COTTON MATHER'S COSMOLOGY AND THE 1692 SALEM WITCH TRIALS

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ABSTRACT

The Salem witchcraft trials and Cotton Mather's role in them continue to engage the interests of historians and scholars, who have written about them from a number of perspectives, including those derived from most of the social sciences. However, Mather's own seventeenth-century, New England historical-theological context, has attracted much less scholarly interest. Instead, such studies tend to echo the historical portrait of Cotton Mather as the enigmatic representative of the Salem witch-hunt, a view first created by Mather's contemporary critic, Robert Calef.

Yet, in relation to Salem studies and Cotton Mather's role in them, the theological dimension provides an important and perhaps vital lens through which to study the events at Salem in 1692 to 1693. Moving away from the at time banal observations of scholars about Mather's general Puritan theology, this thesis lays greater emphasis upon Mather's well-formulated and consistent cosmology and response to witch episodes prior to, during, and after the Salem trials.

In light of this demonstrable integrity, the thesis suggests a more equitable assessment of the relationship between Mather's preconceived and demonstrated cosmology and his role in the Salem trials. While not suggesting that Mather can or should be absolved of all responsibility for his behavior during, or the course of the trials, the thesis presents a more balanced appraisal of the relative importance and roles of Mather and the Salem Court. Although Mather did in fact make mistakes in his handling of his advice to Governor Phips, and in the publication of The Wonders of the Invisible World, the study gives a fresh understanding of those mistakes and presents a clearer view of Mather's influence upon the proceedings.

As a whole, this study develops a more fully articulated interpretive model of the relationship between the forces and personalities present in New England during the early 1690s, and allows us to explore a single individual's intellectual and behavioral contribution to a series of events for which that individual, Cotton Mather, has traditionally been held responsible. Additionally, the focus on Cotton Mather and the Salem episode, provides an opportunity to add a further level of interpretive understanding of Salem witchcraft by re-examining what is arguably, and what contemporaries would certainly have identified as the underpinnings of the entire episode: the theological worldview of seventeenth-century New England.

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CHAPTER ONE

A RANGE OF INTERPRETIVE VIEWPOINTS

I have indeed set myself to countermine the whole PLOT of the Devil, against New England, in every Branch of it, as far as one of my darkness, can comprehend such a World of Darkness.

Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World (1693)

On 20 April 1692 the family of twelve-year-old Ann Putnam Jr., of Salem village Massachusetts was gathered around the bedside of the young girl, one of the original Salem-village girls to suffer witchcraft possession. Since February, Ann had been the subject of attacks from the invisible world by various spectres resembling local personages. On that night, the latest torments would come from a spectre of an unexpected source. Ann cried out, 'Oh, dreadful, dreadful. Here is a minister come: what are Ministers witches too?'[1]

Ann Putnam Jr. was 'racked and choked' as the spectre tempted her to write her name in the Devil's book as a Salem-witch conscript. When Ann demanded to know the spectre's name, it revealed itself as George Burroughs, the former minister at Salem village.[2] Although Ann Putnam Jr. refused to sign the Devil's book, her experience with George Burroughs' spectre did not end here. Throughout the months of her possession, Putnam complained that the image of the former minister tormented her several times a day in its attempts to make her a Salem witch. [3]

Burroughs had served the Salem village church from 1680 until 1683 at which time a growing conflict between the minister and churchmen over salary and political issues forced his angry departure from Salem. Burroughs moved to Maine, accepting another pastorate at Wells.[4]

The move, however, did not prove to be far enough away from Salem village. As a result of the insistent testimony of Ann Putnam Jr., on May 4, 1692, nine years after his bitter departure

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[1] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (eds), The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Document of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692 (3 vols.; New York, 1977), 1:164.
[2] Boyer and Nissenbaum, The Salem Witchcraft Papers, 1:164.
[3] Ibid, 1:166.
[4] See Larry Gragg, The Salem Witch Crisis (New York, 1992), p. 114.

from Salem, George Burroughs was arrested by the authorities in Maine and deported to Salem to face charges of witchcraft.

At his trial on 5 August 1692, George Burroughs' situation worsened when he was accused of witchcraft by his neighbors in Wells, Maine, and then identified by several Andover witch suspects as the leader of a growing witch cult centered in Salem and Andover. According to these testimonies, Burroughs and his followers were developing a satanic church, whose alleged aim was to take over the political and religious structure of New England. The combined evidence led to Burroughs' conviction for witchcraft and subsequent death on the scaffold.

On 19 August 1692 the former Salem pastor, and now convicted Salem wizard, George Burroughs was transported by cart through the streets of Salem along with four other condemned witches to Gallows Hill. In keeping with the usual pattern of Puritan New England hangings, after being led up the ladder, Burroughs was given an opportunity to speak before being executed. Instead of confessing guilt and warning the assembled crowds of the consequences of sin, Burroughs protested his innocence, and ended his address with a flawless recitation of the Lord's Prayer. Samuel Sewell recorded that Burroughs' perfect repetition of the Lord's Prayer, 'did much move unthinking persons', who had gathered for the execution, since it was commonly believed that witches could not say the Lord's Prayer without error.[5] Others in the crowd countered that the 'Black Man' himself stood beside Burroughs and dictated the words to him.

According to Salem contemporary and critic of Cotton Mather, Robert Calef, at that moment Mather, a minister at Boston's Old North Church made his presence known. Mounted and standing in the stirrups of his horse, he stilled the confused crowd. He reminded those assembled that the Devil had often been 'transformed into an angel of light', and that Burroughs was not an ordained minister.[6] After Mather's intervention, the hangman carried out his duties, executing the former pastor at Salem Village and four other convicted Salem witches.[7]

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[5] See George Lincoln Burr, Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648-1706 (New York, 1952), p. 361.
[6] Robert Calef, More Wonders of The Invisible World, (London, 1700), in Samuel Drake, (ed.), The Witchcraft Delusion in New England (3 vols.; New York, 1866), 3:38.
[7] Those executed with George Burroughs were John Willard, Martha Carrier, John Proctor, and George Jacobs. See Calef, More Wonders of the Invisible World, 3:360-61.

Although Robert Calef's account of Mather's actions at the Burroughs' execution was printed in Calef's attack on Mather, More Wonders of the Invisible World, and is therefore suspect, it nonetheless encapsulates the historical portrait that has come to typify the popular view of Cotton Mather and his role as stern cheerleader and prime mover in the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692 to 1693. Scholars and historians, who have largely ignored the theological elements of seventeenth-century New England witchcraft beliefs, have, following Robert Calef, made Cotton Mather the enigmatic representative of the Salem witch-hunt.

The cosmology and theological beliefs which allowed Mather to act out his role in this tragedy, form the subject of this thesis. Historians and scholars have written about Cotton Mather and the Salem trials from a number of perspectives, including those derived from most of the social sciences. However, Mather's own seventeenth-century, New England historical-theological context, has attracted much less scholarly interest. And yet, in relation to Salem studies, and Cotton Mather's role in them, the theological dimension provides an important and perhaps vital lens through which to study the events at Salem in 1692 to 1693.

This thesis will examine Cotton Mather's personal cosmology and his relationship to the Salem trials. By exploring these events from the perspective of a single individual a number of benefits will accrue. First, this approach allows for the development of a more fully articulated interpretive model of the relationship between the forces and personalities present during the early 1690s, and allows us to explore a single individual's intellectual and behavioral contribution to a series of events for which that individual, Cotton Mather, has traditionally been held responsible. More than this, the focus on Cotton Mather and the Salem episode, provides an opportunity to add a further level of interpretive understanding of Salem witchcraft by re-examining what is arguably, and what contemporaries would certainly have identified as the underpinnings of the entire episode: the theological worldview of seventeenth-century New England.

As this introductory chapter will suggest, in exploring Cotton Mather's cosmology and relating it to the Salem trials a new, or perhaps very old, complexity, will be added to what is already a very rich historiography. Such a study presents a long-missing explanation of Cotton

Mather's personal cosmology, that is, the intellectual framework through which Mather observed and interpreted the events of his era and his own life, in terms of cause and effect. The Calvinistic theology of the Puritans has been well documented within seventeenth-century New England studies. However, with respect to Salem studies, scholars have offered only a very limited explanation of Mather's personal cosmology. Instead, Mather's cosmology has been primarily subsumed within a largely undifferentiated seventeenth-century Puritan theology. Yet, as the thesis demonstrates, Cotton Mather had a well-developed and articulated personal worldview that was largely in place prior to the Salem events, and which, while it shared many facets with a broader Puritan belief structure, was nonetheless distinct.

The thesis suggests that an evaluation of Mather's involvement in the Salem trials is greatly benefited by an understanding of his normal pattern of interpreting events through the lens of his cosmology, particularly during confused, or emotionally and politically charged periods such as 1692 to 93. Mather's cosmology included specific and personal beliefs about the existence, identity, and powers of the Devil and demons. By examining these beliefs from Mather's individual perspective, the thesis moves away from the at times banal observations of scholars about Mather's general Puritan theology, and lays greater emphasis upon Mather's well-formulated and consistent cosmology prior to, during, and after the Salem trials.

While Mather's perspective was unique and individual, he was also a member of a well-defined social cadre: an intellectual and clerical elite who effectively governed large aspects of late seventeenth-century New England life. By exploring Mather's worldview, this thesis will provide an additional interpretive framework through which to view the Salem situation; providing a new insight into the world of Massachusetts' clerical elite. Mather's beliefs about magic and witchcraft serve as an excellent model of early modern clerical views, since his ideas were accepted by a majority of his ministerial contemporaries. Modern critics have often alleged that Cotton Mather's theology represents an individual, if not aberrant, worldview at odds with the beliefs held by his clerical and educated contemporaries. Yet, as this thesis will show, when Mather's conceptions of the supernatural and specifically witchcraft, are compared to that of the generality of seventeenth century clerics, they demonstrate more concurrence than disparity, although they remain

distinct and individual.

Among other areas, the thesis seeks to expose the relative agreement of the New England clergy with Mather's own application of his cosmology to the Salem trials. In this context, the thesis presents the view that Cotton Mather's cosmology was not aberrant or misaligned with that of his contemporaries. Seventeenth-century sources reveal that the clergy of Boston and more largely, New England, preached and published views on the power and dangers of witchcraft similar to those expressed by Cotton Mather. Citing the pre-Salem progression and influence of sermons and published works by other New England clerics, the thesis shows their persistent attempts to address the growing clerical alarm at the practice of magic and witchcraft among seventeenth-century New England's populace. In addition these sources bolster the view of a broad consensus of witchcraft beliefs by the New England clerics before, during, and after the Salem trials.

The thesis therefore brings to the study of Salem a more balanced view of Mather's cosmology within the context of contemporary beliefs. Additionally, it offers an explanation of how the Boston clergy could have largely agreed upon the necessity for the witch prosecutions, despite their undeniable and specific disagreements about the legal process which led to so many deaths.

This thesis will also examine Cotton Mather's reaction to witchcraft cases, and especially those involving possession. An analysis of this area reveals a strong pattern to Mather's pastoral application of the theology of witchcraft to its treatment, an area largely ignored by modern scholars. As a result of Mather's prominent position in the clerical hierarchy, his involvement in suspected witchcraft cases was greater than many of his contemporaries. Historically, Mather's involvement in witchcraft cases has been used by critics to give credibility to the caricature of Cotton Mather as a zealot and 'witch-hunter' on par with several seventeenth-century counterparts across the Atlantic. Given this common portrayal of Mather, the thesis engages in a serious examination of Mather's life-long pattern of spiritual warfare, noting specifically his ministry to witchcraft victims.

In this thesis, Mather's application of the biblical principles of fasting and prayer in his attempts to deliver witchcraft victims is contextualized within the larger discussion of the continuity between his beliefs and his overall behavior during the Salem witchcraft trials.

The benefit of the examination of this aspect of his beliefs and behavior is that it brings a greater degree of fairness to the historical portrait of Cotton Mather's theology and his application of that theology to the Salem trials. As such, this study presents a more fully contextualized historical treatment of Cotton Mather's reaction towards witchcraft episodes, by examining the consistency of his response to cases preceding and following the Salem trials.

Finally, this study clarifies the issue of the degree to which Cotton Mather's role in the Salem trials influenced the proceedings and their outcome. The characterization of Mather by prior historians and scholars as the initiator or primary proponent of the Salem episode is subjected to a thorough analysis. To do so, the thesis examines the detail of Mather's stated beliefs about the three primary causes of the Salem situation as expressed in Wonders of the Invisible World. For Mather these were divine judgment upon New England's spiritual degeneration, a demonic retaliation for the Puritan settlement of New England, and an end-times precursor of Christ's Second Advent. By comparing these postulates to Mather's response to witchcraft episodes prior to Salem, it can be demonstrated that Mather's response to Salem witchcraft was to a large degree, predictable and consistent with his previously expressed views.

In light of this demonstrable integrity, the thesis suggests a more equitable assessment of the relationship between Mather's preconceived and demonstrated cosmology and his role in the Salem trials. The thesis does not suggest that Mather can or should be absolved from all responsibility for his behavior during, or the course of the trials. Instead, it argues that, to date, historical perceptions of Cotton Mather have been unduly influenced by a tradition of criticism initiated by Mather's bitter contemporary rival Robert Calef and carried on by modern critics.

To this end, the final chapter of thesis compares the advice Cotton Mather gave to the Boston and Salem authorities with the independent actions of the Stoughton Court. In doing so, a more balanced appraisal of the relative importance and roles of Mather and the Court, is achieved. The thesis moves the discussion of Cotton Mather's culpability for the Salem trials away from the standard condemnation of Mather as a singularly malevolent influence. Although Mather did in fact make mistakes in his handling of his advice to Governor Phips, and in publishing The Wonders of the Invisible World, the study gives a fresh understanding of those

mistakes and presents a clearer view of Mather's influence upon the proceedings.

Current Issues in Salem and New England Scholarship

Modern historical writing on the history of New England is voluminous and complex. But the continuing importance to scholars of what happened at Salem Massachusetts in 1692-1693 is beyond doubt. Salem witchcraft remains at the heart of our understanding of the place and the period. As David Levin suggests, '. . . the Salem trials have... held a disproportionately large place in American historical consciousness for nearly three centuries'.[8] Although the Salem episode was relatively short in comparison to many major historical events in the American history, the trials have become a symbol for a number of issues in both the modern popular and scholarly imagination.

Perhaps the easiest place to start in any attempt to characterise this extensive literature, is with the broader scholarship on the history of seventeenth-century New England as a whole. Historians and scholars have invested a large degree of research effort into the various political, military religious, social, and cultural contexts of Puritan New England, as a synopsis of just a few items reveals.

Among modern scholars, one of the most active debates concerns the Puritans' domination of seventeenth-century New England. The nature of the Puritans' elevated initial view of their journey to the New World is being challenged by a number of authors including Andrew Delbanco, as being constructed from texts that are both limited and of questionable reliability.[9] Based upon such a reassessment, Mark A. Peterson's book, The Price of Redemption, adopts a revisionist interpretation, insisting that Puritan theological compromises such as the Halfway Covenant were not signs of religious declension, but progressive attempts by

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[8] David Levin, 'Did the Mathers disagree about the Salem witchcraft trials?', The Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 95, (1), (1985), pp. 19-37.

[9] Representative of the arguments against Puritan glorification of their New World errand, see Andrew Delbanco, 'The Puritan errand re-viewed', Journal of American Studies, 18, (1984), pp. 343-60, and Theodore Dwight Bozeman, To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism (Chapel Hill, 1998).

Congregationalist churches to adapt to changing religious, social. and cultural realities.[10]

Another debate within current early modern New England studies deals with the historical perception of the cultural insulation of Puritan New England. While much of New England's historiography has focused upon Puritanism's seventeenth-century internal cultural productions, Phillip H. Round's book, By Nature and by Custom Cursed insists that Puritanism was not impervious to external and competing discourses. Round asserts that Puritanism was forced to engage a number of opposing transatlantic discourses concerned with a highly diverse set of issues, including ethnicity, gender, genre, and class.[11]

In the area of women's studies, New England scholarship has focused on a wide range of issues, and adopted viewpoints which run from the more overtly feminist analytical models of the 1960's and 1970's to more moderate descriptions of women's contributions to New England history. Representing one approach is Elaine Forman Crane's book, Ebb Tide in New England, an examination of women and womanhood in the colonial seaport towns of Boston, Salem, Newport, and Portsmouth.[12] Crane's central focus is how New England's transformation from a frontier-based economy to an urbanized, specialized, regulated, and essentially male market economy led to the loss of women's prestige and authority, and that this is reflected in their growing social and economic marginalization.[13] An alternative approach to the gendered history of Puritan New England can be found in studies based on the analysis of discursive norms and controls, which are seen in this literature to represent both individual and community boundaries. A good example of this sort of study is Jane Kamensky's Governing the Tongue.[14] In this volume

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[10] Mark A. Peterson, The Price of Redemption: The Spiritual Economy of Puritan New England (Stanford, 1997).

[11] Phillip H. Round, By Nature and Custom Cursed: Transatlantic Civil Discourse and New England Cultural Production, 1620-1660 (Hanover, 1999).

[12] Elaine Forman Crane, Ebb Tide in New England: Women, Seaports, and Social Change 1630-1800 (Boston, 1998).

[13] The declining place of women in New England's 17th to 18th century society is echoed in several women's studies. For examples, see Kathleen M. Brown, Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia (Chapel Hill, 1996); Carol Karlsen, The Devil in the Shape of a Woman, Witchcraft in Colonial New England (New York, 1989); Suzanne Lebsock, The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town (New York. 1984).

[14] Jane Kamensky, Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England (New York, 1997).

she looks at specific periods in which 'dangerous speech', particularly by women, threatened the Puritan model of godly order, prompting clerical and judicial attempts at control. Adopting an approach similar to that of Bethany Reid, Kamensky places particular emphasis upon the conflict between patriarchal leaders and specific outspoken women such as Anne Hutchinson.[15] Kamensky maps the reaction of New England authorities towards independent women during the Antinomian debate, the Salem witch trials, and the eventual decline of Puritan anxieties about speech manifest by the early eighteenth century.

While women's studies has provided a new and growing historiography, ethnography has also been used to rewrite the history of New England in recent decades.[16] Dedicated to the examination of specific cultures, or subcultures, ethnography encompasses, but is not limited to an examination of such themes as religion, social constructs, economics, and spatial organization.[17] Kathleen J. Bragdon's work, Native People of Southern New England, is a good example of ethnography as applied to colonial New England.[18] Bragdon's book looks at the Native American populations in southern New England, particularly the Ninnimissinuok. Using current ethnology as well as sociology and economic models, Bragdon portrays the various aspect of Ninnimissinuok culture, and the European-Native American relationship from the sixteenth century to the mid-seventeenth.

In terms of the most recent scholarship, therefore, the historiography of seventeenth-century New England's presents a rapidly changing and evolving landscape in which a range of new approaches is evident. Many of the old shibboleths of seventeenth-century history are currently up for discussion, and no single over-arching model has remained either unchallenged, or universally accepted. In this context, this thesis aims to add a further element of complexity to an already complex picture.

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[15] Bethany Reid, 'Unfit for light: Anne Bradstreet's monstrous birth', The New England Quarterly, 71, (December 1998), pp. 517-42.

[16] See Peter C. Mancall and James H. Merrell, (eds), American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500-1850 (Boston, 1999).

[17] For a good example of spatial organization studies, see Joseph S. Wood, with a contribution by Michael P. Steinitz, The New England Village (Baltimore, 1997).

[18] Kathleen Bragdon, Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650 (Tulsa, 1996).

Seventeenth-Century European Witchcraft Scholarship as a Background to Salem Studies

As even this small selection of current seventeenth-century literature on New England suggests, Salem studies belong to a much larger body of New England scholarship. Additionally, in recent years there has also been a greater degree of sensitivity to how New England and European witchcraft relate to one another. In essence historians are increasingly sensitive to the claim that Salem witchcraft cannot be understood in the near vacuum of seventeenth-century New England itself. First, New England clerics and authorities were far from intellectually isolated from England and Europe in this period. Some of the prominent figures in the Salem events, such as Cotton and Increase Mather were active participants in transatlantic discussions on politics, natural philosophy, and witchcraft. Second, the Puritans readily transported their primary English witchcraft beliefs across the Atlantic Ocean, including them in the staple of religious and cultural realities that pervaded their understanding of this not so new world.

Because of the interconnectedness of European and American witchcraft beliefs, the impact of European scholarship is also important to the interpretation of the events at Salem. As a theme in European history, the witch trials of the seventeenth century continue to attract the attention of historians. The British scholar James Sharpe has described the witch-hunts as 'one of those pieces of history . . . to be taken out and reinterpreted, like so many of the best bits of history, at regular intervals'.[19]

In the latter half of the twentieth century, a wide variety of approaches to seventeenth-century witchcraft events in Europe have been assayed. Partial explanations involving historical or intellectual shifts such as the Reformation,[20] the Counter-Reformation,[21] the rise of the modern state,[22] political consolidation by elite ruling classes,[23] and misogynist-based persecutions,[24] have all provided valuable insights and perspectives. However, explanations based entirely upon

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[19] James Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550-1750 (New York, 1996), p. 5.
[20] Richard MacKenny, Sixteenth Century Europe Expansion and Conflict (Handsmill, 1993).
[21] Anthony Wright, The Counter Reformation: Catholic Europe and the Non-Christian World (London, 1982).
[22] See Mary Condren, The Serpent and the Goddess (San Francisco, 1989).
[23] Bob Scribner, 'Witchcraft and judgement in Reformation Germany', History Today, (April 1990), pp. 34-47.
[24] Christina Larner, Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief (Oxford, 1984),

single historical shifts or events have largely failed to convince, due to the complications inherent in the variety of geographical, political, and religious contexts in which European witchcraft persecutions took place. Mono-causal approaches have, as Brian Levack notes, 'proved to be singularly unconvincing, if not demonstrably false'.[25]

Consequently, emerging scholarship is increasingly cognizant of the necessity to view the causes of individual and large-scale seventeenth-century witchcraft episodes as multi-faceted. This approach, which shows greatest promise, is one which crosses a number of research disciplines, including most of the social sciences. The journey to this more interdisciplinary and inclusive approach has, however, been a long one. Rationalist scholarship, which viewed witch-hunts as the product of theological dogmatism, dominated European witchcraft studies up until the 1960's, and is typified by the work of scholars such as Rossell Robbins, who saw the European witch-hunts as barbaric and unintelligible.[26] Perhaps the first small shift away from this type of scholarship can be found in the work of Hugh Trevor-Roper, in his 1969 book, The European Witch-craze.[27] Trevor-Roper's study of the larger sixteenth and seventeenth-century European witch-hunts, covering a wide range of cultures and geographical locations, took the view that these witch-persecutions needed to be placed in a more clearly articulated contemporary early modern European historical context. Still, typical of rationalist studies, Trevor-Roper gave little attention to social-anthropological questions, and attributed the eventual demise of witchcraft beliefs to the rise of later philosophical and scientific movements.

As Trevor-Roper's views were being advanced and debated, alternative methods for the analysis of witch-hunts were being initiated by other European scholars. Several works emerged which suggested that witchcraft needed to be seen 'from below', and which incorporated a self-conscious social-science perspective. Peter Burke describes the methodology of these scholars,

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(Published posthumously under the editorship of Alan Macfarlane).

[25] Brian Levack, The Witch-hunt in Early Modern Europe (New York, 1987), preface, ix.

[26] Rossell Robbins, The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology (London, 1959). For a review of rationalism, see Leland L. Estes, 'Incarnations of evil: Changing perspectives on the European witch-craze', Clio 13, (1984), pp. 136-9.

[27] Hugh Trevor-Roper, The European Witch-craze of the 16th and 17th Centuries (Harmondsworth, 1969).

noting:

> They tended—like anthropologists—to put rationalism in brackets . . . to write about witches and their accusers without using words like "craze", "credulity", or "hysteria", and to even suggest that accusations of witchcraft served a social function.[28]

Alan Macfarlane's Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England, and Keith Thomas' Religion and the Decline of Magic modeled this largely social-anthropological approach, combining modern anthropological research with that of the early-modern English witchcraft studies.[29] Thomas drew comparisons between the early twentieth-century African Azande and seventeenth-century European witchcraft, while Macfarlane looked at the relevance of witchcraft to sixteenth and seventeenth-century English socio-economic relationships. Macfarlane and Thomas represented witchcraft accusations and purges as endemic to societies in which relationships between villagers and particularly needy neighbors, primarily socially and economically marginalized women, lead to the expression of strong social tensions. For these scholars it was a small step from bickering on your back door step to the initiation of an accusation of witchcraft.

Historians have continued to use the Macfarlane-Thomas model with variations of emphasis. Their influence, for instance, is seen in William Monter's examination of endemic and epidemic small-scale witchcraft episodes in France and Switzerland, as well as in Erik Middlefort's study of the larger panics of South West Germany.[30] Similarly, Christina Larner's research on seventeenth-century Scottish witchcraft attributed witch-examinations in part, to attempts by adjudicators to legitimize the monarchy during James VI's reign.[31] Larner's moderate feminist perspective encouraged a number of later studies on women and witch-hunts

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[28] Peter Burke, 'The Comparative Approach to European Witchcraft' in Bengt Anklaroo and Gustav Henningsen, (eds), Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries (Oxford, 1990), p. 436.

[29] Alan Macfarlane, Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study (New York, 1970), and Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (New York, 1971).

[30] William E. Monter, Witchcraft in France and Switzerland The Borderlands During the Reformation (New York, 1976).

[30] Midlefort, H.C. Erik Witch-Hunting in Southwestern Germany 1562-1684 (Stanford, 1972).

[31] Christina Larner, The Enemies of God: The Witch-hunt in Scotland (London, 1981).

including Lyndal Roper's recent emphasis upon the theme of motherhood and witchcraft.[32]

During the last decade, one of the most noteworthy developments in European scholarship has been the adoption of the 'acculturation model' developed in the late 1960's by sociologists and economists studying delays between cultural and market innovations and their wide-scale acceptance. European witchcraft scholars have used acculturation to study attempts by the elite of the seventeenth century, including clerics and the representative of the state, to convert peripheral populaces to orthodox and changing intellectual positions. To do so, they diabolized popular magical beliefs, attempting to transform the outer periphery initially by persuasion and subsequently by accusations, trials, and purges.[33]

Among those applying the acculturation concept, Robert Muchembled and Peter Burke have researched the early modern French and Flemish witch trials. In addition, while Carlo Ginzburg has used this model to explain the diabolization of the sabbath-myth of the North Italian and Friulian Benandanti, Gustav Henningsen has examined the same process with reference to the fairy and dream-cults of Sicily.[34] At present, European witchcraft studies are engaged an expanding multi-causal interpretive approaches to early modern witchcraft, as three recent examples demonstrate. Robin Briggs' book, Witches and Neighbors, based upon hundreds of cases from the Franco-German borderlands, is a consideration of the social dynamics of the

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[32] Lyndal Roper, Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe (London, 1994). For additional women's studies on European witchcraft, see Anne Barstow, 'On studying witchcraft as women's history: A historiography of the European witch persecutions', Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 4, (1988), pp. 7-19; Sigrid Brauner, Fearless Wives and Frightened Shrews:The Construction of the Witch in Early Modern Germany (Amherst, 1995); Marriane Hester, 'Patriarchal Reconstruction and Witch Hunting' in Jonathan Barry, et al., (eds), Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 288-308.

[33] Stuart Clark reviews the acculturation model in greater depth in his book, Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe (New York, 1997), pp. 509-25.

[34] Robert Muchembled, Popular Culture and Elite Culture in Early Modern France (Baton Rouge, 1985); Peter Burke, 'A Question of Acculturation?' in Paola Zambelli, (ed.), Scienze, credinze occulte, livellie di cultura (Florence, 1982), pp. 197-204. For Carlo Ginzburg, see the following: Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches Sabbat (London, 1991); The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the 16th and 17th Centuries (London, 1983); 'The Witches Sabbat: Popular Culture or Inquisitorial Stereotype', in Stephen L. Kaplan (ed.), Understanding Popular Culture Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century (Berlin, 1984); for Gustav Henningsen, 'The Ladies from Outside: An Archaic Pattern of the Witches' Sabbath' in Ankarloo and Henningsen, Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries, pp. 191-215.

creation of the witch figure and witch-hunts.[35] Using psychoanalytical concepts such as projection, Briggs relates how in times of economic distress, the imagined and real fears of any village could transform social conflict into witchcraft allegations and prosecutions. James Sharpe's recent book, Instruments of Darkness, explores English witchcraft beliefs and episodes from 1550 to 1750, focusing upon the complexity of witchcraft allegations and trials and their origins in contemporary structural tensions. In particular, he traces the origins of these trials to a combination of direct interpersonal conflict, and the existence of endemic social attitudes within the state, and society.[36] Sharpe asserts that witchcraft allegations were often developed slowly, and towards economically distressed members of society, including women and the elderly.[37]

Finally, Stuart Clark's book, Thinking with Demons, has added significantly to the argument that witchcraft belief in early modern Europe was not marginal or peripheral to elite conceptualizations. In examining the intellectual context of early modern European witch prosecutions, Clark traces the centrality of constructs of and debates about witchcraft to the larger areas of language, science, history, religion, and politics, and relates these in turn to attitudes towards and beliefs about magic, festivals, superstition, women, etc. The analysis found in the work of Clark and other more recent scholars, has effectively placed the witch hunts at the center of developments in a broader intellectual and social history, and has suggested that both the rise and decline of witchcraft prosecutions is an epiphenomenon of the fundamental transitions (intellectual, spiritual and economic) which characterised the period.

The Salem Trials and Cotton Mather: A Range of Interpretations

Turning back to the historiography of Salem and Cotton Mather, there is a growing recognition of the importance of using a variety of interpretive tools in order to crack this particular historical nut. Recent work has applied the techniques of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and

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[35] Briggs, Witches and Neighbors, p. 8.

[36] James Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550-1750 (New York, 1996).

[37] Using this model, Sharpe has also written a study on the 1605 Jacobean English case of Anne Gunter. See: James Sharpe, The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and True Story of Football, Witchcraft, Murder and the King of England (London, 2000).

economics. The background to this more recent work is perhaps best explored through a brief review of the extensive older scholarship on Salem, which is itself characterised by a variety of approaches. The origin of the first of these historiographical traditions can be found in attempts by contemporaries to understand events which they themselves contributed to. The basis for much later scholarship can be readily identified in the work of by Puritan clerics such as Cotton Mather, and John Hale, and in that of their critics, such as Robert Calef.[38]

Perhaps the most vibrant tradition to emerge from this contemporary scholarship encompassed a scholarly attempt to assign blame for the trials and executions. Following late seventeenth century critics of the trials, several people, individuals and groups, including Samuel Parris, the Salem judges, the Boston clergy, and in particular Cotton Mather were identified as bearing substantial responsibility for the tragedy. From the early eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century a number of authors would take this approach, including Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson, Salem mayor Charles Upham, and modern American textbook authors such as George Bancroft and Vernon Parrington.[39]

Within their larger arguments, a common theme was the culpability of Cotton Mather for the Salem trials. Upham alleged that at the least, Mather 'took a leading part in fomenting it . . . in order that he might increase his own influence'.[40] Bancroft described Cotton Mather as a primary example of 'how far selfishness under the form of vanity and ambition, can blind the faculties, stupefy the judgment, and dupe consciousness itself'.[41] Similarly, Vernon Parrington, insisted that Cotton Mather, 'not only ran with the mob, but he came near to outdistancing the

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[38] Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World (Boston, 1693); John Hale, A Modest Inquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft in George Lincoln Burr, (ed.), Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648-1706 (New York, 1914); Robert Calef, More Wonders of the Invisible World in Drake, Witchcraft Delusion.

[39] Thomas Hutchinson, The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay (ed.), Lawrence Shaw Mayo, (3 vols.; New York, 1970); Charles Upham, Salem Witchcraft (2 vols.; Boston, 1867); George Bancroft, History of the United States of America from the Discovery of The Continent (Boston, 1879); Vernon Louis Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought (New York, 1954).

[40] Upham, Salem Witchcraft 2:366-367.

[41] Bancroft, History of the United States p. 266.

most credulous. His speech and writings dripped of devil-talk'.[42]

The role of human culpability in the Salem trials continued to be assessed, and at times debated well into the early twentieth century. Historians such as James Truslow Adams insisted that Salem was a typical example of Puritan intolerance, while others such as Samuel Eliot Morse and George Lyman Kittredge portrayed Cotton Mather and the Puritans more moderately.[43]

Kittredge's work on seventeenth-century New England witchcraft, one of the last attempts to explicitly assign blame, was largely based upon the 'rationalist approach' to Salem and New England witchcraft studies. His view was typical of European rationalist studies, which predominantly viewed witch-hunts in terms of the transmission of beliefs from medieval logic to the Enlightenment. Kittredge suggested the Salem Witchcraft trials were 'a brief and transitory episode in the biography of a terrible, but perfectly natural superstition'.[44] In his, Witchcraft in Old and New England, Kittredge suggested historians read the events of Salem, 'by common consent . . . the darkest page of New England history, in an unemotional and rational fashion'.[45]

Kittredge's efforts were followed by those of Perry Miller whose two-volume, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province, was published in 1953.[46] Perry Miller's viewpoint is typical of a larger body of scholars, who present seventeenth-century New England as a homogenous Puritan society defined by their intellectual commitment and covenant mindset.[47] Miller's two-volume book dealt primarily with the intellectual constructs of Puritan rhetoric and covenant, examining the Salem events within the overall paradigm of a largely undifferentiated New

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[42] Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought p. 116.
[43] James Truslow Adams, The Founding of New England (Boston, 1921); Samuel Eliot Morse, The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England 4th edn. (New York, 1970).
[44] George Lyman Kittredge, 'Notes on Witchcraft', Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, XVIII, (April 1907), repeated in Witchcraft in Old and New England (Cambridge, 1929), p. 329.
[45] Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England, p. 329.
[46] Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, 1953).
[47] For additional studies presenting New England Puritanism as a homogenous culture, see Sacvan Bercovitch, The Puritan Origins of the American Self (New Haven, 1975); Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth Century New England (Chapel Hill, 1982); Robert Middlekauff, The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals (New York, 1971); George Selement, 'The meeting of elite and popular minds at Cambridge, New England, 1638-1645', William and Mary Quarterly, 3d series, 41, (1984), pp. 32-48.

England Puritanism.[48]

Miller further asserted that in writing The Wonders of the Invisible World, Cotton Mather joined the clergy in their abuse of the covenant, concealing the violation of the jeremiad principle of confession and forgiveness perpetrated by the Salem court.[49] Using Cotton Mather as a model, Miller's conclusion was that the Puritans could be rightly blamed by history for what went wrong at Salem not by the terms of a more 'enlightened' age, but specifically in their own terms--in those of the covenant.[50]

In essence, Miller insisted that the Puritans' belief in God's covenant with New England was used as an excuse to hunt down and execute those members of society that did not live up to the demands of that covenant.[51] He blamed the Salem judges for erroneously applying the doctrines of the jeremiad--the sermonic formula specifically used by New England Puritan clerics to threaten the wrath of God for covenant neglect and offer forgiveness for reform.[52] He depicted their methods as ensuring that 'meretricious confession went free and sincere denial automatically became guilt'.[53]

In the years following Miller's New England Mind, the Salem scholarship increasingly came under the influence of the social sciences. As with the European work of Trevor-Roper, Thomas and MacFarlane, a number of historians began using models of seventeenth-century New England witchcraft that relied upon psychology, sociology, physiology, anthropology, and

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[48] Later scholars would distance themselves from Miller's stance, emphasizing emotional piety and cultural plurality within seventeenth-century New England. For examples, see: Laura Ricard, 'New England Puritan studies in the 1970's', Fides et Historia, 15, (1982): pp. 6-27; Charles Lloyd, God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience (New York, 1986), pp. 275-89; Theodore Dwight Bozeman, To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism (Chapel Hill, 1988).

[49] Miller, p. 203.

[50] Ibid, p. 192.

[51] Ibid., p. 178. Kai T Erikson would take a similar interpretive approach, insisting that the Salem trials were an attempt by New England's clergy to restore the sense of unity and purpose by exterminating those
who modeled their own spiritual failure. See, Kai T. Erikson, Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance (New York, 1966).

[52] The jeremiad was used throughout early modern England, but found particular development and contextual usage by the clerics of New England. See: Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province pp. 27-39.

[53] Ibid. p. 197.

economics. A precursor to this transition to the social sciences appeared in 1943. when medical doctor Ernest Caulfield, presented a study to the American Journal of Diseases of Children. In what was an early use of psychoanalysis, Caulfield challenged earlier views of the Salem girls, calling them uncharitable and unfounded.[54] He theorized that they Salem had experienced a psychological hysteria, understood by their contemporaries as physical manifestations of possession.

Caulfield attributed this situation to the Goodwin and Parris children's psychological inability to cope with the strict Calvinistic theology of death and eternal damnation. In short, they were reacting to deep distress over these issues. In this analysis, 'demons' were an indication of repressed instinctive impulses, and that these had manifested themselves to the Parris girls and the New England population through the language of witchcraft and demonic possession.[55] Starkey portrayed the Parris girls' possession behavior during the Salem proceedings as an attempt to take 'terrible revenge upon a society' that both neglected them and subjected them to the rigors of a Calvinistic childhood.[56] Starkey also viewed the Salem witch-hunt as providing the New England community with its own psychological catharsis, through which it was able to deal with '. . . a kind of collective guilt on the part of all Massachusetts in falling away from the high consecration of its founders'.[57]

Psychological theories would be advanced yet again in 1969, in Chadwick Hansen's book, Witchcraft at Salem.[58] Hansen attempted to establish the psychological 'reasonableness' of seventeenth-century fears of witches based upon the model of a less enlightened era struggling with apparently diabolical events and persons. In doing so, Hansen insisted that the behavior of the girls at Salem and that of their subsequent accusers was pathological rather than fraudulent.

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[54] Ernest Caulfield, 'Pediatric aspects of the Salem witchcraft tragedy', American Journal of Diseases of Children, 65, (May 1943), pp. 788-802.

[55] Sigmund Freud, 'A seventeenth-century demonological neurosis', in Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London, 1961), Volume 4, preface, xix.

[56] Ibid, p. 6. See also, David Harley, 'Explaining Salem: Calvinist psychology and the diagnosis of possession', American Historical Review, 101, (1996), pp. 307-330: Robert D. Anderson, 'The history of witchcraft: A review with some psychiatric comments', American Journal of Psychiatry, 126, (1970), pp. 1727-35.

[57] Ibid, p. 277.

[58] Chadwick Hansen, Witchcraft at Salem (New York, 1969). Hansen used psychology, but also insisted Cotton Mather attempted to restrain the excesses of the witchcraft crisis, see: preface, x.

In his view, 'They were hysterics . . . mentally ill [and] they were ill long before any clergyman got to them'.[59] In a controversial vein, Hansen further catalogued evidence that image magic, including that which was intentionally malevolent, had in fact been practiced at Salem and other New England villages. Accompanying this assertion was Hansen's view that in societies that accepted witchcraft, the psychological suggestion of malevolence was physically effective, although, the resulting symptoms were '. . . psychosomatic rather than organic'.[60]

Hysteria and superstition, the Freudian psychological concepts of mental unbalance and delusion, have not been the only explanation offered for the mental imbalance evident during the Salem episode, since such conditions can also be produced by chemical or organic means. Some scholars have suggested that the latter may have been used to create the illusory memory of flying on sticks or of having participated in the witch's sabbath.[61] Another theory, proposed by Linnda Caporael in an article entitled, 'Ergotism: The Satan loosed in Salem?' suggested that the same outcome was the result of the inadvertent consumption of ergot. On the basis of the depositions from the 1692 Salem trials, Caporael observed that the general features of the Salem crisis corresponded to the characteristics of convulsive ergotism outbreaks.[62] Caporael theorized that the physiological and psychological distortions of the afflicted and the accusers of witches were the affects of ergotism.[63] She also suggested that some of the Salem trial convictions could be attributed to the fact that the judges at Salem Town may have had their thought processes altered by ergotism as well.

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[59] Hansen, Witchcraft at Salem, pp. 10-11.
[60] Ibid, p. 10.
[61] For example, see Sally Hickey, (Parkin) 'Fatal feeds? Plants, livestock losses and witchcraft accusations in Tudor and Stuart Britain', British Journal of Folklore, 101, (1990), pp. 131-42; Geoffrey Quaife, Godly Zeal and Furious Rage (London, 1987), pp. 201-204; Carolyn Merchant, The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution (San Francisco, 1980); Michael J. Harner, Hallucinogens and Shamanism (New York, 1974).
[62] Linnda R. Caporael, 'Ergotism: The Satan loosed in Salem?', Science, 192, (April 1976), pp. 21-26. Ergot, a fungus which hosts cereal grains, but especially rye, has a form of sclerotia containing a large number of potent alkaloid pharmacologie agents including LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), capable of producing mental disturbances.
[63] Caporael, 'Ergotism: The Satan loosed in Salem?' p. 23. The manifestations included crawling sensations in the skin, tingling in the fingers, vertigo, tinnitus aurium, headaches, disturbance in sensation, hallucinations, painful muscle contractions, epileptiform convulsions, vomiting and diarrhea.

Linnda Caporael's theory that the origins of the Salem trials lay in ergot poisoned rye was largely refuted by two psychologists, Nicholas Spanos, and Jack Gotlieb.[64] Noting that ergot epidemics are 'exclusive to locales where the inhabitants suffered vitamin A deficiencies', they argued that its presence in seventeenth-century Salem Village and Salem Town was very unlikely since both had ample supplies of dairy products.[65] As to the courtroom behavior of the Parris girls and the symptoms of possession, Spanos and Gotlieb took the view that the various manifestations of affliction by the Salem girls seemed connected to certain 'social cues', suggesting the disease [as they call it] was of an internal, psychological nature.[66] As to the symptoms of the witnesses, Spanos and Gotlieb adopted Boyer and Nissenbaum's explanation, pointing to the power of social disunity to drive communities into crisis. They also suggested that the rapid conclusion of the Salem trials provided evidence of psychological and social conflict, rather than a chemical one.[67]

Although psychological analysis has continued to preoccupy a segment of the scholarly community, by the 1970's many scholars were entertaining increasingly interdisciplinary approaches to interpretation. From the early 1970s onwards historians began to place greater emphasis upon the theory of social conflict as an explanation of witch-hunting, emphasizing its origin at the local level, rather than in elite culture. The views of this phalanx of scholars is perhaps best represented by the work of a team of sociologists, Paul Boyer and Steven Nissenbaum, but also includes the work of historians such as John Demos, and Carol Karlsen.

Sociologists Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum in their book, Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft, concluded the Salem episode originated in pre-existing social and class conflict between the two main families in the Salem village church: the Putnams and Porters.[68]

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[64] Nicholas Spanos and Jack Gotlieb, 'Ergotism and the Salem village witch trials', Science, 194, pp. 1390-4.

[65] Spanos and Gotlieb, 'Ergotism and the Salem village witch trials', p. 1390.

[66] Ibid, p. 1391.

[67] Ibid, p. 1394. Spanos also details psychological aspects at Salem in 'Witchcraft and social history: An essay review', Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, 21, (1985), pp. 60-66.

[68] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft (Cambridge, 1974), p. 65. Tracing this conflict, Boyer and Nissenbaum showed that by 1691, the year the Salem Village church committee hired Samuel Parris to become their pastor, an important power shift had occurred in which the Putnams and Porters constituted a serious breach within the Salem church.

In particular, they associated a conflict over the role and suitability of minister Samuel Parris to the relationship between the wealthier mercantile elements of the port town of Salem and the largely marginalized elements of the agrarian village of Salem.[69] Using a map from Charles Upham's Salem Witchcraft, the two scholars suggested that the geographical locations of the landholdings of the families of Salem Village relative to Salem Town suggested that a broad division based on church membership, wealth, and geography separated the Putnam backed, anti-Parris faction from the Porter backed, pro-Parris elements.[70] As they depict this issue, the supporters of the trials generally belonged to the pro-Parris faction, while the opponents of the trials were overwhelmingly anti-Parris in persuasion.[71] Boyer and Nissenbaum argue that the explosive nature of the Salem trials was primarily the result of a unique combination of historical factors, which included the internal Putnam-Porter dispute over Salem village minister Samuel Parris as an all important component.[72]

While Boyer and Nissenbaum focused on the Salem village-Salem town conflict, John Demos employed psychohistory to study New England witchcraft in his 1982 book entitled, Entertaining Satan.[73] Demos reflects on the theme of witch-hunts as a form of persecution, whether interpreted as covert attempts at state-building, societal purges, the imposition of religion, or gender bigotry.[74] Put within the religious context of seventeenth-century New England, Demos viewed the clergy and government as the conservative and cooperative elements within the Puritan

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[69] Boyer and Nissenbaum note that Salem Town saw extensive mercantile expansion in the 1660s and was named (along with Boston) by the Massachusetts General Court as the principle port for both import and export taxable products. Taxation records reveal that from 1661 to 1681 the Salem townspeople averaged one-third greater wealth than the Salem villagers. See Boyer and Nissenbaum, Salem Possessed, p. 86.

[70] Ibid, pp. 81-85.

[71] Ibid, p. 181.

[72] Ibid, p. 181.

[73] John Demos, Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England (New York, 1982), See also, Patricia Henry Davis, 'Siding with the Judges: A Psychohistorical Analysis of Cotton Mather's Role in the Salem Witch Trials', (Princeton Theological Seminary Ph.D. thesis, 1992).

[74] For witch-hunts as societal persecution of non-conforming persons, see: Nachman Ben-Yehuda, Deviance and Moral Boundaries: Witchcraft, the Occult, Science Fiction, Deviant Science and Scientists (Chicago, 1985) and 'The witch craze of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries: A sociologist's perspective', American Sociological Journal, 86, (1980), pp. 1-31; Robert Moore, The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250 (Oxford, 1987).

communities confronting persons who evidenced individualistic traits. He points to the persecution of married but childless women between forty and sixty years of age, women with long standing histories of strife with neighbors, and women practicing informal medicine, as evidence for this conflict.[75]

Social conflict as an explanation of witch purges has also found a place in feminist scholarship examining European and Salem witchcraft. Beginning with the American suffragist leader Matilda Joslyn Gage, a number of feminist interpretations have been written which depict the persecution of women for witchcraft as an outgrowth of a broader gendered conflict. The role of women as cunning-folk, local healers, peasant revolutionaries, and precursors of later independent feminists, have been used to explain their function as scapegoats in this context.[76]

A noted feminist study of Salem is Carol Karlsen's, The Devil in the Shape of a Woman, which is based upon case studies and statistics from New England witch trials from the years 1620 to 1725.[77] In Karlsen's opinion, the 1692 Salem trials represent a watershed in a seventeenth-century gender conflict, which was endemic to colonial Puritanism, and indicative of the fear men felt towards women whose individualistic and non-conforming life patterns challenged the social order.[78] Karlsen particularly points to antagonism felt towards local healers and midwives who turned their traditional skills to profit, and older widows who by their disruption of the pattern of primogeniture were felt to deprive men of their rightful property.[79]

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[75] Demos, Entertaining Satan, p. 309.

[76] A variety of gender studies have been written as explanations for witch-hunts. For examples, see, Marianne Hester, Lewd Women and Wicked Witches: A Study of the Dynamics of Male Domination (London, 1992); Janet A. Thompson, Wives, Widows, Witches, and Bitches: Women in Seventeenth Century Devon (New York, 1993); Francis E. Dolan, Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England 1550-1700 (New York, 1995); Merry Weisner, Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge, 1993); Lyndal Roper, Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe (London, 1994); Deborah Willis, Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England (New York, 1995).

[77] Karlsen, The Devil in the Shape of a Woman, preface, xiii.

[78] Ibid, pp. 75-76. Karlsen notes that in the late seventeenth-century New England, 'Men worried especially about masterlessness—insubordination in women, children, servants, vagabonds, beggars, and even in themselves'.

[79] Ibid, pp. 144-5. According to Karlsen, local healers and midwives placed themselves in competition with male doctors who attempted to establish their own 'professional' superiority by 'barring women

In Karlsen's view, these women came into direct conflict with the accepted social order, and inadvertently brought into being the wide-scale accusations and persecutions of New England women by a society unable to deal the tensions created. Consequently, driven by these tensions, Puritan society and the religious and legal establishment went into action during the Salem trials, attempting to both restore social order and to eradicate the cause of the disruption—the women who refused to fit into their traditional role.

During the last couple of decades Salem scholarship has benefited from studies which have at their core, insights derived from the 'acculturation' model of European scholarship as represented in the work of Peter Burke and others.[80] This research illustrates how the elite, learned classes of seventeenth-century clerics either accommodated popular beliefs or forced their own views of witchcraft upon a populace which held different views of magic and maleficium. Salem scholars have begun to ask new questions of this society. Exemplifying this trend is the work of Richard Weisman, David D. Hall, and Richard Godbeer.

Richard Weisman's book, Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion, represents a significant strand in this tradition. He argues that conflicting Pre-Salem and Salem trial clerical and popular beliefs about witchcraft ensured that the Salem trials would end in failure.[81] Weisman draws attention to the dissonance between the clergy and the populace in two critical areas of pre-Salem and Salem witchcraft proceedings. First, he argues that the normal pattern of witch accusations and examinations found prior to the 1690s, allowed Salem villagers to resolve long-standing disputes with women representing unacceptable communal attributes. He goes on to suggest that

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from 'professional training', and, it seems, by accusing women practitioners of witchcraft. This view is also held by a number of feminist writers. For examples, see: Anne Barstow, 'Women as healers, women as witches', Old Westbury Review, 2, (1986), pp. 121-33; Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers (Old Westbury, 1973); Thomas Rodgers Forbes, The Midwife and the Witch (New Haven, 1966).

[80] Peter Burke, 'A Question of Acculturation?' in Paola Zambelli, (ed.), Scienze, Credinze Occulte, Livellie di Cultura (Florence, 1982), pp. 197-204; Mary O'Neil, 'Magical Healing, Love Magic and the Inquisition in late Sixteenth-Century Modena', in Stephen Haliczer (ed.), Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Europe (London, 1986), pp. 88-114; Ruth Martin, Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice, 1550-1650 (Oxford, 1989).

[81] Richard Weisman, Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion in 17th-Century Massachusetts (Amherst, 1984).

this pattern was distorted in the Salem court proceedings, as the court prosecuted people often unknown to their accusers, and who did not fit the commonly held stereotypes of the witch.[82]

Weisman's second point relates to matters of evidence. He suggests that because most pre-Salem accusations were characterised by the lack of provable criminality, the clergy and magistracy was able to accommodate popular conceptions about witchcraft. The creation of witch tests and the banishment of individuals found innocent, suggests to Weisman, that the New England establishment had chosen an ill-defined middle way between elite and popular beliefs, in their response to the problem.[83] In the context of the Salem trials, Weisman believes this accommodation broke down, as the court became the focus for the essentially elite, legal persecution of witchcraft. By using confessions and spectral evidence to identify and prosecute people, forms of evidence based on an essentially elite view of spiritual causality, the court lost its ability to claim legitimacy in the eyes of the populace as a whole. The result was the execution of persons who formerly would have been acquitted for a lack of evidence.

Weisman's conclusion is that the decline in witchcraft prosecutions in New England after 1692 rather than being 'a sudden reversal in public policy', was 'an understandable resolution to a long standing predicament'.[84] As the popular conceptions of pre-Salem witchcraft and the clergy's faith in the adjudication process were shaken by the perception that the actions of the Court of Oyer and Terminer were either illegitimate or unwarranted, the Salem trials represented a turning point in popular and elite constructions of witchcraft crimes and perhaps more importantly, the nature of the relationship between these two worldviews.[85]

When David D. Hall attempted to recreate a seventeenth-century Puritan worldview in his book, Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment, he presented New England's mindset as a 'fluidity of power and culture' in which religion had much in common with folk beliefs.[86] Hall

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[82] Weisman, Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion, p. 184.
[83] Ibid, p. 187.
[84] Ibid, p. 185.
[85] Ibid, p. 183.
[86] David D. Hall, Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England (New York, 1989), p. 245.

portrayed the clerics and the populace as sharing religious thought, whether distinctively Calvinistic or otherwise, allowing a 'hegemonic system' which included both magic and counter-magic to exist.[87] As in Weisman's work, Hall's analysis of the Salem suggested that it represented the break down of this system of shared beliefs.

By examining both almanacs and the wonder stories, and the clergy's response to them, Hall suggests that the clergy actively attempted to engage with popular views, and to influence the reception of this printed popular culture. Hall then suggests that the 1692 Salem witchcraft episode represented a crisis which stemmed from the failure of the clergy to perform this mediating role. The key ritual of confession, followed by restoration to God and community, found in the clergy's interpretation of almanacs and wonder literature collided with the witchcraft adjudications.

