

Reverend. John Hale Background

Reverend John Hale was the minister of Beverly, one of Salem's neighboring communities. He was an eyewitness to the witchcraft panic and saw the events unravel in real time. Hale was one of several ministers called to examine and pray with Betty Parris and Abigail Williams when they initially became sick in the early months of 1692. As the year went on, Hale was not only present for many of the examinations, but interviewed some of the accused witches in prison, and even testified against one of his own parishioners. Despite his initial support, Hale ultimately became a skeptic of the witch trials. It is hard to know exactly when he began to distrust the court, but the accusation of his pregnant wife in November certainly solidified any previous doubt. Though written in 1697, his account of the trials was not published until after his death in 1702.

The following excerpt was taken from a full transcription of Reverend Hale's *A Modest Enquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft*, available through the University of Michigan's Evans Early American Imprint Collection:

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N00872.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>

CHAPTER II.

I. IN the latter end of the year 1691. Mr. *Samuel Paris*, Pastor of the Church in *Salem-Village*, had a Daughter of Nine, and a Neice of about Eleven years of Age, sadly Afflicted of they knew not what Distempers; and he made his application to Physitians, yet still they grew worse: And at length one Physitian gave his opinion, that they were under an Evil Hand. This the Neighbours quickly took up, and concluded they were bewitched. He had also an Indian Man servant, and his Wife who afterwards confessed, that without the knowledge of their Master or Mistress, they had taken some of the Afflicted persons Urine, and mixing it with meal had made a Cake, & baked it, to find out the Witch, as they said.

Page 24

After this, the Afflicted persons cryed out of the Indian Woman, named *Tituba*, that she did pinch, prick, and grievously torment them, and that they saw her here and there, where no body else could. Yea they could tell where she was, and what she did, when out of their humane sight. These Children were biuen and pinched by invisible agents; their arms, necks, and backs turned this way and that way, and returned back again, so as it was impossible for them to do of themselves, and beyond the power of any Epileptick Fits, or natural Disease to effect. Sometimes they were taken dumb, their mouths stopped, their throats choaked, their limbs wracked and, tormented so as might move an heart of stone, to sympathize with them, with bowels of compassion for them. I will not enlarge in the description of their cruel Sufferings, because they were in all things afflicted as bad as *John Goodwins* Children at *Boston*, in the year 1689. So that he that will read Mr. *Mathers* Book of *Memorable Providences*, page 3. &c. may Read part of what these Children, and afterwards sundry grown persons suffered by the hand of Satan, at *Salem Village*, and parts adjacent, *Anno* 1691, 2. Yet there was more in these Sufferings, than in those at *Boston*, by pins invisibly stuck into their flesh, pricking with Irons. (As in part published in a Book Printed 1693. viz. *The Wonders of the Invisible World*.)

Page 25

Mr. *Paris* seeing the distressed condition of his Family, desired the presence of some Worthy Gentlemen of *Salem*, and some Neighbour Ministers to consult together at his House; who when they came, and had enquired diligently into the Sufferings of the Afflicted, concluded they were preternatural, and feared the hand of Satan was in them.

II. The advice given to Mr. *Paris* by them was, that he should sit still and wait upon the Providence of God to see what time might discover; and to be much in prayer for the discovery of what was yet secret. They also Examined *Tituba*, who confessed the making a Cake, as is above mentioned, and said her Mistress in her own Country was a Witch, and had taught her some means to be used for the discovery of a Witch and for the prevention of being bewitched, &c. But said that she her self was not a Witch.

III. Soon after this, there were two or three private Fasts at the Ministers House, one of which was kept by sundry Neighbour Ministers, and after this, another in Publick at the *Village*, and several days afterwards of publick Humiliation, during these molestations, not only there, but in other Congregations for them. And one General Fast by Order of the General Court, observed throughout the

Colony to seek the Lord that he would rebuke Satan, and be a light unto his people in this day of darkness.

But I return to the History of these troubles. In a short time after other persons who were of age to be witnesses, were molested by Satan, and in their fits cryed out upon *Tituba* and *Goody O. & S. G.* that they or Specters in their Shapes did grievously torment them; hereupon some of their Village Neighbours complained to the Magistrates at *Salem*, desiring they would come and examine the afflicted & accused together; the which they did: the effect of which examination was, that *Tituba* confessed she was a Witch, and that she with the two others accused did torment & bewitch the complainers, and that these with two others whose names she knew not, had their Witchmeeting together; relating the times when & places where they met, with many other circumstances to be seen at large. Upon this the said *Tituba* and *O. & S. G.* were committed to Prison upon suspicion of acting Witchcraft. After this the said *Tituba* was again examined in Prison, and owned her first confession in all points, and then was her self afflicted and complained of her fellow Witches tormenting of her, for her confession, and accusing them, and being searched by a Woman, she was found to have upon her body the marks of the Devils wounding of her.

IV. Here were these things rendred her confession credible. (1.) That at this examination she answered every question just as she did at the first. And it was thought that if she had feigned her confession, she could not have remembred her answers so exactly. A lyar we say, had need of a good memory, but truth being always consistent with it self is the same to day as it was yesterday. (2.) She seemed very penitent for her Sin in covenanting with the Devil. (3.) She became a sufferer her self, & as she said for her confession. (4.) Her confession agreed exactly (which was afterwards verified in the other confessors) with the accusations of the afflicted. Soon after these afflicted persons complained of other persons afflicting of them in their fits, and the number of the afflicted and accused began to increase. And the success of *Tituba's* confession encouraged those in Authority to examine others that were suspected, and the event was, that more confessed themselves guilty of the Crimes they were suspected for. And thus was this matter driven on.

V. I observed in the prosecution of these affairs, that there was in the Justices, Judges & others concerned, a conscientious endeavour to do the thing that was right. And to that end they consulted the Presidents of former times & precepts laid down by Learned Writers about

Witchcraft. As *Keeble* on the *Common Law*, *Chapt. Conjuraton*, (an Author approved by the Twelve Judges of our Nation.) Also Sir, *Mathew Hales* tryal of Witches, Printed *Anno* 1682. *Glanvils* Collection of sundry tryals in *England & Ireland*, in the years 1658, 61, 63, 64, & 81. *Bernards* guide to Jurymen, *Baxter & R. Burton*, their Histories about Witches and their discoveries. *Cotton Mather's* Memorable Providences relating to Witchcrafts, Printed *Anno* 1689.