

# Religion: man's greatest hope... and downfall

[Religion](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## An analysis of religion's effects on Reverend Hale

It is 1692, many girls have fallen ill or have called witchcraft on their neighbors; Salem is struck with madness and havoc is running amok. Enter Reverend John Hale, an overeager man who desires only to help the citizens of Salem, hopefully through driving out the devil. Instead, Rev. Hale grows guilty and doubtful, unsure of the validity of the accusations against most of Salem, though he continues to believe that those that are innocent shall not be harmed.

However, he is able to sever his ties to the unjust court and attempts to save those accused. Hence, in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, Reverend John Hale is portrayed to be a very naive and confused character whose religion has made an already complicated mess into an irreversible and dire mistake that would be remembered centuries later.

Thus, as the play progresses in Act I, Rev. Hale enters and is described to be very eager to prove himself and his skills. Miller provides insight into Hale's mind, " His goal is light, goodness and its preservation"(Miller 587). As can be surmised, although he may come across as conceited and arrogant in his endeavors, at the root of it this only points towards his over abundance of faith in his religion and people.

Therefore, Hale may be a slightly over-eager religious zealot, but he is only trying to do what he believes is holy and just. One cannot condemn an honest man for carrying out what he believes to be God's work, even if his methods come across egotistical and vainglorious.

Furthermore, as the play continues on into Acts 2 and 3, Rev. Hale begins to doubt the confessions of the accused and the rationality of the court.

He travels from house to house, questioning the religious standing of each family. The Proctors are one of the many families that Hale visits on this night, but John Proctor protests more than any other household has. Proctor demands that Hale provide substantial evidence to prove that those that have confessed are actually witches and that the girls accusing the townsfolk are actually innocent. Hale is noticeably bewildered and slightly guilty; this was the same suspicion he already had, yet he had disregarded it in hopes that the men of power in his religion could prove their claims to be completely true.

Hale is evidently culpable of trying to ignore the truths staring him in the face, but unlike the popular claim that he is doing this to hide his own guilt the more correct and borderline obvious answer is that John Hale is trying to cope with the shredding apart of the deep-rooted beliefs he had since childhood. All men, when faced with such cruel and devastating events, are forced to step back and reanalyze what is going on around them, which is exactly what Hale ends up doing.

Moreover, Hale's entire character has changed by the end of the third Act onward. What was once a very bright and cheerful man whose vision was clear and rose tinted became, "Steeped in sorrow, exhausted, and more direct than he ever was" (Miller 666). As can be seen, Hale has finally ended the ever-growing internal conflict going on within himself.

He knows what side of the line he stands on and he bravely admits to the whole court that, " It does not follow that everyone accused is a part of it"(Miller 639). " I denounce these proceedings, I quit this court!"(Miller 655). Rev. Hale is taking a huge risk in even attempting to get the court to change its mind on the verdicts of the trial's victims let alone freeing himself from its claws and practically calling them out as liars.

Furthermore, he solidifies his newfound views in his attempts to get many of the victims to confess. He knows that they will be lying, but he cannot allow such atrocities to be committed, especially to good men and women who he now knows to be completely and truly innocent to any of the crimes they have been condemned.

In fact, he cries when Proctor, who helped Hale see the falseness of the witnesses of the witch trials, chooses to hang rather than sign a confession. Hence, Hale has genuinely established himself as a rather good-hearted character whose only desire is to save Salem, though it was certainly not in the way he had originally planned.

Thus, in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, Reverend Hale is portrayed as a man whose core values have misguided his attempts to help the people of Salem, though he is able to evict these ingrained beliefs through his even stronger desire to help those around him. He enters the play confident and ready to help through God's authority, believing this case to be open and shut, comes to see the faults of the court but attempts to stay true to his religion and puts his faith in Judge Hawthorne's hands.

Luckily, he is able to throw the wool from over his eyes and see this case for what it is; a bunch of teenage girls trying to play God. Therefore, Rev. Hale has many, many faults both in his actions and inactions, but he was only a man whose beliefs, which had led him right his whole life, had betrayed him and left him stranded in a sea of confusion amidst one of the greatest tragedies of the time period.