As Hall describes it, the result was the transformation of confessions from, 'a means of reconciling with the covenanted community', to a method whereby magistrates could justify the execution of those who refused to confess, as a way of cleansing the land of malevolent witches, appeasing God, and reestablishing the righteousness of the community of believers.[88] In the final analysis, David Hall viewed the Salem trials as the point at which the prior successful mediation of popular beliefs by clerics collapsed. The trials and deaths of 1692 were the disastrous result.

A third model based on acculturation can be found in Richard Godbeer's work. In his book, The Devil's Dominion, Godbeer argues that far from holding shared beliefs about the power of witchcraft and magic, New England's seventeenth-century elite and general populace were substantially in conflict.[89] Godbeer's assessment is that, despite clerical opposition, New England Puritans and non-Puritans alike resorted to magic, countermagic, and maleficience on a regular basis, to 'enable… them to harness the world and adapt it to their own ends: to heal the sick, to

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[87] Hall, Worlds of Wonder, p. 245.
[88] Ibid, p. 192.
[89] Richard Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England (New York, 1992), p. 5. Godbeer insisted that, from the Puritan's initial days in New England, 'Alongside Protestant Christianity there coexisted a tangled skein of magical beliefs and practices that the colonists brought with them from England'.

protect against harm, and also to inflict harm'.[90] Godbeer argues that by the later seventeenth century, clerical insistences that these practices were attempts to overturn God's providence and access to occult realms created an ideological power struggle within New England. For Godbeer, the first signs of witchcraft possession at Samuel Parris' home renewed the ministers and judges' determination to 'rid Christianity of magical accretions and to suppress folk magic', a magic which the clergy insisted be understood under the umbrella of diabolism.[91] Godbeer argues that unlike earlier New England witch trials, it was the evidence of diabolism, under attack by the clergy and searched for by the Salem judges, that made the Salem trials so deadly. He asserts that the Salem trials were 'crippled by what was in effect a clash between magical and theological principles'.[92]

Besides center-to-periphery acculturation and that associated with distinctions of class and power, some recent scholars have added an analysis of more narrowly defined seventeenth-century Puritan aspects of faith and belief. Relative to the Salem episode, two authors advancing a limited shift towards theological studies are Elizabeth Reis and Peter Lockwood Rumsey.

In her book, Damned Women, Elizabeth Reis focuses on the relationship between religion and gender within the constructs of Puritan New England's 'underside of theology; sin, predestination, and witchcraft'.[93] Questioning earlier studies which appealed to an ill-defined misogyny, Reis points out the correlation between the theological dynamics of Puritanism and the

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[90] Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion, p. 31.
[91] Ibid, p. 60.
[92] Ibid, p. 217. Godbeer's view of the coexistence of Puritan pietistic and magical approaches has been discussed by a number of scholars. See: Laurence Veysey, 'Intellectual History and the New Social History', in John Higham and Paul Conkin, (eds), New Directions in American Intellectual History (Baltimore, 1979), p. 16; William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, (eds), Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach 3d edn. (New York, 1972); John Middleton, (ed.), Magic, Witchcraft, and Curing (Austin, 1967); Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality (New York, 1999).
[93] Elizabeth Reis, Damned Women, Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England (New York, 1997). Reis' discussion in many ways complements the works of Ann Kibbey, who has also addressed the critical relationship between religious ideology and gender studies in Puritan New England. See, Kibbey's 'Mutations of the supernatural: witchcraft, remarkable providences, and the power of Puritan men' American Quarterly, 34, (1982), pp. 125-48; Patricia Caldwell, The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression (Cambridge, 1983); Cornelia Hughes Dayton, 'Taking the trade: Abortion and gender relations in an eighteenth-century New England village', William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series, 48:1, (January 1991), pp. 19-50.

association of witchcraft with women.[94] She assesses the ways the 1692 Salem witchcraft trials reveal the place of women in the larger context of the theology of women and sin within Puritanism.

Reviewing Puritan literature, Reis links the unequal ratio of female witches and accusers to the Puritan emphasis upon the innate depravity of women, a depravity derived from the close association of women '. . . with their inner nature, the unregenerate [and feminine] soul'.[95] Reis articulates seventeenth-century Puritan ideas about the Devil in relation to the idea that women would be uniquely susceptible to his blandishments.[96] Reis suggests that during the Salem trials, when women confessed to witchcraft or accused other women, they were following a culturally transmitted and highly gendered script, which affirmed the proper Puritan view of Christian womanhood and supported a process of identifying those who stood outside its definition.[97]

In addition, Reis points out that women's views of their own individual, inward depravity, reduced their resistance to the idea that other women could or would covenant with the Devil. She argues that by accusing other women of witchcraft, testifying against them, or by speaking in their defense, women 'helped produce or reproduce particular gender categories and arrangement, and helped construct or reconstruct female subjectivity in Puritan New England'.[98]

In Peter Lockwood Ramsey's book, Acts of God and of the People, 1620-1730, he examined the transformation of the Puritan doctrine of special providences from one which emphasized passive, theologically unimproved acts of God, to a doctrine that could be used by the clergy in the 1680s to insist upon God's active role in events within New England.[99]

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[94] Reis, Damned Women, preface, xvi.

[95] Ibid, 43. For discussions of women and the 'sin' of witchcraft, see also, Allison Coudert, 'The Myth of the Improved Status of Protestant Women: The Case of the Witchcraze', in Jean Brink et al., (eds), The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe (Kirkville, 1989); Louise Jackson, 'Witches, wives, and mothers: Witchcraft persecution and women's confessions in seventeenth-century England', Women's History Review, 4, (1995), pp. 63-83.

[96] Ibid, p. 115. For women's acceptance of their own susceptibility, see also Michael MacDonald, Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and healing in Seventeenth-Century England (Cambridge, 1981).

[97] Ibid, p. 124.

[98] Ibid, p. 139.

[99] Peter Lockwood Rumsey, Acts of God and of the People, 1620-1730 (Ann Arbor, 1986). Michael P. Winship has also done a convincing study of Puritan providentialism in his book, Seers of God: Puritan Providentialism in the Restoration and Early Enlightenment (Baltimore, 1996).

According to Rumsey, in the 1680s the Puritan clergy increasingly complained of the spiritual decline of their generation, and more than this, that the doctrine of special providences became hopelessly enmeshed in the clergy's understanding of the their contemporaries' position.[100] Charting Puritan reactions to comets and natural disasters, found in almanacs, sermons, complex theological discourses, and eschatological predictions, Rumsey shows the clergy's extension of special providences within seventeenth century New England to cover all types of negative and non-serial events including witchcraft.

To Rumsey, the issue of spectral evidence, the most disastrous issue for the Salem court, was an extension of the use of special providences. This was the result of the inherent antithesis of the role of the secular court in weighing tangible, accusative evidence versus the elusive and invisible theological evidence used to try cases of witchcraft.[101] Rumsey suggests that the adverse effects of special providences on the Salem trials forced the clergy to retreat to their prior cautious approach to special providences, having been exposed to the dangers created by their own unchecked rhetoric.

As this abstract of twentieth-century literature demonstrates, historians have used a number of interpretive models in an attempt to understand both why the 1692 Salem witch-hunt occurred, and why witch prosecutions diminished in the aftermath of the Salem trials. Most theoretical models available to modern scholars have been applied to these issues. What historians, with a few notable exceptions discussed above, have largely failed to undertake, is the serious consideration of the detailed theological framework within which late seventeenth-century clerics and lay-people worked. This thesis is, in part, attempts to rectify this notable lacuna.

The Historical-Theological Model

With the recent work of writers who are more willing to take religion and its theologies seriously, Salem scholarship has to some extent come full circle. Despite this progress, Puritan theology in

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[100] Rumsey, Acts of God and of the People, p. 65.
[101] Ibid, p. 62.

the Bible Commonwealth during the seventeenth-century Salem trials remains, what Michele Lise Tarter has called, 'the much neglected and yet central lens'.[102] More than this, one of the original questions posed by the Salem trials, why Cotton Mather conducted himself as he did, why he appears to have promoted them, remains largely unanswered. To date, Salem scholarship has offered a less than satisfactory explanation of the theology of the late seventeenth century, and of Mather's behavior and motivation. There are certainly unquestioned assumptions about both these issues in the whole corpus of Salem scholarship, which have remained either naively unexamined, or where analyzed, approached in a way which ahistorically ignores the beliefs and assumptions of the original participants.

Indeed, and perhaps surprisingly, it can be argued that what Salem scholarship has yet to do is examine Cotton Mather's cosmology as it relates to the 1692 Salem trials, placing it in an appropriate contemporary context. This thesis is an attempt to do just this. It returns to the theological dimensions of Salem witchcraft, contending that Cotton Mather's view of New England Witchcraft was the natural and logical result of his cosmology. Taken within its historical period, this concentration deserves consideration as a way of understanding Salem witchcraft and Cotton Mather's responsibility in relation to it.

A word is in order here about the intention of this thesis. First, although this study acknowledges the principle of acculturation and the role it played at Salem, this thesis is not a study in acculturation. Nor is this study a defense of Cotton Mather. Returning to a mono-causal approach for the purpose of defending either Cotton Mather or colonial Puritanism is neither practical, possible, nor appropriate, since, as the breadth of recent scholarship so ably demonstrates, the Salem situation can only be viewed as combination of cultural, social, psychological, political, and religious constructs.

Nevertheless, the thesis insists that there are interpretive benefits to be derived from focusing precisely upon the historical-theological approach to the study of Cotton Mather and the Salem witchcraft trials. In the process of presenting this study, the thesis therefore engages the

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[102] Michele Tarter Lise, Clio, 28:1, (Fall 1998), pp. 93-97.

following areas:

Chapter one has examined the historiography of the Salem trials, beginning with the latter nineteenth-century. This chapter has looked at the various interpretive viewpoints that have been applied to the Salem trials and used as explanations of Cotton Mather's role within them. Beyond this, a number of both European and American interpretations of seventeenth-century witch-hunts have been identified, and the relative scarcity of work which takes a historical-theological approach to the study of Salem and Cotton Mather has been noted.

Chapter two investigates the cosmology of Cotton Mather as it relates to witchcraft, drawn from four of his major works on the subject: The Wonders of the Invisible World, The Magnalia Christi Americana, The Diary of Cotton Mather and The Armour of Christianity. After tracing the early development of Cotton Mather's cosmology within the context of his Puritan upbringing, the balance of the chapter defines the specific components that formed Cotton Mather's personal theology. This chapter demonstrates that prior to the 1692 Salem trials Mather had developed a consistent theological outline related to witchcraft as a whole.

After this examination of Cotton Mather's personal cosmology, chapter three considers seventeenth-century New England witchcraft beliefs as found in pre-Salem, Salem episode, and post-Salem journals, publications, and court records of New England. The relative unity of witchcraft beliefs across social groups is presented, taken from these extant historical records. This chapter shows the compatibility of Cotton Mather's views of witchcraft to that of his contemporaries, demonstrating the shared witchcraft beliefs of the elite and common seventeenth-century New England populace.

Chapter four analyses Robert Calef's censure of Cotton Mather as detailed in More Wonders, and reviews the background of the Calef-Mather dispute. Subsequently it considers the historical insistence initiated by Calef and repeated by Salem historians, that the Salem trials and executions resulted from Cotton Mather's pre-Salem and Salem preaching and publications.

Next, the historical climate of New England relative to witchcraft is investigated, through an examination of the major pre-existent and transcendent factors within New England

that had a formative impact on the Salem events. This evidence leads to a rebuttal of the historical allegation that Mather caused the Salem ignominy and suggests that the Salem witch trials can be more accurately described as another cycle of witchcraft accusations and adjudications within a pre-existent and dominant culture.

Chapter five assesses the continuity between Cotton Mather's cosmology and his response not only to the Salem adjudications, but the broader scope of New England witchcraft episodes. First, the chapter looks at Mather's pattern of using his cosmology in interpreting contemporary personal, national and international events in terms of spiritual warfare and end-times portents. This pattern is expressed in several documents written by Mather before, during, and after the Salem trials. Next, the chapter examines Mather's application of his cosmology to several witchcraft episodes besides the Salem trials. Included in this is Mather's use of fasting and prayer to combat witchcraft invasions, as opposed to any adjudicatory procedures. The rest of the chapter presents Mather's primary postulates about the meaning of the Salem events, and the consistency of his corresponding conduct during the trials.

The sixth and final chapter begins with a contextual sketch of the challenges the New England government and magistrates faced in the Salem witchcraft trials. Following this, a fuller examination of Mather's advice to the Court of Oyer and Terminer is given, outlining Mather's plan for the examination and prosecution of the Salem witches. This chapter shows Cotton Mather allowed his relationship to the judges to prevent him from challenging their abuse of spectral evidence, and that he presented ambidextrous advice to the Salem court about its use. Last, this chapter shows that The Wonders of the Invisible World inadvertently became a self-contradictory and paradoxical account of the Salem trials as Mather attempted to distance himself from the principle personages involved in the Salem adjudications.

In its conclusion, the thesis presents the view that without identifying Cotton Mather as the initiator of the Salem trials, his role as an advisor to the Salem court and his publication of Wonders of the Invisible World created a legacy for him in later scholarship which has allowed historians to censure him, without ever entirely understanding him.

CHAPTER TWO

A CONSISTENT COSMOLOGICAL OUTLINE

Go tell Mankind, that there are Devils and Witches; and that tho those night-birds least appear where the Day-light of the Gospel comes, yet New-Engl. has had Exemples of their Existence and Operation; and that not only the Wigwams of Indians, where the pagan Powaws often raise their masters, in the shapes of Bears and Snakes and fires, but the Houses of Christians, where our God has had His constant Worship, have undergone the Annoyance of Evil spirits.

Cotton Mather, Memorable Providences (1689)

By the time the curtain fell on the Salem witchcraft trials that in the late Fall of 1692 twenty New Englanders had been executed and another three hundred were in custody awaiting trial or execution.[1] Rather than subsiding, additional witchcraft accusations were surfacing regularly. On 29 October 1692, Governor Phips ordered a halt to all of the proceedings, and later replaced the special court of Oyer and Terminer with the regular Superior Court. Sitting in January 1693 the Superior Court abruptly ended the previous judicial activities and exonerated all of the accused.[2] There would be no further executions.

It was at this moment that Cotton Mather released his latest book entitled, The Wonders of the Invisible World.[3] Written at the request of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, with Governor Phips' permission, it was a hurried compilation of sermons, accounts of Indian atrocities, and a chronicle of five select cases from the recent witch trials and executions. More importantly, it would be Mather's theological defense of the reality of witchcraft and an attempt to show that witchcraft had been genuinely present in the colonies, and in particular, at Salem.

Wonders was not immediately distributed in the colonies because Governor Phips felt it might have an inflammatory influence upon a population already deeply divided over the trial procedures and executions. Because of Phips' delay in releasing Wonders in New England, the

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[1] Ralph Boas, Cotton Mather (New York, 1928), p. 98.
[2] Upham, Charles, W., Salem Witchcraft (2 vols.; Boston, 1867).
[3] Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World (Boston, 1693), in Samuel Drake, (ed.), The Witchcraft Delusion in New England (3 vols.; New York, 1866; repr. 1970).

same 1693 publication sold more copies in England than in north America. When Wonders was finally released to the New England public, it was received with a mixture of both compliments and criticism in spite of the fact that it was endorsed by several prominent Puritans including Chief Justice Stoughton.[4]

In the hands of his critics, however, Mather's publication of Wonders allowed his defense of the Salem court to be equated with the tragic outcome of the trials themselves. In the writings of Robert Calef, in particular, Mather's name was effectively linked to the trials. In 1700, Calef wrote a scathing attack on Cotton Mather in his own account of the proceedings entitled, More Wonders of the Invisible World.[5] As previously noted, Calef's criticism has informed the work of many more recent historians, including Perry Miller. In Miller's analysis, he specifically singled out Cotton Mather and his defense of the Salem trials and executions, alleging Mather knew they were a shameful disgrace. In doing so, he portrayed Mather's publication The Wonders of the Invisible World, as an attempt to cover the Salem atrocity perpetrated by the ministers and in particular, the court of Oyer and Terminer. Miller describes Mather's motives this way:

> He was commissioned to absolve them [the court]; to his undying infamy, he accepted the assignment . . . The Wonders of the Invisible World, has ever since scarred his reputation . . . He tried to make those killings legitimate when he knew they were murders by dressing them in the paraphernalia of the federal doctrine.[6]

Miller's viewpoint is important as it typifies the belief of modern critics that Mather defended the results of a judicial proceeding in which he had no faith, by means of a hurriedly created and ill-conceived book. The allegation becomes incriminating when it is taken to its logical conclusion: that in the fallout of the Salem trials, Mather wrote Wonders as a theological defense of witchcraft beliefs, in a craven attempt to save the reputations of Boston's ministers and judges, and his own.

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[4] David Levin, Cotton Mather, The Young Life of the Lord's Remembrancer, 1663-1703 (Cambridge, 1978), p. 216. Mather records that 'some revered persons' had sent him encouraging letters about the release of Wonders, including William Stoughton. See, Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681-1709, 1709-1724 (2 vols.; New York, 1957), 1:153.

[5] Robert Calef, More Wonders of the Invisible World in Drake, (ed.), The Witchcraft Delusion.

[6] Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 200-04.

At the time of its publication in 1693, Wonders was Cotton Mather's most detailed and widely read work on witchcraft. Nonetheless, it was hardly his only study of the issue. Four other major works by Mather either exclusively or partially deal with witchcraft. These include Memorable Providences (1689), Magnalia Christi Americana (1702), The Armour of Christianity (1704), and his then unpublished diaries (1681-1724). Written before and after the events at Salem, these works encompass Mather's main cosmological beliefs, and reinforce the positions on witchcraft found in Wonders.

In all of Cotton Mather's works there is the obvious pervasive influence of the dogmatic theology of Puritanism. This cosmology served as the mental grid through which Mather perceived and interpreted events in his personal life and historical era both in terms of causation and effect. One cannot begin to fathom Salem witchcraft or Mather until the theology behind it is taken seriously. The Puritan worldview had everything to do with how Cotton Mather and his generation perceived and dealt with witchcraft. As Richard Weisman puts it, 'If Puritan theology can be adequately interpreted without reference to witchcraft, it remains the case that witchcraft in Massachusetts cannot be understood outside the context of Puritan theology'.[7] As a result no assessment can be made of the credulity of Mather's book, The Wonders of the Invisible World or his role in the Salem trials, without first reviewing Mather's seventeenth-century cosmology relative to witchcraft.

This chapter will do just that -- examine Mather's personal cosmology related to witchcraft. In what follows, it will demonstrate that the historical evidence bears witness to the fact that Cotton Mather possessed a specific world view in relation to witchcraft that was in agreement with the basic premises the court used in the Salem adjudications. Far from being a post-Salem creation, Mather's cosmology had been largely formed between the period of his graduation from Harvard college in 1678 and his publication of Memorable Providences in 1689. This chapter will look at Cotton Mather's theology in relation to witchcraft from the perspective of his pre-Salem,

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[7] Richard Weisman, Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts (Amherst, 1984), p. 24.

Salem, and post-Salem works, rather than focusing exclusively upon Mather's publication of Wonders. After briefly surveying Mather's theologically formative years, this chapter addresses three dominant parts of his cosmology related to witchcraft. First, the chapter identifies Cotton Mather's theological explanation of the existence of Satan and demons. This section shows not only Mather's personal understanding of these entities, but the compatibility of Mather's views with those of his seventeenth-century clerical contemporaries. Next, the chapter explores Mather's analysis of the practice of witchcraft, including his explanation of how witchcraft was initiated, developed, and operated in his era. Finally, while Mather's specific recommendations to the Salem Court will be discussed in the final chapter of the thesis, this chapter makes a number of preliminary observations of Mather's overall beliefs concerning how the covenant-people of New England were expected by God to respond to witchcraft.

The Background of Cotton Mather's Theology

The Puritans of seventeenth-century New England subscribed to a basic cosmology predicated upon what they believed to be God's revelation to humanity: the Bible. The Bible was the singular authority for their corporate faith, as presented through the framework of their Calvinistic theological predisposition. This was particularly and adamantly true of Cotton Mather. He was a third generation Puritan minister, and the maternal grandson of one of the great architects of the Puritan faith, John Cotton. Mather was the epitome of Puritan society's product in terms of his belief in the concepts of the Puritan community and covenant faith.

As the son of Boston minister, Increase Mather, Cotton spent his formative years in the setting of a ministry. Having learned to read at about the age of seven, Mather's early interest in the Bible resulted in his routine reading of around fifteen chapters from the scriptures each day. When at age eleven and a half Mather became the youngest student in Harvard College's history to be admitted, he already had a working knowledge of Latin and Greek, and showed signs of academic promise.[8] At Harvard, Mather simultaneously devoted much of his time to studying

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[8] Kenneth Silverman, The Life and Times of Cotton Mather (New York, 1984), p. 14.

theology, natural philosophy (science), including contemporary astronomy and Copernican theories, and medicine. This trilogy of disciplines had a profound impact upon Mather's later life as a minister and scholar, as is evidenced in a number of his works and endeavors.

During some point in the last two years of Cotton Mather's college education, he felt he had received the assurance of salvation, and began to apply himself to the work of the ministry. He became an amanuensis for his father Increase, transcribing important documents. Mather graduated from Harvard College in 1678, at the age of fifteen. Two years later he was appointed a probationary pastor, along side his father Increase, at the historic Old North Church in Boston. With as many as two thousand people in the congregation, it was one of the largest and most influential churches of Mather's day. By the time Cotton received his M.A. degree in 1681, he was being courted by churches seeking a pastor, but he chose to remain at the Old North church. In May 1685 the Boston ecclesiastical authorities ordained Cotton Mather as a co-pastor with his father Increase.

By age twenty-two, Cotton Mather's position at the Old North church had contributed greatly to his visibility as both a minister and scholar. Among his early published and unpublished works, Mather's notebooks of sermons and his diaries are most notable. His diaries in particular, beginning in 1681 and ending in February 1725 are as Silverman notes, 'the lengthiest surviving of any American Puritan'.[9] The sheer volume of Mather's published and unpublished writings is impressive. During the forty seven years of his active ministry he produced over four hundred works, for both publication and private use and circulation.[10]

Between the years of 1678 and his 1689 publication of Memorable Providences Relating to Witchrafts and Possessions Mather gradually developed his own worldview, including that part which dealt with witchcraft. Of particular importance is the fact that Mather's cosmology was quite compatible to that of his contemporaries, although it was at points more fully articulated in that he was in a powerful position from which to apply that cosmology to the specifics of seventeenth-

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[9] Silverman, Life and Times of Cotton Mather, p. 31.

[10] For a thorough bibliography of Cotton Mather's works, see Thomas James Holmes, Cotton Mather: A Bibliography of His Works (3 vols.; Newton, 1974).

century life. Mather's fuller expression of his views can be primarily attributed to his clerical prominence, which allowed him to publish his sermons and historical narratives. It would be inaccurate to say that before the Salem trials Mather had made witchcraft a central focus of his studies. Mather's ongoing publications were reflective of his varied interests in the Bible, natural philosophy, medicine, and pietistic works. With this in mind, it is nevertheless helpful to briefly describe his writings specifically on witchcraft: Memorable Providences (1689), Magnalia Christi Americana (1702), The Armour of Christianity (1704), and The Diary of Cotton Mather (1681-1724).

Beyond periodic sermons and diary entries, Cotton Mather's 1689 publication of Memorable Providences, was arguably his clearest pre-Salem account of his theology relative to witchcraft to that date. It summarizes the events surrounding the 1688 possession of the young daughters of Boston native John Goodwin, a member of Mather's congregation, and reveals as much about Cotton Mather's personal ministry approach to deliverance as it does his theology of witchcraft. Within its pages, Memorable Providences details the biblical and contemporary views of seventeenth-century New England witchcraft beliefs as seen in the Goodwin children's possession and Cotton Mather's application of Puritan theology to effect their spiritual liberation. This experience had a particularly profound impact upon Mather's personal belief in the power of witchcraft:

> I am resolved after this, never to use but just one grain of patience with any man that shall go to impose upon me a Denial of Devils, or of Witches. I shall count that man Ignorant who shall suspect, but I shall count him down-right Impudent if he Assert the Non-Existence of things which we have had such palpable Convictions of.[11]

Mather's theology of witchcraft found in The Wonders of the Invisible World, was not theologically innovative compared to his contemporaries. Cotton Mather may have been more specific in his articulation of Puritan clerical beliefs about the power of Satan and witches, but he did not present any substantially new ideas.

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[11] Cotton Mather, Memorable Providences Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions (Boston, 1689; 2nd edn. London, 1691) in American Antiquarian Society Early American Imprints, 1639-1800. Microcard no. 486, (Worcester, 1967), p. 123.

In the years after the Salem trials, despite some introspection about his involvement in these events, Mather's belief in the nature of witchcraft or the power of Satan did not diminish. This is evident in Mather's publication of Magnalia Christi Americana, his church history of New England. Finished in 1698, but not published until 1702, the pages of Magnalia bear the marks of Mather's consistent and continuing application of theology to all forms of witchcraft, including predictive astrology. Magnalia also repeated much of the information found in The Wonders of the Invisible World, reinforcing Mather's insistences on the validity of the Salem trials.

The Armour of Christianity, published in 1704, would be one of Mather's most detailed publications relating his views of Satan and the powers of the demonic to attack both believers and non-believers. Mather's depiction of Satan in this work was far from that of a symbol of evil, instead Satan was depicted as a personal and powerful adversary, bent on the corruption and destruction of humanity. The Armour was originally preached by Mather at the Thursday Lectures in Boston from June to October of 1703 and entitled, 'The Wiles of the Devil'. Mather subsequently published this series of sermons expressing his intent to 'undermine the Kingdome and Interest of the Devil', by exposing Satan's devices and arming his readers with biblical guidelines for overcoming diabolic and malignant influences.[12]

Last in this list of Mather's major works reflecting his cosmology as it related to witchcraft are his diary entries for 1681 to 1724 published later as The Diary of Cotton Mather. These provide insight into Mather's ongoing interpretation of seventeenth-century events. Since Mather never intended to publish his journals, these entries record Mather's personal and often introspective insights without the mitigating influences seen in publications meant for his contemporary audience.

Taken together, these works provide a valuable resource from which it is possible to establish that Mather produced a rather detailed and consistent cosmological outline concerning Satan, demons, witchcraft, and the Covenant-People's expected response toward them.

A Consistent Cosmological Outline Regarding Witchcraft

To Cotton Mather's mind, the Bible taught that the world was made up of two critical spheres.

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[12] Cotton Mather, Diary, 1:489.

One could be identified as the visible world and the other as the invisible world. The visible world was by all accounts, a difficult realm. It was not only the domain in which every day events occurred, but also where the great battle of the ages was waged, and won or lost. Then there was the invisible world. It was more glorious and menacing by far. It was the environment of both benevolent and malevolent forces in which the former functioned as marvelous protectors and the latter as terrible adversaries. On the whole, the invisible world was a mysterious realm into which few persons, including Mather, had ever been privileged by God to see.

It was the manner in which these two realms interacted that arrested the imagination and attention of Cotton Mather. It was the subject of not only his scholarship but his pietism as well. Almost all of his life he studied and postulated about this interaction, but it was New England witchcraft, and the events connected to the Salem witch episode that provided him a real life laboratory in which these two worlds could be seen to have collided. As it turned out, it was an experience of unique and tragic proportions.

When it came to the diabolical entities of the invisible realm, the first and most easily identifiable individual in Cotton Mather's writings was Satan. Mather believed in the real and personal entity known as Satan, not merely as a symbol of evil, but as evil embodied. The subject of the Devil was never to be treated lightly, for Satan was an invisible and formidable enemy.

In fact, to Mather, questioning the existence of Satan was tantamount to denying the existence of God and the validity of the Bible itself. Mather says it this way in Magnalia Christi Americana, 'Come hither, ye prophane Saducees, that will not believe the being of a devil, for fear lest you must thence infer the being of a God'.[13] After all, the same Bible that said God was a real person said that Satan was also a real person. Only a defiant Sadducee (Mather's favorite term of condemnation for his antagonists) would fail to recognize Satan's existence. Satan was the foremost entity connected to witchcraft and the Bible the foremost authority that supported this fact. He states this categorically when he writes:

> That there is a Devil, is a thing doubted by none but such as are under the influence of the Devil. For any to deny the being of a devil must be from

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[13] Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana (2 vols.; London, 1702; repr. Hartford, 1853), 2:445.

> ignorance of profaneness, worse than diabolical. About this Devil, there are many things, whereof we may reasonable and profitably be inquisitive: such things, I mean, as are in our Bibles revealed unto us . . . .[14]

There was no debate therefore in Mather's mind as to the reality of Satan. It was a foregone conclusion. And this should come as no surprise. It was an opinion shared with the vast majority of biblical scholars, both Mather's contemporaries and his predecessors. The majority of seventeenth-century Christians, including Puritan clerics would have agreed with Mather's portrayal of Satan as a personal entity capable of extreme diabolism. Puritan minister Edward Taylor described Satan as having 'laid his Train to blow up all the world by sin'.[15] Though rarely used as the central or singular theme of Puritan sermons, Satan was ever present in the writings of New England clerics as Elizabeth Reis indicates, '. . . not as a metaphorical character, but as an actual embodiment of worldly and spiritual attractions: he was cunning, manipulative, and above all, persistent'.[16]

As to the nature of Satan, Mather repeats the common Puritan interpretation. He sees him as a fallen angel who is involved in the affairs of this world as an adversary to man and God, and at times a tool of God. In The Armour of Christianity, Mather writes, 'Those Apostate Angels, are all United under one Infernal Monarch, in the Designs of Mischief . . . .'[17]

As Mather and his Puritan clerical contemporaries such as Samuel Willard and Jonathan Mitchell understood it, Satan's fall stemmed from his post creation status within the divine hierarchy. They explained that Satan's ill-fated discontent was provoked when God signified that Satan and his subservient angels' role in the universe would include ministering to the needs of the newly created human race.[18] Citing humanity's apparent inferiority to themselves, Satan

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[14] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:55.

[15] Edward Taylor, Harmony of the Gospels in Thomas M. and Virginia L. Davis (eds), (3 vols.; New York, 1983), 1:67.

[16] Elizabeth Reis, Damned Women, p. 65. For an in depth examination of the role of Satan in seventeenth-century ministerial discourse, see Edward K. Trefz, 'A Study of Satan with Particular Emphasis upon the Preaching of Certain New England Puritans', (Union Theological Seminary, D.D. thesis, 1952).

[17] Cotton Mather, The Armour Of Christianity (Boston, 1704), in American Antiquarian Society, Early American Imprints, 1639-1819, Micro-card [no.]1171, (Worcester, 1967). See also, Cotton Mather's Speedy Repentance Urged (Boston, 1690), p. 10.

[18] See Jonathan Mitchell, 'Continuation of Sermons Concerning Man's Misery, 15 August 1655', Massachusetts Historical Society; Samuel Willard, A Compleat Body of Divinity in Two Hundred and Fifty Expository Lectures . . . (Boston, 1726), pp. 180-81.

and the angels rebelled against God. Consequently, as Mitchell described it, the 'witting and wilfull Sin and pride' of Satan caused his irretrievable fall from grace.[19] As Mather would further expound:

> He was once in that Order of Heavenly Creatures, which God in the Beginning made Ministering Spirits, for his own peculiar Service and Honour, in the Management of the Universe; but we may now write that Ephitath upon him, How art thou fallen from Heaven! Thou hast said in thine Heart, I will Exalt my Throne above the Stars of God; but thou art brought down to Hell.[20]

The Devil, however, is not to be viewed as a uniquely powerful entity, apart from the demonic hosts. Instead, he was to be regarded as one being in the same category of divinely created, but fallen beings. Further, even the term 'Devil', was adaptable, since as Godbeer notes, 'it could signify not only a specific being, but also evil in a collective. . . . to designate the fallen angels by a singular name was not inappropriate, since it underlined their "oneness and union in sundry respects" '.[21] For Mather, then, Satan's actual prominence is due to the fact that he occupies an elevated position in the hierarchy of evil angels. This is reflected in Mather's descriptions of the Devil:

> When we speak of, the Devil, 'tis, A name of Multitude; it means not One Individual Devil, so Potent and Scient, as perhaps a Manichee would imagine; but it means a Kind, which a Multitude belongs unto. . . . A Devil is a Fallen Angel, an Angel fallen from the Fear and Love of God, and from all Celestial Glories; but Fallen to all manner of Wretchedness and Cursedness.[22]

This description by Mather is similar to those penned by a number of his seventeenth-century counterparts. The English minister, Henry Smith would remind his readers that '. . . when Christ asked [the demon] his name, he called himself Legion, which imports a multitude, as if he should brag of his number'.[23] Jonathan Mitchell would declare Satan the leader of 'a

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[19] Mitchell, 'Continuation of Sermons', This narration of the 'Fall of Satan' is also given in Deodat Lawson's book, Christ's Fidelity the Only Shield against Satan's Malignity (Boston, 1692), pp. 1-2.

[20] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:55.

[21] Richard Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England (New York, 1992), p. 87. Puritan clerics described Satan, demons, and persons aligned with Satan or his works as 'devils'. In one sermon, During the Salem trials, Salem minister Samuel Parris described humans in collusion with Satan as 'devils'. See, 'Sermon on 6.John.70, 27 March 1691|2' in James F. Cooper, Jr. and Kenneth P. Minkema, (eds), The Sermon Notebook of Samuel Parris, 1689-1694 (Boston, 1993), pp. 194-8.

[22] Cotton Mather, Wonders of the Invisible World, 1:55-7.

[23] Henry Smith, in Thomas Fuller, (ed.), The Works of Henry Smith: Including Sermons, Treatises, Prayers, and Poems (2 vols.; Edinburgh, 1867), 2:19.

numberless number of those Invisible Immortall created spirits . . . .'[24] Similarly, Samuel Willard would indicate that while Satan connoted all of the devils, he was also 'the ringleader of the rest called the prince of Devills'.[25]

Although like his contemporaries, Mather's intent was to put the emphasis upon the fact that Satan is not an omnipotent, omnipresent personality, the effect is nonetheless just the opposite. It tends to give him a ubiquitous presence, for in folding him into the general scheme of ever-present evil angels Satan does indeed become practically pervasive. In the process, Mather depicts Satan as the root cause of what evil activities transpire in the world. This line of thought acquires an increasingly important element in Mather's reaction to the evil perceived at work at Salem. In Mather's view, the Devil is responsible for what is happening, because the evil spirits are in his command. Mather describes it this way when he writes,

> Tis probable, That the Devil, who was the Ringleader of that mutinous and rebellious Crew, which first shook off the Authority of God, is now the General of these Hellish Armies; Our Lord, that Conquered him, has told us the name of him; 'tis Beelzebub; 'tis he that is the Devil, and the rest are his angels, or his Souldiers.[26]

Mather believed Satan's role in witchcraft to be a deliberate and orderly process: that the Devil was always at the core of witchcraft troubles. This was true whether one was referring to the Salem affair or any other historical case of witchcraft. He took great pains in Wonders to record events found in other parts of the world, including several reported accounts from cases in Sweden in the year 1669.[27]

To Mather, Satan's overarching design was always the same, to seduce humanity away from God and to enslave it to himself. This remained true whether Satan's attack was focused upon the elect or damned, individually or the community, since all humans were his prey in the cosmic battle against God. In the case of the unregenerate, Mather insisted that Satan was active to 'employ as many and subtle wiles to divert every man living from ever being a Christian'.[28] Far more

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[24] Jonathan Mitchell, 'Continuation of Sermons, 15 August 1655'.
[25] Samuel Willard, The Child's Portion (Boston, 1684), pp. 29-30.
[26] Mather, Wonders, 1:58.
[27] Ibid, 1:211.
[28] Cotton Mather, The Armour Of Christianity (Boston, 1704), American Antiquarian Society, Early

frightening to Mather, however, was the Devil's ability through witchcraft covenants to persuade the godly to renounce Christ, and become his slaves. In such cases, Mather warned that, 'All the vice, all the baseness, all the darkness that could render a man a devil incarnate, would presently seize upon the soul of that man'.[29] Mather indicates the age-old, persistent approach of the Devil towards humanity, remarking that, ' . . . the Devil whose Malice and Envy prompts him to do what he can in his assaulting of us: he that assail'd our First Parents, in a Serpent, will still Act Like a Serpent . . .'.[30] This battle which had gone on throughout human history, would find its culmination in eschatology as William Perkins suggested, 'these are the last times, and Satan seeth, that he hath but a short time to continue therefore he bestirreth himselfe'.[31]

In all cases, the Devil's first tool was that of recreating in humans the same damning sin of pride that had been present at the Devil's rebellion, thus alienating men and women from saving grace.[32] In Wonders, Mather detailed this attack, writing:

> The Temptations of the Devil, aim at puffing and bloating us up, with Pride: as much perhaps as any iniquity . . . Pride is the Devil's own sin: and he affects especially to be, The King over the Children of Pride . . . He [the Devil] is a Fallen spirit Himself, and it pleases him to see the Falls of Men.[33]

By the end of the Salem trials, Mather believed that in accomplishing his design of seducing New England, Satan's method was to consistently work from one population centre to another until he accomplished a grandiose design of ruining not just individuals, but the churches and government of God's commonwealth. Mather found ample evidence to support this belief in Andover witches' testimonies verifying Satan's intention to '. . . set up his own worship, abolish all the churches in the land, to fall next upon Salem and so go throughout the country . . . to set up the kingdom of the Devil'.[34]

American Imprints, 1639-1819, Microcard [no.]1171, (Worcester, 1967), p. 59.

[29] Mather, Armour of Christianity, p. 141.

[30] Ibid, p. 10.

[31] William Perkins, A Fruitful Dialogue Concerning the End of the World, in The Workes of William Perkins (3 vols.; London 1616-18), 3:465-477.

[32] Cotton Mather, The Gospel of Justification by the Righteousness of God (Boston, 1700), p. 21; For other examples of this explanation, see Increase Mather, The Folly of Sinning (Boston, 1699), p. 50; John Williams, Warning to the Unclean (Boston, 1699), p. 53.

[33] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:239-40.

[34] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (eds), The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692 (3 vols.; New York, 1977), 1:67.

Just how did the Devil intend to implement this? Was there a pattern which Mather could detect and identify in all that was happening? The answer to these questions is found in a system of evil that Mather lays out for the reader in his book Wonders, and amplifies in other writings.

Satan's first objective in his longer campaign was to gain access to the various communities and populations. Mather's view is that Satan could not act without the permission of God in such matters. As a result, his first role was to act as an accuser before the throne of God, with his primary activity centred on pointing out where such individuals and societies had sinned and when they deserved punishment. This was the starting point. Mather says of this:

> The Devil first goes up as an accuser against us. He is therefore styled The Accuser; and it is on this account, that his proper Name does belong unto him. There is a Court somewhere kept; a Court of Spirits, where the Devil enters all sorts of Complaints against us; he charges us with manifold sins against the Lord our God . . . whereupon he urges, Lord, let'em now have the death which is wages, paid unto'em![35]

Mather would repeat this version of events in his 1704 publication of The Armour of Christianity, when he wrote:

> The Devil sees, that by sin against God, men bring upon themselves the Wrath of God; and he hopes to be the Executioner of that wrath . . . it is the Office of the Devil, to be the Executioner.[36]

In this process, the fate of the accused is determined by the truthfulness of the charges. The hope, of course, is an acquittal. Mather's courtroom portrayal continues this way:

> There he loads us with heavy Imputations of Hypocrysie, [sic] Iniquity, Disobedience . . . If our Advocate in the Heavens do not now take off his Libel; the Devil, then, with a Concession of God, comes down, as a destroyer upon us. Having first been an Attorney, to bespeak that the Judgements of Heaven may be ordered for us, he then also pleads, that he may be the Executioner of those Judgements.[37]

If the charges are just and no acquittal materializes, then God grants Satan permission to afflict the population for their crimes against God. The effect of this consent is to give Satan a powerful additional role, that of implement of God's punishment. Putting it in explicitly judicial

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[35] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:63.
[36] Cotton Mather, The Armour Of Christianity, p. 13.
[37] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:63.

terms, Mather says, '. . . The God of Heaven sometimes after a sort, signs a Warrant, for this destroying Angel, to do what has been desired to be done for the destroying of men'.[38]

Mather sees Satan's acting in the visible and invisible realms, in both tangible and intangible forms. He portrays Satan's visible punishments as infectious plagues, human wars, and natural storms and disasters. However, by far the worst, are the intangible signs. These are 'spiritual woes', the working of Satan's wrath and God's judgement as evidenced among covenant nations by heresies, persecutions, the turning of pious men to acts of wickedness, and yet the most damning of all--witchcraft in the population.

Witchcraft then, is one of Satan's greatest instruments against God's chosen people. It becomes a two-pronged dilemma. First, Satan gains permission to distress the populace through the temptations of witchcraft participation and then he tyrannizes the population through witchcraft possessions and attacks, all as a prelude to their submission to him.

What then, is Satan's goal in the use of witchcraft assaults against the nations? As Mather sees it, without God's intervention the outcome of Satan's diabolical effort is the enslavement of the nation to himself, destroying them as well as God's historical and salvific plan in the process. As Mather puts it,

> You may both in Sacred and Profane History, read many a direful Account of the woes, which they that are possessed by the Devil do undergo: And from these conclude, What must the children of Men hope from such a Devil . . . Furthermore, the servile, abject, needy circumstances wherein the Devil keeps the Slaves, that are under his more sensible Vassalage, do suggest unto us, how woful the Devil would render all our Lives.[39]

The only thing that prevents Satan from accomplishing his final objective is the mercy of God. As a true Puritan Mather believes that God may punish the sin of his people through allowing Satan room to afflict them, but that his initial and concluding purpose is always redemptive. It should be clearly stated that Mather's great concern was that his country's afflictions be recognized as God's judgement so that a repentant nation would stop the cause of judgement - - Sin.

In viewing Satan's role, Mather effectively portrayed him as the adversary of humanity.

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[38] Ibid, 1:63.
[39] Ibid, 1:65.

Satan appears in the court of heaven accusing the covenant people of crimes against God. If his charges are truthful, he gains authorization to execute the judgement of God. Witchcraft is the preeminent tool of Satan because by it he can both execute his wrath against the populace and bring it under his own control.

In Satan's plot to enslave humanity he was not alone in his diabolical endeavors. For Cotton Mather if, in this invisible cosmos, Satan was a formidable opponent, there were quantitatively even more menacing evil entities about: the devils themselves. Satan was a devil, to be sure, but he was only one devil: powerful, but limited in the scope and range of his ability to do evil. On the other hand, his underlings, the demons were so many they could not be numbered, nor was it any use to guess what their combined strength might be.

Mather held that the general dwelling place of this demonic host was the atmosphere that surrounded the earth. He envisions this when he writes,

> The Sovereign God hath, with infinite Wisdom and Justice confined the Fallen Spirits unto this atmosphere; But with their confinement, they have so much liberty . . . they may range and rove about, and molest the poor children of men. Our air is filled with them, as with flies in midsummer. We draw our breath in the place of Dragons.[40]

The world, the very place that humans walked, was filled with demons. Within Wonders Mather insists that, 'We are continually surrounded with swarms of those devils, who make this present world become so evil'.[41] This translated into a perilous picture of evil entities all seeking an opportunity to enter the general rank and file of human beings to carry out their horrid designs. Mather's Boston colleague, Peter Thatcher, would claim that the number of demons among humans was sufficient to 'Beleaguer the whole Earth', as there was 'not a place under Heaven where Satan had not his Troops; not a person without some of these cursed Spirits haunting and watching him'.[42]

Added to the dangers posed by these invisible co-conspirators of Satan was the fact that Christians were not even safe from the work of demons in their own New England meeting houses. Preaching to his congregation at the Old North Church, Mather admonished them to consider,

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[40] Cotton Mather, The Armour Of Christianity, p. 6.
[41] Mather, Wonders, 1:80.
[42] Peter Thatcher, The Saint's Victory and Triumph over Sin and Death (Boston, 1696), p. 19.

> In our Church-Assemblies, O how many Devils, do you imagine, crowd in among us! There is a Devil that rocques [sic] one to Sleep, there is a Devil that makes another to be thinking of, he scarce knows what himself; and there is a Devil, that makes another to be pleasing himself with wanton and wicked speculations.[43]

Within the visible world, Mather believed that the demons had specific spiritual and geographic areas that they were authorized to control. He reasoned that, '. . . Tis to be supposed, that some devils are peculiarly Commission'd, and perhaps Qualify'd, for some Countries, while others are for other'.[44] Mather derives this view from the gospel of Mark, chapter five, where the demons ask Christ not to cast them out of the country of the Gadarenes. Mather conjectures from this that the power of those demons was limited to the area in which they had already enslaved a portion of the population. According to Mather, 'each devil, as he sees his advantage, cries out, Let me be in this Countrey, rather than another'.[45]

In terms of structure, Mather believed that the demons were well organized. Their work was one of co-operation and mutual support in the cause of Satan. They are seen as, 'united under One Monarch and upon One design . . . .'[46] Mather will often use terms denoting organization to describe them, such as, an invisible army, a horde, or confederate spirits. In each instance he wants his addressees to understand that these powers are not arbitrary, not random, but a well-ordered unit capable of careful strategy and coordinated attack upon humanity.

One of the chief advantages possessed by such entities is their vast knowledge gained through centuries of existence in the world. Mather deems the devils to be extremely intelligent adversaries, though like Satan they are not omniscient. He writes that the '. . . education of all Devils is not alike'[47] and as such, they are not all equal in knowledge. This does not make them any less dangerous, for in Mather's opinion they are still more knowledgeable than humans. He states it this way, 'Doubtless, the knowledge of a Daemon is vastly beyond any of ours . . . And the vast

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[43] Mather, Wonders, 1:230-31. The sermon, The Wonders of the Invisible World was first preached at the Old North Church in Boston, before it became part of the printed manuscript which bears the same title.
[44] Ibid, 1:58.
[45] Ibid, 1:59.
[46] Mather, Armour Of Christianity, p. 3.
[47] Mather, Wonders, 1:58.

knowledge and understanding of the Devil is improved by a long experience'.[48]

What then is their field of operation? Mather sees this in terms of ordinary vexations and extraordinary works. They are commissioned by Satan to bring about the judgement of God upon mankind in the form of visible and invisible afflictions. Within the category of the ordinary vexations caused by demons, the role of these co-conspirators of Satan was to destroy the kingdom of God through their seduction and perversion of humanity. To do so, the fallen angels focused their attacks on recreating their own sin of rebellion within their human counterparts, using the soul as the battlefield between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.[49]

Mather and his contemporaries believed this attack upon the soul could take various forms, one of which was the attempt to distract humans from spiritual matters to the enjoyment of the sinful pleasures of the flesh.[50] Mather would note in the beginning of The Armour of Christianity that 'the enemies that War against our Souls are the Flesh, the World, and the Devil: the Trinity of Hell!'[51] For Mather and his contemporaries sinful flesh served the purposes of the demons well. They were able to use it as Jonathan Mitchell noted, as 'the principle agent in all disobedience'.[52] As Mather put it in Wonders, 'How did the Devil assault the First Adam? It was with Temptations drawn from Pleasure, and Profit, and Honour . . . Whereby the Devil would be Ensnaring us'.[53]

Additionally, the devils attempted to vex the New England Commonwealth through dissension within the Puritan churches. Such divisions were characteristically attributed to the work of malevolent demons working to undermine pastoral authority and harmony within the godly community. As the Puritan minister William Hubbard wrote, 'Divisions, especially in the Church of God, [were] in a great measure to be ascribed to the policy of Satan'.[54] Finally, the cohorts of Satan

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[48] Ibid, 1:11.

[49] See Deodat Lawson, Christ's Fidelity, pp. 1-2.

[50] For examples of the attacks of Satan and demons upon humanity, see Daniel Russell, 'Sermon notes, 1677', in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, p. 23; Joshua Moodey, Soldiery Spiritualized (Cambridge, 1673), p. 36; Benjamin Wadsworth, Good Souldiers a Great Blessing (Boston, 1700), p. 28.

[51] Mather, Armour Of Christianity, p. 2.

[52] John Norton, 'Notes on sermons of Jonathan Mitchell, 1654-5, (1 February 1654), in the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

[53] Mather, Wonders, 1:220.

[54] William Hubbard, The Happiness of a People in the Wisdom of Their Rulers Directing and in the

worked in the lives of the believers to attempt to bring them into false beliefs or to get them to denounce God altogether. As far as Cotton Mather was concerned, the most effective demonic vexation, short of witchcraft, was that of bringing people into heresy. In Wonders, Mather identifies these attempts by the demons at Satan's bidding, warning, 'O Never does the Devil make such dangerous passes at us . . . when the Devil would poyson with false Doctrines'.[55] Mather observed that heresy had not only been the fall of many humans, but the tool of the Devil in the hands of the promoters of heresy. Mather puts it in this manner, writing:

> That Serpent the Devil has acted his cursed Seed in unwearied endeavors . . . By the impulse of the Devil, 'tis that first the old Heathens, and then the mad Arians . . . and the Papists that came after them, have out done them all for Slaughters.[56]

In the context of seventeenth-century Massachusetts, as Richard Weisman notes, the demons were not limited to any one form of heresy, but 'encouraged all forms of religious error, from Antinomianism at one extreme to Arminianism and Catholicism at the other'.[57]

As much as Cotton Mather underscored the ordinary vexations of the demons, the *extraordinary* vexations were a greater concern for him. These were the supernatural works of devils connected to the world of witchcraft. It was one of their areas of specialization, and perhaps the single greatest tool they possessed. In reading Mather's publications, the work of the demons in this matter can be readily divided into three activities.

Their first endeavor involved enticing persons to enter the practice of witchcraft through promises of supernatural assistance. As Mather described it, the demons were permitted by God to 'Range with their Poisonous Insinuations among Ignorant, Envious, Discontented People, till they have cunningly decoyed them into some sudden act, whereby the Toyls of Hell [were] inextricably cast over them'.[58] This would be the case in Mather's post-Salem account of the witchcraft torments of the young Boston woman, Mercy Short. Mather wrote that the demons had 'used a thousand Flatteries and Allurements to induce her into a compliance', in their (unsuccessful)

Obedience of their Brethren Attending (Boston, 1676), p. 17.

[55] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:235.

[56] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:69-70.

[57] Weisman, Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion, p. 89. For Mather's insistence of this, see Cotton Mather, A Good Man Making a Good End (Boston, 1698), p. 36.

[58] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:20.

attempts to convince Mercy Short to become a Salem-witch conscript.[59]

The second activity was that of persuading the subject to inscribe their name in the Devil's covenant book, thus sealing an alliance with the Devil. In Wonders Mather noted that the Devil had convinced a 'fearful knot' of persons to 'lift themselves in his horrid service, by entering their names in a Book by him tendered to them'.[60] As Mather saw it, the demons' success in persuading individuals to seal a covenant with the Devil had extended to the individual's children as well. Mather described the inversionary nature of the demons' works when he wrote:

> It would break the heart of stone to have seen what I have lately seen: Even poor Children of several ages, even from seven to twenty, more or less, Confessing their Familiarity with Devils . . . that made a little Pourtratiture [sic] of Hell itself.[61]

In certain cases, the demons took on the visage of particular witches in order to persuade persons, either by promises or by threats, to sign their names in the Devil's book. Mather records that the spectre of Bridget Bishop, a Salem tavern-keeper, had taken one victim 'from her [spinning] Wheel, and carrying her to the River-side, threatened there to Drown her, if she did not Sign to the Book mentioned'.[62]

Last of all, Mather sees the demons bringing the witches themselves into the Devil's snare through their individual practice of witchcraft. Mather's point was that in those cases in which people allowed themselves to covenant with the Devil, the demons assigned to them would eventually prove to be their adversary. One danger was that once the demon was employed, the witch could not sever ties with it. In these cases, Mather explained that the, '. . . devil is evermore invited to the service of the Person that shall practise these Witchcrafts . . . and so assume their Livery, that they cannot shake him off in any way'.[63] Another dire effect of making a covenant with demons was that they would maliciously retaliate against witches who attempted to repent by the confession of their crimes. Mather recorded in Wonders that those witches who had testified against George Burroughs, the former minister of Salem, 'ever since their Confessions, had been

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[59] Cotton Mather, A Brand Pluck'd Out of the Burning (Boston, 1689), in George Lincoln Burr, (ed.), Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648-1706 (New York, 1914), p. 263.
[60] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:102.
[61] Ibid, 1:131.
[62] Ibid, 1:164.
[63] Ibid, 1:24.

themselves terribly Tortured by the Devils' and 'therein undergone the Pains of many Deaths for their Confessions'.[64]

One could not covenant with the Devil and demons with impunity. Having used the witches to afflict and destroy others, the final goal of the demons was the damnation of the witches' souls. In the end, humanity lost, and the demons were the victors in Satan's plot. As this section demonstrates, in the years prior to the first signs of witchcraft at Salem, Cotton Mather had developed the overarching outline of his theology relative to the existence and activities of Satan and demons. The chapter now examines Mather's conceptions of witchcraft within the context of seventeenth-century New England.

