

WITCHES & HISTORIANS

INTERPRETATIONS OF SALEM

Edited by **Marc Mappen**

Rutgers University

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Introduction to the Second Edition

I am grateful for the opportunity presented by Krieger Publishing Company to do a revised edition of *Witches and Historians: Interpretations of Salem*. I have added two chapters to reflect recent scholarship on New England witchcraft, and I have updated the bibliography.

found in plenty. The "Malleus Maleficarum," or Hammer of Witches, published in 1489, became the great text-book of the subject, and at no time since history began have the fires of hell been so often lighted upon earth as in the course of the next two centuries. . . .

Modern historians have begun to study witchcraft not as an end in itself, and not as an example of the struggle between superstition and science, but rather as a clue to the way common people of centuries past viewed the world they lived in. The following review essay by LAWRENCE STONE (b. 1919) addresses a broad range of subjects such as the tensions of village life, the spread of poverty, and the social position of women. He is also interested in how societies change with time; and he speculates on why witch-beliefs eventually lost their hold on the European mind—and why these beliefs are reviving in our own era. Stone's message is clear: witchcraft cannot be studied in isolation from the larger framework of the social, economic, and intellectual history of the West. His is a view that is far more complex than the one given by Fiske in the preceding selection.

Lawrence Stone is a professor of history at Princeton. This essay originally appeared as a review of several recent books on witchcraft and magic, including Witchcraft at Salem by Chadwick Hansen, Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England by Alan MacFarlane, Magistrates et Sorciers en France au 17^e Siecle by Robert Mandrou, and Religion and the Decline of Magic by Keith Thomas.

2. A New Interpretation of Witchcraft

Until the last few years the study of witchcraft has been almost entirely left either to unscholarly cranks or to indignant rationalists, the latter more concerned to castigate the witch-baiters for their credulity and cruelty than to understand what the phenomenon was all about. Mr. MacFarlane's study of witchcraft in Essex, illuminated by detailed knowledge of the findings of modern anthropology, the reassessment of the witchcraft outbreak of 1692 in Salem by Professor Hansen, drawing on the findings of abnormal psychology, the examination of the change in attitude of the French magistrates by Pro-

From Lawrence Stone, "The Disenchantment of the World," *The New York Review of Books*, (December 12, 1971), pp. 17–25. Reprinted with permission from *The New York Review of Books*. Copyright © 1971 Nyrev, Inc.

fessor Mandrou, and Mr. Thomas's major survey of the climate of opinion in England on all kinds of magical beliefs—these books at last make it possible to answer some of the basic questions. Moreover by a happy chance they complement one another, since each approaches the problem from a different angle. From the findings of all four, a composite picture can be drawn which has the appearance of plausibility.

Belief in witchcraft reached a higher level of consciousness in the sixteenth century than it had in the Middle Ages. The first reason for this was the enormous increase in belief in the powers of the Devil brought about by the Reformation. The early Protestants indignantly rejected all claims that God could be persuaded or cajoled into interfering for the good in the workings of nature, but at the same time they strengthened claims that the Devil was responsible for all the forces of evil in the world. Thus they rejected white magic for the Church, while offering an official explanation for black magic. This paradoxical development arose since an immanent Devil was the necessary and logical complement to an immanent God. While the latter ruled in heaven, the former became, in John Knox's words, "the Prince and God of the World." Belief in the supernatural forces of evil abroad in the world was thus reinforced by Protestant doctrine, which soon also spilled over into Counter-Reformation beliefs.

Secondly the Reformation theologians abandoned the only approved remedies against the machinations of the Devil, namely exorcism, holy relics, and the sprinkling of holy water, thus removing the official means of cure at a time when the disease was officially said to be spreading.

Third, the pressure of social and economic change was breaking down the old values of the intimate, "face-to-face" peasant communities and creating great tension in the villages. In particular, poverty was becoming too widespread to be handled on a voluntary basis, and the moral duty of the rich to give alms to the poor and the moral right of the poor to demand them were both being called into question. As a result of this breakdown there was constant friction between increasingly reluctant alms givers and increasingly exigent poor old women. The former had residual feelings of guilt at the decline of their charitable impulses and felt resentful toward those who badgered them. If the guilty refuser of charity then suffered a misfortune, he immediately suspected that the rejected alms seeker had bewitched him. This transferred his guilt back to the alms seeker and diverted the frustrations felt against the whole system of poor relief on to the persecution of an individual. The psychological mechanism of witch persecution is now clear enough.

Fourth, continental Europe, although to a much lesser extent than England, saw the acceptance among the educated of a comprehensive conspiracy

theory, an invention of obsessed priests and intellectuals. This was the notion of a widespread secret society of witches, assembling in covens, making pacts with the Devil, and copulating with him at Sabbats, to which they traveled on broomsticks. Evidence for this extraordinary farrago of nonsense was soon provided by a flood of confessions, either the product of autosuggestion in hysterics or extracted by the use of the most terrible torture, the increased use of which was the last contributory cause. As we have found out again in the twentieth century, the torturer can obtain detailed evidence of the most absurd conspiracies and the most unlikely conspirators, provided he is told what and whom to find, for in their torment the subjects will freely confess to anything and will accuse any or everyone they know.

It is to the credit of the English that the common law legal system greatly inhibited, if it did not altogether prevent, the use of "the unEnglish method of torture." As a result, the destructive potentialities of the witch hunting craze were never allowed to develop to the degree that they did on the continent and in Scotland. Although prosecution was extremely common in England, the death penalty was relatively rare, owing to the care with which the magistrates and clergy normally approached the problem of obtaining satisfactory evidence.

Fear of evil spirits manipulated by witchcraft thus spread in the sixteenth century in a society which believed implicitly that any inexplicable event was caused by magic, in which the Church had abandoned its old miracle-working weapons, and in which the powers of the Devil were thought to have greatly increased. It was also a society undergoing great social stress, in which the moral duty of the rich toward the poor was no longer clear, and in which the only resort of the poor against injustice was the invocation of black magic. It is clear that village communities must have spent an enormous amount of time discussing suspicions of witchcraft and ways of dealing with it. The prosecutions were only the top of the iceberg, and below the surface there was a constant warfare in progress between white and black magic. Only if black magic seemed to be unstoppable by other means was there recourse to the courts.

So far, we have treated witchcraft exclusively as part of a system of beliefs whose function was to alleviate anxiety caused by ignorance of causation and incapacity to control the environment. It may also have served a latent function as well, as a restraint upon social conflict. Everything we know about village life, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, suggests that it was bad-tempered, quarrelsome, and riddled with hatreds, jealousies, and feelings of guilt. Fear of being bewitched must have acted as a powerful incentive to the financially secure in the prime of life to be kind and generous

to the old, the sick, and the poor. Conversely, fear of being accused of witchcraft must have been a powerful incentive to the latter to be amiable and courteous to the former.

