trials*, p. 15; Either Parris chose these words to describe his wife because he truly believed that she was all things to him, or he was showing that she fulfilled her duties. It almost seems a bit emotionless.

<sup>119</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 85.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p. 85.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, p. 86.

Parris's sermons show he believed that commonwealth was an important concept and that he often tried to inspire his congregation to spur a sense of mission and community. "By divine selection, the people of Massachusetts Bay had been assigned the duty of creating a model Christian community."<sup>122</sup> Rather than devote sermons solely to his support of the commonwealth, Parris made occasional passing references to his vision of a model Christian community in scattered passages. Responsible leadership was the key to his vision for the community he sought and Parris believed that the best qualities of leadership were patience, valor, diligence, true piety, and prudence. "Men who displayed such laudable characteristics could be trusted to dispense justice and provide leadership because a 'zeal for Gods service' rather than their 'own private interest' motivated them."<sup>123</sup> Parris pointed out in his ordination sermon that the pastor of a community should be regarded with high respect. He believed that people should willingly obey leaders and accept that God had sanctioned social order. "Accordingly, all should recognize their place and obligations in the commonwealth. 'To every thing, work, or person,' Parris explained, 'both in civil, and also sacred matters, there is a meetness, right & decency belonging unto it.'"<sup>124</sup> He spoke that the wealthy should part with their money for Christ. "For Salem Village to be part of a 'flourishing common wealth' its residents must 'walk heedfully in the paths of piety' and live as those 'whose Natures are changed.'"<sup>125</sup> Those members of Salem Village who sought to be autonomous were pleased with his ideals and eager to support him. Parris's ideals were in conflict with reality. The reality was that not everyone in Salem Village was willing to

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, p. 86.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, p. 86.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p. 87.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, p. 87.

make the types of sacrifices deemed necessary to form a commonwealth giving rise to unrest and disagreement among neighbors.

Parris faced a lot of contention during his first two years as minister in Salem Village. After the weekly Thursday lecture on October 8, 1691, he announced to his congregants that his job was in jeopardy. Parris was understandably upset that he was not being provided for as promised. He was nearly out of firewood and was unable to purchase wood since he had not received his salary. He deeply focused on his lack of firewood because of the approaching winter and his concern for his family. On October 16, 1691, another meeting was held by the villagers to appoint a new rate committee:

The 16<sup>th</sup> of this instant October, 1691, the inhabitants being met together according to the warrant; it being then voted whether there should be instructions given to the Committee then chosen in order to making a rate for payment of Parris' salary: it was voted on the negative. The inhabitants of this Village are desired to meet at their ordinary places of meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of December, 1691, at 10 of the clock in the morning to consider by what means the inhabitants were convened together on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, 1689 (then there was a Committee chosen and a yearly salary stated to Mr. Parris that day, but no warrant appearing in the book for it), and to consider of a vote in the book on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, 1689, where in our right in the ministry house and land seems to be impaired and made void; also to consider about our ministry house and 2 acres of land given to Mr. Parris, and a committee chosen to make conveyances to Mr. Parris in the name of the inhabitants; and to consider about Mr. Parris's maintenance for this year—whether by voluntary contributions or by subscription.<sup>126</sup>

Joseph Porter, Joseph Putnam, Daniel Andrew, Francis Nurse, and Joseph Hutchinson were the men selected to act as the rate committee. These men “emerged as leaders in an effort to oust Samuel Parris.”<sup>127</sup> This group wanted to rid the community of Samuel Parris because they were not satisfied with the way he was hired, the concessions that

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<sup>126</sup> Hill, Frances. *The Salem Witch Trials Reader*. (Cambridge: De Capo Press, 2000); p. 120

<sup>127</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 95

were made for his salary, and they were angry over Parris acquiring the ministry house and the lands. The new rate committee convened and decided not to collect the taxes from the villagers to pay Parris's salary.

“Only one month after his ordination the village ‘rate’ committee determined that over twenty percent of the taxes for the minister’s salary remained unpaid. The committee ordered constable Edward Bishop to contact the almost forty delinquent taxpayers to collect the amounts due by ‘distress’ if necessary.”<sup>128</sup> Parris’s three predecessors also dealt with the same type of nonsupport from the community. The first three ministers received their full pay the majority of the time, but, for his first two years, Parris didn’t receive his full salary as promised. Also the question was addressed about the land transfer to the village from Joseph Holton which was designated as ‘ministry land’ in 1681.

To complicate matters, Nathaniel Ingersoll had claims on the land. In 1690 and 1691 meetings were held to discuss the issue, but no agreement was reached. “This squabble over a seemingly minor legal matter had great importance to Parris because it foreshadowed a much more serious debate over the transfer of the property to him as part of his settlement with the village.”<sup>129</sup> A more pressing matter was the condition of the meetinghouse, which had fallen to disrepair before Parris’s arrival in Salem Village. The committee had met in 1690 and agreed on repairs noting that the inhabitants would be responsible for the cost. However, the villagers contributed no money to repair their meetinghouse. “A house of worship in disrepair was bad enough but Parris considered

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid, p. 87.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, p. 88.

inadequate vessels for communion and outrage.”<sup>130</sup> Parris had previously called a church meeting in December 1690 to discuss the condition of the meeting house, point out the importance of having a proper place of worship, and to explain the necessity of liberal contributions by the congregation, but nothing was done about its condition.

Another bone of contention with Parris was brought on by the selection process and ordination of deacons. The congregation had chosen Nathaniel Ingersoll to act as Deacon shortly after Parris’s ordination. After a year, Parris recommended Edward Putnam as a second Deacon. During a December church meeting he “proposed not only that Putnam be elected but also that he be ordained along with Ingersoll.”<sup>131</sup> Parris was disappointed with the reaction of his congregants to his suggestion. Some wanted other names to be submitted so that there would be more choices. Deliberations took four days at which time Parris announced to his congregation after worship service the committee’s decision to elect Putnam and ordain both men and asked his congregation if there were any objections to the decision. “Although no objections were raised, Parris did not proceed directly with the ordination of the two deacons. Instead, he waited six months.”<sup>132</sup> While Parris was dealing with the lack of support by his congregants in his deacon selection, the deteriorating condition of the meetinghouse, the issue of his salary and the squabble over the land, he began to notice a decrease in attendance. “More disturbing from the minister’s point of view, however, was the abrupt halt in baptisms and applications for membership.”<sup>133</sup> Parris expected a decline in the numbers after the first year, but didn’t expect the halting that occurred after that since there were still 400

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid, p. 88.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, p. 88.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, p. 89.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, p. 89.

people in Salem Village who had not attained membership in the church nor received the sacrament of baptism.

Although the records that detail the life of Samuel Parris are limited, enough can be gleaned from them to get an idea what type of person Samuel Parris was and to learn of the struggles he faced throughout his life. Parris appeared to be an honest man; a shrewd business man; a good family man; and an overachiever. He worked hard to negotiate his salary and, like anyone else, wanted what was due to him and to be treated fairly just like others. Parris wanted respect and aspired to be someone that people would look up to—a leader of the community. Records indicate that he fell short of his dream. Parris's situation as minister of Salem Village became controversial and factions developed among his parishioners, coalescing into pro-Parris and anti-Parris factions during the latter months of 1691 and most of 1692 indicating altogether tension-filled circumstances at the eve of the first witchcraft accusations.



### Chapter 3: The Sermons

There are such Devils in the Church: Not only sinners but notorious sinners; sinners more like to the Devil than others... If ever there were Witches, Men & Women in Covenant with the Devil, here are Multitudes in New-England.

-Samuel Parris<sup>134</sup>

When Samuel Parris accepted his position as minister of Salem Village he was aware that there were differences in the congregation. He had witnessed first-hand the bitter separations between neighbors in Salem Village. The disputes over property and the struggle for control of the village were central to the divisions that existed in the tiny community.

Brother Cheevers who having in distress for a horse upon his wives approaching travell about five or six weeks past taken his neighbor Joseph Putnams horse out of stable & without leave or asking of it, was called forth to give satisfaction to the offended Church, as also the las Sabbath he was called for the same purpose, but then he failed in giving satisfaction, by reason of his somewhat mising in the latter part of his confession, which in the former he had more ingenuously acknowledged, but this day the Church received satisfaction as was testified by their holding up of their hands.<sup>135</sup>

Parris struggled with these problems and the dispute over his pay and the congregant's obligations to provide him with what was negotiated and promised made the divisions worse. Problems in his own household added to the tension in Salem Village. Lack of firewood and other necessities to support his family were forefront in his mind. At the center of the events that brought the strain in the village to a head were Parris's daughter and his niece. They were involved with other village girls experimenting with fortune

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<sup>134</sup> Cooper, Jr., James F. and Kenneth P. Minkema, ed. *The Sermon Notebook of Samuel Parris, 1689-1694*. (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1993); p. 1. Samuel Parris, "Sermon Notebook", (Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut); pp. 196, 202.