Witchcraft: The Damned Art

Just as Mather's understanding of the invisible world of Satan and demons had been largely developed by the publication of Memorable Providences in 1689 it is equally true that Mather had also created a consistent theological perspective in relation to the practice of witchcraft itself. Again, the importance of Mather's statement of his theology of witchcraft is not so much found in any novel, theoretical aspect, as in the fact that it was in agreement with the preponderance of witchcraft beliefs in his own era. This section therefore surveys the main tenets of Mather's personal beliefs about witchcraft as identified in Wonders. Later, in chapter four, the thesis will detail the specific application of Mather's theology of witchcraft to the Salem trials themselves.

Cotton Mather, like almost all of his contemporaries, readily accepted the reality of witchcraft. He had only to go to his Bible and a plethora of established authorities on the subject to find evidence to validate the assertion that witches and witchcraft were not fictional, but a dark and evil reality. This view was expounded by Mather and nearly all of seventeenth-century New England, to the degree, as Weisman notes,

> That witchcraft and witches existed as real occurrences was as thoroughly uncontroversial an assertion to the colonial of New England as it was to his contemporaries in western Europe. The proof consisted merely of pointing to the relevant biblical texts.[65]

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[64] Ibid, 1:158-59.

[65] Weisman, Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion, p. 19.

For Mather therefore it was unnecessary to go to any great lengths to defend such a belief. His preface to Wonders of the Invisible World simply declares 'For the Dogmatical part of my Discourse, I want no Defense . . .'.[66]

In an attempt to define witchcraft Mather offered what was tantamount to a paraphrase of that penned by the Cambridge theologian, Joseph Glanville. Mather described it as 'The doing of Strange (and for the most part ill) Things by the helpe of Evil Spirits, Covenanting with (and usually representing of) the woful Children of Men'.[67] His and Glanville's definition is insightful for it describes not only the activity of witchcraft, but also its operational basis.

As will be seen in greater detail in the next chapter of the thesis witchcraft also had an inversionary aspect, since like salvation it was seen as a systematic progression of evil. In this respect, as Mather put it, witchcraft was a 'Renouncing of God and Advancing of a filthy Devil into the Throne of the Most High . . . preferring of the Communion of a loathesome lying Devil before all the Salvation of the Lord Redeemer'.[68] Therefore, witchcraft possessed a recognizable pattern and an identifiable result.

Drawing upon prior and contemporary sources on witchcraft, Mather proposed what he believed to be a plausible explanation for how witchcraft was initiated, developed, and operated. To begin with, witchcraft was understood to have a preparatory phase. The person who became a fully empowered witch was first preconditioned to such a state. In the minds of the New England clergy, this pre-entanglement consisted of the nurturing and practice of sin. The sins most usually cited as precursors to witchcraft were pride, greed, lust, anger, hatred, unbelief, revenge, or discontent. All these sins of impiety created avenues that Satan used to prepare one for his service. Mather expresses this when he writes,

> When persons through discontent at their poverty, or at their misery, shall be always murmuring, and repining at the Providence of God, the Devils, do then invite them to an Agreement with, and a Reliance on them for help. Downright

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[66] Mather, Wonders, 1:4.
[67] Cotton Mather, A Discourse on Witchcraft (Boston, 1689), in American Antiquarian Society. Early American Imprints, 1639-1800, Microcard [no.] 486, p. 4, (Worcester, 1967).
[68] Mather, A Discourse on Witchcraft, p. 9.

Witchcraft is the upshot of it.[69]

There were more direct preparatory routes to witchcraft. Mather identified these as dabbling in the practice of 'white magic' or 'little witchcrafts'. These included such activities as fortune telling, using spells or conjurations to heal sicknesses, and water-witching. These could be easily identified with seventeenth-century folk religion, which had been largely imported from Europe.[70]

Mather had often warned his congregation and all of New England that such dabbling would lead to witchcraft activities. In Wonders, he asks, 'Whether a World of Magic Tricks often used in the World, may not insensibly ablige Devils to wait upon the Superstitious Users of them'.[71] In his mind, the use of any type of magic called forth demonic powers as the active agents in the practice of such magical arts. This was equivalent to becoming partners with demons.

Up to this point, such entrances to witchcraft might be called 'innocent' entrapments. However, they led the individual down the much more serious path to the practice of 'black magic' which itself implied conscious acts of occultism. These were most commonly called Sorceries. In his book Wonders, Mather would only describe them as the use of demons to perform functions to gratify the curiosities or to prevent inconveniences to individuals and beasts. He feared to give any further descriptions as he explained, 'I should by naming, Teach them'.[72] These actions were considered the swiftest and most dangerous path by which one became caught in witchcraft.

The most crucial progression occurred when the witch sealed a covenant with Satan, who then promised to assign a demon to actively provide them assistance. The covenant was composed of several parts. Mather describes it on the basis of the confession of several witches convicted at the Salem proceedings:

> We have seen a horrible thing done in our land! O 'tis' a most humbling thing, to think, that ever there should be such an abomination among us, as for a crue of humane race to renounce their Maker, and to unite with the Devil, for the troubling of mankind, and for People to be, (as if by some confess'd) Baptized by a

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[69] See Weisman, Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion, p. 35.

[70] See: Richard Weisman, Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion; David D. Hall, Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment (New York, 1989).

[71] Mather, Wonders, 1:23.

[72] Ibid, 1:24.

> Fiend . . . afterwards communicating in a Hellish Bread and Wine, by that Fiend admitted to them . . . .[73]

Here, the crux of the matter is presented. The imitations of the Lord's Supper and the Book of Life were the tangible and horrible counterparts to the Covenant of salvation so ardently believed in by the Puritans. In the mind of Mather and the rest of the New England clergy, this was the ultimate expression of sin. Nothing could be more treacherous, for the witch shunned God's grace and mocked the salvific covenant, but far worse, matriculated to the leagues of the damned. Peter Hoffer refers to this when he writes; 'They were to sign the Devil's book . . . it made the contract secure against the new witch's backsliding. The Devil gained possession - - in law "seisin"- - of the signer's soul'.[74] In essence, it was the purposeful renunciation of God and willing conscription into Satan's war against God and the objects of God's love -- his chosen people. In the framework of Puritan theology, it was the equivalent of committing treason.

The most powerful stage of witchcraft emerged after one entered a covenant with the Devil. One or more demons assigned to the initiate would be called upon to become the 'Engines of malice' for them. They took the form of poltergeists, or 'spectres' and attacked both humans and animals, with invisible and often visible weapons. Their attacks on humans were evidenced by the witch's prey being tormented. In Mather's words, '. . .The spectres would proceed then to wound them with Scalding, Burning, Pinching, Pricking, Twisting, Choaking, and a thousand preternatural Vexations'.[75] In certain extreme cases the victim either died suddenly or was driven to commit suicide. Cotton and Increase Mather had each documented such occurrences in their respective books, Memorable Providences, and Remarkable Providences. Both ardently reported, with noticeable public credibility the number of previous cases of demon attacks in New England and elsewhere.

Demon representatives of the witch, using the witch's visage would make the desired

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[73] Ibid, 1:111.

[74] Peter Charles Hoffer, The Devil's Disciples (Baltimore, 1996), p. 79.

[75] Cotton Mather, Diary, 1:155. Note: This and other descriptions are repeatedly put forth as evidence of witchcraft afflictions. This is not unique to Mather or seventeenth-century New England beliefs. See George Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England, chapter 18.

attacks. This was undoubtedly a great advantage, but it also became a chief danger because in a court of law the victim could easily identify his/her tormentor because the demon had appeared in their form. As will be seen in the later chapters of the thesis, the whole issue of 'spectral evidence' became increasingly problematic as many began to believe that 'spectres' could take the form of innocent persons. As demonstrated later, this issue would be the most significant problem that the Court of Oyer and Terminer faced. It would also become the issue which more than any other ended the Salem trials and brought Cotton Mather into disrepute.

As this section has shown, Cotton Mather truly believed in the power of witchcraft. Those who became fully empowered witches were preconditioned by their own sin of either 'innocent' dabbling with 'white magic' or the purposeful use of the dark arts. When persons involved in such activities accepted the promises of supernatural assistance from demonic entities and signed their names in the Devil's covenant book, they were assigned demons to aid their practice. The crucial aspect of this covenant was its sheer mockery of the covenant of grace and the act of enlisting in Satan's army against God and his chosen people. This was the most diabolical and horrific act that Cotton Mather and his generation could imagine. In the context of seventeenth-century Massachusetts, Puritanism and malevolent witchcraft could not be reconciled. What was left to be decided was how a covenant people should respond. For Cotton Mather, this was also a part of his cosmology, one that was largely in place prior to the 1692 Salem trials. The final section of this chapter discusses Cotton Mather's view of what seventeenth-century New England's response to witchcraft should be.

The Expected Covenant-Nation Response to Witchcraft

The greatest question that faced Cotton Mather's generation was not the authenticity of witchcraft, since this was a well-documented and largely uncontested. On their migration to the Massachusetts Bay Colony they had brought their cosmological model, and it was still intact eighty years later. As Karlsen points out, the 'continuities rather than the differences stand out. . . . Indeed belief in the existence and danger of witches was so widespread, at all levels of society, that disbelief was itself

suspect'.[76] As a consequence, for the Puritans, the question they struggled with above all others was: What should be done when witchcraft was discovered in their midst? The last major component of Mather's cosmology relating to witchcraft dealt with this very inquiry and details his own method for the eradication of this danger. In all of his writings, he presents this outline dogmatically.

To counter any crisis linked to witchcraft Mather advised creating a system of shared responsibility on several levels. He proposed dealing with the problem spiritually and judicially. There were certain steps he insisted were necessary to ensure the success of such an undertaking.

The first consideration was what a covenant nation should do spiritually. In his book Wonders, Mather suggested the first step was to address the nation's failure to serve God properly. Mather says to his readers, 'Let the Devils coming down in great wrath upon us, cause us to come down in great grief before the Lord'[77] Clearly, the attitude to be adopted was humility. By doing so, perhaps the Lord would be moved to pull back the chain which held the great 'mastiff' called Satan. This was fundamental.

Because he believed that national sin brought about God's judgement, the initial response to witchcraft was centred around the concept of national repentance and reformation. In his book, Wonders, he takes this position:

> . . . O let us set ourselves to make our peace with our God, whom we have displeased by our iniquities: and let us not imagine that we can encounter the Wrath of the Devil, which there is the Wrath of God Almighty to set that Mastiff upon us. REFORMATION! REFORMATION! has been the repeated Cry of all the Judgements that have hitherto been upon us . . . .[78]

Mather could see no end to the witchcraft dilemma unless the nation would call upon God and turn from the very sins that had given Satan a platform from which to launch his fiendish plot. In other words, it was sin that brought the horrible circumstances about and only the elimination of sin through repentance that could change the situation.

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[76] Carol Karlsen, The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England (New York, 1989), p. 2.
[77] Mather, Wonders, 1:109.
[78] Ibid, 1:18.

Next, he maintained that the nation be cautious to eliminate the circumstances in which Satan could 'lodge' among them. He cites Ephesians 4:27 which states, 'Neither give place to the Devil'. Here he is suggesting that in the acts of accusing and judging one another of witchcraft the whole 'thorny business' could get out of control. This would result in the Devil accomplishing far more with the help of the people than he could have expected by his own unaided powers.

With this caution, Mather thought the nation should then take a third step in seeking to rid itself of any occult practices that were present. Keeping in mind the belief that witchcraft was often preceded by occult dabbling, Mather warns the nation to put away anything of the sort, because,

> By these Courses 'tis, that People play upon The Hole of the Asp, till that cruelly venomous Asp has pull'd many of them into the deep Hole of Witchcraft it self. It has been acknowledged by some who have sunk the deepest into this horrible Pit, that they began at these little Witchcrafts: on which 'tis pity but the Laws of the English Nation, whereby the incorrigible repetition of those Tricks, is made Felony, were severally Executed.[79]

The danger was that the same activities that caused the original witch invasion would bring others.

The best method of escaping further trouble was prevention.

> The last spiritual step that Mather points to is what he describes as: 'laying hold on the Covenant of God'. In essence, this is the return to piety. Mather urged New England to return to its spiritual roots. If the judgement of God was upon the nation, it was because it had failed to give God glory by living out the covenant of grace He gave her. Throughout Wonders, Mather's tone is emphatic as he implores New England to return to God in this manner:
>
> > With Great Zeal, we should lay hold on the Covenant of our God, that he may secure Us and Ours, from the Great Wrath, with which the Devil Rages. Let us come to the covenant of Grace, and then we shall not be hook'd into a Covenant with the Devil, not be altogether unfurnished with Armour against the Wretches that are in that Covenant.[80]
>
> In Mather's mind, a return to piety would have more power to heal New England of its wounds and put to rest the problem of witchcraft than any other method. It was his country's failure to live out the Covenant that allowed for the horrible events that had transpired. God's purpose in allowing the witch invasion was to bring His people back to the place of spiritual vitality. New

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[79] Ibid, 1:123.
[80] Ibid, 1:129.

England needed to return to the life of the covenant nation and then, and only then, would the colony be secured from evil.

The second major aspect of Cotton Mather's proposed response to witchcraft centred on the adjudication process. Mather was firm in his belief that witchcraft needed to be dealt with jointly by the Church and the government. The judicial process, however flawed it may or may not have been, was a tangible outworking of the theology of the Puritan community. The Puritans saw themselves, as Silverman attests, ' . . . as a small independent church-state, a purified American Israel separated from a corrupt Old World'.[81]

No better term could be employed here than that of a church-state. Much like John Calvin's Geneva, New England was designed by its architects to be a state in which the Law of God was to be the law of the land. As such, when the Law of God was broken, it was not only the right, but also the obligation of the State to be responsible for the carrying out of the adjudication process, under the moral guidance of the Church. Hoffer notes this important connection when he writes:

> The close ties between ministerial roles and magisterial roles in New England made the judges' recourse to the ministers a natural step . . . they were adepts in a time when moral judgement and natural truths were not severed from each other.[82]

When it came to the unpleasant subject of witchcraft, Cotton Mather and the New England ministers called for no less than this. The Bible, the Law of God (upon which the laws of New England were based) had to be consulted in the determination of what was a crime, and what the prescribed punishment must be. This was the position of not only Mather but also all of seventeenth-century New England.

It certainly required them no great amount of study to arrive at the conclusion that witchcraft was expressly condemned by the Bible. In Exodus 22:18 God explicitly commanded, 'You shall not suffer a witch to live'. In Leviticus 20:6 God warned, 'And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go awhoring after them, I will even set my face

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[81] Silverman, Life and Times of Cotton Mather, p. 59. For a well written narrative of Cotton Mather's own view of New England as a Church-State, see Sacvan Bercovitch, The Puritan Origins of the American Self (New Haven, 1975), pp. 35-71.
[82] Hoffer, The Devil's Disciples, p. 139.

against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people'. Countless other passages condemned all acts of occultism and witchcraft. In particular, The Old Testament judgement for such unrepentant and malevolent activities was quite consistent; it always ended in capital punishment for the offenders.

With regard to New England's legal statutes, one of its earliest constitutional documents, The Body of Liberties, specifically outlawed witchcraft activities. Drawn up in 1641 by Cotton Mather's grandfather, John Cotton, this document was patterned after the scriptures and specifically the Pentateuch. The Body of Liberties stated the biblical penalty for witchcraft categorically: 'If any Man or Woman be a Witch they shall be put to Death'.[83]

New England's prohibitions against and prosecutions of witchcraft were not the exception of the day; they were the norm. Similar laws were in use throughout the countries of Europe from the Medieval era to more than fifty years after the Salem situation. By the end of the seventeenth century there had been extensive witchcraft allegations in the French and German parts of Europe in which, as Robin Briggs indicates, 'the most reasonable modern estimates suggest perhaps 100,000 trials between 1450 and 1750, with something between 40,000 and 50,000 executions'.[84] Given this propensity towards the prosecution of witches in both Europe and the American Colonies, perhaps it would be natural to expect that Cotton Mather's initial reaction when faced with a witch molestation would be that of calling for the immediate execution of all suspected witches. But he definitely did not do that. Mather's writings and actions concerning the prosecution and punishment of suspected witches reveal a dichotomous approach. This dichotomy would cause him great grief in the aftermath of the Salem tragedy.

As chapter five of the thesis will show in detail, Mather discriminated between two situations in the adjudication process. The first was that of the prosecution of malicious witches.

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[83] Samuel Drake, The Witchcraft Delusion, p. 24

[84] Robin Briggs, Witches and Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft (New York, 1996), p. 8. Similarly, James Sharpe puts the total of executions resulting from the European witch trials at less than 50,000. He indicates this total was less than one half of the casualties during the Civil Wars. James Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England, 1550-1750 (London, 1996), p. 5.

He recognized the biblical injunction so often quoted by the Court of Oyer and Terminer; 'You shall not suffer a witch to live'. (Exodus 22:18) In the cases where the witchcraft was deemed to be deliberate and malicious, Mather saw no reason to waive the execution of the guilty fiend.

In one of the historical cases he records in Magnalia Christi Americana, that of Ann Cole, Mather reports that in 1662 she had been terribly afflicted by a local witch. After a thorough examination the witch at last confessed and was sentenced by the judges to die. Mather records that 'the woman was executed . . . whereupon Ann Cole was happily delivered'.[85]

In the Salem cases, when Mather felt assured of the evidence and verdict of the court, he would intimate that the executions were biblically and socially deserved. This is manifest in the case of Tituba, the slave woman who was an early participant in the Salem affair. Although her execution did not end the Paris family's ordeal, to Mather it was perfectly in order because it exposed what he deemed to be a plot of Satan against New England.[86]

Perhaps one of the best examples of this viewpoint may be taken from a letter that Cotton Mather wrote to his uncle, John Cotton, in which he commended the proceedings of the court in hanging five of six convicted witches on 5 August 1692. Among those executed were two persons accused by the Andover witches of being the leaders of their coven: George Burroughs of Maine and Martha Carrier of Andover. His letter specifically signified his approval of the executions, identifying Burroughs as the 'Ringleader' and Martha Carrier a 'Rambling Hag'. It was evident to Mather that the leaders of the entire devilish plot had been righteously executed, since as Silverman notes, 'For him, the persons being executed included the veritable King and Queen of American Hell'.[87]

The second part of Mather's attitude was his reluctance to execute those whom he felt had no malicious or devilish intentions in their practice of witchcraft. Mather held out for them the grace of God and his personal sympathy. In Goody Glover's situation and similar cases, Mather went so far as to visit them personally in prison and to pray for them. Mather cautioned the court

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[85] Mather, Magnalia, 2:449.
[86] Ibid, 2:472-3.
[87] Silverman, Life and Times of Cotton Mather, p. 111.

not to move too quickly in sentencing the convicted witches when their involvement in the Salem atrocities did not appear purposeful. He felt compassion for the common 'neighbors' that were caught in the Devil's web, as evidenced by the following passage from Wonders:

> With great regard, with great pity we should lay to heart the condition of those, who are cast into affliction, by the great wrath of the Devil. There is a number of our good neighbours, and some of them very particularly noted for goodness and virtue, of whom we may say, Lord, they are vexed with Devils.[88]

In Mather's mind there was a need to be judicially responsible for the execution of the dangerous witches and yet an equal need to protect both the 'innocent' and the inadvertently guilty. He reasoned that this dichotomy needed to be kept in tension. History records that it was this very dichotomy that caused Mather to vacillate on his opinion of the trials and the executions of the convicted witches. It was this dichotomous thinking that would also lead to Mather's eventual historical characterization as primarily responsible for the Salem tragedy.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, it can be demonstrated that Cotton Mather held a consistent theological view concerning the existence and activities of Satan and demons, the practice of the damned art of witchcraft, and the response towards witchcraft that God expected of the covenant-nation. Mather did not, as his critics contend, develop an entire cosmology about witchcraft in the aftermath of the Salem tragedy. Instead, it was this preconceived cosmology that would form the basis for his response toward the Salem witchcraft trials. Accordingly, in Mather's mind and heart New England had a spiritual and judicial responsibility to actively deal with the witchcraft assault.

With Mather's cosmology relating to witchcraft in focus, the thesis now turns to an examination of seventeenth-century beliefs about magic and witchcraft, within the historical context of Puritan New England.

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[88] Wonders, 1:126.

CHAPTER THREE

A CONGRUENCE OF BELIEF: NEW ENGLAND WITCHCRAFT

Witchcraft is a most monstrous and horrid evil. Indeed there is a vast heap of bloody roaring impieties contained in the bowels of it. Witchcraft is a renouncing of God, and an advancing of a filthy Devil into the throne most high's. Tis the most nefandous High Treason against His Majesty on High.

Cotton Mather, Memorable Providences

The intellectual landscape of seventeenth-century New England was filled with the elements of the supernatural. Within this world, frightening supernatural entities such as demons and apparitions existed and were used to account for a number of strange but true events. Demons at New Hampshire, Newbury, Massachusetts, and Hartford, Connecticut assaulted the homes of three families during the 1680s.[1] A strange scythe-shaped light appeared in the New England sky during 1681, seen by large numbers of people. Near Lynn, Massachusetts, a ghost ship was observed floating atop the waters of the bay.[2] In one incident, a woman murdered by her husband appeared to a young woman to report the homicide.[3] At Marblehead, Massachusetts, residents heard the eerie screams of a girl killed by pirates each year on the anniversary of her death. Another such apparition appeared at regular intervals during the decade of the 1680's in Cavendish, Vermont.[4]

Beyond the Puritan faith and sporadic wonders, however, the most generally accepted elements of the supernatural within early modern New England were embodied in the belief in witchcraft. As the previous chapter has shown, Cotton Mather's well-developed personal theology reflected a belief in the existence and work of Satan and demons, as well as the dangers

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[1] Richard Chamberlain, Lithobolia, or the Stone-Throwing Devil in George Lincoln Burr, (ed.), Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648-1706 (New York, 1914), pp. 58-77; Increase Mather, An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences (Boston, 1684), pp. 142-55.

[2] John Winthrop, 'History of New England, 1630-1649', in James Kendall Hosmer, (ed.), Original Narratives of Early American History (2 vols.; New York, 1908), 2:346.

[3] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (eds), The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692 (3 vols.; New York, 1977), 3:851.

[4] David D. Hall, Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England (New York, 1989), p. 71.

of witchcraft. Nonetheless, a critical question that needs to be addressed concerning Mather's relationship to the 1692 events at Salem is whether his personal cosmology conforms to, or is incompatible with that of his own contemporaries.

This chapter examines early modern New England elite and popular notions concerning magic and witchcraft by looking at pre-Salem, Salem episode, and post-Salem journals, publications, and court records. The chapter begins by exploring the widespread belief in witchcraft in early modern New England, with an emphasis upon historical sources and interpretive difficulties. This section cites elite and popular conceptions of witchcraft practice among groups threatening Puritan Massachusetts' security or homogeneity, including the Native Americans and radical dissenters. The balance of the chapter is given to an examination of the cohesiveness of elite and popular conceptions of four significant categories of witchcraft within seventeenth-century New England: magic, malefic witchcraft, counter-magic, and covenant witchcraft.

The chapter illustrates the broader 'congruence' in elite and popular conceptions of the supernatural within seventeenth-century New England. The ultimate benefit of doing so is the establishment of the compatibility of Cotton Mather's personal cosmology with that of his contemporaries, both elite and plebeian. This examination lays the groundwork for a critical assessment of the historical condemnation of Cotton Mather for initiating the 1692 Salem witchcraft trials.

The Widespread Belief in Witchcraft

For the people of seventeenth-century New England, witchcraft was not a theoretical matter, but a historical and contemporary reality based upon a plethora of common human experiences. The belief in the person of Satan, the power of demons, and the dangers of witchcraft extended in some measure to every branch of seventeenth-century New England society. One Dutch visitor to New England in 1679 was particularly conscious of this pervasive belief. In his journal, he wrote, ' . . . he had never been in a place where more was said about witchcraft and witches'.[5]

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[5] Richard Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England (New York, 1992),

This does not imply that seventeenth-century New England lacked anything by way of intellectual sophistication. It would be too simplistic to attribute the belief in magic and malevolent witchcraft to superstition and ignorance. James Sharpe, referring to English witchcraft of the same era notes the dangers of such an approach when he writes,

> The belief in witches was shared by many people who were in the context of their own times as intelligent as we are . . .The issue is not to show that people who believed in witchcraft were unintelligent; it is rather to explain how a wide variety of people, ranging from the very intelligent to the fairly stupid, were able to hold that belief.[6]

Certainly, what Sharpe suggests is equally important to understanding witchcraft beliefs in seventeenth-century New England. New Englanders held a wide range of witchcraft beliefs similar in depth to their sixteenth and seventeenth-century English counterparts. Their witchcraft postulations were also largely derived from their English heritage and experiences. This becomes clear when one compares central English and New England witchcraft beliefs of the same era.

Seventeenth-century New England witchcraft beliefs do nonetheless present scholars with certain interpretive difficulties. Among these, one of the greatest challenges is that of determining the congruity of witchcraft definitions and beliefs between the elite-learned class and the larger population of early modern New England. This is largely due to the fact that the specific nature of popular beliefs in witchcraft are difficult to ascertain, especially during periods in which little official documentation is produced. However, there are sources for studying beliefs in either the European or North American context that arise primarily from the various witchcraft narratives. These documents tend to give the greatest information about learned and popular views.

Relative to New England clerical and popular witchcraft beliefs, one helpful source is the accounts and trial transcripts of pre-Salem and Salem prosecutions. Of course, caution is necessary in examining this testimony, since these documents themselves present profound problems of interpretation. Witchcraft trial transcripts reveal neither complete agreement nor widespread dissension between the learned and popular culture of New England about the various aspects of

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p. 177. The quote was taken from Jasper Danckaerts, Journal of a Voyge to New York and a Tur of Several of the American Colonies in 1679-1680 trans. Henry C. Murphy, Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society, 1, (1867), p. 419.

[6] James A. Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England, 1550-1750 (London, 1996), p. 7.

witchcraft beliefs. This divergence of clerical and popular beliefs exhibits itself at times in ambiguity and confusion during witch examinations. For example, whether the adjudicators define witchcraft in response to the evidence provided during interrogation, or whether the outcome of interrogation reflected the shared beliefs of both the interlocutor and accused, is frequently unclear. As Keith Thomas put it, 'legal proceedings for witchcraft, in other words, represent the tip of an iceberg of unascertainable dimensions'.[7]

Beyond trial transcripts, another major source of witchcraft beliefs is the writings of the clergy. The New England Puritan clergy, who were 'interdisciplinary' in their education, believed quite literally in the powers of the Devil and the dangers of witchcraft. Their testimonies reveal that the divergence of beliefs at least between the Puritan clergy and the populace had little to do with the existence or efficacy of magic, whether beneficent or malevolent. Richard Godbeer brings this issue into focus when he states:

> Puritan sermons, treatises, diaries, and correspondence also testify to the persistence of magical practices: in these writings the godly reported and condemned popular recourse to magic. None of those describing magical experiments, whether in court testimony or elsewhere, ever suggested that such activities were in any way unusual.[8]

For the Puritan leadership, the real issue was not the efficacy of such activities, but rather the biblical and moral legitimacy of them. This insistence is repeated throughout the writings of the clergy as well as in the transcripts of the pre-Salem and Salem episode examinations. The Puritan clergy and government based the illegitimacy of magic and witchcraft upon three underlying assumptions examined in this chapter. In the first place, the clergy maintained a determined stance against the practice of all forms of witchcraft. In their view, whether beneficent or malevolent, witchcraft was an effort to manipulate or overturn the will of God through human, and worse yet, diabolical means.[9] Second, the use of magic, (especially in the case of physical healing), was a departure from faith and dependence upon God which was to be primarily exhibited through prayer and perseverance. Consequently, the use of magic was clearly outside of those means of relief solely ordained by God. Third, the clergy taught that magic, including but not limited to

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[7] Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (New York, 1971), p. 449.

[8] Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion:Magic and Religion in Early New England (New York, 1992), p. 31.

incantations, fortune telling, and divination, created a dangerous propensity towards greater levels of witchcraft and possible damnation.

A second interpretive question, which arises in the examination of seventeenth-century witchcraft beliefs, is that of the level of witchcraft practice within New England prior to and concurrent with the Salem trials. John Hale, the minister at Beverly, seems to indicate that at least the first generation of Puritans did not in fact believe they faced any real threat of witch invasions. He noted, '. . . Our fathers in the beginning of times of this Land, did not see so far into these mysteries of iniquity, as hath been since discovered'.[10] By the latter part of the seventeenth century, this situation had obviously changed, since the historical evidence confirms that multiple levels of witchcraft belief and witchcraft practice existed throughout the New England populace, although to what degree cannot be ascertained.[11]

Beyond this, competing elements of magic and religion had become a part of an ongoing point of contention in the relationship between the clerics and general populace of New England. As this chapter will show, by this time New England's clerics were becoming more vocal about the illegitimacy of all forms of magical practices. The preaching and publications of this era are punctuated with clerical attempts to both warn their flocks of the inherent dangers of magical practices and to convince them to adhere to the Puritan supplicative means afforded by the Church.

The New England clerics were not alone in their attempts, since their colleagues on the other side of the Atlantic were pursuing similar ends. Stuart Clark has demonstrated that during the sixteenth and seventeenth century Protestant clerics throughout Europe were also attempting to dissuade their congregates from all magical practices. Identifying this conflict, Clark indicates that, to the extent that services like healing, divination, and counter-witchcraft had become

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[9] Ibid, p. 60.

[10] John Hale, A Modest Inquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft in Burr, Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, p. 430.

[11] For various views regarding the degree of seventeenth-century magic and witchcraft practices, see: Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion (New York, 1992) and Richard Weisman, Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion in Seventeenth-Century New England (Amherst, 1984); Hall, Worlds of Wonder (New York, 1989); Timothy Breen and Stephen Foster, 'The Puritans' greatest achievement: a study of social cohesion in seventeenth-century Massachusetts', Journal of American History 60, (1973), pp. 5-22.

professionalized in the hands of 'cunning' practitioners, the churches were probably correct to think that they were being challenged by a rival institution.[12]

If indeed the seventeenth century Massachusetts clergy considered magical and witchcraft practitioners to be their rivals, such persons were not exclusively found in a small portion of aberrant New England Puritan adherents. Clerical and government documents within later seventeenth century New England demonstrate that groups challenging Puritan ideology and unity were also presumed to have implicit or explicit links to witchcraft practices. As chapter five of the thesis reveals, Cotton Mather and his clerical contemporaries would interpret these conflicts as divine judgments upon Puritan spiritual decline and as millennial anticipators.

For example, the Puritans not only insisted that the 'Native American culture was of diabolical origin', but that the Native Americans had long been in collusion with Satan through witchcraft practices.[13] Indian hostilities such as Metacomet's War of 1675-1676 strengthened late seventeenth-century views that the Indians continued to be, what Alfred Cave suggested, '. . . villains in a sacred drama' wherein God and the Devil struggled for control of the American wilderness.[14] Both clerics and settlers believed that Indian diabolism and English witchcraft were intertwined at several points. Accordingly, one former Indian captive claimed that spectres of 'Indian Sagamores' she had known during captivity appeared to her, urging her to sign the Devil's book.[15] To Increase Mather, such claims of Indian-Satanic collusion seemed verified by post conversion admissions of Indian shamans that they had previously 'by the hands of Evil Angels murdered their neighbors'.[16] Puritan clerics also attributed witchcraft activities to seventeenth-

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[12] Stuart Clark, 'Protestant Demonology: Sin, Superstition, and Society (c.1520-c.1630)', in Bengt Anklaroo and Gustav Henningsen, (eds), Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries (Oxford, 1990), p. 458.

[13] Alfred A. Cave, 'Indian shamans and English witches in seventeenth-century New England', in Essex Institute of Historical Collections, 128 (October 1992), p. 41.

[14] Cave, 'Indian Shamans and English Witches', p. 41. See also: Increase Mather, A Brief History of the War with the Indians in New-England 2nd edn. (London, 1676), p. 1.

[15] Cotton Mather, A Brand Pluck'd Out of the Burning in Burr, Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, p. 99.

[16] Increase Mather, Angelographia, (1694), quoted in Chadwick Hansen, Witchcraft at Salem (New York, 1969), p. 198. During the Salem trials Sarah Osborne's defense included claims of bewitchment, after having been assaulted by 'a thing like an Indian all black'. See: Boyer and Nissenbaum, Salem Witchcraft Papers, 2:610-11.

century dissenters, including the Antinomians, Anabaptists, and Quakers. When the Massachusetts General Court formally tried Antinomian leader Anne Hutchinson and her accomplices Jane Hawkins and Mary Dyer for heresy, they informally identified them as witches. According to Governor Winthrop, Jane Hawkins' activities involving midwifery and informal medicine 'grew into great suspicion [that she was] a witch'.[17] Hutchinson and Dyer were also suspected of witchcraft, in part because of miscarriages that allegedly produced 'monstrous births' indicative of diabolical conception.[18]

In the case of the Anabaptists' radical millenarianism and denial of paedobaptism and church membership, the Puritan clerical response was to decry them as heretics and to insist that the magistrates enforce whatever punishments were afforded by New England laws.[19] As this chapter will later demonstrate, Puritan clerics and witch suspects alike portrayed the witch's rebaptism by means of 'dipping' initiates' heads in water in similar terms to the Anabaptists' pattern of rebaptizing adult converts who had thereby rejected Congregationalist traditions.

The Puritans attributed diabolism to the Quakers quite specifically. This was evident as early as the 1677 trial of Quakeress Margaret Brewster, when one witness insisted that during Brewster's recent disruption of a Boston church service, 'she had appeared in the shape of a devil'.[20] In short, it was reasoned that because the Quakers were heretics, closely aligned with the Devil, it followed that they were also involved in witchcraft. As Carla Pestana notes,

> If the heretics were witches, their success at converting English men and women to their blasphemous views was much easier to explain. Thus, Quakers as a group were described as witches . . . Quaker leaders were accused of witchcraft, and individual Quakeresses were believed by New England authorities to be witches.[21]

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[17] John Winthrop, 'History of New England, 1630-1649', in Hosmer, Original Narratives of Early American History, 1:268.

[18] This adaptation of heresy and monstrous conceptions was commensurate with the popular views of covenant witchcraft, in which witches were impregnated by Satan or demons. For the claims that Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer had produced demonic offspring, see: Winthrop, 'History of New England, 1630-1649', 1:214, 1:268.

[19] In this vein, heresiographers such as Daniel Featley would write of the Anabaptists that 'In one Anabaptist you have many heretics, and in this one Sect as it were one stock, many erroneous and schismaticall positions and practices ingraffed'. See Daniel Featley, The Dippers Dipt, or Then Anabaptists Ducked and Plung'd Over Head and Eares 3rd edn. (London, 1645), sig. B2.

[20] Carla Gardina Pestana, 'The city upon a hill under siege: The Puritan perception of the Quaker threat to Massachusetts Bay, 1656-1661', The New England Quarterly, 56, (September 1983), pp. 323-53.

Beyond spectral sightings, within the seventeenth-century, the New England Quakers' physical manifestation of quaking during either prophecy or revelatory receptions would also be equated with Native Americans demonic possession. In Illustrious Providences, Increase Mather clearly made this association, when he recorded a form of demonic possession among Quakers at wilderness meetings. He reported that after singing and dancing as a sign of conversion Quaker converts 'were murdered, driven insane, inspired to dance naked, believed they were the risen Christ, or were urged to participate in ritual blood sacrifices'.[22] The identification of the Quakers with Indian possession also took the form of accusations that the Quakers joined Native Americans in Devil worship. As such, Salem merchant Edmund Batter testified that Quakeress Elizabeth Kitchen had been 'apawawing', - - that is, attending nocturnal devil worship with Indians.[23]

Turning back to the New England populace, it is not surprising that within this broader context of late seventeenth-century New England that clerics were battling another perceived challenge to Puritan homogeneity. This one however, did not come from external forces threatening destruction, or heretics disturbing the tranquility of the Commonwealth. Instead, it came from insidious powers operating in portions of the Puritan population, to the degree that as Richard Godbeer describes it, 'magic, countermagic, and maleficience . . . proved to be 'less susceptible than either dissent or sectarianism to control by the guardians of spiritual purity'.[24]

Despite disagreements about its biblical validity, the clergy and general populace still agreed about the power of witchcraft. This agreement can be traced in New England's

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[21] Pestana, 'The city upon a hill under siege', p. 337. For the association of Quakers with witchcraft, also see: William C. Braithewaite, The Beginnings of Quakerism (New York, 1923); Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (New York, 1971); Amelia Mott Gummere, Witchcraft and Quakerism: As Study of Social History (Philadelphia, 1908).

[22] Increase Mather, Illustrious Providences, pp. 341-56.

[23] George Francis Dow, (ed.), Records and Files of the Quarterly Court of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-1683, (8 vols.; Salem, Essex Institute, 1911-1921), 2:219.

[24] Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion, pp. 6, 10-11. Godbeer defines the major theological difference between magic and religion is that the Puritan devotional ritual was supplicative, whereas popular magic was coercive in nature. In general, the Puritan Protestants were reacting to the prior centuries in which the Catholics had attribute some powers to humans in the form of ritual, while the English culture had blended an amount of folk beliefs with Christianity. The results were that Catholics believed in ritual to prevent or relieve misfortune, while Protestants attributed misfortune to sin or to the will of God: either way submission to providence was the only recourse for Puritans.

seventeenth-century experience. Carol Karlsen notes this consensus indicating that, '. . . what is most striking about the Salem outbreak was the congruence of belief it featured between Puritan leaders and townspeople'.[25]

It is this 'congruence of belief' that is the focus of the remainder of this chapter. The pre-Salem trial records and the literature stemming from the Salem situation present strong evidence for the widespread belief in witchcraft within the New England populace. The next section therefore concentrates on depicting the relative unity of witchcraft beliefs across social groups evident in the extant historical records of New England. Specifically, four types of elite and popular common conceptions of witchcraft are presented: magic, malefic witchcraft, counter-magic, and covenant witchcraft.

Elite and Popular Cross-Social Conceptions of Witchcraft

The first level of seventeenth-century New England shared beliefs in witchcraft centred in magic or 'white witchcraft'. In England and Scotland, persons practicing this variety of magic were known as 'blessers' or 'cunning folk'. In New England, the latter description was often used. The work of cunning folk was believed to have involved the use of supernatural powers to perform acts of benevolence to humans, often involving some payment for services rendered.[26]

The use of such arts was well known to both the clergy and populace and both groups attested to its existence and power. Clerical documents and court records from both the pre-Salem and Salem witch trials indicate the use of magic by many who were later accused of malevolent acts. The techniques used by each varied, but all of them tended to employ charms, spells, and incantations, often based upon Christian prayers or scriptures.

One of the more common reasons that New Englanders consulted cunning folk had to do with physical healing. At least some of the populace went beyond the Puritan's teaching of God's sovereignty in such matters, to attempts at securing healing outside of the covenant. Those who did so evidently did not have to go far to find one of cunning folk. Cotton Mather acknowledged as

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[25] Carol Karlsen, The Devil in the Shape of a Woman (New York, 1987), p. 35.

[26] For English examples of cunning folk, see Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness, pp. 66-70. For the New England cunning folk see Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion, pp. 20-22, and chapter 2.

much in his 'Paper on Witchcraft' when he wrote of a woman 'who upon uttering some Words over very painful Hurts and sores, did . . . presently cure them'.[27] In a similar reflection within Wonders of the Invisible World, Mather insisted, 'They say, that in some Towns it has been an usual thing for People to cure Hurts with Spells' . . . .[28]

In Easthampton Connecticut, a small farming town on the eastern tip of Long Island, neighbors sought one of its residents, Elizabeth Garlick, on many occasions when in search of healing.[29] In Massachusetts, Margaret Jones was also widely known for her healing powers and medicinal advice which reportedly had 'extraordinary violent effects' on those who followed them.[30] Jones' healing powers may have been too successful, since they also became a source of evidence against her during her later trial for maleficium.

In both Old and New England, a second use for magic entailed efforts to find lost or stolen objects. William Byg of England, who was arrested in 1647 for heresy and sorcery in the court of the Archbishop of York, confessed under examination that he employed a twelve-year-old apprentice who successfully used a crystal in locating stolen goods for others as well as ascertaining the identity of the thieves.[31] In New England, Governor John Winthrop noted a Massachusetts' resident who alleged that he spoke to the dead 'in order to discover either future events or locate stolen goods'.[32] Cotton Mather also reported in his 'Paper on Witchcraft' that he knew of a person, who, 'missing anything, would use to sitt down and mutter a certain Charm and then immediately by an Invisible Hand be directly led unto the place where the Thing was to be found'.[33]

Predictive astrology was another cunning skill that a portion of the New England populace employed. Standard forms of the seventeenth-century English almanac contained astrological prognostications and zodiacal symbols based upon astrological lore, in which the

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[27] Cotton Mather, 'Paper on Witchcraft', Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 47, (1914), pp. 265-66.
[28] Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World (Boston, 1693), in Samuel G. Drake, (ed.), The Witchcraft Delusion in New England (3 vols.; New York, 1866; repr. 1970), 1:123.
[29] Records of the Town of Easthampton (5 vols.; New York, 1887-1892), 1:134.
[30] John Winthrop, 'History of New England', 2:344.
[31] George Lyman Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England, 187-188.
[32] John Winthrop, 'History of New England', 2:156.
[33] Cotton Mather, 'Paper on Witchcraft', p. 265.

influence of celestial bodies was linked to natural events. When these were used for the study of heavenly movements and their effect on weather conditions, agriculture, or medical treatment, the Puritan clerical attitudes ranged from ambivalence to tacit approval. However, the use of judicial or prognosticative astrology -- the use of astrology by fortunetellers, etc. -- to predict or coordinate human activities was severely condemned by clerics as a violation of God's providential dealings.

Puritan clerical attitudes towards such uses of astrology are clearly enunciated by Cotton Mather: 'It is a disgrace to the English Nation, that the Pamphlets of such idle, futile, trifling Stargazers are so much considered; and the Countenance hereby given to a Study . . . perilous to the Souls of Men'.[34] Clerics construed the use of horoscopes to predict the course of a person's life, to determine favorable times for specific activities, or to ask specific questions based upon the position of stars, as a variant of witchcraft.[35]

The Salem trial transcripts indicate Dorcas Hoar had acquired an astrology book from John Samson containing 'streaks and pictures in it'. Among other things, she used astrology to decide which dates were most propitious for stealing from her employer John Hale.[36] At her trial in Salem, Mary Toothaker owned that the Andover witches had consulted astrology books as well, and 'especially one book that treated of the twelve signs, from which book they could tell a great deal'.[37] Their avowed purpose however, rather than stealing, involved predicting the best time for their assault upon the New England religious and governmental establishment.

As the use of astrology might suggest, cunning folk might also practice fortune telling. Some twenty years before the Salem trials Dorcas Hoar confessed to her pastor John Hale that she had 'borrowed a book of Palmistry, and there were rules to know what should come to pass'.[38]

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[34] Mather, Wonders, 1:124.

[35] For a further detailed study of the use of astrology in seventeenth-century New England see: Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion, pp. 122-52; Hall, Worlds of Wonder, pp. 58-60.

[36] Boyer and Nissenbaum, Salem Witchcraft Papers, 2:398.

[37] Ibid, 3:769.

[38] Ibid, 2:397-398. In another part of his deposition Hale noted other Beverly residents who practiced palmistry 'to tell persons their Fortunes [as they call it] or future Condition by looking into their hands'. See John Hale A Modest Inquiry, quoted in Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion, p. 35.

Dorcas Hoar was obviously not the only New Englander to practice this art, since throughout the Salem trials evidence of fortune telling was used against those facing maleficium indictments.

Andover resident Samuel Wardwell accurately predicted the gender, birth order, and number of children Ephraim Foster's wife would bear.[39] When Wardwell was later charged with maleficium by the Salem court, he confessed to Essex County authorities that he was 'sensible he was in the snare of the devil' and that he had been 'foolishly led along with telling of fortunes, which sometimes came to pass'.[40] This confession gave credence to the Clergy's insistence that practicing the lesser forms of witchcraft would ensnare individuals into yet greater degrees of the damned art. According to Wardwell, the Devil had promised to extend his life to some sixty years if he would sign a compact. The Devil's word, however, proved undependable since at the age of forty-six Samuel Wardwell was executed alongside Alice Parker on 22 September 1692.[41]

Before the Salem outbreak, the New England clergy also expressed concern about an increased use of divination among young persons. Their fears seem well founded in light of the Salem records. For example, during the examination of Sarah Cole of Lyne, she confessed that she had, along with other young girls, 'toyed with a Venus glass and egg, what trade their sweet hearts should be of'.[42] It was a similar attempt at satisfying youthful curiosity that precipitated the possession episode of Samuel Parris's daughters leading to the entire Salem tragedy.

During the Salem trials several New Englanders would also either be charged with or confess to using divination. The Salem sheriff arrested Abigail Faulkner Senior for witchcraft after neighbors reported that she knew how to 'Conjure with a sieve'.[43] Rebecca Johnson also owned that she used divination, but she did so for more personal reasons–to determine '. . . if her brother Moses Haggat was alive or dead'. Johnson testified that after using the words 'by Saint Peter and Saint Paul, if Haggat be dead let this sieve turn round' it did so. Johnson subsequently learned through more conventional means that at the time of her experiment her brother was indeed dead.[44]

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[39] Ibid, 3:787.
[40] Ibid, 3:783.
[41] Ibid, 3:784.
[42] Ibid, 1:228.
[43] Ibid, 1:328.
[44] Ibid, 2:507.

Foreknowledge, a companion to fortune telling and divination, was also part of New England magic. This held particular importance because in contrast to divine revelations, foreknowledge endowed the witch with a unique body of information not available to others, and useful for beneficent or as the case often turned out, for malevolent reasons. Peter Pitford obviously believed in the witch's foreknowledge as he had once complained to a neighbor about Ann Dolliver's insight, saying, ' . . . that old witch knows every things that is done in my house'.[45]

Martha Dutch expressed similar misgivings in her deposition against suspected witch Alice Parker. She testified that one day as the two were watching the crew of a ship coming ashore Dutch commented that it had been by God's grace that her own sailor husband had returned safely from many extended periods of duty at sea. At this point, the conversation changed dramatically. As Dutch recalled it, 'I did say unto the said Parker that I did hope he would come home this voyage well also and the said Parker made answer unto me and said 'No Never more in this world . . . .'[46] Sadly for Martha Dutch, Parker's prediction came true, for seaman Dutch died on that voyage. As for Alice Parker, her word of prediction was partially responsible for her execution at Salem on 22 September 1692.[47]

By the seventeenth century the ability to use magic to do harm was also a part of the imagining of both the elite and popular culture. Put simply, those magic practitioners who brought about good might employ the same supernatural arts for sinister purposes, with or without remuneration. Despite some degree of interpretive difficulty, the Salem trial transcripts reveal that many of the confessors believed their diabolical methods to have real effect.[48] The records involving pre-Salem

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[45] Ibid, 1:271-72.

[46] Ibid, 2:626.

[47] Attempts at determining the future would be a problem in the post Salem days in New England as well. In 1695 Cotton Mather would record in his diary that two young women had been guilty of consulting 'and ungodly fortune teller, in the Neighborhood, with desire to be informed of some secret and future things'. Upon their confession of sin Mather notes, '. . . the Church was reconciled to them as such'. See: Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681-1709, 1709-1724, (2 vols.; New York, 1957), 1:181.

[48] There is some debate as to whether or not the practitioners of malevolent witchcraft actually believed that they were doing real harm. Godbeer believes so, but Demos and Karlsen doubt this. For this discussion see: Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion, p. 40; Demos, Entertaining Satan (New York, 1982), pp. 80-84; Carol Karlsen, The Devil in the Shape of a Woman, (New York, 1987) p. 132, n. 50.

and Salem witchcraft adjudications are resplendent with accounts of malefic acts of witchcraft, enumerating common elements of maleficium as purported by accusers, adjudicators, and the accused themselves.

One of the forms of maleficium perhaps most often cited by accusers and adjudicators was the alleged power of the witch to bring about dire effects through verbal curses. Taken in the Puritan context, the witch's cursing represented the use of diabolical powers to reverse or harm the natural world order. Such powers presented a threat to the well being of individuals and communities. Jane Kamensky, describes this threat:

> The witch's words struck at the very foundation of local life: the dominion of man over their wives and farmers over their crops and livestock, the ability of parents to protect and nurture their children . . . the impact of her words in the community setting was more literal and immediate. Babies and animals dropped dead. Inanimate objects moved at will. Luck ran out.[49]

In the American colonies and in England, within early modern society verbal curses were part of a broader set of dangerous activities. Both slander and verbal curses were associated with persons who stood outside the boundaries of acceptable social behavior, whether on the interpersonal or community level. Verbally abusive persons, therefore, were identified as part of the process of defining and maintaining social boundaries, as well as differentiating between 'deviant' and 'normal' persons with reference to morals, and at times, witchcraft suspicion.[50] As Laura Gowing has demonstrated, this pattern can be seen in English verbal slander cases involving sexual accusations, in which 'sexual insult and its prosecution became woven into the fabric of neighborhood dispute'.[51] In New England, similar protracted village disputes involving slander and verbal curses often culminated in witchcraft accusations. As Jane Kamensky puts it, 'Hectoring,

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I would concur with Godbeer that some of the participants did in fact believe in their own powers to cause harm through the diabolical arts. The Salem court records abound with such statements, although at times it is difficult to determine the voluntary nature of such confessions.

[49] Jane Kamensky, 'Words, witches, and woman trouble: Witchcraft, disorderly speech, and gender boundaries in Puritan New England', Essex Institute Historical Collections, 128, (October 1992), p. 299.

[50] This perhaps explains why accused witches tended to have, as John Demos demonstrates a higher rate of charges against them for both assaultive speech and crimes. See: Demos, Entertaining Satan, pp. 77-78.

[51] Laura Gowing, 'Gender and the language of insult in early modern London', History Workshop, 35, (Spring 1993), pp. 1-21. For more on the history of sexual defamation cases see: Martin Ingram, Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640 (Cambridge, 1987).

threatening, scolding, muttering mocking, cursing, railing, slandering . . . reads like a handbook of verbal etiquette for witches'.[52]

In both England and New England, relative to witchcraft, a suspect's speech weighed heavily against them both at the point of neighbourly conflict and in the context of judicial examination. In 1608 the English theologian and witchcraft scholar William Perkins indicated in his treatise, A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft that the witch acquired the powers of verbal maleficium in a covenant with Satan. He observed that the Devil had ' . . . his words and certain outward signs to ratify the same to his instruments'. He further directed judges to note any accusations of maleficium that followed either the direct curse uttered by witches or as a result of quarreling or threatening relatives or neighbours.[53]

The power of the tongue was a much-attested danger within the Salem trials as well. Curses were often directed at either property or animals. In the case of Benjamin and Sarah Abbot (husband and wife), their misfortunes began when after they were granted an enviable parcel of land by Andover Township, their neighbor Martha Carrier accosted Benjamin about it and 'gave out threatening words'. Shortly afterward, Benjamin Abbot developed an acute inflammation in his side and feet, and as Sarah Abbot testified:

> . . . Strange and unusual things has happened to his [Benjamin's] cattle, for some have died suddenly and strangely . . . and some of the cattle would come out of the woods with their tongues hanging out of their mouths in a strange and affrighted manner, and many such things, which we can give no account of the reason of, unless it should be the effects, of Martha Carrier's threatenings.[54]

The ability of malevolent practitioners to cause either loss of life or property was not limited to verbal means. Indeed, 'cunning people' turning to malefic practices might utilize more insidious and less obvious methods. One of these was the 'overlooking' or 'casting of the eye' upon animals, belongings, and persons. New England literature is replete with examples of this. When a sow belonging to John Bly suddenly became violent, he was certain that it had been 'over-looked'

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[52] Jane Kamensky, 'Words, witches, and woman trouble: witchcraft, disorderly speech, and gender boundaries in Puritan New England', pp. 270-85.
[53] William Perkins, A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft, 1608) found in Ian Breward, (ed.), The Works of William Perkins (Abingdon, 1970), pp. 596-600.
[54] The Salem Witchcraft Papers, 1:190.

by a witch. At the suggestion of a neighbor, Bly fed the animal a mixture of 'red okra and milk' as a remedy against a witch-attack and later found the sow normal again.[55] During the Salem proceedings many of the witnesses attested to the dangers of the 'evil eye'. In the case of suspected witch Mary Taylor, when she was directed to look upon her accusers, Simon Willard records that one of them was 'struck down by it'.[56] The power to 'overlook' was possessed by both male and female witches. The Salem court clerk recorded that during Job Tookey's appearance before the judges that 'The said Tuky lookeing upon the afflicted struck them down with his eyes and recoverd them by taking on them Severally by the hand or wrist'.[57]

At other times, the witch might perform maleficium through image magic; charms, images, or spells used to cause harm or death to others. As a scholar, Cotton Mather wrote of the ability of witches to cause harm using puppets made to resemble the witch's victim. Mather in his 'Paper on Witchcraft' told his readers of an unnamed man who was 'tortured with a cruel, pricking, Incurable pain in the Crown of the head'. In the end, the authorities caught the man's sister with 'a Poppet in Wax, resembling him, with a pin stuck in the head of it; which being taken out, he Recovered Immediately'.[58] As a minister, and in a more personal and specific encounter, Cotton Mather watched image magic being performed at the Salem jail while visiting Goody Glover, an Irish witch. Mather wrote in Memorable Providences, that 'She took a stone, a long and slender stone, and with her Finger and Spittle fell to tormenting it . . . though whom or what she meant, I had the mercy never to understand.'[59] Mather was obviously uneasy about being the only person present with Glover during this activity.

