Richard M. McGee

Religion, War, and Native America: The Causes of the 1692 Salem Witchcraft Trials

ABSTRACT: *This article revisits the early modern buildup to the 1692 witchcraft hysteria in Salem, Massachusetts, from a historiographical perspective. Based on scholarly works, including those by Mary Beth Norton and Elaine G. Breslaw, as well as firsthand narratives and trial records, it discusses European Christian witchcraft beliefs; how Puritans viewed Native Americans in this regard; how warfare erupted between settlers and the Indigenous; and why these factors collided in Salem. The author argues that the Salem trials resulted from a combination of early modern Euro-America's paranoid religious worldview, two decades of colonial warfare, and an Indigenous confession validating preexisting perceptions of witches.*

KEYWORDS: *early modern history; Massachusetts Bay; colonialism; Puritanism; paganism; Wabanaki; Tituba Indian; Parris family; King Philip's War; King William's War*

Introduction

In early 1692, the Devil finally infiltrated the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Located in the northeastern region of the modern-day United States of America, bordering the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Maine, Massachusetts became the place where colonial religious fervor reached its zenith. Two young girls mysteriously began to contort, utter deafening shrieks, and claim to feel agonizing pain: nine-year-old Betty Parris (1682–1760) and twelve-year-old Abigail Williams (1680–?), respectively the daughter and niece of Reverend Samuel Parris (1653–1720), all of them residents of the small village of Salem, situated in Essex County in the northeast of Massachusetts. Rather than the "pure Christian utopia" it was intended to be, Salem was riddled with refugees, rivalrous neighbors, property disputes, and unholy levels of superstition.[1] When Samuel Parris had moved to Salem in 1689, he had found it in disarray. The failed merchant-turned-preacher reasoned that the Devil was to blame for the village's troubles. Three years later, when his daughter and niece began to experience inexplicable torment, Parris believed that the only logical answer was witchcraft. By the time the Salem witch trials concluded in May 1693, one hundred and eighty-five people had been accused, sixty-one tried, and nineteen (i.e., fourteen women and five men) executed.[2]

Conventional scholarship posits that the Salem trials resulted from the "bewitchment" of a pious reverend's family. However, the story is far more

[1] *America's Hidden Stories*, episode 1, "Salem's Secrets," aired December 30, 2020, *Smithsonian Channel*, online; Robert Detweiler, "Shifting Perspectives on the Salem Witches," *The History Teacher* 8, no. 4 (1975): 597.

[2] Charlotte Carrington-Farmer, "Witchcraft in the Atlantic World: Indigenous Witchcraft in the Seventeenth Century—Tituba Case Study," lecture, Roger Williams University, January 2, 2022.

© 2024 by Richard M. McGee

complex and multifaceted.[3] This article argues that the Salem witch-hunt occurred due to a combination of early modern Euro-America's paranoid religious worldview, two unstable decades of warfare with the Indigenous, and one confession that ignited a larger conspiracy that validated preexisting racist perceptions of the Native American peoples of New England.[4]

I. Early Modern European Christianity and Witchcraft

The witchcraft hysteria that exploded in Salem was not unfamiliar to Euro-American colonizers in the New World, as religious beliefs pertaining to the occult had existed long before 1692. Known as the "Age of Witch-Hunts," the early modern period between 1450 and 1750 contextualized everyday life with superstition. In these three centuries, over 100,000 individuals throughout Europe and North America were accused of witchcraft. Half of the accused—mostly women—died from torture, imprisonment, or execution.[5] The belief in witchcraft generally allowed people to explain otherwise inexplicable phenomena. As Richard Godbeer argues in "How Could They Believe That," early modern people "were convinced that they inhabited an enchanted world where supernatural forces constantly interacted with and shaped the physical reality that could be experienced with the five senses."[6] While cultural understandings of magic differed throughout the Atlantic World, most people believed that witches were influencing mystic forces through *maleficia*—harmful magic—to negatively affect reality. In a pre-Enlightenment world devoid of advanced sciences, witchcraft provided easily understandable and seemingly logical explanations for particularly unusual or calamitous events.[7]

In the ancient past, religious dogmas and witchcraft practices had often coexisted on the same divine spectrum, and witchcraft was not considered inherently evil. In classical Greco-Roman societies, for example, those considered demigods employed magic to produce rain for crops or increase wealth. Magic could be used for evil, but its main function in classical and medieval societies, so people thought, was to serve human needs. As the Middle Ages transitioned into

---

[3] Jane Kamensky, "Salem Obsessed; Or, 'Plus Ça Change': An Introduction," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (2008): 393–394; Benjamin C. Ray, "'The Salem Witch Mania': Recent Scholarship and American History Textbooks," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 1 (2010): 40–41.