On the other hand witchcraft allegations deflected aggressive impulses and social tensions away from the maladjusted institutions and conventions that lay at the root of the trouble. In this particular case the root was the economic system which made the poor so demanding and burdensome and the rich so guilty and resentful, and the status system which left women without a meaningful social position. Witchcraft beliefs therefore postponed the necessary institutional and intellectual changes by allowing society to deflect its rage onto the persecution of a scapegoat. As a result these dysfunctional institutions were allowed to struggle on instead of being rapidly transformed.

Those who launched accusations of witchcraft can be seen to fall into three categories. The first, and by far the most common, were simple village peasants who had committed some breach of the social conventions in their behavior toward the accused—usually it was the refusal to give alms or lend money. The accused had consequently let fall some expression of malice—usually a curse—and the accuser had subsequently been struck by misfortune. The sufferer first made application to a "cunning man," who helped him to confirm his suspicions of the identity of the witch who was the cause of his troubles. Because of this relationship between the accuser and the accused, the former almost always enjoyed a higher social and economic status than the latter.

The second class of accuser was the hysteric, usually a woman, who went into severe fits and spoke with voices, accusing all and sundry of bewitching her. In some of the most sensational cases, it is clear that the predominant role was played by a local epidemic of hysteria, superimposed on a general belief in magic. Hysteria is extremely catching, and as a result from time to time, as in Salem in 1692, or in some French nunneries, whole communities would be shattered by an epidemic of witchcraft hysteria which could well engulf the accused as well as the accusers, and could temporarily blind the authorities to the flimsy nature of the evidence. . . .

The third and rarest class of accuser was the dedicated ideological witchfinder, armed with the *Malleus Maleficarum* or some similar inquisitorial handbook, who roamed about the countryside terrorizing whole neighborhoods. A fearful example of the havoc wrought in a suggestible population by these men was the mass prosecution of fifty witches in the Manningtree area of Essex in 1645, which was launched by two witch-finders. Because of the presence on the scene of these professionals, this is one of the rare cases in England in which the confessions made mention of those stock European

practices of assembling in covens, copulating with the Devil, kissing his arse, etc.

On the other hand it is clear that these professional witch-finders with their obvious anal-erotic obsessions were only exploiting and encouraging pre-existing fears and hatreds and delusions within the village community. Indeed, the whole history of witchcraft has been distorted by concentration upon these rare but highly sensational cases, heavily spiced with sex and sadism, which were launched by hysterical women or by professional witch-finders. What has been ignored is the regular flow of complaints and prosecutions from ordinary persons who had suffered inexplicable misfortune.

Those accused of witchcraft can also be fitted into three categories, although the distinctions are by no means as sharp as they are between the types of accuser, and the risk of over-schematization is greater. The first group are the genuine witches, resentful persons of low social status and economic level, who tried to take revenge upon their neighbors, usually for some real injury. By the use of spells, rituals, potions, the sticking of pins into waxen dolls, etc., they seriously tried to induce sickness or death in human beings or cattle. Witchcraft was the weapon of the weak against the strong for, apart from scolding and arson, it was the only weapon they had.

Magic, of which witchcraft is a part, only works to the extent that people think it works, for its effects are dependent on the psychosomatic power of belief and not on physical properties. Since society believed in witchcraft, the victims were often suggestible enough to be severely affected by it. There is therefore a good deal to be said for the view of skeptics like Hobbes, who denied the capacity of witchcraft to do any concrete harm but thought that witches should be punished for the malice of their intentions.

The second category of the accused was the innocent, who undoubtedly formed the great majority. Some of them denied their guilt to the end, but very many were browbeaten, tortured, or confused by the strength of popular opinion among their neighbors and by the pressure of prolonged interrogation into confessing crimes of which they were not guilty. The third category were the hysterics, often women or pubescent children, who gave free rein in their voluntary confessions to auto-suggestive fantasies about affectionate dealings with animal familiars or loveless copulations with the Devil.

It is very noticeable that during the peak period of witchcraft activity and persecution in the West, most of the black witches were women, and most of the white witches and the accusers were men. Unfortunately, anthropologists have so far been unable satisfactorily to identify and isolate the causes why in some African societies today the black witches are nearly all women, in others they are nearly all men, and in others again they are mixed. Theories about the

economic predominance of women in Ghana or about generational conflict in Massachusetts simply do not apply to other societies.

In this vacuum of scientific theory, the historian can only speculate in the void. Is it possible that the practice of witchcraft was one of the very few ways in which a woman could impress herself on a male chauvinist world, at a time when economic opportunities were limited, the structure of the family was changing only very slowly, and when feminine eroticism was strongly condemned? Is it possible that the decline of witchcraft was brought about to some extent by a partial adaptation of the family in order to give women a greater share of respect, authority, and sexual satisfaction? Is it more than coincidence that witches vanish just at the time when Fanny Hill appears?

If so, then the rise and fall of witchcraft in the West has to be associated with different stages of a revolution of rising female expectations, generated in turn by the growth of literacy and the rise of individualism that were accidental by-products of the Reformation. All this is very fanciful, but the sexual element in witchcraft in the West is too obvious to be ignored. . . .

* * *

Why did the persecution of witches decline in the seventeenth century? What is absolutely certain is that the lead was taken by the lay and clerical elite, who were the first to lose faith in the system of beliefs upon which the persecutions were founded. Belief in the efficacy of magic, and therefore of the reality of black witchcraft, survived in the general population until recent times. Indeed there are sound reasons for doubting whether belief in magic has ever died out in the West.

Today, at the apogee of our scientific, rationalist, technological civilization, magical beliefs are spreading once more. Millions of lucky charms hang in cars to ward off traffic accidents; astrological advice is regularly published in the popular newspapers, and courses on the subject are just beginning to appear at the universities in response to student demand; the casting of horoscopes, often assisted by computers, is a booming growth industry; every year huge crowds of the sick pour into Lourdes in the hope of a miraculous cure.

Perhaps most disturbing of all is the current faddish revival of interest in witchcraft, evidence for which is provided by the spate of new historical works, reprints of inquisitorial handbooks and of reports of notorious witch trials, imaginative re-creations of historical events by talented novelists like François Mallet-Joris and fashionable film directors like Ken Russell, and the beginning of semiserious organized witch cults in California.

The problem, therefore, is how to explain a change in attitude in the seventeenth century not so much among the peasantry who launched the prosecutions as among the elite who controlled the legal process, the clergy and the magistrates. The great strength of Mr. Thomas's book is his insistence that the change cannot be considered in isolation, as hitherto it has been, but must be looked at in the light of magical beliefs of all kinds. There is a basic intellectual and practical unity between magic, astrology, and witchcraft. William Lilly, for example, practiced astrology, medicine, spirit-raising, treasure hunting, and the conjuration of fairies. Astrologers and their rivals, the cunning men, were often called in to diagnose cases of witchcraft.

The question must therefore be broadened, and we must ask not what was the cause of the decline in the belief in witchcraft in the seventeenth century, but what was the cause of the decline in the belief in magic. One possibility is the growth of mechanical philosophy. The trouble with this explanation is that skepticism about magic and witchcraft was growing among clergy, lawyers, doctors, and lay magistrates in the early seventeenth century, before the new natural science had made any real impact. In any case, magical overtones pervaded early seventeenth-century science. Hermetic thought was a stimulus to heliocentric theories, belief in the magical properties of numbers to mathematics, astrology to astronomy. The discovery of magnetism actually increased belief in the spirits, since it seemed to prove that physical objects could influence one another from a distance.

