

Student Essay

The Status of Reverend Paris by Arthur Miller

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The Status of Reverend Paris

Before analyzing this quote by Reverend Paris, several facts should be noted about the Puritan community of Salem. Like their fellow Puritans of other communities the Salem Puritans were an extremely devoted and religious people. They were constantly praying throughout the day. Even if they happened to have some leisure time they would spend it concentrating on even more prayer. However, unlike the other Puritans the Salem Puritans were always watching and scrutinizing the actions of their neighbors to make sure they were being good Puritans. Often times, the Puritans were so concerned with the business of their fellow Puritans that they overlooked their own faults and sins, including that of being nosy and overly critical.

Several conclusions can be drawn from Reverend Paris's quote. The first is that the Reverend Paris is extremely concerned about his perfect image as a Reverend and knowing that he already has enemies does not want to further tarnish his image. By having his daughter be accused of witchcraft he is automatically associated with the practice of witchcraft. With the overly nosy and inquisitive population of Salem, gossip could lead to rumors about the Reverend's association to witchcraft, and his term as Reverend could end very abruptly and his reputation could forever be tainted. For this reason, when he is speaking to Mrs. Putnam he stubbornly denies his daughter's involvement with any act of witchcraft.

Another thing that can be deduced from this quote is the priorities of the Reverend. While the book does say that he sends for the town doctor several times and that he prays for his ailing daughter it seems as though he seems to worry more about preserving his righteous image than his own daughter. Even though he does pray for his daughter, this was not an uncommon practice amongst the Puritans and it was not out of his way to do this especially considering his affiliation to the local church. He does not care for her or keep to her needs while she is ill. He mainly just wants his daughter to get well so that his name is exonerated of any link to witchcraft. Additionally, during the conversation he has with the Putnams he never once expresses sorrow or sympathy towards his daughter and only tries to clear his name of any connection there might be to witchcraft.