Perceptions Of Faith In Young Goodman Brown Essay, Research Paper

Perceptions of Faith in ?Young Goodman Brown?

Throughout ones journey in life, our individual perceptions of faith in God, in mankind, and in ourselves, guide us along our path. In the absence of clarity of our faith, one is led to believe the norm is what proves to be popular within a society. Nathaniel Hawthorne?s, ?Young Goodman Brown?, demonstrates to the reader, man?s inherent attraction to evil, the intertwined depths of evil, and that a lack of understanding of faith; can not only destroy ones life, but also steal from the beliefs which binds us together in commonality. Even with a clear understanding of the Puritan attitude, the reader is left with the dilemma that seems to impose the idea, that faith in God alone is but a dogma in the absence of faith in and an understanding of humanity. Therefore, we resolve that it is not good enough to choose between good and evil; we must be all embracing of the doctrine of faith and forgiveness, so that we can function in a contributory way within our community.

Is Young Goodman Brown?s encountering with the Devil merely a test of his own faith? Or perhaps, is he simply intrigued by the mystique of evil forces that lie outside the realm of what he considers acceptable behavior in his Puritan times? ?With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose? (634). Through his writing Nathaniel Hawthorne is able to develop a distinct set of doctrine that existed within the mind of Goodman Brown. Thus, the reader can assume that one trait of Puritan Society is a lack of tolerance for forgiveness. It is no wonder that Puritanism is known for a somber outlook on life,

and a tendency to be immovable. A Puritan Society might find it difficult to see perfection in it?s own members, especially if they do not recognize their own tendency toward hypocrisy.

Young Goodman Brown?s perception of his faith abandons him because he lacks a clear understanding of his experience in the woods. So in his ignorance he simply continues to criticize others due to the events that have taken place in his misguided life. He resolves that those he had previously viewed as pious, are now hypocrites in his eyes. ?Men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice and suspected of horrid crimes? (640). It is clear that in the absence of the understanding of the freewill of mankind, Goodman Brown sees only immoral, sanctimonious, mischief-makers all around him. Thus, throughout the course of his life, Brown is overwhelmed with the burden of judging those around him. ?A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become? (642). Unfortunately, even though Goodman Brown?s ability to withstand the allure of evil sustained him through his own perceptions of faith, he lost something he can never regain; his belief in the goodness of mankind.

When faith is shaken, or lost, whether in religion as an institution, or in ourselves for not being as constant as we think others are being, we change somehow. Like losing one?s virginity, when the mystery of the church is questioned, or made more real to us, like it was to Goodman Brown in the forest that night, we are never the same. With a loss of blind faith comes the realization of a world filled with the horrors we pray to rectify, only to realize that we ourselves are as guilty as anyone. Our salvation comes

with a clear understanding of forgiveness and the communion of saints which enables each of us to pick up the pieces of our unsuccessful attempts at perfection and forge ahead in acceptance of a less idealistic coexistence.

“Young Goodman Brown” Nathaniel Hawthorne