More important than any scientific discoveries was the change in scientific attitudes, namely the new Baconian demand for experimental proof. The idea that "there is no certain knowledge without demonstration" slowly eroded belief in all kinds of magical explanations for events, just at the time when the lawyers were tightening up their rules of evidence in a parallel demand for more rigorous proof. But this rational approach to evidence could not develop in a world of arbitrary magic. A prior condition for the emergence of the spirit of scientific inquiry was therefore the development of religious belief in an orderly universe in which God's providence operates according to natural laws.

Organized and established religion must be seen as a system of explanation and recourse parallel to and rivaling those of magic and astrology. Hobbes rightly pointed out that the distinction between superstition and religion is in the eye of the beholder. "This fear of things invisible is the natural seed of that which everyone in himself calleth Religion; and in them that worship or fear that power otherwise than they do, superstition." Although religion deals with fundamentals, and magic with particulars, ministers and witch doctors were clearly rival practitioners in the application of supernatural powers to

the problems and miseries of this world. Both tended to blame individuals—the former the sufferer for his sin, the latter the malicious manipulator of spirits.

Presbyterians and astrologers offered alternative systems of predestination. Professor Evans-Pritchard has recently suggested that "when religious beliefs, whether those of spiritual cults or ancestor cults, are strong, witchcraft beliefs are relatively weak." As we have seen, the distinction between religion and magic was hopelessly blurred in the Middle Ages, and the first stage in making a separation occurred when the Protestant reformers rejected all claims to miracle-working powers for their churches. The second important step, however, was taken at the end of the seventeenth century; when religion became more rational and God's providence was at last regarded as working in strict conformity to natural laws. It was the natural theology of the eighteenth century which finally broke the habit of ascribing misfortune to moral delinquency or malevolent agency.

Another of Hobbes's theories was that "in these four things, opinion of ghosts, ignorance of second causes, devotion to which men fear, and taking of things casual for prognostics, consisteth the natural seed of religion, which by reason of the different fancies, judgements, and passions of several men, hath grown up into ceremonies so different, that those which are used by one man are for the most part ridiculous to another." It is undoubtedly true that both magic and the various Christian churches and sects all offer explanations to fill the gaps caused by human ignorance of causation, but their scope is not purely determined by the ignorance. If this were so, neither would have shrunk until technological control of nature had increased, but the chronology, as we have seen, is wrong.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century Bacon had defined the aims of the new science:

The end of our foundation is the knowledge of causes and the secret motion of things, and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible.

This was indeed the goal, but during the critical period when magic was in decline and the magical properties of religion also in retreat in the face of natural theology, there was really no great technological breakthrough. Doctors were just about as powerless to cure disease or to prolong life in 1700 as they were in 1500, the means of recovery of stolen property were as inadequate as ever, forecasting the future was as unreliable as ever.

What had changed, however, was man's aspirations and expectations. There was now a belief abroad that the human condition could be improved,

partly by social action such as founding hospitals or legislating poor relief, and partly by making technological discoveries. There was also a new willingness to tolerate ignorance, instead of filling the hitherto intolerable void with assumptions about the intervention of demons or angels, or the direct providence of God.

What undermined educated belief in magic, and with it educated belief in witchcraft, was thus not the success of technology in reducing the area of ignorance. It was rather a new religious attitude of self-help, an acceptance of the doctrine that God helps those who help themselves, and that supernatural intervention in the workings of nature was now so rare as to be negligible for all practical purposes. Such are the broad conclusions of Mr. Thomas's important book, parts of which are supported by the works of Professors MacFarlane, Mandrou, and Hansen. . . .

* * *

We can now see, perhaps for the first time, the complex chronological interaction of magic, religion, and science as rival explanatory systems. The early Reformation renounced the magical powers of religion, and unofficial magic presumably poured in to fill the void. In its official doctrine, however, the reformers greatly stimulated belief in the Devil as the instigator of all misfortune and evil, and of Antichrist as the embodiment of evil on earth, who had to be destroyed before the reign of Jesus could begin. It was only much later on, after a century of turmoil and bloody persecution, that the profounder aspects of the new religion came to the fore. By the late seventeenth century Protestantism's more rational and coherent view of nature and its relationship of God's providence had at last produced a state of mind to which magical or miraculous explanations of events were unacceptable. Later still, this religious-inspired rationalism began to undermine religion itself.

The relation of magic and science went through the same two stages of symbiosis and antagonism. For a century, magic went hand in hand with science, but eventually science broke away and destroyed its partner's credibility, at any rate among the educated classes. Much later still, in the nineteenth century, it also broke with religion, which it began to destroy too.

This is not a simple story of heroes and devils, of reason battling unreason, nor is it enough to treat it as one of the more bizarre aspects of human folly. The most deeply held beliefs of the past seem wholly irrational to us, as no doubt many of our own will seem to posterity. When all is said, however, the abiding distinction of the West has been that in the last three hundred years it

has gone further than any other society the world has ever known to rid itself of these ancient fears and superstitions. The process is perhaps the most important intellectual change since man emerged from caves. But in the light of the current revival of belief in magic and the irrational, neither arrogance nor complacency is in order when one views the long, messy, continuing struggle which has slowly led to what Max Weber described as "the disenchantment of the world."

As a result of this struggle modern man now walks upon a knife edge. On the one side is a "technetronic" society, smooth, impersonal, rational, and scientific, a kind of universal IBM company ruled over by the computer. While it can be supremely efficient, it is also drab and sterile, leaving no place either for the emotions, including the finer ones of love and compassion, or for the sense of aesthetic mystery and wonder which is at the root of all great literature, art, and music. On the other side is a society at the mercy of prejudice and passion, driven forward by wholly irrational beliefs which stunt the mind and prevent effective action for human betterment. While it may be warm and vibrant, it is also full of cruelty, hate, and fear. The naked ape had better watch his step.

The Verdict of Contemporaries

To the majority of orthodox Puritans at the onset of the Salem trials, the outbreaks of witchcraft were just what they appeared to be: a certain number of wicked persons were in league with the Devil and had supernatural powers to afflict their innocent neighbors. But there were some in Massachusetts who had their doubts, and their numbers increased as the trials progressed. They were disturbed by the flimsy nature of the evidence and by the spread of accusations in ever-widening circles. It was inevitable that COTTON MATHER (1663–1728) should be drawn into this controversy. The third-generation Puritan minister had established himself as an authority on witchcraft when, in 1689, he published Memorable Providences Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions. Now, three years later, the governor of the colony asked him to speak in defense of the Salem trials.

