

Samuel Parris provided his own commentary on the outbreak of witch accusations week by week from the pulpit; his notes for one of these sermons, delivered at the end of March, are excerpted in Document 12. The minister's warning that "devils" may have infiltrated the church ended with an attack on "covetous" people who would "sell Christ to his enemies and their souls to the Devil" to fulfill their material "lusts" and acquire "a little pelf" (money). This was a none-too-subtle reference to villagers who identified with the commercial interests of nearby Salem Town. (See the introduction for a discussion of the tensions between Salem Village and Salem Town.) Parris also chronicled in the church records his response on discovering that Mary Sibley, a member of the congregation, had turned to an occult technique that involved baking a urine-cake in order to find out who was bewitching her niece (Document 13).

It is worth noting that Hale's description of youthful experiments with divination before the fits began makes no mention of Tituba (the Indian slave owned by Samuel Parris) being involved, though subsequent accounts have often claimed that she encouraged the girls to dabble in occult experiments and even that she was their teacher. Tituba and her husband, John, were clearly involved in the urine-cake experiment, but it was Mary Sibley who asked them to bake the cake.

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John Hale's Account

1702

In the latter end of the year 1691,¹ Mr. Samuel Parris, pastor of the church in Salem Village, had a daughter of nine and a niece of about eleven years of age sadly afflicted of they knew not what distempers; and he made his application to physicians, yet still they grew worse. And at length one physician gave his opinion that they were under an evil hand. This the neighbors quickly took up and concluded they were bewitched. He had also an Indian man servant and his wife who afterwards confessed that, without the knowledge of their master or mistress, they had

¹Hale was operating by the Julian calendar, according to which March was the first month of the year, so "the latter end of the year 1691" refers to what we would describe as early 1692. The fits seem to have begun in January; see Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Knopf, 2002), 333, n. 12.

John Hale, *A Modest Enquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft* (Boston, 1702), 23–27, 132–33.

taken some of the afflicted persons' urine and mixing it with meal² had made a cake and baked it, to find out the witch, as they said. After this, the afflicted persons cried out of the Indian woman, named Tituba, that she did pinch, prick, and grievously torment them, and that they saw her here and there, where nobody else could. Yea they could tell where she was and what she did when out of their human sight. These children were bitten and pinched by invisible agents, their arms, necks, and backs turned this way and that way, and returned back again, so as it was impossible for them to do of themselves, and beyond the power of any epileptic fits or natural disease to effect. Sometimes they were taken dumb, their mouths stopped, their throats choked, their limbs wracked and tormented, so as might move a heart of stone to sympathize with them, with bowels of compassion³ for them. . . . Mr. Parris, seeing the distressed condition of his family, desired the presence of some worthy gentlemen of Salem and some neighbor[ing] ministers to consult together at his house; who when they came, and had enquired diligently into the sufferings of the afflicted, concluded [that] they were preternatural and feared the hand of Satan was in them.

The advice given to Mr. Parris by them was that he should sit still and wait upon the Providence of God to see what time might discover; and to be much in prayer for the discovery of what was yet secret. They also examined Tituba, who confessed the making [of] a cake, as is above mentioned, and said her mistress in her own country was a witch and had taught her some means to be used for the discovery of a witch and for the prevention of being bewitched, etc., but said that she herself was not a witch.

Soon after this, there were two or three private fasts at the minister's house, one of which was kept by sundry⁴ neighbor[ing] ministers, and after this another in public at the village, and several days afterwards of public humiliation⁵ during these molestations, not only there but in other congregations for them. And one general fast by order of the General Court, observed throughout the colony, to seek the Lord that he would rebuke Satan and be a light unto his people in this day of darkness.

²Edible grain, coarsely ground or powdered.

³A reference to 1 John 3.17, as translated in the King James Version of the Bible (published in 1611). In the seventeenth century, people associated tender feelings such as pity with the bowels rather than the heart.