Short of killing their victims, perhaps the most striking manifestation of the witch's power occurred in possession cases. Richard Godbeer suggests that 'Diabolical possession was one of the most dramatic and disturbing manifestations of the supernatural world to which early

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[55] Ibid, 1:103.
[56] Ibid, 3:741.
[57] Ibid, 3:762.
[58] Cotton Mather, 'Paper on Witchcraft', 265.
[59] Cotton Mather, Memorable Providences relating to Witchrafts and Possessions (Boston, 1691), in American Antiquarian Society, Early American Imprints, 1639-1800, Microcard [no.] 486, (Worcester, 1967), p. 12.

modern Europeans and seventeenth-century New Englanders were exposed'.[60] In short, diabolic possession was defined as the inhabitation and control of a human body by one or more demonic powers, manifested through the victim's speech, physical movements, and behavior.

In cases involving diabolical witchcraft possession, there were however, significant difficulties in these matters. The first was the issue of the diagnosis of witchcraft possession by the seventeenth-century clergy and medical establishment. Both, of course, gave credence to witchcraft. For example, Sir Thomas Browne in his treatise Religio Medici wrote 'I have ever believed and do now know that there are witches. They that doubt of these are . . . of a sort, not of infidels, but atheists'.[61] Such a belief on the part of medical practitioners was not always on a professional basis. In Old England, an Elizabethan doctor at Wells complained the Devil was appearing to him more often than he liked. Trained by Jesuits, he dispensed with the Devil by throwing rosary beads at him.[62]

This seventeenth-century agreement concerning possession cases by the clergy and physicians was normal. The cooperation between the disciplines in theological and medical education was a long established tradition harking back to the Puritan's English era. This cooperation, however, could also create a propensity toward dangerous speculation or medical diagnoses of witchcraft when unexplainable physical and mental manifestations occurred.

Of course, not all possession cases in seventeenth-century New England could be automatically attributed to demonic possession. What historians have labeled 'spirit-possession' took a number of specific forms, indicating either the manifestation of God or Satan, depending upon the context. This was an era in which, as Clarke Garrett has pointed out ' . . . the Millennium seemed to be at hand, [and] spirit possession manifested itself in many forms.[63]

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, when Pennsylvania Quakers and other radical dissenters experienced spirit possession they believed that the Holy Spirit had taken control in

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[60] Richard Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion, p. 106.

[61] Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici (Oxford, 1642), p. 32.

[62] 'The Chronicle of the English Augustinian Canonesses Regular of the Lateran, at St. Monica's, Louvain', (ed.), A. Hamilton (1904), pp. 251-252.

[63] Clarke Garrett, Spirit Possession and Popular Religion: From the Camisards to the Shakers (Baltimore, 1987), p. 10.

order to grant them access to 'Inner Light' revelations. The Puritans of course shunned enthusiastic possession while finding diabolic possession more capable of Calvinistic interpretation in the battle between the Puritan community and the Devil's end time forces. The latter approach, as Stuart Clark observes reveals that,

> In an age accustomed to polarize the moral categories on which history ultimately rested, possession and its treatment were the most vivid possible demonstration of the relative strengths of good and evil in the world.[64]

As to diabolical possession, despite diagnostic difficulties, three discernible explanations had become established for how persons came to this condition. The first possibility was that the possessed might have given themselves over to the Devil of their own free will. A second was that the Devil might have taken over victims without their permission or desire.[65] Lastly, and perhaps the most prevalent explanation was that possession had occurred as a result of the malevolent mediation of a witch.[66] The third explanation, possession by witchcraft would have a definite hold on the New England populace within the middle to latter part of the seventeenth century. In fact, during the thirty years before the Salem episode, and well after it, a number of possession cases were attributed to witch attacks within New England. Godbeer makes this clear when he writes, 'For New England alone, we know of seventy-eight cases that occurred during the first century of settlement'.[67]

The information available on these disturbing events stems from clergy journals and sermons, official court records (where prosecutions occurred), and from firsthand accounts of observers. Possession cases often became public events, drawing significant numbers of people either out of curiosity or for fasting and prayer for deliverance. Karlsen gives a telling account of the common elements attributed to possession cases when she writes:

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[64] Stuart Clark, Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe (New York, 1997), p. 413.
[65] See Michael MacDonald, Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 198-217.
[66] For an excellent example of possession by witchcraft, taken from the English annals, see The Most Strange and Admirable Discoverie of the three Witches at Warboys arraigned, convicted and executed at the last Assizes at Huntingdon (London, 1593).
[67] Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion, p. 106.

> They typically included strange fits, with violent, contorted body movements; prolonged trances and paralyzed limb; difficulty in eating, breathing, seeing, hearing, and speaking; sensations of being beaten, pricked with pins, strangled, or stabbed; grotesque screams and pitiful weeping, punctuated by a strange but equally unsettling calm between convulsions, when little if anything was remembered and nothing seemed amiss.[68]

A classic case of witchcraft possession occurred in 1662 at Hartford Connecticut. Ann Cole was experiencing possession as a direct result of the malevolent witchcraft practiced by several witches, including Judith Varleth. According to Increase Mather, during Cole's possession by demons, she manifested supernatural knowledge, as well as astonishing her attendants with her ability to 'so exactly imitate the Dutch-tone in the pronunciation of English'.[69] The latter ability seemed particularly important to the judges since Judith Varleth was Dutch by ancestry.

Another case of possession occurred in 1671. Samuel Willard's servant, Elizabeth Knapp underwent thirty-four days in the hold of unseen powers. Her invisible captors caused her to alternate between the inability to speak and verbal torrents, while at other times she was either paralyzed or 'leaped and skipped' about the house. The clergy and her family eventually recovered Knapp through fasting and prayer.[70] No counter-magic or Catholic ritual had been employed, for reasons one Elizabethan preacher had stated decades before, possession was not to be dealt with by 'conjuration and incantation as Popish priest profess and practice, but by entreating the Lord humbly in fasting and prayer'.[71]

Acts of maleficium, however powerful, were not always final in their effect. New England witchcraft beliefs attested to by both clergy and populace also extended to the possibility of their reversal as well. Although denounced by the Puritan clergy, counter-witchcraft, also called counter-magic, was deemed capable of powerful effects. New England minister Deodat Lawson, in his Christ's Fidelity the Only Shield against Satan's Malignity, wrote that these 'unwarrantable

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[68] Karlsen, The Devil in the Shape of a Woman, p. 232.

[69] Increase Mather, Remarkable Providences in Burr, Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, pp. 18-19.

[70] Mather, Remarkable Providences, pp. 21-23. Also, see John Demos, Entertaining Satan, pp. 99-111.

[71] Holland, Henry, Spiritual Preservatives against the Pestilence . . . chiefly collected out the 91.Psalme (London, 1593), pp. 69-70. Henry Holland was the Vicar of St. Bride's church in London.

projects' included, 'Burning the afflicted persons hair; paring of nails stopping up and boyling the urine; [and] Their scratching the accused, or otherwise fetching Blood of them'.[72]

Lawson's condemnation of these 'unwarrantable projects' underscored contemporary and deep-rooted clerical fears about witchcraft progressions through counter-magic. They were not alone in such fears, as the English cleric George Gifford had said much the same when he warned his congregation about counter- magic:

> A man is tormented sore in his body; he feareth that it is some witch that hath done it. He is advised by his neighbors to send unto some cunning man. Word is sent back, that indeed he hath bad neighbors. Let him do such an such a thing and he shall have ease. Well, he doth it and hath ease. What, shall we think that the Devil is driven out? A woeful driving out. He doth cease from tormenting the body [of the man] for a time, that he may enter deeper into the soul. He winneth by this driving out.[73]

In spite of warnings by the Puritan clerics that the use of counter witchcraft to reverse maleficium would eventually lead to the Devil's ensnarement, some New Englanders willing to take such risks used this power anyway. Perhaps they did so because counter-witchcraft provided the person suffering from the effects of witchcraft recourse beyond the religious forms that were wielded exclusively by professional clergymen like Lawson and Gifford. Beyond its transgressive and empowering nature, counter-magic had a range of characteristics which made it particularly attractive for seventeenth-century New Englanders.

The first purpose of counter-magic was to reverse or remove a witch's spell. Trial records seem to indicate that, in part, counter-magic was attractive to common people because it depended primarily upon the correct use of reverse image ritual or spoken words, as opposed to skill or education. As such, its efficacy rested on the fact that the initial use of witchcraft by anyone created the environment in which malevolent and reversal witchcraft operated. As Godbeer explains it, 'When someone used image magic to injure a person or damage an object, a two–way channel of communication was believed to open between practitioner and victim'.[74]

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[72] Deodat Lawson, Christ's Fidelity the Only Shield against Satan's Malignity in Charles Upham (ed.), Salem Witchcraft (2 vols.; Boston, 1867), 2:78-87.
[73] George Gifford, Two Sermons upon I Peter 5, verses 8 and 9 (London, 1597), p. 66.
[74] See Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion, p. 42.

Therefore, the witch's victim might attempt to reverse the maleficium personally or secure this service from one of the cunning folk.

Second, beyond reversing or removing the witch's spell, counter-witchcraft could be used to identify the individual or agency responsible for the victim's suffering or reversals. Often, in these circumstances items taken from the victims themselves were burned or boiled to identify the witch. Beverly minister John Hale noted the use of boiling and burning experiments writing, 'I observed that people laid great weight upon this; when things supposed to be bewitched were burnt, and the suspected persons came to the fire in the time of it'.[75]

Hale's insistence is verified by an incident recorded in 1685. A local doctor diagnosed a young Quaker child in Salem to be 'under an evil hand'. When the boy had been ill for some time, the neighbors suggested cutting off a lock of the boy's hair and boiling it in water. Though Quakers, like Puritans forbade the use of counter-magic, because of his failing health, they proceeded. According to the boy's father, Samuel Shattock, while the hair was boiling the child began to 'Shreek out as if he had bin tormented'.[76] During this episode, Mary Parker, a neighbor long rumored to be a witch presently came asking if Shattock desired to purchase some chickens. Shattock's visiting neighbours felt this strange, since they believed Parker had none available for sale. Clearly, they believed that boiling the afflicted boy's lock of hair had drawn the guilty witch to Shattock's home.

In specific cases, counter-witchcraft took on its third and most serious purpose: the punishment of the witch responsible for the damage to personal property or bodily affliction. When used in this manner, the purpose of counter-witchcraft moved beyond the healing of the person or restoration of the items corrupted by the witch: the intent was the exaction of revenge. A case in point is that of Henry Grey, a Connecticut farmer, who suspected witchcraft was the cause of his ailing heifer's sad condition. Grey attempted to verify bewitchment by cutting off a piece of the heifers' ear and burning it. After this failed, he beat the animal intending to transfer harm to the responsible person. To Grey, the effect was seemingly immediate and convincing

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[75] John Hale, A Modest Inquiry, in Burr, Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, p. 411.
[76] Salem Witchcraft Papers, 2:635.

since his heifer recovered, but his neighbor Mercy Disborough, whom he suspected had bewitched his heifer, was discovered collapsed in agony as if from a beating.[77]

This adaptation of counter-witchcraft might also involve the use of 'urine tests'. The prevalence of these experiments within New England led to its formal prohibition by the courts. To this end the Bay Colony authorities noted that the 'urinary experiment . . .was an unwarrantable way to find out Witches'.[78] Cotton Mather wrote of these experiments in Memorable Providences identifying the practice of putting nails and pins, items commonly reported to be manifested by possession victims, into a urine bottle.[79] Showing his familiarity with such methods he explained that the 'Urine must be bottled with . . . instruments in it as carry a show of torture with them'.[80]

Mather clearly was not the only New Englander familiar with the urinary experiment. At the onset of the Salem episode Tituba, the Parris family servant had employed another version of the 'urine experiment' while attempting to identify the person responsible for the affliction of the Parris' girls. At her later trial, Tituba confessed her 'mistress in her own country' had taught her the 'means to be used for the discovery of a Witch'. Tituba employed this method when she mixed some of the urine of the possessed girls with meal, baked it, and fed it to the family dog. There is no record of how the dog fared in the matter, but the Parris girls were able to identify their tormentors. Tituba, on the other hand, nearly went to her death as a convicted witch, in part due to the experiment.[81]

During the 1662 Hartford witch outbreak, one of the magistrates asked suspected witch Rebecca Greensmith, 'have you made an express covenant with the Devil?'[82] Thirty years later, at one of the

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[77] Suffolk County Court Files: Original Depositions and other Materials in Proceedings of the Quarterly Courts of Suffolk County, Massachusetts', 24, (1972).

[78] John Taylor, The Witchcraft Delusion in Colonial Connecticut 1647-1697 (New York, 1908), p. 41.

[79] As Richard Godbeer has noted, archaeologists have discovered twenty such bottles in Great Britain, though none have survived from New England. See Ralph Merrifield, 'Witch bottles and magical jugs', British Journal of Folklore, 66 (1955), pp. 195-207, id, The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic, (London, 1988).

[80] Cotton Mather, Memorable Providences, p. 59.

[81] Salem Witchcraft Papers, 3:745-57.

[82] For two considerable works on the idea of witchcraft covenants see: Elizabeth Reis, 'Witches, sinners, and the underside of covenant theology', Essex Institute Historical Collections 129 (1993), pp. 103-18; Ian Bostridge, 'Debates about witchcraft in England, 1650-1736', (Oxford University Ph.D. thesis, 1990), pp. 27-31.

1692 Salem trials, Judge Nathaniel Hawthorne recorded a similar confession taken from suspected witch Deliverance Hobbs' examination, noting that 'She continued in the free acknowledging herself to be a Covenant Witch'.[83] These examinations, separated by three decades, are significant as they describe a third level of shared witchcraft beliefs within seventeenth-century New England -- that of covenant witchcraft.

The idea of the witch compact, as previously noted, was not an invention of the seventeenth-century populace. Keith Thomas notes the antiquity of such ideas when he writes:

> In itself, the idea of a compact with the Devil was as old as Christianity. Pagans had been regarded as devil-worshippers, and the Legend of Theolophilus, the monk who transferred his allegiance to Satan, was familiar to the late Anglo-Saxons. It was a commonplace of medieval theology to assert that any magical activity, however beneficent in intention, necessarily involved a tacit compact with the Devil and should therefore be punished. The church courts often treated crystal-gazing and similar activities as a kind of heresy. But there was a great deal of difference between this idea of a tacit compact implicit in an individual's magical dabblings and the myth of explicit covenants with Satan made by bands of self-conscious devil-worshippers.[84]

Despite this ideological difference, the Devil's compact became part of the fabric of witchcraft beliefs throughout the seventeenth-century world. Kittredge indicates that by 1590 Continental witch trials were detailing the covenant witchcraft in what he describes as 'an elaborate form'.[85] By 1612, confessions from English witch trials began to give at least an outline of an 'oral compact' with the Devil. By the 1640's, the examinations of English demonologist Matthew Hopkins would include detailed depositions admitting to a written covenant with the Devil, although, as Thomas, remarks ' . . . even then it was far from being an indispensable feature'.[86]

In seventeenth-century New England, the compact seems to have made significant advances in the popular imagining. In keeping with their views of maleficium, the New England learned and popular culture held similar views about those who had matriculated to Satan's kingdom through witchcraft. Rebecca Greensmith's testimony is notable for in it she described several elements of New England witch beliefs that had become common by the later seventeenth

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[83] Salem Witchcraft Papers, 2:423.
[84] Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p. 439.
[85] Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England, p. 265.
[86] Thomas, Religion and Magic, p. 444.

century.[87] Greensmith admitted that:

> . . . she had had familiarity with the Devil . . . she promised to go with him when he called . . . and that the Devil told her that at Christmas, they would have a merry Meeting, and then the covenant between them should be subscribed. Moreover, she said that the Devil had frequently the carnal knowledge of her Body. And that the witches had meetings at a place not far from her house.[88]

Taken within the context of seventeenth-century New England, and in much Europe, the 'express covenant' that Greensmith confessed to must be seen as part of a systematic progression. Just as the Puritans of New England had sought to define salvation in terms of inward and outward signs of election, witchcraft would be cast in a similar, though diabolical light. Robert Rowland explains this when he writes, 'the world of witches often constitutes a systematized structure of negation, an inversion of the world in which people who hold these beliefs live'.[89]

The depositions from the pre-Salem and Salem trials offer a good look at the beliefs of seventeenth-century New England concerning matriculate maleficium. These elements are important for if they are observed in parallel with Cotton Mather's beliefs as detailed in the previous chapter, they give an outline of what the judges, the witch victims, and the accused themselves believed about the concept of an organized aspect of witchcraft within New England relevant to the Salem and Andover cases. Again, these record demonstrate how witchcraft beliefs existed and were propounded in a cross-social setting within seventeenth-century New England.

As previously mentioned, the covenant with the Devil had its necessary pre-conditions apart from the precursor sins of greed, lust, anger, hatred, unbelief, revenge, or discontent usually cited by the clergy. Richard Gildrie observes, 'Preceding the pact was the temptation, which, by definition, involved gaining an improper goal or acquiring something by improper means'.[90] The

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[87] Mather, Illustrious Providences, p. 21. Although two other alleged accomplices fled before they could be examined and convicted, both of the Greensmiths were subsequently convicted and executed for malefic witchcraft, despite Nathaniel's protests that he was not involved in these activities.

[88] Ibid, pp. 20-21.

[89] Robert Rowland, 'Fantasticall and Devilshe Persons: European Witch-Beliefs in Comparative Perspective', in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen, (eds), Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries (Oxford, 1990), p. 169.

[90] Richard Gildrie, 'The Salem witchcraft trials as a crisis of popular imagination', Essex Institute Historical Collections, 128:4, (October 1992), pp. 270-85.

Puritans believed the Devil might offer a number of initiatives to the elect, just as he had to Christ in the wilderness.[91]

One of the Devil's initiatives might entail economic assistance or material possessions. This was the case on both sides of the Atlantic. John Rogers of England would confess later in life that as a young man, too financially distressed to get into Cambridge University, he experienced the powers of the Devil's temptations. In his own words, 'The devil did often tempt me to study necromancy and nigromancy and to make use of magic, and to make a league with him, and that then I should never want'.[92]

As it turned out, John Rogers did not study necromancy or make a contract with Satan. In New England, however, the Devil's temptations proved to be too much for Tituba, Rev. Parris' Barbados servant. Perhaps, like Rogers it was her sense of marginalization that set in motion the set of circumstances which forever linked her personally to the outbreak of the Salem witch hunt. At her examination, she told Judge Hawthorne, 'A man come to me and say serve me . . . He had a yellow bird that kept with him and he told me he had more pretty things that he would give me if I would serve him.'[93]

Tituba would not be the only Salem witch suspect to make this confession. Others told of similar promises made by the Devil in exchange for their cooperation. William Barker of Andover was promised that the Devil 'would pay all his debts and he should live comfortably'. Steven Johnson was offered a pair of 'French fall Shouses [shoes]' which Johnson confessed he had never received in spite of having been baptized at Shaw Shim river. Mary Bridges Jr was promised 'money and fine Cloathes' and Andrew Carrier 'new cloathes and a horse'.[94]

The Devil's bargain might also be for protection from prosecution or execution. In a notable Salem case, Thomas Putnam's daughter, while in the throes of possession, had seen the

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[91] The Gospel According to Luke, chapter four.

[92] John Rogers, Some Account of the Life and Opinions of a Fifth-Monarchy-Man (London, 1867), pp. 474-5.

[93] Salem Witchcraft Papers, 3:748.

[94] Ibid, William Barker: 1:65; Stephen Johnson: 2:509; Mary Bridges Jr: 1:135; Andrew Carrier: 2:528.

spectre of a man who claimed that Giles Corey had pressed him to death with his feet. After Ann's visitation, Thomas Putnam, notified Judge Samuel Sewell that local court records did indeed confirm that a man who had lodged with Corey had died suddenly. When Dr. Endicot examined the man's body, he recorded that he had been 'bruised to death, having clodders of blood about his Heart'. The inquest jury issued a determination of murder, without naming a suspect.

What was not in the inquest record was the apparition's insistence that not only had Giles Corey committed the murder, but that the Devil had been involved. The Devil's timing was excellent, for as Putnam reports it, '. . . The Devil there appeared to him [Corey] and covenanted with him, and promised him He should not be hanged'.[95] In truth, Corey did not suffer hanging for murdering his houseguest. Instead, during the Salem witch trials he was arrested for maleficium. In a rather ironic twist of fate, on 16 September 1692 Corey died during the Salem sheriff's attempt to make him enter a plea to the charges. Corey died by pressing.

Finally, one of Satan's temptations seems to have applied specifically to women: the offer of sexual pleasure. Richard Baxter had attributed the success of this tactic by the Devil to 'Lustful, ranks of girls and young widows that plot for some armourous, procacious design, or have imaginations conquered by lust . . . [there] Satan oft sets in'.[96] This is not to say that sexual intercourse with the Devil was a common feature of Salem witchcraft, nor of the English versions. Sharpe notes, 'Sexual intercourse between the Devil and the witch was rarely a salient feature in accounts of English witchcraft, but it was clearly not a totally alien concept'.[97] Sharpe relates that when Mother Samuel, the eighty-year old central figure in the Huntingdonshire Warboys witchcraft case sought to avoid execution by claiming to be pregnant, a jury of women reported her not to be, 'unless, [as some saide] it was with the divell'.[98]

In New England, such confessions were also to be found. In a pre-Salem witch trial, Mary Johnson confessed to covenanting with the Devil after he offered 'the best service he could do for

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[95] Ibid, 3:767.

[96] Richard Baxter, The Certainty of the World of Spirits (London, 1691), preface.

[97] For a discussion of sexuality related to New England witchcraft, see: Robert Masters, Eros and Evil: The Sexual Psychopathology of Witchcraft (New York, 1962).

[98] Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness, p. 74.

her'. Evidently this service included sexual favours, since Johnson confessed that 'she had been guilty of Uncleanness with . . . Devils'.[99] Similarly, during the Salem trials, local authorities suspected Sarah Bishop of witchcraft, but her husband suspected her of adultery with the Devil. He complained to the magistrates that 'the Devill Did Come bodyly unto her [Sarah Bishop] and that she was familiar with the devil and that she sate up all the night Long with the Devill'.[100] Bishop's husband obviously assumed that in these 'all night visits' his wife had transferred her affections to the Devil.

If the Devil's were successful in his temptation of the elect, the initial consummation of the witch's compact would entail signing the Devil's (covenant) book. At the Salem trials, this would be a standard allegation as a few examples demonstrate: Sarah Bridges confessed that when Satan came to her in the form of a man, urging her signature, 'I did Sign the book and the Mark was Red [and] he told me I must . . .Renounce God and Christ'.[101] Hannah Post also admitted to signing the Devil's book, but not with ink. Instead, the trial transcripts state 'She also Showed her finger tep where it had been Cut and said she made the Red mark In the Divels book w'th the blood of that [finger]'.[102]

Mercy Lewis complained to her examiners that the spectre of former Salem minister George Burroughs had appeared to her, threatening that if she did not sign the Devil's book, 'he had severall books in his studdy [by which] . . . he could raise the Divell'. When she refused, Lewis was forced to endure 'a temptation of Christ' experience, for as she testified:

> On '9'th May Mr. Burroughs carried me up to an exceeding high mountain and shewed me all the kingdoms of the earth and tould me that he would give them all to me if I would writ in his book and if I would not he would throw me down and brake my neck; but I tould him they ware non of his to give and I would not wirt if he throde me down on 100 pitchforks.[103]

Mercy Lewis had obviously understood the Devil's book was an inversion of both church membership and the Book of Life, and that to inscribe her name would damn her soul eternally. Cotton Mather would reflect on such dire consequences in Wonders, writing that, 'The

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[99] Cotton Mather, Memorable Providences, p. 62.
[100] Salem Witchcraft Papers, 1:112.
[101] Ibid, 1:140.
[102] Ibid, 2:643.
[103] Ibid, 1:168-9.

unpardonable sin, is most usually committed by professors of the Christian Religion, falling into Witchcraft'.[104]

By Mercy Lewis' refusal, she had narrowly escaped the Devil's snare and the second element of covenant witchcraft: the witch's mark or teat. After the witch signed the covenant, the Devil marked the new initiate with a sign which took the form of a spot in the flesh insensitive to pain, or an excrescence of flesh from which demonic imps might suckle. The Devil's mark had become a common allegation in English witch cases by 1579. Some insisted it was 'a common token to know all witches by'.[105] Sharpe observes the chronology of this belief:

> In the early pamphlet accounts the place where the witch was sucked varied: face, nose, chin, and forefinger, but also thigh, shoulder and wrist. By the end of James I's reign, however, the mark was most often thought to be located on the genitalia or near the rectum of the witch.[106]

Within seventeenth-century New England, the Devil's mark had become an essential part of the witch's compact with the Devil. Karlsen notes of this, 'Puritan doctrine had it that the mark was placed on the witch's body by the Devil at the signing of the covenant, to seal their bargain, and allow him to recognize her as one of his followers'.[107] One outcome of this belief led to the practice of the courts in Scotland, England, and New England: the impaneling of committees to conduct body searches for the witch's mark.

These searches followed a pattern already at work in formal and informal seventeenth-century inquiries primarily related to women. In England, adjudications involving suspicion of bastardy or infanticide often included formal tests to determine pregnancy or recent pregnancy. Under these circumstances, juries of matrons were assigned to do such tests as squeezing the breasts of female suspects for signs of milk.[108] Laura Gowing notes that in one such case in Yorkshire an

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[104] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:60.

[105] John Davies, A History of Southampton (Southampton, 1883), p. 236.

[106] Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness, p. 73.

[107] Karlsen, The Devil in the Shape of a Woman, pp. 12-13.

[108] Laura Gowing has written a thorough article dealing with the aspects of secret births and infanticide, including the female world's formal and informal surveillance of suspects, and how such measures reflected social boundaries between a woman's privacy and community relationships. See Laura Gowing, 'Secret births and infanticide in seventeenth-century England', Past and Present Journal, 156, (August 1997), p. 91. Gowing notes that 'since at least some people expected milk to be present in the breasts from around the fourth month of pregnancy, the test served to check for a current

unmarried woman suspected of an illegitimate birth, was 'searched by midwives who found fresh milk in her breasts'. The woman subsequently confessed to having delivered 'a man child dead and stillborn'.[109] While impaneled juries were used to search for signs of pregnancy in women, the parallel practice used during the 1692 Salem trials searched for witch signs. In this instance, however, the searches were not sex specific since men also underwent accusations of and searches for witch marks or teats.

Susannah Sheldon alleged that 'Good man Core [Giles Corey] had two tircels [turtles] which he put to his brest and gave them suck'.[110] Sheldon's testimony influenced the Salem judges to the degree that Corey and his wife Martha were both searched for witch marks.[111] Besides searching Giles Corey, sometime between July and August of 1692 a seven-man court panel also searched former Salem minister George Burroughs and George Jacobs Jr. While no witch marks were observed on George Burroughs, the panel reported finding on Jacobs' body 'three Teets w'ch according to the best of our Judgements wee think is not naturall for we runn a pinn through two of them and he was not sensible of it'.[112]

After becoming an initiate witch by signing the Devil's covenant book and receiving the witch's mark; one was obliged to attend the witch's sabbath. Although it was not an indispensable part of New England witch lore, by the latter part of the seventeenth century, both elite and popular witchcraft beliefs included witches meeting for an inverted form of church service and sacrament. Although there are no extant pre-Salem documents verifying inverted sabbaths, in the Salem trials there are accounts of at least two specific witch sabbaths. Deliverance Hobbs and Mary Lacey

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pregnancy as well as a recent birth or miscarriage'. For additional studies of this subject, see: Regina Schulte, The Village in Court: Arson, Infanticide and Poaching in the Court Records of Upper Bavaria, 1848-1910 trans. Barrie Selman, (Cambridge, 1994); Robert Malcomson, 'Infanticide in the Eighteenth Century', in James Cockburn (ed.), Crime in England, 1500-1800 (Princeton, 1977).

[109] Gowing, 'Secret births and infanticide', p. 98.

[110] Salem Witchcraft Papers, 1:105. The allegation of Susannah Sheldon that Giles Corey suckled an imp is significant, for most Salem scholarship tends to focus upon the female gender in the discussion of the witch's imp.

[111] Ibid, 3:951. When Thomas Manning presented his 'accounts tally' for 1692 to the Boston magistrates he included among other costs, a bill for 'providing a Jury to make search upon Cori and his wife, and Clenton Easty Hoare, Cloisss and Mrs. Bradbury'.

[112] Ibid, 1:159. On a similar note, on 2 June 1692 a panel including Dr. Barton, a local physician, searched John Proctor Sr. and John Willard for witch's marks or teats but without finding anything to 'farther suspect them'. Ibid, 2:681.

insisted that at least one major witch sabbath had taken place at Salem Village attended by some seventy people.[113] According to Sarah Bridges a second witch's sabbath took place at Chandlers Garrison in Andover, at which she recalled, 'there were about 200 witches there'.[114]

Whether located in Salem or Andover, the witch's flight to these meetings on poles or sticks would be another point of general agreement among those examined during the Salem trials. Conversely, across the Atlantic pole riding by witches would rarely appear in the transcripts of the English witch trials. Thomas observes that 'The notion that witches could fly . . .and the broomstick, made famous by subsequent children's fiction, occurs only once in an English witch-trial'.[115]

Witches riding poles would not be so rare in New England. Tituba, the first Salem witch gave evidence of such transport in her response to Judge Hawthorne's question of 'How did you go?' Tituba responded, 'We ride upon stickes and are there presently'.[116] Mary Osgood and others would verify Tituba's testimony. Osgood claimed to have journeyed along with three other persons towards a witch meeting 'carried upon a pole . . . through the air in company'.[117] Still another Salem witch, Mary Bridges Jr, told the court of her personal ride with the Devil to a Salem village meeting. She claimed they rode 'upon a pole and the black man carried the pole over the tops of the trees'.[118]

True to its inverted formula, the Devil's sabbath would also include two important sacraments: baptism and the eucharist. For the Puritan clergy, these imitations of Baptism, the Lord's Supper and the Book of Life were the tangible and devilish counterparts to the Covenant of salvation. For the Devil, the perversion of these two elements of the Puritan community would be the powerful counterpart of his hellish synergy with the witches, since as Gura points out, 'To the

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[113] Ibid, 2:423; 2:529.
[114] Ibid, 1:140.
[115] Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p.445. Cecil L. Ewen notes the singular usage of witch-transportation in English withcraft trials in his book, Witchcraft and Demonaniam: A Concise Account Derived From Sworn Depositions And Confessions Obtained In The Courts Of England And Wales (London, 1933), p. 337.
[116] Salem Witchcraft Papers, 3:748.
[117] Ibid, 2:615.
[118] Ibid, 1:135.

New England Puritans, the Abrahamic covenant was the corner stone of the ecclesiastical edifice that housed God's visible saints'.[119]

Throughout the Salem trials, accounts were given of re-baptism by the Devil. These baptisms were not, however, in accordance with the Puritan formulas. As previously mentioned, this devilish re-baptism resembled the various versions used by the Anabaptists and other radical sects.[120] Most often, the confessors indicated that the Devil baptized them by 'ducking their heads' in a pond, a river, or even a bucket of water. Salem witch suspects Mary Barker and Sarah Hawkes confessed that upon becoming witches they were both baptized by the Devil at Five Mile Pond.[121] Hawkes lamented that she was forced to renounce 'her former Baptism' at which time 'the Divel dipt her face in the Watt'r'.[122]

In 1694, Massachusetts' minister Joshua Scottow, identified the second of these counterfeit sacraments, the Devil's eucharist, describing it as 'The Damned Crew of Devils feasting on Red Bread and Wine, in derision of our Lord's Body and Blood'.[123] Scottow's disgust for this inversion of the eucharist was well founded in the 1692 Salem witch examinations. Abigail Williams testified against Sarah Cloyce that not only had some forty Salem witches met in the woods near Samuel Parris's house, but that 'Goody Cloyse and Goody Good were their Deacons'.[124] In terms reflecting Roman Catholic transubstantiation, another witness to this witch's meeting stated that the Devil's priest 'administered the sacrament unto them . . . with Red Bread, and Red Wine like Blood'.[125] With respect to this testimony Gildrie comments, 'Among the orthodox, and particularly in the preaching of Samuel Parris, the Salem village pastor, Catholic ritual was a form of witchcraft in any case'.[126]

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[119] Phillip F. Gura, A Glimpse of Sion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620-1660 (Middletown, 1984), p. 95.

[120] Gura, A Glimpse of Sion's Glory, p. 100. Gura notes, heresiographers noted Anabaptist meetings in open spaces, in which such baptisms were often supplemented by 'love feasts' at which they washed each other's feet, imposed hands on the new convert, and then offered a 'kiss of charity'.

[121] Salem Witchcraft Papers, 1:59.

[122] Ibid, 2:388.

[123] Joshua Scottow, A Narrative of the Planting of the Massachusetts Colony Anno 1628 (Boston, 1694), pp. 46-48.

[124] Salem Witchcraft Papers, 2:659.

[125] Ibid, 2:423.

[126] Gildrie, 'The Salem witchcraft trials', p. 283.

As outlined in the previous chapter, in the minds of the seventeenth-century New England populace, the most powerful and dangerous stage of witchcraft emerged after the witch's acceptance of the Devil's compact. At this point, the Devil assigned to the initiate one or more demons called 'familiars' who would become the witch's invisible operatives. As such, demons representative of the witch, using the witch's visage, would take the form of poltergeists or spectres, as they attacked both humans and animals with visible or most often invisible weapons. The attacks on humans were evidenced by any of a number of manifestations. In the words of Cotton Mather, ' . . . The Spectres would proceed then to wound them with Scalding, Burning, Pinching, Pricking, Twisting, Choaking, and a thousand preternatural Vexations'.[127]

Beyond whatever injury the witch and his/her familiar might cause individuals, by far the greatest threat the Puritans feared was the Devil's invasion and overthrow of both religion and government. Richard Gildrie observes, 'The pact with Satan, which began a witch's career, was a decision not only to reject proper society but also to wage war upon it'.[128] In this light, the standard form for witchcraft indictment used in New England is clear about the religious and governmental aspects of the charges. In the case of Edward Farrington, the bill of indictment by the Province of Massachusetts Bay reads in part as follows:

> The Jurors for o'r Sov'r Lord and Land the King and Queen Present That Edward Farington of Andivor in the County of Essex . . . is become a detestable witch against the peace of o'r Soveraign Lord . . . and the Laws in this Case made and provided.[129]

If one takes the testimony of the Salem and Andover witches seriously, the Massachusetts' Courts should have been concerned about the threat of the witch invasions. As chapter five of the thesis will elaborate, near the onset of the Salem trials testimony was given insisting that an organized witch sect in New England was actively planning to 'bewitch all in the Village . . . gradually and not all att once'.[130] According to one witness, the witch's unified task was to 'afflict persons and over come the Kingdome of Christ, and set up the Divels Kingdome . . . throughout

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[127] Cotton Mather, Diary, 1:155.
[128] Gildrie, 'The Salem witchcraft trials', p. 278.
[129] Salem Witchcraft Papers, 1:325.
[130] Ibid, 2:423.

the whole country'.[131]

It would appear that in this invasion the human witches were not left to their own devices, since suspected wizard William Barker would indicate that the Devil had assigned spectral spiritual warriors to the witches. Barker claimed that 'At Salem Village, there being a little off the Meeting-House, [were] about an hundred five Blades, some with Rapiers by their side, which was called and might be more for ought I know'.[132] Such testimonies effectively identified the business of Satan in tempting New Englanders to sign a compact with him and the empowering of such initiates to destroy the religious, political, and societal structuring of New England.

To the Puritan populace, both learned and plebian, this was undoubtedly a frightening and unthinkable horror. Thomas Putnam, in his letter to Judges Hawthorne and Corwin would sum it up well when he wrote, 'We, [are] beholding continually . . . not only every day but every hour', things which are 'high and dreadful: of a wheel within a wheel, at which our ears do tingle'.[133] Nor would such fears of diabolical witches plotting to overthrow society end with the Salem witchcraft trials, as is apparent from Richard Boulton's 1715 An Account of the First Rise of Magicians and Witches. Among tantalizing reports, Boulton promised to detail 'the contracts they make with the Devil and what Methods they take to accomplish their infernal Designs'.[134]

Conclusion

In Cotton Mather's seventeenth-century world, both the elite-learned class and the ordinary New England inhabitant shared a common set of witchcraft beliefs despite differences in specific interpretations and definitions. Within this framework, the New England population accepted witchcraft as an everyday reality of life. The clerical and popular shared beliefs in witchcraft are identifiable in four major categories of witchcraft: magic, maleficium, counter-magic, and covenant witchcraft. These are abundantly evidenced through the pre-Salem, Salem episode, and post-Salem

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[131] Ibid, 2:529.
[132] Ibid, 1:166.
[133] Ibid, 1:165.
[134] R. Boulton, An Account of the First Rise of Magicians and Witches (London, 1715), cover.

journals, publications, and court records of New England.

Cotton Mather's theology of Satan, demons, and witchcraft, as has been demonstrated in chapter two, was not incompatible or exaggerated within his contemporary context. As the remaining chapters of the thesis will suggest, perhaps what made the Salem witchcraft trials a particularly Puritan witch hunt is not to be found only in Puritan dogma, but in the context of what the Puritan clerics perceived to be a falling away from the Puritan errand and the growing threats to the unity of Massachusetts presented by Indians, dissenters, and Puritans practicing witchcraft. In essence, elite and popular beliefs about witchcraft served to set the stage for what was to follow in the Salem witch outbreak. Taken in this light, as Phillip Gura observes,

> What remained inviolate at least through the seventeenth century . . . was the colonists' sense of their specialness as guardians of the Christian faith against the attacks of any and all enemies, be they Indians, Papists, witches, or, eventually opponents of 'enthusiastic' religion, colonial agents, and deists.[135]

Having outlined the predominant witchcraft beliefs of seventeenth-century New England, held by both elite and popular classes, the dissertation now moves on to an examination of Robert Calef's charges that Cotton Mather should be blamed for the initiation of the Salem witchcraft trials.

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[135] Gura, A Glimpse of Sion's Glory, p. 233.

CHAPTER FOUR

PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS: A PARADIGM OF BLAME

> I am far from insensible that at this extraordinary time of the devils coming down in great wrath upon us, there are too many Tongues and hearts set on fire of hell; that the various opinions about the witchcrafts which of later time have troubled us, are maintained by some with so much cloudy fury, as if they could never be sufficiently stated, unless written in the liquor wherewith witches use to write their covenants; and that he who becomes an author at such a time, had need be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear.
>
> Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World (1693)

In the wake of the Salem dilemma, the single most energetic and dogmatic effort to place the blame for the Salem trials and executions at the feet of Cotton Mather was Robert Calef's. This is reflected in his book, More Wonders of the Invisible World, published in London in 1700. As the initial chapter of this thesis indicated, Calef's characterization of Cotton Mather in More Wonders led to the creation of a historical portrait of Mather as a seventeenth-century Puritan witch-hunter and instigator of the Salem trials.

Calef's stinging criticism of both the trials and more specifically Cotton Mather has also become central to subsequent scholarly treatment of the subject.[1] Charles Upham for instance adopted Calef's views with little amendment, and this pattern has been echoed well into the twentieth-century.[2] Upham in particular based much of his two-volume historical assessment, entitled Salem Witchcraft, upon the evidence supplied by Robert Calef in his More Wonders of the Invisible World. Like Calef, Upham castigated Cotton Mather, alleging that he not only instigated the Salem witch-hunt but also continued his witch-hunting activities even after the Salem trials had ended. As Upham put it:

> There is some ground for suspicion that he was instrumental in originating the fanaticism at Salem . . . at any rate . . . it can be too clearly shown that he was secretly and cunningly endeavoring to renew [the proceedings] during the next year in his own parish in Boston.[3]

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[1] Robert Calef, More Wonders of the Invisible World in Samuel Drake, (ed.), The Witchcraft Delusion in New England (3 vols.; New York, 1866; repr. 1970).

[2] Charles Upham, Salem Witchcraft (2 vols.; Boston, 1867).

[3] Upham, Salem Witchcraft, 2:366-67.

Upham's assertions about Salem and Cotton Mather became, what Marc Mappen has labeled, 'the standard interpretation, repeated for generations in textbooks on American History'.[4] A succession of nineteenth and twentieth-century authors have repeated this view, and have collectively created the popular American public image of both the Puritans and specifically Cotton Mather. The nineteenth-century descendant of Salem Judge Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne, depicted Cotton Mather as 'the one bloodthirsty man, in whom were concentrated those vices of spirit and errors of opinions that sufficed to madden the whole surrounding multitude'.[5] Over a century later this view would still have resonance for the European rationalist scholar H. Trevor Roper. In his volume, The European Witch-craze, he includes Mather in a list of infamous witch-hunters:

> Perkins in England, Rivetus and Voetious in Holland, Baillei and Rutherford in Scotland, Desmarets and Jurieu in France, Francis Turrettini in Switzerland, Cotton Mather in America—what a gallery of intolerant bigots, narrow-minded martinets, timid conservative defenders of repellent dogmas, instant assailants of every new or liberal idea, inquisitors and witch-burners![6]

Late twentieth-century scholarship, with only a few exceptions, repeats this well-worn litany of Cotton Mather's purposeful malignancy. George Malcolm Yool, for instance, asserts that Cotton Mather, as 'a zealous witch hunter, wanted nothing less than to see them [witch suspects] brought to justice'.[7]

In light of the continuing acceptance of Calef's perspective on Mather and the Salem trials, and subsequent historians' use of his version of the historical record, we need to examine Robert Calef's censure of Cotton Mather in detail. The chapter commences by reviewing Robert Calef's background and the Calef-Mather dispute, detailing Calef's adamant insistence that the trials and executions were the direct result of Cotton Mather's preaching and his publication of the Margaret Rule possession case. In doing so, Mather's pre-Salem articulation of witchcraft is outlined relative to his published and unpublished sermons, and his publications, showing the

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[4] Marc Mappen, Witches and Historians: Interpretations of Salem (Malabar, 1996), p. 36.
[5] Nathaniel Hawthorne, Alice Doane's Appeal (1843), Quoted in Kenneth Silverman, The Life and Times of Cotton Mather (New York, 1984), p. 53.
[6] Hugh Trevor-Roper, The European Witch-craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Harmondsworth, 1969).
[7] George Malcolm Yool, The 1692 Witch Hunt: The Layman's Guide to the Salem Witchcraft Trials (Bowie, 1992), pp. 4, 74.

degree to which he kept the subject before his Boston congregation and the larger New England populace.

Next, the historical climate of New England in relation to witchcraft is examined, demonstrating the existence of three major pre-existent and transcendent factors within New England that had an overriding impact on the Salem events. These factors include the prevalence of prior witchcraft publications, seventeenth-century contemporaneous preaching on witchcraft, and a legacy of prior witch trials and executions. Finally, this chapter maintains that the indictment of Cotton Mather's preaching and publications as the single most important influence on the initiation and course of the Salem trials is unsustainable.

Robert Calef's More Wonders of the Invisible World

Little is known about Robert Calef's history prior to his emigration from England to Boston. He was known as a 'Merchant of Boston and a Dealer in woolen goods'.[8] And although Cotton Mather's description of Calef as a 'weaver' emphasized his relatively low social status, after the Salem trials he did hold at least two political offices in Boston. He was elected as 'Hayward and Fence-viewer' in 1694 and served as an 'Overseer of the Poor' in 1702. He was also subsequently chosen as an 'Assessor' in 1706, but declined to serve.[9]

Calef was living in Boston in 1692-1693 during the witchcraft proceedings at Salem village and Boston. It seems that even during the trials Calef was looking for some way to express his consternation at what was happening at Salem. Finding no other way in which to do so, in 1693 Calef took the initiative to denounce the matter personally and pointedly, in print.

Two specific events precipitated Calef's initiative. First, the publication and distribution in New England of Mather's book, The Wonders of the Invisible World, perceived by some as an attempt to legitimize the recent adjudications. Second, a further case of 'diabolical possession'

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[8] Samuel Drake, The Witchcraft Delusion in New England (New York, 1866; repr. 1970), preface, xxi. According to Drake, Calef was born in 1648 and died in 1719. Drake has compiled what little relevant biographical history of Robert Calef is available, including his genealogical records, in his introduction of More Wonders.

[9] Drake, The Witchcraft Delusion in New England, preface, xii.

emerged in Calef's hometown of Boston. While Wonders had a profoundly negative affect on Calef, he feared that the case of Margaret Rule would initiate another deadly witchcraft episode.

The Margaret Rule case is particularly important for our understanding of Calef's perspective. From 10 September until the end of October, some five weeks, Margaret Rule, a young Boston woman, suffered what her family and the clergy assumed to be a form of demonic torment. On 13 September 1693 Calef visited Rule's home on an occasion when both Increase and Cotton Mather were present. In the company of some thirty or forty others, Calef watched as the Mathers examined the seventeen-year-old, made inquiries into her condition, and attempted to effect her deliverance.

Afterwards, Calef wrote to Cotton Mather asking for an explanation of his views about witchcraft, as laid out in Mather's book, Wonders, and for specific scriptural passages supporting these beliefs.[10] Meanwhile, Calef quietly circulated a copy of his own observations to some of his and Cotton Mather's friends who had been present that evening at the Rule house. His stated objective was to allow these spectators to verify the accuracy of his account. Several modern authors have reproduced that letter, but for the purpose here a summary will suffice.[11]

Calef began by asserting that Cotton Mather had asked leading questions to get Margaret Rule to tell him the names of the witches tormenting her. He also alleged that Increase Mather had prayed for half an hour and sought God to reveal the names of the spectres tormenting the young woman. More incriminating than all of this was Calef's accusation that Cotton Mather had lewdly fondled the afflicted young woman. Using ambiguous but graphic language, Calef wrote that Mather 'brushed her on the face with his glove, and rubbed her stomach (her breast not covered with the bedclothes) and bid others do so too, and said it eased her'.[12]

When Cotton Mather was shown a copy of the observation he was horrified. After complaining to Calef that the account had 'contributed to make people believe a smutty thing', Mather promptly castigated Calef from his pulpit at the Old North Church.[13] Cotton and Increase

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[10] This first letter was written on 11 January 1693, see More Wonders, 2:48.
[11] For a complete transcript of the accusation see Drake, Witchcraft Delusion, 2:49.
[12] Calef, More Wonders, 2:50.
[13] Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World (Boston, 1693), in Samuel Drake, (ed.), The

Mather underscored this censure by having Calef arrested for scandalous libel, but because they failed to appear and testify at the court session, the suit was dismissed.

The conflict, though, was far from finished. Calef had gathered documents related to the Salem events for a book, but was unable to find a publisher in New England. One can only assume that this was partly a result of Cotton Mather's local influence. Calef sent the manuscript to London for printing choosing the title More Wonders of the Invisible World, as an obvious play on the title of Mather's recent work, The Wonders of the Invisible World. Realizing the potential impact of Calef's publication, Cotton Mather indicates in his diary that he prayed against its success, asking God to rescue his 'opportunities of serving [the] Lord Jesus Christ, from the attempts of the man [Calef] to damnify them'.[14] When the book arrived in Boston during November of 1700, as president of Harvard College, Increase Mather had a copy of it publicly burned in the college yard.[15]

The release of More Wonders in New England proved to be more significant than Increase's actions. While Upham reported that it 'burst like a bomb shell upon all who had been concerned in promoting the witchcraft prosecutions', Richard Lovelace asserts that More Wonders was an 'inarticulate, poorly organized, but telling attack'.[16] Indeed, More Wonders of the Invisible World was not a literary masterpiece. Calef's imitation of Cotton's book approximated it too well in that it suffered from equal if not worse organization, rambling from cover to cover.

Despite these defects, More Wonders should not be underestimated. Its impact far outdistanced its lack of coherency and structure. Calef's basic premise was that the trials been a deadly charade 'disguised under the mask of zeal for God', in which the ministers and the magistrates of New England had branded innocent persons as witches, 'insulting over the [true] sufferers at execution'.[17] Where directed specifically at the Court of Oyer and Terminer, Calef's attack was a blow at the theological foundation of the trials, a castigation of the adjudication process, and a censure of the ethical integrity of the members of the court and clergy. Calef's

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Witchcraft Delusion in New England (3 vols.; New York, 1866; repr. 1970), 2:65.

[14] Cotton Mather, Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681-1709, 1709-1724 (2 vols.; New York, 1957), 1:264, (June 1698).

[15] Richard Lovelace notes that this was the 'traditional way of stigmatizing a libelous book'. See: Richard E. Lovelace, The American Pietism of Cotton Mather (Grand Rapids, 1979), p. 22.

[16] Upham, Salem Witchcraft, p. 462; Lovelace, American Pietism of Cotton Mather, p. 23.

criticism of Cotton Mather, as this next section shows, was much more specific and incriminating.

Calef's first allegation detailed in More Wonders was that Cotton Mather had created the environment which led to the Salem accusations and trials through his preaching about the Devil, demons, and witchcraft and by publishing his works on the subject in the period before and during the Salem episode, which he dates from the 1689 Goodwin possession until the end of the Salem tragedy in 1693. This charge is most clearly reflected in two passages in More Wonders. The first is from an open letter to the Boston area ministers dated March 18, 1694, and reproduced in More Wonders. In it Calef wrote,

> I medle not now to say, but cannot but suppose his strenuous and Zealous asserting his opinions, has been one cause of the dismal Convulsions we have here lately fallen into. . . . His books Memorable Providences relating to Witchcraft, and also his Wonders of the Invisible World, did contain in them things not warrantable, and very dangerous.[18]

The second statement is found in the postscript to More Wonders, where Calef insists:

> Mr. Cotton Mather was the most active and forward of any Minister in the Country in those matters, taking home one of the Children, and managing such intreagues [sic] with that Child, and after printing such an Account of the whole, in his Memorable Providences, as conduced much to the kindling of those flames, that in Sir Williams time threatened the devouring this Country.[19]

Again, as previously noted, Calef's allegations can be traced to those of modern scholars. Peter Hoffer's 1996 book, The Devil's Disciples echoes this opinion that Cotton Mather's involvement in the Salem trials outdistanced that of his peers and created a dangerous platform for trying and executing witches. Hoffer suggests that through Mather's insistence upon relating supernatural providence to witchcraft outbreaks in his publication of such books as Memorable Providences:

> No divine had more to do with the forthcoming trials than Cotton Mather. His story in inextricably interwoven with the cases, for he was more than an elite spokesman for a book-bound priesthood. Mather was a believer in the invisible world . . . With a mixture of arrogant carelessness and true belief Mather aspired to bridge the gap between the popular and the elite across a span of miraculous prodigies.[20]

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[17] Robert Calef, More Wonders, 2:6-7.

[18] Ibid, 2:92.

