

The Convergence of the Bible and History in the Understanding of the Crucible

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Biography of Arthur Miller

Arthur Miller is a famous American playwright of the twentieth century. He has acquired a notorious celebrity through his wide range of artistic contribution to American literature in general and theatre in particular. He was born in October of 1915, in New York City. His father was a famous ladies-wear manufacturer whose wealth was ravaged and ruined by the economic paralysis that accompanied the Great Depression of the 1930's. This would very clearly shape and determine Miller's life as a young man during the Great Depression and taught him the insecurities of modern existence. Suffering bitter poverty, Miller after graduation from high school, worked in a warehouse to hoar some money to be able to attend the University of Michigan. There he started writing plays.

Focus (1945), was Miller's first public success, a novel about anti-Semitism, however, it was All My Sons (1947) that made Miller emerge as an important playwright. *"Arthur Miller reached his personal pinnacle in 1949 with Death of a Salesman, a study of man's search for merit and worth in his life and the realization that failure was invariably looms. Set within the Loman family, it hinges on the uneven relationships of father and sons, husband and wife. It is a mirror of the literary attitudes of the 1940's-with its rich combination of realism tinged with naturalism."* ⁽¹⁾ Miller won a Tony Award for Death of a Salesman as well as a Pulitzer Prize. This play has been so much often revived in film, television and stage versions acted by well-known actors such as Dustin Hoffman, George C. Scott and many others.

Miller, after Death of a Salesman, wrote his most politically significant play The Crucible (1953) to which our humble research is

to be devoted. The Crucible is a tale of the Salem witch trials which contains close analogies and strong connection to the McCarthy anti-Communist hearings contemporary equivalent in Miller's time. *“Three years later, in 1956, Miller found himself part of these hearings when he was called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Miller refused to name people he allegedly saw at a Communist writers' meeting a decade before and was convicted of contempt.”*⁽²⁾ That same year (1956), Miller married actress Marilyn Monroe, but their link did not last long for the two divorced in 1961. Later, after divorcing Monroes, Miller married Ingeborg Morath who gave him a son and a daughter.

Miller then wrote many other plays such as: A Memory of Two Mondays, A View from the Bridge, which were both staged in 1955. Then an unlimited number of works including: After the Fall (1964), The Price (1967), The Archbishop's Ceiling (1977), The American Clock (1980), The Ride Down Mt. Morgan (1991), The Last Yankee (1993) and Broken Glass (1993), which won him the Oliver Award for Best Play.

Miller did not write exclusively for films, but he did adaptation for the 1996 film version of The Crucible, which gained him an Academy Award nomination. Miller died at the age of 90 years old.

Introduction and Support

The Bible permeates the Western world. Its traces and imprints on the western societies remain indelible. It has shaped not only their religious thought, but their politics, education, law, art, literature and culture. It has flavored their language so deeply and enriched them with words and phrases. Its stories are creatively adopted and its themes have been portrayed poetically by composers and writers over ages. Among these writers is Arthur Miller whose writing style especially that of The Crucible (1952), remains eminently dominated by biblical expressions, words and phrases. Nevertheless, Miller's reference to borrowing biblical expressions in his play The Crucible is only a way to show us that extent of the Puritan's reliance on the Bible as the final authority for decision-making. People speak in terms of ultimate authority-a divine authority granted to them by God-they speak the language of God. Thus, no-one dares to question this

authority or doubts it, otherwise, one is considered as anti-Christ or anti-religion. Miller attempts to convince his readers that the Bible's influence goes well beyond the Early Puritans' interpretation of the bible. Even their attitudes activities and aspirations are being imbued by its influence. No space left for personal and private life having people to recite The Ten Commandments to prove that they are 'followers' is only an example of this ultimate dogmatism.

What is exciting about Miller's *The Crucible* is his exploration of an unlimited number of biblical themes besides that of witchcraft such as the story of Cain and Abel and their competition upon reward, and the sin of adultery.

It is not surprising, and then, that many names of characters such as Ruth, John, Ezekiel and others have biblical roots. Miller refers to these names to create more or less an authentic relationship between his theme and God.

The Early Puritans were greatly influenced by the Bible. The British Americans and their founding fathers with them held the idea that they have something within them that God injected. Accordingly, it might sound very useful to quote a few words from Martin Luther King's speeches on this respect. "*...Not that they have (the founding fathers) substantial unity with God, but that every man has a capacity to have fellowship with God. And this gives him uniqueness, it gives him worth, it gives him dignity. And we must never forget this as a nation: there are no gradations in the image of God. ...One day we will learn that God made us to live together as brothers and to respect the dignity and worth of every man.*"⁽³⁾

Miller may seem to depict through his play *The Crucible* how tragically and schizophrenically the Early Puritans got divided and turned enemies against each other. On the one hand they had bitterly faced hardships and great difficulties and even death to escape Europe, especially England, the land of misery, tyranny, absolute despotism and persecutions to a land of dreams, promises, equal opportunities, tolerance, and democracy. But on the other hand, these people turned to be the persecutors. They had sadly practised the very opposite of

those principles of tolerance and democracy. Hence the dreams of the Puritans had shattered and turned into nightmares and shortcomings. What the Early Puritans craved for was to establish an identity proper to the new land through several pure social, religious and legal institutions. These institutions such as the church and the courts were aimed at establishing a sense of community such as that of Salem Village. However, these already established institutions would soon destroy not only the communicable identity, but also the individuals' identity and their ideals. Miller's *The Crucible* depicts how the church—the supposedly an institution of tolerance and the body of faith-being dominated by narrow minded and dogmatic people destroy other people's identity and ruin the lives of many innocents. A best illustration of this point, perhaps, is the following utterances: "...*The church's main goal is to bring together a community in communion with God, however, the Salem church seems to do the exact opposite. The self-righteous Parris often wordily and possessive, thinking more of his pay back and prestige than on the good of his flock.*"⁽⁴⁾.
"*I am paid little enough without I spend six pounds on fire wood*" (*The Crucible* P.27)

Many of Miller's characters in *The Crucible* seemed to draw back from these institutions and break totally with them because of the hypocrisy embodied in the church and the courts. John Proctor, though tormented and troubled by his sin of adultery, he could hardly repent it upon the advice of a priest of a hypocrite church. In order to remain at least faithful to his beliefs, Proctor confessed publicly and overtly his secret sin even to his wife Elizabeth.