<sup>135</sup> Harris, Wm. Thaddeus, Esq. J (Transcribed by). "Salem Village Church Record Book". (1857). The New England Historical and Genealogical Register. (<http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/villgchurchrcrd.html>)

telling techniques. Their behavior baffled and terrified Parris, as well as anyone who witnessed the ‘afflictions’ suffered by the two girls. Elizabeth Parris and Abigail Williams “fell into fits...so strange as a well person could not Screw their Body into. The violence of their movements was ‘much beyond the Ordinary force’ of the girls when they were in ‘their right mind.’”<sup>136</sup> The Reverend John Hale says “these Children were bitten and pinched by invisible agents; their arms, necks, and backs turned this way and that way, and returned back again, so as it was impossible for them to do of themselves, and beyond the power of any Epileptick Fits, or natural Disease to effect.”<sup>137</sup>

Parris consulted with a number of physicians, including Dr. William Griggs who had recently purchased nineteen acres and a house in Salem Village. Griggs delivered a diagnosis that the girls were suffering from supernatural or ‘evil’ influence. “In other words, some person or persons, utilizing the powers of witchcraft, were harming the girls.”<sup>138</sup> Parris also sought the advice of nearby ministers. Each of the men who arrived to examine the ‘afflicted’ girls concluded that they were indeed under the hand of Satan. Fasting and prayer were the norm among Puritans for cases such as this. A neighbor, Mary Sibley, witnessed the suffering of the young girls and concluded that the use of a traditional method of counter-magic in lieu of the spiritual method should be relied on to help the girls. She approached Parris’s slaves, Tituba and John Indian, to make what was

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<sup>136</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 105. Marilyn Roach, in “That child,” pointed out that Parris kept a “list of local vital records in June 1688” which included information of the Goodwin incident which took place in Boston. Ann Glover was accused of bewitching the Goodwin children. Roach notes that Parris collected these notes regarding witchcraft accusations several years prior to the outbreaks in Salem, which could imply that others in the household might have been aware of the existence of these notes. Roach makes a comparison to the similarities between the Goodwin episode and the Parris household.

<sup>137</sup> Hale, John. "A Modest Enquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft, and How Persons Guilty of That Crime May Be Convicted: And the Means Used for Their Discovery Discussed, Both Negatively and Affirmatively, According to Scripture and Experience." *Narratives of the New England Witchcraft Cases*. 1914. Ed. George Lincoln Burr. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc, 1697). 467. 2002; p. 413.

<sup>138</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 106.

known as a 'witchcake' which was concocted "from the children's urine and rye meal, baked in the ashes, it was then fed to the family dog. The ingestion of such a witchcake, it was believed, would lead to the discovery of a witch's identity."<sup>139</sup>

Parris was dismayed when he learned of what Sibley and his slaves had done without his knowledge or consent. Neighboring ministers suggested "Mr. Paris" should "sit still and wait upon the Providence of God to see what time might discover; and to be much in prayer for the discovery of what was yet secret."<sup>140</sup> Once the girls accused Tituba of being a witch, then Tituba announced that Sarah Osborne and Sarah Good were also witches. Everyone believed that witchcraft was real. It was as real to the people of seventeenth century as Christianity. They believed in both the visible and the invisible world.<sup>141</sup> The widespread belief in the occult allowed the people of Salem Village to easily accept the explanation of witchcraft as the cause of the afflictions experienced by the girls. This belief stems from "the worldview" shared by late-seventeenth-century Puritans, who resided in a "pre-Enlightenment world" which lacked any experience with the scientific revolution, which focused on the careful study of physical phenomena.<sup>142</sup> Many of the events of 1692 lacked any obvious explanations such as animals that died from mysterious ailments, children who suddenly became sick and died, and strange

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<sup>139</sup> Norton, *Devil's Snare*, p. 20. Norton notes that once the witchcake was ingested that the girls began crying out Tituba's name and saying that she had tormented them, pricked and pinched them. She also states that the girls said that they saw Tituba in their room...standing where no one else could see her. She points out that Sibley was publicly chastised for her part in the creation of the witchcake by calling attention to her transgression in front of the congregation before communion.

<sup>140</sup> Hale, *Modest Inquiry*, p. 414.

<sup>141</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 106. "Virtually all people in the preindustrial world believed in the power of witchcraft. To them, Christianity, magic and witchcraft were all part of the same supernatural, invisible world." According to Gragg, William Perkins, an English Puritan, acknowledged that the occult was widespread. "As the Ministers of God doe give resolution to the conscience, in matters doubtfull and difficult; so the Ministers of Satan, under the name of Wise-men, and Wise-women, are at hand, by his appointment, to resolve, direct and helpe ignorant and unsettled persons in cases of distraction, loss or other outward calamities." (p. 106).

<sup>142</sup> Norton, *Devil's Snare*, pp. 6-7.

apparitions that appeared or noises that were heard. To Puritans, the invisible world was as real as the visible world and that the two sometimes overlapped. The New England Puritans also believed that all their troubles were caused by devils and witches. In the months that followed the first accusations of witchcraft the number of people among the ‘afflicted’ and the number of accused ‘witches’ multiplied. “Those months encompassed legal action against at least 144 people (38 of them male), most of whom were jailed for long periods; 54 confessions of witchcraft; the hangings of 14 women and 5 men; the pressing to death of another man by heavy stones; and the deaths in custody of 3 women and a man, along with several infants.”<sup>143</sup>

In reaction to the problems that he was experiencing in his household Parris chose to preach particular sermons. They directly influenced the people of Salem. According to James Cooper and Kenneth Minkema in *The Sermon Notebook of Samuel Parris, 1689-1694*, “a crucial source of information about Parris’s involvement in the affair is the manuscript notebook of sermons that he preached before, during, and after the controversial episode, in which the pastor discussed the origins and meaning of the calamity before his congregation.”<sup>144</sup> My examination of Parris’s sermon notebook shows how Samuel Parris chose his sermons, and in which ways they affected the ways in which his congregation viewed and reacted to the events in Salem Village. Ray’s work disagrees with this idea. He believes “Parris quickly began to exploit the difference between the ‘precious’ and the ‘vile,’ the ‘chosen’ and the ‘wicked & unconverted’ in an

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid, pp. 3-4.

<sup>144</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 1. “In times of crisis such as those during the witchcraft accusations, the sermon became that much more important as a frightened people gathered to determine the larger meaning of events swirling around them.” (p. 1)

effort to prod and encourage the nonelect to embrace the covenant.”<sup>145</sup> In New England, people turned to their minister whenever they needed to understand any strange occurrences.<sup>146</sup> Parris’s response to current events was handled from the pulpit.<sup>147</sup> Only one of Parris’s sermon notebooks still exists. “The notebook contains sermons he delivered from the period of his ordination in September 1689, over two years prior to the outbreak of witchcraft accusations, until May 1694, well after the executions had stopped and Parris’s position at Salem was in jeopardy.”<sup>148</sup> Parris wrote his sermons on loose leaf paper and then copied it to the notebook to better protect the notes. The limited number of sermons available “is nevertheless of singular importance in understanding the religious and intellectual context of Salem’s witchcraft controversy, and in assessing the significance of Parris’s interpretation.”<sup>149</sup>

Puritan sermons are divided into two types...the ‘occasional’ sermon and the ‘regular’ sermon. “On weekday occasions, the minister examined New England’s corporate meaning, but on Sundays his chief concern was the individual, personal pilgrimage from death in sin, to new life in Christ, to the hope of eternal life.”<sup>150</sup> Parris’s sermon notebook contains only one ‘occasional’ sermon. This provides “the clearest indication of the religious culture of the period because their emphasis was on personal salvation.”<sup>151</sup> There are specific types of regular sermons are contained in Parris’s notebook. The collection of sermons in Samuel Parris’s notebook “are sacrament-day sermons, that is, sermons preached prior to or in the afternoons following celebrations of

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<sup>145</sup> Ray, p. 75.

<sup>146</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 2.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2-3.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8; Stout, Harry S. *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); p. 3

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

the Lord's Supper."<sup>152</sup> This is the largest collection of sacrament-day sermons from seventeenth-century New England. They add that Parris specifies his sermons as sacrament-day sermons. It was typical in seventeenth-century New England to celebrate the Lord's Supper on the first day of each month and then later changed to the first Sunday of each month.

Parris's sermons up to 1693 are spaced approximately five to six weeks apart and that the normal observance fell within a six to eight week period. "Ministers employed the sacramental mediation, more than any other, to provide a unique blend of spiritual, ecclesiastical, and social direction to their auditors."<sup>153</sup> Cooper and Minkema state that Parris wrote notes to himself in Latin. "From these asides we know that he composed 'uses' or discreet heads of the application sections of his sermons to be preached 'during the meal' and 'after the meal' in order to obtain the maximum effect from the combined services of word and sacrament."<sup>154</sup> Parris put a lot of emphasis on the Lord's Supper and that "given the importance that Parris attached to the Lord's Supper, it is highly significant that during the witchcraft controversy Parris chose the occasion of sacrament day to offer his first public and extended commentary on the 'diabolical operations' that afflicted the town."<sup>155</sup>

Parris's sermons were delivered in response to current controversies in the town and were laced with a certain amount of foreboding of the witchcraft crisis. These sermons depict a preoccupation with his belief that there was a hidden presence of evil in Salem Village. He frequently refers to the struggles between the forces of Christ and

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, pp. 11-12.