[19] Ibid, 2:152.

[20] Peter Hoffer, The Devil's Disciples: Makers of the Salem Witchcraft Trials (Baltimore, 1996), p. 139.

These accusations against Mather raise two questions. First, do the extant historical records confirm that Cotton Mather made witchcraft a prominent issue of his ministry during the period of 1689 to 1693? And second, does a clear historical connection exist between Mather's pre-Salem publications and preaching, and the initiation of the Salem trials?

Cotton Mather's Pre-Salem Articulation about Witchcraft

The first question can be addressed through a chronological sampling of Mather publications and sermons. To begin with, in 1689 Cotton Mather published Memorable Providences, a collection of supernatural experiences. The book itself, as will be seen later, was little different from the myriad of similar publications which described wonderful miracles, strange preternatural occurrences, unique judgments of God upon sinners, (such as deformed monstrous births) divine vindications and rescues, and of course, demon possessions and witchcraft manifestations. Mather however added another feature to this genre by the addition of a postscript to the book in which he detailed a recent situation in a Boston family. His conclusion hinted that witchcraft had been involved and further suggested that God might be preparing to expose more witches.

Mather's pulpit ministry at the Old North Church in Boston is also relevant. For some time prior to 1692 he had been preaching to Boston and all of New England about their spiritual condition. In the years before the witch invasion he had preached several messages in which he called New England to repentance, without which he warned dire punishments were in store. What Mather was doing, as was common for his day, was to preach the 'jeremiad' style of sermon, a rhetorical formula that had been used in both Protestant and Catholic churches throughout Europe from the medieval era onwards. As Sacvan Bercovitch describes it, the jeremiad 'decried the sins of "the people"– a community, a nation, a civilization, mankind in general – and warned of God's wrath to come'.[21] The clerics of New England, however, modified this type of sermon creating a distinctively Puritan formula. As Emory Elliot observes

> Taking their texts from Jeremiah and Isaiah, these orations followed—and reinscribed—a rhetorical formula that included recalling the courage and piety of

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[21] Sacvan Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad (Madison, 1978), p. 7. Bercovitch's book is an thorough study in the formulation and modification of the jeremiad within Colonial New England.

> the founders, lamenting recent and present ills, and crying out for a return to the original conduct and zeal.[22]

In their adaptation, the clerics included an insistence the people of New England were special to God, and that therefore, they would at times face God's corrective wrath because of their very place in God's end-times salvific plan. By Cotton Mather's era, such jeremiads often preached after political elections, commonly consisted of describing the sins of the people, predicting God's eminent judgments upon their continuance, and delivering a plea for repentance and revival among the elect.

Cotton Mather preached and published no less than five jeremiads between the 1689 publication of Memorable Providences and the first signs of the troubles of 1692. In each of them he warned of God's imminent judgment upon New England, reminding the people of the power of the Devil and demons, and pointing to witchcraft as a possible means of this judgment.

The first of such jeremiads came on March 20, 1690. As Mather was preparing his Thursday lecture, he changed his sermon topic to reflect the recent news of a renewed French and Indian attack on the outlying settlements of New England. In his revised sermon entitled, The Present State of New England, Mather reminded his audience that during the preceding year there had been 'Devastations upon the more pagan skirts of New England'. He then declared that the recent attacks of the French and Indians were an outcropping of spiritual warfare, saying that the 'devils are stark mad, that the House of the Lord our God, is come into these remote corners of the world'.[23]

Mather's words about Indian invasions called to mind recent Indian hostilities such as Metacomet's War of 1675-1676, in which as many as one tenth of all colonial males were killed and over twelve thousand homes were burned. The death of Metacomet in 1676 put an end to that particular round of hostilities, but the population centres in the lightly defended northern frontier in Maine, New Hampshire, and western Massachusetts continued to suffer sporadic attacks by Indians accompanied by their French allies.[24] Since, as the previous chapter noted, the Puritans believed

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[22] Emory Elliot, in Sacvan Bercovitch, (ed.), The Cambridge History of American Literature (3 vols.; Cambridge, 1994), 1:257.

[23] Cotton Mather, The Present State of New England (Boston, 1690), p. 38.

[24] For a depiction of these circumstances and the Metacomet War, see: Alden T. Vaughan and

that Native Americans were part of a diabolical alliance with Satan to destroy New England, Mather's sermon reminded Bostonians of this ever-present threat.

Mather would use this same framework, which pitted the Devil against New England again while speaking to the Artillery Company of Massachusetts at their annual meeting on 1 June 1691. In a message entitled Things to be Looked For, Mather reflected on the economic and emotional strains brought about by the failure of the recent Canadian expedition, the intensity of the recent Indian raids, and the Colonists' foreboding about the new Charter. As Increase Mather was in London attempting to gain the new agreement, Cotton was preaching a message of judgment and hope to the Artillery Company. Within the second point of his sermon, alluding specifically to the military conflicts, Mather noted, 'As now, t'is the Divel that is the Make-hate of the World . . . the same Divel that makes Demoniacks to tear and cut themselves, do's also cause men to Wound one another'.[25]

Third, casting spiritual warfare in the human terms of religious unorthodoxy Mather wrote a tract against the Quakers in September of 1691 entitled Little Flocks guarded against Grievous Wolves. Using portions of several tracts written by the Quaker George Keith, Mather presented five specific arguments against the tenets of the Society of Friends.[26] Among his arguments, he compared the Quakers' 'strange quaking' to the 'diabolical possession' of witchcraft.[27]

Another sermon would come from Mather on 24 December 1691, entitled Fair Weather (not published until 1692). In the wake of the recent revolt, Mather found himself preaching to a discontented group of Bostonians. He suggested to his audience witchcraft was already at work within the Boston and broader New England population. In rhetorical fashion he stated: 'How many doleful wretches, have been decoy'd into witchcraft itself, by the opportunities which their

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Edward W. Clark, (eds), Puritans among the Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676-1724 (Cambridge,1981), p. 9.

[25] Cotton Mather, Things to be Look'd For (Cambridge, 1691), pp. 18-19.

[26] George Keith was born in Aberdeen, Scotland in 1639. He became a member of the Society of Friends in his early years. He was well known for his debates with the Boston Ministerium through a number of tracts on behalf of the Quakers. Eventually Keith came into disagreement with the Society of Friends over certain theological issues and was disowned by the Yearly Meeting in 1694. Ironically, Keith became an Anglican Minister in 1700 and published several works against the Quakers before his death in 1716.

[27] Cotton Mather, Little Flocks guarded against Grievous Wolves (Boston, 1691), p. 9.

discontent has given the Devil, to visit 'em and seduce 'em'.[28]

The last in this progression, and one of the best examples of a published Cotton Mather jeremiad is entitled A Midnight Cry. Mather first preached this sermon in April of 1692, only a month before the Salem trials began in earnest. In hopes of a national revival, not unlike the Protestant Reformation, he delivered this alarming message describing the state of New England as that of a nation asleep in sin, unprepared for the coming of Christ. Mather instructed his audience among other things, to 'Look upward and see a God Angry . . . Look inward, and see our Cursed hearts [and] . . . Fly to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Refuge that has been set before us'. In stark terms, Mather portrayed a devilish invasion as one possible judgment of God upon New England should the nation refuse to repent.[29]

Considering this, and the many other unpublished works by Cotton Mather during this period, it is apparent that preceding the Salem outbreak and afterwards, Mather kept the concept of a malevolent spiritual world in front of his own congregation and of his broader New England audience.[30] The question that remains is not whether witchcraft was one of the subjects of Mather's 1689-1693 ministry but whether the publication of Memorable Providences and Mather's preaching significantly contributed to the creation of Salem events or whether his actions were an indirect and general influence on a pre-existing propensity toward episodes of the sort which descended upon Salem in 1692? To fully understand the significance or indeed lack of significance of these publications we need to place them in their context. The rest of this chapter describes three historical and theological factors that arise out of New England's early history which provide such a context: the prevalence of prior witchcraft publications, contemporaneous preaching about the invisible world, and New England's legacy of prior witchcraft trials and executions.

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[28] Cotton Mather, Fair Weather (Boston, 1692), p. 50.
[29] Cotton Mather, A Midnight Cry (Boston, 1692), p. 24.
[30] Cotton Mather's preaching and publications can be plotted to show that he continued this pattern beyond Salem. See, Cotton Mather, Batteries Upon the Kingdom of the Devil (London, 1695), pp. 21, 26. See also, Cotton Mather, Another Brand Pluck't from the Burning, originally circulated in manuscript form, is preserved by the Massachusetts Historical Society. The first printing was done without Mather's permission by Robert Calef in his book More Wonders of the Invisible World.

Pre-Existent and Transcendent Factors in New England

Cotton Mather's Memorable Providences and Wonders were an addition to an already established genre of prior witchcraft publications in New England. Such books had been in existence since the nation's New World inception.[31] When the Puritans made their journey to the New World they took with them much of their Old World. The new adventure was bound to be coloured by the old beliefs. As a result, Puritans included in their spiritual and intellectual luggage two types of publications that related to the supernatural, including witchcraft: the Bible and the wonder stories.[32]

To the Puritans, the first and foremost publication that attested to the existence of witchcraft was the Bible itself. Though this may seem obvious, the fact is that much of what has been written on New England witchcraft undervalues this integral factor. Like the Protestant Reformers themselves, the long tradition of Puritan biblical scholars held to the belief that the Bible was the grid through which every subject was to be studied.[33] Basing their overall religious and social ordering upon the Bible and Calvinistic doctrine, Puritans took their basic beliefs about witchcraft from the Bible.

The Bible's importance is give further impact as a result of two additional factors: high literacy rates and the prevalence of Bible ownership among the New England populace. Literacy rates were high because the founders of the colony had insisted upon a rigorous attempt to teach the

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[31] William Frederick Poole notes that, 'One who has never examined this point would be surprised at the number of witch books'. See Poole, Cotton Mather and Salem Witchcraft (Cambridge, 1689) p. 13.

[32] This is not to ignore the fact that by the end of the seventeenth-century, witchcraft beliefs were also reflected by an extensive witchcraft bibliography available from English, Continental, and American Colonial sources. Written by the clergy, monarchs, and legal advisors, these had a broader appeal to, and influence upon the learned classes of New England. A partial list of these works includes: Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer, Malleus Maleficarum (1487); Jean Bodin De la Demonomanie des Sorciers, (Paris, 1580); Martin Del Rio's Disquisitionum Magicarum Librie Sex, (Lyons, 1608); James VI and I, Daemonologie (Edinburgh, 1597); John Gaule, Select Cases of Conscience Touching Witches and Witchcraft (London, 1646); William Perkins, A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft (London, 1608); Richard Bernard, Guide to Grand Jury Men 2nd edn. (London, 1630); Michael Dalton, Countrey Justice 4th edn. (London 1630); Richard Baxter, Certainty of the World of Spirits (London, 1691); Joseph Keble, An Assistance to Justice of the Peace (London, 1689); Matthew Hale, A Tryal of Witches at the Assizes Held at Bury St. Edmunds (London, 1682). Many of these works were utilised by the Salem Court. See thesis chapters five and six for the Salem Court's use of 17th C. witchcraft scholarship

[33] This assertion of the Bible's infallibility also represented the Puritans' (and all Protestantism) doctrinal stand against the Roman Catholic Church's tradition and ceremonies. As William Ames would declare in his book, Fresh Suit against Ceremonies: '. . .The word of God, and nothing else, is the only standard in matters of religion'. See: William Ames, in Ralph

skills of reading and writing. David Hall notes that beginning with the hornbook, 'apart from the Bible (and especially the Book of Psalms), the crucial texts were the primer and the catechism.'[34] Hall indicates that in 1660 even though only sixty percent of men and forty percent of women were able to write, a large majority of people of all classes were able to read.[35]

Like their seventeenth-century counterparts across the Atlantic, New England clerics pointed to the biblical references about witchcraft. As Stuart Clark observes, whether Protestant or Catholic, 'the thing that defined witchcraft for clerics . . . is its universal placement in the Decalogue as a sin against the first Commandment'.[36] Therefore, Cotton Mather's generation had little trouble defending their belief in witchcraft, since both the Old and New Testament give indications of the various acts of witchcraft, albeit without dividing them into beneficent or malevolent categories.

The Bible defines witchcraft by depicting the witch's activities rather than focusing specifically on the identity of witches. Leviticus 19:26 banned both divination and sorcery, including the use of spells and enchantments. Leviticus 19:31 warned, 'Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards'. Deuteronomy 18:10 spoke of the practices of divination, sorcery, the interpretation of omens, and the practice of witchcraft. In I Samuel 15:23 the prophet Samuel compared rebellion to the 'sin of witchcraft'. Acts 19:19, referring to the city of Ephesus, mentions that a number of witchcraft scrolls had been burned by those who had converted to Christianity. Finally, Galatians 5:19-20 lists witchcraft among 'the works of the flesh'.

The Bible also indicated that practitioners of witchcraft could be male or female, and identified certain individuals as witches, sorcerers, or sorceresses. Exodus 22:18 commanded Israel to 'not allow a sorceress to live'. I Samuel 28:7 says that Israel's king Saul was inquiring

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Bronkema, The Essence of Puritanism (Rotterdam, 1929), p. 84.

[34] David Hall, Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England (New York, 1989), p. 37. For example, John Barnard could remember that before age six he had read the entire Bible through three times. See: John Barnard, Massachusetts Historical Society Collections 3rd Series, 5 (1836). Barnard may not have been all that unusual, for the Young Child's Catechism by Isaac Watts was a standard of the day, usually taught to children of ages three and four. See Clifton Johnson, Old-Time Schools and School-Books (New York, 1963), p. 13.

[35] Hall, Worlds of Wonder, p. 32. Hall notes that these estimates are based upon 'a careful count of signatures as against simple marks on wills' sampled from 1660.

[36] Stuart Clark, Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe (New York, 1997), p. 529.

about the future from a female witch at Endor. In II Kings 9:22, Queen Jezebel is described as a witch, noting that 'Jezebel and her witchcrafts are many'. Conversely, in Numbers 24:1 Balaam is identified as the sorcerer who attempted to 'curse' Israel in exchange for money from king Baalak. Similarly, Manasseh, the King of Israel, is condemned for his use of witchcraft including child sacrifices, necromancy, and consulting with wizards. In the New Testament, in Acts 8:9 the figure Simon was known to have 'practiced sorcery in the city of Samaria'. Again, in Acts 13:6 Paul the Apostle is met with the opposition of a sorcerer named Bar-Jesus or Simon at Paphos.

Last of all, witchcraft and especially maleficium was a capital crime under the Old Testament Law. Leviticus 20:6 cautioned that 'Such as turn after such as have familiar spirits, and wizards . . . I will even cut him off'. Leviticus 20:27 gave instructions that any persons consulting 'familiar spirits' or known to be male witches, should be exterminated. In II Kings 23:24, King Josiah is mentioned to have exterminated a number of persons known as 'mediums' and 'spiritists'. For both the clergy and the populace, the Bible was the unquestionable and ubiquitous authority upon which all witchcraft beliefs were based.

The Bible did not, however, provide the only seventeenth-century discourse on witchcraft. The founders of New England brought to the New World a cosmology based upon the Bible but one heavily influenced by medieval Continental and English ideas about the supernatural. This was manifest in an extensive literature that recorded and popularised a conception of an invisible world of angels, demons, and witches. Hyder Rollins notes the nearly universal acceptance of these publications by both elite and common persons in seventeenth-century England when he suggests that they presented

> . . . the same subjects as those to which learned men like Glanvill were devoting themselves—the same subjects as [the] Royal Society . . . listened to and published; accounts of human and animal monstrosities, of wheat rained from the sky, of ghosts and witchcraft, of enchantment, earthquakes, and judgments of God.[37]

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[37] Hyder Edward Rollins, (ed.), The Pack of Autolycus 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1969), preface, x. During the same era, both German and French publications were listing the same types of 'wonders' included in the English variety. There is little difference in the general make up of such stories. For further reading on the European 'wonder publications' see Miriam Chrisman, Lay Culture, Learned Culture: Books and Social Change in Strausberg 1480-1599 (New Haven,

In seventeenth-century New England, such books were readily available as the book trade in Boston was one of the most active in the British colonies. Although the local authorities and clerics exercised strict control over printing, these books were regularly imported by booksellers. Such books, including those written by Samuel Clarke and Thomas Beard, which are examined in this section, easily found their way into the hands of both the general populace and the elite-learned class. For example, as a Harvard student during the 1670's, Edward Taylor copied the story of 'An account of ante-mortem visions of Mr. John Holland from Beard's book'.[38] Increase Mather often quoted from both Samuel Clarke and Thomas Beard's collections of wonder stories. And the founder of the Boston press, John Foster incorporated almost all of Beard's work in his own 1679 adaptation of a London broadside entitled, Divine examples of Gods Severe Judgements against Sabbath Breakers.[39]

The 'wonder pamphlets' helped shape and reinforce the beliefs in the supernatural present within New England both before and after the Salem trials engulfed the colony. Richard Godbeer cites the presence of these publications and their link to Old and New England, when he writes that 'for all their determination to break with the "superstitions" of the past', the Puritan colonists maintained 'the lore of wonders that pervaded seventeenth-century English culture'.[40]

These imported 'wonder stories' established and repeated three specific themes within seventeenth-century supernaturalism. The first theme was reflected in those stories which manifested God's ability to suspend the normal course of nature or events in order to save the 'elect' or perhaps even to identify the wicked. Peter Lake, describing English murder pamphlets notes the emphasis upon 'an even more powerful force' correcting these wrongs 'for over against

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1982). Also see, Jean Ceard, La Nature et les Prodiges: L'insolite au XVI siecle en France (Geneva, 1977).

[38] See William P. Upham, 'Remarks,' in Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 2nd Series, 13, (1900), pp. 126-7. Increase Mather, Wo to Drunkards (Cambridge, 1673), p. 28; The Diary of Increase Mather, Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 2nd Series, 13, (1900), p. 345.

[39] See Worthington C. Ford, The Boston Book Market, 1679-1700 (Boston, 1917), p. 149.

[40] Richard Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England (New York, 1992), p. 56.

the forces of sin and the devil was ranged the awesome power of divine providence'.[41] The working of this providence is reflected in John Trundle's work A Miracle of Miracles in which he recorded the case of a Holnhurst criminal whose demise was representative of 'a sodaine and strange death upon perjured persons . . . including the execution of God himself from his holy fire in heaven'.[42]

The second class of wonder stories were those which showed the Devil's ability to disrupt the natural order. One such story well known in both Old and New England, was that of St. Cainnicus who remained dry in spite of traveling through a downpour. During the Salem trials Sarah Atkinson may have applied this legend in sinister terms when she testified that the accused witch Susannah Martin did not get wet on her journey to Atkinson's home during a rainstorm. As Atkinson put it, 'I should have been wet up to my knees if I should have come so far'.[43]

A third category of the wonder stories promoted the seventeenth-century elite and popular concept of the rapid winding down of history in which signs or portents did not indicate the promises of the future, but the certainty of the 'end of the age' coming upon the world. This theme was one of the predominant messages of the seventeenth-century New England clergy, including Cotton Mather.[44]

Among the most active writers and printers of volumes of wonder stories were Londoners, Nathaniel Crouch, (who went by the pseudonym Robert Burton), John Hart, and John Trundle. Trundle's reputation was primarily based on his extensive plagiarism of earlier works. David Hall indicates that the scope of these volumes included a wide variety of subjects:

> Their product line included histories and merriments that told of cuckolds or astrology or repeated Chaucer's vulgar stories. Humor, sex, romance-we may add to these another vein of proven popular appeal, the violence that pervaded

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[41] Peter Lake, 'Deeds against Nature: Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder in Early Seventeenth-Century England,' in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake, (eds), Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England (London, 1994), p. 270.

[42] John Trundle, A Miracle of Miracles, (London, 1614), in David Hall, World of Wonders, p. 72.

[43] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (eds), The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692 (3 vols.; New York, 1977), 2:578.

[44] For examples of this tendency refer to Herschel Baker, The Race of Time, (Toronto, 1965), pp. 57-63 and Joseph J. Morgan Jr., Chaucer and the Theme of Mutability (The Hague, 1961).

narrative of witchcraft, war, death and supernatural wonders.[45]

Although the New England ministers warned their congregations against those books which dealt with the more 'vulgar' side of life, they could at times accommodate the use of wonder stories in their attempts to promote more acceptable moral values. Just as Puritan clerics had patiently worked to reform the standard form of the English almanac, they also chose to reinforce the biblical concepts of morality by the selection of and adaptation of the wonder stories. They used, among many examples, tales such as the one describing the fate of 'Margery Perry, whose soul was carried away by the Devil in person after she perjured herself. Equally terrible was the story of the punishment inflicted by the Devil on Gabriel Harding for having murdered his wife'.[46]

Beyond attempts at accommodation, the New England clerics encouraged the populace to read publications dealing with the issues of evangelical faith and the fate of the unconverted. Often written by clerics, such books were available in abundance to the New England populace. The latter theme, the fate of the unconverted, was reflected in such works as The Progress of Sin, by Benjamin Keach. Among other things it equated sin with a 'commission from the Devil' who practiced his abilities to lead the godly into perils and the ungodly into damnation.[47] Others include John Bunyon's Sighs from Hell: Or, The Groans of a Damned Soul,[48] Stephen Batman's 1581 work, The Doome warning all men to Judgment,[49] and Thomas Beard's book, The Theatre of God's Judgements, which first appeared in the 1597.[50]

Another version of the wonder stories included models of spiritual warfare, which were widely circulated among the clergy and laity alike. Two popular examples include John Downame's

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[45] Hall, Worlds of Wonders, p. 52. For further reading on these types of books, see Roger Thompson, Unfit for Modest Ears: A Study of Pornographic, Obscene, and Bawdy Works Written or Published in England in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century (London, 1979) and J.L. Gaunt, 'Popular fiction and the ballad market in the second half of the seventeenth century', Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 72, (1978), pp. 1-14.

[46] Rollins, Pack of Autolycus, For Margery Perry, p. 146; Gabriel Harding pp. 163, 221.

[47] Benjamin Keach, The Progress of Sin (Boston, 1744), pp. 10, 19.

[48] John Bunyon, Some Sighs from Hell: or The Groans of a Damned Soul (London, 1658).

[49] Stephen Batman, The Doome warning all men to Judgemente (London, 1581).

[50] Thomas Beard, The Theatre of God's Judgment (London, 1648). Beard, who was a schoolteacher and ordained minister under Queen Elizabeth, described divine providences and demonic witchcraft within the same volume. It was so popular it eventually saw three more editions, the last being in 1648.

The Christians Warfare Against the Devill, the World, and Flesh [51] written in 1604 and William Gurnall's The Christian in Compleat Armour [52] originally published in 1655. Similarly, Michael Wigglesworth's 1661 ballad-styled folio entitled The Day of Doom [53] also had great success in New England, selling some eighteen hundred copies in the first year.[54] A minister and Harvard graduate, Wigglesworth capitalized on the population's interest in the supernatural and perhaps more importantly their fears of the power of the Devil and witches.

In 1597, Samuel Clarke produced one of the truly great masterpieces of this genre, A Mirrour or Looking Glasse both for Saints, and Sinners, Held forth in about two thousand Examples. The Puritans came to know it simply as Clarke's Examples.[55] They referred to it for examples of preternatural events, and its influence can be seen during the Salem witchcraft trials themselves, including testimonies of Satan's appearances as black bears or dogs.[56]

The last in this line of publications important for the present purpose is that of Nathaniel Crouch's The Kingdom of Darkness (1688). Its full title is perhaps more helpful: The History of Daemons, Spectres, Witches, Apparitions, Possessions, Disturbances and other supernatural Delusions, and malicious Impostures of the Devil. With respect to the Salem trials, The Kingdom of Darkness is relevant in two specific ways. First is its historical proximity to the Salem trials. Written just four years before the Salem trials, this book was essentially a re-telling of a number of well-known wonder stories gathered from and at times plagiarized from several other authors including Alexander Roberts and Increase Mather.[57] Second, Crouch gave the New England

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[51] John Downame, The Christians Warfare Against the Devill, the World, and Flesh (London, 1604).
[52] William Gurnall, The Christian in Compleat Armour (London, 1665; 1662).
[53] Michael Wigglesworth, The Day of Doom (Boston, 1662).
[54] John Hart's inexpensive chapbooks also found a large audience. Hart dwelt on such themes as the powers of Satan, the 'threats of atheism', and, the judgment of God upon sinners. See C. John Sommerville, 'Popular religion in Restoration England', University of Florida Social Science Monographs, 59 (Gainesville, 1977), p. 45.
[55] Samuel Clarke, A Mirrour or Looking Glasse for both Saints, and Sinners, 2nd edn. (London, 1654). Clarke's Examples was so popular that five editions of it were published, with the last one in 1671, just seventeen years before Memorable Providences.
[56] For a good survey of the belief in Satan's appearances as a black dog, etc., see Katharine M. Briggs, British Folk Tales and Legends: A Sampler (London, 1977), pp. 115-20.
[57] Well after the Salem trials and Increase Mather's Remarkable Providences, William Turner

populace a compendium of demonological stories involving witchcraft possessions, magic, demonic resurrections, and Satan's appearances in the forms of common village animals.

Many of these seventeenth-century publications propounded wonder stories that served as an additional authority beyond the Bible for what New Englanders commonly believed about supernatural events. Cotton Mather's two works in this genre, Memorable Providences, (1689), and Wonders of the Invisible World, (1692) were little more than minor additions to an extensive and popular body of literature.[58]

At times, historians have treated Cotton Mather's sermonizing about the hostile invisible world and witchcraft as if it were a singular, ill-fated practice. As previously detailed in the beginning of this chapter, Mather had preached extensively on the subject during the eighteen months between the Goodwin case and the Salem problems of 1692. However, before the Salem episode, during the period of 1689 to 1692 the rest of the New England clergy had also been regularly preaching against all forms of sin, including magic and witchcraft.

One of their main concerns was the apparent spiritual decline on the part of the New England populace. An early example of this outlining of spiritual deficiencies can be seen in Michael Wigglesworth's 1662 sermon in which he charged that the hearts of New Englanders had become filled with 'luke-warm Indifferency' and 'key-cold Dead-heartedness'.[59] This arraignment would grow during the years directly preceding the Salem trials, as the clergy insisted with growing intensity that New England had failed to live up to her covenant responsibilities.[60] As the Salem era drew closer the clergy added to their lists of indications of spiritual decline the use of magic, counter-magic, and malevolent witchcraft, seeking as Godbeer

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would produce a book entitled, Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences, both of Judgement and Mercy, which have hapned [sic] in this Present Age (London, 1697).

[58] David Hall insists that the Increase and Cotton Mather both borrowed heavily from medieval to contemporary sources in their own 'wonder books' on providences. See Hall, Worlds of Wonders, p. 88.

[59] Michael Wigglesworth, 'God's controversy with New England', in Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 12, (1871-3), p. 88.

[60] Godbeer, The Devil's Dominion, p. 75. Godbeer notes of this growing opinion of the clergy, writing that, 'Throughout the 1670s and 1680s, an overwhelming majority of sermons addressed the issued of spiritual decline . . . and urged new Englanders to repent'.

maintains, 'to purge their communities of magic'.[61]

Examples abound. One may begin with Jonathan Mitchell, the pastor at Cambridge. As early as 1656 he found it necessary to preach to his congregation against the use of divination and astrology, declaring popular astrology was centred in 'things secret . . . forbidded, and concealed from discovery by lawful means' by God. He went further to demand that anyone using such arts was falling into 'the Devills policie and invention' designed to draw them away from 'God and his providence and word into an irreligion'.[62]

Increase Mather should not be overlooked. Before his son Cotton preached his first jeremiad against witchcraft in 1690, Increase had already felt the need to preach a lengthy series on the subject in 1683. In a 1684 sermon later published as Illustrious Providences, Increase told the Old North congregation that some New Englanders were in fact using counter-magic techniques, and warned them that 'for men to submit to any of the Devils Sacraments is implicitly to make a covenant with him'.[63] Increase followed this sermon with another extended series on witchcraft in 1685. Even after the Salem trials, Increase Mather's preaching would include much of the text of his 1696 publication of Angelographia, in which he would give notice of God's severe condemnation for those who would go to 'fortune tellers, to reveal such things, as cannot be known, but by the help of Evil Angels'.[64]

In a 1691 pre-Salem sermon another clergyman Samuel Willard, a contemporary of Cotton Mather, decried the use of magic formulas intended either for 'the keeping of Devils out of places, or for the Curing of . . . Maladies'. Willard went on to insist that such measures were nothing short of 'plain conjuration, and an horrible abusing of the Name of God . . . establishing the Devils Kingdom'. Subsequent to this, in a sermon preached during the first month of the Salem inquiries, he told his congregation that he believed that Elizabeth Knapp had been

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[61] Ibid, p. 60. For an excellent treatment on this subject see: Stuart Clark, 'Protestant Demonology: Sin, Superstition, and Society' in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen, (eds), Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries (Oxford, 1990), pp. 45-81.
[62] Jonathan Mitchell, 'Continuation of Sermons upon the Body of Divinity,' (Cambridge, 1656).
[63] Increase Mather, Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences (Boston, 1684), p. 261.
[64] Increase Mather, Angelographia (Boston, 1696), p. 25.

possessed by demons, admonishing them to 'examine by this Providence what sins [had] given Satan so much footing in this poor place'.[65]

Charles Morton, a pastor in Charlestown also propagated a view of the hostile and invisible world of demons and witches. Preaching in 1688, Morton claimed that in some natural disasters God 'improves Evil angels as his Instruments and Executioners'.[66] It was Morton, who, along with James Allen, Joshua Moodey, and Samuel Willard, signed the preface to Mather's Memorable Providences attesting to be witnesses of the supernatural things Mather recorded connected to the Goodwin case.

Deodat Lawson also had a significant place in such matters. Preaching against the use of all forms of magic in a message published as Christ's Fidelity he remonstrated his congregation that the use of magic experiments with the 'Sive and Seyssors, the Bible and Key; the White of an Egge in a Glass . . . are from the Devil, not from God'.[67] Similarly, on 24 March 1692 , as he preached from Zechariah 3:2, Lawson declared that in carrying out his diabolical plans Satan would especially choose persons who like recently accused witches Rebecca Nurse or Martha Cory appeared to be the very elect. As he said to them, '. . . It is certain that he never works more like the Prince of Darkness than when he looks most like an angel of light'.[68]

Finally, it would be a serious error to disregard the one New England pastor whose church and household had more to do with the initiation of the Salem trials than any other: Samuel Parris. Throughout his tenure as the Salem village pastor, Parris' sermons reflected the social and political rivalries in his church. Yet, more importantly, as Cooper and Minkema observe,

> His preoccupation with hidden evil in the church, his frequent references to the struggles between the forces of Christ and Satan . . . and his insistence upon the

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[65] Kenneth Silverman, The Life and Times of Cotton Mather (New York, 1984), p. 88. Like Lawson, the minister at Andover, Francis Dane, also found it necessary to preach to his congregation about the dangers of the use of magic, and particularly divination, as his testimony to the Salem judges indicates. See: Salem Witchcraft Papers, 3:881. The Manuscript has not survived. Godbeer suggests that this may indeed be the fate of a number of sermons that were preached against witchcraft during this period. See Godbeer, Devil's Dominion, p. 74.

[66] Godbeer, Devil's Dominion, p. 88.

[67] Lawson, Christ's Fidelity the Only Shield against Satan's Malignity (Boston, 1692), p. 65.

[68] Lawson's sermon is found in Charles Upham's Salem Witchcraft, 2:78-87.

> imminence of an invasion of 'devils,' all helped to create a propitious climate for witchcraft accusations.[69]

Samuel Parris would be voiceferous throughout the Salem ordeal, beginning with the first Sunday that he chastised Salem village church member Mary Sibley for 'going to the Devil for help against the Devil' by using the urine-cake experiment to discover the source of his own children's possession. Both during and after the Salem trials, Parris would use his pulpit as a public forum to both explain the witch invasions, and at times defend the adjudication process.[70] Peter Hoffer, in his book The Devil's Disciples, makes an insightful comment on this issue when he writes,

> Although others may have had unsavory motives for accusing their neighbors of witchcraft, Parris truly believed the Devil had made converts within his own congregation, had insinuated himself into Paris's own family, and had done it to reduce the minister's life to a living hell.[71]

The pre-Salem and Salem event sermons of Cotton Mather's contemporaries demonstrate that he was not the only one to preach on the invisible world and witchcraft during the period in question. Mather's position as the pastor of the Old North Church in Boston simply afforded him a greater weekly audience than any other pulpit in New England, and allowed for a greater proportion of his sermons to be published than most clerics. Even so, Mather's preaching cannot be seen as singular either in their emphasis on witchcraft, or in relation to their role in the Salem tragedy. One would have to agree with David Levin's assessment when he writes,

> These [Mather's] sermons, preached before the first witchcraft accusations of 1692, could hardly have affected anybody in Salem Village until the irrevocable crying-out had resounded through the village and the town for many weeks.[72]

Salem was not New England's first or final witchcraft incident. The propensity toward accusations and prosecution for witchcraft represents the third major pre-existing condition within New England

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[69] James F. Cooper, Jr. and Kenneth P. Minkema, (eds), The Sermon Notebook of Samuel Parris, 1689-1694 (Boston, 1993), p. 3.

[70] Parris discovered that a member of his congregation, Mary Sibley had instructed Tituba to make the now famous 'witch-cake' for the purpose of discovering the source of the Parris family possession. For this sermon, see: 'Records of the Salem-village Church,' in Danvers First Church Records, (Microfilm Copy: Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts, 27 March 1692).

[71] Peter Hoffer, The Devil's Disciples: Makers of the Salem Witchcraft Trials (Baltimore, 1996), p. 18.

[72] David Levin, Cotton Mather, The Young Life of the Lord's Remembrancer (Cambridge, 1978), p. 201.

society that pre-dates the 1690s.

From the inception of the American Colony, the Puritans transferred the basic premises of English law to the New World. Choosing the Mosaic Code as their core ethics, as Robert Oaks indicates, the New England clerics and judges, 'incorporated verbatim into statutes the proscriptions of Leviticus'.[73] By combining English practice with Mosaic law, the Puritan clergy in the New World greatly affected the system of jurisprudence. Justifying their adoption of the Old Testament standards, they insisted that if reason through legal precedent revealed a code of proper and improper behavior, the Bible most certainly set forth injunctions against sin compatible with that older legal system. That the New England settlers accepted this argument can be observed in the cooperation between the courts and the clergy in matters of the prosecution and punishment of offenders. Francis Hill, in her book A Delusion of Satan describes it in these terms:

> The Massachusetts Bay Colony was governed by a secular body called the General Court, but it laws were based on the edicts of the Old Testament . . . in practice it was a dictatorship by an elite of Puritan politicians and clergymen.[74]

In reality, the enforcement of moral order within the Massachusetts Bay Colony was no more severe than it had been in Reformation Geneva or Scotland. A review of the laws of England itself during the same seventeenth-century period suggests that in general, the moral standards demanded by the English legal system were not far removed from those imposed on New England. The modern historical belief in the peculiarity of Puritan justice is perhaps exaggerated not so much by the seventeenth-century judicial code itself as by the exactness of its implementation. This exactness was not limited to cases of witchcraft, since the Puritans took an identical approach to other capital crimes defined in the Bible.[75] To this end, both the initial laws of Plymouth Colony and the 1641 Body of Laws and Liberties of the Massachusetts Bay Colony included multiple types

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[73] Robert Oaks, 'Perceptions of homosexuality by Justices of the Peace in Colonial Virginia', in The Journal of Homosexuality, 5, (1& 2), (Fall-Winter 1979/80), pp. 35-41, see p. 35.
[74] Frances Hill, A Delusion of Satan: The Full Story of the Salem Witch Trials, (London, 1995), p. 15.
[75] Louis Crompton explains this process as a Puritan attempt to 'form a Bible Commonwealth and to bring their laws into line with the Old Testament'. See: Louis Crompton, 'Homosexuals and the death penalty in colonial America,' Journal of Homosexuality, 1, (3), Spring 1976), pp. 277-293, see p. 279.

of offenses punishable by death.[76]

While the punishment for such crimes as murder and treason might seem self-evident in early modern New England, other specific crimes potentially punishable by death included rape and homosexuality. In Colonial New England the death penalty was prescribed for rapes involving 'carnal copulation' with any 'woman child under ten years old', (with or without her consent), or an engaged or married woman. The latter two instances were applied to rape cases since under the Old Testament Law intercourse with an engaged or married woman was defined as 'adultery' and punishable by death.[77]

Similarly, in a particular application of the Old Testament code, homosexuality was defined as a capital offense within seventeenth-century New England and throughout Colonial America. This continued to be the case until the 1790s, at which time from state to state sodomy was largely made non-capital. The New England and Colonial American penal codes for homosexuality were not unusual for the seventeenth century. Sodomy was a capital crime throughout most of Europe until the Napoleonic code of the 1790s and specifically within Britain until 1861. The Bay Colony adopted for their laws against homosexuality the word-for-word translation of Leviticus 20:13 which said, 'If a man lyeth with mankinde as he lyeth with a woman, both of them have committed abhomination, they both shall surely be put to death'.[78] Colonial clerics and judges demonstrated their commitment to enforcing the Old Testament prohibition against this crime when, as Louis Crompton relates, twice in early modern America they executed persons convicted of homosexual activities.[79]

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[76] The first list of 'Capitall offences lyable to death' established in Plymouth Colony included treason, murder, witchcraft, arson, sodomy, rape, and adultery. The '*Body of Laws and Liberties*', adopted by the New England authorities authorized capital punishment for 12 crimes as well. For these laws, see William Bradford's Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647, Samuel E. Morrison, (ed.), (New York, 1975); Records of the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay in New England, (ed.), Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, (2 vols.; Boston, 1853-54); Max Farrand, (ed.), The Laws and Liberties of Massachusetts, (1648 edn.; repr. Cambridge, 1929).

[77] Shurtleff, Records of the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay, 2:21-22.

[78] See: William Whitmore, The Colonial Laws of Massachusetts reprinted from the edition of 1672 . . . together with the Body of Liberties of 1641 (Boston, 1890); Acts and Laws Passed by the Great And General Council or Assembly of the Province Of Massachusetts Bay in New-England from 1692 to 1719 (London, 1724) in British Library General Collections, ASM 79/2.

[79] Crompton, 'Homosexuals and the death penalty in Colonial America', p. 288.

As applied to witchcraft, the laws recognizing and punishing the 'damned art' existed because the colonists had a practical purpose in prohibiting what they believed had dangerous social and spiritual implications. By the seventeenth century a number of New England statues were in place condemning both benevolent and malevolent witchcraft.

The Massachusetts Bay Colony laws of 1641 and 1648 stated categorically, 'If any man or woman be a witch (that hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit), they shall be put to death. Exodus 22:18 Leviticus 20:27 Deuteronomy 18:10-11'. The 1671 and 1685 laws of Plymouth Colony specifically expressed 'If any Christian (so called) be a witch, that is, hath, or consulteth with a familiar spirit; he or they shall be put to death'. The Rhode Island and Providence Plantation's judiciary used similar language. The 1647 statute declared 'Witchcraft is forbidden by the present Assembly to be used in this colony; and the penalty imposed by the authority that we are subjected to is felony of death'.

The New Haven Colony law of 1656 warned, 'If any person be a witch, he or she shall be put to death according to Exodus 22:18 Leviticus 20:27 Deuteronomy 18:10-11'. Connecticut records show a 1672 ordinance demanding that 'If any man or woman be a witch, that is, hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit, they shall be put to death, Exodus 22:18 Leviticus 20:27 Deuteronomy 18:10-11'. Finally, the 1679\80 Cutt Code of New Hampshire pronounced, 'If any Christian, so-called, be a witch, that is, hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit, he or they shall be put to death'. [80]

A perusal of New England's clerical and court records reveal that from the 1620s to 1646, there were few witchcraft allegations within New England that reached official hearings and were brought to trial. Even though the Antinomian controversy had diabolical overtones, (as noted in chapter three), the Hutchinson crisis was treated as a case of heresy, and not specifically as a witchcraft trial.

This seemingly quiet period would come to a halt when in 1647 Alice Young and

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[80] This list is largely drawn from David D. Hall, Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England, See: 'Appendix: Statutes Relating to Witchcraft in New England', pp. 315-16.

Elizabeth Kendall were both executed for witchcraft.[81] The pace of formal complaints and trials steadily increased with the June 1648 trial of Margaret Jones, in the city of Charlestown. Governor Winthrop presided at Jones' trial in which she was accused of having a 'malignant touch' that caused others to become sick or to become deaf. Margaret Jones became the first accused witch in Massachusetts to be executed, initiating the now familiar pattern of New England witch trials.[82]

Beginning with the same year, 1648, and until 1665, Hartford Connecticut became the location of the first serious outbreak of witch trials and executions, with only a few acquittals. In 1648, Mary Johnson of Hartford was tried as a witch and executed upon her confession of having had 'familiarity with the Devill'.[83] Hartford was also the site of the trial of Mary and Hugh Parsons, a husband and wife. Mary Parson faced witchcraft allegations in 1651 and 1674. Hugh Parsons was tried in 1652. Neither husband nor wife was convicted. In 1663 a woman named Greensmith was tried and hanged for diabolical practices. And in 1665, Elizabeth Segur was condemned at Hartford but released by the court before her sentence could be carried out.

In 1670 at Northampton, Mary Webster of Hadley was examined, sent to Boston for further interrogation and finally acquitted by that court. This, however, was not the end of the situation. When she returned home she was accosted by a group of young men who dragged her from her home and hung her upside down until she nearly died of suffocation. Essex County, in Massachusetts, had a similar history from 1652 until the first of the Salem trials. During this period witchcraft accusations resulted in no less than three trials and the execution of a woman named Hibbins.[84]

It should also be noted that New England was not the only American setting for witch

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[81] There are no extant records descriptive of the charges or examinations for either woman. Windsor Connecticut town clerk Matthew Grant, and Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop's journals indicate the conviction and execution of the accused. See: John Winthrop, 'History of New England, 1630-1649', in James Kendall Hosmer (ed.), Original Narratives of Early American History (2 vols.; New York, 1908), 2:323 and Matthew Grant, 'Diary, 1637-1654' in Archives, History and Genealogy Unit, Connecticut State Library, verso of front cover.

[82] Winthrop, 'History of New England, 1630-1649', 1:268.

[83] See Samuel Drake, (ed.), Annals of Witchcraft, Woodward's Historical Series (8 vols.; New York, 1869) 8:62.

[84] Poole, Cotton Mather and Salem Witchcraft, p. 12.

trials and executions during the seventeenth century. New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia saw similar cases regularly within this same period. As Silverman points out, the 'Colonial courts tried more than eighty such cases from 1647 to 1691 resulting in twenty executions and many more fines, banishments, and whippings'.[85]

Beyond the pattern of periodic witch outbreaks and prosecutions, the New England witch trials also demonstrate a consistency with that of their English and Continental counterparts in one other important aspect: the high percentage of alleged witches who were female. In Europe, James Sharpe indicates that 'as a whole, something like 80 percent of those accused of witchcraft were at the courts were women, while in England, a figure nearer 90 percent was not uncommon in samples of cases tried at the assizes'.[86] Similarly, in early modern New England witch trials, and specifically the Salem outbreak the majority of accused witches were women. Of these, sixty-one were married, twenty widowed, and twenty-nine were single.

The linking of women and witchcraft has roots in earlier witchcraft scholarship. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries alone, a number of sources alleged this propensity of women towards witchcraft. A few examples are relevant here: Nicolas Remy, the Lorraine judge and witch prosecutor in the 1590's did not find it 'unreasonable that this scum of humanity [witches] should be drawn chiefly from the feminine sex'.[87] Nor would Henri Boguet the witch-hunter and prosecutor in the Burgundian Franche-Compte. He agreed with this analysis writing: 'The Devil knows that women love carnal pleasures, and he means to bind them to his allegiance by such agreeable provocations'.[88]

In his 1608 treatise The Damned Art, English witchcraft expert William Perkins observed that 'The woman, being the weaker sex, is sooner entangled by the devil's illusions with this damnable art than the man'.[89] Alexander Roberts had made a similar connection in his

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[85] Silverman, Cotton Mather, p. 89.
[86] Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness, p. 169.
[87] Nicolas Remy, Demonolatry, (Lyon, 1595), (ed.), Montague Summers, (New York, 1974), Book 1, chapter 15.
[88] Henri Boguet, An Examen of Witches (N.p. 1929), chapter 13.
[89] Perkins, The Damned Art, quoted in Gragg, The Salem Witch Crisis, p. 12.

1616 A Treatise of Witchcraft, writing, 'women more easily receive the impression of the Divell'.[90]

Recognizing this evidence, scholars have offered varying explanations for this historical association of women with witchcraft. As noted in the introduction, one approach taken by a number of feminist writers argues that the explanation of this association between women and witchcraft can be found in the mysogynistic mindset on the part of the male-dominated early modern society. Christina Larner's monumental work on Scottish witchcraft beliefs and prosecutions, Enemies of God, concluded that witchcraft could be shown to be sex-related though not sex specific, whether examined in the Continental, English, or New England setting. She suggests that the Scottish witch-hunts were primarily a result of the emergence of a new type of post-Reformation Christianity, and Catholic counter-Reformation thought within seventeenth-century Scotland.[91] She focused on what has been described as the 'validating ideologies such as moral purity, moral control and, by extension, law and order consciousness . . . pre-existent misogynistic notions interacted with new religious, political and social processes'.[92]

In a similar vein, Carol Karlsen portrays the witchcraft persecutions in New England as being predominantly a byproduct of mysogynistic viewpoints in Puritan society. Karlsen argues that women were identified with witchcraft when their behavior challenged the male-dominated societal ordering. The Puritans were, for Karlsen, marked by their purposeful teaching and ordering of women, and their attempt to train women to submission. Karlsen suggests that witch hunts and persecutions were often the result of what she calls 'the fear of female sexual power' mediated through the practice of magic, midwife practice, and other female-centred activities.[93]

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[90] Alexander Roberts, A Treatise of Witchcraft: Wherein Sundry Propositions are Laid Down, Plainely Discovering the Witnesse of that Damnable Art (London, 1616), pp. 40-47.

[91] Christian Larner, Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief (Oxford, 1984), (Published posthumously under the editorship of Alan Macfarlane). See chapter eight on 'Who Were the Witches'.

[92] Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness, p. 171.

[93] Carol Karlsen, The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England (New York, 1989), p. 256. On the issue of the midwife as the common subject of witchcraft accusations, Robin Briggs challenges this notion:

> The idea that midwives were commonly accused of witchcraft has proved quite

Other scholars such as Elizabeth Reis suggests in her book Damned Women, that the unequal ratio of female to male witches and accusers is a direct outcome of the application of Puritan theology.[94] Citing seventeenth-century Puritan sermons, as well as midwifery and medical tracts in circulation in New England, Reis indicates a shared assumption by men and women that although 'women and men would be equal before God and the Devil, . . . women were more likely than men to submit to Satan and become witches'.[95] Reis suggests that although the Salem witch-trial process was clearly in the control of the male adjudication panel, both accused and accusing women reaffirmed the role of women in society through their response to cultural expectations both while on the witness stand and in acting as examiners. In short, Reis argues that they were following a culturally transmitted script on gender roles, which both affirmed the proper Puritan view of womanhood, while at the same time agreeing with a process that identified those who did not fit the proper model of a Christian woman.[96]

Finally, in bringing a balance to the discussion of the linking of women and witchcraft, it is important to note that despite the higher numbers of seventeenth-century women witch-suspects, witchcraft and maleficience was not an exclusively 'female' crime. Robin Briggs makes point when he writes:

> Although every serious historical account recognizes that large numbers of men were accused and executed on similar charges, this fact has never really penetrated to become part of the general knowledge on the subject.[97]

The historical evidence points to fact that men were not believed to be any less capable of engaging

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> untenable . . . surviving European records show very few such cases. A painstaking check of all known British cases reveals precisely two rather dubious instances in England, and fourteen out of some 3,000 accused in Scotland. In both countries midwives, far from being prime targets, are under-represented among the suspects.

See Robin Briggs, Witches and Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft (New York, 1996), p. 279.

[94] Elizabeth Reis, Damned Women, Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England (New York, 1997), preface, xvi.

[95] Ibid, pp. 5, 94. Reis specifically notes the correlation between the Devil's pact and episodes involving the demonic possession of a witch.

[96] Carol Karlsen estimates that in New England's overall history of witch prosecutions some sixty-seven out of seventy-eight accusations were brought against women by allegedly possessed women. See: Karlsen, The Devil in the Shape of a Woman, p. 223.

[97] Briggs, Witches and Neighbors, p. 259.

in white magic, maleficium, or compact witchcraft. In some individual witch-hunts, particularly in continental Europe, the number of men prosecuted was equal to or greater than that of women, especially in cases where witches were prosecuted primarily as heretics or for treason.[98] As Brian Levack suggests:

> In some of the woodcuts and engravings produced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially those illustrating the pact with the Devil, male and female witches are shown in equal numbers.[99]

Seventeenth-century legal structures did not necessarily mandate, or point to a specifically female identity for the witch.. Within Old and New England, men were just as 'eligible' to be examined since there was nothing in the definitions or legal prohibitions that excluded males from witchcraft allegations. In reference to English witchcraft, Sharpe places this in perspective:

> . . . in our discussion of women and witchcraft we should not lose sight of one basic point: men were accused of witchcraft . . . the current interpretation would suggest that most men accused of witchcraft were related to a female witch, either through blood or though marriage. . . . Occasionally however, it is possible to find a male witch who seemed to enjoy an individual career.[100]

In seventeenth-century New England, men figure generally as witchcraft participants in the Salem court transcripts, but also specifically, as in the case of George Burroughs. The former Baptist minister and accused Salem-Andover witch cult leader seems to have enjoyed the 'individual career' Sharpe describes.

Nonetheless, as this material suggests, the consistency of gender bias in witchcraft prosecutions represents an equivalence throughout European and Northern American perceptions of the likelihood of women being witches, and strongly reinforces the evidence for a trans-Atlantic community of belief and function, in relation to witchcraft, drawn from intellectual and legal sources.

In light of the preexisting pattern of witch trials within New England, a pertinent

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[98] William E. Monter notes that during the fifteenth century the number of men executed far outweighed females in the Jura region during the Waldensian Heresy. See his book, Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands during the Reformation (New York, 1976), pp. 23-24. In a similar situation, some seventy-two percent of all witches were male in the Aragonese Inquisition.

[99] Levack, The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe, p. 125.

[100] Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness, p. 188.

question regarding this would be if near the end or after the Salem events anything relative to witchcraft prosecutions had changed? In other words, had the colonists changed their minds about the necessity for laws or prosecutions against witchcraft? They had not. One indication of this continuing pattern is the passage of 'A Bill Against Conjurations, Witchcraft, and Dealing with Evil and Wicked Spirits' ratified by the Boston Legislature in December 1692, just before the termination of the Salem trials. The thrust of the re-enacted prohibition against all forms of witchcraft is evident in the General Court's adoption of this statute warning the New England populace that,

> . . . If any persons shall use, practice or Exercise any Invocation or Conjuration of any evil and wicked Spirit, Or shall consult, covenant with Entertain, Employ, feed or reward any evil and wicked Spirit for any intent or purpose . . . or shall use, practice or Exercise any Witchcraft Inchantment charm or Sorcery, whereby any persons shall be killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, pined or lamed in his or her body or any part thereof, That then every such Offender or Offenders, their Aiders, Abetters, and Counsellors . . . shall suffer pains of death as a Felon or Felons.[101]

Nor would the Salem events end New England's witch trials, since arrests and trials for witchcraft would continue well into eighteenth century, demonstrating the continuity of the fear of witches and their malevolent powers.

Conclusion

The Salem witch trials were simply one more turn in an ever-present cycle of witchcraft accusations, trials, and executions. Cotton Mather's presence in Boston could not have been the key factor that led to the trials, since as Kenneth Silverman insists, 'The enormous likelihood is that the girls at Salem would have become possessed, and their alleged tormentors would have been tried and hanged, had Cotton Mather never existed'.[102]

There are significant reasons for believing this. First, as the previous chapter demonstrated, seventeenth-century New Englanders maintained a largely congruent set of witchcraft beliefs that pre-dated the Salem episode. Second, as this chapter has shown, against the backdrop of seventeenth-century New England witchcraft beliefs, a better argument can be

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[101] Salem Witchcraft Papers, 3:885.
[102] Ibid, p. 90.

made that the Salem events were predisposed by the prevalence of prior witchcraft publications in New England, contemporaneous preaching about witchcraft, and a legacy of prior witchcraft trials and executions.