The result was The Wonders of the Invisible World, published in late 1692. The twenty-nine-year old author took pains to state, "I Report matters not as an Advocate but as an Historian." It is possible to take Mather at his word and to regard The Wonders of the Invisible World as the first historical interpretation of Salem. The thesis is simple: the sentences of death were fully deserved because the witches were guilty. It was no accident, said Mather, that the outbreak had occurred at Salem, "the Center, and after a sort, the First-born of our English Settlements." New England had been a land ruled by the Devil until the Puritans had arrived to establish a holy commonwealth. Now the Devil was launching a counterattack to regain his dominion, and because the people of New England had fallen away from the piety of their ancestors, this invasion had come close to succeeding. Indeed, those who doubted the wisdom of the magistrates were themselves contributing to the Devil's cause. By repentance and unity, however, Satan could be defeated.

To prove that the case against the witches was overwhelming, and that "spectral evidence" provided by witnesses was reliable, Mather described in detail the proceedings against several of the accused. Included in the following excerpt is his account of the case against Bridget Bishop, the first witch to be hung at Salem.

3. Satan's Attack on New England

The New-Englanders are a People of God settled in those which were once the Devil's Territories; and it may easily be supposed that the Devil was

exceedingly disturbed when he perceived such a People here accomplishing the Promise of old made unto our Blessed Jesus, That He should have the Utmost Parts of the Earth for his Possession. There was not a greater Up roar among the Ephesians when the Gospel was first brought among them than there was among The Powers of the Air (after whom those Ephesians walked) when first the Silver Trumpets of the Gospel here made the Joyful Sound. The Devil, thus Irritated, immediately try'd all sorts of Methods to overturn this poor Plantation: and so much of the Church as was Fled into this Wilderness, immediately found The Serpent cast out of his Mouth a Flood for the carrying of it away. I believe that never were more Satanical Devices used for the Unsettling of any People under the Sun, than what have been Employ'd for the Extirpation of the Vine which God has here Planted. . . .

But, All those Attempts of Hell have hitherto been Abortive, many an Ebenezer [i.e., prayer] has been Erected unto the Praise of God by his Poor People here and Having obtained Help from God, we continue to this Day. Wherefore the Devil is now making one Attempt more upon us; an Attempt more Difficult, more Surprizing, more snarl'd with unintelligible Circumstances than any that we have hitherto Encountered; an Attempt so Critical that if we get well through, we shall soon enjoy Halcyon Days with all the Vultures of Hell Trodden under our Feet. He has wanted his Incarnate Legions to Persecute us, as the People of God have in the other Hemisphere been Persecuted: he has therefore drawn forth his more Spiritual ones to make an Attacque upon us. We have been advised by some Credible Christians yet alive that a Malefactor, accused of Witchcraft as well as Murder, and Executed in this place more than Forty Years ago, did then give Notice of An Horrible Plot against the Country by Witchcraft, and a Foundation of Witchcraft, then laid, which if it were not seasonably discovered would probably Blow up, and pull down all the Churches in the Country. And we have now with Horror seen the Discovery of such a Witchcraft! An Army of Devils is horribly broke in upon the place which is the Center, and after a sort, the First-born of our English Settlements: and the Houses of the Good People there are fill'd with the doleful Shrieks of their Children and Servants, Tormented by Invisible Hands, with Tortures altogether preternatural. After the Mischiefs there Endeavoured, and since in part Conquered, the terrible Plague of Evil Angels hath made its Progress into some other places, where other Persons have been in like manner Diabolically handled. These our poor Afflicted Neighbors quickly after they become Infected and Infested with these Demons, arrive to a Capacity of Discerning those which they conceive the Shapes of their Troublers; and notwithstanding the Great and Just Suspicion that the Demons might Impose the Shapes of Innocent Persons in their

Spectral Exhibitions upon the Sufferers, (which may perhaps prove no small part of the Witch-Plot in the issue) yet many of the Persons thus Represented, being Examined, several of them have been Convicted of a very Damnable Witchcraft: yea, more than One Twenty have Confessed that they have signed unto a Book which the Devil show'd them, and Engaged in his Hellish Design of Bewitching and Ruining our Land. We know not, at least / know not, how far the Delusions of Satan may be Interwoven into some Circumstances of the Confessions; but one would think all the Rules of Understanding Humane Affairs are at an end, if after so many most Voluntary Harmonious Confessions, made by Intelligent Persons of all Ages, in sundry Towns, at Several Times, we must not Believe the main strokes wherein those Confessions all agree: especially when we have a thousand preternatural Things every day before our eyes, wherein the Confessors do acknowledge their Concernment [i.e., involvement], and give Demonstration of their being so Concerned. If the Devils now can strike the minds of men with any Poisons of so fine a Composition and Operation, that Scores of Innocent People shall Unite in Confessions of a Crime, which we see actually committed, it is a thing prodigious, beyond the Wonders of the former Ages, and it threatens no less than a sort of Dissolution upon the World. Now, by these Confessions 'tis Agreed That the Devil has made a dreadful knot of Witches in the Country, and by the help of Witches has dreadfully increased that Knot: That these Witches have driven a Trade of Commisioning their Confederate Spirits to do all sorts of Mischiefs to the Neighbours, whereupon there have ensued such Mischievous consequences upon the Bodies and Estates of the Neighbourhood, as could not otherwise be accounted for: yea, That at prodigious Witch-Meetings the Wretches have proceeded so far as to Concert and Consult the Methods of Rooting out the Christian Religion from this Country, and setting up instead of it, perhaps a more gross Diabolism than ever the World saw before. . . .

But that which most of all Threatens us in our present Circumstances is the Misunderstanding, and so the Animosity, whereinto the Witchcraft now Raging has Enchanted us. The Embroiling, first of our Spirits and then of our Affairs is evidently as considerable a Branch of the Hellish Intrigue which now vexes us as any one Thing whatsoever. The Devil has made us like a Troubled Sea, and the Mire and Mud begins now also to heave up apace. Even Good and Wise Men suffer themselves to fall into their Paroxysms; and the Snake which the Devil is now giving us fetches up the Dirt which before lay still at the bottom of our sinful Hearts. If we allow the Mad Dogs of Hell to poyson us by biting us, we shall imagine that we see nothing but such things about us, and like such things, fly upon all that we see. Were it not for what is

in us, for my part I should not fear a thousand Legions of Devils: 'tis by our Quarrels that we spoil our Prayers; and if our humble zealous, and united Prayers are once hindered: Alas, the Philistines of Hell have cut our Locks for us; they will then blind us, mock us, ruine us. . . .

The Tryal of Bridget Bishop, alias Oliver, At the
Court of Oyer and Terminer Held at Salem, June 2, 1692

She was indicted for Bewitching of several Persons in the Neighbourhood, the Indictment being drawn up according to the Form in such Cases usual. And pleading Not Guilty, there were brought in several persons who had long undergone many kinds of Miseries, which were preternaturally inflicted, and generally ascribed unto an horrible Witchcraft. There was little occasion to prove the Witchcraft, it being evident and notorious to all beholders. Now to fix Witchcraft on the Prisoner at the Bar, the first thing used was the Testimony of the Bewitched; whereof several testifi'd That the Shape of the Prisoner did oftentimes very grievously Pinch them, Choak them, Bite them, and Afflict them; urging them to write their Names in a Book, which the said Spectre called Ours. One of them did further testifie that it was the Shape of this Prisoner, with another, which one day took her from her Wheel, and carrying her to the Riverside, threatend there to Drown her if she did not Sign to the Book mentioned: which yet she refused. Others of them did also testifie that the said Shape did in her Threats brag to them that she had been the Death of sundry Persons, then by her named; and that she had Ridden a Man then likewise named. Another testifi'd, the Apparition of Ghosts unto the Spectre of Bishop, crying out, you Murdered us! About the truth whereof, there was in the Matter of Fact but far too much suspicion.

