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AN ANALYSIS OF GOSPEL ELEMENTS IN SELECTED MAJOR WORKS OF CHARLES DICKENS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

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by

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May 1990

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CHAPTER I

"GOSPEL ELEMENTS" AND DICKENS

When dealing with two subjects as wide in scope as Dickens and the Gospel, it almost goes without saying that any study is really only a partial one. The whole content of Dickens' fourteen major novels and numerous other works of prose and fiction can hardly be presented or digested in any single study. Neither, of course, can a comprehensive study of the Bible or its central focus--the Gospel.

By selectively wedding the two main foci of this study, though, we can hope to achieve at least some sense of progress in the study of the Gospel and its impact on literature. Thus, this study is intentionally narrow and specific. It is my thesis that Dickens' use of "Gospel elements" in the works studied is both intentional and fundamental to the themes and structures of the novels. The Gospel elements present are no afterthought or coincidence but significant in Dickens' intent and meaning. Finally, Dickens' inclusion and use of Gospel elements is a helpful means of relating literature to the true Gospel.

The title of this thesis, "An Analysis of Gospel Elements in Selected Major Works of Charles Dickens," is

meant to be descriptive of my intention. First, the intention is to analyze Gospel elements in some of Dickens' works. My methodology in this respect is twofold: first, to note the Gospel elements in a careful reading of the primary texts; and second, to cite secondary literature on the chosen texts--especially those sources which specifically support the Biblical, religious, or Christian aspects of Dickens.

Presupposed in the first of the two aspects of my methodology is that there are Gospel elements in Dickens' works. Chapter II of the thesis has been included not only to give an indication of what Dickens' understanding of the Gospel was, but moreover, to present evidence that he included the Gospel (at least in some form) in his works. That Dickens' personal beliefs are not necessarily the same as beliefs expressed in his works is explicated also in this chapter. Chapters III through VI show the "how" and "why" of the Gospel elements in the works selected: specifically how Dickens included the Gospel elements and why (i.e., their role and function in the novels).

It is these chapters (III through VI) which are the bulk of the thesis and which address the main issue of the Gospel in Dickens. That Dickens put Gospel elements in his works is hard to deny. Characters dying to save others, characters with Biblical names like Uriah or Abel or the initials J.C., and moreover Dickens' own admission in

letters of "putting the Gospel in" his works are strong evidence. What is debated, though, is _why_ Dickens put Gospel elements in his novels and what their significance is. These are questions dealt with in the individual chapters and the conclusion--the "Why?" more in the conclusion and the "What significance?" more in the chapters. As stated previously, this thesis argues for a fundamental and significant role for the Gospel elements.

Other critics would allow whatever Gospel is present only a very minor role. Dickensian scholars characteristically select a thread perceived to run through Dickens' works and use that as the organizing principle of their criticism. Often they develop this "norm" to the exclusion or de-emphasis of what others perceive as significant themes. Thus, the denial of the importance of one theme is usually detectable in its absence in a critic's books or articles. In other words, those critics who see the Gospel as an insignificant theme in Dickens usually say very little about the Gospel in Dickens. John Kucich, Arthur Adrian, Philip Rogers, and numerous others are respected scholars who do not deny that the Gospel is present, but make almost no mention of it. Instead, they propose themes like parent-child relationships, women and society, education and others as unifying threads in Dickens' works.

Secondly, and perhaps most necessary, though, is to define how the second aspect of the thesis title--the term

"Gospel elements"--is meant. "Gospel elements" are not simply Biblical allusions, but are a subset of this larger category. "Gospel elements" are Biblical allusions specifically associated with the "Gospel-event" of Christianity.[1] Francis Rossow, in an article titled "Echoes of the Gospel-event in Literature and Elsewhere," is helpful. He defines "Gospel-event" as "the Son of God's incarnation, life, death, damnation, and resurrection for our salvation."[2] In other words, "Gospel elements" include everything related to Jesus Christ and/or His saving work.

Furthermore, "Gospel elements" are Biblical allusions that call attention to the need for or the significance of Christ's saving work. Thus, they may include aspects that may fall under the theological category of "Law" (as opposed to "Gospel").[3] Also, "Gospel elements" foreshadow or reflect the coming of Christ or some aspect of the "Gospel-event" (Christ's saving work). Included in these points of definition are those elements like sin, grace, love, forgiveness, vicariousness, and others which, combined, are the sum of our soteriology.

It is important to note that Gospel elements are not necessarily orthodox presentations or representations of the Gospel. Works by authors who are not conservative or orthodox Christians (or even Christians at all) may contain Gospel elements. A Gospel element may not seem like (the orthodox Biblical) Gospel at all to a conservative Christian

when a Gospel element/allusion is what the author intended.[4] For example, one character "saving" or "redeeming" another who cannot do this for himself can be a Gospel element.

In short, Gospel elements are those Biblical allusions which are intended to bring to the reader's mind some aspect of Jesus Christ's saving work or of sinful mankind who need this redemption.

Finally, a note on a third aspect of the thesis title: "selected major works of Charles Dickens." By major works I refer to Dickens' novels, not the short stories or essays (although a study of this type would certainly be possible with these also, especially the "Christmas stories"). From the corpus of the novels, I have chosen four: The Pickwick Papers, David Copperfield, A Tale of Two Cities, and Great Expectations. Probably the four best-known of Dickens' novels, these were selected that they might be of the most use to those not well-read in Dickens. However, Oliver Twist, Dombey and Son, Bleak House, and Our Mutual Friend could just as easily have served as the bases for this study.

Though certainly four of the best-known novels, the novels addressed in this thesis are also representative of the different stages of Dickens' career. The Pickwick Papers is Dickens' first novel, written in 1836-7. David Copperfield was written in the middle of Dickens' career (1849-50) and A Tale of Two Cities and Great Expectations

were the third-last and second-last novels Dickens wrote (both of them written between the years 1859 and 1861). Thus the beginning, middle, and end of Dickens' writing career are represented.

Furthermore, David Copperfield and Great Expectations are the only two of the fourteen novels written in the first person and are also seen by many as the most autobiographical of Dickens' works. Pickwick Papers is probably the most comic of Dickens' novels and A Tale of Two Cities is Dickens' only historical novel, tied closely to the events of the French Revolution. Thus, is represented "the best of times and the worst of times" in all of Dickens. And significantly, not incidentally, the "Gospel" is always there.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

1. It may be (correctly) argued that the entire Bible is associated with and points to the "Gospel-event" (as defined below). "Gospel elements" as presented in this thesis, though, are those which specifically and explicitly relate to Christ. For example, Moses and Abraham certainly have a role in the "salvation history" of God's people but would be "Gospel elements" only insofar as they are anti-types of Christ or Christ-like in some way (as with the Abraham and Isaac story pointing to God's later sacrifice of His only Son, Jesus).

2. Francis Rossow, "Echoes of the Gospel-event in Literature and Elsewhere," Concordia Journal 9 (March 1983):50. Furthermore, the defense of both his thesis for the article and "Gospel patterns" in literature provides necessary groundwork for theses such as this.

3. In the technical sense, this is Law, and thus not Gospel (in the "narrow sense" as Lutherans characteristically understand it). However, "Gospel" and "Gospel elements" in this paper include personal or corporate "Fall(s)" into sin which necessitate a Christ-figure for redemption. Thus, a Gospel element which points to the need for Christ's saving work is not only Law, but Law for the purpose of pointing to the Gospel.