Accordingly, this thesis now proceeds to an explanation of Cotton Mather's theology as it applies to the specific circumstances of the events at Salem.

CHAPTER FIVE

A PREDICTABLE RESPONSE TO SALEM WITCHCRAFT

A Malefactor, accused of Witchcraft . . . Executed in this place more than Forty Years ago, did then give Notice of, an Horrible plot against the Country by WITCHCRAFT then laid, which if it were not seasonably discovered, would probably Blow up, and pull down all the Churches in the Country. And we have now with Horror seen the Discovery of such a Witchcraft!

Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World (1693)

As the previous chapter has shown, when the pre-existing factors integral within New England's religious and social structure prior to the Salem trials are examined, it becomes clear that Cotton Mather could not have had a decided affect upon the initiation of the trials. No precise link between Cotton Mather and the initiation of the trials can be demonstrated. Instead, Mather had a conspicuous but limited part in the trials, the scope of which derived more from New England's judicial cooperation between the judges and clergy, and Mather's personal ministerial prominence in Boston.

It is equally true, however, that an equitable historical analysis cannot be allowed to end with this conclusion or anything like the total denial of the allegations critical of Cotton Mather. Rather, it leads us to an assessment of his conduct as it related directly to the entire Salem affair. In the light of Mather's pre-conceived, cohesive cosmology, the issue that must be addressed is the extent to which those beliefs were acted out prior to and during the Salem trials. This chapter will begin the process of doing just this.

There are however, a number of complications in assessing the evidence for what that behaviour in fact was. Perhaps the most difficult of these lies in the nature of Mather's own most comprehensive statement of events. Scholars have criticized not only Cotton Mather's behavior during the trials, but also the integrity of Mather's main statement on the subject of Salem witchcraft, The Wonders of the Invisible World. Wonders has been identified by various scholars as Mather's justification for the entire Salem situation. Peter Hoffer, for instance, complains: 'Would that we could trust that tract, but its author was a partisan . . . Mather lionized the judges

and approved everything they did, casting some doubt upon the validation process'.[1] Wonders alone is therefore not sufficient as a source from which to form an analysis of the integrity and consistency of Mather's conduct in Salem's witchcraft episode. Such an analysis would be compromised by the singularly complicated account contained in Wonders, an account by a prominent Boston pastor with some serious personal doubts about what had transpired.

Fortunately, although Wonders is Mather's most comprehensive work detailing both his cosmology and the historical outline of the trials, it is not the only Mather document contemporary to the Salem trials. Wonders was the culmination of Mather's thinking about witchcraft to the year 1693 rather than a coherent pronouncement of a well articulated cosmology. There are supporting documents Mather wrote before, during, and after the Salem episode including his personal letters, and his unpublished diary, as well as tracts such as Remarkable Providences and Magnalia Christi Americana. Using these resources in a corroboratory and comparative manner creates a much broader portrait of Mather's cosmology and the nature of his overall response to witchcraft events within New England and specifically the New England of the early 1690s.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the continuity between Cotton Mather's cosmology and conduct pertaining to the Salem witch episode. Using several of Mather works, the first half of the chapter will demonstrate Mather's pattern of interpreting his era's international, local, and personal events within his preconceived worldview as spiritual warfare and end-times indicators. The balance of the chapter outlines the three main points of Mather's propositions about the meaning of the Salem witchcraft episode as detailed in The Wonders of the Invisible World. Using Wonders as a benchmark, Mather's other major works, Diary, Remarkable Providences, and Magnalia Christi Americana are examined to show how Mather's cosmology was employed in several episodes of witchcraft within New England including that of Salem. This includes Mather's pattern of spiritual intervention in witchcraft cases through fasting and prayer, as opposed to any involvement in adjudicatory matters as expressed in the final chapter of the thesis. The result is a portrait of the interrelationship between Mather's stated beliefs and his response to witchcraft

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[1] Peter Hoffer, The Devil's Disciples: Makers of the Salem Witchcraft Trials (Boston, 1996), p. 157.

episodes.

A Consistent Pattern of Cosmological Interpretation

In keeping with the model of his Puritan forefathers, Cotton Mather observed the events and circumstances of his generation through a specifically Puritan, biblical and eschatological understanding. His theological disposition, which affected his interpretation, is critical because it largely determined Cotton Mather's response not only to Salem witchcraft, but also to all incidents of New England witchcraft. As the historical evidence bears out, Mather's reaction to 'preternatural' events, stemming from malevolent witchcraft was both predictable and consistent.

Apart from his attitudes towards witchcraft, Cotton Mather's writings reveal that he employed a distinct pattern of interpreting seventeenth-century events on multiple levels in relation to contemporary events both in New England and on the international stage. He also analyzed the world in light of much more personal circumstances. Consequently, his habits of interpretation affected not only what he understood, but also how he responded.

Throughout his life, Cotton Mather's propensity was to place the world's more pronounced incidents into the scheme of his cosmology. Mather viewed seventeenth-century international religious and political situations, national revolts, and military conflicts in this way. This was equally true when the situation dealt with witchcraft. He consistently saw world events as the battleground in which God and Satan vied for the control of the human race, interpreting those events in the light of the Biblical prophecies.

One area from which Mather drew cosmological implications was that of natural disasters. An example of this is Mather's commentary on the earthquake that struck the island city of Port Royal, Jamaica on 7 June 1692. When word of the earthquake reached Boston, Mather changed his 4 August 1692 lecture-day message to reflect the news of this catastrophe. Calling Port Royal 'the Tyrus of the whole English America, but a very Sodom for wickedness', Mather declared that God had judged the wicked city since:

> Just before the earthquake the People were violently and scandalously set upon going to Fortune-Tellers upon all Occasions; much notice was taken of this Impiety generally prevailing among the People; But none of those wretched

Fortune-Tellers could foresee or forestall the direful Catastrophe.[2]

Mather then drew a parallel between Port Royal and Boston, referring to 'Fortune-Tellers in this Town [Boston] consulted by some of the sinful inhabitants'.[3] He went on to warn the assembly that the Port Royal catastrophe was an end-times portent of the judgment to come for the 'high treason' of fortune telling and other forms of witchcraft in New England.

International political and religious persecutions such as the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 and the resulting immigration of the French Protestants to America could also be understood this way. This political reversal ended any hopes of pluralism in France, precipitating the closure of the final one third of French Protestant churches. Although it was illegal, many French Protestants emigrated to New England through the West Indies, but not without extreme physical and financial hardships.

Cotton Mather also identified these events as an end-times indicator, insisting that Satan was clearly the active force behind the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the persecution of French Protestants. In Wonders of the Invisible World, Mather writes that:

> The late French Persecution is perhaps the horriblest that ever was in the World: And as the Devil of Mascon seems before to have meant it in his out-cries upon the Miseries preparing for the poor Hugenots! Thus it has been all acted by a singular Fury of the old Dragon inspiring of his Emissaries.[4]

Using much of the same biblically illustrative and prophetic language, Cotton Mather also sought to explain New England's own political, religious and catastrophic events. In Magnalia Christi Americana, Mather's extensive historical rendering of New England's New World experiment, Mather describes a number of ecclesiastical, political and military challenges faced by New England. One notable example is Mather's approach to the Quakers' incursion into seventeenth-century New England. As radical millenarians, with similarities to the English Fifth Monarchy Men, the Quakers saw their task as preparing the world for the Second Coming of Christ. Like many other seventeenth-century Christians, the Puritans also played this millenarian strain, but the Quakers representation of these ideas stood in stark opposition to the Puritans. Whereas the

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[2] See Kenneth Silverman, Selected Letters of Cotton Mather (Baton Rouge, 1971), p. 41.
[3] Cotton Mather, Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681-1703, 1709-1724 (2 vols.; New York, 1957), 1:257.
[4] This passage is quoted and further described in Cotton Mather's Diary, 1:135.

Puritan's preparation was seen in external, visible manifestations, the Quakers emphasis was upon the internal, invisible realization of this truth. Subsequently, as Phillip Gura writes, the Quakers

> . . . confirmed their worst fears about the final tendency of radical spiritism [which] undermined the Puritans' elaborately constructed Bible Commonwealth and threatened New England with the religious anarchy that in England eventually led to the reinstatement of Anglicanism as the nation's official faith.[5]

Throughout New England, the official reaction to the Quakers came in two forms: persecution and accusations of diabolism. Carol Karlsen records the response of the New England leadership to the arrival of the first two female Quaker preachers in Boston in 1656.

> Ann Austin and Mary Fisher were arrested as witches before they ever reached shore. Acting Governor Richard Bellingham ordered both Austin and Fisher stripped naked on board ship and their bodies examined for signs of Devil worship. Their possessions were searched for books containing "corrupt, heretical, and blasphemous Doctrines".[6]

Despite the authorities' rough treatment and deportation of Austin and Fisher, during the decades that followed the Quakers eventually made inroads into New England. In 1682 when William Penn arrived in the New World he carried a charter from Charles II to establish a new colony and the monarch's decree for the colonies to repeal many of their punitive laws against the sect. Consequently, by the late seventeenth century, the Quakers, with their stronghold in Pennsylvania had ruptured the religious monopoly held by the New England Puritan institutionalized church.

Like other clerics, Cotton Mather believed that God intended New England to be Puritan throughout. Mather therefore viewed the introduction of religious sects into New England as a work of the Devil to destroy 'Christian' and more importantly 'Puritan America'. Mather's view that the growth of Quakerism posed a genuine spiritual threat to Protestantism is clear in his explicit opposition to them.

In the introduction to his sermon Little Flocks guarded against Grievous Wolves, published in 1691, Mather charged that the physical manifestations and powers of the Quakers were nothing

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[5] Phillip Guru, A Glimpse of Sion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620-1660 (Middletown, 1984), p. 151.

[6] Carol F. Karlsen, The Devil in the Shape of a Woman, Witchcraft in Colonial New England (New York, 1997), p. 123. For primary source reading on this event can be found in Humphrey Norton's account entitled, New England's Ensign: Being the Account of Cruelty, the Professors' Pride, and the Articles of Faith (London, 1659), pp. 5-11.

less than the work of Satan. Mather claimed that the conversion of one young woman to the Society of Friends in the 1680s was simultaneous with her possession by demons. Quoting his father, Mather wrote in Magnalia Christi Americana, 'Diabolical Possession was the Thing which did dispose and encline Men unto Quakerism'.[7] In a further coupling of Quakerism and demonic possession, he stigmatized the notable manifestations of the Quakers this way:

> . . . The quaking which distinguished these poor creatures was a symptom of diabolical possession . . . there could be nothing less than a diabolical possession in many other things that attended and advanced Quakerism . . . .[8]

The Quakers and other radical separatists were not the only religious threats to New England's 'errand in the wilderness'. There were also struggles internal to New England Puritanism itself, such as the establishment of successive Puritan churches within New England and specifically Boston. Some resulted from divisions within the congregational churches themselves. First had come the debate over the Halfway Covenant Synod of 1662. By the 1690's, certain segments of Puritans were again straying from the original premises of New England's Congregationalist pattern of baptism and church membership predicated upon evidence of salvific grace. The result was a move towards allowing participation in the sacraments to a wider portion of the population.

This controversy would gain importance in the years after the Salem events. Out of this debate the Brattle Street Church formed in 1699, providing a rival of Cotton Mather's Old North Church. The Brattle Street Church founders included some former Mather supporters, such as Solomon Stoddard and the wealthy Thomas Brattle, from whom the church derived its name.

The church had two distinctive features; its architectural and ecclesiastical structure. The Brattle Street church construction imitated the churches of England, with a full tower and a spire at one end rather than the central turret common to New England Congregationalist buildings. The church also adopted more ecumenical standards, claiming its governing structure to be in the spirit of the United Brethren of England - the recently aligned English Presbyterian and Congregational

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[7] Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana (2 vols.; London, 1702; repr. Hartford, 1853), 2:528.
[8] Mather, Magnalia, 2:528. Near the end of his life, Cotton Mather displayed a recurring pattern of ambidextrous reasoning by accepting the Quakers as 'spiritual Friends'. This occurred as Mather shifted his viewpoint in an attempt to create an ecumenical spirit in New England. See: Thomas J. Holmes, Cotton Mather: A Bibliography of his Works, (3 vols.; Newton, 1974), 2:564-69.

churches. This included the admission of members to communion and baptism without requiring a conversion statement and allowing the church membership to elect its ministers. Cotton Mather's reaction to this was direct and wrathful. He rejected the new church, likening its formation to an assault by Satan against Puritan New England:

> I see Satan beginning a terrible shake unto the Churches of New England; and the Innovators, that have sett up a new Church in Boston (a new one indeed!). . . . The Men are ignorant, arrogant, obstinate, and full of Malice and Slander, and they fill the Land with Lyes. . . .[9]

Near the end of his life, Mather would continue to place New England's events within this framework as an example from 1721 demonstrates. That year New England would suffer one of its worst smallpox epidemics. Cotton Mather fought ardently for the inoculation of the population against the disease and succeeded in spite of volatile opposition. Mather drew parallels between the battle to institute inoculations, the suffering of the infected, and spiritual warfare. Placing these within a cosmological framework, Mather wrote in his Diary,

> The Destroyer being enraged at the Proposal of anything, that may rescue the Lives of our poor People from him, has taken a strange Possession of the People on this Occasion. They rave, they rail, they blaspheme . . .[10]

Cotton Mather also perceived the situations and phenomenon of his own life, whether positive or negative, within the boundaries of his cosmology. His worldview held considerable sway over his analysis of incidents related to the invisible and supernatural realm. Included in Mather's journals are claims of Divine guidance through visions, dreams, scriptural illumination, and angelic visitations.[11]

Cotton Mather's personal contact with the hostile invisible world was equally consequential. Whether preaching from his Boston pulpit or writing in his journal Mather often described personal incidents and obstacles through the lens of this conflict with Satan. No greater primary records of this conflict exist than Cotton Mather's then unpublished diary, and Magnalia Christi Americana, which detail many of his attempts at comprehending both the will of God and

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[9] Cotton Mather, Diary, 1:330.
[10] Ibid, 2:632.
[11] Mather's claim was that an angel, he called the 'Angel of Bethesda', had appeared which promised him he would accomplish great things for God in his ministry in New England. For more on this, see Kenneth

the mystery of God's actions in his personal life.

Beyond any doubt, Mather believed himself to be personally and decidedly locked in a battle with the Devil. Within his Diary, Mather details this battle in terms of spiritual oppression used by Satan to dissuade Mather from his ministerial duties:

> Satan has made violent and surprising Assaults upon me . . . it is an incredible Force, with which the Satanic Energy hath at certain Times, bore in upon my Soul . . . and the presence of it hath made the Confusion of my Mind unutterable, and unsupportable.[12]

Spiritual oppression was not the Devil's only weapon. Mather frequently mentions in his diary his anticipation of the Devil's assault against his person, family, or possessions. An example that illustrates this is a personal tragedy that Mather experienced in March 1693 during the Salem witchcraft episode. In his Diary, Mather relates that his then pregnant wife, Abigail 'a few weeks before her Deliverance, was affrighted with an horrible Spectre, in our Porch, which Fright caused her Bowels to turn within her'.[13]

When Abigail gave birth to a male infant, it died within a few days. Afterwards, Mather either conducted or assisted in an autopsy, which linked the infant's death to a deformity in its lower intestinal tract. Given the context of Mather and New England's contemporary struggle with the witches, the medical evidence seemed to verify Mather's 'great Reason to suspect a Witchcraft, in this praeternatural Accident'.[14]

Six months later, after the Salem trials, Mather was scheduled to preach at Salem village. While there he intended to gather some further documents on the recent witch trials for preservation in his forthcoming 'Church-History' of New England, Biblia Americana. During the journey, Mather lost three sermon manuscripts, about which he wrote in his diary: 'These Notes, were before the Sabbath, stolen from mee, with such Circumstances, that I am somewhat satisfied, The Spectres, or Agents in the invisible World, were the Robbers'.[15] Mather equated the manuscript theft with a satanic attempt to prevent him from preaching at the seat of the recent witch trials.

Silverman's The Life and Times of Cotton Mather, (New York, 1984), p. 128.

[12] Mather, Diary, 1:585.

[13] Ibid, 1:164.

[14] Ibid, 1:164.

[15] Ibid, 1:172.

When Mather returned to Boston, he was asked to pray for Margaret Rule, a young neighbor woman suffering from an apparent witch-possession. Before her deliverance, Rule claimed Mather's sermon notes had been stolen by the very spectres tormenting her and predicted the notes would be returned. A few days later, when the manuscripts were found scattered about the streets of Lynn Village and returned to Mather he marveled at the 'exactness of their Praeservation', writing triumphantly in his journal that, 'God helped me . . . so that the Divel got nothing!'[16]

At times, Mather could be excessive in this application of a personal battle with the Devil. In a particularly self-absorbed moment, writing in his Diary Mather implied that the Salem witch assault might have been Satan's retaliation against Mather's own evangelizing efforts in New England:

> This Assault of the Evil Angels upon the Countrey, was intended by Hell, as a particular Defiance, unto my poor Endeavors, to bring the Souls of men unto heaven . . . it enflamed my Endeavors this Winter to do yett more, in a direct opposition unto the Divel.[17]

Whether or not Mather really believed that the Salem invasion was a direct attack of Satan upon Mather's endeavors, he was certain the ongoing criticism of Robert Calef over the theological and adjudicatory issues connected to the Salem Trials was. Without specifically naming Calef, Mather depicts a recent letter from Calef in his journal in explicitly diabolical terms:

> This day I was buffeted with a libellous Letter from a Merchant in this Town, fill'd with Scurrilities that I suppose were hardly ever aequalled in the World. The Divel stared in every Line of it. A Legion together could scarce have out done it.[18]

As these examples demonstrate, Cotton Mather maintained a consistent pattern of interpreting the events of his era cosmologically and eschatologically. Whether it was the minor loss of some sermon notes or the cataclysmic destruction of an entire city by an earthquake, nothing transpired in Mather's world that did not possess some spiritual, if not supernatural significance.

A Correspondence of Belief and Response to Salem Witchcraft

Cotton Mather's general pattern of interpreting contemporary international, New England, and personal events through the grid of his cosmology would find a significant application during the

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[16] Ibid, 1:172-3.
[17] Ibid, 1:155-56.
[18] Ibid, 2:99.

Salem witchcraft chapter. Mather interpreted the Salem trials as an extension of God's judgment, as well as the outcropping of the war between New England and the Devil.

In reviewing three of Mather's main works, The Wonders of the Invisible World, his Diary, and Magnalia Christi Americana, the salient points of his conviction concerning Salem witchcraft can be seen. Within Wonders, the synthesis of Mather's eschatological expectations and pre-Salem assessment of New England's moral state, Mather argues that genuine witchcraft had been present at Salem. Viewed together these propositions suggest he believed Salem Village's witchcraft invasion was the focal point of three converging situations: God's judgment upon New England's spiritual decline, a demonic retaliation due to the Puritan settlement of America, and an end-time plot of Satan to destroy the establishment of New England.

For each of Mather's postulates as to the meaning of the Salem episode, he displayed a pattern of behavior consistent with his own interpretation of the predicament the New England clergy and government faced. This section suggests that he not only believed in the reality of the threats, but that this belief informed his conduct at every level.

As far a Cotton Mather was concerned, the Puritans of the seventeenth century had largely failed to live out the vision of their forefathers typified by John Winthrop's theme of 'A City Set on a Hill'. In Wonders, Mather extols the piety and holiness of the first generation New World-Puritans who desiring 'Reformation . . . embraced a voluntary Exile in a squalid, horrid, American Desert, rather than to live in Contentions with their Brethren'.[19] To Mather, the expression of this first generation piety could be seen in Giles Firmin's speech to Parliament, in which he boasted that in his first seven years of life in New England he 'never saw one man drunk, or heard one oath sworn, or beheld one beggar in the streets'.[20]

Cotton Mather saw the New England of 1692, dramatically termed, as a society suffering a significant spiritual relapse. Mather's jeremiads at the Old North Church in Boston insisted that

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[19] Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World (Boston, 1693), in Samuel Drake, (ed.), The Witchcraft Delusion in New England (3 vols.; New York, 1866; repr. 1970), 1:6.
[20] Mather, Wonders, 1:6.

New England had 'miserably degenerated from the first Love' of their predecessors.[21] To Mather, the former 'true Utopia' of New England, had become 'a nest of swearing, Sabbath-breaking, whoring, drunkenness'.[22]

Wonders was in part a denunciation of the sins of the people of the day.[23] Within its pages, Cotton Mather pointed to the recent adverse conditions New England had experienced, for which the Colony had 'all the reason to ascribe it unto the Rebuke of Heaven' for their 'manifold Apostates'. He warned his generation that 'We make no right use of our Disasters: if we do not, Remember whence we are fallen, and repent, and do the first Works'.[24]

These disasters, repeatedly cited by Mather, were an ever increasing series of 'judgments' which had befallen New England in the form of severe calamities. Religious threats had abounded in the form of the Antinomian error,[25] the rise of the Quakers, the incursion of the Baptist-Arminian influence, and the worrisome presence of the Crown's Episcopal churches. Hostilities or threats of war had also either occurred or loomed close, such as the Indian attacks, the distant, but still frightening European wars, (i.e., the Glorious Revolution with the warfare in Scotland and Ireland), and the ever-present threat of a French invasion in the New World. Added to this, there had been inexplicable crop failures, disease-related plagues, droughts, fires, and storms. Finally, there had been the revocation of the Bay Charter, the conflict with Governor Andros, and the threat of English military rule in New England under Kirke.

To Mather, if God's judgment on New England's backsliding had not been evident enough, there came another prodigious calamity -- the onset of Salem witchcraft -- God's climatic sentence upon a people in spiritual decline. In Peter Hoffer's words:

> Mather correctly reckoned the crucial ministerial issues for his generation were moral and social, part of the goal of recovering the founders' community spirit and the purity of worship. Against this, he judged, the threat of witchcraft was primarily directed, for witchcraft did not raise doctrinal problems so much as

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[21] Ibid, 1:13-14.

[22] Perry Miller, The New England Mind, Colony to Province (Cambridge, 1953), p. 282.

[23] Mather, Wonders, 1:282. Perry Miller described the first part of Wonders as 'reconstituted jeremiads' and the 'epitome of all the pronouncements since 1689'. Miller, New England Mind, p. 282.

[24] Ibid, 1:15.

[25] See notes on this in Cotton Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana, (ed.), Kenneth B. Murdock, (2 vols.; Cambridge, 1977), 2:443, n220:90.

social ones.[26]

In a multitude of references within The Wonders of the Invisible World, Mather intimates that Salem witchcraft was the equivalent of God's judgement on Salem. In writing the first half of Wonders, Mather presents several postulates, by which he detailed this view.

First, Mather points out that God severely judged New England by witchcraft because their place of prominence demanded greater allegiance to Him than they had offered. Here is his contention:

> The Kingdoms of Sweden, Denmark, Scotland, yea and England itself, as well as the Province of New-England, have had their Storms of Witchcrafts breaking upon them . . . And it is not uneasie to be imagined, that God has not brought out all the Witchcrafts in many other Lands with such a speedy, dreadful, destroying Jealousie, as burns . . . here in the Land of the Uprightness: Transgressors may more quickly here than elsewhere become a Prey to the Vengeance of Him. . . .[27]

In Mather's mind, it would come as no surprise if 'witch storms' might break upon nations he considered lesser in godliness and teleological importance. Even Old England might experience these trials as part of the judgment of God for its unfaithfulness and spiritual decline. However, New England, the site of God's great Puritan colony, naturally attracted God's sentence more quickly and severely enacted precisely because of God's jealousy over New England's 'High Treason', her idolatry connected to Satan.

Mather also describes the invasion and execution of the witches as the chastisement of God for New England's corporate sins. The villages had been rife with those errors the clergy had long been preaching against: backbiting, talebearing, scandal mongering, card playing, drunkenness, law suits, complaints, clamours, and the lack of church attendance. In addition, as previously demonstrated some portions of the New England populace had transgressed through lesser magical practices. Mather reprimands New England's populace for using the various forms of lesser witchcraft such as fetishes, fortune telling, superstitious health remedies, 'water witching', and of course, uttering imprecations over their enemies. These lesser sins had led to the dangerous sin of witchcraft. Hence, God permitted the devils to hook the 'ignorant, envious, discontented people' of

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[26] Peter Hoffer, The Devil's Disciples (Boston, 1996) p. 140.
[27] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:20.

New England as a form of punishment.[28]

A third proposition suggested by Mather was that God had used Satan's own wrath as a means of judgment. As Mather put it, 'There is a Devilish wrath against Mankind, with which the Devil is for God's sake inspired'.[29] Satan received God's express permission to afflict the nation, but as Mather put it, God's purpose in the Salem situation was not destruction, but the awakening of the nation:

> It is not without the wrath of God himself, that the Devil is permitted thus to come down upon us in his wrath . . . Blessed Lord! Are all the other Instruments of thy Vengeance, too good for the chastisement of such transgressors as we are? Must the very Devils be sent out of their own place, to be our troublers.[30]

If in Mather's thinking Salem witchcraft was God's judgment upon New England's spiritual degeneration, what then was the solution? Mather spells it out in twin spiritual terms: repentance and reformation. Mather saw a new Reformation, created by true repentance, as the only means for turning back Satan's wrath and averting God's certain judgment. This belief on the part of Cotton Mather is confirmed by one important aspect of Mather's pre and post-Salem activity: a call for repentance.

Mather had in fact been calling the nation to repentance long before the 1690s, making use of every opportunity to do so. For example, in 1685, he delivered the customary 'execution sermon' at the hanging of convicted murderer James Morgan. Preaching to an enormous crowd representative of a wide cross section of New England's population, Mather pointed to Morgan as a 'frightening example of the results of brothels, swearing, and other prevalent vices'.[31] Soon afterwards, Mather included a full account of Morgan's execution and this sermon in The Call of the Gospel; Mather's first published call for a national reformation.

Again, as noted in chapter three, on 20 March 1690, Mather preached a jeremiad entitled, The Present State of New England. In this sermon, Mather reflected on the French and Indian

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[28] Barrett Wendell points out that Mather believed that Salem witchcraft was '. . . a real attack of the Devil, permitted . . . as punishment for dabbling in sorcery and magical tricks which people had begun to allow themselves'. Barrett Wendell, Cotton Mather (New York, 1980) p. 160.
[29] Mather, Wonders, 1:59.
[30] Ibid, 1:108.
[31] Kenneth Silverman, Life and Times of Cotton Mather, p. 47.

attack on New England's outlying settlements and called for a renewed commitment to England's monarchs before going on to an overlapping subject: the colony's moral state. After saying that this new calamity was a result of the 'anger of The righteous God' against New England, Mather appended to the sermon a proclamation calling for a 'Speedy REFORMATION'.[32] He also called upon the magistrates to enforce the laws against 'Blasphemy, Cursing, Prophane Swearing, Lying, Unlawful Gaming, Sabbath breaking, Idleness, Drunkenness, Uncleanness'.[33]

A final extract illustrating Mather's call for repentance and reformation was published in 1692 just weeks before the culmination of the Salem trials as suspicion, trepidation, and paranoid confusion seemed to reign throughout New England. Entitled, A Midnight Cry, it was one of the most powerful sermons Cotton Mather ever preached. Preaching from the pulpit of the Old North Church in Boston, Mather called for a return to God similar to Europe's Protestant Reformation. Mather punctuated his sermon with emotionalism, and sporadic threats of impending judgment. Referring to the Salem witchcraft events, Cotton Mather called the populace to '. . . Look upward, and see a God Angry; Look Downward, and see an Hell Gaping; Look Inward, and see our Cursed Hearts; Look Backward, and see our Wicked Lives . . . .'[34]

Mather's call for reformation continued well past the Salem trials. In a lecture that was later included in Magnalia called The Boston Ebenezer, Mather warned that:

> Tis notorious that the Sins of this Town have been many Sins, and mighty Sins; the Cry thereof hath gone up to heaven. If the Almighty God should from heaven Rain down upon the Town an horrible Tempest of Thunderbolts, as he did upon the Cities which he overthrew in his Anger, and repented not, it would be no more than our unrepented Sins deserve.[35]

With this in view, it is evident Cotton Mather believed that the Salem witchcraft events were at least partially the result of New England's spiritual decline. Salem witchcraft was a judgment on Salem. What was necessary to restore the spiritual vitality of New England and avert God's wrath was a wholehearted return to the covenant.

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[32] Holmes, Cotton Mather: A Bibliography, 2:846.
[33] Ibid, 2:848.
[34] Ibid, 2:682.
[35] Cotton Mather, Magnalia, 1:95.

When the main body of the Puritans landed at Massachusetts Bay in June of 1630, they saw themselves at the beginning of a new era of Christianity. Although their 'spiritual' vision focused upon establishing a truly theocratic society, they nonetheless understood that colonizing the territory would include a number of physical, agricultural, financial and political challenges.

At least one other major concern existed: the presence of a large population of native Indians. The early Puritans lived in state of alarm with respect to Indian attacks. Although the frequency of the Indian raids upon the main settlements eventually lessened, the fear of them was still quite real nearly six decades later in the now large city of Boston.

As the third chapter of this thesis discussed, the Puritans came to the New World believing that it had long been Satan's particular preserve. Joseph Mede, had expressed this view as early as 1634, when he said that Satan had chosen and established the Indians as his people even before Christ's Incarnation. As Mather put it, for centuries Satan, 'like a Dragon', had ruled America completely unopposed, keeping 'a Guard upon the spacious and mighty Orchards of America'.[36]

According to the Puritans, Satan's primary influence over his 'chosen ones', involved empowering them through ceremonial magic and demonic covenants. William Bradford recorded in his history of the Plymouth colony that soon after the Indians of Cape Cod first sighted the Puritans, they 'got all the Powachs of the country, for three days together in a horrid and devilish manner, to curse and execrate them with their conjurations'.[37] Similarly, Roger Williams stated categorically that the Bay Colony 'Indian's priests were no other than our "English witches", the Devill drives their worships'.[38] This witchcraft in which the 'pagan Powaws often raise their masters, in the shapes of Bears and Snakes and fires', included spectral agents used to torture human targets.[39]

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[36] Ibid, 1:41-2.

[37] William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647 (ed.), Samuel Eliot Morrison, (New York, 1952), p. 84.

[38] Roger Williams, The Complete Writings of Roger Williams (7 vols.; New York, 1963), 1:152.

[39] Cotton Mather, Memorable Providences Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions (Boston, 1689; 2nd edn. 1691), American Antiquarian Society, Early American Imprints, 1639-1819, Microcard no. 486, preface, ii, (Worcester, 1967).

Predictably, the original Puritan settlers concluded that the Indians were the subjects of Satan's evil dominion and a real threat to the Puritan's American colonization. In inheriting and retaining this view, it was only natural then for Cotton Mather to believe that the Puritan colonists would continue to face the Devil's opposition.[40] Returning to the position that Satan was the master of the devils, the same in nature and malice as Satan himself, Mather derived particular meaning from the Salem calamity.

In both Wonders and Magnalia, Mather details the calamities that the settlement had endured intimating that some were demonically induced. He further noted that if this had not been enough, the Indians had not only 'watered the soil' of New England with the 'blood of many hundreds of our inhabitants',[41] but often forced their captives to observe as 'their friends [were] made a sacrifice of devils before their eyes'.[42] His intent was to show that the Indians had historically been demonically energized and commissioned to attack the Puritans. Contemporary to Mather's era, this was evident in the Indians' frequent assistance in the attacks by the French, whom the Puritans regarded as the Catholic minions of the Papal Antichrist.

Certainly, the Indians had held a considerable degree of terror for the populace of New England.[43] James Kences notes that witchcraft episodes in New England villages often occurred simultaneously with the population's fear of either war or Indian atrocities. Kences gives a telling account of this propensity when he records that:

> In July, [1692] soldiers guarding the approaches to the town of Gloucester fired their muskets at what they believed to be . . . a hoard of Indians with "Black bushy hair". But their bullets passed right through the wavering images of the attackers. In panic, the soldiers called for reinforcements, crying that the town was besieged by spectral Indians.[44]

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[40] This would be true in spite of the fact that Cotton Mather made a diligent attempt to evangelize the Native American population for a great part of his ministerial career including translating the scriptures and his sermons for various tribes. For an excellent review of this, see Silverman, Life and Times of Cotton Mather, pp. 237, ff.

[41] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:95.

[42] Cotton Mather, Magnalia, 2:597-8.

[43] Frances Hill, A Delusion of Satan (London, 1995), p. 40. Hill writes that:

> The New Englanders' fear of the Devil was in turn rendered more concrete and powerful by their terror of the flesh-and-blood enemies with whom he was linked. Devils and spirits were not abstract ideas but creatures dwelling all around them.

[44] James E. Kences, 'Some unexplored relationships of Essex County witchcraft to the Indians wars of 1675 and 1689', Essex Institute Historical Collections, 120, (1984), p. 191.

In relation to the Salem dilemma, the 1692 reinterpretation of this theme suggested that just as the demons had enticed previous generations of Indians into a compact with Satan, the same devils were now carrying out an identical strategy. This time, however, they were ensnaring subjects from within the Puritan community, as Cotton Mather reported:

> The People that were Infected and Infested with such Daemons, in a few Days time arrived unto such a Refining Alteration upon their Eyes, that they could see their Tormentors; they saw a Devil of Little Stature, and of a Tawny Colour, attended still with Spectres that appeared in more Humane Circumstances.[45]

Mather's insistence on Indian and demonic cooperation was not limited to his personal observations, since various Salem witchcraft suspects and victims would claim that a native American-Salem witchcraft connection existed. Witch suspect Sarah Osborne claimed that she was 'more like to be bewitched than that she was a witch', having been assaulted by 'a thing like an indian all black'.[46] Mercy Short, a possession subject, would tell Cotton Mather that she had been tormented by spectres [change throughout] of 'Indian Sagamores' she had known during her Indian captivity, who urged her to sign the Devil's book.[47] Another Salem victim would testify that Captain John Alden, a prominent New England figure involved in negotiating a truce with warring Indian tribes, was also involved with Salem witchcraft. Alden was in attendance at one of the Salem proceedings when one of the young women cried out that he sold 'Powder and Shot to the Indians and French, and lies with the Indian Squaes, and has Indian Papooses'.[48] This indictment is a poignant illustration of the perceived relationship between the Indians and New England witchcraft in which, as Cave puts it: 'Suspicion of collusion with Indians, in this case, led to charges of collusion with the Devil'.[49]

As these citations show, Cotton Mather saw Salem witchcraft as a demonic retaliatory

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[45] Cotton Mather, Magnalia, 1:206.

[46] Paul Boyer and Steven Nissenbaum, (eds), The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692 (3 vols.; New York, 1977), 2:610-11.

[47] Cotton Mather, A Brand Pluck'd Out of the Burning, in George Lincoln Burr, (ed.), Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648-1706 (New York, 1914), p. 99.

[48] Found in Robert Calef's More Wonders of the Invisible World, in Samuel Drake, (ed.), The Witchcraft Delusion in New England (3 vols.; New York, 1866; repr. 1970), 3:27.

[49] Alfred A. Cave, Indian shamans and English witches in seventeenth-century New England' in Essex Institute Historical Collections, 128, (October 1992), pp. 239-54.

attack upon the Puritan settlement of America. With this belief firmly fixed in his mind, Cotton Mather went on to express the solution to this second causation for the Salem outbreak. He referred to what had been his personal and official response in every case of New England witchcraft he had encountered--a period of spiritual warfare against Satan through fasting and prayer. If repentance and reformation were the twin elements able to remove God's judgment upon the colony, prayer and fasting were the twin weapons able to defeat the demons molesting the populace through witchcraft.

If Mather clearly displayed a single course of action before, during, and after Salem's ordeal, it was his dedication to spiritual warfare as the primary means of countering demonic invasions. This was Mather's solitary approach to dealing with Satan's incursions into his personal life and the only means he employed in delivering those suffering 'diabolical possessions' caused by demons in covenant with witches. The next section reviews Mather's methodology of fasting and prayer in connection to spiritual warfare.

In reading Mather's Diary for the summer of 1692, it is evident that it was a difficult time for Cotton Mather for more than one reason. His health had been 'lamentably broken' for some period, through what he described as 'excessive Toyle' connected to his personal and public life. He found it difficult to prepare properly for his preaching, and even more difficult to recover after exercising his pulpit ministry. There was also another exceptional reason: the Salem village troubles. Mather describes the events in these terms,

> The Rest of the summer, was a very doleful Time, unto the whole Countrey. The Divels, after a most praeternatural Manner, by the dreadful Judgement of Heaven took a bodily Possession, of many people, in Salem, and the adjacent places; and the Houses of the poor People, began to bee filled with horrid Cries of Persons tormented by evil Spirits. There seem'd an execrable Witchcraft, in the Foundation of this wonderful Affliction . . . .[50]

Because of his illness, Cotton Mather did not actively attend the witch trials or the executions during that summer and the next fall. His friends advised him to forego any excessive traveling to attend the trials at Salem village fearing that any extra burden on his fragile health, as Mather records, 'would at this time threaten perhaps my life itself'.[51]

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[50] Mather, Diary, 1:150.
[51] Mather, Diary, 1:147.

Although Mather could not be present in Salem for the trials, he could nonetheless exercise what he believed would ultimately prove to be the most powerful weapons against the witch attack: fasting and prayer. In his diary he writes about this often, emphasizing that the Salem village experience had become a primary focus of personal intercession. This spiritual methodology is also evident in several examples during the periods before, during, and after the Salem trials.

During a pre-Salem episode, in February of 1685, Mather faced circumstances involving witchcraft possession. Mather notes his determination that,

> . . . whereas those Divels may bee cast out by Fasting and Prayer, [I will] sett apart still a Day of secret Prayer, with Fasting . . . to supplicate for such Effusions of the Spirit from on high as may redress, remove, and vanish such Distempers from the Place.[52]

Seven years later, Mather would make similar notations about spiritual warfare during Salem's dark hour. His journal entry for April of 1692 records, 'But my Prayers did especially insist upon the horrible Enchantments, and Possessions, broke forth upon Salem Village: things of a most prodigious Aspect'.[53] Later that year, Mather details in his journal his ongoing intercession about Salem:

> However, for a great part of the Summer, I did every Week, (mostly) spend a Day by myself, in the Exercises of a sacred FAST, before the Lord . . . not only for my own Praeservation from the Malice and Power of the evil Angels, but also, for . . . this miserable countrey.[54]

Although Salem scholars have generally offered little concerning Mather's method of fasting and prayer, this was Cotton Mather's primary answer to the Salem witch attack. It would continue to be the course that Mather pursued with absolute faith. Viewed within Mather's cosmology, witchcraft stemmed from a malevolent spiritual source, and thus necessitated a spiritual solution. Following this understanding, Mather believed that incursions of the evil invisible world would be defeated by the intercession of God's servants.

Cotton Mather did not confine this approach to his personal life. When he was confident that an alleged witch victim was truly 'diabolically possessed', his initial response was to call for a season of prayer and fasting. This activity would break the hold of demons acting for their

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[52] Ibid, 1:114.
[53] Ibid, 1:147.
[54] Ibid, 1:152.

confederates, the witches. To Mather's Calvinistic mindset, because deliverances were acts of God's sovereign grace, as Kenneth Silverman remarks,

> Like all other Puritans, he [Mather] regarded holy water, crosses, and the entire Catholic rite of exorcism as gross superstition . . .. Abjuring exorcism and magic, he followed Mark 9:29: "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting".[55]

It is a historical fact that Mather originally suggested to the Salem judges that the witchcraft victims be scattered throughout Boston, personally offering to take charge of six of them to prove 'whether without more bitter methods, Prayer and Fasting would not putt an end unto these heavy Trials'.[56] For reasons which remain unclear, the Court of Oyer and Terminer did not accept Mather's offer. Even so, at least three examples of Mather's use of this method to liberate witch victims, occurring in varying points in time can be cited. Each bears a considerable degree of consistency on the part of Cotton Mather.

The first recorded case of Mather's public ministry to the bewitched began at Midsummer 1688, about three and a half years before the Salem incident. Martha Goodwin, the eldest daughter of Bostonian John Goodwin, 'became variously indisposed in her health, and visited with strange Fits'[57] after an altercation over stolen linens with the elderly mother of their family's laundress, Goody Glover.

After Martha told her story, Glover was arrested and examined by the magistrates. When 'puppets and babies' stuffed with rags and goat hair were found in her home, Glover was convicted by the court and sentenced to die by hanging. As Cotton Mather accompanied her to the gallows, Goody Glover revealed the names of her accomplices, including one close relative and warned him that her execution alone would not end the Goodwin affliction. Cotton Mather never revealed those names.[58]

Soon afterwards, Martha's sister Mercy, and two of her brothers also began manifesting elements of possession. Dr. Thomas Oakes, a locally renowned physician, concluded that 'nothing

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[55] Silverman, Life and Times of Cotton Mather, p. 94.
[56] Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, 1:210.
[57] Mather, Memorable Providences, p. 3.
[58] Ibid, p. 12.

but an hellish Witchcraft could be the original of these maladies'.[59] Cotton Mather then offered to take Martha Goodwin into his own home to 'observe the extraordinary circumstances' and to serve as a 'critical eyewitness'. Mather studied Martha's condition, tried various tests used to detect witchcraft and wrote copious notes. Goodwin displayed some remarkable manifestations, including choking on a ball about the size of an egg and riding an invisible horse (without touching the floor). Demons attempted to pull her into the fireplace using invisible chains which Mather confided, 'Once I did with my own hand knock it [the chains] off as it began to be fastened about her'.[60]

Mather initiated several intense periods of fasting and prayer, imploring God for her deliverance. Finally, on 27 November, Mather invited three other ministers and some neighbors to keep another set of days in fasting and prayer for the young woman. Through this procedure, Martha Goodwin, and her siblings were all permanently released from the power of witchcraft.

When these events were over, in 1689 Mather released his book, Memorable Providences, which related his recent and successful attempt to deliver the Goodwin children. The book commenced by stating that, 'Prayer is the powerful and effectual remedy against the malicious practices of devils and those that covenant with them'.[61] At the end of the introductory passage, Mather concluded 'All that I have now to publish is, that Prayer and Faith was the things which drove the devils from the children'.[62]

Mather used this spiritual remedy in a later encounter with another young woman, Mercy Short, a seventeen-year-old Boston servant girl. In the early summer of 1692, Mercy was on an errand to the prison in Boston when she encountered Sarah Good, an imprisoned witch.[63] When Sarah Good asked Mercy for some pipe tobacco, Mather records that Mercy 'affronted the hag by throwing an handful of shavings at her, saying "that's tobacco enough for you" '.[64] In return, Sarah Good cursed Mercy Short, causing her to have strange fits suggesting bewitchment. Consequently,

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[59] Ibid, p. 3.
[60] Ibid, p. 21.
[61] Ibid, preface, vii.
[62] Ibid, p. 44.
[63] Sarah Good was incarcerated at Boston, 7 March 1692. She was condemned by the Salem Court of Oyer and Terminer, on 30 June and executed there on 19 July 1692.
[64] Cotton Mather, A Brand Pluck'd Out of the Burning, in Burr, Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases. This

her family contacted Cotton Mather, who aided by others fasted and prayed for some twelve days before attaining Mercy's freedom. Unfortunately, sometime around 22 November, two months after the last round of executions at Salem, Mercy Short's possession recurred, complicated by worse manifestations than before.

Although the experience of Mercy Short was in many respects analogous to the Martha Goodwin case, it included other remarkable features. Mercy saw a spectre of the Devil himself, who appeared in the 'figure of a short and a black man'.[65] At each appearance, Satan cast Mercy Short into a 'horrible Darkness' in which she would see 'hellish harpyes', hearing demonic voices urging her to sign the 'Book of Death' to become a 'Devoted Vassal of the Divel'.[66] At times, Mercy Short also learned information about the Devil's own campaign against Cotton Mather and Boston. For example, once it was revealed that the demons were planning to burn the city of Boston. Mather reports that the night after this 'The Town had like to have been burn't; but God wonderfully prevented it'.[67]

Considering the horrible possession of Mercy Short, one might ask what Cotton Mather's course of action would be. The answer comes from Mather's own pen, as he writes that 'The methods that were taken for the Deliverance of Mr. Goodwin's afflicted Family, four years ago, were the very same that wee now follow'd for Mercy Short . . . Prayer with Fasting'.[68] It took four months of prayer and periods of fasting to effect Mercy Short's cure, but as Mather records, 'she was finally and forever delivered from the hand of evil angels'.[69] In time Mercy gave evidence of grace and became a full member of Cotton Mather's Old North Church. It was a glorious ending to a terrible chapter.[70]

The last case presented here is that of Margaret Rule, of Boston. Her experiences at the

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quote and the Mercy Short account, pp. 259-87.

[65] Cotton Mather, A Brand Pluck'd Out of the Burning, p. 261.

[66] Ibid, p. 262.

[67] Ibid, p. 273.

[68] Ibid, p. 276.

[69] Mather, Diary, 1:161.

[70] Cotton Mather never published A Brand Pluck'd Out of the Burning, because the backlash from the Salem trials was too great at that time. Mather explained this in the following quote taken from the above title, page 286: '. . . No man in his wits would fully expose his thoughts unto them till the charms which enrage the people are a little better dissipated'.

hand of evil angels began on 10 September 1693, after the Salem affair ended. On that day, Rule 'fell into odd fits' during the public assembly and had to be carried home by her friends. After an examination, a physician declared her to be 'diabolically possessed'. She too suffered horribly from the physical and emotional effects of witchcraft attested to by Martha Goodwin and Mercy Short.

She experienced some unique phenomena as well. Mather reports that '. . . Once her tormentors pull'd her up to the cieling [sic] of the chamber, and held her there before a very numerous company of spectators, who found it as much as they could all do to pull her down again'.[71] Rule not only saw evil spectres, but at one point she also saw a 'White Spirit' which specified that Cotton Mather would be the principal agent in her deliverance.[72] Five weeks later the angel reappeared to Margaret predicting her freedom from demonic torment on the third day of Mather's next fast.

Deliverance ministry, however, had its dangers as well as its victories. The next spectres to appear to Margaret Rule were in Mather's own image, causing Rule to complain that Cotton Mather 'threatened her and molested her', a charge that Mather's antagonist Robert Calef would later make. Mather worried about insults from Boston and New England 'if such a lying Piece of a Story should fly abroad, that the Divels in my Shape tormented the Neighbourhood'.[73] Ironically, Cotton Mather had once written to judge John Foster that he himself would have no fear of being tried by the Court of Oyer if his own image should appear as a spectre.[74] Now, in the aftermath of Salem, his reaction was not as certain. Cotton Mather was undoubtedly relieved that 'his spectral appearances' ceased on the third day of his fast when 'without any further noise, the possessed person, [Margaret Rule] . . . was delivered from her captivity'.[75] Once again Mather's fasting and prayer had successfully liberated a victim of witchcraft.

The previous sections have revealed two of the three points of Cotton Mather's predictable response toward witchcraft. First, believing that Salem witchcraft was the equivalent of a

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[71] Cotton Mather, Another Brand Pluck'd out of the Burning, p. 315.
[72] Ibid, p. 317.
[73] Ibid, p. 178.
[74] See Kenneth Silverman's Selected Letters of Cotton Mather, p. 41.
[75] Mather, Diary, 1:179.

judgement upon Salem and by extension New England, he summoned New England to repentance and reformation to avert the judgment of God upon his generation's spiritual decline. This act would deal with the witchcraft attack on a national level. Second, Cotton Mather's opinion was that Salem witchcraft was a retaliatory attack by demons due to the Puritan settlement of America. As such, he exercised a regimen of fasting and prayer to counteract this demonic incursion in both his personal life and deliverance ministry to the objects of the witch's torment. These points now prepare this study for an explanation of Mather's third and final proposition about Salem witchcraft as found in The Wonders of the Invisible World: An end-time plot of Satan to destroy New England.

When Cotton Mather preached at the Old North Church on 4 August 1692 his message was alarming. He took Revelation 12:12 as his text: 'Woe to the Inhabitants of the Earth, and of the Sea; for the Devil has come down unto you, having great wrath; because he knoweth, that he hath but a short time'. Mather warned his congregation and all of New England that because of the immediacy of Christ's Appearance, the Devil was presently carrying out a diabolical plot to destroy New England. This plot was none other than the recent invasion of devils, carried out by witches in covenant with Satan. Kenneth Silverman has suggested that this message was a 'changed understanding of the outbreak at Salem'.[76] One can validate this opinion by the fact that Mather was predisposed toward viewing the Salem affair as an end-time plot of Satan. Two influences led to this important interpretation: Mather's eschatological expectations, and the Andover witchcraft case.

Cotton Mather had been preaching and writing concerning the return of Christ which would result in the Millennium for some time before his 4 August 1692 fast-day sermon. As previously noted, Mather's understanding had been influenced by the works of two renowned eschatologists, England's Joseph Mede and Pierre Jurieu, a Dutch Professor of Divinity in France.[77]

In part, their combined research insisted that the Protestant Reformation of 1517 signaled the

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[76] Silverman, Life and Times of Cotton Mather, p. 107.

[77] For a very thorough explanation of Jurieu and Mede's theories, see Robert Middlekauf's The Mathers, Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728 (New York, 1971), pp. 333-50.

(Papal) Antichrist's final 180-year reign would end in 1697, heralding Christ's appearance and the Antichrist's defeat.[78]

Cotton Mather and a large part of the New England's seventeenth-century clerics accepted at least some form of this eschatological interpretation. They had established an impressive catalogue of sermons and books maintaining that the American experiment was nothing less than an 'end times' part of church history, in which the cosmic battle between God and Satan was being played out between the Church of England and the Antichrist Papacy.

This eschatological positioning on the part of the New England Puritans was part of a broader compendium of belief common throughout seventeenth-century Europe in which millennialism and eschatology were being addressed by both Protestants and Catholics. These viewpoints were espoused and developed in a number of ways by early modern radical groups which Stuart Clark describes as 'deviant religious sects [who] conceived of the complete transformation of their world by supernatural agency', and conservative academics and clerics such as Mede and Jurieu.[79] The composite of these groups, as Clark also points out, lent itself to apocalyptic expectations periodically manifested in dramatic pronouncements, in which

> There were many comments on the prevalence of social misrule---the rebelliousness of the young and the lower orders expected in the last times, whether involving the supplanting of social and moral values by their opposites, the disasters of famine, pestilence, persecution, and warfare, or violent upheavals in the environment.[80]

In England, this expectation of universal upheaval and eschatological fulfillment seemed quite real with respect to such historical events such as the English Civil War, the 1649 execution of Charles I, the Interregnum, and perhaps most pointedly, the Glorious Revolution. These events saw the emergence of millenarian groups with their accompanying militant challenges, as embodied in

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[78] Mede's system of prophetic interpretation centered upon the millennial expectation was first introduced in 1627 in his book, Clavis Apocalyptica. The popularity of this first work would eventually lead to its translation into English in 1642. Mede followed this with two more forays into this realm entitled, The Apostasy of the Latter Times (1641) and The Key to the Revelation (1643). The latter, The Key to the Revelation did much to establish Mede as one of the foremost prophetic interpreters of his era.

[79] Stuart Clark, Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe (New York, 1997) pp. 336-37.

[80] Clark, Thinking with Demons, p. 349.

groups such as the Fifth Monarchists, with their powerful influence on the New Model Army.[81] Beyond these, there were conservative and radical separatists such as the Quakers, Levellers, Diggers, and Ranters.[82]

Throughout the seventeenth-century, New England had also experienced its share of what seemed to many including Cotton Mather as stark indicators of eschatological upheaval. Cotton Mather's own contemporary preaching reflected an expectation of the imminent return of Christ, but also a belief in a renewed, but brief end-time attack of Satan.

Mather makes this plain in A Discourse on the Wonders of the Invisible World, writing, 'The Devils Eldest Son seems to be toward the End of his last Half-time; and if it be so, the Devils Whole-time cannot but be very near its end'.[83] Two other examples of this pattern of thought, contemporary with the Salem witch episode, reflect Mather's beliefs at this time. The first example is a sermon Mather published, entitled, Things to be Look'd For. He first proclaimed this message on 1 June 1691 at the annual meeting of the Artillery Company of Massachusetts Colony. In it, Mather rehearsed the recent Boston revolution which ended with the deposition of Governor Andros, and the European situation involving the persecution of the French Protestants by Louis XIV. Balancing eschatological prophecies from the Bible with New England's recent troubles and world events, Mather led his hearers to one 'glorious expectation' which he identified as 'the speedy approaches of . . . the Latter Dayes'.[84]

A Midnight Cry, another of Cotton Mather's published sermons, is also a good example of

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[81] Bernard Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism (London, 1972); Leo Solt, 'The Fifth Monarch men: Politics and the Millennium', Church History, 30, (1961), pp. 314-24; See Also: Michael Adas, Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order (Chapel Hill, 1979).