It is generally agreed, however, that any social institutions should be based and founded upon the use of a certain force as Trotsky says, "*Every state is founded on force*"⁽⁵⁾ Otherwise these social institutions would be replaced by anarchy and absolutism. The question that should be asked at this level is what makes this force legitimate? Max Weber seems to give us an answer by suggesting that "*There is the authority of the extraordinary and personal gift of grace (charisma), the absolutely personal devotion and personal confidence in relation to heroism, or other qualities of individual leadership. This 'charismatic' domination as exercised by the prophet...*"⁽⁶⁾

Arthur Miller attempts to give us an account of a group of people who, with a certain 'gift of grace', wanted to dominate other individuals by virtue of religious attitudes.

Part One: Historical Understanding of the Crucible

The story of Salem Village collective hysteria in colonial period has aroused the interests of many scholars, writers and historians. These scholars, each one within his branch of study, have tried to underlie the causes of this tragic events that characterized the history of early American society, and hoped to go deep into its conflicts and tensions that shape that provincial society at its formative stage. Among these scholars and authors whose names have been identified with the Salem witchcraft trials, one should list the following names: Nathaniel Hawthorn, a descendant of one of the judges involved in Salem Trials, Esther Forbes, Lyon Phelp (*The Gospel Witch*), Sartre with his film "*Les Sorciers de Salem*" and many other films based on the trials. These books and films are being accused of distortion of facts and what actually took place. Each one of the already mentioned contributors depicted different themes such as the drinking of blood, the dancing naked in the moonlight and adultery. What needs to be mentioned is that no defendants or their accusers were free from such guilt. Many of them lead a happy, stable life and a healthy family. Arthur Miller on the other hand, as a radical writer, tells his readers that the trials were the products of two main persons committing adultery-the servant girl, Abigail Williams, with a married man, John Proctor. Although Proctor was one of many accused in the Salem Witch Trials, Miller considers him as his hero. This heroism may be extracted from the fact that he confessed his adultery to his wife. A device used by Miller to triumph good over evil. Proctor is in fact, the symbol of a good society.

Without so much exaggeration, most of the accusations concerning witchcraft had come from young girls, women and slaves. One may spontaneously wonder why? One possible answer to this question may be that education of these people had been neglected in a provincial society. This idea of education will be debated later on.

At this level, it would be very benefit able to mention Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's *Salem Possessed* where they suggest that the "witchcraft hysteria registered the strains attending the emergence of commercial economy in New England generally and the wider Salem Community specifically. In their view, what prompted accusations of witchcraft were anxieties and resentments festering among some Salem Village families who were faltering and falling behind in a society being rapidly transformed by the quest for profit and material comforts." (7) Intersections of Religion and Society. Accordingly, one can admit that the thirst for material profits and economic strength are the real causes of witchcraft. The opposite view to the already mentioned quotation is the argument of Carol Karlsen in his *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, where he explains that the accusations spreading in Salem Village and through New England which involved disproportionate numbers of women who were apt of property inheritance "reflected the depth of misogyny within this Puritan culture." (8)

Other scholars and historians are deeply attracted to Salem Village as an astonishing and amazing figure of how superstitions and witches disturbed even the glowing Christian culture of Puritan New England. Christine Leigh Heyrman crediting Richard Godbeer's ideas in *The Devil's Dominion*, suggests that "Salem Village vividly illustrates the remarkable persistence among all early New Englander of beliefs in witchcraft and magic, demonical possession and angelic visitation, spectral apparitions, prophetic dreams, and portents. Such convictions coexisted easily with the people's devotion to Puritanism." (9)

This may compel us to say that the New Englanders and all early Americans may have ventured to live in a very complex and incomprehensible universe where Christian beliefs were so perplexedly intermingled with varied beliefs in a world of superstition. This is probably due to the immensity of the land which they conquered, with its different regions, large forests, and most important of all the habits and customs of its native inhabitants i.e. the Indians. This would very much explain why Tituba, the slave of Reverent Parris, is to be considered the first to be accused of sorcery. Let us

consider the following lines from Miller's play *The Crucible* at the moment of Parris' investigations about what was taking place in the forest.

"Parris: Now then, in the midst of such disruption, my own household is discovered to be the very center of some obscene practice. Abominations are done in the forest-

Abigail: It were sport, uncle!

Parris: You call this sport? Abigail, if you know something may help the doctor, for God's sake tell it to me. I saw Tituba waving her arms over the fire when I came on you. Why was she doing that? And I heard a screeching and gibberish coming from her mouth. She were swaying like dumb beast over that fire!

Abigail: She always sings her Barbados songs, and we dance."
The Crucible (Act I.PP.8-9)

Other words may explain why Tituba was from the beginning suspected of witchcraft from the behalf of the citizens of Salem.

Mrs. Putnam speaking to Parris:"...And Now, this year, my Ruth, my only-I see her turning strange. A secret she has become this year, and shrivels like a sucking mouth were pullin' on her life too. And so I thought to sent her to your Tituba-

Parris: To Tituba! What may Tituba-?