Satan, his obsession with distinguishing saints from sinners, and his constant insistence that an invasion of ‘devils’ was imminent all contributed to a propitious climate for the witchcraft accusations.<sup>156</sup> These same themes served to reinforce and justify the interpretation of witchcraft once the accusations began.”<sup>157</sup> Looking at a variety of Samuel Parris’s sermons from his ordination to his exit from Salem Village will show that his sermons had both a positive and negative effect on his congregation.

In his ordination sermon Parris warns the congregation of a public and private war with the forces of wickedness. He asks his congregation to seek the protection of Christ against their enemies. During this sermon he clearly points out that he considers those members who partake in communion as persons who should receive God’s blessing. Parris chose to recite a passage from Joshua 5:9 in his ordination sermon, but did not quote this passage verbatim. “This day have I rolled away the Reproach of Egypt from off you.”<sup>158</sup> Parris notes that the Canaanites were carnal sinners and that God gave them a chance to change before punishing them. He expresses the importance of the book of Joshua to his congregants. Parris believed that it was important “to discover to us the sufficiency of a divine promise for Faith to build upon, & (as I may say) rest it self in.”<sup>159</sup> He also felt that it was necessary “to discover to us the sufficiency of a divine threatening to strike terror into Heavens Rebels.”<sup>160</sup> Parris points out to his congregation in this sermon that sinners have no fear of hell because they don’t believe in its existence. Therefore, when the Canaanites faced the wrath of God they trembled with fear.

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, p. 4

<sup>158</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 38.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, p. 38.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, pp. 38-39.

Parris wanted his congregants “to discover to us the true, & most shining, ornaments of a good Ruler whither in Church, or Commonwealth, namely that he be endued w<sup>th</sup> true piety, prudence, valour, diligence, patience &c as Joshua here.”<sup>161</sup> The ideal chosen leader should be focused solely on religion. Parris noted that he quoted Joshua 24:15. “Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”<sup>162</sup> His interpretation of this passage is off. Rather than conveying the message to his congregation that it was their choice to serve God, he pointed out that the path to ‘true piety’ was attained by ‘pure worship’ and that service to God was unwavering. In reality, people often struggle with maintaining their faith. Parris pointed out to his congregation that it was important “to discover to us the very best way for the attaining of a flourishing Common wealth.”<sup>163</sup> He noted that the only way to attain prosperity was to walk a path of piety and the people of New England knew this to be true. New Englanders attributed their prosperity to God because of their unwavering faith and continued worship. Because of their faith, loyalty, devotion to God they also believed they, along with their children, were truly blessed with land and prosperity. It was the belief of New Englanders that if they were in a covenant with God, then their children were also in that covenant. The Covenant of Grace is based on the biblical

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>162</sup> *The Holy Bible*, p. 206.

<sup>163</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 39.



doctrine of original sin.<sup>164</sup> Puritans believed that they were promised eternal life for forgiveness of sins through Christ.

In his ordination sermon, Parris spoke that by accepting his position as minister in Salem Village he had taken a great weight upon his shoulders.

I am to carry it not as a Lord, but as a Servant, yet not as mans but the Lords servant: now the greater the Master, the greater y<sup>e</sup> service. I am to be zealous in my Masters service: to give my self wholly to these things. I am in all godliness to labour to be exēplary. I am to labour that my doctrine may burn, & my conversation may shine. I am to make difference between y<sup>e</sup> clean, & unclean: so as to labour to cleanse & purge the one, & confirm & strengthen the other. As I am to give Cordials to some, so I must be sure to administer corrosives to others. And what I do this way without partial respect to persons, you must not, you cannot, you ought not to be angry, for so I am commanded. Here is some, & but some of my work, & yet here is work enough, & work hard enough: yet this must be attended, or I shall Reproach the work of this day: & therefore for my help herein I crave, & humbly challenge an interest in all your fervent Prayers who would not have your God Reproached.<sup>165</sup>

Parris told his congregation that he was willing to accept the work that was ahead of him in keeping the congregation together and on the path of righteousness. “You are to pray for me, & to pray much & fervently always for me, but especially when you expect to hear from God by me. You are to endeavor by all lawfull means to make my heavy work as much as in you lyes light & cheerfull.”<sup>166</sup> By concluding his ordination sermon this way, Parris is trying to get his new congregation to work together and help make his work easier and cheerful rather than adding to the burden he already bore by making his life “grievous” and “unprofitable.” Parris had attempted to appeal to the consciences of the people of Salem Village and asked that they would put aside their differences and

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<sup>164</sup> Hall, David D. *Puritans in the New World: A Critical Anthology*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 73. Hall cites the words from Thomas Shepard in defining original sin. “Original sin is the contrariety of the whole nature of man to the law of God, whereby it, being averse from all good, is inclined to all evil. (Eccles. 8:11, Gen. 6:5, Rom. 6:20).”

<sup>165</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 50.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51.

come together as a community under the covenant with God. The undertone here is that Parris is also asking his congregants to do what is right and give him what was originally agreed upon when they were negotiating on his contract and accepted him as their minister. “Therefore by your leave, & in your Name, what I just now requested for my self, I will also desire for you of all praying persons that they would pray for a Sufficiency of grace yet you & I may give up a good account in the season thereof: And as every lover of Gods honour will, so let them, say Amen.”<sup>167</sup>

The sermons following Parris’s ordination to the outbreak of the witchcraft accusations center on the theme of Christ’s suffering and his ascension into heaven. These sermons clearly show that Parris was obsessed with the spiritual war between good and evil. “He continually warns the elect to expect spiritual war with the forces of wickedness.”<sup>168</sup> Parris also put a lot of emphasis on the sacrament of communion. During services, those who were not members of the congregation were asked to leave before communion was shared. “Each time the minister dismissed the non-communicants from the Salem Village meetinghouse before the administration of the Lord’s Supper, the divisions of the church were palpably reenacted, as those who remained behind watched—and were watched by—their departing neighbors.”<sup>169</sup> This no doubt strengthened the bitter feelings that the ‘outsiders’ had welling inside and, on the other hand, drew his supporters closer to him. These communicants continued to be strong supporters of Parris throughout the witchcraft crisis. By the time Parris had made attempts to rectify the division in the congregation, the resentment among the non-communicants was too deep.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid, p. 51.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

Parris's early sermons were dedicated to the doctrine of Christ. In each of these sermons Parris focuses on the betrayal of Christ, Christ's suffering and death, and the resurrection, ascension and exaltation of Christ. "Parris's discussion of Christ's travails reflected his larger concern with the development of a cosmic struggle between good and evil, one in which even the little Salem Village church was involved."<sup>170</sup> During his sermons, Parris prompted the 'elect' to prepare themselves for a spiritual war. He may have believed that outside influences such as the changing economy, the war the frontier, and outsiders, would bring temptation to his congregation and felt that it was necessary to warn them that they should be prepared to fight these evil influences. Parris also used this topic as a way to remind his elect that he was disgruntled over the treatment he received from some of the villagers. "Some sit before the Preacher as senseless as the seats they sit on, pillars they lean on, dead bodies they sometimes tread on: Others rage & fret so y<sup>t</sup> a man if he would please, must either be mute, or say nothing to the purpose."<sup>171</sup> By the time Parris delivered his sermon on May 25, 1690, a portion of the congregants had fallen further behind in Parris's pay. He noted to his communicants, "Reviling & Reproaching any: for this is to savour of the worst of Spirits especially when our Reproaches against such poor Ministers, whose desire is your best welfare, & whose endeavour is to be found faithfull."<sup>172</sup> In preaching to his congregation, "Parris identifies himself with Christ, who was similarly 'rejected' and 'despised.'"<sup>173</sup> This interpretation might not be suitable for what Parris was trying to convey. It is possible that Parris believed that his congregants would identify with Christ as an example for his sermons

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid, pp. 58-59; Parris quoted John Trapp, *A Commentary or exposition upon all the Epistles and the Revelation of John the Divine* (London, 1647), p. 35.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

rather than any other person in the Bible. It is more plausible to believe that he was trying to get the attention of his congregation, so he used Christ as the center for his sermons. Parris may have intended to align himself with Christ in his sermon to show his communicants that he felt betrayed as Christ must have felt.

Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, & my words, in this adulterous & sinful generation of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, w<sup>n</sup> he cometh in y<sup>e</sup> Glory of his Father, with y<sup>e</sup> holy Angels. If you are ashamed to own Christ now, to profess him before y<sup>e</sup> World: To follow him in his Ordinances, in y<sup>e</sup> pattern he hath set you, what will be y<sup>e</sup> fruit hereof? Why hereafter Christ will be ashamed of you. You are now ashamed to own an humble, wounded, bruised, & crucified Saviour: Well shortly an exalted & Glorified Redeemer will be ashamed of you. Now how just & equal is this?<sup>174</sup>

In the first year and a half of his ministerial appointment, Parris delivered twelve installations on Isaiah 53:5 which states that Christ died for our sins. “As Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum observe, in this and other sermons in the pre-accusation period Parris relentlessly pursues the subject of Christ’s betrayal and the ‘Devils & men’ and ‘pretended freinds’ who ‘peirced and bored through, ground & crushed to peices’ their Savior (77).”<sup>175</sup> Parris’s constant reiteration of the passage from Isaiah 53:5 “implies an effort by Parris to identify himself as similarly the victim of betrayal as one of Christ’s ambassadors.”<sup>176</sup> In his sermon delivered on January 12, 1689/90, Parris preaches to his congregants, “hince learn that there is no trust to a rotten-hearted person what ever friendship may be pretended. There are too many in this guileful & deceitful age w<sup>o</sup> live as if they have drank in that heretical notion, together with their mothers milk, qui neseit

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p. 148.

