Moral Dilemmas and Cases of Conscience: Trollope's Morality in The Warden and The Last Chronicle of Barset

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Abstract
This thesis offers an exploration of Trollope's morality in The Warden and The Last Chronicle of Barset. Existing critical work which explores Trollope's morality often argues either for or against Trollope's moral relativism. This thesis argues, instead, that Trollope's morality unifies aspects of both theoretical perspectives. It reconciles the polarisation of Trollope's moral absolutism and moral relativism, taking the middle-ground. In doing so, it makes evident the contradictions and extremes in existing Trollopian criticism.

The thesis places Trollopian morality within the historical and socio-cultural context of Victorianism. It focuses on the Victorian consciousness of change, securing a definition of Trollope's morality which brings to the fore the contradictions masked by complacent assumptions about Victorian moral conservatism. Incorporating primary and secondary literary sources, the thesis interweaves the man and his work in an original assessment of Trollope's personal and professional moral code.

Recommended Citation

Anthony Trollope is a favourite author of mine, and I fear that he has fallen out of fashion. He wrote over 40 novels between the… Or perhaps in this case, the better part of The Last Chronicle of Barset. It is a magnificent book – at least in my opinion most of it is. Anthony Trollope is a favourite author of mine, and I fear that he has fallen out of fashion. The six Barchester novels are book-ended by the exquisitely short The Warden, and the dauntingly long The Last Chronicle of Barset. This sequence describes a world – a prosperous Southern county, with a dominant cathedral city, great houses, gentlemen's estates – and peoples it with characters from the two powerbases: the cathedral close and the landed aristocracy and gentry, and those who interact with them, for good or ill.