

## Robert Calef Background

Robert Calef was a Boston merchant who openly criticized the witchcraft trials in the years after 1692. His book's title, *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, was an obvious reference to the court-sanctioned account of the trials published in 1693, entitled *Wonders of the Invisible World*. While Calef was present for some of the proceedings in 1692, his account was largely based on information acquired from the families of the accused witches. As citations were not yet commonly used, it can be difficult to determine the sources used for many of his descriptions of the events—Which details came from eyewitnesses, and which from second hand retellings? Robert Calef's book was completed four years after the witchcraft trials came to an end, and was published in 1700.

The following excerpt was taken from a reprint of Robert Calef's *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, available in its entirety on Internet Archive. This excerpt includes part of the book's prologue as well as the beginning of his description of the witchcraft trials.

<https://archive.org/details/morewondersofinv01cale/page/n5/mode/2up>

that, after w  
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this whole country.

And as to most of the actors in these tragedies, though they are so far from defending their actions, that they will readily own that undue steps have been taken, &c. yet it seems they choose that the same should be acted over again, enforced by their example, rather than it should remain as a warning to posterity, as herein they have mist it. So far are they from giving g  
to themselves.

Begin Below the Red Line

And now, to sum up all in a few words, we have seen a bigoted zeal stirring up a blind and most bloody rage, not against enemies, or irreligious, profligate persons; but (in judgment of charity, and to view) against as virtuous and religious as any they have left behind them in this country, which have suffered as evil doers (with the utmost extent of rigour, not that so high a character is due to all that suffered) and this by the testimony of vile varlets, as not only were known before, but have been further apparent since, by their manifest lives, whoredoms, incest, &c. The accusations of these, from their spectral sight, being the chief evidence against those that suffered; in which accusations they were upheld by both magistrates and ministers, so long as they apprehended themselves in no danger.

And then, though they could defend neither the doctrine nor the practice, yet none of them have, in such a public manner as the case re-

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a stain and lasting infamy they have brought upon the whole country, to the endangering the future welfare not only of this but of other places, induced by their example; if not to an entailing the guilt of all the righteous blood that has been by the same means shed, by heathen or papists, &c. upon themselves, whose deeds they have so far justified, occasioning the great dishonour and blasphemy of the name of God, scandalizing the heathen, hardening of enemies; and, as a natural effect thereof, to the great increase of atheism.

I shall conclude, only with acquainting the reader, that of these collections, the first, containing *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, I received of a gentleman, who had it of the author, and communicated it to use, with his express consent, of which this is a true copy. As to the letters, they are, for substance, the same I sent, though with some small variation, or addition. Touching the two letters from a gentleman, at his request I have forborn naming him. It is great pity that the matters of fact, and indeed the whole, had not been done by some abler hand, better accomplished, and with the advantages of both natural and acquired judgment; but others not appearing, I have enforced myself to do what is done; my other occasions will not admit any further scrutiny therein.

R. C.

*August, 11, 1697.*

PART V.

AN IMPARTIAL ACCOUNT

OF THE MOST MEMORABLE

MATTERS OF FACT,

TOUCHING THE SUPPOSED WITCHCRAFT IN NEW-ENGLAND.

**MR. PARRIS** had been some years a minister in Salem Village, when this sad calamity, as a deluge, overflowed them, spreading itself far and near. He was a gentleman of liberal education; and, not meeting with any great encouragement, or advantage, in merchandising, to which for some time he applied himself, betook himself to the work of the ministry; this Village being then vacant, he met with so much encouragement, as to settle in that capacity among them.

After he had been there about two years, he obtained a grant from a part of the town, that the house and land he occupied, and which had been allotted by the whole people to the ministry, should be and remain to him, &c. as his own estate in fee simple. This occasioned great divisions both between the inhabitants them-

selves, and between a considerable part of them and their said minister; which divisions were but as a beginning, or prelude, to what immediately followed.