Mrs. Putnam: Tituba knows how to speak to the dead."(The Crucible (Act I.P.1)

Having evoked the idea of the New Englanders with their encounter with a new world, where their Christian beliefs interacted with that of the natives superstitious and occult practices, it would sound rather vague not to mention how the land with its immensity and huge forests had a great influence on their thinking and the way they would become to perceive things.

Accordingly, the forest was regarded as a source of the Devil. This has been evoked by Miller himself when he says: *"The parochial snobbery of these people was partly responsible for their failure to convert the Indians. Probably they also preferred to take land from heathens rather than from fellow Christians. At any rate, very few Indians were converted, and the Salem folk believed that the virgin forest was the Devil's last preserve, his home base and the citadel of*

his final stand. To the best of their knowledge the American forest was the last place on earth that was not paying homage to God." The Crucible (Act I P.3)

On this respect we should put forward the idea of the conflict of two different cultures that of the settlers and that of the native Indians. Both see the land from an opposite angle. These opposite views about the land most of the time led to armed conflict. Most of the books ever written on the history of the United States emphasize this clash of interests between the Indians and colonists over the land. *"The English thought that you could own land whether you use it or not. The English also thought that the Indians wasted land by hunting rather than planting crops. The Indians thought no one could own the land; everyone could use it."* ⁽¹⁰⁾

What is worth mentioning is that great variety of themes that are injected in *The Crucible*, at times, they contradict each others, and at other times, may try to provide mutual clarification. Strange enough, is that no one of these themes completely provide an explanation to the play. These themes are: *"Social Drama Arthur Miller is dramatizing a bizarre but not uncommon social phenomenon. The explanation for the witch madness can be found in the makeup of the society itself. The play was written at a time when American was threatened by a similar madness, over communism instead of witchcraft. The author is telling us that it might happen again, and we would better do something about it."* ⁽¹¹⁾

Another theme may be involved in *The Crucible*, apart from that of superstition, is that of authority. The early settlers in the New World were seeking to practice power, which the majority of them had lost in the motherland. To make it more effective, they tried to base this authority and power on the Bible. The judges, helped by the ministers of the church, believed that they derive and stem their authority from God, and *"so carry on the witch-hunt as if they are on a holy mission"* ⁽¹²⁾

We shall not concentrate on this idea for the time being because it would be tackled in the second part of this research.

Miller, on the other hand, seems to ground his play on a theocratic society where the puritans believed they were founding God's visual World on the New Land in particular, and the whole world in general. They were completely convinced that the state was to be governed by God's laws. We should remember that the event of witch hunt of the Salem Village (Massachusetts) took place in 1692, therefore, the idea of separating the church from the state which shaped the American Constitution just in the few coming years, was not known among the early settlers. Thanks to the great endeavors and ideas advanced by some philosophers such as Montesquieu whose doctrine of separation of powers found expression in the political discourse of revolutionary America. *"His work was a major justification for the structure of the American Constitution."* ⁽¹³⁾

Digging very deep in the very historical context of *The Crucible*, one may find it very legitimate to consider Mary Beth Norton's interpretation of the Salem Witchcraft Crisis as credited and reviewed by Carol Karlsen. Norton in her book *"In the Devil's Snare"* discusses the relationships between the Salem trials and the series of fierce late-seventeenth century encounters between English settlers and their neighbors the French and the Indians. It was that conflicts over the frontiers between England and its traditional enemy France and Native American Indians which would shape the spirit of vengeance between the Puritans their neighbors. Norton wants to suggest that the troubles of Salem could be attributed to the external enemies of the New England. Thus, the idea that the Devil was an outsider and not from the community. Tituba, the first accused slave, as it has been mentioned was an Indian girl brought by Reverend Parris from Barbados. During the trials she says:

"We' goin' to Barbados, soon the Devil gits here with the feathers and the wings....Oh it be No Hell in Barbados. Devil, him be pleasurman in Barbados, him be singin' and dancin' in Barbados. It's you folks-you riles him up 'round here; it be too cold 'round here for that Old Boy. He freeze his soul in Massachusetts, but in Barbados he just as sweet and-" (*The Crucible Act IV P.117*)

Attempting to clarify each item related to the event of the Salem Witch hunt one may find out—apart from the slave girl Tituba—the number of the girls most often adolescent- was eminent. We can list immediately their names: Abigail Williams (*seventeen year-old and Parris' niece*), Betty Parris (the daughter of Rev. Parris), Mary Warren (*eighteen –year servant of the Proctors*). The common factor between these afflicted girls besides their age was that they were all orphans. Some of them were exploited and used as servants if not slaves. Thus, their dance in the forest can be interpreted only as a means of getting out of the pits of frustrations and boredom prevailed in Salem community.

These young girls, especially the orphans, were refugees who had been taken as servants in Boston and after they had their families been killed. Being traumatized by the decimation of their families in the war, the afflicted accusers grieved that they were being attacked by the spirit of the Devil. It is this strange combination of frustration, boredom and bitter vengeance that can account for the spiraling accusations. They "*suspect everyone who might have links to the warton region...These girls and young women were expressing their own guilt and resentment of others for surviving the wrath of their families killers.*" ⁽¹⁴⁾

Miller emphasizes this idea through Abigail's words when she says to the other girls not to divulge any secret while they were in the forest and Tituba the slave girl was practising some occults of her ancestors trying to conjure Ruth Putnam's dead sisters.

"Abigail: Now look you. All of you. We danced. And Tituba conjured Ruth Putnam's dead sisters. And that is all. And mark this. Let either of you breathe a word, or the edge of a word, about the other things, and I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you. And you know I can do it; I saw Indians smash my dear parents' heads on the pillow next to mine, and I have seen some reddish work done at night, and I can make you wish you had never seen the sun go down." *The Crucible (Act I P.17)*

Witches who disloyally allied themselves with Indians and French also caused sufferings and guilt of Massachusetts' ruling elite. However, the link between the Indian raids and the early New England settlers which eventually constitute the essential background of the Salem Witchcraft is rarely mentioned.

