Final thoughts on Salem Witch Trials

**MOTIVATIONS? CAUSES?**

1. **MONEY / PROPERTY**

   - Money: In the trials, when any were indicted for afflicting, pining, and wasting the bodies of particular persons by witchcraft, it was usual to hear evidence of matters foreign, and of perhaps twenty or thirty years standing, about over-setting carts, the death of cattle, unkindness to relations, or unexpected accidents befalling after some quarrel. Whether this was admitted by the law of England, or by what other law, wants to be determined; the executions seemed mixed, in pressing to death for not pleading, which most agrees with the laws of England, and sentencing women to be hanged for witchcraft, according to the former practice of this country, and not by burning, as is said to have been the law of England. And though the confessing witches were many, yet not one of them that confessed their own guilt, and abode by their confession were put to death.

   - Revenge: If you submit to the community you are spared; if you perjure yourself you die.

2. **“Matter Foreign”: REVENGE FOR OLD GRIEVANCES**

   - John Proctor and his wife being in prison, the sheriff came to his house and seized all the goods, provisions, and cattle that he could remove, and sold some of the cattle at half price, and killed others, and put them up for the West Indies, threw out the beer out of a barrel, and carried away the barrel unempted a pot of broth, and took away the pig, and sold all the white for the support of the children. No part of the said goods are known to be returned. Proctor earnestly requested Mr. Noyes to pray with and for him, but it was wholly denied, because he would not own himself to be a witch.

3. **The “Nine Years’ War” (1688-1697): first of four “French-Indian Wars”**

   - The Nine Years’ War (1688–1697) was the first of four major conflicts between Great Britain and France in North America. It was fought primarily in what is now eastern Canada and New England, and it played a significant role in shaping the diplomatic and military strategies of both nations.

   - While the origins of the war are complex, one of the primary factors that led to its outbreak was competition for control of the fur trade and territory in North America. This competition was fueled by economic interests and the desire for political influence in the region.

   - The war had a significant impact on the colonial populations of both nations. For example, the Iroquois Confederacy, which had been a powerful ally of the British, shifted its allegiance to the French during the war. This change in allegiance had a profound effect on the balance of power in the region.

   - The war ended with the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697, which gave the French a degree of control over the region, but it did not bring an end to the tensions that had led to its outbreak. The conflicts that followed, known as the French and Indian Wars, continued for another century and a half.
4. James II (Catholic) replaced by “William and Mary” 
[Nine Years War] = first of French-Indian = “King William’s War”

made them so, who has been confined here this nine weeks. My son, William Proctor, when he was examined, because he would not confess that he was guilty, when he was innocent, they tied him by the neck and heels all the blood gushed out at his nose, and would have kept him x 24 hours, if one more merited than the rest, had not taken pity on him, and caused him to be unbound. These actions are very like the popish cruelties. They have already undone us in our estates, and that will not serve their turns, without our innocent bloods. If it cannot be granted that we can have our trials at

5. Purity and Danger: MIXTURE / Hybrid / “Perversion”

Then all were ordered to go down into the street, where a ring was made; and the same accuser cried out, “there stands Alden, a bold fellow with his hat on before the judges, he sells powder and shot to the Indians and French, and lies with the Indians squaw, and has Indian papouses.” Then was Alden committed to the

ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY vs. ABSOLUTE RELATIVISM?

THIRD OPTION: Thought! Evidenced! Truth!
1. Fallacy of a Single Cause
   There are many causes for any single event.
   Life is complex; simple answers are not adequate to reality.

2. Some use of evidence is better than others. Check the footnotes!!
   Tituba is not African-American
   Majority were not “common-sensical”

3. Broad variety of sources; check intertextuality
   War
   Harvest
   Grudges
   DNA?

Cf. Aristotle: “rational animals”

St. Ignatius Loyola and the Jesuits [Society of Jesus]

• Ignatius Loyola:
  – b. 1491, Loyola, Castile [Spain]
  – d. July 31, 1556, Rome [Italy]
• Jesuits: founded 1540
• 1556: 1,000 Jesuits already in Asia, Africa, and Americas
  – Trent: 1545-1563 [“Counter-Reformation”?]