It was testifi'd, That at the Examination of the Prisoner before the Magistrates, the Bewitched were extreemly tortured. If she did but cast her Eyes on them, they were presently struck down; and this in such a manner as there could be no Collusion in the Business. But upon the Touch of her Hand upon them when they lay in their Swoons, they would immediately Revive; and not upon the Touch of any one else. Moreover, Upon some Special Actions of her Body, as the shaking of her Head, or the turning of her Eyes, they presently and painfully fell into the like postures. And many of the like Accidents now fell out, while she was at the Bar. . . .

One Deliverance Hobbs, who had confessed being a Witch, was now tormented by the Spectres for her Confession. And she now testifi'd That this Bishop tempted her to sign the Book again, and to deny what she had confess'd. She affirm'd That it was the Shape of this Prisoner which whipped

her with Iron Rods, to compel her thereunto. And she affirmed that this Bishop was at a General Meeting of the Witches in a Field at Salem-Village, and there partook of a Diabolical Sacrament in Bread and Wine then administered. . . .

Samuel Shattock testify'd That in the Year 1680, this Bridget Bishop often came to his House upon such frivolous and foolish Errands that they suspected she came indeed with a purpose of mischief. Presently whereupon his eldest Child, which was of as promising Health and Sense as any Child of its Age, began to droop exceedingly; and the oftner that Bishop came to the House, the worse grew the Child. As the Child would be standing at the Door, he would be thrown and bruised against the Stones by an invisible Hand, and in like sort knock his Face against the sides of the House, and bruise it after a miserable manner. . . .

To crown all, John Bly and William Bly testify'd That being employ'd by Bridget Bishop to help to take down the Cellar-wall of the old house wherein she formerly lived, they did in holes of the said old Wall find several Poppets [i.e., dolls], made of Rags and Hogs-bristles, with headless Pins in them, the Points being outward; whereof she could give no account unto the Court that was reasonable or tolerable. . . .

One thing that made against the Prisoner was her being evidently convicted of gross Lying in the court, several times, while she was making her plea; but besides this, a Jury of Women found a preternatural Teat upon her Body: But upon a second search, within 3 or 4 hours, there was no such thing to be seen.* There was also an Account of other People whom this Woman had Afflicted; and there might have been many more, if they had been enquired for; but there was no need of them.

There was one very strange thing more, with which the Court was newly entertained. As this Woman was under a Guard, passing by the great and spacious Meeting-house of Salem, she gave a look towards the House: And immediately a Demon invisibly entering the Meeting-house, tore down a part of it, so that tho' there was no Person to be seen there, yet the People, at the noise, running in, found a Board, which was strongly fastend with several Nails, transported unto another quarter of the House.

**Editor's note:* When an unusual mark or growth was found on the body of an alleged witch, it was usually assumed that this was a teat provided by the Devil to enable the witch to nurse a demon. The fact that such a "preternatural teat" seemed to appear and disappear on the body of Bridget Bishop is used as evidence by Mather to prove that she was guilty of witchcraft.

The Wonders of the Invisible World failed to convince Cotton Mather's countrymen. The same governor who had urged him to write a defense of the trials later dissolved the Court of Oyer and Terminer and pardoned those who remained in prison. Mather had hoped that the people of New England would repent their scepticism; what they repented instead was their part in the tragedy of Salem. And in the course of this change in opinion, Mather himself came under attack. In 1697 the Boston merchant ROBERT CALEF (1648–1719) wrote a vitriolic denunciation of the trials and of Cotton Mather's role. This book was published in London in 1700 with the sarcastic title *More Wonders of the Invisible World*. Not surprisingly, Cotton Mather angrily described *More Wonders* as a libelous book, and called its author a "sort of Saducee . . . who makes little Conscience of lying."

These two books—*The Wonders* and *More Wonders*—represent the polarized attitudes toward witchcraft of seventeenth century New Englanders. To Mather the trials were a timely and proper exercise of authority against a monstrous evil; to Calef the trials themselves constituted the evil. In the centuries since Salem it has been Calef's view that has prevailed.

4. An Attack on the Trials

In a time when not only England in particular, but almost all Europe had been labouring against the Usurpations of Tyranny and Slavery, The English America has not been behind in a share in the Common calamities; more especially New-England has met not only with such calamities as are common to the rest, but with several aggravations enhancing such Afflictions, by the Devastations and Cruelties of the Barbarous Indians in their Eastern borders, etc.

But this is not all, they have been harrast (on many accounts) by a more dreadful Enemy, as will herein appear to the considerate.

[In the following three paragraphs, Calef summarizes Cotton Mather's version of the witchcraft episode. The number at the beginning of each paragraph refers to the corresponding page number in the 1692 edition of Mather's *The Wonders of the Invisible World*.]

P. 66. Were it as we are told in *Wonders of the Invisible World*, that the Devils were walking about our Streets with lengthened Chains making a dreadful noise in our Ears, and Brimstone, even without a Metaphor, was making a horrid and a hellish stench in our Nostrils,

From Robert Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, reprinted in *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases*, edited by G. L. Burr (New York, 1914), pp. 289–393.

P. 49. And that the Devil exhibiting himself ordinarily as a black-Man, had decoy'd a fearful knot of Proud, Froward, Ignorant, Envious and Malitious Creatures, to list themselves in his horrid Service, by entring their Names in a Book tendered unto them; and that they have had their Meetings and Sacraments, and associated themselves to destroy the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, in these parts of the World; having each of them their Spectres, or Devils Commissionated by them, and representing of them, to be the Engines of their Malice, by these wicked Spectres siezing poor People about the Country with various and bloody Torments. And of those evidently preternatural Torments some to[o] have died. And that they have bewitched some even so far, a to make them self destroyers, and others in many Towns here and there languish'd under their evil hands. The people thus afflicted miserably scratch'd and bitten; and that the same Invisible Furies did stick Pins in them, and scald them, distort and disjoint them, with a Thousand other Plagues; and sometimes drag them out of their Chambers, and carry them over Trees and Hills Miles together, many of them being tempted to sign the Devils Laws.