Probably Miller's play the Crucible though written in an other totally historical context different from that period under study, tries to bridge the gap between the New England settlers and the Indian raids. This is clearly articulated in Tituba's utterances when she says, "It was black dark, and I-

"Well, they was always talking; they was always runnin' round and carryin'on-" The Crucible (Act I P.43)

It might sound important to mention the other category of suspect witches in Salem 1692, who were men who had either helped the Indians and the French or received supernatural assistance and comfort. Some scholars may even argue that the Indian attacks were the direct cause of the witch trials and their rapid spread beyond Salem Village. These views are prominently shared by Arthur miller and clearly stated in his play The Crucible. A glance to the previously just mentioned quotation from the play (Act I P.43), may be sufficient for us to notice that Arthur Miller is describing a scene when the Indians were ready to go on attacks *"It was black dark. They was talkin', they was always runnin' round-and carryin'on."* The Crucible (Act I P.43)

It is said that whether further back in the historical or mythical past or even in New England before King Philip's War, devils were any other color but black. Carol Karlson puts it as follows: *"Satan hailed from the dark, impenetrable depths of Hell. Devils, male and female, came black-hearted, in dark impulses, clothed in black, covered with black hair, shaped like black animals, black ugly visages...and in early modern Europe, devils could be black like Native Americans..."*⁽¹⁵⁾

Remember what Mary Warren says to Proctor: *"That she-she sometimes made a compact with Lucifer, and wrote her name in his*

black book-with her blood-and bound herself to torment Christians till God's thrown down –and we all must worship Hell forevermore."

One may ask the question why does Miller emphasize the color of darkness? The only possible answers may derive from the idea that Miller is every now and then purposely attempting to build tension or suspense; and pleasurably using the biblical language and keep the same religious context. Because "*the Puritans themselves were outspoken. One reason they were driven to the New World in the first place was that they couldn't keep quiet about religious matters.*" ⁽¹⁶⁾ Let us write this biblical passage to draw that similarity on the stress of the black color:

"Wild waves of the sea that foam up their own causes for shame; stars with no set course, for which the blackness of darkness stands reserved forever." (Jude 13)

Miller, like many other scholars and historians, is fascinated by the peculiarities and the uniqueness of Salem Witchcraft and the collective hysteria that embed the citizens in Salem Village. Through his play *The Crucible*, Miller attempts to explore the causes of that inexplicable and unavoidable hasty spread of superstition that tormented both the collective mind and that of the individual, shaking the stability and order of a provincial society at the end of the seventeenth century. But what makes *The Crucible* sufficiently outstanding is its twofold grounds. If Paul Boyer and Stephan Nissenbaun in their "*Salem Possessed*" concentrate mainly on this historical period as such suggesting that "*the witchcraft hysteria registered the strains by attending the emergence of a commercial economy in New England generally and the wider Salem community specifically.*"⁽¹⁷⁾ Miller, on the other hand concentrates on this period and the event of Salem Village to use it as an allegorical device and make it to parallel the period of the 1950's and the witch-hunt of Mc Carthyism.

Through his play, Miller strives to link the past to the present, for the witchcraft hysteria that gripped the total town of Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, was created by lies and based strangely

enough on false witnesses that continued spreading all over Massachusetts to reach Boston. People were scared, tormented by stress and pressure, made false accusations which led to the hanging of innocent people. The same story seems to take place in the United State between 1948 to about 1956, when the country fell into a hysteric turmoil engaged actively in persecution and suppression of the communists and almost everyone suspected of holding communists views.

This new hysterical investigation, McCarthyism, is a term named after the conservative Senator Joseph McCarthy, who was anticommunist. This movement was also known as the second Red Scare. *"Since the time of the red scare led by Joseph McCarthy, the term McCarthyism has entered American Speech as a general term for the phenomenon of mass pressure, harassment, or blacklisting used to pressure people to follow popular political beliefs."* (18)

Miller, then, strives to depict the common denominator between these two events that characterized and affected the history of the United States. Besides, and most important of all, Miller suggests to his readers that these events took place in the past and is taking place now and its happening may be predicted in the future. Accusing innocent people whose ideas are different from us is nothing new. Thus, *The Crucible* can be regarded as symbolic of the mass paranoia about communism that invaded America in the 1950's. It relates the Salem witchcraft trials to the McCarthy hearings in Miller's time. Both events are somehow identical. Nevertheless, the collective fear and hysteria, which prevailed in Massachusetts over witchcraft, culminated with the hanging of the accused people. Whereas, fear and hysteria which gripped the nation during the McCarthy era of the early 1950's, the sweeping unfounded accusations of communist infiltration did not result in any hanging. They just ruin the reputations of many people for years to come by removing innocent people out their offices and jobs. On this respect it would be of a great importance to ask the question why did people turn to accuse each other, apart from the individual reasons that we have already mentioned in the previous papers?