Influences on Jesuit Humanism
1. Medieval

- They retain belief in mediation
  - Jesuit Order: a company of Catholic priests
- Differ from Luther:
  - believe that creation is fundamentally good...
  - against Ockham: no gulf between Creator and creation
- No gulf between “inner” and “outer” person (faith/works)

And yet the primary sacrament for them is **confession**

- Ancient mediation — confessor between person and God...
- Yet “confession”: increasingly not just for monks but for everyone [lowered boundaries between clergy and laity]

INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION: DISCERNMENT

Humanism: an urban value-system

- **Studia Humanitatis**: the art of persuasion
  - grammar; poetry; rhetoric; history; eloquence
- **Reverse Medieval Essentialism**:
  - Theology useless for “citizen”: eternal values
  - Needed: persuasion about the here and now

3. Italian Christian Humanism

- Believe in Great Chain of Being — they are essentialists, like Thomas Aquinas
- All things are created by Creator, connected by chain
- Since Christ was human, all things somehow divine
Jesuit schools

- Renaissance belief: reading good books leads to good character
- Point of education: form citizens for the "republic" [city-state]
- All sciences, no matter how "secular," are somehow "sacred"

Key point: Even after Plague, a profound trust in creation
AND
the intimate closeness of God.

4. Black Plague / Knowledge Skepticism

- Difficulty of reading the "text" of life: surface not always reality
- Major Jesuit idea: **NEED TO DISCERN**
  - Surface text never "transparent"
  - Discern "good spirit" from "evil spirit"? "Angel of Light" from "Angel of Darkness" [Lucifer]
  - Cf. Luther: Heidelberg Theses
  - Cf. Derrida

What is it that Luther wrote? "Here I stand. Here I remain. Here I glory. Here I triumph." Here I stand. Here I remain. Here I glory. Here I triumph. It does not matter to me if a thousand Augustins or Cyprains stand against me. It is one of the great moments of Protestant affirmation and became a primary text for the "individualism" and "subjectivism" of post-Reformation culture, but to More it was "false" or simple madness. Only a lunatic, or drunkard, could express himself in such a fashion. More invoked, instead, the authority of the apostles and the church fathers, the historical identity and unity of the Catholic Church, as well as the powerful tradition of its teachings guided by the authority of Christ. Where Luther would characteristically write 'I think thus,' or 'I believe thus,' More would reply with 'God has revealed thus' or 'The Holy Spirit has taught thus.' His was a church of order and eminence in which the precepts of historical authority were enshrined. All this Luther despised and rejected. He possessed the authentic voice of the free and separatist conscience and somehow found the power to stand against the world he had inherited. He was attacking the king and the Pope, but more importantly he was dismissing the inherited customs and traditional beliefs of the Church itself, which he condemned as "scandalous." He was unsettling the whole medieval order of which More was a part.
4. Black Plague / Knowledge Skepticism

- Difficulty of reading the “text” of life: surface not always reality.

- Major Jesuit idea: NEED TO DISCERN
  - Surface text never “transparent.”
  - Discern “good spirit” from “evil spirit”? “Angel of Light” from “Angel of Darkness” [Lucifer]? [Angelus]? [Lucifer focus]?
  - Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses
  - Cf. Derrida

5. Turn to “Private” spaces

- Where do we go to discern?
  - ON RETREAT!
  - KAIROS!!!

- Ignatius leaves us two books:
  1. Spiritual Diary
  2. Spiritual Exercises

6. Multicultural world of Jesuits: Italian and Iberian Peninsulas

- If all cultures have been created by a Creator;
- and if Christ became human and all things human are somehow sacred;
- then all cultures are somehow sacred.
- E.g.: sanskrit!
Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier born in “Navarre” — kingdom tries to break off from Castille; Ignatius wounded in war at Pamplona
Sum: six historical influences on JESUIT ACCOMMODATION

1. Medieval mediation
2. Renaissance humanism
   - [education = “character”]
3. Italian Renaissance Christian humanism
4. Plague --- instability of surface meanings
   - [need to discern appearance from reality]
5. Turn to private spaces / practices
6. Iberian/Italian: multicultural [East-West?]