⁴Several.

⁵Days set aside for collective acknowledgment and contemplation of the sinfulness that had prompted God to punish Salem Village and neighboring communities by allowing witches to assault the residents there.

But I return to the history of these troubles. In a short time after, other persons who were of age to be witnesses were molested by Satan and in their fits cried out upon Tituba and Goody [Sarah] O[sborne] and S[arah] G[ood], that they or specters in their shapes did grievously torment them; hereupon some of their village neighbors complained to the magistrates at Salem, desiring [that] they would come and examine the afflicted and accused together, the which they did; the effect of which examination was that Tituba confessed she was a witch and that she, with the two others accused, did torment and bewitch the complainers; and that these with two others whose names she knew not had their witch-meeting together, relating the times when and places where they met, with many other circumstances to be seen at large. Upon this the said Tituba and O[sborne] and S[arah] G[ood] were committed to prison upon suspicion of acting witchcraft. After this the said Tituba was again examined in prison and owned her first confession in all points, and then was herself afflicted and complained of her fellow witches tormenting of her for her confession and accusing them; and being searched by a woman, she was found to have upon her body the marks of the Devil's wounding, of her.

Here were these things [that] rendered her confession credible. (1) That at this examination she answered every question just as she did at the first. And it was thought that if she had feigned her confession, she could not have remembered her answers so exactly. A liar, we say, had need of a good memory, but truth being always consistent with itself is the same today as it was yesterday. (2) She seemed very penitent for her sin in covenanting with the Devil. (3) She became a sufferer herself and, as she said, for her confession. (4) Her confession agreed exactly (which was afterwards verified in the other confessors) with the accusations of the afflicted.

Soon after, these afflicted persons complained of other persons afflicting of them in their fits, and the number of the afflicted and accused began to increase. And the success of Tituba's confession encouraged those in authority to examine others that were suspected, and the event was that more confessed themselves guilty of the crimes they were suspected for. And thus was this matter driven on. . . .

I fear some young persons, through a vain curiosity to know their future condition, have tampered with the Devil's tools so far that hereby one door was opened to Satan to play those pranks, anno⁶ 1692. I knew one of the afflicted persons who (as I was credibly informed) did try

⁶In the year.

with an egg and a glass to find her future husband's calling;⁷ till there came up a coffin, that is, a specter in likeness of a coffin. And she was afterward followed with diabolical molestation to her death; and so died a single person. A just warning to others, to take heed of handling the Devil's weapons, lest they get a wound thereby.

Another I was called to pray with, being under sore fits and vexations of Satan. And upon examination I found she had tried the same charm; and after her confession of it and manifestation of repentance for it, and our prayers to God for her, she was speedily released from those bonds of Satan. This iniquity, though I take it not to be the capital crime condemned [in] Exodus 22,⁸ because such persons act ignorantly, not considering they thereby go to the Devil, yet borders very much upon it.

⁷Trade or profession.

⁸"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus 22.18, King James Version).

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Deodat Lawson's Account

1692

On March 19, I went to Salem Village and lodged at Nathaniel Ingersoll's [inn] near to the minister Mr. P[arris]'s house, and presently after I came into my lodging Captain Walcott's daughter Mary came to Lieutenant Ingersoll's¹ [inn] and spoke to me, but suddenly after, as she stood by the door, was bitten so that she cried out of her wrist, and looking on it with a candle, we saw apparently the marks of teeth, both upper and lower set, on each side of her wrist.

In the beginning of the evening, I went to give Mr. P[arris] a visit. When I was there, his kinswoman, Abigail Williams (about 12 years of age), had a grievous fit; she was at first hurried with violence to and fro in the room, though Mrs. Ingersoll endeavored to hold her, sometimes making as if she would fly, stretching up her arms as high as she could and crying, "Whish, Whish, Whish!" several times. Presently after, she

¹Captain Walcott and Lieutenant Ingersoll were officers in the local militia.