A close attention to the structure of Salem society may provide us with a possible answer. The Puritans of Massachusetts were a religious faction who, after years of suffering persecution themselves, developed a willful sense of community to guard against infiltration from outside sources. It is this paradox that Miller finds to be a major theme of *The Crucible*: in order to keep the community together, members of that community believe that they must in some sense tear it apart. Miller relates the intense paranoia over integrity of the Puritan community to their belief that they are in some sense a chosen people who will forge a new destiny for the world. ⁽¹⁹⁾

This is strongly connected to the political scene during which Arthur Miller wrote his play *The Crucible* i.e. the early 1950's. For just after the end of the Second World War, the United States ventured herself in another kind of war exclusively different called the Cold War. America found herself confronted by a stout enemy the Soviet Union and the spread of communist forces. Each country was making haste to struggle for political supremacy on the globe. Accordingly, the communist ideas were reaching the American soil. So, just as the Salem authorities believe that witchcraft threatens their community, senator Joseph McCarty and many of his followers during this time felt that communism was a real danger and threat to the American way of life and the security of the country. For this particular reason *The Crucible* Miller says that it is "taken from history...that details he gives are historically correct." ⁽²⁰⁾

Part Two: Intersections of the Bible and *The Crucible*

It should be stated right from the beginning that *The Crucible* is a play which is based on a theocratic society, in which there is absolutely no difference between the church and the state, and religion as a form of dogmatism does not accept any tolerance. There are no state laws outside the moral laws. In other words state laws are directly derived from that of the bible. There is no private life and no freedom beyond that which is tolerated by God. Any individual, whose behaviors do not harmonize with the divined established moral laws, represents a danger not only to the public welfare but also to the rule of God. In *The Crucible*, Miller dramatizes this relationship between this individual and the rules of God. One is either at the side

of God or one belongs to the Devil. There is no room in between. Dissension between God and the Devil is interpreted by Man's activities. This opposition determines the logic behind the witch-hunts in Salem Village. "*A person is either with this court or he must be counted against it*", Danforth says in (*The Crucible Act III P.90*) To restore stability and purity of the Salem community is the hanging punishment the elimination of the accused witches.

Miller endeavors to show through his play *The Crucible* how people, in their struggling process of leaving the old world with its conformity (that is the Catholic Church of England) for the new world with its freedom (Protestantism known as Puritanism) to practise faith according to the Scripture, have misinterpreted and manipulated it by superstition and false beliefs. It is very important to quote Donald Soper's words in this respect saying that "*the Bible makes a wonderful servant but an intolerable master.*"⁽²¹⁾

Interpreting Donald's idea on the light of the Salem events as depicted in *The Crucible* we can easily substitute 'the servant' by the ordinary puritans and 'master' by the ministers of the church and the judges of the courts who gave themselves the absolute right to use the Bible in the wrong way persecuting and ruining the lives of innocent people. Instead of pursuing the Word of God (the Bible) they took the role of God by taking the lives of people the most precious gift. As Proctor says "*it is mistaken law that leads you to sacrifice. Life is, woman, life is God's most precious gift; no principle, however glorious, may justify the taking of it....*" (*The Crucible Act IVP.127*)

Throughout the play Miller's use of language is totally similar to that of the Bible. By doing so, the playwright is calling his audiences attention that extremes are very hazardous. To attach too much excess to religious laws without using our knowledge and suppositions of our world we may be paving our lives to the unknown paths of tragedy and un-atoning mistakes.

Miller then seems to share the same point of views with the Episcopal Bishop Jack Spong:

"The suppositions that underlie the Bible are today held by no one, not even those who define themselves as 'Bible believing Christians'. Their value is only historic. The Bible relates to us the way our ancient forebears understood and interpreted their world, made sense out of life, and thought about God. Our task is the same as theirs. We must interpret our world in the light of our knowledge and suppositions." ⁽²²⁾

On the other hand, Miller argues that the Bible is full deceptions and deceit but its message is morally acceptable as long as it deceives for reasonable attentions. Each one of us knows what is morally good and bad, but what Miller is seeking to do is to shock people with the abrupt contact of evil. Accordingly, Miller says, *"By showing what happens when there are no values, I, at least, assume that the audience will be compelled and propelled towards a more intense quest for values that are missing."* ⁽²³⁾

The evil which manifests itself in Miller's play is that of accusing innocent people of witchcraft merely on evidence of young girls confessions without having the accused witches the right to legal counsel and witnesses testify their innocence. Confessions dictated mainly by hatred and vengeance. Just consider Abigail's incrimination to Mrs. Proctor she accused. The intersection of the Bible and *The Crucible* is apparent in many aspects: the use of the Biblical language, words and expressions. Miller's exploration of biblical stories and the names of the some characters in the play are to be illustrated from the play.

Let us first concentrate on some Biblical expressions such as: Sabbath, sin, Lucifer, Heavens, Hell, Christ, the Almighty God, the auxiliary shalt followed by 'not' and many others are reminiscent in the Bible. The citation of the Ten Commandments is another feature in the *Crucible*. The writer mentions them intentionally to pave the ground to the legendary traits of the Biblical stories.

Sometimes a whole structure is completely photographed from the Bible especially when John Proctor is compelled to cite the Ten Commandments as a proof of his faith in the Gospel and that he is not anti-Christ.

"Hale: Let you repeat them, if you will.

Proctor: The Commandments.

Hale: Hye.

Proctor, looking off, beginning to sweat:

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods, nor

make unto thee any graven image.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain; thou shalt have

no other gods before me." (The Crucible Act II P.64)

Miller uses these Biblical and religious expressions to confirm the nature of this strongly religious provincial community fuzzed with the state power embodied in the court to keep the community together and to stretch its dominion. This leads us to mention the Reconstruction's views. They argue, *"The American society must be rebuilt on laws drawn exclusively from the Bible.... Once America is purely Christian, it will establish dominion over the world and lead the forces of good in their final confrontation with Satan's evildoers. It is for this dominion we are after, not just influence...Christian politics has its primary intent the conquest of the land –of men, families' institutions, bureaucracies, courts and governments for the kingdom of Christ."* (24)

Elizabeth's description of Abigail's entrance to the court-"*where she walks, the crowd will part like the sea for Israel.*" *The Crucible (Act II P.50)* is very strikingly analogous to the following quoted Biblical expressions: *"Moses now stretched out over the sea; and Jehovah began making the sea go back by a strong east wind all night long and converting the sea basis into dry ground, and waters were being split apart."* Ex 14:21

