



RELIGIOUS VALUES IN NICHOLAS SPARKS'S A WALK TO REMEMBER

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses religious values in Nicholas Sparks' "A Walk To Remember." The novel is considered a representation of individuals holding religious values, facing life with the belief that miraculous events shape one's existence. Conducted as a library research, this study applies mimetic theory proposed by Abrams, asserting that literature imitates real life. The analysis centres on religious values represented by the characters Landon, Jamie Sullivan, and Highbert Sullivan. The author introduces Landon, who, through his affection for Jamie, experiences a positive transformation. Jamie, a religious woman devoted to serving orphanage children, becomes a catalyst for Landon's change into a better person. Landon holds unwavering faith in Jamie's recovery from illness. Jamie, facing numerous life challenges, proves that love and faith can lead to positive transformations, even for someone like Landon, initially perceived as a criminal and brutal. Highbert, a priest living with his daughter, showcases the struggles of a father caring for his child. Landon's consistent devotion to Jamie demonstrates the power of love and affection. In conclusion, Nicholas Charles Sparks vividly portrays characters with religious values in faith, love, and devotion. The novel focuses on the positive aspects of life, encouraging optimism and strong faith to overcome deficiencies, suffering, and difficulties.

Keywords: faith, love, sacrifice

I. INTRODUCTION

Nicholas Charles Sparks, born on December 31st 1965, in Omaha, Nebraska, is recognized as one of the great authors. He was the middle child in a family of three, with an older brother, Michael Earl Micah Sparks, and a younger sister, Danielle Dana Sparks Lewis, who tragically passed away at the age of 33 due to a brain tumor. Raised in the Roman Catholic faith, Sparks has a diverse ancestry, including German, Czech, English, and Irish roots.

Sparks spent his early years in various locations, moving to north California at the age of eight. His childhood involved living in different places, including Watertown, Minnesota, Inglewood, California, Playa Del Rey, California, and Grand Island, Nebraska, where his parents were temporarily separated. In 1974, his father became a business professor at California State University, Sacramento, and the family settled in Fair Oaks,

California. Sparks graduated as the Valedictorian of Bella Vista High School in 1984, where he even learned to slam dunk.

In 2015, Sparks announced his amicable separation and subsequent divorce from his then-wife Cathy, with whom he shared three sons and twin daughters. Despite the end of his marriage, Sparks continued his prolific writing career.

While working his day job, Sparks began collaborating with former Olympic Runner Billy Mills, and in 1990, they published a book. Sparks' determination to become a professional writer led him to spend several months crafting "The Notebook," his first published novel, which quickly achieved New York Times best-seller status upon its release in 1996.

Although Sparks' works often revolve around love stories, he rejected the label of being solely a romance novelist. Supporters acknowledged that while romance played a role in his stories, he delved into more



serious subjects, including loneliness, grief, obsession, and loss. Many of his books were noted for featuring poignant, less-than-happy endings (Nicholas-Sparks).

Nicholas Sparks stands as one of the world's most beloved storytellers, with all of his books achieving New York Times bestseller status. His literary works have garnered immense popularity, boasting over 105 million copies sold worldwide and translations into more than 50 languages. In the United States alone, his books have surpassed 75 million copies in sales.

The widespread acclaim for Sparks' writing extends to the international stage, with translations into over 40 languages. Notably, his literary prowess was recognized with a No. 2 ranking in the Top 10 overall from Publishers Weekly, underlining the global appeal and impact of his storytelling.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Religious Values

Religious values encompass the principles and norms that shape the conduct of individuals who adhere to a particular faith. These values, also regarded as moral values, find justification through faith and are intricately linked to the teachings of a religion. The nature of these values can vary, influenced by the cultural constructs established by a religion to govern the behavior of its followers. Serving as ethical guidelines, religious values influence human conduct and interpersonal relationships, establishing a connection between the individual and God, particularly in polytheistic religions.