P. 7[0]. Those furies whereof several have killed more People perhaps than would serve to make a Village.

If this be the true state of the Afflictions of this Country, it is very deplorable, and beyond all other outward Calamities miserable. But if on the other side, the Matter be as others do understand it, That the Devil has been too hard for us by his Temptations, signs, and lying Wonders, with the help of pernicious notions, formerly imbibed and professed; together with the Accusations of a parcel of possessed, distracted, or lying Wenches, accusing their Innocent Neighbours, pretending they see their Spectres (*i.e.*) Devils in their likeness Afflicting of them, and that God in righteous Judgment (after Men had ascribed his Power to Witches, of Commissionating Devils to do these things) may have given them over to strong delusions to believe lyes, etc. And to let loose the Devils of Envy, Hatred, Pride, Cruelty, and Malice against each other; yet still disguised under the Mask of Zeal for God, and left them to the branding one another with the odious Name of Witch; and upon the Accusation of those above mentioned, Brother to Accuse and Prosecute Brother, Children their Parents, Pastors and Teachers their immediate Flock unto death; Shepherds becoming Wolves, Wise Men Infatuated; People hauled to Prisons, with a bloody noise pursuing to, and insulting over, the (true) Sufferers at Execution, while some are fleeing from that call'd Justice, Justice it self fleeing before such Accusations, when once it did but begin to refrain further proceedings, and to question such Practices, some making their Escape out of Prisons, rather than by an obstinate Defence of their

Innocency, to run so apparent hazard of their Lives; Estates seized, Families of Children and others left to the Mercy of the Wilderness (not to mention here the Numbers proscribed, dead in Prisons, or Executed, etc.)

All which Tragedies, tho begun in one Town, or rather by one Parish, has Plague-like spread more than through that Country. And by its Eccho giving a brand of Infamy to this whole Country throughout the World,

If this were the Miserable case of this Country in the time thereof, and that the Devil had so far prevailed upon us in our Sentiments and Actions, as to draw us from so much as looking into the Scriptures for our guidance in these pretended Intricacies, leading us to a trusting in blind guides, such as the corrupt practices of some other Countries, or the bloody Experiments of Bodin,* and such other Authors—Then tho our Case be most miserable, yet it must be said of New-England, Thou hast destroyed thy self, and brought this greatest of Miseries upon thee.

**Editor's note:* Jean Bodin (1529–1596) was a French writer and jurist notorious for his persecution of witches.

"I have special reasons moving me to bear my testimony," said the REV. JOHN HALE (1636–1700) in his book *A Modest Inquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft*. Hale, the minister of Beverly, Massachusetts, was a participant in the Salem episode, and he had actively supported the work of the magistrates. But ironically, his own wife was accused of witchcraft in the fall of 1692, and Hale became convinced that the trials had been a ghastly mistake. Writing five years later, Hale tried to draw lessons from the tragedy. The historian Perry Miller (see selection 12) describes *A Modest Inquiry* as a "sad, troubled, and honest book," and one can see in it the tortured effort of a devout man who, lacking the arrogance of Mather or the anger of Calef, tried to arrive at the truth. Although the book was completed in 1697, it was not published until 1702—two years after the author's death. It is likely that this was Hale's wish.

5. The Lessons of Salem

The Holy Scriptures inform us that the Doctrine of Godliness is a great Mystery, containing the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven: Mysteries which require great search for the finding out: And as the Lord hath his

From John Hale, *A Modest Inquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft*, reprinted in *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases*, edited by G. L. Burr (New York, 1914), pp. 399–432.

Mysteries to bring us to Eternal Glory; so Satan hath his Mysteries to bring us to Eternal Ruine: Mysteries not easily understood, whereby the depths of Satan are managed in hidden wayes. So the Whore of Babylon makes the Inhabitants of the Earth drunk with the Wine of her Fornication, by the Mystery of her abominations, Rev. 17. 2. And the man of Sin hath his Mystery of iniquity whereby he deceiveth men through the working of Satan in signes and lying wonders, 2 Thes. 2. 3, 7, 9.

And among Satans Mysteries of iniquity, this of Witchcraft is one of the most difficult to be searched out by the Sons of men; as appeareth by the great endeavours of Learned and Holy men to search it out, and the great differences that are found among them, in the rules laid down for the bringing to light these hidden works of darkness. So that it may seem presumption in me to undertake so difficult a Theam, and to lay down such rules as are different from the Sentiments of many Eminent writers, and from the Precedents and practices of able Lawyers; yea and from the Common Law it self.

But my Apology for this undertaking is;

1. That there hath been such a dark dispensation by the Lord, letting loose upon us the Devil, *Anno*. 1692, as we never experienced before: And thereupon apprehending and condemning persons for Witchcraft; and nextly acquitting others no less liable to such a charge; which evidently shew we were in the dark, and knew not what to do; but have gone too far on the one or other side, if not on both. Hereupon I esteemed it necessary for some person to Collect a summary of that affair, with some animadversions upon it, which might at least give some light to them which come after, to shun those Rocks by which we were bruised, and narrowly escaped Shipwrack upon. And I have waited five years for some other person to undertake it, who might doe it better than I can, but find none; and judge it better to do what I can, than that such a work should be left undone. Better sincerely though weakly done, then not at all, or with such a byas of prejudice as will put false glosses upon that which was managed with uprightness of heart, though there was not so great a spirit of discerning, as were to be wished in so weighty a Concernment.

2. I have been present at several Examinations and Tryals, and knew sundry of those that Suffered upon that account in former years, and in this last affair, and so have more advantages than a stranger, to give account of these Proceedings.

3. I have been from my Youth trained up in the knowledge and belief of most of those principles I here question as unsafe to be used. The first person that suffered on this account in New-England, about Fifty years since, was my Neighbour, and I heard much of what was charged upon her, and others in those times; and the reverence I bore to aged, learned and judicious persons,

caused me to drink in their principles in these things, with a kind of Implicit Faith. *Quo semel est imbuta recens servabit odorem, Testa diu*. [Translation: "The fresh-made pot will long retain the odor in which once 'tis steeped."] A Child will not easily forsake the principles he hath been trained up in from his Cradle.

But observing the Events of that sad Catastrophe, *Anno* 1692, I was brought to a more strict scanning of the principles I had imbibed, and by scanning, to question, and by questioning at length to reject many of them, upon the reasons shewed in the ensuing Discourse. It is an approved saying *Nihil certius, quam quod ex dubio fit certum*; [Translation: "Nothing is surer than what out of doubt is made sure."] No truth more certain to a man, than that which he hath formerly doubted or denied, and is recovered from his error, by the convincing evidence of Scripture and reason. Yet I know and am sensible, that while we know but in part, man is apt in flying from a discovered error, to run into the contrary extream.

Incidit in Scyllam qui vult vitare Charybdim.

[Translation: "Into Scylla falls he who tries to keep clear of Charybdis."]

The middle way is commonly the way of truth. And if any can shew me a better middle way than I have here laid down, I shall be ready to embrace it: But the conviction must not be by vinegar or drollery, but by strength of argument.

4. I have had a deep sence of the sad consequence of mistakes in matters Capital; and their impossibility of recovering when compleated. And what grief of heart it brings to a tender conscience, to have been unwittingly encouraging of the Sufferings of the innocent. And I hope a zeal to prevent for the future such sufferings is pardonable, although there should be much weakness, and some errors in the pursuit thereof.

