

Abstract

This thesis explores George Orwell's relationship to and critique of religion in his early novel *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935). The main focus is the protagonist and her loss of faith and an explanation of the image of an ideal Christian she represents contrasted with the clergymen and other characters found in the story. Dorothy Hare is a decent young woman both before and after her loss of faith, meaning she does not need an external incentive for her behaviour. Orwell made a point of criticising the ecclesiastical system based upon contradictory instructions of the Bible and the lack of true Christian belief and kindness among the priests.

The thesis first introduces the writer's early experience with religion at schools he attended and describes the effect the institutions had on Orwell in later life, followed by the analysis of the novel *A Clergyman's Daughter*. Each chapter of the novel is analysed separately, as each of the five chapters represents a different formative experience for the protagonist.

The first chapter shows Dorothy's everyday hardships, as she is subject to the demands of her father, the Rector of an Anglican parish, as well as the requests of the other clergymen and the parishioners she visits every day, and shows Orwell's general criticism of the Church and its ritualistic formality. In the second chapter, Dorothy undergoes a reset of character, temporarily losing her memory, faith and even her innate moral code that is otherwise ever-present throughout the novel as a control mechanism of the protagonist's behaviour, devoid of the endless punishments the protagonist set for herself in order to be a good Christian in accordance with the Church doctrine. The third chapter experiments with the dramatic form, imitating *Ulysses* by James Joyce, whom Orwell greatly admired. The two chapters offer insight into a social environment devoid of the rigid moral code of the Church yet much more willing to help others in the same predicament. The fourth chapter further criticizes not only religion but the English private school system built upon money-making rather than education, in a greatly exaggerated school principal figure and the clash of the protagonist's heartfelt desire to help others with oppression from parents who only wish their children to be taught practical subjects, or in other words, subjects that yield quick results that are easily visible. The fifth chapter concludes the journey of Dorothy Hare in an attempt at

answering the fundamental question of the importance of faith and the consequences of its loss.

Orwell used his own experience of working in a hop-picking community, and his time spent among the homeless in London as well as his teaching experience in an all-boys school in the novel.