4. Several examples come to mind. Steinbeck's The Wayward Bus is one. The bus driver, Juan Chicoy, is a sort of Christ-figure, leading the people in the bus on a "spiritual" journey to San Juan (St. John of the Cross). His initials, J.C., are an intended parallel to Jesus Christ. Juan looks at a statue of the Virgin Mary at times of crisis. The Gospel elements, though, do not further the Gospel; Steinbeck uses them to add to Chicoy's character and make him the hero. Similarly, Albert Camus's The Fall has imagery of Christian Baptism and other Gospel elements while presenting a seemingly unChristian (or at least very cynical) message. Finally, Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea has clear parallels to the Gospel yet their purpose is more toward making Santiago a hero figure than promoting the Gospel or the Christian message.

CHAPTER II

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO DICKENS

> I have always striven in my writings to express veneration for the life and lessons of our Saviour, because I feel it, and because I re-wrote that history for my children, every one of whom knew it from having it repeated to them, long before they could read, and almost as soon as they could speak. But I have never made proclamation of this from the housetops.[1]

Thus read Dickens' own words from his now oft-quoted letter to John Makeham. Ironically, this letter was written the day before Dickens died, and, as the last letter he ever wrote, can serve as a final word of sorts on the Gospel in Dickens' works.[2] Even in such a short excerpt Dickens makes four important points--important because in them can be seen the essence of his religion. First, it is evident that Dickens did intend "to express veneration for the life and lessons of our Saviour" in his works. Second, the "proclamation [was not] from the housetops." Third, his was a religion he "felt"; so much so that he also "felt" compelled to teach it to his children at a very early age and, moreover, put it in some form or another in his works. Fourth, "the life and lessons of our Saviour" was a "history" that he "re-wrote."

It is important to note, here, that an author's work is not always equatable with his life. This is especially

important in the area of religion: what an author personally believes is not necessarily what the characters or even the heroes of his books believe or represent. Thus we cannot say that Pip's or Pickwick's or David Copperfield's beliefs are Dickens' or that these characters speak for him. Neither can we say that there is full expression of the Gospel in any or all of Dickens' works. However, there are elements or parts of the Gospel in all of them. As will be seen, Dickens was no systematician of theology. Neither are his works a systematic representation of his beliefs. What there is, though, by his own admission, is Dickens' respect for and veneration of Jesus Christ.

The first point relates to Dickens' inclusion of religion, or, more accurately, Christianity, in his novels. Though perhaps a seemingly obvious statement, we must note at the outset that Dickens saw his works as Christian. By his own admission, there is "express(ed) veneration for the life and lessons of our Saviour" in Dickens' writings. In other words, the Gospel is present (at least in some form) in his novels.

For Dickens, though, this veneration for Jesus did not parallel a veneration for organized religion. To him, organized religion had departed far from the essence of true Christianity. In keeping with this belief, Dickens did not regularly attend church for a large portion of his adult life. As Ivor Brown notes, "He [Dickens] was no sectarian

or devotee of any one Church since he thought that religion organised was religion corrupted."[3]

Thus, what Dickens strove to venerate were not the "pious" clergymen of organized religion. On the contrary, it is these clergymen who are often poked fun at in Dickens' novels. Stiggins in The Pickwick Papers and Chadband in Bleak House are two notable caricatures. Some have mistaken Dickens' lampooning of these and other hypocritical clergymen as attacks upon Christianity: on religion (in the negative sense of the word), yes; on Christianity (in the true Biblical sense of the word), no. Dickens explains in the Preface to The Pickwick Papers:

> Lest there be any well-intentioned persons who do not perceive the difference . . . between religion and the cant of religion, piety and the pretence of piety, a humble reverence for the great truths of Scripture and an audacious and offensive obtrusion of its letter and not its spirit in the commonest dissensions and meanest affairs of life, to the extraordinary confusion of ignorant minds, let them understand that it is always the latter, and never the former, which is satirized here. Further, that the latter is here satirized as being, according to all experience, inconsistent with the former, impossible of union with it, and one of the most evil and mischievous falsehoods existent in society.[4]

Suffice it to say that Dickens was dissatisfied with the church of his day. In a letter to a clergyman, he wrote,

> There cannot be many men, I believe, who have a more humble veneration for the New Testament, or a more profound conviction of its all-sufficiency than I have. . . . My observation of life induces me to hold in unspeakable dread and horror these unseemly squabbles about "the letter" [of the law] which drive "the spirit" out of hundreds of thousands.[5]

Such a statement leads to a second point about the inclusion of Christianity in Dickens' novels. Dickens' veneration for Christ and (Biblical) Christianity was something done in a subtle way--not shouted "from the housetops." To the "hundreds of thousands" whom Dickens perceived had been driven from "the spirit" of Christianity, what did he say and how did he say it? Again, we cannot say that Dickens' characters necessarily speak his personal beliefs. But there does seem to be some of Dickens' religion--especially in the humble and quiet voices--in his works. Jane Vogel writes,

> To a Christendom that has lost hold of the mantle of Christ, Dickens shows forth a God, not of jealousy and wrath, but of mercy and salvation, refuting the wasting unchristian class mentality of England in the pure, bell-like tones of a little child: "God bless Us, Every One!"[6]

Indeed. It is the meek and the humble who are the pure and true Christian examples in his books. The Tiny Tims, the Joe Gargerys, the Agnes Wickfields, the Peggottys, and the Samuel Pickwicks are the pleasant and appealing bearers of grace and truth and forgiveness. And they lead by example. They lead Christian lives pure and simple. They speak by their actions, living out the words of the Biblical writer James, ". . . and I will show you my faith by what I do" (James 2:18).

For Dickens, religion/Christianity was meant to be a pleasant experience. As pointed out above, Christianity was

something he felt that he wanted others also to "feel." It was to leave one with a pleasant taste in his mouth and a warm feeling inside of him. Ivor Brown literalizes this analogy of warmth and pleasantness, saying, "His [Dickens'] religion was basically cordial, as warm and inspiriting as the cordials which his characters so frequently drink. They took their liquor warm and Dickens did the same with his Christianity."[7]

Part of this pleasant and warm Christianity for Dickens was the downplay of sin and the rejection of original sin. Both Humphry House and Ivor Brown have noted this. House writes, "Virtue is for him [Dickens] the natural state of man . . . man as the child of a good father is himself good, and the evils of the world are obstructions which prevent him from being himself. He rejected Original Sin. In fact, 'sin' is scarcely mentioned at all."[8] Brown concurs, writing of Dickens, "He did not believe in original sin; the original virtue of the child was implicit in his view of human nature."[9] Though it is not always the case that Dickens' personal beliefs made their way into his works, his rejection of original sin seems one instance where there is a clear correlation between the two. The portrayals of both the young Pip in Great Expectations and the young David in David Copperfield--as naive and innocent until they are led astray and/or mistreated by adults--support this view.

Also interesting is Dickens' portrayal of evil. Humphry House notes,

> Evil is always terrifyingly real; but the source of it is obscure. In the earlier novels, especially, the bad characters have a concentrated personal malignity which comes near to making them the devil; . . . [and] The Devil and Hell are frequently referred to in passing, but ambiguously; they might be either literal or metaphorical, so that details of belief are left open.[10]

We need only think of Uriah Heep or Orlick to see graphic representations of evil. Only the very bad characters in Dickens have any hint of being "inherently" evil, though, and even they are evil as much by their mass of misdeeds as by some evil nature. So, much as true Christianity is shown by action, so also is true evil. Evil must manifest itself in some bad action before it is evil/ sin. In fact, it has been said that "Dickens knew nothing of sin when it was not crime."[11]

There are struggles and Dickens' heroes may be temporarily tainted by evil; but this evil is from outside of themselves and something that certainly can be "got rid of" by better behavior. The Heeps and the Orlicks may trick and tempt the "good" characters or heroes of the novels, but in the end we see that good can triumph over evil. Thus it is for individual characters to go through their personal "Fall(s)" into sin and later--either by themselves or some other "good" character--be redeemed.