5. I observe the failings that have been on the one hand, have driven some into that which is indeed an extream on the other hand, and of dangerous consequences, *viz.* To deny any such persons to be under the New Testament, who by the Devils aid discover Secrets, or do work wonders. Therefore in the latter part of this discourse, I have taken pains to prove the Affirmative, yet with brevity, because it hath been done already by Perkins of *Witchcraft*. Glanvil his *Saducismus Triumphatus*, Pt. 1 p. 1 to 90 and Pt. 2 p. 1 to 80. Yet I would not be understood to justify all his notions in those discourses, but acknowledge he hath strongly proved the being of Witches.

6. I have special reasons moving me to bear my testimony about these matters, before I go hence and be no more; the which I have here done, and I

hope with some assistance of his Spirit, to whom I commit my self and this my labour, even that God whose I am and whom I serve: Desiring his Mercy in Jesus Christ to Pardon all the Errors of his People in the day of darkness; and to enable us to fight with Satan by Spiritual Weapons, putting on the whole Armour of God.

And tho' Satan by his Messengers may buffet Gods Children, yet there's a promise upon right *Resisting*, *he shall flee from them*, Jam. 4. 7. *And that all things shall work together for the good of those that Love the Lord*, Rom. 8. 28. So that I believe Gods Children shall be gainers by the assaults of Satan, which occasion'd this Discourse; which that they may, is the Prayer of, Thine in the Service of the Gospel.

* * *

I shall conclude this Discourse with some Application of the whole.

1. We may hence see ground to fear, that there hath been a great deal of innocent blood shed in the Christian World, by proceeding upon unsafe principles, in condemning persons for Malefick Witchcraft.

2. That there have been great sinful neglects in sparing others, who by their divinings about things future, or discovering things secret, as stolen Goods, etc., or by their informing of persons and things absent at a great distance, have implored the assistance of a familiar spirit, yet coloured over with specious pretences, and have drawn people to enquire of them: A sin frequently forbidden in Scripture, as Lev. 19. 31 and 20. 6, Isa. 8. 19, 20. and yet let alone, and in many parts of the World, have been countenanced in their diabolical skill and profession; because they serve the interest of those that have a vain curiosity, to pry into things God hath forbidden, and concealed from discovery by lawful means. And of others that by their inchantments, have raised mists, strange sights, and the like, to beget admiration, and please Spectators, etc., Whereas these divinations and operations are the Witchcraft more condemned in Scripture than the other.

3. But to come nigher home, we have cause to be humbled for the mistakes and errors which have been in these Colonies, in their Proceedings against persons for this crime, above forty years ago and downwards, upon insufficient presumptions and precedents of our Nation, whence they came. I do not say, that all those were innocent, that suffered in those times upon this account. But that such grounds were then laid down to proceed upon, which were too slender to evidence the crime they were brought to prove; and

thereby a foundation laid to lead into error those that come after. May we not say in this matter, as it is, Psal. 106. 6. *We have sinned with our fathers?* And as, Lam. 5. 7. *Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have born their iniquities?* And whether this be not one of the sins the Lord hath been many years contending with us for, is worthy our serious enquiry. If the Lord punished Israel with famine three years for a sin of misguided zeal forty years before that, committed by the breach of a Covenant made four hundred years before that: 2 Sam. 21. 1, 2, Why may not the Lord visit upon us the misguided zeal of our Predecessors about Witchcraft above forty years ago, even when that Generation is gathered to their Fathers.

4. But I would come yet nearer to our own times, and bewail the errors and mistakes that have been in the year 1692. In the apprehending too many we may believe were innocent, and executing of some, I fear, not to have been condemned; by following such traditions of our fathers, maxims of the Common Law, and Precedents and Principles, which now we may see weighed in the Balance of the Sanctuary, are found too light. I heartily concur with the Direction for our publick prayers, emitted December 17, 1696, by our General Assembly, in an order for a general Fast, viz. "That God would shew us what we know not, and help us wherein we have done amiss, to do so no more: And especially that whatever mistakes on either hand, have been fallen into, either by the body of this people, or any other of men, referring to the late tragedy raised among us by Satan and his Instruments, through the awful Judgment of God: He would humble us therefore, and pardon all the errors of his Servants and People, that desire to love his Name, and be attuned to his land." I am abundantly satisfied that those who were most concerned to act and judge in those matters, did not willingly depart from the rules of righteousness. But such was the darkness of that day, the tortures and lamentations of the afflicted, and the power of former precedents, that we walked in the clouds, and could not see our way. And we have most cause to be humbled for error on that hand, which cannot be retrieved. So that we must beseech the Lord, that if any innocent blood hath been shed, in the hour of temptation, the Lord will not lay it to our charge, but be merciful to his people whom he hath redeemed. Deut. 21. 8, And that in the day when he shall visit, he will not visit this sin upon our land, but blot it out, and wash it away with the blood of Jesus Christ.

5. I would humbly propose whether it be not expedient, that some what more should be publickly done then yet hath, for clearing the good name and reputation of some that have suffered upon this account, against whom the evidence of their guilt was more slender, and the grounds for charity for them more convincing. And this (in order to our obtaining from the Lord farther

reconciliation to our land,) and that none of their surviving relations, may suffer reproach upon that account. I have both read and heard of several in England, that have been executed for Capital crimes, and afterwards upon sense of an error in the process against them, have been restored in blood and honour by some publick act. My Lord Cook relates a story. A man going to correct a Girle his Neice, for some offence, in an upper room, the Girle strove to save her self, till her nose bled, and wiping it with a cloath, threw the bloody cloath out at the window, and cryed Murder; and then ran down staires, got away and hid her self. Her Uncle was prosecuted by her friends upon suspicion of Murdering her, because she could not be found. He declared that she made her escape, as above said. Then time was allowed him to bring her forth, but he could not hear of her within the time, and fearing he should dy if she could not be found, procures another Girle very like her, to appear in Court, and declare she was his Neice that had been missing: But her relations examine this counterfeit, until they find her out, and she confesseth she was suborned and counterfeited the true Niece. Upon these presumptions the man was found guilty of Murdering his Neice, and thereupon executed. And after his execution his true Neice comes abroad and shews her self alive and well. Then all that saw it were convinced of the Uncles innocency, and vanity of such presumptions. The Printing and Publishing of this relation Vindicates the good name of the Uncle, from the imputation of the crime of Murder. And this is one end of this present discourse, to take off (so far as a discourse of this nature can) infamy from the names and memory of such sufferers in this kind, as do not deserve the same.

6. Here it may be suitable for us to enquire, What the Lord speaks to us by such a stupendous providence, in his letting loose Satan upon us in this unusual way? *Ans.* 1. We may say of this, as our Saviour said of his washing his disciples feet, Joh. 13. *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hererafter. The Judgments of the Lord are a great deep,* Psal. 36. 6. *How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.* 2. Yet somewhat of his counsel at present for our instruction may be known, by comparing the Word and works of God together.

1. As when Joshua the high Priest though an holy chosen man of God, stood before the Angel, Satan stood at his right hand to resist him, or to be his adversary: And the advantage Satan had was by the filthy garments Joshua was clothed with before the Angels: That is, some iniquity which yet was not passed away, Zech. 3. 1, 3, 4. So we may say here were among Gods own Children filthy garments. The sins of Lukewarmness, loss of our first love, unprofitableness under the Gospel, slumbering and sleeping in the wise, as well as foolish Virgins, worldliness, pride, carnal security, and many other

sins. By these and such like sins the accuser of the Brethren [i.e., Satan] got advantage to stand at our right hand (the place of an Accuser in Courts of Justice) and there accuse us and resist us.