While the specifics may differ based on cultural and religious contexts, certain values transcend these differences and are shared across various religions. Examples include love, solidarity, respect, and the fundamental concept of faith itself. These shared values act as guiding principles for human actions and are directly aligned with the teachings inherent in each religious tradition. Consequently, religious values

play a crucial role in fortifying the behavior, characteristics, and virtues sought after by adherents of each respective religion (englopedia.com).

Religious values can be characterized as steadfast beliefs that a specific model of human behavior or the ultimate purpose of an individual's existence is not only preferable socially but also personally, as opposed to alternative modes of behavior or different existential goals. These values typically find their basis in religious texts or are shaped by the influence of religious figures' lives (Wikipedia).

These values, rooted in religious teachings, play a pivotal role in shaping individuals' expectations of themselves and others within the framework of their practiced religion. Serving as fundamental principles, religious values guide daily decision-making, aiding individuals in discerning appropriate actions and making moral judgments about what is right or wrong, good or bad (classroom.synonym.com).

Furthermore, religious values assert that specific behavioral patterns or ultimate life goals are not just socially favored but also personally endorsed. They act as benchmarks for both individual and collective perspectives, influencing methods of behavior and shaping the overarching existential goals within the context of a particular religion (whatmaster.com).

Faith is characterized by complete trust or confidence in something. In navigating the complexities of the world, faith becomes essential. For instance, when boarding an airplane, one relies on faith in the pilot's ability to safely reach the destination. While we may place our faith in various individuals, places, and things throughout our lives, when it comes to matters eternal, ensuring correctness is crucial (biblword.net).

Affection, on the other hand, refers to a feeling of liking and caring for someone or something, often synonymous with feelings of love. It is a disposition or state of mind



associated with a particular type of love, leading to the exploration of various branches of philosophy and psychology concerning emotion, influence, disease, and overall states of being (Britannica Dictionary).

Devotion is defined as the action that exemplifies the attitude of Jesus, emphasizing the act of attendance towards God's creation without expecting anything in return. The purpose of such action is to contribute in building others up and making the world a more loving, happier, safer, cleaner, and holier place. (iccatholicschool.org).

B. Theory and Method

The study applies Mimetic theory, as proposed by Abrams, which posits that art is essentially an imitation of aspects of the universe. In this context, various forms of art, including painting, poetry, music, dancing and sculpture, are considered imitations. Socrates suggests that these imitations involve a relational term, signifying a correspondence between two items. The mimetic view of literary works is closely tied to thinking, with later mimetic theories often involving three categories. The first category encompasses eternal and unchanging ideas, the second reflects the world of the senses, whether natural or artificial, and the third, in turn, reflects the second and includes shadows, images in water and mirrors, as well as the fine arts (9-10).

The method employed in this study is library research. Data are collected from various online libraries, the author's website, journals, and online resources. The primary source for this study is the novel "A Walk to Remember," while secondary sources are drawn from various books and relevant internet resources. After collecting all secondary sources, the analysis involves selecting the most crucial issues from the novel related to religious values. The gathered data are then interpreted to provide

a comprehensive and meaningful result for literary appreciation and interpretation.

III. ANALYSIS

"A Walk To Remember," a 119-page novel written by Nicholas Sparks, revolves around a mischievous young man who frequently bullies his classmates. The narrative unfolds with Landon Carter, a 57-year-old man from Beaufort, North Carolina, recounting the story of his fifteenth year – the year that altered his life. In his life, no one, including friends, parents, or teachers, had the capacity to inspire positive change. Landon's perspective on life remained satisfactory, and there seemed to be no reason for anyone to encourage change. That is until Jamie Sullivan entered his life – a young, religious girl endowed with the power of faith, relying on it for strength throughout her journey.

He reluctantly participates in a Christmas play at the encouragement of a peculiar girl he has known throughout his life, Jamie Sullivan. Seventeen-year-old Jamie is terminally ill with cancer, yet she profoundly impacts the lives of those around her. The daughter of the local Baptist minister, Jamie was previously shy and insecure, with no friends. However, someone entered her life who transformed her into a cheerful and confident individual. As Landon becomes involved in Jamie's life, he falls in love with her, only to discover that she is battling cancer. Initially struggling to accept her illness, he continues to love and accept her for who she is.