It was the latter end of *February*, 1691, when divers young persons belonging to mr. Parris's family, and one or more of the neighbourhood, began to act after a strange and unusual manner, viz. as by getting into holes, and creeping under chairs and stools, and to use sundry odd postures and antick gestures, uttering foolish, ridiculous speeches, which neither they themselves nor any others could make sense of. The physicians that were called could assign no reason for this; but it seems one of them, having recourse to the old shift, told them, he was afraid they were bewitched. Upon such suggestions, they that were concerned applied themselves to fasting and prayer, which was attended not only in their own private families, but with calling in the help of others. *March the 11th*, mr. Parris invited several neighbouring ministers to join with him in keeping a solemn day of prayer at his own house. The time of the exercise, those persons were for the most part silent; but after any one prayer was ended, they would act and speak strangely and ridiculously; yet were such as had been well educated, and of good behaviour; the one, a girl of 11 or 12 years old, would sometimes seem to be in a convulsion fit, her limbs being twisted several ways, and very stiff, but presently her fit would be over.

A few days before this solemn day of prayer,

mr. Parris's Indian man and woman made a cake of rye meal, with the children's water, and baked it in the ashes, and, as is said, gave it to the dog; this was done as a means to discover witchcraft; soon after which, those ill affected or afflicted persons named several that they said they saw, when in their fits, afflicting them.

The first complained of was the said Indian woman, named Tituba: she confessed that the devil urged her to sign a book, which he presented to her, and also to work mischief to the children, &c. She was afterwards committed to prison, and lay there till sold for her fees. The account she since gives of it is, that her master did beat her, and otherways abuse her, to make her confess and accuse (such as he called) her sister-witches; and that whatsoever she said by way of confessing, or accusing others, was the effect of such usage: her master refused to pay her fees, unless she would stand to what she had said.

The children complained likewise of two other women, to be the authors of their hurt, viz. Sarah Good, who had long been counted a *melancholy* or *distracted* woman; and one Osborn, an old *bed-ridden* woman; which two were persons so ill thought of, that the accusation was the more readily believed; and, after examination before two Salem magistrates, were committed. *March 9th*, mr. Lowson (who had been formerly a preacher at the said village) came thither, and hath since set forth, in print, an account of what then passed; about which

time, as he saith, they complained of goodwife Cory, and goodwife Nurse, members of churches at the Village and at Salem, many others being by that time accused.

*March 21.* Goodwife Cory was examined before the magistrates of Salem, at the meeting house in the Village, a throng of spectators being present to see the novelty. Mr. Noyes, one of the ministers of Salem, began with prayer; after which the prisoner being called, in order to answer to what should be alledged against her, she desired that she might go to prayer; and was answered by the magistrates, that they did not come to hear her pray, but to examine her.

The number of the afflicted were at that time about ten, viz. mrs. Pope, mrs. Putman, goodwife Bibber and goodwife Goodall, Mary Wolcott, Mercy Lewes (at Thomas Putman's) and Dr. Grigg's maid, and three girls, viz. Elizabeth Parris, daughter to the minister, Abigail Williams, his niece, and Ann Putman; which last three were not only the beginners, but were also the chief, in these accusations. These ten were most of them present at the examination, and did vehemently accuse her of afflicting them, by biting, pinching, strangling, &c. and they said they did in their fits see her likeness coming to them, and bringing a book for them to sign. Mr. Hathorn, a magistrate of Salem, asked her why she afflicted those children. She said, she did not afflict them. He asked her who did then. She said, I do not know, how should I know? She said, they were poor distracted creatures, and no heed ought to be given to

what they said. Mr. Hathorn and mr. Noyes replied that it was the judgment of all that were there present, that they were bewitched, and only she (the accused) said they were distracted. She was accused by them, that the *black man* whispered to her in her ear now (while she was upon examination) and that she had a yellow bird, that did use to suck between her fingers, and that the said bird did suck now in the assembly. Order being given to look in that place to see if there were any sign, the girl that pretended to see it said, that it was too late now, for she had removed a pin, and put it on her head; it was upon search found, that a pin was there sticking upright. When the accused had any motion of their body, hands or mouth, the accusers would cry out; as when she bit a lip, they would cry out of being bitten; if she grasped one hand with the other, they would cry out of being pinched by her, and would produce marks; so of the other motions of her body, as complaining of being prest, when she leaned to the seat next her; if she stirred her feet, they would stamp, and cry out of pain there. After the hearing, the said Cory was committed to Salem prison, and then their crying out of her abated.

*March 24,* goodwife Nurse was brought before mr. Hathorn and mr. Curwin (magistrates) in the meeting house. Mr. Hale, minister of Beverly, began with prayer; after which she, being accused of much the same crimes, made the like answers, asserting her own innocence with earnestness. The accusers were mostly the