The role model for this good behavior, this goodness that redeemed, was found in none other than "the life and

lessons of our Saviour." Dickens knew the Bible quite well --Old and New Testaments. But it was the Christ-centered New Testament in which Dickens especially saw goodness and love and mercy. Dickens, like some others, had a hard time seeing the connection between the Old and New Testaments. He saw the "Old Testament God" as a harsh and wrathful God and the "New Testament God" as a loving and merciful God. Janet Larson cites a letter from the pen of Dickens as evidence of "Dickens' often-expressed belief that one can take 'the New Testament as a sufficient guide in itself' rather than 'forc(ing) the Old Testament into alliance with it--whereof comes all manner of camel-swallowing and of gnat-straining,' as he wrote Frank Stone in 1858."[12] Nonetheless, he saw pious examples of faith in the Old Testament and occasionally he used them as paradigms: Noah Claypole and Daniel and Ham Peggotty are fashioned at least in part on their Old Testament namesakes.

As early as the 1920s a study tracked Dickens' use of Bible quotations and allusions in his works. James Stevens, the compiler, noted well over two hundred references, concluding, "A study of this kind leaves one strongly impressed with the feeling of reverence which Dickens entertained for the Bible."[13] Stevens also noted:

> In going over these nearly 250 Biblical quotations one is impressed with the fact that Dickens uses the simpler and more frequently quoted Scriptural passages rather than those that are more profound in their meaning. We are struck by his frequent reference to the Creation, the Garden of Eden, the story of Cain and Abel, the

> Tower of Babel, and the Flood. As might be expected from one who so thoroughly loved his fellow-men, and worked for the amelioration of social conditions, the story of the Good Samaritan and the parable of the Prodigal Son are frequently quoted.[14]

In the end, though, it was the New Testament Christ who was the example and the object of Dickens' faith. Jane Vogel attests to this, writing, "Dickens's social blueprint is, first and last, the NT, which teaches the forsaken and fatherless of a Father in Heaven as loving and forgiving towards them, every one, as the father in the parable of the prodigal son."[15] Even more specifically, Ivor Brown points to the Sermon on the Mount as the essence of Dickens' Christianity. Brown writes: "He took the Sermon on the Mount to be the essence of Christianity, and must have found the doctrinal disputation in the Epistles of St. Paul tedious and useless, if he ever bothered to plod through them. His faith was impulsive, emotional, and practical."[16] Again, Dickens' faith was of the highly subjective variety--it was something he felt and felt strongly.

So "impulsive, emotional, and practical" was his faith that Dickens felt the need to put his faith in his own words for his children. The fourth point mentioned above--that Dickens "re-wrote" the "life and lessons of our Saviour"--can, in one sense, be seen in Dickens' The Life of Our Lord. Not well-known, this little book was intended for Dickens' children and them alone. So intent was Dickens that this work be for his children and not subject to public

scrutiny, that it was not allowed to be published until 1934, after the last of Dickens' ten children had died. As Jane Vogel describes it,

> The Life of Our Lord is a tender, devout Child's history of the NT that brings key moments in the ministry of Christ to within both reach and grasp of a child's understanding, as if in token of what a Heaven's for. Dickens clearly values Christian truth highly enough to want it communicated to young minds in just the right way.[17]

While this paraphrase of selected Gospel stories appears faithful to the Biblical text, a closer examination reveals that Dickens did enough "rewriting" that this becomes "The Gospel According to Dickens." It must be noted, though, that this cannot be called upon to serve as Dickens' systematic theology. He was writing for his children and thus "simplifying" things for them. Again, we must remember that The Life of Our Lord does not necessarily propose the same "theology" that is in his novels. The Life does, however, give us some added insight to Dickens' beliefs and for this reason, it is valuable. And in it, Dickens ends up with a theology of an undivine Jesus and clearly one of works righteousness.

Even from the very beginning Dickens shades his presentation of Jesus by pointing to the "good" things Jesus did rather than who He was--namely, the Son of God. Dickens begins The Life of Our Lord by writing:

> My dear children, I am very anxious that you should know something about the History of Jesus Christ. For everybody ought to know about Him. No one ever lived, who was so good, so kind, so gentle, and so sorry for

> all people who did wrong, or were in any way ill or miserable, as he was. And as he is now in Heaven, where we hope to go, and all to meet each other after we are dead, and there be happy always together, you never can think what a good place Heaven is, without knowing who he was and what he did.[18]

What is hinted at here--that Jesus was a very good man but not God--is made explicit shortly after. Dickens paraphrases the angels' announcement of Jesus' birth to the shepherds by writing,

> [The angels said] there is a child born to-day in the City of Bethlehem near here, who will grow up to be so good that God will love him as his own son; and he will teach men to love one another, and not to quarrel and hurt one another; and his name will be Jesus Christ; and people will put that name in their prayers because they will know God loves it, and will know that they should love it too.[19]

This depicts Jesus as no more than a model person: the very best man who ever lived, but still a man.

For Dickens, though, this seemed to be enough. Since Dickens discounted original sin and praised the goodness of "untainted" youth, Jesus' perfect example could be enough to encourage people to be good and "love one another." To Dickens, this was inspiring--that a person would live a life of such self-sacrifice and love that he would be an example for everyone to follow. Again, while this little book is not the gauge for the Gospel in Dickens' works, it helps explain how characters in his novels can emerge as Christ-figures. By following Jesus' example, they can "save" not only themselves but others.[20]

Thus the Agnes Wickfields and Abel Magwitches and Joe

Gargerys could easily pray the same prayer that Dickens puts on the lips of Jesus in The Life of Our Lord; Dickens records the picture of Jesus ". . . praying that he might be of use to men and women, and teach them to be better, so that after their deaths, they might be happy in Heaven."[21] We might even add that this is a prayer likely to be found also on the lips and in the heart of Dickens himself.

Yet Dickens' The Life of Our Lord can allow inconsistencies that an "impulsive" and "emotional" personal faith doesn't mind or even necessarily notice. Janet Larson writes, "He [Dickens] does not allow that Jesus is really divine, yet he credulously reports the miracles, the most powerful signs that Jesus is God; the forgiveness stories are particularly important, yet Dickens insists that heaven is the reward of Duty Done."[22]

It is this highly subjective combination of perceived duty and consequent action that comprises the Dickens code. While there is not a one-to-one correlation of Dickens' "code" to the action of his heroes, there are similarities. Pip knows that he must forgive and be forgiven and by doing it is "saved." Both Pickwick and Sam Weller also know their courses of action and do them. So much is "duty done" Dickens' idea of Christianity that his religion is totally based on works. Humphry House attests to this, saying,

> His [Dickens'] religion is emphatically one of works, not faith; but there is no dwelling on any religious merit works may win. Heaven is more a compensation than a prize. Yet virtue is not purely its own reward: the

> beneficent characters have their full return in watching the happiness they distribute, and in the enjoyment of gratitude and power.[23]

Thus the good--the heroes--can, in a sense, begin their heaven on earth. The truly good take joy simply in living good lives and helping others--as Dickens saw exemplified in Jesus' life. With enough people perpetuating love and kindness and forgiveness, there could be a sort of heaven on earth. By allowing goodness and virtue an environment in which to flourish, the world could be made better.