[4] In this article, the term "New England" denotes the modern-day areas of Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

[5] Charlotte Carrington-Farmer, "Witchcraft in the Atlantic World: Witchcraft in the Atlantic World—Intellectual Foundations," lecture, Roger Williams University, December 31, 2022.

[6] Richard Godbeer, "'How Could They Believe That?': Explaining to Students Why Accusations of Witchcraft Made Good Sense in Seventeenth-Century New England," *OAH Magazine of History* 17, no. 4 (2003): 28–29.

[7] *Witches of the Atlantic World: A Historical Reader & Primary Sourcebook*, ed. Elaine G. Breslaw (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 1–3; Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 6.

the early modern period, European Christians came to believe that witchcraft operated as an antithesis to God, capable of causing catastrophe.[8]

This novel perspective was articulated by members of an educated elite. Obsessed with apostasy (i.e., the renunciation of previously held religious beliefs), heresy, and illicit relationships between witches and demons, they were determined to bring attention to demonic collusion, mainly to preserve their own power. Demonological theory—the belief that evil spirits cause individuals to commit crimes or sins—operated as a method of intellectual superiority and climaxed in 1486 when Dominican priests and inquisitors Heinrich Krämer (c. 1430–1505) and James (Jakob) Sprenger (1435–1495) published a witch-hunting guidebook, *Malleus Maleficarum* (i.e., "The Hammer of Witches").[9] Krämer and Sprenger reconceptualized witchcraft by explaining that it occurred when "the Devil asks whether [witches] will abjure the Faith and forsake the holy Christian religion […] and never venerate the Sacraments."[10] *Malleus Maleficarum* increased the prevalence of anti-Devil ideologies in Europe as well as Christianity's control over the notion of evil magic. Convinced of their divine right of legitimacy, both secular and ecclesiastical governments linked witchcraft with heresy. Those practicing magic or even denying witchcraft's existence were considered disobedient to God and their rulers, even though occult methodologies had profoundly permeated religious and secular life prior to the publication of *Malleus Maleficarum*.[11] Krämer and Sprenger explained their papally sanctioned treatise by claiming that women's "intellectual feebleness," "sexual passion," and "moral weakness" was spreading the Devil's temptation, thereby intensifying the European witch-hunts whenever and wherever women were attempting to claim agency for themselves.[12]

Malleus Maleficarum's denunciation of witchcraft prevailed even after the 1534 secession of King Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547)—and thus England—from the Roman Catholic Church. Henry's split from Catholicism caused substantial unrest throughout his realm. New laws requiring English subjects to join the Anglican Church or face increased taxes outraged Catholics because they were prevented from worshiping in their own community. In 1553, when Queen Mary I ascended the English throne after the death of King Edward VI, Protestants feared a Catholic

---

[8] Nachman Ben-Yehuda. "The European Witch Craze of the 14th to 17th Centuries: A Sociologist's Perspective," *American Journal of Sociology* 86, no. 1 (1980): 2–3.

[9] Brian P. Levack, *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 59–60.

[10] Heinrich Krämer and James Sprenger, "The Methods of the Devil," in *The Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. Montague Summers, in *Witches of the Atlantic World*, ed. Breslaw, 24.

[11] David D. Hall, "Witchcraft and the Limits of Interpretation," *The New England Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (1985): 253–254; Lyndal Roper, "Witchcraft and the Western Imagination," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 16 (2006): 121–123.

[12] Malcolm Gaskill, "The Pursuit of Reality: Recent Research into the History of Witchcraft," *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 4 (2008): 1077–1079; Elizabeth Reis, "The Devil, the Body, and the Feminine Soul in Puritan New England," *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 1 (1995): 15–17.

uprising that would reverse their progress. Amidst this religious turmoil, however, the belief that witchcraft equated to Devil worship remained strong on both sides. This notion crossed the Atlantic when separatist groups, such as the Puritans, split from the Anglican Church to establish their own utopian commonwealth in North America.[13]

II. Puritan Witches, Indigenous Peoples, and Settlement

In "Salem Witchcraft and Spiritual Evil," R. D. Stock asserts that the Puritans' worldview was "primed in every malevolent superstition that could commend itself […] They looked for the Devil round every corner […] They were obsessed with hell and damnation."[14] While Puritans were by no means the sole inhabitants of early modern New England, their belief in the Devil's prominence throughout the North American wilderness was quite common amongst the general population, especially in Massachusetts Bay.