THREE PRIMARY LOCATIONS OF ACCOMMODATION:

1. “SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION”:
   -- Confession / Counseling / Retreats
2. PREACHING AND TEACHING
3. FOREIGN MISSIONS

1. “Spiritual Conversation”:
   Accommodate yourself to your “counselee”

   A turn to the subjective individual:
   -- “counseling”
   -- “spiritual counsel”
   -- “spiritual conversation”
   - self-reflection
   - self-interrogation
   - meditation

   • Annotation #15: presume that God works directly
   • [NB: without mediation!!!]
   • in the soul of the person who is talking to you
     – Listen well
     – Do not give ready-made responses
     – “Do not get in God’s way!”

Early Jesuits often imprisoned by Spanish Inquisition:
“Are they alumbrados?”

• Alumbrados --
  “illuminated ones”
  - Sephardic Jews:
    “conversos”
  - Islamic mystics: truly converted???
  - Cf. John of the Cross!
    • Juan de la Cruz

2. Preaching and Teaching
Renaissance Humanist ideal: accommodate your audience

- Ideal of rhetoric --- accommodate yourself to your audience in order to persuade them emotionally to act as you want them to act
- Loyola: “Do not preach as the dry [medieval] scholastics do!”
- An appeal to the heart

3. Cultural Accommodation: Missions

accommodating to another culture: dress, language, food, customs

very “modern”: the age of Discovery
- Jesuits go to Latin America, North America, India, China, Japan

NB: different degrees of mediation

• “Early Modern Catholicism”: cf. Luther and Calvin:
  - “preaching the WORD” becomes primary for the Jesuits
—yet based on Medieval scholastic essentialism: GREAT CHAIN OF BEING

if God created all these different cultures, they must be essentially good — not “barbaric” or alienated

Jesuit Humanism / “Early Modern Catholicism”

• Medieval: Great Chain of Being / Essential Goodness of Being

• Modern: A turn to the individual — individual person, individual culture — accommodate them precisely because it holds onto a belief in a cosmic order that is mediated

Jesuits at the court of the Grand Mogul, Imperial Court of India 1580-1630

Taj Mahal: tomb for Mogul’s wife
St. Jerome, ca. 1570-90
Produced by Jesuit Art School at Court of Grand Mogul

Albrecht Dürer, St. Jerome (1510-1514)
Jesuit Art School, St. Jerome, (1570-90)
Buddhist Monks at Bodhi Tree
(The site of Buddha's enlightenment) Bodh Gaya, India

Madonna and Child,
(ca. 1560-1600)
Jesuit Art School at Court of the Grand Mogul
Madonna and Child, Italian Renaissance [ca. 1500]

Madonna and Child, Jesuit School in India, 1560-1600

Arabic calligraphy: art form that allows for non-representation

Representing nature/God = idolatry

⇒ Hence: SHOCK!!!

⇒ [divinity / humanity]

Ladies Praying with a Child, Jesuit Art School at Court of Grand Mogul, c. 1580

Fr. Mancinelli, S.J., in Constantinople
Istanbul, Turkey  
(formerly Constantinople, capital of Byzantium)

Jesuits in Indochina  
(present-day Vietnam):  
Bringing the scientific revolution to  
Far East Asia

NOTE: Fascination with observation of nature / astronomy / culture

Fr. Johann Adam von Bell,  
S.J. (1591-1666)  
[Jesuit astronomer and mathematician  
in Chinese imperial court]
OBSERVATION: To take the measure of the world is to engage in divine activity.

Why was Early Modern Catholicism successful?

Old story: Force! Violence! Imposition!

New story: It was attractive! It appealed to hearts and emotions!