Toward this end, Dickens' commentary in The Life of Our Lord is often in the form of morals and directives. Dickens saw as important "the life [example] and lessons [morals] of our Saviour." About forgiveness he wrote,

> We learn from this, that we must always forgive those who have done us any harm, when they come to us and say they are truly sorry for it. Even if they do not come and say so, we must still forgive them, and never hate them or be unkind to them, if we would hope that God will forgive us.[24]

Another quote blends good works and forgiveness, seeming to suggest two ways of "salvation." For Dickens, the parables of Jesus taught that good people go to heaven because of their virtue but "wicked" people can also go to heaven by repenting and being forgiven:

> Our Saviour meant to teach them by this, that people who have done good all their lives long, will go to Heaven after they are dead. But that people who have been wicked, because of their being miserable, or not having parents and friends to take care of them when young, and who are truly sorry for it, however late in their lives, and pray God to forgive them, will be forgiven and will go to Heaven too. He taught His disciples in these stories, because he knew the people liked to hear them,

> and would remember what He said better, if he said it in that way. They are called Parables--THE PARABLES OF OUR SAVIOUR.[25]

We also find similar statements about being kind and doing good. Jesus' example to the disciples was to foster kindness among all men: ". . . but our Saviour told them that He did this, in order that they, remembering it, might be always kind and gentle to one another, and might know no pride or ill-will among themselves."[26] Dickens' Christianity taught by example and exhortation, and the goal was always better behavior from better people. Jesus could by His "life and lessons" show the way, but each person had to follow in this way on his own.

Finally, Dickens' closing words to his children in The Life of Our Lord can serve well as the final word on Dickens and religion. Though these words are not necessarily all there is to Dickens' religion or the religion represented in his novels, they capture much of what seems characteristically Dickensian.

> REMEMBER!--It is christianity TO DO GOOD always--even to those who do evil to us. It is christianity to love our neighbour as ourself, and to do to all men as we would have them Do to us. It is christianity to be gentle, merciful, and forgiving, and to keep those qualities quiet in our own hearts, and never make a boast of them, or of our prayers or of our love of God, but always to shew that we love Him by humbly trying to do this, and remember the life and lessons of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and try to act up to them, we may confidently hope that God will forgive us our sins and mistakes, and enable us to live and die in Peace.[27]

NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

1. [Georgina Hogarth and Mamie Dickens] His [Dickens'] sister-in-law and his eldest daughter, eds., The Letters of Charles Dickens, vol. 2 (1857-70), (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1879), pp. 514-15.

2. The letter to John M. Makeham was written June 8, 1870. It was Dickens' response to a letter from Makeham about an allusion to Scripture in The Mystery of Edwin Drood which Makeham thought was subject to misinterpretation.

3. Ivor Brown, Dickens in His Time (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1963), p. 178.

4. Charles Dickens, The Oxford Illustrated Dickens, The Pickwick Papers (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1989), pp. xii-xiii.

5. Quoted in Jane Vogel, Allegory in Dickens (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1977), p. 23.

6. Ibid., pp. 40-41. 7. Brown, p. 179.

8. Humphry House, The Dickens World, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 111-12.

9. Brown, p. 178. 10. House, p. 112.

11. E. L. Woodward, The Age of Reform, p. 535, quoted in House, p. 112.

12. Janet L. Larson, Dickens and the Broken Scripture (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1981), p. 10.

13. James S. Stevens, "Dickens's Use of the English Bible," The Dickensian 21 (January 1925):33.

14. Ibid., p. 218. 15. Vogel, p. 30.

16. Brown, p. 178. 17. Vogel, p. 24.

18. Charles Dickens, The Life of Our Lord (London: Associated Newspapers, 1934), p. 11.

19. Ibid., p. 14.

20. It is such cases of "salvation" of one character by another which typify what is a "Gospel element" in literaure but what an orthdox Christian might take exception to. The orthodox Christian knows of only one Savior--the God-man Jesus Christ; this is the (one and only) Gospel. In literaure, however, a "saving" from sin or evil which parallels the person or work of Christ is a Gospel element--however unorthodox or even "heretical" it is theologically (by detracting from the all-sufficient life, death, and resurrection of Jesus). Agnes Wickfield "saving" David Copperfield from the evil of Uriah Heep is a clear example.

21. Ibid., p. 24. 22. Larson, pp. 11-12.

23. House, p. 111.

24. The Life of Our Lord, p. 45.

25. Ibid., p. 58. 26. Ibid., p. 87.

27. Ibid., pp. 124-25.

CHAPTER III

AN ANALYSIS OF GOSPEL ELEMENTS IN

THE PICKWICK PAPERS

It takes no longer than the first page of Dickens' first novel for him to introduce us to an embodiment of Dickensian Christianity: Samuel Pickwick. As previously noted, Dickens' concluding words to his children in The Life of Our Lord suggest a sort of personal "creed" for Dickens: "REMEMBER!--It is christianity TO DO GOOD always--even to those who do evil to us." Though Dickens does not necessarily intend all the characters or even all the heroes of his novels to live up to this creed, Mr. Pickwick does.

In fact, Pickwick is a man who so naturally lives by this creed that he doesn't always seem to realize it. Benevolent to the core, Pickwick furthermore seems surprised that not everyone he encounters is benevolent. Thus, as much innocent as he is benevolent, Pickwick wanders and wonders his way through the adventures on the pages of the book that bears his name.

More than just a good-hearted man, though, Pickwick is in one sense Dickens' representation of every man. Pickwick discovers what we have each learned at different times and in different ways. But through Pickwick, we

vicariously re-discover the tension between idealism and realism in an imperfect (sinful) world. In short, through Pickwick, we see both man's fall into sin and his need for and subsequent redemption. This is W. H. Auden's thesis about Pickwick. He writes,

> The conclusion I have come to is that the real theme of Pickwick Papers . . . is the Fall of Man. It is the story of a man who is innocent, that is to say, who has not eaten of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and is, therefore, living in Eden. He then eats of the Tree, that is to say, he becomes conscious of the reality of Evil but, instead of falling from innocence into sin--this is what makes him a mythical character--he changes from an innocent child into an innocent adult who no longer lives in an imaginary Eden of his own but in the real and fallen world.[1]

Thus Pickwick is somewhat an anti-type of Adam. He is the man innocent of sin who then experiences his first taste of sin. What is significant about Pickwick, though, is that he seems to stay innocent. In so doing, he can be both the innocent who undergoes the Fall and the benevolent savior or redeemer who saves not only himself but (some, not all) others. Thus, Pickwick is also a type of "Second Adam"--that is, Christ.

There are two things going on at once in Pickwick Papers. Innocence not only meets experience (in the form of a fallen world) but innocence also stays innocent and is therefore able to save itself. Philip Rogers has noted this duality, writing, "The central action of the novel is double: through Pickwick's travels Dickens himself explores a precarious, fallen world, but simultaneously creates, in

the character of Pickwick, a steady foothold in a prelapsarian existence."[2] And Dickens manages all this in the person of the lovable and hilarious Mr. Pickwick.

What Dickens actually did with Pickwick Papers was put a new slant on an old tradition. J. Hillis Miller suggests as much in his classic work, Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels: "A long tradition in the eighteenth-century English novel . . . was based on a pattern of exit from some earthly paradise into a fallen world, followed, after many adventures, by a return to that paradise."[3] Fielding's Tom Jones is a perfect example of this. With Pickwick Papers, though, it is all Mr. Pickwick: subject and object of his own redemption.

Thus, first, we can see Pickwick as the first Adam, the innocent man leaving Eden. Then we can explore the striking similarities between Pickwick and the "Second Adam," showing Pickwick as a Christ-like figure.