"At length sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea and dry land." Ex 14:22

Another example of these Biblical features may be extracted from Rebecca's words to John Proctor at the moment of hanging. *"Let fear nothing! Another judgment waits us all."* (*The Crucible Act IV P.138*) This is very astonishingly related to: *"But by the same words of*

heavens and earth that are now stored to the Day of Judgment and destruction of the ungodly men." 2P 3:7

Throughout his play, Miller stresses the conflict between God and Lucifer (the Devil), as an attempt to explore the association between good and bad. That is why "*Arthur Miller is widely proclaimed as a moral writer whose aim is to bring out the good in man rather than the bad*"⁽²⁵⁾

To illustrate this opposition between these two extremes it sounds better to cite Miller's words when he says: "*like Reverend Hale and the others on this stage, we conceive the Devil as a necessary part of a respectable view of cosmology. Ours is a divided empire in which certain ideas and emotions and actions are of God, and their opposites are Lucifer. It is impossible for most men to conceive of a morality without sin as of an earth without 'sky'. Since 1692 a great but superficial change has wiped out God's beard and the Devil's horns, but the world is still gripped between two diametrically opposed absolutes.*"(*The Crucible Act I P.30*) This opposition and conflict between God and the Devil is greatly emphasized in the Bible: "*Subject yourselves, therefore, to God; but oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you.*" *Jas 3:7*

It is said that one of the primary reasons of European immigrations to settle in the New World was to escape religious persecution. However, the hope for freedom of worship in the early colonies turned into despair. The same pressure and abuse of the church seemed to characterize their communities. The puritans appeared to behave in the same way as their ancestors. If the Christians in Europe, towards the end of the Middle Ages, had suffered under the Roman Catholic Church's great abuse; ordinary Christians in the early American colonies endured oppressions and harassment practiced by the Puritans. They moved to competition to possess more lands using religion and the Bible to confiscate the lands and property of innocent people. They did this by accusing them of witches and sorceries. Judges helped by ministers and priests carried out trials and punishments on innocent people. They began promoting

the witchcraft theories by detecting some malicious spirits within the Salem Village.

They would implicate rival landowners as witches, an opportunity to enlarge and expand their holdings. When the court would jail the accused people, they would purchase their forfeited lands. This is clearly stated in Giles' words: *"My proof is there! Pointing to the paper. If Jacobs hangs for a witch he forfeit up his property –that's law! And there is non-but Putnam with the coin to buy so great a piece. This man is killing his neighbors for their land!"*

Danforth: But proof, sir, proof.

Giles, pointing at his disposition: The proof is there! I have it from an honest man who heard Putnam say it! The day his daughter cried out on Jacobs, he said she'd given him a fair gift of land." (The Crucible Act III P.92)

A careful study of the discourse of *The Crucible*, one may notice the internal workings of its text. Miller attempts to show the hidden ideology of possession in a religious context. The irony lies, however, in the sense that these so called Puritans misinterpreted the bible or used it intentionally with a great deal of excess as a pretext to bereave and covet their neighbors' lands and properties. Thus, turning religion into a state of austerity and a form of dogmatism leaving no room for freedom of worship and personal and private life. Miller seems to stress this misinterpretation of the bible in a very dramatic way.

This is widely apparent in the following quotations from the *Crucible* when Parris says:

"...I left a thrifty business in the Barbados to serve the Lord.

Proctor:...But to ask ownership is like you shall own the meeting

house itself; the last meeting I were at you spoke so long on deeds and mort ages I thought it were an auction.

Parris:...You people seem not to comprehend that a minister is the Lord's man in the parish; a minister is not to be so lightly crossed and contradicted.

Parris: There is either obedience or the church will burn like Hell is burning! It is not for you to say what is good for you to hear. Putnam to Proctor: I do not think I saw you at Sabbath meeting since snow flew. (The Crucible Act I PP.26-7)

This is just a false assumption made by Putman to taint Proctor as being anti-religious. Because as we know Sabbath day is a sacred and holy day when the supposedly "true Christians" and believers must attend its prayers. No work, therefore, is permitted on Sabbath. Parris says: *"Such a Christian that will not come to church but once a month!*

Cheever: He plow on Sunday, sir.

Danforth: Plow on Sunday!

Cheever :I think it be evidence, John. I am an official of the court; I cannot keep It. (The Crucible Act I P.27)

Let us now quote the Bible: *"Remembering the Sabbath day to hold it sacred, you are to render service and you must do all your work six days. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to Jehovah your God. You must not do any work, you nor your son nor your daughter, our slave girl your domestic animal or your alien resident who is inside your gate. "Ex 20:8-9-10*

Settlers came to the New Land with great hopes of realizing dreams escaping the religious tyranny exercised by the Roman Catholic Church of England. However, working the land was not an easy task. People should spend all their time long plowing the soil including the Sabbath day. Proctor says:

"I- I have once or twice plowed on Sundays. I have three children, sir, and until last year my land give little." (The Crucible Act III P.87)

Miller may want to suggest that a strong religious practice is impossible in this early provincial community (*Salem Village*) because of the lack of material factors. There is also the idea of the impossibility of a good foundation in the new land, since these people

were supposed to have a healthy future, when they may have liberty of religion and live comfortably in a land of all bounties.