<sup>175</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 15; they quoted Parris’s sermon beginning on p. 72 and Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, pp. 169-70.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

dissimulare, neseit vivere.”<sup>177</sup> The church record book reflects his dissatisfaction with some of the villagers over his treatment and lack of concern over the few provisions which had been given to him. Parris paints a dark picture of the community in this sermon. He indicates to his congregants that others cannot be trusted.

Parris’s sermons from November 1691 through February 1691/92 leading up to the first accusations began to take on a darker tone. “Parris focuses on the ‘enemies of Christ’ and the church’s inevitable victory.”<sup>178</sup> The opposition that Parris faced at this time was the heaviest to date. This message to his congregation could not have been any clearer.<sup>179</sup> Parris’s message to his communicants begins to reflect his desperation in dealing with his lack of pay over the last two years. The church records for this time period shows that Parris appointed a committee of his supporters to represent him in court to request his pay and provisions before he runs out of firewood. His sermons on the spiritual war had reached an especially high note. Parris preached that Christ will execute “just & severe Revenge” on “his enemies.”<sup>180</sup> Parris conveyed to his communicants: “Christ will assuredly vanquish and punish the Devil and those wicked and reprobate men who are his assistants in the world.”<sup>181</sup> Parris told his communicants to “be very thankful” for the “Ministry of the word” and for the “divine Ordinance” which he delivers to them.<sup>182</sup> “It is by the Ministry of the word, through the efficacy of the Spirit, that Christ brings us into his blessed Kingdom”...and that it is the minister’s

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid, p. 76; Qui neseit dissimulare, neseit vivere translates to: he, who does not know how to dissimulate, does not know how to live.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>179</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 17.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p. 172.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, p. 190.

job to “endeavour a true separation between the precious & the vile” and to work hard at whatever it takes to bring together a “pure Church unto Christ.”<sup>183</sup>

Just before Parris’s sermon on February 14, 1691/92, his daughter, Betty, and his niece, Abigail Williams, began to experience strange fits. Parris called upon Dr. William Griggs, a man that he knew prior to moving to Salem Village and trusted as a result of their friendship, to examine the girls. “The behavior of the Salem Village afflicted, far from being unique, resembled various prior counterparts; other physicians, much more distinguished than Dr. William Griggs, had pronounced children bewitched on the basis of similar evidence.”<sup>184</sup> As stated earlier, Parris then called upon other area ministers for their advice in the matter and, after much fasting and prayer, it was determined that the girls were suffering from afflictions brought on by witchcraft. Gragg and Norton do not agree with the events that immediately followed. Gragg argues that after dealing with the afflictions through prayer and fasting first, some time passed before Parris called in area colleagues. Norton points out that Parris delivered his sermon after the examination by Griggs. “Continuing to preach on Psalm 110, verse 1, he spoke of how God was ‘sending forth destroyers’ as a consequence of men’s ‘slighting of Christ.’”<sup>185</sup> Norton also indicates that his congregation was already aware of the afflictions before he consulted other ministers. During his sermon, Parris reminded his congregation that Jesus “Governs his church, not only by his word & spirit, but by his Rod, & afflictions: therefore we are to beware of fainting when we are chastened, or despising the Rod.”<sup>186</sup> Norton seems to have made the assumption that Parris’s use of the word ‘afflictions’ in

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid, p. 190.

<sup>184</sup> Norton, *Devil’s Snare*, p. 40.

<sup>185</sup> Norton, *Devil’s Snare*, p. 19.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

this sermon meant that everyone knew about the girls before he consulted others. There is no mention in the church record book that he shared this information with his congregation. Parris unequivocally accepted the diagnosis that Dr. Griggs made, and chose to consult with other ministers most likely for assistance in dealing with the witchcraft rather than a confirmation of the findings.

“At the end of the first week of March there remained the problem of properly identifying the witches responsible for the afflictions in Salem Village. Three had been named by one teenager and three children (who were too young to be wholly trustworthy witnesses), all of whom continued to suffer torments.”<sup>187</sup> Assumptions were made and accusations cast. One of the accused confessed and named two others as witches and insinuated the existence of others. Norton and others indicate that John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin were two of the examining magistrates chosen to determine whether there was sufficient evidence against the accused to hold them over for trial. Massachusetts was ruled by an ad-hoc government so the suspected witches would not be tried for witchcraft until a formally reconstituted government was put into place. “Even so, Hathorne and Corwin confronted a daunting task. If Tituba’s confession was credible (had certainly John Hale found it so), then they had the responsibility of uncovering a witch conspiracy of unknown extent.”<sup>188</sup>

These men sought the advice from the best known sources of the time. Those sources included Bernard’s *Guide to Grand-Jury Men*, John Gaule’s *Select Cases of Conscience Touching Witches and Witchcrafts* (1646), and William Perkins’s *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608). “William Perkins, for example,

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<sup>187</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 40.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, p. 41.

stressed that a magistrate should not ‘proceede upon sleight causes...or upon sinister respects,’ but must have ‘speciall presumptions’ before examining suspects in witchcraft cases. He listed ‘certaine signes’ that ‘at least probably, and conjecturally denote one to be a Witch,’ most of which accorded with those identified by Richard Bernard.”<sup>189</sup> Norton writes that these men also indicated that having a connection to a known witch, exhibiting quarrelsome behavior resulting in something happening to the other party, and bearing the ‘devil’s mark’ are all reasons to rightfully presume witchcraft and constitute an examination. Bernard gave the best instructions on how to proceed with an examination, “indicating that magistrates should question a suspect only after having examined the afflicted (if possible), any knowledgeable relatives and neighbors, a physician, and the suspect’s own family. Moreover, ‘a godly and learned Divine’ should be recruited to prepare the suspect for ‘confession before Authority, when he or shee is examined.’”<sup>190</sup> The examinations were scheduled.

On March 24, 1962 Deodat Lawson, one of the visiting ministers and a former minister of Salem Village, delivered a sermon to the Church of Christ at Salem for their lecture day service. Lawson started by apologizing to the congregation for being an unworthy minister when he served Salem Village earlier. “The Sermon here presented unto you, was Delivered in your Audiences; by that Unworthy Instrument, who did formerly spend some Years among you, in the Work of the Ministry, tho’ attended with manifold Sinful Failings and Infirmities, for which I do Implore the Pardoning Mercy of

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid, p. 41.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, p. 42.



God in Jesus Christ, and Intreat from you the Covering of Love.”<sup>191</sup> There are similarities here between Lawson’s style of preaching and Samuel Parris’s. Each of these ministers addresses the congregation by stating their flaws. Perhaps this is an attempt to show that they, too, are working to overcome their inadequacies in order to live a Godly life. Lawson continues by telling the congregation that he is praying for them and that God is preparing them for the Kingdom of Glory. This, of course is typical of ministers to state to their congregations. Lawson also points out that the Apostles said that everyone must endure tribulations to enter into the Kingdom of God.

Now since (besides your share in the common Calamities, under the Burthen whereof this poor People are groaning at this time) the Righteous and Holy God hath been pleased to permit a sore and grievous Affliction to befall you, such as can hardly be said to be common to Men, viz. By giving Liberty to Satan to range and rage amongst you, to the Torturing the bodies, and Distracting the Minds of some of the visible Sheep and Lambs of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>192</sup>

Like Parris, Lawson tells the congregation of the coming of Christ and how he died for the sins of man.

Lawson continues his sermon by telling the congregation that they all have means available to end Satan’s stand. They have the means “to resist him, to oppose his Execution of the Priests Office.”<sup>193</sup> He points out to the congregants that Joshua stood up to Satan by saying, “The Lord Rebuke thee, O Satan.”<sup>194</sup> Lawson states that Joshua’s strength and opposition to Satan are “drawn from the Covenant of God”...and that it is but a vain thing for thee, O Satan, to move me again them, know their Faults, but I will

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<sup>191</sup> Lawson, Deodat. "Christ's Fidelity the Only Shield against Satan's Malignity. Asserted in a Sermon Deliver'd at Salem-Village the 24th of March, 1692. Being Lecture Day There, and a Time of Publick Examination, of Some Suspected for Witchcraft" (1704), p. 6.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, pp. 7-8.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, p. 18; like Parris, Lawson also chooses to cite Joshua for his sermon.

now admit no further accusations, being resolved to perfect my Mercy to them.”<sup>195</sup>

Lawson reminds the congregants that Jesus Christ is their Savior and the only one that can protect them from Satan as long as they follow Christ. Again, Lawson echoes what Parris has been saying to the congregation since he stepped into the role of their minister.

Lawson points out that sometimes God allows the devil to inflict man with diseases by using Job as an example.