Pickwick's Farewell to Eden

Stephen Marcus has noted, "Quite literally Pickwick is a man without a history, created, as it were, entirely in the present: he exists only in the activity of the novel."[4] Details about Pickwick's life prior to the action of the novel are few and far between. He is retired, recalling that "nearly the whole of my previous life had been devoted to business and the pursuit of wealth."[5] Yet Pickwick seems

to have no connection with this "previous life." Like Adam, Mr. Pickwick seems just to have been "created" at the beginning (of this story) at his present age. There is no hint of there ever having been a "young" Pickwick, but always the spectacled, roundish, and amiable "dear old gentleman." Indeed, it is hard to imagine pre-Pickwick Club days.

In fact, it seems that all has been timeless before Pickwick's adventures begin. He lives a life of leisure, free to pursue any of his wants or desires and untroubled by the banalities of everyday life. This leisure also seems to have an "eternal" quality about it. Just before Pickwick journeys out into the world, he looks out his window, and thinks ". . . well might I be content to gaze on Goswell Street for ever, without one effort to penetrate to the hidden countries which on every side surround it."[6] When one is in Eden, time is not a concern.

However, Pickwick decides to "look to the truths which are hidden beyond . . . the things that lie before them."[7] What Pickwick and three other members of the Pickwick Club volunteer to do is to venture forth to see new places, take notes, and send them back to the other members of the club. In other words, they, led by Pickwick, are seeking more "truth" than they already know in the form of experience. In the Eden metaphor, this venturing forth is Pickwick's desire to eat of the fruit: the desire for

knowledge of good and evil. Pickwick doesn't intend to seek out evil, but it is soon evident that the only "truth" or knowledge he will find beyond his Edenic innocence is evil. When one is as benevolent and innocent as Pickwick, the only new things that he can learn are evil.

Equally uninitiated to the ways of the world are Pickwick's three companions on his journey. As members of the Pickwick Club, they are allied with Pickwick's innocence--inhabitants of Eden, so to speak. W. H. Auden concurs, saying, "His [Pickwick's] three young friends, Tupman, Snodgrass, and Winkle, are equally innocent."[8] What these "innocents" encounter is not "truths which are hidden beyond" but falsehoods. To be sure, they meet all levels of society and not all are bad. But, previous to their venturing out of Eden, they never really knew there were "levels" of society--their innocence knew only good.

This rude awakening to the ways of the world starts immediately for Pickwick. As soon as Pickwick moves from viewing Goswell Street to stepping out onto Goswell Street, his departure from Eden has begun. As Pickwick hails a carriage, the driver plays with Pickwick's gullibility/ innocence by telling him that the horse is forty-two years old--for no other reason than to lie to him. Furthermore, when Mr. Pickwick tries to pay the fare, the pugnacious driver wants to fight Mr. Pickwick for the fare. This was clearly not the Eden that Pickwick knew.

Lending credence to the idea that Pickwick and company have left Eden is that the first character they run across is a serpent. W. H. Auden explains: ". . . the first new acquaintance they make in their exploration of Eden is with the serpent, Jingle, of whose real nature they have not the slightest suspicion."[9] Mr. Pickwick and his friends meet a man whom they later find out to be named Alfred Jingle. At first they do not even know his name, which makes us wonder even more who he is or what he is up to. Jingle's deeds--among which is the "stealing away" of the lady whom Tupman is courting--soon reveal him for the rogue that he is. Most conclusive, though, are two of Dickens' page headings. On the pages where Jingle is executing his deviousness in full measure, the page headings read "A Snake in the Grass" and "The Snake Victorious."[10] Thus, meeting a serpent/snake such as Jingle as they depart Eden (eat of the fruit), supports the view that Pickwick and the others have left Eden and fallen into the "real world."

Moreover, it is not only Jingle who is roguish. As J. Hillis Miller writes, "Pickwick discovers that the reigning principles of large portions of the world are disorder and injustice. God is apparently not present in these areas at all, and to leave one's protected enclosure may be to put oneself at the mercy of merciless forces."[11] The Pickwickians' innocence often left them in less than desirable situations--narrowly avoiding duels over misunderstandings,

being seen with ladies in misunderstood but innocent circumstances, and having their words or motives twisted by shrewd and clever lawyers. In short, Pickwick and his friends find much evil in their journey.

But it is not Pickwick's original intent to "defeat" evil; he is no crusader at this point. He ventures out to observe and note what he sees, not necessarily even to learn. As Philip Rogers writes of Pickwick, "His function in the novel is not, however, to grow in the knowledge of evil, but to remain himself, an elderly child, happily unaware of the full nature of the world he passes through."[12]

It is passing through that Pickwick is doing; for there is never really much doubt that this is not Pickwick's world and that he will not stay in it. Though he is temporarily in the world, he is not of it. Just like the Christian who knows his true home is heaven and clings not to the things of this world, Pickwick does not invest himself in the world outside of Eden. He endures the world --but Pickwick's intention is always to go back to Edenic innocence.

So, as Joseph Gold writes, "What their [the world's] evil must not be allowed to do is contaminate Pickwick or sour him."[13] Evil in this novel, however, does not have the threatening and heinous quality that it takes on in later novels, in characters like Uriah Heep and Orlick. As Stephen Marcus writes, "Pickwick Papers is Dickens's one

novel in which wickedness, though it exists, is not a threat."[14] More specifically, this wickedness/evil is not a threat to Pickwick and his friends: they are able to retain their innocence and by doing so can hope to return to their Eden.

But it is really only by avoiding evil--or at least avoiding dealing with it--that Pickwick is not threatened by it. In fact, it has been noted that the worst instances of evil in Pickwick Papers--the really terrible stories--are just that: stories. Following a convention of novels at that time, "Dickens interrupts his narrative to let Mr. Pickwick read or listen to a tale . . . to introduce novel entertainment for his readers at a point when he feels they would welcome an interruption from the main narrative."[15]

However, these tales are not just "novel entertainment" in Pickwick Papers. It is in these stories--told by the various people whom Pickwick meets--that Dickens really tells about suffering and sorrow and the effects of a fallen world. Auden notes a few instances:

> . . . a surprising number [of these stories] are melodramas about cases of extreme suffering and evil: a broken-down clown beats his devoted wife and dies of D.T.'s; the son of a wicked father breaks his mother's heart, is transported, returns after seventeen years and is only saved from parricide by his father dying before he can strike him; a madman raves sadistically; a man is sent to prison for debt by his father-in-law, his wife and child die, he comes out of prison and devotes the rest of his life to revenge, first refusing to save his enemy's son from drowning and then reducing him to absolute want.[16]

This is significant. Mr. Pickwick has no trouble going to

sleep after reading a horrible tale like "The Madman's Manuscript": to him it is beyond his experience and thus only a story. W. H. Auden suggests as much when he writes, "To Mr. Pickwick, on the other hand, literature and life are separate universes; evil and suffering do not exist in the world he perceives with his senses, only in the world of entertaining fiction."[17] Pickwick's retained innocence can allow him to avoid believing that these stories are real or at least let him believe that they are tales of people and places and times about which he cannot do anything. In short, Pickwick's reaction (or non-action) to the interpolated tales typifies his response to all the evil in <u>Pickwick Papers</u>.

All is not evil in Pickwick's adventures, though; the one oasis from evil that Pickwick comes upon is Mr. Wardle's farm, Dingley Dell. Both Christmas and the first visit to Dingley Dell are delightful respites from the world's troubles. Pickwick and his friends are allowed to step back into innocence here. Even so, it is not completely Edenic. Dennis Walder writes, "Thus if the Dingley Dell scenes suggest a paradise, it is also an earthly one, in which the brilliancy of the Pickwickian joy is moderated by the shadows of actuality, even while those shadows are prevented from darkening the whole picture."[18] Even at "good" places like Dingley Dell, the devious serpent Jingle is able to slither in and disrupt the pleasant scene. For this is

where Jingle steals away Rachel Wardle from Mr. Tupman.