[82] For a discussion of the relationship of the various separatists and millennial expectations, see: Frederic J. Baumgartner, Longing for the End: A History of Millennialism in Western Civilization (New York, 1999), pp. 100-17.

[83] Mather, Wonders, 1:89.

[84] See: Holmes, Cotton Mather: A Bibliography, 3:84. Holmes described this attempt well:

> He interpreted the history of Europe and the Christian Church to determine the probable and approximate time of the inception of the great day of peace, to which he pointed . . . "It is possible that many of Us, may Live to see the Peace of the Latter Dayes".

Mather's chiliasm. It came about in the first part of 1692, as Mather twice preached at the Old North Church on the text Romans 13:11, 'And that knowing the time, that it is high time to awake out of sleep'.

Similar to Things to be Look'd for, it predicted that Christ's return was imminent. Following Mather's eschatological view point, this pointed sermon maintained that the recent problems with the 'serpentine' Quakers, Bloody Kirke, the Arminians, and the Indians, were all acts of Satan's end-time diabolism and, therefore, precursors to Christ's second coming. Mather further insisted there might also be worse attacks of Satan yet to come, noting that New England was 'doubtless very near the Last Hours of That Wicked One, whom our Lord shall Destroy with the Brightness of his Coming'.[85]

Cotton Mather was expecting the imminent return of Christ, even going as far as to set a date of 1697 for that return. Although Mather's expectation remained unfulfilled, it remains profoundly significant for events at Salem. Cotton Mather was placing the events of Europe and New England within his eschatological framework, and expecting Christ's return to occur within only a few short years. Just before that event, the world would necessarily be plunged into convulsions because of God's judgment upon the world's sin. Mather was also convinced that Satan would attempt to take over the human race before Christ's Second Coming ushered in the Millennium.

This belief created the premise upon which Cotton Mather established a pattern of interpreting diabolical events as portents of Satan's end-times assaults. This can be seen in Mather's sermon, A Discourse on the Wonders of the Invisible World, in which he outlined his anticipation of an end-time's assault by Satan. He initiated this sermon by telling his seventeenth-century audience to anticipate that 'the Devil towards the end of his Time, will make a Descent upon a miserable World',[86] and that in such a decent, 'The dying Dragon, will bite more cruelly and sting

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[85] Cotton Mather, A Midnight Cry (Boston, 1692), p. 24. When Cotton Mather finished this sermon, he called the Old North Church to a day of fasting held on 10 April 1692. On that day he presented the members with an instrument of repentance for their ratification, calling his church and New England to repentance and a renewed preparation for the Second Coming of Christ.

[86] Mather, Wonders, 1:54.

more bloodily than ever he did before'.[87]

Cotton Mather therefore, saw the 'last days' as the great battleground between God and Satan. Because Satan knew his time on the earth was short, he would descend upon the nations in wrath attempting to destroy God's Kingdom. To Mather's thinking, New England might well be the subject of this end-time attack, since the Puritans had taken over Satan's former New World dominion, filling it with Evangelical Churches.

It was because of Cotton Mather's expectation of an end-time attack by Satan that he was not completely surprised when in the summer of 1692 the next Salem-related event seemed to confirm a diabolical conspiracy within New England. That incident was the Andover witchcraft case. Although this episode has already been described, it is difficult to overstate its importance to Mather's interpretation of Salem witchcraft. Silverman's account of the initial story is telling:

> Sometime in the early summer of 1692, an Andover man name Joseph Ballard sent to Salem for some of the possessed girls, hoping they could identify the spectre afflicting his wife, who was ill and later died of a fever . . . The girls acted in the Andover sickrooms as they had in the Salem court: they fell to fits and named the persons whose spectres they saw tormenting the sick. Fifty persons in Andover were accused of witchcraft and thirty to forty sent to prison.[88]

The result of the accusations was that a trial of the Andover suspects yielded information about a plot of Satan against New England. During the prosecution of these alleged witches, their confessions were so similar that the judges suspected something more diabolical than previously imagined.

By this time, the conviction and execution of several witches had passed including Tituba, Sarah Good, Goody Glover, Rose Cullender, and Ann Durent. Acting on individual instincts the devils had, in Mather's view, tormented individual victims, but rarely multiple families. Additionally, their testimonies were largely individualistic and distinctive.

The Andover group did not fit this profile, as their confessions were too similar. To begin, they all agreed to the identity of the Devil and his method for ensnaring subjects. Silverman reports, 'He got them to undo their allegiance to the Congregational Church . . . and had them seal their

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[87] Ibid, 1:72.
[88] Silverman, Life and Times of Cotton Mather, p. 105.

covenant with him by signing his book'.[89] The Andover witches also testified to their participation in several specific acts of Devil worship including rebaptism and receiving a 'hellish' communion, as well as being commissioned by Satan.

There was one further startling feature to this unified confession of the Andover witches--one that seemed to confirm Cotton Mather's eschatological expectations—the claim of a diabolical end-times plot by the Devil. The testimonies suggested that there were as many as five hundred confederates within New England. Only the Devil himself knew the exact number.

Beyond this testimony, at least eight of the suspects confided that former Salem minister George Burroughs and Martha Carrier--both accused of witchcraft--were the organizing human agents in the Andover plot. Salem defendant Deliverance Hobbs testified that George Burroughs had directed the Salem witches to 'bewitch all in the Village . . . gradually and not all att once, assureing them they should prevail'.[90] Mary Lacey would make a similar allegation at her trial, admitting the witch's unified task was to 'afflict persons and over come the Kingdome of Christ, and set up the Divels Kingdome . . . throughout the whole country'.[91]

For Cotton Mather this revelation confirmed that the Salem chapter was not only the judgment of God upon New England's spiritual degeneration, and a demonic retaliation due to the Puritan settlement of America. The Salem affair had one more alarming feature; it had the marks of the end-time attack Mather had been anticipating and preaching about in recent years. Stuart Clark emphasizes the universality of this approach when he writes that:

> It is clear that, in so far as history was brought to bear on the problem of witchcraft, this was by virtue of an overwhelmingly eschatological account of events. The activities of demons and witches were apocalyptic both because they could be matched with description of the last times lying encoded in the prophetic texts of scripture, and because, in turn, they too were texts which, when suitably analyzed, might reveal truths about the nature and nearness of the world's end.[92]

From the testimony of several of the Andover witches, it becomes apparent, whether advertently or inadvertently, that they too had come to believe in a plot to overthrow New England's religious and governmental structure. Andover witch William Barker outlined the intention of the joint Salem-

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[89] Ibid, p. 105.
[90] Boyer and Nissenbaum, Salem Witchcraft Papers, 2:423.
[91] Ibid, 2:529.

Andover witches:

> They mett there to destroy that place by reason of the peoples being divided and their differing with their ministers. Satan's desire was to set up his own worship, abolish all the churches in the land, to fall next upon Salem and soe goe through the countrey . . . .[93]

Beyond this, these confessed witches also foresaw a period in which Satan himself would be ruling America. Barker gave some insight into what a New England society would be like, when the planned infiltration and overthrow of the colony was complete. He described it in terms of the Devil's offer in exchange for the allegiance of the witches:

> The Devil promised that all his people should live bravely that all persones should be equall, that there should be no day of resurrection or of judgment, and neither punishment nor shame for sin.[94]

Richard Gildrie points out the likely import of this latter language:

> That "there should be no day of resurrection nor of judgement" removed the cosmological framework for the New England way, abolishing the orthodox meaning of history as expressed through providence and the jeremiad. That here be "neither punishment nor shame for sin" directly challenged the most common early modern rationale for government, as well as the urge to reform popular culture where "shame for sin" was a most potent weapon.[95]

According to this testimony the Devil was planning to attack New England through a covert witch invasion. The Salem-Andover witches were therefore localized and organized, specific in their leadership and their adherents. Taken within the period, this revelation stood out to the court and the Boston clergy, since this group was far from a mythical and generalized threat. The Andover witches portrayed Salem witchcraft as more than an isolated event; it was the manifestation of a localized witch-army preparing and launching a premeditated assault of Satan upon New England.

When the Salem judges heard this evidence they were greatly bolstered in their determination to deal with this alleged invasion of the Colony. They obviously believed in the veracity of the accounts of the confessing witches and the dangers that such a plan suggested. One

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[92] Clark, Thinking with Demons, p. 335.
[93] Salem Witchcraft Papers, 1:67.
[94] Ibid, 1:66.
[95] Richard Gildrie, 'The Salem witchcraft trials as a crisis of popular imagination', Essex Institute Historical Collections, 128, (October 1992), pp. 270-85.

of the results of these revelations was that the number of indictments for witchcraft during the Salem episode would greatly increase. From February to April of 1692, there would be some twenty-seven indictments, while the months of May and June would witness the issuance of some forty-eight more. After the Barker confession, there would be some seventy-eight indictments handed down, with more than half of them served upon residents of Andover. Additionally, many of the accused persons known for their exemplary Puritan piety, had voluntarily confessed to the organized plot to overthrow New England and establish Satan's kingdom in America.[96]

As for Cotton Mather, he was predisposed to believing in this plot. As previously noted, Mather had already faced prior 'plots' of the devil in his attempts to liberate bewitched persons. Mercy Short had revealed that the demons were planning to diabolically burn the city of Boston, Mather's newborn son had probably died due to a spectral appearance to his pregnant wife, and Margaret Rule's possession had included the Devil's plot to destroy Mather's reputation by an appearance of a spectre in Mather's image. Cotton Mather was also aware of another plot. Some forty years before the Salem events, a condemned prisoner on his way to the gallows predicted:

> . . . An Horrible PLOT against the Country by WITCHCRAFT, and a Foundation of WITCHCRAFT then laid, which if it were not seasonably discovered would probably Blow up, and pull down all the Churches in the Country.[97]

This brings the present study back to Mather's 4 August 1692 sermon entitled, A Discourse on the Wonders of the Invisible World. On that momentous day when Mather stood to deliver his sermon at the Old North Church he had in his hands a powerful manuscript, but in his heart he possessed a thorough belief that the end-times were at hand. He therefore proclaimed that the Andover witch trials proved the existence of a final plot of Satan to overtake New England. Mather repeated the details of this plot in a personal letter to John Cotton, writing,

> Five witches were lately executed, impudently demanding of God a miraculous vindication of their innocency. Immediately upon this, our God miraculously sent in five Andover witches, who made a most ample, surprising, amazing confession of all their villanies, and declared the five newly executed to have been of their company, discovering many more, but all agreeing in Burroughs

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[96] Richard Gildrie gives an excellent breakdown of three phases of the Salem adjudication based upon the dates of the indictments levied against the residents of Salem and the region. See Gildrie, 'The Salem witchcraft trials as a crisis of popular imagination', p. 284.

[97] Ibid, p. 16.

being their ringleader.[98]

The five witches convicted on 5 August, and hanged on 19 August, were: John Proctor, George Jacobs Sr., John Willard of Salem Village, George Burroughs of Maine, and Martha Carrier of Andover--the secret 'king and queen' of hell.[99]

To Mather, the import of these revelations was clear. The Salem-Andover invasion had been planned by Satan, encouraged by demons, and to this point carried out by human vassals. The Andover testimonies suggested that even if the previously convicted and executed Salem witches had been silent or uninformed, they had still been a part of Satan's overall plot to conquer New England.

As the final chapter of this thesis shows, in response to this perceived danger Cotton Mather would take his place alongside his New England clerical counterparts as they advised the Salem Court about the witchcraft examinations. In that role, Cotton Mather articulated his personal opinion that the judges and ministers of New England needed to do something to stop Satan's assault against the Colony. That 'something' was a strategy for a careful, but nonetheless, deliberate adjudication process. After all, the colony was dealing with a 'dreadful knot' of witches that Satan had placed in the land. In following a careful strategy, an eradication of the malicious witches would end the demonic siege, while clearing innocent persons of guilt.

As the historical evidence will demonstrate, although Mather was willing to offer his personal, considered opinions to the court, he was unwilling to propel himself to the forefront of the witchcraft trials - - even when the examinations went horribly amiss. Despite his ministerial prominence as a pastor of the Old North Church in Boston, Cotton Mather chose to limit his involvement in the Salem trials to that of advising the Salem Court and the New England government. Out of a sense of personal paucity and respect for his colleagues, many who were his mentors and elders, Mather would not only refuse to confront their errors but unwittingly become the scapegoat for their erroneous actions.

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[98] Cotton Mather, in Silverman, Selected Letters, p. 40.

[99] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:200.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Cotton Mather's interpretation and response to witchcraft, and especially Salem witchcraft was predictable. When Cotton Mather's pre-Salem and Salem era preaching, publications, and activities are examined, it becomes clear that his cosmology was more than a set of theorems. Rather, it was the basis upon which he interpreted the events of his era and determined his responses.

As this chapter has shown, Mather interpreted seventeenth-century world events, New England's circumstances, and his personal experiences as both spiritual warfare and end-time indicators. Consequently, Mather approached events denoting these indicators through a process of fasting and prayer, whether in his personal life or public ministry.

Relative to the Salem episode, again, Mather's cosmology was met with corresponding actions as his three strongly held postulates about witchcraft and his world were accompanied by corresponding behavior. First, Cotton Mather saw Salem witchcraft as God's judgment upon New England's spiritual degeneration; he therefore called for national repentance and reformation. Second, Mather believed Salem witchcraft was a demonic retaliation due to the Puritan settlement of America and he therefore proposed and employed a private and public practice of using fasting and prayer to counteract the demonic incursion. Last, Cotton Mather believed Salem witchcraft was an end-times plot of Satan to destroy New England, based upon his eschatological expectations and confirmed by the Andover witchcraft case. He responded by warning his community of its danger.

Having presented the consistent factors of Mather's cosmology and conduct in the Salem enigma, the final chapter of this thesis explores Mather's role as an advisor to the Salem court and assesses his errors in connection with the Salem affair.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SALEM TRIALS: COTTON MATHER'S DILEMMA

> For my own part, I was alwayes afraid of proceeding to convict and condemn any Person, as a Confederate with afflicting Daemons, upon so feeble an Evidence, as a spectral Representation. Nevertheless, on the other side, I saw in most of the Judges, a most charming Instance of Prudence and Patience . . . Though I could not allow the Principles, that some of the Judges had espoused, yett I could not but speak honourably of their Persons, on all Occasions . . . .
>
> Cotton Mather, Diary, (May 1692)

The previous chapter revealed two lines of congruence between Cotton Mather's worldview and behavior during the Salem Trials. The first was Cotton Mather's consistent overall pattern of interpreting contemporary international, local, and personal events within the parameters of his preconceived worldview as spiritual warfare and end-times indicators. The second focused on Mather's propositions about the meaning of the Salem witchcraft episode as detailed in several of his works. These showed a strong degree of consistency between Mather's stated beliefs and his responses to episodes of witchcraft in New England.

Taking up this second thread, this chapter begins with a sketch of the challenges the New England government and magistrates faced in prosecuting individuals accused of witchcraft. Following this, a fuller exploration of Mather's advice to the Court of Oyer and Terminer is given, outlining Mather's approach to the examinations and prosecutions of the accused. After tracing the progression of the Salem trials, the final section of this chapter addresses the dilemma the trials produced for Cotton Mather in relation to his continuing role as spiritual advisor to the Salem Court. This dilemma is explored through an examination of Mather's personal relationship to the Salem Court, his advice about spectral evidence, and his published account of the trials, The Wonders of the Invisible World.

Without underplaying Mather's culpable role in the tragedy, this chapter explores why Mather avoided openly opposing the Salem judges or the conduct of the trials. The evidence for this examination includes both Cotton Mather's own personal and administrative writings,

particularly letters written to John Richards and John Foster, both judges in the Salem trials, and the more public document, 'The Return of the Ministers'. While representing the collective opinions of the Boston area ministers, it was penned by Cotton Mather, and clearly reflects his beliefs and influence. When these are examined a recognizable pattern of thinking and activity surfaces which allows a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of Mather's role and motivations.

Cotton Mather's Proposals for the Salem Adjudications

With the outbreak of witchcraft accusations in 1692, the New England courts faced several serious problems. And, as the crisis began to expand significantly beyond the scope of earlier accusations and examinations, the Massachusetts's government was forced to put in place a mechanism to deal with the situation. Strictly speaking, the Massachusetts' legislature alone had the authority to create new courts, yet as Koenig observes,

> . . . In the rush to prosecute, Phips yielded to pressure and established the special court [Oyer and Terminer] without waiting for the newly authorized legislature to convene . . . although it possessed broad powers of punishment, its jurisdiction was limited to witchcraft cases alone.[1]

The newly authorized court would face two specific challenges. First, neither the New England courts nor Chief Justice Stoughton who supervised the initial investigations had ever dealt with an outbreak of witchcraft on this scale. Second, the court struggled to find an appropriate methodology for the examination process itself. Although New England's standard guidelines for prosecutions embodied by England's Laws and Liberties, contained general rules for capital crimes, as Peter Hoffer explains, witchcraft examinations brought with them a singular level of difficulty with respect to the use and assessment of evidence:

> The best evidence of crime is probative: it proves to the jury that the facts are as alleged. Probative evidence may be direct, that is, eyewitness testimony, or indirect, re-created through a convincing sequence of circumstantial inferences. Witchcraft cases threw these precepts into confusion, for only perpetrators' or confederates' confessions could establish that a pact with the Devil existed, and indirect evidence--the causal chain--rested upon spectral evidence that only victims could see.[2]

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[1] David Koenig, Law and Society in Puritan Massachusetts, Essex County, 1629-1692 (Chapel Hill, 1979), p. 170.

[2] Peter Hoffer, The Devil's Disciples: Makers of the Salem Witchcraft Trials (Baltimore, 1996), p. 133. Christina Larner convincingly describes the issues related to the 'Crimen Exceptum' model of witchcraft trial procedures in her volume on Scottish witch trials. See: Christina Larner, Enemies of God, The Witchhunt in Scotland (Baltimore, 1981), p. 68.

Being cognizant of these difficulties, the Court of Oyer and Terminer chose as their prosecutor Anthony Checkley, an Essex County lawyer with a reputation for arguing strenuously for 'legal precision against informality and uncertainty'.[3] Additionally, the Court addressed its problems over the use of evidence by consulting previous witchcraft trial guidelines drawn from English witch trials, and the advice of several eminent English witchcraft scholars.

Cotton Mather was aware of the great dangers that lay in store at Salem if the court did not balance the desire to reach a judgement with solid and appropriate procedures.[4] In several Salem era documents Mather admonished the Salem court to use rules for witchcraft prosecution based upon the works of three earlier English witchcraft scholars: William Perkins of Christ's College in Cambridge, who wrote A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft; John Gaule, author of Select Cases of Conscience Touching Witches and Witchcrafts; and Richard Bernard a renown minister in Somersetshire, who published A Guide to Jurymen.[5]

Describing them as a 'triumvirate of as eminent persons as have ever handled it', Mather recommended these authors because he knew they largely agreed upon the examination process and were well respected throughout the legal and religious establishment of New England.[6] Drawing primarily upon these sources, Mather gave the Salem court his opinion concerning the best way to approach the trials. He addressed three specific elements: evidentiary matters, the use of leniency in certain cases, and the prosecution and execution of malicious witches. These are examined in the next section of the thesis.

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[3] Koenig, Law and Society, p. 171.

[4] Mather had once intended to write his own manual on this subject, as indicated in Wonders:

> I was going to make one Venture more; that is, to offer some safe Rules for the finding out of the Witches . . . but this were a Venture too Presumptuous and Icarian for me to make; I leave that unto those Excellent and Judicious Persons, with whom I am not worthy to be numbered.

See: Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World (Boston, 1693), in Samuel Drake, (ed.), The Witchcraft Delusion in New England (New York, 1866; repr. 1970), 1:36.

[5] William Perkins, A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft (Cambridge, 1613); John Gaule, Select Cases of Conscience Touching Witches and Witchcrafts (London, 1646); Richard Bernard, A Guide to Jurymen (London, 1630). These discourses, where dealing with witchcraft trials, are all printed in full in Cotton Mather's Wonders, 1:37-48.

[6] Mather, Wonders, 1:36.

Mather's foremost concern was the use of spectral evidence as a basis for witchcraft convictions. Spectral evidence, the testimony of acts committed by the witch's familiar spirit, visible only to their victims, had been used in England as early as 1593. By the late seventeenth century, despite growing doubts about the validity of spectral evidence on the part of the English legal establishment, even the ardent skeptic Chief Justice Sir John Holt had allowed its admission into evidence in cases in 1690, 1696, and 1701. In the 1701 case, Richard Hathaway was charged with falsely accusing a woman named Sarah Mordike of witchcraft.[7] Although Holt's influence over the court proceedings eventually led to the conviction of Hathaway and acquittal of Sarah Mordike, he had nonetheless allowed the jury to consider the weight of spectral evidence.[8] The New England courts had also allowed spectral evidence in some pre-Salem trials, although there was a divergence of opinion among the clergy about its use.[9]

Mather's concern about spectral evidence is apparent in a letter he wrote to Salem judge, John Richards, on 31 May 1692, three days before the trials started.[10] Mather's first request was that Richards would not 'lay too much stress upon pure spectre testimony', since the Devil might appear in the form of innocent persons. Mather therefore recommended that such testimonies should have a single purpose--to justify a search of a suspect's home for further material evidence such as puppets, images, or other objects used in witchcraft.[11] Three months later, as the scope of the trials expanded, Mather repeated this advice in a letter to John Foster, emphasizing that

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[7] The Tryal of Richard Hathaway upon an Information for being a Cheat and Imposter, for endeavouring to take away the Life of Sarah Morduck [Mordike], for being a Witch (London, 1702).

[8] Sir John Holt tried witchcraft cases in 1690, 1693, 1696, 1701, and seven others. For a discussion of the Hathaway case and Holt's supervision of the trial, see James Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness, Witchcraft in England 1550-1750 (London, 1996), pp. 227-228.

[9] Kittredge cites the use of this evidence in trials in England and its colonies when he writes, 'The fact is, and it should never be lost sight of, there was noting strange in their admitting such evidence. It was a matter of course that they should admit it'. See: George Lyman Kittredge, Witchcraft in Old and New England (Cambridge, 1929), p. 363.

[10] This letter, in its entirety is reproduced in Kenneth Silverman's Selected Letters of Cotton Mather (Baton Rouge, 1971), pp. 35-36.

[11] This concern is repeated in the sixth article of The Return of the Ministers which states,

> Presumptions whereupon persons may be . . . condemned as guilty of witchcrafts, ought certainly to be more considerable than barely the accused person being represented by a Spectre unto the afflicted.

See William Frederick Poole, Cotton Mather and Salem Witchcraft (Cambridge, 1689), p. 32.

testimonies alleging that 'a spectre in their [the accused] shape doth afflict a neighbor . . . is not enough to convict' a suspect.[12]

Mather then went on to raise the issue of the use of evidentiary experiments to confirm witchcraft allegations. As chapter three detailed, there were a number of such tests including having the accused person look upon the victim, having the afflicted person touch the accused, or having the accused recite the Lord's Prayer. If the suspect's glances or their touch induced fresh torment in their accusers, it was considered a powerful sign of bewitchment. Similarly, if the suspect could not recite the Lord's Prayer flawlessly, their guilt was allegedly established.

Although Cotton Mather himself had used a modified version of the recitation test in his experiments with possession victim Martha Goodwin, he considered private experiments and public examinations to be very different. Mather told Richards that the court should be looking for 'good, plain, legal evidence', to convict an alleged witch.[13] Urging the court to use evidentiary experiments only to elicit voluntary confessions, Mather wrote:

> The danger of this experiment will be taken away if you make no evidence of it, but only put it to use . . . confounding the lisping witches to give a reason why they cannot . . . repeat those heavenly composures. The like I would say of some other experiments, only we may venture too far before we are aware.[14]

In a final directive, Mather told Richards that a 'satisfactory confession', devoid of any forms of torture, would be the best form of evidence. Torture had been practiced to a limited extent in English witch trials, but had been a consistent component of Scottish examinations.[15] James I had 'warmly' recommended its use, as did William Perkins.[16] Cotton Mather, however, cautioned the court by expressing repugnance towards confessions by torture, insisting that a voluntary and

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[12] See Kenneth Silverman, Selected Letters of Cotton Mather, p. 41.

[13] This advice was repeated in the Return of Several Ministers, in article six, stating, 'Nor can we esteem altercations made in the sufferers by a look or a touch of the accused to be infallible evidence of guilt, but frequently liable to be abused by the Devil's legerdemains'. See: Poole, Cotton Mather, p. 32.

[14] Silverman, Selected Letters of Cotton Mather, p. 38.

[15] Larner, Enemies of God, pp. 107-109.

[16] As it would turn out, one clear incident of torture being used to exact a confession took place during the Salem trials. In a July 23, 1692 legal petition John Proctor complained that his son William, as well as Richard and Andrew Carrier, had all been 'tyed neck and heels till the Blood was ready to come out their noses' during their prison examinations. See: Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (eds), The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692 (3 vols.; New York, 1977), 2:689-690.

'unexpected confession' by an accused witch would be the preferred type.[17]

The second part of Cotton Mather's plan regarding the Salem trials dealt with the use of leniency towards convicted witch suspects, under certain circumstances. For example, Mather proposed to Councilman John Foster that in cases where convictions lacked a solid determination by the judges, 'it would certainly be for the glory of the whole transaction to give that person a reprieve'.[18] Similarly, Mather recommended leniency for persons whom Mather called 'lesser criminals'. In a compassionate tone, he told Judge John Richards that he was concerned about the entrapment of some 'poor mortals' into unintentional witchcraft. He suggested lesser punishments be applied such as 'some solemn, open, public, and explicit renunciation of the Devil' or even banishment, if it would spare the life of the accused while preventing further witchcraft allegations.[19]

Chief Justice Stoughton obviously did not agree with Mather's analysis, or, at least in the intensity of the examinations, simply ignored it. Although seventeenth-century trials were not conducted in the climate or manner of modern English and North American courtrooms, the Salem transcripts indicate a harsh examination pattern even by seventeenth-century standards. A case in point is the questioning of Mary Easty of Topsfield, who was accused by the Salem girls Ann Putnam, Mercy Lewis, Mary Walcot, and Abigail Williams of tormenting them through her spectral image. The transcripts of Easty's examination went along these lines:

> Court: How can you say you know nothing when you see these Tormented and accuse you?
> Easty: Would you have me accuse my self?
> Court: Yes if you be guilty.
> Easty: Sir, I have no complyance with Satan in this. What would you have me to do?
> Court: Confess if ye be guilty.
> Easty: I will say it, if it was my last time, I am clear of this sin.[20]

Similarly, during the course of the trials Stoughton would also ignore Mather's advice about the rules of evidence. He not only failed to require strict adherence to the rules of evidence for the conviction of accused witches, but lowered the standard of conviction by appealing to less

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[17] Silverman, Selected Letters, p. 38.
[18] Ibid, p. 42.
[19] Ibid, p. 40.
[20] Boyer and Nissenbaum, Salem Witchcraft Papers, 1:288.

specific grounds such as the mere intent to harm others. As Koenig describes it, the result of Stoughton's use of the punishment clauses of the 1604 Witchcraft Statute without requiring the strict evidentiary rulings was that 'No harm (maleficium) need be inflicted . . . it was only necessary to prove the girls were the objects of any type of magical actions that incidentally brought such pains and contortions with it'.[21]

Mather's tone would not be so compassionate or understanding when it came to the last aspect of his advice to the court. He took a markedly different perspective on those witchcraft cases marked by two specific indications of purposeful diabolism: an explicit covenant with the Devil or obvious attempts to injure or murder others, or to overthrow Puritanism. Referring back to his own pre-Salem trial letter to Judge Richards, Mather equated Salem witchcraft with the crimes of treason and murder insisting, 'Our dear neighbors are most really tormented, really murdered, and really acquainted with hidden things, which are afterwards proved plainly to have been realities'.[22] In that same letter, Mather compared the Salem witchcraft trials to an outbreak of witchcraft in Mora, Sweden that took place from 1669-70. Referring to this, Mather wrote:

> I cannot for once forbear minding the famous accidents at Mohra [sic] in Swedeland, where . . . a stupendous witchcraft, much like ours, making havoc of the kingdom, was immediately followed with a remarkable smile of God upon the endeavors of the judges to discover and extirpate the authors of that execrable witchcraft.[23]

The witchcraft outbreak in Mora was part of a much larger witch-hunt that had begun in 1668 in northern Dalarna and before its apex in 1675 had included Norrland, Uppland, and Stockholm. The situation was in some ways similar to the Salem events in that the trial testimonies included an inverted covenant and sabbath--mythically described as Blakulla, the supernatural transportation of witches, and maleficium primarily directed at the seduction (transvection) of children.[24] The Mora witch trials also had a specific parallel to the Salem and Andover situation in

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[21] Koenig, Law and Society, p. 173.
[22] Kenneth Silverman, The Life And Times of Cotton Mather (New York, 1984), p. 37.
[23] Silverman, Selected Letters of Cotton Mather, p. 36.
[24] For a detailed description of medieval and early modern witchcraft beliefs in Sweden, see Bengt Anklaroo, 'Sweden: The Mass Burnings (1688-1676)' in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen, (eds), Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries (Oxford, 1990), pp. 285-317. See also,

that the outbreak was primarily viewed as a threat to communal order, and in that evidentiary matters caused no small frustration to the cooperative efforts of the courts and clerics.[25] By the end of the outbreak some seventeen adults had been beheaded and their bodies burned.

Cotton Mather had described the Mora witchcraft events in his 1689 book, Memorable Providences, no doubt drawing his information from reports in Glanvil's Sadducismus Triumphatus. By the 1690s, in the aftermath of the Salem affair, Mather was making a qualitative comparison between the events at Mora and at Salem, noting the Swedish judges' eradication of the guilty witches and the consequent ending of 'execrable witchcraft'. In Salem, those witches proved by the court to be 'obnoxious' and therefore unrepentant earned none of Mather's leniency, and gave him no hesitation in concurring with their speedy execution. By their own admission, these witches had willfully joined Satan's army to overthrow Christ's Kingdom on earth.

Consequently, in the course of the Salem trials, when Mather believed malicious witches had been discovered he gave his approval to their death. To Mather, those who had intentionally aligned themselves with Satan in order to overthrow the government posed a genuine threat to New England's existence. In all such cases, to Mather's seventeenth-century mind, the execution of the accused was the only certain means of eliminating the overwhelming danger. Mather therefore went directly to the biblical injunction found in Exodus 22:18 which stated, 'You shall not suffer a witch to live'. It was an act of divine justice to execute such notable witches as Goody Glover, the tormentor of Goodwin children; and of course, George Burroughs and Martha Carrier, the 'ringleaders' of the Andover plot.

The Stoughton Court and the Course of the Salem Trials

In the course of the Salem examinations, the judges apparently ignored the advice of Cotton Mather. When the new Governor, Sir William Phips arrived in Boston on 14 May 1692 he found the prisons full of people, and new accusations surfacing almost daily. He could not personally manage the affair due to the recent incursion of a combined French and Indian force into the colony. However,

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Stuart Clark, Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe (New York, 1997), p. 185.

[25] Anklaroo, 'Sweden: The Mass Burnings', p. 292.

he did order that all those who had previously been examined and incarcerated in Boston should now be formally tried.

The first round of prosecutions began on 2 June 1692 under the auspices of a newly configured adjudication panel. William Stoughton was retained as the Chief Judge, assisted by Bartholomew Gedney, Nathaniel Saltonstall, John Richards, William Seargent, Samuel Sewell, and Wait Winthrop.

The reconfigured panel proved to be no more cautious than the original magistrates, since as Silverman observes, 'By their standards Cotton Mather set forth to John Richards, the new court on which Richards sat was reckless and severe'.[26] The trials proceeded with a flurry of accusations and interrogations, followed by speedy convictions and executions. These were typified by the case of Bridget Bishop, a tavern owner with a disreputable reputation. On 10 June she was convicted and then expeditiously hanged on the west side of Salem town--the first Salem witch to die.[27] Bishop's death greatly alarmed the populace and the Governor's newly formed Council, prompting Phips to halt the proceedings while he consulted the Boston clergy. Meanwhile, Judge Saltonstall resigned and was replaced by Jonathan Corwin of Salem.

It was 28 June before the judges reconvened, but when they did, the court tried five cases in one day--an amazing pace for any court, even a seventeenth-century one. On 19 July 1692 the first mass execution was carried out as Rebecca Nurse, Goody Good, Elizabeth How, Sarah Wild, and Susanna Martin were taken to Gallows Hill at Salem town and hanged simultaneously. These were followed by another set of examinations and executions stemming from the Andover witch cases. Six witches were condemned on 5 August 1692 only one day after Cotton Mather delivered his sermon, A Discourse on the Wonders of the Invisible World. On 19 August five of the six, John Proctor, George Jacobs, Sr, John Willard, George Burroughs, and Martha Carrier were all executed in yet a second mass hanging. The number of deaths now stood at eleven.

On 9 September 1692, the trials began anew in Salem, which had now become the focus of the accusations, trials, and executions. The court continued to work with remarkable speed and in

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[26] Silverman, The Life and Times of Cotton Mather, p. 99.

[27] For an excellent review of the case of Bridget Bishop's ordeal, see Marion Starkey's The Devil in Massachusetts (New York, 1950), pp. 146-57.

less than two weeks nine more persons were condemned. On 22 September 1692, eight of the nine were taken to Gallows Hill. There, before a large gathering of spectators, Mary Easty, Alice Parker, Ann Pudeator, Margaret Scott, Wilmott Reed, Samuel Wardwell, Mary Parker, and Martha Corey were simultaneously executed. Three days before Corey's execution, her husband Giles had been unintentionally 'pressed to death' by the local Magistrates. Salem's death toll now stood at twenty--the final tragic number.

Meanwhile, after the last round of executions, Increase Mather wrote a stinging indictment of the trials which he appropriately titled and subsequently published by the title, Cases of Conscience Concerning Evil Spirits Personating Men (1693). As this chapter will show, the document clearly insisted that because of the Salem court's unwarranted use of spectral evidence innocent people had been executed and that others were still in jeopardy.

Phips explicitly acknowledged the intent of the publication. On 26 October 1692, a bill was sent to the Assembly calling for a fast day, as the ministers met privately to discuss the fate of the trials. Afterwards, Phips dismissed the Court of Oyer and Terminer, replacing it with the regular Superior Court of Judicature. Incredibly, when the new court convened, Stoughton was still in charge, but spectral evidence had become inadmissible. However, when Massachusetts' highest court, the Court of Assistants, met on 3 January 1693 it quickly acquitted forty-nine of the fifty-two suspects awaiting decisions, while Phips reprieved three persons for whom Stoughton and the Superior Court had signed execution warrants. Shortly thereafter, Stoughton resigned as Chief Justice. Governor Phips had effectively ended Salem's witchcraft episode.

With the exception of a small number of modern Salem scholars, most historians have credited Increase Mather with having had the largest hand in ending the Salem trials by his straightforward contradiction of spectral evidence as presented in Cases of Conscience.[28] Conversely, for three hundred years Cotton Mather has borne the character of personifying the worst about the Salem Trials. One question that continues to be asked by historians is: Why did

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[28] Certainly, this was not the only factor since the accusation against Phips' wife must have provided some incentive for the Governor to control the situation. Further, the growing criticism of the populace had its own impact. Phips was sensitive to the ramifications of another mob like the one that had deposed Andros in the recent past. All these must have had some part in ending the trials.

Cotton Mather refuse to openly and directly confront the procedures used by Chief Justice Stoughton and the Salem Court, as his father Increase had done so effectively?

Some answers to this question can be located in Mather's pre-conceived cosmology. To understand his reluctance to openly oppose the Salem judges and the trial procedures, or the reasons behind his decision to publish a half-baked and partisan account of the trials, his Wonders pamphlet, we need to recognize the meaning the trials had for Mather. By comparing Mather's stated world-view to his actions, it becomes evident that Mather found himself in perhaps the greatest dilemma of his ministerial career; how to support the battle against the witch invasion while disagreeing with some aspects of the way in which the trials were conducted.

Mather's Ambiguous Advice to the Salem Court about Spectral Evidence

One of the great difficulties that Cotton Mather faced throughout the Salem affair was the contradiction between his own desire to give balanced advice, and the pressures on him created by his personal relationship with the members of the Court of Oyer and Terminer. As Murdock observes, at those points in which Mather's advice appeared to contradict the courts' procedure, Mather found himself

> . . . caught in a painful dilemma . . . his father, by virtue of his age, experience, and achievement, could afford to rebuke them, but Cotton . . . must preserve the good will of such local potentates as Stoughton and Sewell.[29]

In truth, Cotton Mather did have personal reasons to be cautious about criticizing the Salem judges, since at least four of them were either friends of the Mather family or members of the Old North Church. For example, Judge John Richards, a wealthy member of the Mathers' congregation, had backed Cotton Mather both politically and financially when he became Increase's assistant in the church. The young Mather turned to John Richards for advice and support in times of congregational problems. Similarly, John Foster, whom Mather advised during the Salem situation was an influential member of the Old North Church, a member of the Governor's Council, and a confidant of Mather. Wait Winthrop, another court member, and a friend of Cotton Mather, had intervened on Cotton's behalf during the 1689 Boston Revolt when Andros signed a warrant for

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[29] Kenneth B. Murdock, in Murdock, (ed.), Magnalia Christi Americana (2 vols.; Cambridge, 1977), 1:11.

Cotton's arrest. Likewise, Samuel Sewell, whose trial records Mather used in his book Wonders, frequently attended Mather's lectures.

The most troubling relationship, however, was that between Cotton Mather and the Chief Justice of the special court, Lieutenant Governor William Stoughton. Cotton's ties to him were clear: the Mathers had been largely responsible for Stoughton coming to power in New England's post-Andros government. Unfortunately for Cotton Mather, the trials were not conducted on the basis of the type of evidence that Perkins, Bernard, and Gaule required, and as the General Court would follow from January of 1693. Instead, Stoughton became the main proponent of the use of spectral evidence, and the other members of the court followed his direction. As a result of these conflicts of interest and belief, Mather's interaction with Stoughton and the rest of the court would be notably bereft of criticism, and at times, contradictory. Mather's response to this dilemma was to provide the court with ambivalent advice about spectral evidence, and to pen a paradoxical account of the trials in Wonders.

As chapter four of this thesis demonstrated, the clergy and the civil courts in New England shared responsibility for a wide range of moral and legal issues. As Peter Hoffer notes, 'The close ties between ministerial roles and magisterial roles in New England made the judges' recourse to the ministers a natural step . . . They expected to be consulted in the crisis'.[30] This cooperation was nonetheless, at times fraught with complications. The courts and the clerics would particularly struggle at those points at which, as previously noted, evidentiary matters would prove a stumbling block in the court's headlong rush to convict and punish accused witches. These issues would be faced by seventeenth-century New England courts and clerics by the application of the Old Testament code and contemporary legal statutes in several areas besides witchcraft, including accusations including adultery, fornication, infanticide, and homosexuality.

A particularly significant example of the variety of complications created by issues of evidence can be seen in the circumstances surrounding a trial in Massachusetts in 1641. By permanently relocating to England, Massachusetts' Magistrate John Humfrey apparently abandoned

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[30] Hoffer, The Devil's Disciples, p. 139.

his two young daughters, leaving them in the care of some household servants. Unfortunately, over a period of two years, three of these male servants sexually abused the girls.[31] When the authorities were notified of these shocking events, their first instinct was to convict and execute all three men. However, complications arose with respect to both the evidence and the statutory authority upon which they wished to base their judgement. The local authorities attempted to apply a recent New England law against sodomy to the case, a law which allowed for the execution of the accused. The court consulted a number of prominent New England clerics who offered conflicting advice on the biblical and legal nature of the application of the sodomy prohibition to this case of sexual abuse.[32] Lacking a consensus, the court finally sentenced the three men to severe physical punishment and confined them to specific geographical areas, threatening execution if they ever left these districts.[33] In the end, the difficulty in providing appropriate evidence to prove either rape or sodomy, both complicated the judicial proceedings and prevented the Massachusetts General Court from executing the three defendants.

When the Salem events unfolded, the New England authorities would face similar problems in their use of evidence. Just as the General Court had done in the 1641 sexual abuse case, their response was to seek out the advice of the New England clergy. Accordingly, among the Boston ministers, Cotton and Increase Mather were a logical point of reference for the authorities. Both Mathers were well known for their compilations of supernatural wonder stories and involvement in prior witchcraft scares. Furthermore, Cotton Mather's account of the possession of the Goodwin children published in 1688 went a long ways towards accrediting him as a local Boston authority on the subject of witchcraft and spectral evidence.[34]

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[31] This case is given in its entirety in an article by Robert F. Oaks entitled, 'Defining sodomy in seventeenth-century Massachusetts', The Journal of Homosexuality, 6, (1-2), (Fall/Winter 1980/81), pp. 79-83.

[32] As Robert Oaks details this situation, it was the inability of the prosecutors to prove that sexual penetration had occurred that prevented the court from being able to execute the three defendants for rape. See Oaks, 'Defining Sodomy', p. 80.

[33] Two of the men had their nostrils slit upwards, and were forced to wear a rope about their necks signifying their punishment if they ever left their restricted districts. See: Oaks, 'Defining Sodomy', p. 81.

[34] Cotton Mather, Memorable Providences Related to Witchcraft Possessions (Boston, 1691), in American Antiquarian Society, Early American Imprints, 1639-1800, Microcard [no.] 486, (Worchester, 1967).

A chronological sampling of Mather's advice to the Salem court reveals that, without duplicitous intent, Cotton Mather failed to incontrovertibly state his strongly held view on the dubious value of spectral evidence. Yet, perhaps more than this, it demonstrates the nature of the twofold dilemma that Cotton Mather faced throughout the Salem period. The first of these dilemmas was how he could support the Salem judges while openly disagreeing with their deliberative methodology. The second dilemma was how to assert the reality of witchcraft as exhibited in spectral evidence without condoning convictions based exclusively upon such unstable evidence.

The results of these dilemmas are best viewed in Mather's letters to his contemporaries, the 'Return of the Ministers', the debate about Increase Mather's Cases of Conscience, and Mather's use of spectral evidence within his book The Wonders of the Invisible World. Taken together, these sources and events show that although Mather did not change his view on spectral evidence during the Salem trials, he failed to openly oppose the Salem Court's use of spectral evidence as the primary basis of conviction and execution of witch suspects.

One of the most telling sources of Mather's unintentional ambivalence in relation to the validity of spectral evidence validity is found in his correspondence to John Richards and John Foster. For example, Mather's pre-trial letter to Richards suggested

> When you are satisfied . . . that the demons which molest our poor neighbors do indeed represent such and such people to the sufferers . . . I suppose you will not reckon it a conviction that the people so represented are witches to be immediately exterminated.[35]

However, in an apparent contradiction, Mather blunted the impact of his cautionary statements by proceeding to include questionable evidence such as alleged prior threats reported by neighbors, apparent supernatural knowledge, and physical harm to victims caused by an accused witch's spectre in his letter. Mather writes:

> If therefore you can find that when the witches do anything easy, that is not needful I say if you find the same thing, presently, and hurtfully, and more violently done by any unseen hand unto the bodies of the sufferers, hold them, for you have catched a witch.[36]

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[35] Silverman, Selected Letters, p. 36.

[36] Ibid, pp. 38-39.

Cotton Mather's confusing approach to spectral evidence is also apparent in his 17 August 1692 letter to John Foster. Again, despite the fact that he had declared to Foster that the court should not hand down convictions based upon spectral appearances, when 'there is no further evidence against a person but only this', only two paragraphs later he wrote:

> Nevertheless, a very great use is to be made of the spectral impressions upon the sufferers. They justly introduce, and determine, an inquiry into the circumstances of the person accused, and they strengthen other presumptions.[37]

It is evident that on one hand Mather was warning Foster against convicting persons solely upon spectral evidence yet gave it credence as a basis for profound suspicion and further inquiry. However, by August 1692, the court had already used this unreliable and divisive evidence too often. Spectral evidence had simply been too dangerous a tool by which to prosecute the alleged witches. This pattern of using a 'nevertheless' in relation to this issue invariably gave an ambivalent and ambiguous quality to Mather's advice.[38]

Perhaps it was because five more people were then awaiting execution, that in writing to Foster Mather pointed to a 'way out' for the judges in those cases lacking in substance, or primarily based on spectral evidence. In his letter to Foster, he went on to suggest several means of reducing or setting aside previous convictions. These included transportation to another part of the Colony, asking the General Court to relax the penalties for witchcraft, or even imploring the Governor to 'relax the judgments of death'. It seems obvious that Mather was tactfully telling Richards that the Court was executing persons upon the very spectral evidence he has previously warned against using. Yet, at the end of the same letter Mather returned to the pattern of avoiding an outright confrontation with the Salem judges. Noting the comparative simplicity of a 1645 New England witch trial, Mather wrote:

> Our case is extraordinary . . . I entreat you that whatever you do, strengthen the hands of our honorable judges in the great work before them. They are persons for whom no man living has a greater veneration than Sir, Your Servant.[39]

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[37] Ibid, p. 41.

[38] Ibid, p. 42. Within the same letter, Cotton Mather, sensing that at least a part of the judges were becoming worried about Stoughton's insistence upon using spectral evidence, suggested to Foster that 'It would make all matters easier if at least bail were taken for people accused only by the invisible tormentors of the poor sufferers and not blemished by any further grounds of suspicion against them'.

[39] Ibid, p. 43.

Finally, at the end of the trials, Mather's letter requesting Stoughton's endorsement of Wonders avoided any direct discussion of his differences with the Court over the use of spectral evidence. Instead Mather praised Stoughton for the '. . . weighty and worthy undertakings wherein almighty God has employed Your Honor as his instrument for the extinguishing of as wonderful a piece of devilism as has been seen in the world . . . .'[40] Mather had chosen to put any disagreements he had with Stoughton in the body of his work, The Wonders of the Invisible World. There, and only there, after the chaos of the trials was past, would Mather give his first open indication that the Salem judges and Stoughton in particular, had mismanaged the evidence against the alleged Salem witches.

Beyond his personal correspondence, Mather would also face difficulties in his role connected to the Boston ministers' advisement of Governor Phips. This is demonstrated in two critical documents from the Salem trials: 'The Return of the Ministers', and Cases of Conscience.

The initial advice given by the Boston ministers resulted from the uproar over the 10 June 1692 execution of Bridget Bishop. This collective opinion of the Boston Ministers, entitled, 'The Return of the Ministers' was penned by none other than Cotton Mather. In their response, the thirteen Boston clergymen used the bulk of their document to warn the court that the past use of spectral evidence had provided 'no infallible proof' of guilt. However, using the 'nevertheless' clause so common to Cotton Mather's advice, he and the Boston clergy included one last article in which they wrote:

> Nevertheless, we cannot but humbly recommend unto the Government, the speedy and vigorous Prosecution of such as have rendered themselves obnoxious; according to the best directions given in the Laws of God, and the wholesome Statutes of the English nation for the Detection of Witchcraft.[41]

While some historians have inferred that Mather included this last article without consulting the other clerics, Cotton Mather insisted in Wonders that, 'those very men of God most conscientiously subjoined this Article to that Advice'.[42]

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[40] Ibid, p. 43.

[41] Mather, Wonders, 1:31.

[42] Ibid, 1:31. Francis Hill has suggested that Cotton Mather may have written this last article encouraging 'Speed and Vigor' without consulting the other Boston clergy. See, Frances Hill, A Delusion of Satan (London, 1995), p. 165.

In retrospect, this was a serious error on the part of the Boston ministers and more particularly on the part of Cotton Mather.[43] As Frances Hill observes,

> . . . The effect was to give Stoughton and his court the ministers' seal of approval. The judges could not prosecute speedily and vigorously except by employing the methods they had already been using, including spectral evidence. The Return would not impede the course of events but encourage it.[44]

In light of the clergy's knowledge of Stoughton's use of spectral evidence, their decision to encourage 'speed' or 'vigor' gave license to the worst features of the court's prior procedures.[45] By then, the Stoughton Court's use of spectral evidence had taken on an increasingly predictable form as the allegedly tormented Salem girls along with John Indian widened their net of accusations.

Had Cotton Mather and the Boston clergy held fast to their stance against spectral evidence, control of the trials might have been reestablished. Instead, as Levin points out, 'In May or June, when absolute condemnation of spectral evidence might have affected the court, neither Mather nor the other ministers could make the caution unequivocal'.[46] Consequently, Stoughton took the eighth clause as a sign of approval for the unsound procedures of the court. Governor Phips verifies this when he notes in his records that Stoughton 'persisted vigorously in the same method, to the great dissatisfaction and disturbance of the people'.[47]

By 22 September the Salem trials had reached a second major crisis, with another mass execution of eight out of nine persons convicted earlier that month. Phips had been absent during most of the Salem episode but, upon his return from the French and Indian combat at Pemaquid, Maine, he faced a populace discontent with the growing number of executions. Realizing the potentially dangerous antipathy to the trials felt in Boston and throughout New England, Phips again sought the advice of the Boston clergy.

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[43] Bernard Rosenthal points out that the only mitigating factor that may be viewed with respect to the outcome of the eighth article in 'The Return' is that regardless of whatever advice Cotton Mather and the other ministers had given the court, it was the court after all, and the not the clergy that was empowered to convict and execute the accused witches. See, Bernard Rosenthal, Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692 (Cambridge, 1995), p. 70.

[44] Frances Hill, A Delusion of Satan, p. 165.

[45] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft (Cambridge, 1974), p. 10.

[46] David Levin, Cotton Mather, The Young Life of the Lord's Remembrancer (Cambridge, 1978), p. 205.

[47] Silverman, Life and Times of Cotton Mather, p. 104.

Much as in 'The Return of the Ministers', the reply he received was their concerted opinion. However, Increase Mather penned this most recent document so as to leave little room for ambiguity. Refuting the Salem court's use of spectral evidence as a sole determinant for convicting and condemning suspects, Increase wrote:

> This then I declare and testify, that to take away the life of anyone, merely because a Spectre or Devil, in a bewitched or possessed person does accuse them, will bring the Guilt of innocent Blood on the Land.[48]

This brings this study to yet another point in which Cotton Mather faced an apparent dilemma in which his actions seem to contradict his stated beliefs. Although fourteen other Boston ministers had signed the preface to Cases of Conscience, Cotton Mather refused to do so for reasons he stated in a letter to his uncle John Cotton dated 20 October 1692:

> I did in my conscience, think that as the humours of this people now run, . . . such a discourse going alone would . . . everlastingly stifle any further proceedings of justice, and more than so, produce a publick and open contest with the judges . . . I did with all the modesty I could use, decline setting my hand unto the book, assigning this reason: that I had already a book in the press which would sufficiently declare my opinion.[49]

Historians have debated the sincerity of this explanation, offering interpretations ranging from duplicity on Cotton's part to an insistence that he and his father Increase did in fact disagree about the limits of spectral evidence.[50] Whether or not one believes Cotton Mather's explanation, one thing is certain: Increase Mather's Cases of Conscience and Cotton Mather's The Wonders of the Invisible World do not present a single view of the use and importance of spectral evidence. Increase Mather's straightforward analysis of spectral evidence insisted it was 'influenced by the Devil' making it utterly unreliable as a basis of lawful conviction, while Cotton's ambiguous language both cautioned against and encouraged its limited use.

A Paradoxical Account: The Wonders of the Invisible World

While Increase Mather was writing Cases of Conscience, on 2 September 1692 Cotton wrote a letter to Chief Justice William Stoughton offering to publish an account of the Salem trials. Mather

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[48] Ibid, p. 113. Kenneth Silverman reflecting on the nature of the document further notes that 'Cases of Conscience' refers to works of casuistry, that is, resolutions of moral dilemmas by skilled theologians.
[49] Silverman, Selected Letters, p. 46.
[50] Perry Miller and Kenneth Silverman have taken Mather's protestations and excuse as insincere. They would insist that Increase and Cotton Mather did in fact disagree about the use of spectral evidence.

indicated his intention to 'vindicate the country, as well as the judges and juries' and 'rectify the opinions of men' concerning the Salem trials and executions.[51]

Considering the then current political backlash against the trials spreading throughout New England, Stoughton gave his approval for the project. On 20 September, just two days before the final Salem executions, Mather wrote to his friend Samuel Sewell, the court secretary, asking for a 'narrative of the evidences' from the recent trials.[52] He needed these to arrange his account of a half dozen or more cases.