Another reading of the already mentioned lines may foster us to admit that these people came to the New Land not merely for spiritual purposes but also for economic reasons. ⁽²⁶⁾

In *The Theocratic Phenomenon*, James Dobson and Romanison may seem to suggest an illustrative contribution to this point. "The history of the U.S.A subsequent to the arrival of the first European settlers in the country was not only a story of the people seeking the economic betterment that is a natural by-product of political freedoms. Economics is also an important motivation. But people who could work-up the immense courage that it took to leave everything they knew, and risk their life and lives a long sea voyage into the unknown, had more reason than just a desire for a material betterment. The settlement ...was primarily the story of people seeking to live their lives, and to practise their personal beliefs, free from the persecutions and oppressions of some or another established religion." ⁽²⁷⁾

This sense of freedom of worship and practice of personal beliefs may cognate from Martin Luther's teachings and his views on the freedom of Christian. Luther's *Von der Freiheit des Christenmenschen*, was an attempt to reform the church. Nevertheless, this attempt culminated into a plan of building a new church independent from the Catholic Church. Luther's theological and ideological thinking, "*On the Freedom of the Christian*", was the spark to ignite human conceptions of freedom. "...the fundamental term of value, that center around which every other concept of his thought rotates, is the concept of Freiheit, 'freedom', or 'liberty'. This is not our concept of freedom, but in the eventual turn of time it will give rise to the notion of 'individual freedom', and later 'political freedom', and later 'economic freedom'. Most of the European Enlightenment revolves around freedom and the project of 'Liberating' people: liberating them from false beliefs, and false religion, from arbitrary authority..." *Reformation Martin Luther* ⁽²⁸⁾

The purpose of mentioning Martin Luther, perhaps, beyond his fundamental reformation of Christianity, lies in his outstanding opposition to the Pope. Accordingly, these antagonistic views led him to being hauled into court and his theology was considered as an outright blasphemy whence he said no to the Pope Leo about authorizing the sale of indulgences. He protested that God's forgiveness could not be bought. He stated that, "*Good works are not required for salvation, faith alone is sufficient. God speaks to us through the Bible, not through the Pope.*"⁽²⁹⁾

Miller mentions Luther in *The Crucible* deliberately to draw an analogy that anyone who may hold antagonistic opinions with the established rules of the church may be considered as having a pact and an alliance with the devil, combined with anti-Christ. This is to emphasize the idea that there is nothing that one may be gone through that another man had been through before. The austerity and dogmatism stemming from that misinterpretation of the Bible is wisely dramatized by Miller through Danforth's speech:

"...Now, children, this is a court of law. The law, based upon the Bible, and the Bible, writ by Almighty God, forbid the practice of witchcraft and describe death as the penalty thereof..." (The Crucible Act III P.98)

Parris' implying questions to Proctor are also an evidence of the meddling of religion on people's private life. Parris says: "*Do you read the Gospel, Mr. Proctor?*

Proctor: I read the Gospel.

Parris: I think not, or you should surely know that Cain were an upright man, and yet he did Kill Abel." Act III P.87 (The Crucible Act III P.87)

Miller tries to fuse these lines with a biblical story that of Cain and Abel which reads as follows: "*...After that Cain said to Abel his brother: Let us go over into the Field. So it came about that while they were in the field Cain proceeded to assault Abel and kill him.*" Ge 4:8

Miller references not only some biblical expressions but even its stories. We can find references to the story in the Exodus which reads: "*And if you keep refusing to send them away, here I am*

plaguing all your territory with frogs." Ex 8:2 Frogs used as a symbol of punishment, are explicitly mentioned in *The Crucible*, intoned by Hale, Parris and Abigail:

Hale: Does someone afflict you, child? It need not be a woman, mind you, or a man. Perhaps some bird invisible to others comes to you-Perhaps a pig, a mouse, or any beast at all. Is there any figure bids you Fly? Parris: I think I ought to say that I-I saw a kettle in the grass where they were dancing.

Abigail: That were only soup.

Hale: what sort of soup were in this kettle, Abigail?

Abigail: Why, it were beans, you did not-and lentils, I think, and-

Hale: Mr. Parris, you did not notice, did you, any living thing in the kettle? A mouse, perhaps, a spider, a frog -? Parris, fearfully: I-do believe there were some movement-in the soup.

Abigail: That jumped in, we never put it in!

Hale, quickly: What jumped in?

Abigail: Why, a very little frog that jumped-

Parris: A frog, Abby! ([The Crucible Act 1 p.39](#))

One does not need to make extensive reading to come to the argument that Miller blindly based his play *The Crucible* upon the Bible, for it is very apparent from that great deal of connection to the Biblical stories. Danforth words invoking Joshua's name and his capacity to make the sun motionless is another very adequate illustrative example.

Danforth: Mr. Hale, as God have not empowered like Joshua to stop this sun from rising so I can not withhold from them the perfection of their punishment." ([The Crucible Act IV P.125](#))

We should remember of-course that most of the hanging used to be performed in the mornings at sun rise.

Now the story of the Bible reads:

It was then that Joshua proceeded to speak to Jehovah on the day of Jehovah's abandoning the Am'or'ites to the sons of Israel: "Sun, be motionless over Gib'e. on,

And the moon, over the low plain of Ai'ja. lon." Jos 10:12

Accordingly the sun kept motionless, and the moon did stand still, until the nation could take vengeance on its enemies. Is it not written in the book of Ja'shar? And the sun kept standing still in the middle of the Heavens and did not hasten to set for about a whole day. Jos 10:13

Even the names of the play-though not conventionally created by Miller himself, for they are true historical names-are very religious names and some of which are directly written in the Bible. Such names are: Ruth, Ezekiel, John and Rebecca (*spelled in the Bible Rebekah*).

Names stands eminently important. *"In Hebrew thought, a name implies a reputation. In Hebraic thought the name is the embodiment of the character of an individual, based on who they are, what they have done, or in the case of humans perhaps the circumstances surrounding their birth."*⁽³⁰⁾ Being fully indulgent to the Bible and viz, all his knowledge being indoctrinated by the sacred book, Parris appears to be much more concerned with his name and reputation rather than the terrible sickness his daughter is suffering from.

