

Religious theme in the novel jane ayre

Literature



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The Religious Theme in Jane Eyre. Charlotte Brontë's characterisation of Jane in the novel Jane Eyre reflects the traditional role that was required of young, impoverished women in the middle of the nineteenth century. Jane's upbringing in her foster family, and then in Lowood school, is strict and she is made conscious of her status as a person relying on the charity of others. This Victorian idea of charity is based on a broadly Christian sense of duty, but it is cold and loveless. Mrs Reed and Mr Brocklehurst, agree that humility and consistency are the virtues that the young Jane must experience at Lowood: "Humility is a Christian grace, and one peculiarly appropriate to the pupils of Lowood...Consistency, madam, is the first of Christian duties..." (pp. 41-42). Jane adapts to this rather dull norm, but is much more drawn to the fiery temperament of Mr Rochester, who is decidedly not a model Christian gentleman, since he has a wild past, and little patience with society's restrictions.

The contrast between established religion and real faith is seen in the characters of St John and Mr Rochester. Jane describes her anguish at the thought of marrying the Christian St John: "- at his side always, and always restrained, and always checked, - forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low..." (p. 470). St John is a good man, but he is authoritarian and cold, as is revealed in the way he "answered icily" (p. 470).

Mr Rochester, on the other hand, first tries to deceive Jane by offering to marry her while he still has a wife, but he later repents and is transformed from a bitter sinner into a man of faith. He is grateful to God for bringing Jane finally to him, even though he survives as a physically broken man. Mr Rochester confesses: "I began to see and acknowledge the hand of God in my doom." (p. 514) This genuine path through sin to faith in God is the kind <https://assignbuster.com/religious-theme-in-the-novel-jane-ayre/>

of religion that Jane wants to share, and so the novel ends with their marriage and the blessing of children, conscious that God “ had tempered justice with mercy” (p. 520). St John, on the other hand, departs to a lonely life as a missionary and an early death, which is surely evidence of Bronte’s ambivalence about Victorian Christianity: a faith which she respects, but chooses to reject in favour of a more genuine life of true earthly love.

Reference.

Bronte, C. 2006. Jane Eyre. London: Penguin.