Finally, though, Pickwick's innocence and benevolence are confronted to a point where he is forced to act. Such a turning point in Pickwick Papers occurs when Mr. Pickwick is put on trial for breach of promise. Mrs. Bardell, the lady from whom Pickwick rents his apartment on Goswell Street, misunderstands Pickwick's request to keep a servant as a proposal of marriage. Acting upon the disappointment of her misunderstanding, she is informed (and encouraged) by some crafty lawyers that she can sue Mr. Pickwick for breach of promise.

The experience of the lawyers preys upon Pickwick's innocence and he is soon found guilty. As Philip Rogers says, though, "A fallen world can suspect Pickwick of latent designs, but Pickwick never doubts the reality of his innocence or its positive value; the reader too knows that Pickwick is innocent, and moreover, incapable by nature even of contemplating the offense of which he has been found guilty."[19] Again Pickwick's innocence clashes with the experience of the fallen world.

Refusing to pay the appointed fine as a matter of principle, Pickwick is sent to debtor's prison. As W. H. Auden notes, "When he is found guilty, Mr. Pickwick takes a vow that he will never pay the damages. In so doing he takes his first step out of Eden into the real world, for to take a vow is to commit one's future, and Eden has no

conception of the future for it exists in a timeless present."[20] Even more, Mr. Pickwick has come to the point where he realizes he must deal with the world. Though he had intended only to pass through it, he realizes that one cannot only observe life but must finally interact with it and participate in it to at least some small degree.

This is Pickwick's great moment. By sitting in the Fleet Prison for a "crime" he knows he didn't do, he acknowledges his exit from Eden. He is prepared to stand on principle and stay in prison. For one brief, shining moment Pickwick endeavors to deal with the world on its own terms. Joseph Gold puts it this way: "The Fleet becomes a symbol for the condition of humanity and Pickwick's volunteering to go to prison is his adult baptism into the human community."[21]

But so miserable are the conditions there that Pickwick is led to retreat to innocence. We read:

> There were the same squalor, the same turmoil and noise, the same general characteristics, in every corner; in the best and the worst alike. The whole place seemed restless and troubled; and the people were crowding and flitting to and fro, like the shadows in an uneasy dream.
>
> "I have seen enough," said Mr. Pickwick, as he threw himself into a chair in his little apartment.
>
> "My head aches with these scenes, and my heart too. Henceforth I will be a prisoner in my own room."[22]

The conditions in the Fleet Prison are terrible, that is, for those who don't have money. For Pickwick soon finds out that if you have money, you can "buy" a better room in the

prison. Thus, having "seen enough," Pickwick again hides his face from evil, preferring to be a prisoner in his own room to beholding the concrete evidence of the suffering of a fallen world.

As evidence that Pickwick is retreating back to Eden's innocence, it is significant that the prisoners are described like "shadows in an uneasy dream." Here, the stories that were previously only stories have come beyond the dream-like stage into reality. Confronted face to face with the terrible results of a fallen world, Pickwick has two choices: to acknowledge the reality of this fallen and evil world or to close his eyes again to reality. He chooses the latter and by doing so, retreats to innocence.

Equally significant as the stories of evil come to life is the fact that it is money that "buys" Pickwick away from the evil. Pickwick can escape because he has the money to have a private room. In the end, too--as will be seen later--it is also money that Pickwick must use to "rescue" himself and Mrs. Bardell from prison. Regarding this, Philip Rogers has insightfully noted, "Dickens' Eden, it appears, can be preserved only by an expedient buying off of the Evil One."[23] An arguable point, this has at least some truth for Pickwick: money enables him to stay innocent from the ways of the world. By the time Dickens writes _Great Expectations_, though, he has the opposite view of money. Money and what it can buy is the great corrupter for Pip.

As Philip Rogers continues, "But when Pickwick breaks his vow and leaves the Fleet, Dickens permits him to step lightly back into Eden."[24] As will be explained more later, Pickwick finds it necessary to use his money to get both Mrs. Bardell--who has been unjustly put into prison--and himself out of prison. Once out, Pickwick goes back to an Eden which beckons to him. Still benevolent and still innocent--though he has had to use money to alter his circumstances--Pickwick knows that Eden is where he belongs.

What Pickwick does, then, is to go back to innocence by re-establishing his Eden. To be sure, Pickwick has seen enough of the world. Both we and he know that his domicile is--and has always been--Eden. J. Hillis Miller's words about the "pattern" of the novel again remind us of this: "A long tradition in the eighteenth-century English novel . . . was based on a pattern of exit from some earthly paradise into a fallen world, followed, after many adventures, by a return to that paradise."[25] Miller calls this end retreat "Pickwick's little heavenly city" and also says about Pickwick, "He is himself the founder of his own earthly paradise."[26] Dickens as narrator writes of the blissful closing scene that "Everything was so beautiful!"[27]

Pickwick himself says of his domicile, "'The house I have taken . . . is at Dulwich. It has a large garden, and it situated in one of the most pleasant spots near London.'"[28] Pickwick's words are surely among the clearest that

tie this place to Eden. To remember that it was the Garden of Eden makes the reference to the "large garden" more significant. As Bert Hornback writes ". . . it should become clear to us that the wonderful house with the 'large garden' to which Mr. Pickwick retires . . . is really a new Eden."[29]

Pickwick's adventures showed him not only that there was a difference between him and the world but that he was not really a part of the world. His benevolence and innocence fit into Eden much better than the "real world."

The Immortal Mr. Pickwick

As much as Pickwick is allied with the fall of man and the exit from Eden, though, he is more. In fact, as alluded to earlier, there are striking similarities between Pickwick and the "Second Adam"--Christ. Both in his character and actions, as well as in his relationships with others, Pickwick is very much a Christ-figure.

It would serve us well, however, to take one prefatory caution here. Especially at the beginning of Pickwick Papers, Dickens' tone is comic. Thus, too serious a treat-ment of the initial evidence for Pickwick as a Christ-figure may strike against Dickens' intended tone. However, seeing Pickwick as a Christ-figure is justifiable: for as much as Dickens may have poked fun at Pickwick at the beginning of the novel, it is clear that Dickens admires and

calls the reader to admire Pickwick by the end of the novel.

First, the various adjectives which describe Mr. Pickwick suggest greatness beyond that of mere men. Pickwick's reputation precedes to some of the various places he goes; the high society in Eatanswill greet him by saying, "'We have heard of your fame, sir.'"[30] Often when Pickwick speaks he is referred to as "that truly great man." For instance, we read, "Mr. Pickwick's mind, like those of all truly great men, was open to conviction. He was a quick and powerful reasoner."[31] Pickwick is also described as a man of great dignity: "There was a solemnity--a dignity--in Mr. Pickwick's manner, not to be withstood."[32] Even Pickwick's anger has a dignity and righteousness that is super-human. In one scene it is noted, "Nothing in the whole adventure, not even the upset, had disturbed the calm and equable current of Mr. Pickwick's temper."[33] In another situation, people marvel at "the countenance of the illustrious man . . . so majestic was his wrath."[34]

Not only did people express admiration for his greatness, though. Pickwick's general popularity is also noted. When Pickwick and his friends find themselves in Eatanswill, Mrs. Potts

> . . . did not hesitate to inform him [Winkle], confidentially, that Mr. Pickwick was "a delightful old dear" . . . [taking the occasion also] . . . as affording at once a touching and a convincing proof of the estimation in which he was held by every class of society, and the ease with which he made his way to their hearts and feelings.[35]

Like Christ, Pickwick's appeal was universal. At the end of the book, it is said of Pickwick, "He is known by all the poor people about, who never fail to take their hats off, as he passes, with great respect. The children idolise him, and so indeed does the whole neighborhood."[36] Also noteworthy is that Pickwick's benevolence shows no partiality. Dickens notes, "They [poor people] were welcomed heartily though, for riches or poverty had no influence on Mr. Pickwick."[37] In this respect, Stephen Marcus even calls Pickwick "not merely a gentleman but the incarnation of benevolence."[38]

It is true that there were the Alfred Jingles and the lawyers and others who preyed upon Pickwick's benevolence and innocence. Similarly, the Sadducees and Pharisees looked for every opportunity possible to trip up Jesus. But as far as the people were concerned, Pickwick--like Jesus--was a figure whose presence engendered both admiration and respect.