The main characters include Landon, Jamie Sullivan, and Hegbert.

Landon undergoes a significant transformation, maturing into a loving, respectful, and selfless individual. Initially raised by his father to become a gentleman, he is a good student liked by most of his peers. Attending church regularly, showing respect to his parents and teachers, and holding a position as the student body president, Landon initially invests his time



and energy only in expected tasks. He exhibits sarcasm and disdain for many events around him.

Jamie Sullivan, the daughter of the Beaufort church priest Hegbert Sullivan, lost her mother shortly after birth, and her father raised her alone. Despite being diagnosed with leukemia, Jamie is characterized by her religious fervor, happiness, and kindness. At the age of 17, she falls in love with a boy with a vastly different personality, Landon Carter. Jamie is a slightly unconventional young girl, often seen wearing her long hair in a bun and donning the same sweater and plaid skirt most days.

Hegbert, a southern Baptist preacher, initially may not seem favorable to his daughter. However, readers gain insight into his character through the semi-autobiographical drama he wrote, "The Christmas Angel." In this play, the protagonist sacrifices everything for his daughter, providing a deeper understanding of Hegbert's complex character. Despite his initial portrayal, Hegbert shares a strong bond with Jamie. He is a multifaceted individual who has endured numerous hardships, from the loss of his wife to the impending death of his daughter. Throughout these challenges, Hegbert continues to love Jamie and fulfill his role as a preacher to his congregation.

The minor characters include Worth and Mrs. Carter, Eric Hunter, Belinda, and Miss Garber. Worth and Mrs. Carter, Landon's parents, lead a privileged life due to their wealth and Worth's position as a congressman. Despite his authority, Worth is not a bad person but is frequently absent. While his word holds sway in the home, he remains open to meeting Landon's needs and strives to build a stronger relationship with him. Mrs. Carter takes on the primary role in raising Landon, as Worth is often away. She is sweet and loving, expecting a lot from Landon and appreciating the positive influence Jamie has on him. During her grief over Jamie's illness, Mrs. Carter

provides guidance, and her advice helps in finding answers to what God wants for Jamie.

Eric Hunter, Landon's best friend, is portrayed as a popular and handsome athlete in school but struggles academically. Initially depicted as harsh, when faced with tragedy involving an old friend, Eric reveals his sympathetic side. Despite being Beaufort High's golden boy, he occasionally exhibits cruelty by teasing those outside the school group.

Belinda, Landon's ex-girlfriend, displays selfishness when she abandons Landon while he seeks help to save Clay. Despite their breakup, Belinda still harbors feelings for Landon. Jealous because she sees Landon kissing Jamie during a game, she resorts to manipulating a photo, insulting Jamie in front of everyone. Later, Belinda realizes her mistake, visits Landon's house to apologize, and gives him a photo of the play.

Miss Garber, a tall, overweight redhead, serves as the instructor of the play. She has a penchant for using the word "marvelous" and takes pride in Landon and Jamie's efforts to benefit the orphans.

A. Faith

Faith is portrayed as an attitude of trust in someone, reflecting a commitment similar to the one God has for people. In the novel, the character Jamie is created to exemplify human faith. Despite having cancer, she maintains a strong faith in God, viewing challenges as part of His plan. Jamie expresses her belief in God's goodness, rejecting the idea of a cruel deity, stating,

"I know challenges are always part of God's plan, but I don't want to believe that God is cruel" (37).

She emphasizes the importance of God's word in her family's life, citing how her parents received a Bible on their wedding day, with her mother continuing to use it. Jamie reads the Bible, especially during challenging times, saying that



"Mother and my father got this Bible on their wedding day, but my mother was the one who used it later. I always read, especially when I'm going through difficult times in life" (57).

