

The Change in Dimmesdale and Chillingworth's Relationship

1. "a quiet depth of malice . . . led [Chillingworth] to imagine a more intimate revenge than any mortal had ever wreaked upon an enemy" (127).
 - "to make himself the one trusted friend" . . . Chillingworth's sin is so great because of the cruelty of his revenge. He intentionally befriends Dimmesdale with the purpose of torturing him. He gains his trust knowing he will have no pity on his soul. Dimmesdale could have received pity from the world, but instead he believes that Chillingworth, his greatest enemy, is his friend.
2. "A revelation . . . had been granted him" no matter if it were from Heaven or from Hell and as a result Chillingworth "could play upon [Dimmesdale] as he chose" (127).
3. "though [Dimmesdale] had constantly a dim perception of some evil influence watching over him, [he] could never gain knowledge of its actual nature" (128).
 - Dimmesdale senses that Chillingworth is evil, but he blames himself for feeling this way. He thinks his hidden sin and guilt ("one morbid spot . . . infecting his heart's entire substance") are reasons for his negative view of Chillingworth; therefore, Dimmesdale feels even more guilty.

Dimmesdale's Effectiveness in the Pulpit

1. "Rev. Dimmesdale had achieved a brilliant popularity in his sacred office . . . won . . . in great part by his sorrows" (128).
2. "this very burden . . . gave him sympathies so intimate with the sinful brotherhood of mankind; so that his heart vibrated in unison with theirs, and received their pain into itself, and sent its own throb of pain through a thousand other hearts, in gushes of sad, persuasive eloquence" (129).
3. The people "deemed the young clergyman a miracle of holiness" (130).
4. "It is inconceivable, the agony with which the public veneration torture him!" (130).
 - While the people in Dimmesdale's congregation view him as a saint, their admiration brings Dimmesdale even further grief and anguish because he knows the truth about himself.
5. "He had told his hearers that he was altogether vile, a viler companion of the vilest, the worst of sinners, an abomination, a thing of unimaginable iniquity; . . . They heard it all, and did but the reverence him the more" (131).
 - Multiple times Dimmesdale tries to confess his sin to his congregation, but they think he is just being humble. . . "If he considers himself such a horrible sinner, how would he view me," they think. This again adds to Dimmesdale's guilt

because he knows how the people interpret his “confessions,” but he tries to delude himself into believing that he has at least tried to confess.

Dimmesdale’s Punishment of Himself

1. “His inward trouble drove him to practices more in accordance with the old, corrupted faith of Rome that with the better light of the church in which he had been born and bred” (131).
 - “bloody scourge”(132)—He would whip himself until he bled.
 - Fasting—He would not eat until “his knees trembled beneath him” (132).
 - Vigils—He would spend hours inspecting his soul, looking at his face in a mirror, and often seeing disturbing visions (demons; angels; dead friends; father; mother; Hester and Pearl, pointing her finger accusingly at his chest).
2. “The only truth that continued to give Mr. Dimmesdale real existence on earth was the anguish in his inmost soul” (133).
 - Dimmesdale’s guilt is basically what is keeping him alive—the energy, the life force.
3. “A new thought struck him. There might be a moment’s peace in it” (133).
 - Dimmesdale desperately seeks some penance that will relieve his anguish. In the concluding paragraph of chapter 11, Dimmesdale thinks to go out and stand on the scaffold where Hester stood seven years earlier, hoping that this might bring him some peace. The difference in his and Hester’s standing on the scaffold is that Dimmesdale’s confession will be done in the dark of night before an empty street. Only the idea comes to Dimmesdale in ch. 11; Hawthorne does not reveal the details of this scene until chapter 12, “The Minister’s Vigil.”

Allusions

- Pentecost, tongues of flame: the filling of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2
- The sanctity of Enoch: In Genesis 5, Enoch, because of his righteousness, is taken to be with God without having to die.
- Faith of Rome: refers to Catholicism; scourging or physical harm was not a Puritan practice but was sometimes done by monks.