2. When the Egyptians refused to let Israel go to sacrifice and keep a feast to the Lord in the Wilderness: The Lord cast upon [them] the fierceness of his wrath, by sending Evil Angels among them, Psal. 78. 49. Egypts sins were (1.) Covetousness; they would not let Israel go, because they gained by their labours. (2.) Contempt of God and his Instituted Worship, and Ordinances. They did not count them of such concernment, that Israel should go into the Wilderness to observe them. Both these sins have too much increased in our Land. (1.) Covetousness, an inordinate love of the World gave Satan advantage upon us. (2.) Contempt of Gods Worship and Instituted Ordinances. The Errand of our Fathers into this Wilderness, was to Sacrifice to the Lord; that is, to worship God in purity of heart and life, and to wait upon the Lord, walking in the faith and order of the Gospel in Church fellowship; that they might enjoy Christ in all his Ordinances. But these things have been greatly neglected and despised by many born, or bred up in the Land. We have much forgotten what our Fathers came into the Wilderness to see. The sealing Ordinances of the Covenant of Grace in Church-Communion have been much slighted and neglected; and the fury of this Storm raised by Satan hath fallen very heavily upon many that lived under these neglects. The Lord sends Evil Angels to awaken and punish our negligence: And to my knowledge some have been hereby excited to enter into the Chamber of Gods Ordinances, to hide themselves, until the indignation be over past.

3. David when he removed the Ark from Kirjathjearim, had the Ark put into a new Cart, which should have been carried by the Kohathites. Numb. 3.31. And David thought this was right, until the Lord slew Uzza for touching the Ark: But then he looked more exactly into the will of God; and confesseth that the Lord made a breach upon them, because they sought him not after the due order, 1 Chron. 13. 5, 7, 9, 10, and 15. 11, 12, 13. Had not the Lord made that breach upon them, they had persisted securely in their error. So I may say in this case. In the prosecution of Witchcraft, we sought not the Lord after the due order; but have proceeded after the methods used in former times and other places, until the Lord in this tremendous way made a breach upon us. And hereby we are made sensible that the methods formerly used are not sufficient to prove the guilt of such a crime. And this I conceive was one end of the Lords letting Satan loose to torment and accuse so many; that hereby we may search out the truth more exactly. For had it not been for this dreadful dispensation, many would have lived and dyed in that error, which they are now convinced of.

4. The Lord delivered into the hand of Satan the Estate, Children, and Body of Job, for the tryal of Jobs faith and patience, and proof of his perfection and uprightness. So the Lord hath delivered into Satans hand mens Children and Bodies, yea names and estates into Satans hand for the tryal of their faith and patience, and farther manifestation of the sincerity of their professions.

7. From that part of the discourse which shews the power of Satan to torment the bodies, and disturb the minds of those, he is let loose upon. . . . I would infer, that Satan may be suffered so to darken the minds of some pious Souls, as to cause them to destroy themselves by drowning, hanging, or the like. And when he hath so far prevailed upon some, that formerly lived a Christian life, but were under the prevalency of a distracting Melancholy at their latter end, We may have Charity that their Souls are Saved, notwithstanding the sad conclusion of their lives. I speak not to excuse any that having the free use of their reason willingly destroy themselves, out of pride, discontent, impatience, etc. Achitophel who out of height of Spirit because his Counsel was not followed, and to prevent Davids executing of him, for his rebellion and treason, destroyed himself, hath left his name to stink unto all generations. And Judas who for his unparalleled treachery in betraying his Master, and the Lord of life, was justly left to hange himself; and the rope breaking or slipping he fell down head long, or with his face down ward, so that he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out, Math. 27. 5. with Act. 1. 13, left by his sin and punishment in the last act of his life the black character of a Son of perdition. But those that being out of their right minds, and hurried by an evil Spirit, as persons under a force to be their own executioners, are not always to be ranked with these.

8. Seeing we have been too fierce against supposed Malefick Witchcraft, let us take heed we do not on the contrary become too favourable to divining Witchcraft: And become like Saul who was too zealous against the Gibeonites, and at last turned to seek after one that had a familiar Spirit, to his own destruction. Let us not, if we can help it, suffer Satan to set up an ensuring office for stolen Goods. That after he hath brought the curse of God into the house of the thief, by tempting him to steal, he may not bring about the curse into the houses of them from whom the goods were stolen, by alluring them to go to the god of Ekron to enquire. That men may not give their Souls to the Devil in exchange, for his restoring to them their goods again, in such a way of divination. The Lord grant it may be said of New England, as is prophecyed of Judah, Mich. 5. 12. *I will cut off Witchcrafts out of thine hand, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers.*

9. Another extream we must beware of, is, *viz.* Because our fathers in the beginning times of this Land, did not see so far into these mysteries of iniquity, as hath been since discovered, Let us not undervalue the good foundations they laid for God and his people, and for us in Church and Civil Government. For Paul that eminent Apostle knew but in part; no wonder then, if our Fathers were imperfect men. In the purest times in Israel, there were some Clouds of ignorance over-shadowing of them. Abraham, David, and the best Patriarchs were generally ignorant of the sin of Polygamy. And although Solomon far exceeded Nehemiah in wisdom; yet Nehemiah saw farther into the evil of Marrying Outlandish Women, than that wisest of Kings, and meer fallen men. Neh. 13. 26. Josiah kept the Passeover more exactly, than David, and all the Reforming Kings of Judah, 2 Chron. 35. 18.

All the godly Judges and Kings of Judah were unacquainted with, and so negligent of the right observation of the feast of Tabernacles, until it came to Nehemiahs time: And he understood and revived an ordinance of God, that lay buried in oblivion, near about a thousand years. Now he that shall reject all the good in doctrine and practice, which was maintained, professed and practiced by so many Godly leaders, because of some few errors found among them, will be found to fight against God. A dwarf upon a giants shoulders, can see farther than the giant.

It was a glorious enterprize of the beginners of these Colonies, to leave their native Country to propagate the Gospel: And a very high pitch of faith, zeal, and courage that carryed them forth, to follow the Lord into this wilderness, into a land that was not sown. Then was New England holiness to the Lord, and all that did devour them, or attempted so to do, did offend, and evil did come upon them. And the Lord did graciously remember this kindness of their Youth, and love of their Espousals; In granting them many eminent tokens of his favour; by his presence with them in his Ordinances, for the Conversion of Souls, and edifying and comforting the hearts of his Servants: By signal answering their prayers in times of difficulty: By protecting them from their Enemies; By guiding of, and providing for them in a Desart. And the Lord will still remember this their kindness unto their Posterity, unless that by their Apostasy from the Lord, they vex his Holy Spirit, to turn to be their Enemy: And thereby cast off the Entail of his Covenant Mercies; which God forbid. *Oh that the Lord may be with us, as he was with our Fathers; and that he may not leave us, nor forsake us!*