In a postscript to this letter, Mather relates that Governor Phips had specifically 'commanded' Cotton Mather to prepare a record of the Salem trials. In truth, Phips, like Stoughton, also had political motivations for asking Mather to write the defense; his handling of the episode was being criticized to his London superiors. This is borne out by a letter written by Governor Phips on 12 October 1692 to William Blathwayt, the clerk of the Privy Council. Citing the enormous difficulties associated with the Salem trials, Phips reported that:

> I did before any application was made unto me about it put a stop to the proceedings of the Court and they are now stopt till their Majesties pleasure be known. Sir I beg pardon for giving you all this trouble, the reason is because I know my enemies are seeking to turn it all upon me and . . . [I] desire you will please to give a true understanding of the matter if any thing of this kind be urged or made use of against mee.[53]

Having received permission from Phips and Stoughton, Cotton Mather began to arrange the materials he had gathered. The resulting book, The Wonders of the Invisible World, was probably his most dubious contribution to the Salem episode. Within this complicated compilation of his own sermons, historical sketches, theological conclusions and chronicle of five specific Salem cases, Mather flits from subject to subject, interjecting opinions, interpretations, and supposed proofs for his own conclusions. The entire composition has the feel of a manuscript inadvisably rushed to the printer. Yet beyond its failings as a piece of literature, Wonders reveals the personal and public dilemma which Cotton Mather faced with respect to how the entire Salem situation had

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Levin takes the approach that Mather's statement bears out his true views.

[51] Cotton Mather's letter to William Stoughton is reproduced in its entirety in Silverman's Selected Letters, pp. 43-44.

[52] Ibid, p. 44.

[53] Letter of Sir William Phips to the Privy Council dated 12, October 1692, in Boyer and Nissenbaum,

evolved. In a way reminiscent of his advice to the court, Mather would attempt within Wonders to uphold the reality of witchcraft without directly censuring the Salem court.

Perhaps no single term more accurately describes the results of this effort than 'paradoxical'. Two elements of his paradox stand out in Wonders. First, although Mather purported to write Wonders as a historian, he more often wrote as an advocate for the court's behaviour, selectively including and excluding material to bolster his case, than as an objective witness to the Salem episode. Second, faced with the errors of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, Mather tried to defend the Salem proceedings while simultaneously including a number of statements about the Salem court, Lieutenant Governor Stoughton, Governor Phips, and the trial accounts found in Wonders, which on analysis appear to criticize and invalidate the court's actions.

Throughout the pages of Wonders, Mather's self-proclaimed intention for publishing his account was first, 'to countermine the whole PLOT of the Devil, against New England, in every Branch of it, as far as one of my darkness, can comprehend such a World of Darkness'.[54] Mather did this fully. The first two-thirds of Wonders deals with Mather's cosmology as it related to witchcraft, detailing theological postulates, providences, previously published jeremiads, and calls for repentance and reformation. These were interspersed with his considered opinions about witchcraft covenants and spectral appearances.

Although Wonders is at times complicated and fraught with side issues, it is nevertheless Cotton Mather's single most important document on witchcraft. In terms of the sheer volume of theological consideration that Cotton Mather included within the covers of Wonders, it provides a revealing picture of seventeenth-century witchcraft beliefs in Colonial America. Had Mather stopped with the first division of his book, it may well have become a standard reference for seventeenth-century New England witchcraft studies, avoiding the ensuing vilification which it helped to bring down upon Mather's head.

It would be Mather's other primary purpose for writing Wonders that would cause his historical stigmatization. At the beginning of the final third of the book, Mather purposed to relate:

The Salem Witchcraft Papers, 3:861-2.

[54] Mather, Wonders, preface, vi.

> . . . a brief account of the Tryals which have passed upon some of the Malefactors lately Executed at Salem, for the Witchcrafts whereof they stood convicted . . . For which cause I have only singled out Four or Five . . . and I report matter not as an Advocate, but as an Historian.[55]

English concepts of historical reporting were being advanced throughout the seventeenth century. This is evidenced by such works as John Craige's Mathematical Principles of Christian Theology. Craige's attempts at explaining what appeared to be a declining belief in Christianity was placed within the context of his mathematical formulations of the verification of the truthfulness of reported events. As Richard Nash has summarized it,

> Two premises underlie Craige's argument. The first is that belief is not fixed and compelled, but is subject to change; the second is that the further we are removed from an event through time and space, the greater are the suspicions we entertain concerning reports of that event.[56]

By the end of the seventeenth century, English history models had also become largely defined by two genres, the 'general or particular histories' and the 'memoirs'. The general history related events either prior to the author's own era, or events in which the author had no participation. It's corollary, the particular history, predominantly dealt with the history of one's own era, often based upon personal observation and participation. Nonetheless, the latter still required an objective, impartial accounting of events. Philip Hicks describes this model:

> The historian's proper tone was one of lofty impartiality. He kept enough distance from events and from his own self-interest . . . he avoided speaking in the first person, because that would call his objectivity into question and draw undignified attention to himself. . . . Since history was "merely narrative", the historian simply told his own story, rarely digressing to argue over disputed interpretations or adding self-justifying transcriptions of supporting documents.[57]

The second seventeenth-century genre, the memoir, entailed a less strict set of standards and was therefore considered to be a lesser model of historical writing. It was often punctuated with the author's own biased judgment and defense of arguments traceable to the memoirist' involvement in, or first-person witness of the events being recorded. The memoir was often the preparatory document for a general or particular history in which, as Philip Hicks indicates,

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[55] Ibid, 1:139.
[56] Richard Nash, John Craige's Mathematical Principles of Christian Theology (Carbondale, 1991), introduction, xv.
[57] Philip Hicks, Neoclassical History and English Culture: From Clarendon to Hume (New York, 1996), p. 10.

> . . . Unlike the historian, the writer of memoirs wrote from a patently personal perspective, often in the first person . . . [and] based his own account primarily on his own observations and interviews with other participants in events, rather than on research into public records or the account of other historians.[58]

Contemporary to Cotton Mather's era are two notable works that reflect such standards of writing; Clarendon's The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England and Bishop Gilbert Burnet's History of His Own Time.[59] Clarendon served as an advisor to King Charles I, and later worked to restore the Prince of Wales to the throne, but was banished in 1667 as a result of political fallout with the court and parliament. Although an active participant in the events which he described, Clarendon's history was written in the model of a general and impartial history, 'from a lofty impersonal perspective, in rolling, archaic periods'.[60]

Burnet, the Minister at Saltoun and professor of Divinity at Glasgow University (1669), was appointed Bishop of Salisbury by William III after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. His general history of England and Scotland under the later Stuarts, Charles II, James II, William III, Mary II and Anne embodies elements of both general and particular history. The first section of Burnet's history, dealing with the pre-restoration era, and pre-dating his own era is a 'proper', impartial history taken from the monarchical and public records. The remainder of Burnet's history deals with events in which he participated. In these records, Burnet acted in the role of a particular historian or memoirist, suggesting that 'those who have been themselves engaged in affairs are the fittest to write history, as knowing best how matters were designed and carried on'.[61]

It was against this backdrop of generally defined English histories that Cotton Mather proposed to write his account of the Salem trials. Yet, as Wonders demonstrates, serious complications arose with Mather's attempts at reporting the Salem trials. Mather had been involved in the advising of Governor Phips about the witch trials; yet had attended none of the examinations he records in Wonders. Further, his historical rendering of the trials did not directly fit the model of

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[58] Hicks, Neoclassical History and English Culture, p. 11.

[59] Edward Hyde Clarendon, The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England (ed.), W. Dunn Macray, (6 vols.; Oxford, 1849); Bishop Gilbert Burnet, History of His Own Time, (London, 1724; repr. 1979).

[60] Hicks, Neoclassical History and English Culture, p. 46.

[61] David Allen, History of His Own Time, introduction, vii-ix.

general/particular history or memoir even though his objective seemed heavily weighted towards writing a 'particular', yet impartial history of the trials.

Cotton Mather would find writing The Wonders of the Invisible World as an objective, detached account of the trials an elusive goal. The causes for this lack of objectivity can be traced to two defects.

The first is the fact that Mather wrote his book partly in a spirit of partisan defense of his friends on the Salem court. Cotton Mather had conceived the idea for Wonders during the height of the public outcry against the trial procedures and executions. The last witches executed would face Gallows Hill only weeks after Mather first dipped his pen in the inkwell to write Wonders. At that point, however, Mather knew the public mood was clearly becoming more critical, as his letters to Stoughton and Sewell demonstrate. In his request for Stoughton's permission, Mather describes his intended efforts to 'divert the thoughts of my readers, even with something of a designed contrivance, unto those points which help very much to flatten that fury which we now so much turn upon one another'.[62] Similarly, Mather's request to Samuel Sewell for the trial records demonstrates his dual intention of 'lifting up an standard against the infernal enemy', and his willingness to 'expose myself unto the utmost, for the defense of my friends with you'.[63]

Given this self-acknowledged intention for writing Wonders, Cotton Mather could only try to convince himself that despite writing in defense of Lieutenant Governor Stoughton and for Governor Phips, Wonders could nevertheless be an accurate historical rendering of the Salem cases. Additionally, he could claim some comfort from the fact that his chronicle would be partially based on the trial transcripts obtained from Samuel Sewell. Unfortunately, the trial accounts were neither accurate nor was his rendering of them free from Mather's own determined bias.

The second feature that predisposed Mather to be a court advocate rather than a historian was the approach he took in writing the last third of Wonders. To begin, his selection of trials was largely unrepresentative. Mather insisted that if he had included more Salem trial accounts Wonders would have 'swollen too big'.[64] But the effect of Mather's silence on many of the cases was to limit

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[62] Silverman, Selected Letters, pp. 43-44.

[63] Ibid, p. 45.

[64] Mather, Wonders, 1:139.

his chronicle to the trials and executions of those whose guilt could be demonstrated without recourse to spectral evidence alone. This afforded him an arsenal against the attacks of an angry and confused populace, as well as providing Mather some level of comfort in reporting those cases his conscience could accept.

Mather includes the cases of Bridget Bishop, Susanna Martin, Elizabeth How, and Martha Carrier and George Burroughs. Of these only George Burrough's case raised the issue of spectral evidence. In effect, Mather only used those cases supported either by tangible witchcraft objects, the confession of the accused witch, or the testimonies of two other or more credible persons.[65] The remaining fourteen cases remained unreported. Yet, in his 17 August 1692 letter to John Foster, Mather had insisted that the Salem Judges '. . . had such an encouraging presence of God with them, as that scarce any, if at all any, have been tried before them, against whom God has not strangely sent in other, and more human and most convincing, testimonies'.[66]

In addition to his problematic selection of cases, Mather's approach to the historical side of Wonders was also marred by personal annotations within this part of his book. While claiming to write strictly as a historian, a title which implied objectivity even, and perhaps more especially in the seventeenth century, Mather punctuated his book with inflammatory statements about the convicted and executed suspects, making Cotton Mather appear even more a court advocate.

Several instances of this occur within Wonders. For example, speaking of George Burroughs, Mather wrote in the opening passage, 'Glad should I have been, if I had never known the name of this man; or never had this occasion to mention so much as the first Letters of his name'.[67] Mather would show another personal prejudice in detailing the story of Susanna Martin.

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[65] Just the opposite was true of those cases that Mather chose not to explicate in his book. Two specific examples come to mind in this regard. Cotton Mather spent but a brief moment in the end of Wonders mentioning the execution of Giles Corey without admitting that spectral evidence was the main condition upon which 'poor Giles Corey' was 'Lately Prest to Death'. See: Salem Witchcraft Papers 1:244. Mather also did not mention the case of Rebecca Nurse in Wonders. Such an example would have been contradictory, since the main reason for prosecuting Nurse was based upon evidentiary tests, including an examination of physical manifestations upon the afflicted when Nurse moved her hands or leaned on the witness chair. For the complete account of Rebecca Nurse's trial, see Robert Calef, More Wonders of the Invisible World in Drake, Witchcraft Delusion, 3:7-33 as well as Salem Witchcraft Papers, 2:604.

[66] Silverman, Selected Letters, p. 42.

[67] Mather, Wonders, 1:152.

After giving the case in full, Cotton Mather added another paragraph as a postscript in which he wrote that 'this woman was one of the most impudent, scurrilous, wretched Creatures in the World; and she did now throughout her whole Tryal, discover herself to be such an one'.[68] Finally, in the case of Martha Carrier, George Burroughs' female counterpart in the Andover witchcraft case, in a memorandum, Mather employed an abusive description of Carrier:

> This Rampant Hag, Martha Carrier, was the person, of whom the confessions of the Witches, and of her own Children among these agreed, that the Devil had promised her, she should be Queen of Hell.[69]

For a historian and not an advocate, Mather's account, largely taken from Sewell's records, is even by his own standards, peppered with loaded and inappropriate asides about the victims of this tragedy. Consequently, Mather's account of the trials and executions belied his stated purpose to the degree that, as Chadwick Hansen has so aptly put it, 'One of the most cogent critics of the court . . . became their chief apologist'.[70]

The second major aspect of Wonders that is clearly paradoxical is Mather's presentation of the adjudication process used by the Court of Oyer and Terminer. The book vacillates between defending the court and stealthily suggesting that from the beginning errors accompanied the trials of the alleged Salem witches. The reader of Wonders can not help but notice Cotton Mather's presentation of contradictory opinions about the integrity of the adjudication process and some unnamed court members. The patterns found within these contradictions is centred on two opposed premises. In essence, Mather suggested to his readers that the Court had erred in its deliberations without specifically saying so. On the one hand, Mather tactfully opposed the Court's trial methodology, while on the other hand he did not purposely single out the erring judges. Illustrations of this are scattered throughout the pages of Wonders.

The initial hint of the court's mistakes comes only thirteen pages into Cotton Mather's manuscript, where he asks, 'In fine, Have there been any faults on any side fallen into? Surely, they have at worst been but the faults of a well meaning Ignorance'.[71] Just a few pages later, noting the

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[68] Ibid, 1:187.
[69] Ibid, 1:200.
[70] Chadwick Hansen, Witchcraft at Salem (New York, 1969), p. 171.
[71] Mather, Wonders, 1:33. [Page 13 of the original manuscript].

use of questionable tactics by the Salem judges, Mather makes yet another veiled assessment of the Salem trial failures as he says:

> Have there been any disputed Methods used in discovering the Works of Darkness? It may be none but what have had great Precedents in other parts of the World; which may, though not altogether justifie, yet much alleviate a Mistake in us if there should happen to be found any such mistake in so dark a Matter.[72]

Again, citing the Court of Oyer and Terminer's use of spectral evidence, Mather observes,

> The whole business is become hereupon so Snarled, and the determination of the Question [validity of spectral evidence] one way or another, so dismal, that our Honourable Judges have a Room for Jehoshaphat's Exclamation, "We know not what to do!"[73]

Using this pattern, Cotton Mather implies, if not quietly confides to the New England populace that the Court had blundered, perhaps executing some innocent persons. Still, he left unnamed the judges responsible for those errors. He certainly could have named William Stoughton, who was not only the Chief Justice, but also the chief proponent of spectral evidence. Mather's implications of wrongdoing were shadowed by his perfectly ambiguous criticism.

The second contradiction of opinions Cotton Mather demonstrates is his pattern of explaining the failures of the Court by citing the confusion that reigned in the Salem adjudications. It becomes apparent with each subsequent illustration that Mather was attempting to distance himself from the errors of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, while protecting the judges from the backlash occurring in the wake of the Salem trials and executions.

Cotton Mather began by describing the Salem affair as a part of an ongoing and unfinished war between the Devil and New England:

> But I do not believe, that the progress of Witchcraft among us, is all the Plot which the Devil is managing in the Witchcraft now upon us . . . And it may be feared that in the Horrible Tempest which is now upon ourselves, the design of the Devil is to sink that Happy Settlement of Government, wherewith Almighty God has graciously inclined Their Majesties to favour us. . . . The wretches have proceeded so far, as to concert and consult the methods of rooting out the Christian religion from this country, and setting up instead of it, perhaps a more gross diabolism, than ever the world saw before. [74]

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[72] Ibid, 1:29-30.

[73] Ibid, 1:106.

[74] Ibid, 1:8. Mather is referring to the anticipated New Charter, promised by William and Mary, which was granted and received in Boston on May 14, 1692. Sir William Phips arrived with the Charter and assumed his role as Governor of Massachusetts.

This was true to his cosmology of Salem witchcraft. However, his next statement centred the errors of the court within the confusion of the hour, as seen in the following statement:

> But in the mean time, the Devil improves the Darkness of this Affair, to push us into a Blind Mans Buffet, and we are even ready to be sinfully, yea, hotly, and madly, mauling one another in the dark.[75]

Placing the trials within the context of a war of Satan and the witches upon New England, through these assertions, Mather could point to the mistakes of the court while shielding them from total blame. Mather suggested that although the Court's management may have been deficient, this was, after all, a war with the Devil. Clearly, the import was that just as times of physical warfare incurred 'mistakes', a spiritual war against the Devil might also.

The description of the judges and people as participating in a 'blind man's buffet' is particularly telling. The illustration lent itself to an explanation of how the court could have erred innocently, could have 'blindly' fallen into error, led by the Devil himself. Emphasizing the difficulties inherent in reaching a judicial judgement in cases of witchcraft, Mather hoped to pacify the New England populace's anger towards the judges.

In assessing these examples, one might ask why Cotton Mather could not, or did not plainly censure the court for its failures in the Salem trials? Why did he resort to contradictory statements instead of openly criticizing the court's use of spectral evidence and its erroneous procedures? Beyond his relationship to the Salem court,[76] other issues may have influenced Mather's choice. One difficulty arose from Mather's apprehension that challenging the prosecutions might lead the populace to believe as Robert Calef did: that witchcraft was spurious.[77] Here Calef and Mather were specifically and irrefutably on the opposite side of the debate. Calef would write with an air of stinging sarcasm, 'It is rather a Wonder that no more blood was shed, for if that Advice of his

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[75] Ibid, 1:107.

[76] A statement by Silverman echoes this contention: 'In writing to and about the Salem court, Cotton Mather was addressing not only judges whom he felt were abusing evidence, but simultaneously neighbors, old friends, [and] members of his church.'. See: Silverman, Life and Times of Cotton Mather, p. 102.

[77] David Levin contends that Mather's Wonders, in part, attempted to show. . . why one should still believe in the Devil's power to set witches loose on human victims, and how a well-meaning, though fallible court could have justly convicted and condemned guilty defendants. See: David Levin, 'Did the Mathers disagree about the Salem witchcraft trials?', Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 95 (1), (1985), pp. 19-37.

Pastor's could still have prevail'd with the Governour, Witchcraft had not been so shammed off as it was'.[78] To Mather, in comparison to the errors of the Salem court, a sweeping dismissal of the trial process would ultimately prove to be more destructive since it might invalidate the dangers of witchcraft itself. Mather alludes to this in Wonders:

> [To] obstruct a Regular Detection of that Witchcraft, is what we may well with an holy fear avoid. Their Majesties good Subjects must not every day be torn to pieces by horrid Witches, and those bloody Felons, be left wholly unprosecuted. The Witchcraft is a business that will not be sham'd, without plunging us into sore plagues, and of long continuance.[79]

Another explanation for Mather's hesitance in castigating the Salem court is the fact that he honestly believed that for the most part the judges had sought to faithfully discharge their duties. After all, the situation was truly perplexing. Mather stated in Wonders, that although he 'could not allow the principles' some of the judges had used, he still 'could not but speak honourably' of them.

Finally, Mather's hesitance in confronting the Salem court can be traced to his view of their biblical obligation to prosecute malevolent witch suspects. In Wonders, Mather cites the court's dilemma:

> What an Arduous Task, have those Worthy Personages now upon their Hands? To carry the knife so exactly, that on the one side, there may be no innocent blood shed by too unseeing a Zeal for the Children of Israel; and that on the other side, there may be no shelter given to those diabolical works of darkness without the Removal whereof we never shall have peace or to those furies whereof several have kill'd more people perhaps than would serve to make a Village.[80]

Mather's statement returns to an earlier theme: the Salem Trials as an end-times attack of Satan upon New England. To Mather, the judges had been thrust into an assignment requiring them to defeat the Devil's witch-attack upon New England without blindly and zealously executing innocent persons. This view is repeated by William Stoughton's observation to Mather that by his publication of Wonders, 'the Spirit of the Lord has thus enabled you to lift up a Standard against the Infernal Enemy, that hath been coming in like a Flood against us'.[81] Mather could attest the need to punish any malevolent witches living in New England, but he also was taken with the plight of those who may have been innocently condemned by the court. His emotional ties to the court engendered

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[78] Calef, More Wonders the Invisible World, 3:157.
[79] Cotton Mather, Wonders, 1:34.
[80] Ibid, 1:50.
[81] Ibid, preface, p. vi.

compassion for the judges, while his conscience told him that he should attempt to quell the populace by ambiguously citing the errors of the court.

Unfortunately for Cotton Mather, his pattern of using ambiguous criticism put him squarely on the side of the Court of Oyer and Terminer. No matter how tactfully Mather may have couched his rebuttals, as this thesis has shown, his later antagonists such as Perry Miller, would describe such ambiguous criticisms as attempts to 'make those killings legitimate when he knew they were murders'.[82]

The final set of Mather's contradictory viewpoints within Wonders is seen in his attempts to cautiously disassociate himself from the Court of Oyer and Terminer, Chief Justice William Stoughton, Governor Phips, and the Salem executions. These attempts were not overt, but if one knew Cotton Mather and his disagreement with the Stoughton court, one could easily spot the carefully worded disavowals.

The first comes in Mather's much needed Author's Defense where he says, 'In fine; For the Dogmatical part of my Discourse, I want no Defense; for the Historical part of it, I have a very Great One; the Lieutenant-Governour of New-England'.[83] The next disassociation appears at the very beginning of the book. In the first sentence of the text Cotton Mather wrote, 'I live by Neighbors that force me to produce these undeserved lines'.[84] Then, before Mather related the initial account of the Salem trials he included this statement: 'But the Government requiring some Account of this trial to be inserted into his book, it becomes me with all Obedience to submit unto the Order'.[85] Having finished the five selective chronicles of the Salem affair, Mather went on to say, 'Having thus far done the Service imposed upon me: I will further pursue it'.[86]

Taken within their context, the purpose of these statements is apparent. Cotton Mather wanted to indicate that what he was about to write was not entirely to his liking, or to be interpreted as a complete agreement with Stoughton's court or Phips' government. As for the historical part, Stoughton had given Mather 'a shield' and 'umbrage' under which he dared to walk; therefore,

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[82] Perry Miller, The New England Mind, Colony to Province (Cambridge, 1953), p. 294.
[83] Mather, Wonders, Preface, vi.
[84] Ibid, viii.
[85] Ibid, 1:152.
[86] Ibid, 1:200.

Stoughton would be accountable for the trial accounts, not Cotton Mather. Something had obviously changed in Mather's mind leading to such a disclaimer, as Mather later wrote that Stoughton's shield had proven 'too much'.

Finally, with the 'Government requiring some account' of Burroughs' trial and the others, Mather had 'submitted to the order'. He had been 'commanded' by the Governor to write the official Salem story. Of course, an informed observer would also have known that it was Cotton Mather who both convinced Governor Phips to authorize the publication of Wonders as the official Salem account and used Phips' command in obtaining the court transcripts.

Such statements were veiled contradictions of the original facts. It was not Cotton Mather's theology that had changed, but his feeling toward the writing of the manuscript, a change presumably caused by William Stoughton's persistent misapplication of spectral evidence. Added to this was Mather's fear about how the book would now be perceived. It appears that his original willingness to expose himself 'to the utmost, for the defense' of his friends had melted into distress as Cotton Mather worried about his reputation after the release of The Wonders of the Invisible World.

Mather's fear proved to be well founded. Increase Mather's Cases of Conscience appeared as a bold attack on the premises of the Salem trials, chastising the Court of Oyer and Terminer for its use--worse yet--abuse of spectral evidence. Conversely Phips' delayed 1693 release of Cotton Mather's Wonders in New England made it appear as an ill-timed and badly written defense of the Salem trials. Speculation arose that Increase and Cotton Mather were at odds with one another over the Salem episode prompting Cotton Mather to complain in his diary that some 'besotted people' were contending that Increase's Cases of Conscience was 'in opposition to it'.[87] Although Increase

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[87] As David Levin points out, the two books were taken to be opposed on the issue of spectral evidence and the trials:

> Increase Mather, the father, presents a thorough argument, scriptural and rational, for excluding all evidence that is any way influenced by the Devil. Increase's son, Cotton published . . .a narrative to show how the people became perplexed . . . and how a well-meaning, though fallible court could have justly convicted and condemned guilty defendants.

Levin, 'Did the Mathers disagree about the Salem witchcraft trials?', p. 24.

and Cotton Mather refuted this idea in public and in print, this would become a lasting perception.[88]

At the end of the Salem nightmare, Increase Mather appeared to New England as the hero of the moment; he had addressed the main impropriety of the trials, and Governor Phips had ended the Salem proceedings.[89] As for Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World and his subsequent battle with Robert Calef, as Rosenthal indicates, 'has been instrumental in offering the popular view of Cotton Mather as a rabid witch-hunter'.[90]

Conclusion

In the years following the trials, Cotton Mather's personal assessment of Wonders and his conduct during the Salem episode is well documented. Long after Cotton Mather wrote The Wonders of the Invisible World, he entertained doubts as to the full meaning of the Salem episode, while questioning the advice he had himself given to the court, including the 'Return of the Ministers'. He was also bothered by the possibility that the Salem court had condemned and executed innocent people, while privately wondering if his failure to confront the judges had contributed to the tragedy.

In Magnalia Christi Americana (1702), Cotton Mather's discomfort with the Salem events is conspicuous. In this work, Mather found it necessary or desirable to modify the 'The Return of the Ministers' by excluding the document's paramount 'eighth article' encouraging the 'speedy and vigorous' prosecution of the Salem witches. Additionally, the worrisome doubts that Cotton Mather had concealed within his heart are fully recorded in his diary. An entry for 15 January 1696-7 relates Cotton Mather's fear that he had not entirely understood the Salem episode or acted properly at the time. Mather records it this way:

> Being afflicted last Night, with discouraging Thoughts as if unavoidable Marks, of the Divine Displeasure must overtake my Family, for my not appearing with Vigor enough to stop the proceedings of the Judges, when the Inextricable Storm from the Invisible World, assaulted the Countrey, I did this morning, in prayer with my Family, putt my Family into the Merciful hands of the Lord.[91]

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[88] See, Mather, Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681-1709, 1709-1724 (2 vols.; New York, 1957), 1:153.

[89] Those presenting this view are Perry Miller, Kenneth Silverman, and Kenneth Murdock, all eminent New England and Salem scholars. David Levin rejects this particular view, suggesting both Mathers cooperated in every attempt to clarify the issue of spectral evidence.

[90] Rosenthal, Salem Story, p. 144.

[91] Cotton Mather, Diary, 2:216.

What is notable about this journal entry is that Mather admitted that he had failed to stop the Salem trials before the deaths of twenty persons. It was now some four years after the last Salem execution and Cotton Mather's heart plagued him about the situation. He now realized the error of supporting the flawed court, writing the trial accounts in Wonders, and including that fatal 'eighth article' in 'The Return of the Ministers'.

His only recourse was to pray that those errors might not bring judgment to his own family. Mather records in his Diary 'And, with Tears, I received Assurance of the Lord, that Marks of His Indignation should not follow my Family, but . . . Goodness and Mercy should follow us, and the signal Salvation of the Lord'.[92] Despite any inconsistencies in his involvement in the Salem affair, he had acted with godly intentions. God knew this and had promised Cotton Mather's family a 'signal salvation'.

Sixteen years later, age fifty, Mather would make one final entry in his daily journal about Salem's dark hour. He recorded that he was continuing to pray that he might understand the meaning of the 'Descent from the Invisible World'.[93] Although Cotton Mather still believed that Satan had been at the head of the witch invasion, even then he was not entirely certain about those tragic events. Perhaps he never did fully understand them. Even so, until his death in 1728 he continued to believe what he had held from the inception of the Salem trials--Salem had been an 'invasion from the invisible world'.

In summary, this chapter has established that Cotton Mather faced a two-pronged dilemma with respect to his beliefs and his conduct during and after the Salem enigma. First, Mather allowed his relationship to the judges to prevent him from challenging their abuse of spectral evidence in the Salem trials. Instead of confronting the court, he acquiesced to their flawed decisions. Second, faced with a set of awkward situations, Mather presented ambiguous advice to the Salem court on the issue of spectral evidence by presenting both encouragement to and caution against its use. Last, this chapter has shown that The Wonders of the Invisible World inadvertently became a paradoxical and self-contradictory account of the Salem trials. Although he claimed to write as a historian,

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[92] Ibid, 2:216.
[93] Ibid, 2:200.

Mather's account of the Salem trials attempts to defend the special court, while at the same time suggesting that it had made serious errors of judgement. He also, used his publication to distance himself in a largely self-serving way, from the principal individuals involved and the trials themselves, by peppering his prose with disclaimers and appeals to higher authority.

CONCLUSION

> . . . I was concern'd, when I saw that no abler hand emitted any Essays to engage the Minds of this People, in such holy, pious, fruitful Improvements, as God would have to be made of his amazing Dispensations now upon us. THEREFORE it is, that One of the least among the Children of New-England, has here done, what is done. . . . My hitherto unvaried Thoughts are here published; and I believe, they will be owned by most of the Ministers of God in these Colonies; nor can amends be well made me, for the wrong done me, by other sorts of Representations.
>
> Cotton Mather, The Wonders of the Invisible World (1693)

Despite the passage of three centuries, the Salem witchcraft trials and Cotton Mather's role in them continue to engage both the popular imagination and interest of historians. In their efforts to give meaning to the Salem episode, scholars have used a wide variety of social science approaches, including psychology, sociology, ethnography, anthropology, and economics. Yet, as this thesis has insisted, no single approach to the history of the Salem trials has been fully satisfactory. We are still left with no clear explanation of how this specific set of events was set in motion or why it concluded in the way it did. In parallel with many of the early modern European witch-scares, the origin and course of that at Salem must be attributed to a number of disparate forces and personalities working in the specific and distinct context of late seventeenth-century New England. It is only by allowing a full and reasonable weight to be given each aspect of this complex set of events that we can begin to explain the basis of this deadly episode.

This thesis has argued that the theological worldview of seventeenth-century New England offers an important lens through which to study these events, and that Cotton Mather provides an excellent exemplar for a historical-theological examination of the Salem trials. Mather produced a number of published and unpublished works dealing with witchcraft in whole or in part, that typify seventeenth-century New England witchcraft beliefs. This thesis has therefore considered a number of facets of Cotton Mather's personal theology and compared them to his activities during the Salem episode. Additionally, Cotton Mather's cosmology provides a much-needed new emphasis upon what his contemporaries, especially the clergy,

chose to identify as the underpinnings of the entire tragic episode: the work of Satan and demons, as well as the dangers of witchcraft.

The starting point for this thesis was a consideration of Cotton Mather's personal cosmology as it related to witchcraft. It was observed that Mather's cosmological perspective gave a full and important place to the roles of Satan, demons, and witchcraft. Furthermore, although Mather has been accused by critics of inventing a theology of witchcraft in the wake of the Salem events, and publishing it in The Wonders of the Invisible World, the historical evidence adduced leads to a different conclusion. This suggests that Cotton Mather gradually developed his own worldview, including its witchcraft dimension, between the years of 1678 and his 1689 publication of Memorable Providences Relating to Witchrafts and Possessions. The theology of witchcraft found in Wonders bears no marks of being theologically innovative when compared to Memorable Providences or other works written by Mather prior to 1692 in terms of his specific articulation of Puritan clerical beliefs about the power of Satan and witches. Instead, both Wonders and Mather's other works dealing with witchcraft are largely consistent in their theological assertions and conclusions.

In brief, like most of his clerical contemporaries, Mather believed in the reality of, and power of Satan and demons. Together, they formed a vast and well-organised array of devils that sought to ruin humanity. To Mather, witchcraft was one of their greatest weapons, allowing them to seduce and destroy humanity. More than this, witchcraft was a weapon which entailed its own internal logical progression, equivalent to that contained in the process of salvation itself. Although this satanic progression often began with apparently innocent and simple forms of magic and beneficent witchcraft, it easily led to the darkest and most dangerous level of covenant witchcraft. As a result, to Mather and his contemporaries witchcraft became one of the most powerful tools Satan and the demons could utilise in their attempts to control humans and eventually destroy God's kingdom, and especially its crowning glory, New England.

As Cotton Mather saw it, when witch invasions occurred, the covenant-people of New England were expected by God to react in specific ways. The first was spiritual in nature: repentance on the part of the covenant-nation. To Cotton Mather, repentance was the first and most powerful act a covenant community could take, as it removed the source of both divine

judgment and the Devil's power over the population. Second, Mather insisted upon a judicial response. He believed that during witchcraft episodes, New England's judicial code, based upon the Bible, needed to be strictly enforced in order to cleanse the land of people who by their allegiance to Satan were necessarily a grave threat to both individuals and the broader community.

Regardless of the judicial errors committed during the 1692 Salem trials, Mather's post-Salem writings on the nature of witchcraft and the power of Satan remained consistent. There is no evidence to suggest that Mather's personal cosmology as presented in his post-Salem works including, quite specifically, Magnalia Christi Americana (1702), The Armour of Christianity (1704), and The Diary of Cotton Mather (1681-1724) changed in any substantial way. These works attest to Mather's continuing defense of the Salem trials, his opposition to all forms of magic and witchcraft, and his lifelong belief that the late seventeenth-century was witnessing a broader spiritual warfare and end-times scenario. It was this preconceived and consistent cosmology that formed the basis for Mather's response to the Salem witchcraft trials and other episodes of New England witchcraft.

Although Cotton Mather's well-developed personal theology included beliefs about the existence and work of Satan and demons, as well as the dangers of witchcraft, such a cosmology cannot be studied in isolation from its seventeenth-century historical context. This thesis therefore addressed how Mather's personal cosmology was related to, representative of, or incompatible with that of his own contemporaries.

The intellectual landscape of seventeenth-century New England with respect to beliefs in Satan, demons, and witchcraft provides such an evaluation. Looking at pre-Salem, Salem episode, and post-Salem journals, publications, and court records, what emerges is a broad 'congruence' in elite and popular conceptions of the supernatural within early modern New England. In this context, witchcraft was understood to be an everyday reality of life, and categorised into four broad types: magic, counter-magic, maleficium, and covenant witchcraft. The first three of these categories of witchcraft involved the use of supernatural power to perform acts ranging from the beneficial to the malevolent. While magic and counter-magic were used as means to bring about healing and remedy adversity, maleficium involved disrupting the natural

order, causing harm, affecting witchcraft possession, as well as inflicting injury or death upon animals or humans. The final category, covenant witchcraft, included the systematic progression of individuals into Satan's service involving the complete denouncing of the Christian faith and adherence to an inverted satanic church. The culmination of this process was manifested in attempts to conscript others for the eventual overthrow of society.

This is not to say that clerical and popular attitudes towards all forms of witchcraft were identical, or that Mather's views coincided with them entirely. Indeed, in seventeenth-century New England disagreements existed between the clerics and populace over the seriousness and validity of such practices. While the populace at large might use these arts to remedy ills and problems without attributing their effectiveness to diabolism, clerics insisted that the Bible prohibited all forms of magic and witchcraft. The clerics further warned that such practices constituted a departure from the Puritan faith, suggesting that these practises represented an attempt to manipulate or overturn God's will, creating a propensity towards more dangerous varieties of witchcraft.

Despite disagreements between clerics and the populace over the legitimacy of magic and witchcraft, the historical context of seventeenth-century Massachusetts suggests that Puritans as a whole perceived themselves to be facing both internal and external threats in the decades before the Salem episode. While some of these challenges took the form of political struggles and were acted out in the broader Atlantic and European world, local agricultural disasters, the influx of religious dissenters and military conflicts, particularly with Native Americans represented threats specific to New England. The historical record from early modern New England is replete with popular, clerical, and historical accounts claiming malevolent witchcraft activities on the part of Native Americans as well as such radical dissenters as the Antinomians, Anabaptists, and Quakers. Witchcraft was seen as a real part of attempts in this world to weaken New England's orthodoxy or destroy its covenant status.

In addition, if these palpable local threats were not enough to set the stage for the initial Salem accusations, they were exacerbated by yet another peril: Puritans practicing witchcraft. At a time when Puritan clerics already perceived New England to be falling away from its original spiritual errand, this added challenge seemed all the more insidious, as it emanated from within

the ranks of the Puritan community itself.

In this milieu, Cotton Mather's theology of Satan, demons, and witchcraft was neither incompatible nor exaggerated compared to his contemporaries. It was the congruence of belief between clerics such as Mather and the New England populace that contributed to their collective willingness to accept witchcraft invasions as real events which needed real and dramatic reactions.

Having laid the groundwork of New England's conceptions of witchcraft, both elite and popular, this thesis examined Robert Calef's indictment of Cotton Mather within his book, More Wonders of the Invisible World (1700). Calef insisted that Cotton Mather's preaching and publications about witchcraft were the catalyst for the Salem trials and executions. Calef's censure of Cotton Mather was considered in detail because it has formed the basis for many later analyses by a succession of authors from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Two substantive issues arise in this scrutiny: the preaching and written works of Cotton Mather prior to the Salem trials, and the historical climate of New England in relation to witchcraft.

In the period between Mather's publication of Memorable Providences in 1689 and the aftermath of the Salem episode in 1693, Cotton Mather kept the concept of a malevolent spiritual world in front of his own congregation and of his broader New England audience. He did this through his published and unpublished works and sermons dealing with witchcraft. Nonetheless, when Mather's activities are weighed against the larger late seventeenth-century context, these were an indirect and general influence on a pre-existing propensity toward the type of episode that descended upon Salem in 1692.

Far from Mather playing a fundamental role in the instigation of the episode, three historical and theological factors within New England's early history can be identified as more significant for the initiation and perpetuation of the Salem trials. The first of these is found in the prevalence of prior witchcraft publications. Beyond clerical witchcraft scholarship, publications commonly available to New Englanders during the late seventeenth-century included a wide range of texts which dealt with witchcraft, including the Bible and the 'wonder pamphlets.' The Bible, the unquestioned and ubiquitous authority on witchcraft, defined witchcraft by depicting

the witch's activities, identifying both genders as potential practitioners, and categorizing maleficium as a capital crime under Old Testament Law. Beyond the Bible, by the seventeenth century, the wonder pamphlets had proliferated on both sides of the Atlantic. These publications acted as an additional authority for what people in England and New England commonly believed about supernatural events, recording and popularizing a conception of an invisible world of angels, demons, and witches.

Preaching on witchcraft forms a second major historical influence on the events at Salem. Cotton Mather's critics have portrayed him as a lone voice in his Boston pulpit, castigating the practitioners of magic and witchcraft during the period before and after the Salem trials. However, a number of late seventeenth-century sermons and publications by Mather's clerical contemporaries can be identified which take a similar approach to the issue. In the period immediately preceding the Salem trials, Mather's colleagues were insisting that one of the indications of New England's spiritual decline was the use of magic, counter-magic, and malevolent witchcraft among the Puritan populace. A growing crescendo of clerical voices in Boston and throughout Massachusetts warned of the dangers of witchcraft and the possibility of God's judgment upon New England for its use of these powers.

The final historical precedent impacting the Salem episode is the prevalence of earlier witch trials in New England, and the other the American colonies. New England's clerical and court records reveal that from the 1620s to 1646, only a tiny number of witchcraft allegations reached the stage of an official examination. However, between 1647 and the 1692, a marked increase in witchcraft allegations, trials, and executions can be identified. Prior to Salem, a number of sites throughout New England and the American colonies became the setting for witchcraft trials. Common to the vast majority of these cases was the high propensity for women to be the subject of witchcraft allegations and prosecutions. As a result, and despite its greater magnitude, the Salem trials were not an isolated witchcraft episode. More than this, the Salem events were not the final capstone to New England's witchcraft troubles, since arrests and trials for witchcraft continued well into the eighteenth century.

Viewed within this larger context of New England's early modern period, Cotton Mather's historical reputation as the initiator of the Salem trials is eclipsed by these pre-existing

factors. Against the backdrop of seventeenth-century New England witchcraft beliefs, the Salem events were precipitated by the prevalence of prior witchcraft publications in New England, contemporaneous seventeenth-century preaching about witchcraft, and a legacy of prior witchcraft trials and executions.

Although Cotton Mather could not have the initiated the Salem trials, he did have a limited role in the proceedings, derived primarily from New England's system of judicial cooperation between the judges and clergy and his personal ministerial prominence in Boston. However, given this thesis' argument for the importance of other factors, and because Mather's conduct in direct relation to the Salem trials still needs to be assessed, this thesis examined the extent to which Mather's pre-conceived, cohesive cosmology was acted out prior to and during the Salem trials.

This review of Mather's actions finds its basis within a range of documents written by Cotton Mather before, during, and after the Salem episode. These include his personal letters, his unpublished diary, and such tracts as Remarkable Providences and Magnalia Christi Americana. Used in a corroboratory and comparative manner these materials add to the creation of a fuller portrait of Mather's cosmology and overall response to witchcraft events in New England and specifically the New England of the early 1690s.

This reading of Mather's works revealed a pattern, and suggested that he interpreted international, local, and personal events within a preconceived and well-articulated worldview. Within his specifically Puritan biblical and eschatological cosmology, Mather consistently observed and understood his era's events and circumstances as both spiritual warfare and end-times indicators. Shoe-horned into this framework were seventeenth-century international religious and political situations, national revolts, military conflicts, and natural disasters. Similar occurrences taking place within New England's own early modern era would also be interpreted by Mather as the marks of end-times conflicts in which New England faced external and internal challenges in its journey towards fulfilling its role in God's kingdom. This pattern of interpretation also extended to Mather's personal life, as he surveyed both positive and negative situations and phenomena in his own life within the parameters of his cosmology. Perceiving

himself to be personally locked in a battle with the Devil, Mather often described reversals within his personal and family life in terms of spiritual oppression.

Cotton Mather's response towards all signs indicating spiritual warfare was to utilize fasting and prayer in both his personal life and public ministry. This is evident in Mather's pastoral ministry to persons whose situations indicated manifest elements of supernatural diabolism, including witchcraft. His response to cases that he deemed to involve genuine 'diabolical possession' was to call for a season of prayer and fasting in order to break the grip of demons acting on behalf of their witch confederates. This pattern held true before, during, and after the Salem trials in such cases as those of Mercy Short, Margaret Rule and the Goodwin children. During the Salem episode, it was his only prescribed response to the crisis.

With these consistent patterns in focus, this thesis outlined Mather's three major propositions about the meaning of the Salem witchcraft episode as detailed in The Wonders of the Invisible World. Using Wonders as a benchmark, Mather's other significant published and unpublished works were used to show the interrelationship between Mather's stated beliefs and his response to witchcraft episodes in New England, including that of Salem.

Three observable, broad areas of congruence between Mather's cosmology and conduct during the Salem events emerge from these documents. First, in a manner consistent with his clerical contemporaries, Mather deemed Salem witchcraft to be one of God's judgments upon New England's spiritual degeneration. Mather's response throughout the Salem trials and afterwards, in both his public lectures and publications, was to urge New Englanders to embark upon a new Reformation. He insisted that by true repentance, Satan's wrath would be turned back, and God's certain judgment averted.

Second, Mather saw Salem witchcraft as a demonic retaliation against the Puritan settlement of America. Believing as many of his predecessors and contemporaries did, that America had been the long-held dominion of Satan and demonically controlled Indians, Mather saw the witchcraft outbreak as another attempt by the demons to seduce and torture humans. Cotton Mather therefore exhorted New Englanders to engage in a period of spiritual warfare against Satan through fasting and prayer. This would result in the defeat of the demons molesting the populace through witchcraft, effectively breaking their diabolical influence over

the situation.

Finally, Cotton Mather interpreted the Salem trials to be a clear indication of an end-times assault by Satan upon New England. Mather's ardent millennial expectations seemed more than justified by the Salem-Andover confessions and trials. In line with his recent eschatological pronouncements, he came to believe that the Salem-Andover invasion had been planned by Satan, encouraged by demons, and carried out by human vassals. Accordingly, Mather warned his New England community of the real dangers they faced from this end-times assault if they failed to take immediate and appropriate actions, including a careful strategy for the identification and examination of suspected witches.

Even though Mather's behavior was consistent with his ardent beliefs about the Salem situation, there remained a distance between these strongly held postulates and Mather's willingness to intentionally place himself at the forefront of the Salem adjudications. Despite his theological certainty, he adopted a limited course of action of a sort that was to be repeated throughout his life. Despite his sermons and published opinions about the events unfolding at Salem, he chose to take a secondary role, rather than acting as a prime mover.

While this is perplexing, it is typical of Cotton Mather. Whether out of personal insecurity or deference to those he believed were more capable or authorized, Mather would offer his advice but retreat from any direct conflict. This is true, whether the situation involved having Robert Calef arrested for slander and then conspicuously avoiding a court appearance, or refusing to refute the Court of Oyer and Terminer's use of spectral evidence in The Return of the Ministers. In similar fashion, Cotton Mather shrank from leading any attempts to discover, examine, or execute those suspected of witchcraft during the Salem trials.

Consequently, even though Mather was convinced that the Salem-Andover events were an end-times attack of Satan, he kept his distance from Salem. He remained in Boston, engaging in fasting and prayer, and acting as an advisor and chronicler of the trials, without becoming personally and directly involved in the proceedings.

Cotton Mather's stated cosmology and his overall conduct as it related directly to the Salem events were consistent, and demonstrably so. Unfortunately, the advice he subsequently gave to

the Salem judges and his account of their proceedings found in The Wonders of the Invisible World failed to meet his own standards of rectitude and accuracy. This dissonance allowed for Mather's historical condemnation by Robert Calef and a long line of Salem historians and scholars to gain such credence in the popular and scholarly imagination.

Cotton Mather was aware of the dangers in the situation at Salem. If the court did not effectively deal with the witchcraft episode New England would be lost, but at the same time, any prosecutions which led to the punishment of innocent people would likewise undermine the religious authority of the covenant community. The Salem era records show Mather admonished the Salem court to use rules for witchcraft prosecution based upon the works of earlier English witchcraft scholars, such as William Perkins, John Gaule, and Richard Bernard. He specifically recommended these works because of the fact that by the late seventeenth century they had become standard works in the area of witchcraft discovery and prosecution.

Beyond this, Mather gave three major guidelines. He suggested a careful detection of witchcraft that avoided reliance upon spectral evidence, evidentiary experiments, or the use of torture in the confirmation of witchcraft allegations. Instead, he insisted upon a voluntary or unexpected confession by an accused witch. Further, Cotton Mather proposed that the Salem judges apply leniency in those cases which lacked a solid determination of guilt, or in which those convicted were guilty of non-malevolent witchcraft. Mather's third suggestion was directed at the treatment of cases of provable diabolism involving an explicit covenant with the Devil and a purposeful attempt to injure or murder others, or to overthrow Puritanism. In these circumstances he insisted that such persons needed to be prosecuted to the full extent of New England's statutes and executed.

Despite Mather's efforts, the Salem court ignored these cautions, and plunged the trials into a confusing pattern of accepting evidence which lead to erroneous convictions and executions. In the process, Cotton Mather faced what was arguably the greatest dilemma of his ministerial career: how to support the battle against the witch invasion while criticizing the trial procedures being used by the Salem judicial panel. This dilemma manifested itself in at least three specific areas of Mather's behaviour.

The first contradiction surfaced between Mather's desire to give balanced advice and the

pressures on him created by his personal relationship with the members of the Court of Oyer and Terminer. While Mather privately confessed his dissent with the Salem trial process, he avoided directly criticizing or opposing either the Salem judges or their questionable methodologies. This weakness was directly linked to Mather's relationship with the various members of the court of Oyer and Terminer, many of whom were Mather's superiors in terms of position and authority within New England.

A second contradiction is seen in Mather's handling of his advice to the Salem Court on the issue of spectral evidence. In his letters to his contemporaries, the 'Return of the Ministers', the debate about Increase Mather's Cases of Conscience, and Mather's use of spectral evidence within his book The Wonders of the Invisible World, a basic contradiction is found. When these documents and events are compared, they show that Mather unintentionally presented ambidextrous advice to the Salem court on the issue of spectral evidence, both encouraging and cautioning the judges about its value and dependability. Even though Mather did not change his view on spectral evidence during the Salem trials, he failed to openly oppose the judges' use of spectral evidence as the primary basis of conviction and execution of witch suspects.

Mather's third major dilemma is seen in his account of the trials, The Wonders of the Invisible World, which created the lasting historical impression that he had fully agreed with and defended the Salem trials. Although this view is not entirely fair, Mather helped to create this legacy through his own failures in both writing this clerical defense of the Salem trials, and by failing to be totally transparent about his disagreements with the procedures used by the court.

Although Mather intended to write The Wonders of the Invisible World as an objective, detached account of the trials, it failed on several points. First, because Mather wrote his book partly in a spirit of partisan defense of his friends on the Salem court, his approach lent itself to the creation of an account that was largely unrepresentative of the entire trials. Furthermore, Mather limited the volume to consideration of those cases in which the trials and executions were pursued without recourse to spectral evidence alone. Beyond this, Wonders was itself paradoxical. Mather presented contradictory opinions about certain unnamed court members, and the integrity of the adjudication process. Last, Mather's contradictory viewpoints within Wonders is seen in his attempts to cautiously disassociate himself from the Court of Oyer and

Terminer, Chief Justice William Stoughton, Governor Phips, and the Salem executions. He did this by interspersing within his text disclaimers and appeals to higher authority.

In the end, we must embrace certain conclusions about Cotton Mather that perhaps do not fully comprehend his personality or satisfy a desire to justify or condemn his actions relative to the Salem trials. While Mather certainly cannot be blamed for initiating the Salem events, or for causing the episode to turn out so horribly, he cannot entirely escape blame. He plainly refused to confront Chief Justice William Stoughton and the rest of the Court of Oyer and Terminer for, among other things, their poor handling of spectral evidence and willingness to execute persons based upon such ambiguous evidence.

Neither can Mather be absolved of his worst error connected to the Salem events: his subtle but ill-fated defense of the flawed proceedings and those officials who conducted them. Had Mather stopped at the theological defense of witchcraft itself, he no doubt would have escaped much of the historical condemnation his reputation has endured. It seems evident from The Wonders of the Invisible World that he both expected and was willing to pay a personal price for his defense of his colleagues who sat on the Salem Court. In historical retrospect, perhaps the payment has proven too weighty. Cotton Mather was by all accounts a powerful Puritan preacher, a remarkable theologian and scholar, a thorough student of natural philosophy, and a voluminous writer. Yet, for all of this, he has been characterized by a succession of historians and scholars as a Puritan zealot and witch-hunter who cared more about his personal reputation than the lives of the twenty people which were taken during the Salem witch trials.

Of course, a comprehensive and fair reading of the Salem trials and Mather's actions during them refutes such a view. Nonetheless, one is forced to agree with a description of Mather's historical legacy written two decades ago: 'In the public memory, however, he personifies the worst elements of Puritanism. Even among scholars, he has until recently been perceived as a disconcerting mixture of scarcely reconcilable opposing qualities, good and bad'.[1] Mather's historical reputation is perhaps just beginning to improve, no doubt due to the willingness of some scholars to view Mather's person and actions within the broader

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1. Richard Lovelace. The American Pietism of Cotton Mather, (Grand Rapids, 1979), 290.

seventeenth-century New England context. Here, the recent trends in scholarship in which events such as witch-hunts are viewed from a multi-faceted perspective have allowed us to move away from the simplistic and prejudiced approach of assigning blame to individuals. The results of this shift have been a more comprehensive understanding of events such as those at Salem.

This has been the overarching argument of this thesis. While Cotton Mather has been made the enigmatic representative of the Salem witch-hunt, a fuller evaluation of his cosmology within his own seventeenth-century setting provides a great deal more insight into Mather himself and the Salem trials. Using this approach, although Mather cannot be absolved of his personal errors connected to Salem, at least his actions can be assessed more equitably than has been done to date. How the historical reputation of both Cotton Mather and the Puritans of his era will eventually fare will unquestionably be linked to the continued willingness of future scholars to avoid judging him by modern standards. Instead, studying both Cotton Mather and the Salem episode in the light of their own seventeenth-century worldview will undoubtedly yield further valuable interpretive insights into what happened at Salem during that brief but infamous period of 1692-1693.

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