Perhaps as enlightening as any epithet given to Pickwick, though, is that he is more than once referred to as "that immortal gentleman." Stephen Marcus comments,

> From the very beginning of Pickwick Papers, Dickens projected Mr. Pickwick in quasi-mythical terms, as if he were a kind of demi-god come to visit the earth. In the opening sentence of the novel he refers to his hero as "the immortal Pickwick" and before he had finished the first chapter he wrote in a letter, "Pickwick is at length begun in all his might and glory."[39]

Also in the very beginning of the book, Pickwick is likened

to the rising sun, which puts him far above human mortality and ties him to the familiar image of goodness and light (as opposed to darkness and evil): ". . . Mr. Samuel Pickwick burst like another sun from his slumbers, threw open his chamber window, and looked out upon the world beneath."[40] Christ, too, was called "the light of the world" as He combatted the "darkness" of evil.

Even more evidence for Pickwick's immortal and Christ-like nature soon emerges. First is the testimony of the Pickwick himself at the meeting of the Pickwick Club which begins the book. There is dramatic irony in Pickwick pointing out his "humanness" as he expresses his intentions and desires. It is noted:

> He (Mr. Pickwick) would not deny that he was influenced by human passions, and human feelings (cheers)--possibly by human weaknesses--(loud cries of 'No'); but this he would say, that if ever the fire of self-importance broke out in his bosom, the desire to benefit the human race in preference effectually quenched it.[41]

The parenthetically noted reaction of the club highlights his popularity (cheers); his humility and "super-humanness" (beyond human weaknesses); and also his high ideals (his desire to benefit the human race). In another instance, Pickwick's friend Tupman, feeling the disappointment of being duped by Alfred Jingle, writes to Pickwick, "'You, my dear friend, are placed far beyond the reach of many mortal frailties and weaknesses which ordinary people cannot overcome.'"[42] Tupman is right--Pickwick is not an "ordinary"

person.

So extraordinary is Pickwick that Sam Weller calls him an angel. The cleverness and savvy of Pickwick's hilarious but devoted servant--Sam Weller--lets us know of the unique esteem in which Pickwick is held. Sam Weller tells Job Trotter,

> "I never heerd, mind you, nor read of in storybooks, nor see in picters, any angel in tights and gaiters--not even in spectacles, as I remember, though that may ha' been done for anythin' I know to the contrairey--but mark my vords, Job Trotter, he's a reg'lar thoroughbred angel for all that; and let me see the man as wentures to tell me he knows a better vun."[43]

This singular reference to Pickwick being "a regular thoroughbred angel" really only hints at what Pickwick is, though. It is Sam's attempt to put into words the greatness of and his admiration for his master. Even critics like G. K. Chesterton have noted from this and other evidence that Pickwick is more than human. Chesterton calls Pickwick both ". . . the half-human and half-elfin creature . . . [with] a hint of divinity" and "a fairy."[44] Pickwick has more than "a hint" of divinity, though: his is no less than the divinity of a Christ-figure.

Also attesting to this similarity to Christ is the devotion that Pickwick's followers have for him. It is recorded in the book that "Mr Pickwick looked round him. The attachment and fervour of his followers, lighted up a glow of enthusiasm within him. He was their leader, and he felt it."[45] In another place, Tupman, one of Pickwick's

followers, is referred to as "his [Pickwick's] faithful disciple."[46] To be sure, Tupman and the rest are disciples.

In fact, the relationship that Pickwick has with his followers is very similar to that of Jesus and His disciples. As the followers of Christ are known as Christians, Pickwick's followers are most often called "Pickwickians." They are all members of a "club" (organization? church?) named after their leader.

Also significant is the first illustration of the Pickwick Club.[47] Though it is never mentioned in words in the book, this illustration shows the Pickwick Club having twelve members. Also, they are seated around a table, many with glasses in their hands. Furthermore, this is the final gathering of the Pickwick Club before Pickwick embarks upon his appointed "mission"--to look up hidden truths. This information put together seems very suggestive of Jesus and the twelve disciples at the Last Supper, before Jesus undertook His final "mission" of dying on the cross.

Also suggestive of Pickwick being a Christ-figure and the Pickwickians being his disciples, is that the character of the Pickwickians is absorbed in the greatness of their leader. Only four members of the Pickwick Club are named specifically in the novel. Three are those that are closest to Pickwick: Tupman, Winkle, and Snodgrass. Perhaps this triad is meant to recall Peter, James, and John--the three disciples who were "closest" to Jesus. The fourth is named

Blotton. He is mentioned only twice, but in these two references, he certainly seems to play the role of Judas. At the above-mentioned meeting, Blotton attacks Pickwick's character, "betraying" his loyalty to Pickwick.[48] Later, the reader is informed that Blotton is ejected from the Pickwick Club for again disputing the credulity of a Pickwickian theory.[49] Even the name of this unfaithful disciple--Blotton--suggests that he is a "blot" on the unblemished reputation of the Pickwick name. Finally, it is significant that the place of the unfaithful disciple seems to be taken over by the faithful servant Sam Weller, who then literally serves his master--Pickwick.

Finally, perhaps most conclusive in proposing Pickwick as a Christ-figure, is what Pickwick does. Pickwick goes out to observe the world; he ends up participating in it and saving some in it. Joseph Gold notes,

> It is for Pickwick to learn that he is an integral part of that world, to discover his relationship to it. From the beginning Pickwick regards himself as apart from the world he inhabits. In his belief that the world can be observed and recorded as by a god, he overlooks his own humanity.[50]

By the end Pickwick has learned this as he begins to view his travels as having been a "ministry" of sorts. At the end of the novel Pickwick intimates, "'I shall never regret . . . having devoted the greater part of two years

to mixing with different varieties and shades of human character; frivolous as my pursuit of novelty may have appeared to many.'"[51] Pickwick knows that he has not just been observing but "teaching" by example. Like Jesus' three-year ministry, Pickwick's two years have been his way of changing the world. J. Hillis Miller has noted, "Pickwick has a power to transform those around him, and to change the situations in which he finds himself into a representation of himself, irradiated by his goodness."[52]

More than just transforming those around him with his benevolence, though, as Philip Rogers notes, Pickwick is "the redeeming center of innocence in an evil world."[53] Joseph Gold concurs, also noting that Pickwick's presence is redemptive. Gold writes, "This idea of a humanized redemption through perception and behaviour, of moral grace through compassion and understanding, informs the entire novel."[54] And Pickwick does this redeeming or saving work near the end of his travels, in the Fleet Prison.

It is first worth noting that Pickwick is accused and convicted of a "crime" he did not commit. Pickwick would never dream of making a false proposal of marriage to Mrs. Bardell or anyone else or of going back on his word. Still, he "stands on principle" and goes to court abiding by "the system." But the innocent Pickwick is taken advantage of and given an unfair trial. In the end, he is declared guilty and punished for a crime he did not commit. The

parallel to Christ is clear. Christ was tried at an unfair trial and found guilty of "crimes" (and sins) His perfectness could not commit. And Christ, like Pickwick, tacitly accepted His punishment.