Landon, curious about Jamie's consistent Bible-carrying habit, initially attributes it to her being the daughter of a priest. However, the writer suggests that Jamie's practice stems from her profound belief and faith. Carrying and reading the Bible, for Jamie, symbolize a closeness to her deceased mother and a source of freedom from life's difficulties.

B. Love

The meaning of life is found in God's unconditional love revealed in Jesus Christ, where without love, nothing else truly makes sense. Love, as depicted by the character Jamie, is portrayed as the act of seeking the good of others and standing in opposition to selfish and self-centered attitudes. It is emphasized that love goes beyond mere emotion and is not confined to mere 'liking.'

Jamie's character illustrates love extending beyond human relationships to encompass all creatures. Her compassionate nature is revealed through her efforts to aid injured animals, ranging from opossums and squirrels to dogs, cats, and frogs. The vet, Dr. Rawlings, recognizes Jamie's kindness, creating an image of a girl with a big heart who cares for all creations on Earth.

The author also portrays Landon as a representation of love, emphasizing the aspect of love that avoids causing harm. Landon's actions reflect his desire to bring happiness and joy to Jamie. When Jamie is feeling down due to a failed plan, Landon goes out of his way to suggest visiting the orphans to lift her spirits. This portrayal highlights the sacrificial nature of love, where Landon is willing to do things he might not have liked before, showcasing the transformative power of love.

Additionally, the narrative explores the idea that love can change one's

perspective on things. Landon's initial reluctance to walk Jamie home transforms into a desire to have the opportunity to do so, showcasing how love can make individuals yearn for experiences they might not have considered before.

Overall, the text underscores the multifaceted nature of love, extending beyond human connections to embrace all living beings and highlighting its transformative and sacrificial aspects.

C. Devotion

Jamie is a helpful girl who assists everyone in need, regardless of their social standing or perceived eccentricities. The narrative mentions:

"Jamie helped everyone; she was one of those equal opportunity saints. She had probably listened to Carey's squeaky voice, seen the goodness radiating from his heart, and accepted right off the bat" (36).

Others label her as a saint because of the love she possesses, a love that not many people exhibit. She engages in her devotion to recognize the goodness within one's heart that others might overlook.

Landon also embodies the portrait of someone who loves to serve others, assisting in planning party performances by decorating the gym most of the afternoon and making time to visit Jamie's house to meet her father. He spends a lot of time visiting an orphanage, helping a homeless person, and providing company to a lonely old woman on Christmas Eve. The narrative states:

"He helps a homeless person (by the way, in those days they were called a homeless person), after which he stops by an orphanage to see some children, and then visits a lonely old woman who wants some company on Christmas Eve" (2).

Landon is consistently by Jamie's side, accompanying her wherever she goes and



fulfilling all her needs. He remains steadfast in his devotion to Jamie, even marrying her when she falls sick. Landon continues to support Jamie in the hospital, attending to all her needs until her eventual passing.

III CONCLUSION

"A Walk to Remember," written by Nicholas Charles Sparks, reflects religious values in human life. People who have religious values and strong faith believe that something miraculous can happen in their lives. The author conveys that individuals with religious values possess strong faith, believing that positive changes can occur. Miracles unfold when there is unwavering faith, with the belief that everything is part of God's plan, preparing something good for them.

Love and devotion also embody religious values, as depicted by Landon, who shows affection to Jamie. Landon's life transforms positively as Jamie, a religious woman dedicated to serving orphaned children, becomes a significant influence. Landon's belief in Jamie's potential recovery reflects his faith. Jamie, facing numerous difficulties, proves that positive change is possible through love and faith. Heghbert, a pastor raising his daughter alone, exemplifies the struggles inherent in a life dedicated to religious values.

Landon consistently provides time, love, and affection to Jamie, showcasing the impact of religious values. In conclusion, Nicholas Sparks, through his novel, illustrates that religious values—faith, love, and devotion—inspire individuals amidst despair, believing in the possibility of miracles. The author encourages people to navigate challenging times, emphasizing a

focus on the positive aspects of life and fostering an optimistic outlook to overcome adversity, suffering, and difficulties.

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