As was the case in Europe, New Englanders viewed their world from a religiously fueled supernatural perspective.[15] As Richard Weisman argues in "Witchcraft and Puritan Beliefs," God and the Devil constantly struggled over humanity's loyalty and its fate. Consequently, Anglo-American colonizers firmly believed that both divine and diabolical elements were influencing their destinies in the unfamiliar New World.[16] As Weisman explains, "the category of witchcraft was incorporated within the mainstream of Puritan ideas […] [and] belief in witchcraft was anchored upon belief in Satan."[17]

New Englanders' superstitiously paranoid worldview thus permeated their establishment in the New World, especially their relationship with neighboring Native Americans. As settlers viewed the Natives as barbaric, uncivilized, and inherently devilish, Puritans concluded that the Devil's actions were manifesting themselves through the Indigenous people. For instance, Reverend Cotton Mather of Massachusetts (1663–1728) wrote in his 1689 treatise "On Witches and Witchcraft" that the Devil and witches appear where Native Americans reside, in "the *wigwams* of Indians, where the pagan *Powaws* often raise their masters […] of evil spirits."[18] Similarly, William Bradford (1590–1657), who served as the

---

[13] Charlotte Carrington-Farmer, "Witchcraft in the Atlantic World: The Dynamics of Witch-Hunting in Early Modern Europe—Impacts of Location, Age, Gender, Socioeconomics, and Martial Status on Witch-Hunting,' lecture, Roger Williams University, January 1, 2022.

[14] R. D. Stock, "Salem Witchcraft and Spiritual Evil: A Century of Non-Whig Revisionism," *Christianity and Literature* 42, no. 1 (1992): 144.

[15] Godbeer, "How Could They Believe That," 29.

[16] Richard Weisman, "Witchcraft and Puritan Beliefs," in *Witches of the Atlantic World*, ed. Breslaw, 79.

[17] Weisman, "Witchcraft and Puritan Beliefs," 78–79.

[18] Cotton Mather, "On Witches and Witchcraft," in *Memorable Providences Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions (1689)*, in *Witches of the Atlantic World*, ed. Breslaw, 44. The term *wigwam* denotes the

governor of Massachusetts (on and off) for thirty years, claimed in his historical account of Plymouth Colony that the Native Americans "got all the *Powachs* of the country […] in a horrid and devilish manner, to curse and execrate [the Puritans] with their conjurations, which assembly they held in a dark and dismal swamp."[19] Even the founder of Massachusetts' neighboring colony of Rhode Island, Roger Williams (c. 1603–1683), who was an ally to the Narragansett Natives and sympathetic to Indigenous independence, wrote that the Native shamans were "no other than […] English witches […] the Devill […] drives their worships […] I durst never bee an eye witness, spectator, or looker on, lest I should have been a partaker of Satan's inventions and worships."[20]

Not only did these beliefs contribute to an increase in public hysteria, they also informed the contentious interactions between Anglo-Americans and Native Americans, thus causing the New Englanders' ruthless colonization and missionary efforts to intensify. Settlers firmly believed that their arrival in America would bring God's word to a heathen land previously ruled by the Devil.[21] As Nathaniel Philbrick argues in *Mayflower*, "the result of this stubborn insistence on rectitude was to dehumanize the Indians so that they seemed the wanton and senseless instruments of God's will."[22] At the same time, European colonization resulted from rulers' ambitions to control the legendarily lush North American territory. The English Crown, in particular, intended to dominate the natural resources to strengthen its realm's socioeconomic prowess via the fur and timber trades. Unlike Indigenous people who believed in preserving the Earth as a natural, shareable landscape in the direct image of their gods, the English believed that Native territory had to be colonized. Because it was undeveloped, Native land encouraged primitivity in the English's eyes, and the Devil was allowed to roam free without God's "civilizing" word.[23] English settlers required the Crown's permission to claim territory. In return, the king, especially James I (r. 1603–1625), expected the conversion of all Natives to Christianity because conversion was regarded as God's deliverance to "savage peoples" and an expulsion of the Devil from North America. Through colonization, the English settlers combined their

semi-permanent dwellings used by the Indigenous. The term *Powaws* (also *Powachs*) denotes the so-called "medicine men" of the Indigenous.

