

After a careful investigation I cannot discover any kinship between the Reverend Samuel Willard and John, though there may have been a remote one. Lydia Nichols and Margaret Knight, according to their depositions, were acquainted with Henry and Benjamin Willard, of Groton, both sons of the minister, and these men knew John Willard. The Reverend Mr. Willard, who had carefully studied Elizabeth Knapp's case twenty years before the Salem tragedy, evidently believed in the demoniacal origin of witchcraft, though he held moderate views on the subject. In a pamphlet written by him, entitled "Some Miscellany Observations on our present Debates respecting Witchcrafts," and printed in the year 1692, he takes the ground that there are witches in New England, and they ought to be punished.

In passing judgment on the authors of this monstrous delusion, let us not forget the fact that witchcraft was recognized as a crime in the colonial and provincial laws of Massachusetts, following those of England; and let us remember, too, that many of the wisest and best men at that period looked upon it as a sin against God which should be punished in accordance with the Mosaic law.

Sir William Blackstone, in his "Commentaries on the Laws of England" (Boston, 1818), says

To deny the possibility, nay, actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery, is at once flatly to contradict the revealed word of God, in various passages both of the old and new testament: and the thing itself is a truth to which every nation in the world hath in its turn borne testimony, either by examples seemingly well attested, or by prohibitory laws; which at least suppose the possibility of a commerce with evil spirits. (iv. 60.)