So Satan went and smote Job with sore Boils &c. It is not expressed, what Disease it was, with which the Devil smote Job; but certainly it seized him, with the utmost degree of Malignity and Loathsomness, that natural causes, under the influence of Diabolical Malice, could produce; and we may rationally conceive that never any man, had that Disease or those Boils (as Job had them) who outlived the Tormenting Pains, and malignity thereof.<sup>196</sup>

He announces that Satan insinuates himself among the people as a false teacher and a seducer of men, trying to disguise himself as a true saint. “If it were possible, he would deceive the very Elect by his subtilty; for it is certain, he never works more like the Prince of Darkness, than when he looks most like an Angel of Light, and when he pretends to Holiness, he then doth most Secretly, and by consequence most Surely undermine it, and those that most Excel in the Exercise thereof.”<sup>197</sup> He points out that the higher the office held by a person within the church the more violently Satan opposes them. Lawson suggests that they pray: “Do not Condemn me; shew me wherefore thou Contendest with me...Search me Oh, GOD, and know my Heart, try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, &c.”<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, pp. 40-41.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, pp. 63-64.

Three days after Lawson delivered his sermon to the people of Salem Village, Samuel Parris gave another sermon. He opened his March 27, 1692, sermon with a statement, “Occasioned by dreadfull Witchcraft broke out here a few weeks past, & one Member of this Church, & another of Salem upon publick examination by Civil Authority vehemently suspected for shee-Witches, & upon it Committed.”<sup>199</sup> Cooper and Minkema state “Parris does not raise the issue of witchcraft as a possibility, but accepts it as a foregone conclusion. The minister not only confirms that the strange afflictions in Salem Village are caused by witches, but also asserts that some of the witches are likely members.”<sup>200</sup> Parris’s supporters were able to see that “his prognostications of the past two years had been fulfilled, imbuing him with all the more spiritual credibility and authority.”<sup>201</sup> Parris reinforced the interpretation of witchcraft by cautioning his listeners against resisting or questioning authority. “He leaves little doubt but that those who object to his interpretations and to the witchcraft proceedings are themselves likely devils.”<sup>202</sup> Parris warned his congregation that “resisters of authority are resisters of God.”<sup>203</sup>

In his sermons, Parris compares the situation in Salem to Christ’s selection of his disciples. “Our Lord Jesus Christ knows how many Devils there are in his Church, & who they are.”<sup>204</sup> He professed to his congregants that Christ knows that there are saints and devils in all churches.

By Devil is ordinarily meant any wicked Angel or Spirit: Somtimes it is put for the Prince or head of evil Spirits, or fallen Angels Somtimes it is

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<sup>199</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 194.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, p. 21.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, p. 22; in other words, his sermons were interpreted by some of his congregants as a warning that the Devil would invade their community with witches and evil if they continued to behave badly.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, p. 205.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, p. 195.

used for vile & wicked person, the worst of such, who for their villainy & impiety do most resemble Devils & wicked Spirits. Thus Christ in our text calls Judas a Devil, for his great likeness to the Devil. One of you is a Devil i.e. a Devil for quality & disposition: not a Devil for Nature, for he was a man &c but a Devil for likeness & operation.<sup>205</sup>

Parris compares the situation with Christ accusing Judas of being a devil with the accusations of witchcraft in Salem Village. He tells his congregants that there is a devil among them just like Judas and points out that there are notorious sinners in their little Church. Parris believes that hypocrites are the worst. “Corruptio optima est pessima. Hypocrites are the sons & heirs of the Devil, the free-holders of hell, whereas other sinners are but Tenants.”<sup>206</sup> Parris reiterates that the church consists of good and bad people and recaptures the statement that Christ knows who the devils are in his church. “He knows who they are that have not chosen him, but prefer farms & Merchandize above him, & above his ordinance.”<sup>207</sup>

Parris is displeased with those in his community who are more concerned with their own wealth and success by mentioning that some people prefer material wealth over spiritual wealth. Parris revisits the idea that there is a devil in their church over and over again and begs them to come forward to share the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to be absolved from sin. “Oh if there be any such among us, forbear to come this day to the Lords Table, least Satan enter more powerfully into you. Least whilst the bread be between your teeth, the wrath of the Lord come pouring down upon you.”<sup>208</sup> Parris asked

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid, p. 195.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, p. 196; *Corruptio optima est pessima* translates to: the corruption of the very best is the worst wickedness.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid, p. 196; it could easily be interpreted that Parris is insinuating with this statement that the very people who refused to pay him or furnish him with goods that were promised to him are the same people who enjoy the benefits of their farms and prosper from their goods.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, p. 197.

his congregants, “How much more may N-E Churches mourn that such as work witchcraft, or are vehemently suspected to do should be found among them.”<sup>209</sup>

Parris painted a pretty grim picture to his congregation as the trials began. He asks his congregation to examine themselves to determine whether they are a saint or a devil. Parris adds that if the devil had his way he would choose the best saints from every church to tempt, but he also tells them that he doesn't believe that the devil is strong enough that he can tempt the best saints among them. Parris ends his sermon by pointing out to his congregation that there are certain sins that make them devils: “A liar or plunderer...A slanderer or accuser of the godly...A tempter of sin...An opposer of godliness, as Elymas...Envious persons as Witches...A Drunkard...A proud person.”<sup>210</sup> Parris's sermons leave his congregation wondering which one of them is the devil that he speaks about at the end of his sermon.

During the course of the witchcraft trials Parris preaches full steam about the devils and the “Multitudes, of Witches & Wizards” in their community.<sup>211</sup> Parris's preaching skills are not quite comparable to those of Deodat Lawson, mostly due to him having less experience than Lawson. Parris was as deliberate as Lawson in stating that there were devils among them. Parris and Lawson both assumed that the accused were guilty before they had ever gone to trial. Their sermons indicate that they both believed that the accused were guilty and that they were working in conjunction with the devil. Their sermons also laid the groundwork for future accusations by stating that people connected to witches could also be suspect of having a relationship with Satan. Parris used Lawson's sermon as an example of how to proceed. Since he accepted the

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid, p. 197.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, p. 198.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid, p. 201.

prognosis of witchcraft without question, he continued his sermons along the lines of devils and witches throughout the course of the trials.

During the time of the accusations and the duration of the trials, Samuel Parris was not as meticulous about keeping track of his records and notes. For example, Samuel Parris's sermon dated May 8, 1692, opens with, "Ye cannot drink the Cup of the Lord, & the cup of the Devils: ye cannot partake of the Lords table, & of the Table of the Devils."<sup>212</sup> The rest of the sermon is missing. Parris wrote in his sermon notebook, "Se these sermons in loose papers."<sup>213</sup> His sermons dated June 19, 1692 and July 31, 1692, have the same note. Through Parris's delivery of sermons we can see that he believed witchcraft was alive in Salem Village. After he delivered his sermons on September 11, 1692, "the tone of Parris's sermons shifts dramatically. This change was as a result of the types of evidence that was going to be accepted in the trials. "By the time of the October 23 sacrament, the Boston clergy had denounced the permissibility of spectral evidence and made clear their intentions of putting a halt to the prosecutions."<sup>214</sup> From this point Parris began to reevaluate his stance on the belief of witches living in their community.

"Parris after a manner seeks reconciliation and healing with his congregation."<sup>215</sup> He preaches to his congregation, "Let him Kiss me with kisses of his mouth...Kisses are sweet among true friends after some jars & differences, whereby they testify true Reconciliation."<sup>216</sup> Parris continued by saying, "Manifestations of Christ[s] love are exceeding sweet after there hath been a seeming breach & estrangedness, especially since

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid, p. 199.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, p. 199.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid, p. 211.

they know the fault is wholly on their side.”<sup>217</sup> Two years after the trials had ended a “ministerial council acknowledged that some of Parris’s comments, while hardly heretical, were ‘unwarrantable and uncomfortable,’ and contributed to the atmosphere of fear and retribution.”<sup>218</sup>

It is important to reiterate that Parris was preaching about ‘Devils’ and ‘Witches’ months before the girls began showing signs of afflictions. His reasoning for choosing those particular sermons was to get the members of the congregation to do the right thing and pay what was owed to him. It is probable that he was trying to point out to his congregation that when people make the wrong choices, they open their hearts to the devil. The records show that the events which unfolded in Salem Village indicate his sermons had the opposite effect on the community. Rather than bring his congregants closer together to heal the afflicted and help the accused, his sermons created an atmosphere of fear. People were afraid and suspicious of each other and as a result, more and more people were being accused of witchcraft. Parris was unaware that his sermons had that effect on his congregants. He wrote in his church record book on March 27, 1692, just days after Deodat Lawson preached to the people of Salem Village, that “It is also well known that when these calamities, first began, which was in my own family, the afflictions was several weeks before such Hellish operations, as Witchcraft was suspected. Nay it never broke forth to any considerable light, untill Diabolical means was used by the making of a Cake by my Indian man.”<sup>219</sup> As a result of his sermons and the accusations that befell this community, members of the congregation quit attending church. Parris noted in the church record book on August 14, 1692 that Peter Cloyse and

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid, p. 211.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid, p. 21.

<sup>219</sup> “Church Record Book.”

the families of Samuel Nurse and John Tarbell had “absented themselves from Communion.”<sup>220</sup> He appointed others to speak to them and persuade them to return to church.