[19] William Bradford, quoted in Alfred Cave, "Indian Shamans and English Witches," in *Witches of the Atlantic World*, ed. Breslaw, 197. For the term *Powachs*, see note 18 above.

[20] Roger Williams, quoted in Cave, "Indian Shamans and English Witches," 197.

[21] Heike Paul, *The Myths That Made America: An Introduction to American Studies* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014), 154–155.

[22] Nathaniel Philbrick, *Mayflower: Voyage, Community, and War* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2020), 231.

[23] James A. Warren, *God, War, and Providence: The Epic Struggle of Roger Williams and the Narragansett Indians against the Puritans of New England* (New York: Scribner Simon & Schuster, 2018), 9–37.

economic desires with their religious dogma, justifying their expansionism through a sociocultural superiority complex.[24]

III. The Indian Wars and Colonial Inefficacy

These endeavors directly contributed to decades of territorial warfare throughout Massachusetts Bay and in the abutting northern regions of Maine and New Hampshire. Encroaching Anglo-American settlers continually forced Native peoples, especially the Wabanaki, into choosing whether they would convert to Christianity and allow the English to urbanize the landscape or, alternatively, defend their territories. As Mary Beth Norton's *In the Devil's Snare* contends, King Philip's War (1675–1678) and King William's War (1688–1697) "would not have erupted in the region had it not been for […] the English […] making peaceful relationships nearly impossible to sustain."[25] While the Wabanaki would have preferred neutrality during King Philip's War, the distrust they received from their Anglo-American neighbors eliminated their ability to sustain even a semi-peaceful relationship. The Wabanaki were also part of the overarching Algonquin people of New England, and their fellow Wampanoags, Nipmucks, and Narragansetts in southern New England desperately sought assistance and shelter. As Wabanaki and English settlers in Maine and New Hampshire captured and executed both combatants and civilians from their respective opponents, reconciliation seemed impossible. While a treaty was signed in 1678, sporadic violence continued because Wabanaki *sachems* (i.e., leaders or chiefs) disagreed with each other regarding the promises of the English. Indeed, the *sachems*' distrust toward the English proved justified. In 1688, King William's War erupted in northern New England when the English continued to disregard Indigenous sovereignty and land claims. Bay Colony authorities, especially Reverend Mather, claimed that the wars brought God's wrath upon New England because the Natives' unrepentant disregard for English law expounded the Devil's presence.[26]

As Alfred Cave notes in "Indian Shamans and English Witches," "outbreaks of witchcraft hysteria in New England villages in the late seventeenth century […] often coincided with war scares or Indian hostilities […] New England villagers facing possible Indian attack sometimes mistook illusions for real enemies."[27] As the Wabanaki successfully attacked densely populated areas during warfare, they avoided colonial troops, thus highlighting the ineffectiveness of English defense tactics. The Wabanaki's ransacking of homes then forced settlers to flee throughout Maine and New Hampshire. Traumatized refugees scattered to surrounding settlements, the most central of which was Salem. With Salem's proximity to the

---

[24] Malcolm Gaskill, "Witchcraft and Evidence in Early Modern England," *Past & Present*, no. 198 (2008): 42–43; Warren, *God, War, and Providence*, 9–37.

[25] Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 86.

[26] Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 99–129; Bryce Traister, *Female Piety and the Invention of American Puritanism* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016), 170–173.

[27] Cave, "Indian Shamans and English Witches," 196.

wars, the overall fear of Natives that was prevalent in New England at this time leached its way into the witch trials. For instance, refugees claimed that they had witnessed the Devil appearing as a "black man" during the wars. This heightened anxieties that the Wabanaki were allied with the Devil, as the word "black" was often used interchangeably with "Indian" during the colonial period. Thus, the English description of Satan corresponded to the Indigenous presence that, as New Englanders believed, was threatening society.[28]

Various factors were now converging. The supernatural worldview of New England residents worsened the skirmishes with the Indigenous. This, in turn, led to the Salem witch-hunt hysteria via the scattering of intimidated refugees who blamed invisible forces, working alongside the Indigenous, for their misfortune and then understood Native peoples as the embodiment of the Devil.[29] And this, in turn, was solidified by a confession that embraced the context of New England's religious conflicts and increased the fear of witches in an already dysfunctional society.