Parris Says: Abigail, I have fought here three long years to bend these stiff-necked people to me, and now, just now when some good respect is rising for me in the parish, you compromise my very character. I have given you a home, child, I have put clothes upon your back-now give me upright answer. Your name in the town-it is entirely white, is it not? Abigail: Why, I am sure it is, sir. There be no blush about my name.[\(The Crucible Act I.P.9\)](#)

This question of name does not seem to be raised by Parris alone, because he is priest, even John Proctor seems to give too much importance to his name as an identity. Proctor says: "Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How

may I live without a name? I have given you my soul;
leave me my name!" (The Crucible Act IV P.138)

Referring back to the Bible one would probably find out why John Proctor was extremely obsessed and shackled by the idea of his name. Let us charitably quote the following proverb from the Bible: The remembrance of the righteous one is due for a blessing, but the Very name of the wicked ones will rot. Pr 10:7

Thus neither Parris nor John Proctor wanted their names to be dishonored and disqualified as being wicked.

Attempting to examine the collective hysteria of the Puritans of Massachusetts due to the expansions of suppositious beliefs, illnesses such as smallpox and tuberculosis accompanied by the Indian attacks, one find it very extremely baffling to provide any rational reasoning, least to quote Norton's intervention on this respect, "*Like the loss of the Massachusetts charter, anxiety over land titles, small pox epidemics, and incessant squabbling over property boundaries, Indian attacks were one sign to Puritans that God was punishing his once chosen people for their back-sliding ways. Guilt for their sins, beliefs that God had abandoned them, and conviction that Satan and his minor hovered nearby encouraged the good people of Salem to deal with forbidden attraction and longstanding hatreds by casting their neighbors as more evil than themselves.*" ⁽³¹⁾

The difficulties, hardships, devastating illnesses and the attacks of the Native Indians were no more than a trial by God, a test of faith. Nevertheless, some Puritans, in moments of despair and loss of hope, interpreted these hardships and religious persecutions as an abandonment of God joining the idea already mentioned by Norton. This is very explicit in Proctor's words when accused of being corroborating against the Christ.

Danforth, to Proctor: what are you?

You are combined with anti-Christ, are you not, mister?

Proctor: I say-I say-God is dead. And he continued saying

A fire, a fire is burning! I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face! And it is my face, and yours, Danforth! For them that

quail to bring men out of Ignorance, as I have quailed, and as you quail now when you know in your black hearts that this be fraud –God damns our kind especially, and we will burn, we will burn together. (The Crucible Act III P.115)

Anything stated in the Bible must not be denied or contradicted even if one has no knowledge of it. This is what Arthur Miller strives to reveal to his readers through his widespread use of Biblical expressions that imbue his play. It is a way to express that blind devotion to the authority of the Bible and the great impact of religion on the Puritans. Proctor says, I know not what I have said, I may have said it. I have wondered if there be witches in the world-although I can not believe they come among us now.

Hale: Then you do not believe-Proctor I have no knowledge of it; the Bible speaks of witches, and I will not deny them. (The Crucible Act II P.67)

The early settlers in Salem Village were eagerly seeking to purify the church to such an extent as to make it appear like Christianity in its formative years i.e. the time of Christ. But soon this process of purity would be transformed in obscurities and accusations of innocent people advanced by immature and irresponsible children. Accordingly, *"by September, twenty people and two dogs had been executed as witches. "said Scot Atkina quoting from Cotton Marther's Memorable⁽³²⁾ Providences, Relating to Witchcraft and Possessions (1989) The American Sense of Puritan by Scot Atkina.*

Strangely enough, among the Puritans of Salem Village who cherished guilt on others such as: Reverend Parris, Putnam and his wife Mrs. Putnam, there were others who at least built their judgments in faith and with great honesty; being modeled by their true understanding of the words of God. Hale would very marvelously fall on the second category. Let us consider what he says to Proctor.

Hale: I cannot think God be provoked so grandly by such a pretty cause. The jails are packed-our greatest judges sit in Salem now-and hanging's promised. Man, we must look to cause

proportionate. Were there murder done, perhaps, and never brought the light? Abomination? Some secret blasphemy that stinks to Heaven? Think on cause, man, and let you help me to discover it...Let you counsel among yourselves;
on your village and what may have drawn from heaven such thundering wrath upon you all. I shall pray God open our eyes. ([The Crucible Act II P.76](#))

To conclude this point one should positively emphasize that Miller's references to Biblical expressions in his play *The Crucible* are but a suggestion to demonstrate how deep and far the Bible had characterized and shaped the mentality of the early Puritans in the Salem Village in particular, and the western thought in general. "*The Bible was the Lord's revealed word, and only through it does He directly communicate to human beings.*"⁽³³⁾ This can be very well matched to the following Biblical passage which reads:

"For Jehovah is our judge. Jehovah is our statue-giver. Jehovah is our king; he himself will save us." Isaiah 33:22

Having a great knowledge of the scripture and divinity was very fundamental to the Puritans and an uncompromising attitude that would shape their entry into New England. Accordingly-Samuel Eliot Morison's terms as paraphrased by Scot Atkina –explained the Puritans thirst to education and noted that "the emphasis on education saw the establishment, survival, and flourishing of Harvard College-which survived because the entire community was willing to support it, so even the poor yeoman farmers. These ordinary common people contributed with all the possible means they could get for the purpose of a literate minister.

A law was enacted in Massachusetts in 1647 required that each town composed of more than one hundred families should have access to free education.

Therefore the first "Free Grammar School "was founded in Boston in 1635,that is to say only five years after the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. At this level one should intentionally mention Parris' words in *The Crucible* when he said that he was no ordinary man but an intellectual.

"I am not some preaching farmer with a book under my arm; I am a graduate of Harvard College." ([The Crucible Act I P.27](#))

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