Once the afflictions began, Parris’s sermons became even more focused on ‘Devils’ and ‘Witches,’ following Deodat Lawson’s sermon. “For little pelf, men sell Christ to his Enemies, & their Souls to the Devil. But there are certain sins that make us Devils, see that we be not such...”<sup>221</sup> These sermons had an accusatory tone. In July Parris asked his congregation, “how many, what Multitudes, of Witches & Wizards has the Devil instigated with utmost violence to attempt to overthrow of Religion.”<sup>222</sup> In the same sermon, he tells his congregants that “if ever there were Witches, Men & Women in Covenant with the Devil, here are Multitudes in New England. Nor is it so strange a thing there should be such: no nor that some Church Members should be such.”<sup>223</sup> However, the tone of his sermons softened with his first sermon in October. “Let him Kiss me with the kisses of his Mouth &c. All true Beleivers are very urgently & fervently desirous of feeling, & sensible manifestations of the Love of Christ, their Lord, Bridegroom, & Husband.”<sup>224</sup> Parris’s sermons took on a tone of reconciliation and forgiveness rather than his earlier accusatory tone. Parris and Lawson must have had several discussions about “the unfolding events” before the delivery of Lawson’s sermon. “They concluded that New England, and Salem Village in particular, faced a conspiracy of witches.”<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 198. Parris lists the things that make people devils. Devils are liars, plunderers, slanderers, accusers of the godly, a tempter to sin, an opposer of godliness, envious persons (witches), drunkards, and proud persons.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, p. 201.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, p. 202. He adds in this sermon that he is using “Baxters Apparitions & Witches” page 122-123 to gather his information regarding the witches among them.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid, p. 212.

<sup>225</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 124.



Parris spent much of his time late in 1691 and early 1692 articulating about the forces that were threatening the church. “The combative minister, with the same vigor he had shown as he battled for his job, threw himself into what he predicted would be a protracted conflict with Satan.”<sup>226</sup> By the end of the trials, Parris was a sullen and apologetic man. The people of Salem Village wanted Parris removed as the minister “by reason of (in their estimation) ‘unwarrantable actings’ of their Pastor.”<sup>227</sup> In 1694 Samuel Parris delivered a sermon apologizing to his congregation for his role in the witch trials. This sermon was titled Meditations for Peace.

And so again, I beg, entreat, and beseech you, that Satan, the devil, the roaring lion, the old dragon, the enemy of all righteousness, may no longer be served by us, by our envy and strifes...but that all from this day forward may be covered with the mantle of love, and we may on all hands forgive each other heartily, sincerely, and thoroughly, as we do hope and pray that God, for Christ’s sake, would forgive each of ourselves....Amen, Amen.<sup>228</sup>

He admitted that he had been too zealous in trying to protect the community from the devil.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid, p. 124.

<sup>227</sup> “Church Record Book.”

<sup>228</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, p. 73.

<sup>229</sup> Breslaw, Elaine G. *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Fantasies*. (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 176.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

The city of heaven, provided for the saints, is well-walled and well-gated and well-guarded, so that no devils, nor their instruments, shall enter therein.

The Reverend Samuel Parris  
September 1692.<sup>230</sup>

The ideals that New England represented and the mission that they envisioned for the settlers were established from the beginning of colonization when Governor John Winthrop announced before dropping anchor that they accepted a divine ‘Commission’ to mold their New World society a godly ‘Citty vpon a hill’ that would be an example for other people.<sup>231</sup> Puritans left their familiar homes and traveled the dangerous seas in order to live the life they believed God wanted for them. In order to serve God, they established new communities—Bible communities—which lived by the word of God. Seventeenth-century New England ministers used their sermon to address all areas of life, whether they spoke to issues in economic, social or political spheres. “Sermons would have to hold uncontested sway over the hearts and minds of its listeners.”<sup>232</sup> To encompass the aspects of public life the Puritans developed the concept of a balance between church and state and set up weekday sermons or ‘occasional’ sermons.<sup>233</sup> The church was the center of each new community. Ministers were chosen to be the only ones that could act as the public orator. The founders of Puritan communities fashioned a model where the sermon was central to New England society.<sup>234</sup> The ideal situation was that the minister would be the leader of a community—the one person that everyone

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<sup>230</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, p. xviv.

<sup>231</sup> Stout, *New England Soul*, p. 13.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

could look to for guidance. Puritans also “discovered that these social occasions required a rhetoric and mode of persuasion different from the evangelical message they had concentrated on in England.”<sup>235</sup>

It became an added responsibility of the minister to provide direction for his congregation, which offered an opportunity for a minister to preach more often or more typical than in England. “A church was composed wholly of elect souls identified through observance of their behavior and satisfactorily meeting the requirements of the entry process.”<sup>236</sup> The congregation consisted of any person who wished to attend services, but was not part of the covenant. The minister’s primary focus during his sermon concentrated on the responsibility that man had to honor his covenant with God. “Here the emotional levers were fear and the possibility of divine desertion.”<sup>237</sup> It was the practice of Puritan ministers that weekday sermons and fast days were observed and invoked to secure God’s for civic order, dangerous ocean crossings, and church foundings.<sup>238</sup> It was especially true that “on Sundays, ministers would be gospel heralds proclaiming the way of personal salvation through faith in Christ; and on weekdays—as the occasion required—they would become social guardians telling the nation who they were and what they must do to retain God’s special covenant interest.”<sup>239</sup> The occasional sermon symbolized the belief New Englanders held that God’s word was preeminent in all things.

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>236</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 18. This practice is reflective of the Covenant of Works. Following the moral laws of God was the key to attaining the Covenant of Works.

<sup>237</sup> Stout, *New England Soul*, p. 24.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

The people of New England “believed in a God who actively governed his creation, controlling all worldly events from the greatest to the smallest.”<sup>240</sup> Puritans believed that God governed both the visible and the invisible world—both good and evil. They valued their covenant with God, but mostly, they feared that disobedience of God’s laws would cause God to sever his covenant with them, leaving them to fend for themselves in a hostile environment. Samuel Parris took this role seriously. He saw this as a new beginning not just for him but also for the Village. He truly believed that his new appointment would bring about changes in the village. He saw himself as the savior.<sup>241</sup> Parris saw a community of people who were at odds with each other and was disappointed with their lack of Christian behavior. There were those that attended services, but left before communion and the sermon. Parris’s focus was to bring the people in the community together in a ‘pure church’ and attempt to heal their differences.<sup>242</sup> “Parris and his congregation chose not to institute the Halfway Covenant, which permitted the children of all baptized adults, even those who had not embraced the covenant, to be baptized.”<sup>243</sup> He believed by not allowing the continuity of the covenant through family members, he would purify his church. He wanted people to commit to God by signing the covenant. Prior to Samuel Parris’s appointment, there was whole generation that had not been baptized as a result of not having a church or a minister in Salem Village. Parris was not willing to allow this generation to become default members of his church because of the halfway covenant. He wanted them to take hold of

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<sup>240</sup> Cohen, Daniel A. *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace*. (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), p. 7.

<sup>241</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, p. 160.

<sup>242</sup> Ray, “Satan’s War,” p. 74.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid*, p. 74. Ray notes that Parris’s church was the “mirror opposite of the Salem town church, which had grown progressively more liberal.” (pp. 74-75)

their religion and accept God through commitment and way of life. Historians note that his lectures and sermons reflect his distress over a community divided and that Parris's own issues with the community over his lack of pay and his shortage in provisions as promised surfaced in his lectures and sermons.

After the trials ended many of the members of the Salem Village church condemned Samuel Parris for his role in the trials and accused him of being the 'procurer' to the events that took place.<sup>244</sup> However, "scholars now agree that Parris by no means was the 'cause' or instigator of the witchcraft hysteria. But this fact should not disguise the significance of Parris's preaching shaping the village's interpretations of the 'afflictions.'"<sup>245</sup> Until now no one has entertained the idea that Parris's sermons caused things to escalate in Salem Village. Although Benjamin Ray writes about Parris's sermons, he believes that were directed toward the division in the community between the church members and the congregation. I believe the sermons he chose and the way that he delivered them to the congregation profoundly affected the outcome in Salem Village. Parris's sermons leading up to the accusations are important for showing his preaching style which sets the mood in the community prior to the onset of the first afflictions. His notebook shows that his sermons responded to controversies taking place in the village and reveal forebodings of the witchcraft crisis.

With each of Samuel Parris's sermons, the divisions within the community became more noticeable. There were those that supported Parris and those that didn't.

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid, p. 1; Cooper and Minkema state that "in the aftermath of the trials, a number of Salem Village churchgoers bitterly condemned Parris as 'the beginner and procurer of the sorest afflictions, not to this village only, but to this whole country, that ever did befall them.'" (p. 1) They quoted Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village Witchcraft*, p. 266.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid, p. 2. Ray's "Satan's War" indicates that it wasn't necessarily the sermons that set the scene, but more so the parameters that he set for his church members. By not allowing for the halfway covenant, he alienated a large part of Salem Village.