IV. Religious Insecurity and the Reluctant Witch of Salem

When Betty Parris and Abigail Williams first experienced their fits of "demonic possession," Salem Villagers immediately believed that a witch was conjuring demons to enter the girls' bodies and take control of their physical and mental capacities. Reverend Parris's hopes that prayers and household fasting would break the bewitchment proved to no avail, until his Indigenous slave woman, Tituba Indian (1674–?), baked a "witchcake" made of rye meal, ash, and the victims' urine as a form of counter-magic to reveal the culprit.[30] As Richard Slotkin explains in "Witchcraft: The 'Captivity to Spectres,'" "the more experience the Puritans acquired in the New World, the more they had to recognize the power of the Indian […] The longer they stayed in the Indian's world, the more they felt themselves succumbing to the Indian mind."[31] New Englanders, believing the Indigenous to be witches in collusion with the Devil, argued that all forms of magic were evil. Even if magic was used to "counter" possible bewitchment—as witnessed in Tituba's cake-baking at the suggestion of Parris's neighbor Mary Sibley (1660–c. 1761)—it was still considered an engagement with the Devil.[32] Subsequently, Betty and Abigail were both terrified by their inadvertent participation in devilish ways. Their symptoms worsened. Furthermore, two teenagers—Ann Putnam Jr. (1679–1716) and Elizabeth Hubbard (1675–?)—also

---

[28] Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 82–114.

[29] Roger Thompson, "Salem Revisited," *Journal of American Studies* 6, no. 3 (1972): 319.

[30] Elaine G. Breslaw, "Tituba's Confession: The Multicultural Dimensions of the 1692 Salem Witch-Hunt," *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 3 (1997): 538–540; Brian P. Levack, "The Horrors of Witchcraft and Demonic Possession," *Social Research* 81, no. 4 (2014): 924–925.

[31] Richard Slotkin, "Witchcraft: The 'Captivity to Spectres,'" in *Witches of the Atlantic World*, ed. Breslaw, 280.

[32] Cave, "Indian Shamans and English Witches," 202.

began experiencing fits and claimed to see the specters of murder victims. Believing Tituba's magic had been effective, Parris demanded that the girls reveal their tormentors.[33]

Tituba was accused of witchcraft along with Sarah Goode (1653–1692) and Sarah Osborne (1643–1692), who were two (somewhat) elderly social outcasts who mirrored the stereotypical witch. While she initially denied the accusations, claiming she would never wish to hurt Parris's family, Tituba soon thereafter changed her story. She admitted to witchcraft in a revealing confession laced with widely held European ideals regarding magic as well as Indigenous and African cultural notions. Tituba's confession synthesized multiethnic witchcraft beliefs with sophisticated manipulations of Puritanism's deepest fears, thus lending credence to the Salem Villagers' beliefs with regard to Native witchcraft.[34] As Tituba herself stated, "the Devil came to me and bid me serve him […] he said he would hurt me and then he looks like a man and threatens to hurt me […] this man had a yellow bird that kept with him."[35] By then accusing Goode, Osborne, and seven other individuals from all over Essex County, Tituba confirmed Salem's fear that a larger conspiracy with the Devil was threatening to destroy God's New England. While the credence given to a Native slave's confession was outlandish for this time, Tituba's credible ethos made her more convincing.[36]

An Arawak Native from Guiana, a region in northern South America bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, who had been transported to the Caribbean Island of Barbados in the West Indies and then sold as a slave in New England, Tituba had experienced English, African, and Indigenous concepts pertaining to the occult. Before coming to Barbados, as Elaine Breslaw surmises in *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem*, Tituba had most likely practiced Arawak protective rituals. Once she arrived in Barbados, she learned the Creole culture's witch mythologies that reformulated English witchcraft without violating its own African worldview. In Barbados, slaves also introduced white Europeans to new magical practices. This concept transferred to Salem, as "Tituba's Caribbean beliefs reflected and distorted learned European notions of a pervasive Satanic presence."[37]

Tituba's confession—which described the Devil as a man who threatened to harm her, seduced her to join a pact, and had a bird on his shoulder, as well as a coven of people who resided outside of Salem—combined all three cultures' beliefs in witchcraft. The English believed that the Devil often appeared as a seductive man threatening to harm witches if they did not sign his book at the

---

[33] Breslaw, "Tituba's Confession," 540.

[34] Levack, *Witchcraft Sourcebook*, 285.

[35] "Examination of Tituba," in *Witches of the Atlantic World*, ed. Breslaw, 378–379.

[36] James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 23, 36.

