The Lightening-Rod Man

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Author Note

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**Introduction**

**Herman Melville** is one of the prominent novelists and short story writers of the American Renaissance period and one of his most celebrated literary works is "The lightening-Rod Man. Taking a look at Melville’s life, it could be witnessed that religion always played a key role in his writings, i.e. Billy Budd is an allegory for the Crucifixion of Christ. Considering this writing style and critical comments of many critics, it won’t be wrong to say that his religious interpretations are both highly sympathetic and dramatic and the traces of the same character could be analyzed in “**The Lightening-Rod Man**”. Critical analysis of this short story shows that religious aspects and teachings are community through it. Through, this story, Church and its minister are being criticized. Melville, through the story, is pointing towards the ways Churches were controlled and ruled by the minister (Kobayashi, 2019). Symbolism is used extensively in this story in order to let the reader understand why this story is being written. The basic argument of this literacy work was the critic of the corrupt practices that were used by the church ministers, and the authorities who were using religions as power and were misleading people so that they could keep them under their own counter.

**Discussion**

Considering the theme of this story, it could be said that the fear itself is the detriment of the object that is being feared. Tricky people is one of the common themes and the lightening-rod man is a symbolic representation of ministers of the Calvinist persuasion who preached people of the hell-fire and damnation, but at the same time, they want others to buy lightning rod (services to Christianity) for saving them from God’s wrath. A clash between the two ideologies could be observed as in the form of the narrator there are people who follow teachings of Word of God (Bible) despite relying on what the clergymen had to say. On the other hand, are the people who wanted to sell their product by fearing people of the wrath of God? In this story, as the lightening-rod man visits the narrator and tries to use the fear of getting stuck with lightening for trapping the people to buy his product, likewise, in the broader terms, Melville portrays the character of the corrupt ministers who wanted more people to visit Church and perform rituals that they believe would save them from the hell-fire.

Another important element that could be seen in this story is that religious leaders try to threaten their followers so that they could do whatever the ministers say. I believe that this story was written for making people realize the hypocrisy of the ministers of the Calvinist, who were with the use of religion was threatening the people to follow what say, and undoubtedly they would be selling what they believe for their personal benefits (Couch, 2018). After reading and critically analyzing this story, I would say I would be wrong to blame only one part as I believe both parties are at fault i.e. one who threat others by using the mask of religion and those who are being pointed weakly by Melville.

I believe, religion and faith are individual and personal things and it is good to listen and follow your religious leader, but following them blindly, distracts you. Those who are easily distracted need to work and develop good faith in them as in this story, the narrator gives many references from Bible that we don’t need to fear as we are not going to live even a single day our Creator’s will. Staying faithful and positive is one of the toughest things to do, in this hypocritical world where things are promoted even in religious institutions if they go in favor of the religious leader (Brokaw, 2019). On the other hand, even if the commandants are listed in the Bible, it would be twisted around and left if they don’t serve the personal benefits of the religious leaders. Being struck by lightning is not as dangerous and being tricked by people like a lightening-rod man is more damaging. Human weakness is one of the only things that could let others overtake him/her. Mentioning of price over and over in this story is an indication of how materialistic this world is.

Another impressive thing that I noticed in this story is that along with criticizing the religious ministers for their corrupt psyche, Melville has pointed towards the unfair means of sellers who target the consumers and tries to take full advantage of other's weaknesses. Brainwashing and taking advantage of the fears of others theme as in this story, the lightening-rod man wants to take the advantage of the bad weather and fear people that they must buy his product that would save them from the thunder and lightning. Lightening and bad weather could be the symbol for the lack of faith and personal weakness, as seen in the story that the conversion of the two characteristics of the story turns into philosophical when after arguments of the lightening-rod man, narrator responds that he has strength in his God, who would save him from any sort of lightning and thunder (Farmer, 2016). Narrators' faith and optimism are the lessons for people who claim that even his house would be struck, he would accept it believing it His Creator’s will, so he believes that there is no use of buying the man’s lightning rod.

For me, it was fascinating to see how masterly, the writer has pointed towards the evils of the society that were not time-bound issues, as they could be witnessed even at present. The negative aspect of human nature has been revealed through this story as every individual wants to fulfill his own thirst no matter if others suffer. Considering this story and the social criticism done by the writer particularly on the religious leaders, I would say that I could truly relate the whole situation at present as in all walks of life people are being preyed on and their weakest areas are the target.

**Conclusion**

Taking into consideration “The Lightening-Rod Man”, it could be said that literature is written for a purpose either for teaching the society of some values or bringing about the social taboos in light. After reading this story, I felt that how selfish people become for serving their individual purpose even knowing that they are deceiving God. Talking about religious corruption was a social taboo at the time of Melville so for revealing the corrupt practices of the ministers of the Calvinist who apparently tries to hide their selfish desire by covering them with fake concerns of providing security against the hell-fire. So a whole, I would say that like the house owner, one must trust God and should accept his will even under the cloudy days as it is the strength of character and believe in the Creator that could save one from the hypocrisy of the society and those who despite encouraging people wants to take advantage of their fears. Repetition of the word "price" is the symbol of materialism that started talking over society and is still one of the dominating factors of the world.

References

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