The ‘anti-Parris’ faction—those who did not support Parris—did not approve of Parris’s appointment or his contract. Lines were drawn in the sand. Public records indicate the many petty differences arose in the community through lawsuits filed with the courts. There was “a strikingly high level of internal bickering and disarray” in Salem Village.<sup>246</sup> The existing alliances became stronger within the two factions that had formed a little over a decade before Parris arrived in Salem Village. These existing divisions morphed into pro-Parris and anti-Parris factions. “What made Salem Village disputes so notorious, and ultimately so destructive, was the fact that structural defects in its organization rendered the Village almost helpless in coping with whatever disputes might arise.”<sup>247</sup> As a result of this quarreling, the village experienced a change of ministers three times before Parris was called to the post. Records show that James Bayley, George Burroughs, and Deodat Lawson each served as minister to Salem Village prior to Samuel Parris. Each of these ministers left their post for the same reason, that is, lack of pay from the villagers. The pro-Parris group paid their portion of Parris’s salary and often provided him with firewood.

In Parris’s first sermon he subtly attacked the men in the community who had exploited the events, which led to their independence from Salem Town, for their own gain.<sup>248</sup> Prior to his appointment there existed political turmoil in the village because of the desire to become independent of Salem Town. “This lofty motivation, Parris insisted, should be more than enough to ‘vindicate and justify’ the measures of the advocates of

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<sup>246</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 45.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65; “Samuel Parris, for one, recognized the ambiguous circumstances which had made him head of an independent church.” They note that in his first sermon “Parris came close to launching an explicit attack on the motives of those Villagers, soon to become his bitter adversaries, who had attempted to exploit the developments of 1689 for their own purposes.”

ordination and prevent any Villager from being ‘offended at the work of this day.’”<sup>249</sup>

The men who stood against the campaign for independence became strong opposition to Parris and their disdain for him grew each year. Between Parris’s appointment as minister and the outbreak of witchcraft accusations the anti-Parris faction began paying less of their taxes that supported Parris.<sup>250</sup> Parris’s sermons focused more and more on the devils and witches in the village and by the time of the first witchcraft accusations the divisional lines in the community were clearly drawn. “Given the ineffectiveness of the Village’s institutional structures, private grievances and disputes escalated with a rapidity which must have startled even those embroiled in them, until the entire community, willy-nilly, was drawn in.”<sup>251</sup>

Parris’s early sermons fueled the already existing divisions in the community. In his ordination sermon he had pointed to those who did not support independence or the creation of a church in Salem Village. Sermons that followed pointed out his lack of supplies and wages. Those opposed to him continued to withhold his pay. Those who supported him filed lawsuits against the opposition. “The minister himself became a kind of reference point by which the groups identified themselves.”<sup>252</sup> The anti-Parris faction countered with lawsuits of their own indicating that fraud was involved in the hiring of Parris and in conveying the parsonage house and land to him. Parris’s “urgent appeals and political maneuverings within the Village, eventually escalated into protracted and

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid, p. 154

<sup>250</sup> Ibid, p. 65; Boyer and Nissenbaum point out that the committee which had been in place when Parris was hired as minister was replaced with five men who “now openly emerged as the anti-Parris faction in the Village.” They also note that Parris wrote these five names down in his Church Book. “Parris had good reason to fear the upheaval that had taken place on October 16. Its proportions had been made unmistakably clear not only by the political complexion of the newly elected Committee but by a further ominous vote passed at the same Village meeting: no tax would be assessed that year for payment of Parris’s salary.” (p. 66)

<sup>251</sup> Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, p. 161.

bitter suits and counter-suits wending their way from court to court.”<sup>253</sup> Parris’s early sermons about the betrayal of Christ angered the anti-Parris factions and inspired the pro-Parris factions into action.

This growing separation of ideas and disagreements in outcomes both past and present caused people to reevaluate and incorporate them into the present conflicts which further fueled the division in the community. One such event took place on January 23, 1692, Alice Parker was found lying in the snow and dirt in the town of Salem. Those who found her thought she appeared to be dead and “one of the women assured the men that Goodwife Parker had had fits of unconsciousness before, but the men were skittish about touching her, and it was a time before one dared to sling her over his shoulder.”<sup>254</sup> At one point Alice regained consciousness, sat straight up in bed, and laughed before becoming limp again. Most people in the community gave little thought to this incident. However, with Parris’s mention of the Devil among them, it was most likely and incident that was kept in the back of the minds of some of the citizens of Salem Village when word spread to them.<sup>255</sup>

The timing of the afflictions and subsequent accusations came when the tension between the two factions was at a peak. The court docket was packed with lawsuits and countersuits over land, the selection of Parris as minister, breach of contract and fraud. Although the divisions didn’t change during the witchcraft accusations, the volley of

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid, p. 161; the lawsuits that Parris was involved with earlier in Boston were similar to the ones in Salem Village. In fact, the suits in Boston were against him...for not paying his rent, etc. These are against others, as well as against him.

<sup>254</sup> Roach, Marilynne K. *The Salem Witch Trial: A Day-by-Day Chronicle of a Community under Siege*. (Lanham: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2002); p. 5.

<sup>255</sup> This incident in Salem town coincides with the events in Salem Village. The people in Salem Town didn’t look at Alice Parker’s unconsciousness as an affliction of witchcraft. However, the events that unfolded in Salem Village a few weeks later were linked to witchcraft. The significance of this is that Samuel Parris was preaching about Devils and Witches, so the diagnosis of witchcraft for the girls in the Parris household was readily accepted.



lawsuits halted. Parris's sermons started taking on a different tone in the months prior to the first afflictions and accusations.<sup>256</sup> He began speaking of devils and witches among their community and he often spoke of what lengths the devil would go to in order to gain souls. In a world of uncertainty, talk of the devil brought fear with it.

Bouts of illness, including smallpox, had been affecting the citizens of Salem Village during the winter. When the 'fits' began with Betty and Abigail, Parris and others associated their afflictions with these illnesses. Testimony by Tituba, in the following months, mentioned involvement with the Devil.<sup>257</sup> Months after the trials had ended, Tituba testified that Parris beat her to make her confess to witchcraft and to name others as her sister witches.<sup>258</sup>

The events which unfolded in Salem Village in 1692 were a result of a strong belief in the 'invisible' world fueled by the growing conflict in the community. Parris's sermons show his obsession with 'devils' and 'witches' throughout his tenure. "The seventeenth century firmly believed in a dualistic universe: in a material or visible world, and a spiritual or invisible world as well. Heaven was still a concrete reality, as were the Angels who inhabited it; so was Hell and its Devils."<sup>259</sup> The subject was one, which

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<sup>256</sup> His sermons were a platform for underscoring his dissatisfaction, anxiety, and frustration concerning his pay and his attempt at uniting a divided community. Those who opposed Parris did not want to pay for a minister that they did not choose. The negotiations for Parris's salary and the relinquishing of the parsonage properties to Parris were done without the consent of all. The anti-Parris faction did not necessarily oppose Parris as a minister...it was more a matter of principal about how the appointment was made. If any of the opposition had anything negative to say about Parris and his ability to be a minister, there is nothing written about it. However, these anti-Parris members had plenty to say about him after the trials came to an end.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid, p. 8; Roach's chronicle takes the reader through a day-by-day reading of the events that were taking place in Salem Village and surrounding areas. She mentions the second French and Indian war that is taking place, as well as, the events taking place in Boston and the town of Salem.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid, pp. 22-23; Roach also notes that Tituba was an Indian women who came from a region where the culture included a bit of the occult. Some records indicate that Tituba was from South America and some indicate that she was native to the island of Haiti. Parris acquired her and John while he was residing in Barbados.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid, pp. 7-8.

seventeenth century people often read about. It was believed that if the idea regarding the unseen world exists, then “we have therefore no more reason to deny or doubt the existence.”<sup>260</sup> This strong belief coupled with the diagnosis by Dr. Griggs was evidence enough for the people of Salem Village. It was easy for them to absorb the sermons that Parris delivered and believe that the Devil and his witches had, in fact, invaded their village.

Each of the sermons delivered by Samuel Parris between March 27, 1691/2, and early October 1692 fueled the dynamics that brought about more accusations. By mid-October the accusations began to decrease. “Events, however, were forcing them to change their positions, although some more slowly than others.”<sup>261</sup> Several members of the court no longer felt comfortable with how the proceedings were conducted. Although the judges believed in witchcraft, this was the first time that a court had accepted ‘spectral’ evidence in a trial. When Governor William Phips returned from the military campaign on the frontier, he “‘found many persons in a strange ferment of dissatisfaction’ with the trials.”<sup>262</sup> As a result, he consulted with Increase Mather for justification in ending the trials. The outcome was Mather’s *Cases of Conscience Concerning Evil Spirits Personating Men*, “a work sharply critical of the trials.”<sup>263</sup> Increase Mather’s treatise changed the view the magistrates in charge of the trials. He did not approve of the acceptance of ‘spectral’ evidence and rejected the way the proceedings were handled. He state that it was better for a small number of guilty people to escape prosecution for not using the various tests and evidence than it was for innocent

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<sup>260</sup> Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. 1690. Ed. Roger Woolhouse. (New York: Penguin Books), 1997; p. 283.

<sup>261</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 146.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid, p. 144.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid, p. 144.

people to be condemned. “Obviously, Mather said little that was new, but he presented it at a time when many had concluded that further trials would serve no good purpose.”<sup>264</sup>

Governor Phips halted the jailing of suspects.