[37] Elaine G. Breslaw, *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Fantasies* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 153.

group meeting labeled the "Witches' Sabbath." African cultures also subscribed to the concept of malevolency from faraway lands and that the "Evil One" always resided outside one's own community. Guianese beliefs featured the *Kenima*, a devilish being who relied on animal familiars, such as the yellow bird in Tituba's confession.[38]

Salem officials listened to Tituba's confession, and her words matched their own ideas. Additionally, Tituba remained consistent with subsequent testimonies. Martha Corey (c. 1620–1692) was accused of witchcraft and "of having familiarity with the Devil in the time of examination in the shape of a black man whispering in her ear. [The victims] affirmed that her yellow bird sucked betwixt her fingers in the assembly."[39] Abigail Hobbs (c. 1675–?) also confessed that she had "'sold her selfe boddy & Soull to the…divell' [in the shape of a 'black man'] and… made a covenant or bargin with him" while she was living in Maine during King William's War.[40] Her stepmother Deliverance Hobbs (c. 1642–?) confessed that she had attended a "witch meeting 'in the Pasture by Mr Parris' house' […] [and] 'a Man in a long crowned white hat… prest them to bewitch all in the Village.'"[41] Validated by other confessions, Tituba convinced the Puritans that the Devil had indeed invaded Salem.

The Anglo-Americans' religious knowledge and fear of Indigenous people after the Indian Wars only intensified their notion of the Natives as Devil-worshippers. The Salem elite trusted Tituba upon hearing her confession, as they equated her Amerindian identity with their common perception of the Devil. Having indicated wider conspiracies involving multiple participants, Tituba's confession not only drew attention away from Salem Village, it also justified the English's idea that the Devil was running rampant in the New World. To the English, the only logical explanation for the Devil's presence was the Natives' presence throughout the region. With a new witch-hunt underway, Salem's paranoia proved itself as the capstone of a long-standing history of supernatural religious doctrines that not only instilled racism in the population but also ensured decades of war with the Indigenous in the process. When Tituba's proficiency in the English language conveyed an eloquent and thoughtful confession that united her familiarity with her master's religious devotion, an understanding of

---

[38] Carrington-Farmer, "Indigenous Witchcraft in the Seventeenth Century—Tituba Case Study."

[39] Deodat Lawson, "Narrative of the Salem Events," in *A Brief and True Narrative of Some Remarkable Passages Relating to Sundry Persons Afflicted by Witchcraft, at Salem Village, Which Happened from the Nineteenth of March to the Fifth of April, 1692*, in *Witches of the Atlantic World*, ed. Breslaw, 391.

[40] Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 79, 81.

[41] Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 138.

multiethnic mysticism, and her position as a community outcast, Anglo-Americans' inherent beliefs and deepest fears coalesced.[42]

Conclusion

Colonizers perceived Native civilization as a primitive barbarism that lacked the enlightening word of God. In the absence of God's word, the Devil had taken over in the form of the Indigenous. The Indigenous were then labeled witches, and their retaliation against ongoing colonization efforts embodied the English's fears that the Devil was working with Natives to destabilize God's New World. With the diffusion of traumatized refugees and the stresses of warfare, Salem's perspective on witchcraft became worse than in previous instances of occultism. The "victims" of Salem thus directed attention away from their own inadequacies in defending themselves by blaming magic, but simultaneously truly believed in the presence of demons. Only when Tituba's confession arose did Salem have the necessary vehicle to successfully sustain its response to the First and Second Indian Wars. As warfare was an unfortunate phenomenon, Salem relied on the early modern period's prevailing belief that the only logical explanation for unusual, calamitous, or generally inexplicable phenomena was witchcraft. According to Puritan logic, the more brutal the warfare, the more malevolent the witchcraft and the enemy. With darker magic came heightened anxiety. With Tituba's affirmation of the Salem Villagers' fear of magic came the need for witch trials. Through their amalgamation of religious mysticism, deadly warfare, racism, and confirmed hysteria, the Salem witch trials marked one of the darkest times in colonial America.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Richard M. McGee of Little Compton, Rhode Island, earned his B.A. in History (2024) at Roger Williams University (RWU) in Bristol, Rhode Island, where he is a member of the Alpha-Eta-Kappa chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honors Society). He is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at the University of Rhode Island in South Kingstown, Rhode Island. The article published above originated in an undergraduate lecture course offered by RWU's Department of History and Cultural Studies and served as a foundation for the author's senior thesis.*

[42] Breslaw, *Tituba*, 152–175; Carrington-Farmer, "Indigenous Witchcraft in the Seventeenth Century—Tituba Case Study."