On October 23, 1692, Samuel Parris delivered a sermon of reconciliation.<sup>265</sup> He attempted to calm the people of Salem Village by preaching about Christ’s love. “There were kisses of subjection, treachery, and lust, he explained, but also kisses of affection, love, approval, and reconciliation. ‘Kisses are very sweet among true friends after some jars and difference, whereby they testify true reconciliation.’”<sup>266</sup> Parris felt that it was time that the people of Salem Village make an attempt to forgive and forget and to move on as a community. “The kin of the imprisoned and executed were in no mood for reconciliation. The Village ‘jars and differences’ could not be easily solved.”<sup>267</sup> People were angry and they blamed Parris. He was faced, in the weeks and months following the end of the trials, with the extent to which the trials had affected the divisions within the community and exacerbated the opposition. The trial made the gap even larger between the two factions. Many people connected to the anti-Parris faction had family members that were accused and condemned of witchcraft. There was no way to heal those wounds.

After months and years of being verbally attacked by members of Salem Village regarding his role in the trials, Parris came to the realization that his sermons may impacted the community adversely and might have caused the accusations to escalate.

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid, pp. 144-45.

<sup>265</sup> Parris realized, once spectral evidence was no longer going to be accepted as evidence of witchcraft and that the magistrates were eager to bring the trials to an end, that it was time to re-direct his sermons.

<sup>266</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 211; Roach, *Witch Trials*, p. 322; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, p. 176.

<sup>267</sup> Roach, *Witch Trials*, p. 322.

Those connected to the accused publicly blamed Parris for starting the accusations. He spent the next two years trying to unify the community. The problems that had not been resolved when the accusations happened were now staring them all in the face. The lawsuits were revived and the courts were once again filled with suits against Parris and suits against members of the community. Parris finally had a bit of a reprieve. “Parris did get some good news from the Court of General Sessions of the Peace. In May, it fined four members of the rate committee ‘for not raising the minister’s maintenance. In addition, the court ordered the committee to ‘assess the inhabitants of said village for...arrears...yet due to Mr. Samuel Parris, their minister, for the two years last past...together with the present year’s salary.’”<sup>268</sup>

In November 1694 Parris delivered his Mediations for Peace.<sup>269</sup>

In fine, the matter being so dark and perplexed as that there is no present appearance that all God’s servants should be altogether of one mind, in all circumstances touching the same, I do most heartily, fervently, and humbly beseech pardon of the merciful God thorough the blood of Christ, of all my mistakes and trespasses in so weighty a matter; and also all your forgiveness of every offence in this or other affairs, wherein you see or conceive I have erred and offended; professing, in the presence of the Almighty God that what I have done has been, as for substance, &c., I may have been mistaken; I also, through grace, promising each of you the like of me.<sup>270</sup>

This was Samuel Parris’s most eloquent sermon. His apology was heartfelt. One can recognize the anguish Parris felt when he delivered this sermon. “Parris stood ready ‘to own any errors’ he had been guilty of in the ‘management of those mysteries.’”<sup>271</sup>

However, “Parris was not willing to accept full blame for the sufferings of the previous year. He suggested that God had permitted ‘the evil angels to delude us on both

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<sup>268</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 158.

<sup>269</sup> Cooper and Minkema, *Sermon Notebook*, p. 33.

<sup>270</sup> Gragg, *Quest for Security*, p. 165

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid*, p. 164.

hands.”<sup>272</sup> None of the people who accused others of witchcraft ever apologized for playing a part.<sup>273</sup> Parris’s sermons unconsciously set the scene and fueled the flames.<sup>274</sup> He preached that “To see a dear friend torn, wounded, and the blood streaming down his face and body, will much affect the heart. But much more when these wounds we see, and that the streaming blood we behold, accuseth *us* as the vile actors...But much more when our consciences tell us that *we*, our cruel hands, have made these wounds.”<sup>275</sup> Parris was clearly telling his congregation that he felt everyone was responsible for the accusations and deaths of people that they had previously considered friends...but that he bore most of the responsibility.

The sermons that Parris delivered between March and October of 1692 were pivotal to the accusations of witchcraft in Salem Village. “Such preaching offered a powerful and dangerous release for social and political tensions that had been brewing for decades.”<sup>276</sup> Parris was delivering his chosen sermons to his congregants in an attempt to set things right. He used the pulpit a tool to convince those who opposed him to give him what was initially agreed. Parris created the scenario of the ‘devils’ and ‘witches’ in the community in an attempt to appeal to the congregant’s consciences regarding their covenant with God. His sermons “encouraged the villagers to purge their feelings of frustration and guilt by locating and destroying the ‘witches’ in their midst.”<sup>277</sup> The fallout of the early sermons that Parris delivered in the first part of his ministry was the catalyst for the witchcraft crisis. His need to point out the injustices which he felt

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid, pp. 164-165.

<sup>273</sup> Hill, *Delusion*, p. 213.

<sup>274</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, p. 168

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, pp. 176-177.

<sup>276</sup> Stout, *New England*, p. 114.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid, p. 114.

towards himself and his family from the people of Salem Village guided him to select the text and exegesis for the sermons that he delivered. His bitterness was apparent in his notes and the church records. Parris's early sermons set the stage for the events, which as they unfolded, were detrimental for the people of Salem Village. The sermons he delivered after the first accusations continued to fuel the flames which changed the tension into crisis. Parris's sermons were the catalyst for the Salem Witch Trials.

## Appendix

### Salem Village in the Seventeenth Century: A Chronology

<b>1626</b>	Founding of the town of Salem
<b>1630's</b>	Settlement begins in the "Salem Farms" region of the town.
<b>1653</b>	Thomas Putnam, Jr., born to Lieutenant Thomas and Ann Holyoke
Putnam	
<b>1669</b>	Joseph Putnam born to Lieutenant Thomas and Mary Veren Putnam
<b>1672</b>	"Salem Farms" becomes the separate parish of Salem Village; James Bayley hired as its first preacher
<b>1679</b>	Bayley resigns amidst criticism by some Salem Villagers.
<b>1680</b>	George Burroughs hired as the new Village preacher.
<b>1683</b>	Burroughs leaves Salem Village.
<b>1684</b>	Deodat Lawson hired to succeed Burroughs as preacher.
<b>1686</b>	Death of Lieutenant Thomas Putnam; a challenge to his will fails.
<b>1686-87</b>	Futile effort to ordain Lawson and form Village Church.
<b>1688</b>	Deodat Lawson leaves the Village; Samuel Parris arrives.
<b>1689</b>	April: Governor Edmund Andros overthrown in a <i>coup</i> at Boston. November: Formation of the Salem Village church and ordination of Samuel Parris as its minister.
<b>1690</b>	Marriage of Joseph Putnam to Elizabeth Porter.
<b>1691</b>	October: Opponents of Parris win control of the Salem Village parish Committee.
<b>1692</b>	January to May: Witchcraft afflictions, accusations, arrests.
<b>1693</b>	Parris's supporters and his opponents jockey for position.
<b>1694</b>	March: The pro-Parris group regains control of the parish Committee.
<b>1695</b>	April: An ecclesiastical council, meeting at Salem Village under the leadership of the Reverend Increase Mather, hints that Parris should resign; eighty-four of Parris's Village opponents petition the council members to take a stronger stand; death of Mary Veren Putnam. May: The council members recommend more forcibly that Parris resign; 105 of Parris's Village backers sign a petition in his behalf. June: The Salem Village church endorses Parris, who agrees to stay on; Thomas Putnam, Jr., unsuccessfully challenges Mary Veren Putnam's will.
<b>1696</b>	July: Resignation of Samuel Parris.
<b>1697</b>	Parris leaves the Village; Joseph Green replaces him.
<b>1699</b>	Deaths of Thomas Putnam, Jr., and his wife.
<b>1752</b>	Salem Village becomes the independent town of Danvers.

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## Curriculum Vitae

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### Education

Bachelor of Arts, School of Liberal Arts, Indiana University, IUPUI, 2005  
Master of Arts, Department of History, Indiana University, IUPUI, 2013

### Honors, Awards, Fellowships

Golden Key National Honor Society, 2003  
Top 100 Students, 2003

### Research and Training Experience

Teaching Assistantship, 2007  
Research Assistantship, Oral History Project, 2007  
Research Assistantship, Economic History Project, 2008  
Internship, Indiana Historical Society, 2009

### Publications

The “Jefferson Chronicles”: Statewide Articles in the *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, 1869-1872:

Part 1: Article Index, compiled by George C. Hibben

Part 2: Name Index from Selected Articles, compiled by Wendy L. Adams and Melinda Moore Weaver

List of Indiana Soldiers Who Served with Custer in the Seventh Cavalry, Extracted from *Men with Custer: Biographies of the 7th Cavalry*, edited by Ronald H. Nichols (2000), by Paul A. Carr and Melinda Moore Weaver

Noble County, Index for General Store Ledger from Bond County, Illinois, 1888, found in Kendallville, by Melinda Moore Weaver

Jackson County, Members of the Jackson County Medical Society, 1876-1936, by Wendy L. Adams and Melinda Moore Weaver