Another parallel between Pickwick and Christ is that each one is the only one who can do what they must do. As both God and man, Jesus Christ was the only one who could lead both a sinless life and then die for the sins of the world and rise again to eternal life. Pickwick, it soon becomes obvious, is the only one who can save himself, Mrs. Bardell, Winkle and Arabella, and even (to a point) Sam Weller. As it turns out, Pickwick is the one who saves Alfred Jingle and Job Trotter too.

After Pickwick is put in jail--debtor's prison for not paying the breach of contract fine--Sam Weller arranges it so that the elder Mr. Weller (his father) puts Sam into debtor's prison to be near Pickwick. Soon after, Mrs. Bardell is also put into Fleet Prison by her attorneys, Dodson and Fogg, on a sneaky technical maneuver. Through maneuvering by Sam and Mr. Perker, Pickwick's lawyer, a deal is worked out whereby Pickwick can free himself and Mrs. Bardell (and thus effect Sam's liberation also) by paying Mrs. Bardell's debt to Dodson and Fogg. Though this is against Pickwick's principles, it is soon made clear that the only way Mrs. Bardell's debt can be paid is by Pickwick. The lawyer Perker says,

> "I say, that her speedy liberation or perpetual imprisonment rests with you, and with you alone . . . . I say that nobody but you can rescue her from this den of wretchedness; and that you can only do that by paying the costs of this suit--both of plaintiff and defendant --into the hands of these Freeman's Court sharks."[55]

Thus Pickwick, like Christ, is the only one who can save others and does so. Even more ironic is that Pickwick literally "pays the price" to redeem Mrs. Bardell with actual money. Christ, however, paid the much greater price --beyond money--to redeem the whole world from its sins, "not with silver and gold but with his holy, precious blood and his innocent suffering and death," as Luther explained the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed.

But Pickwick also redeems Alfred Jingle and his sidekick Job Trotter from debtor's prison. The serpentine Jingle, who had tricked and deceived Pickwick several times, ironically found that Pickwick was in a position to save him. The ever-benevolent Pickwick held no grudge and kindly paid for the release of Jingle and Job Trotter. Jingle responded by calling Pickwick a "life preserver," saying, "'Mr. Pickwick--deepest obligations--life preserver--made a man of me--you shall never repent it, sir.'"[56]

Mr. Pickwick also plays the Christ-like role of reconciler in the case of Mr. Winkle and Arabella Allen. Winkle, one of Pickwick's disciples, falls in love with and marries Arabella without the permission of either his father or her brother. It is none other than Pickwick again who

can effect the reconciliation and save the day. Though Winkle's father at first resists in giving his blessing on the nuptials, he later acquiesces. Arabella pleads with Mr. Pickwick to be the reconciler with her brother in very specific terms. She says, "'If my brother hears of this, first, from you, I feel certain we shall be reconciled. He is my only relation in the world, Mr. Pickwick, and unless you plead for me, I fear I have lost even him.'"[57] Thus Pickwick not only pays the price for the salvation of some but also reconciles some others. This clearly parallels the saving and reconciling work of Christ--but on a much smaller scale.

Conclusion

While Christ's life and death benefit all, Pickwick's saving work was only for a few. Pickwick cannot save the whole world. In fact, it becomes apparent that he cannot even save all the prisoners in the Fleet Prison. There is a tinge of melancholy that he has not been able to do more as Pickwick leaves the Fleet Prison. Dickens describes the scene:

> "Poor fellow, poor fellow" said Mr. Pickwick, "God bless you, my friends!" As Mr. Pickwick uttered this adieu, the crowd raised a loud shout. Many among them were pressing forward to shake him by the hand, again, when he drew his arm through Perker's [Pickwick's lawyer], and hurried from the prison: far more sad and melancholy, for the moment, than when he had first entered it. Alas! how many sad and unhappy beings had he left behind!"[58]

Thus it soon becomes apparent that all do not "live happily ever after" and all are not saved.

Related to this, Joseph Gold makes an interesting statement. Gold writes,

> Dickens attempts in his first novel to show what sort of Grace is possible in the 1830's. Pickwick leaves prison by overcoming his pride, and he does this by recognition of what he shares with his fellow prisoners. His isolation in a prison apartment [to avoid the sad general state of affairs there] is not satisfactory. His imprisonment has not defeated Dodson & Fogg. He pays their damages while retaining his righteous indignation.[59]

Dickens seems to hint at what would become manifest in his later novels. In Pickwick Papers evil does not get the upper hand with Pickwick. Pickwick encounters evil, but it is no serious threat to him. We sense that Pickwick's innocence and benevolence will be enough to get him through his adventures. Certainly Pickwick encounters evil, but he is for the most part able to avoid dealing with it. Pickwick is only called upon to conquer "minor" evil. By only "conquering" incomplete evil, he can only be an incomplete savior. He is not called upon to die like Christ: thus, he has not conquered death. Furthermore, he does not conquer "sin" or "the Devil" like Christ. In fact, Pickwick's way of getting rid of the serpent (devil) Jingle is to redeem him from prison. There is no absolute evil and so Pickwick cannot be absolute "good" in contrast. His partial good, though, is good enough--at least to provide a "happy" ending for this (i.e. his) story.

Dickens' later heroes are not afforded this luxury and, like David Copperfield and Pip, must more actively combat evil. J. Hillis Miller has noted this, writing, "Pickwick is thus safe and happy in the end, but Pickwick Papers itself, seemingly so closely linked to eighteenth-century optimism, is really a farewell to the eighteenth century."[60]

It seems significant to note here that the full title of this work is actually The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club. By the end of the novel, the Pickwick Club is dissolved. The 1820s--when Pickwick mythically ventured through the countryside--are gone before The Pickwick Papers ever made it into print. Dickens seems to be suggesting by the date and the fact that the story is related from the notes of a posthumous club that the days of Pickwick are days that are "gone with the wind."

Somehow, though, it seems as if Pickwick's final retreat is somewhere out in the countryside and wherever Pickwick is, there is eternal Pickwickian life. But if this benevolent and innocent Pickwickism still exists, it never makes it back into the pages of Dickens' novels. As Bert Hornback writes, "Never again is there such innocence or innocent comedy as there was at the beginning of Pickwick Papers. The rest of Dickens's career is spent dealing with the world which Mr. Pickwick quit, honored and blessed for his goodness, but in the last analysis defeated."[61] Thus, as

J. Hillis Miller reminds us, one thing is for certain: "Once Dickens had written Pickwick Papers there was no real possibility of ever going back again to its beginning."[62]

NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

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30. The Pickwick Papers, p. 193.

31. Ibid., p. 131. See also p. 117.

32. Ibid., p. 132. 33. Ibid., p. 117.

34. Ibid., p. 130. 35. Ibid., p. 165.

36. Ibid., p. 801. 37. Ibid., p. 798.

38. Marcus, p. 26. 39. Ibid., p. 17.

40. The Pickwick Papers, p. 6.

41. Ibid., pp. 3-4. 42. Ibid., p. 133.

43. Ibid., p. 642.

44. G. K. Chesterton, "The Pickwick Papers," in The Dickens Critics, eds. George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1954), p. 116.

45. The Pickwick Papers, p. 138.

46. Ibid., p. 50.

47. Ibid., front cover. This is an original illustration.

48. Ibid., p. 5. 49. Ibid., p. 149.

50. Gold, p. 16.

51. The Pickwick Papers, p. 796.

52. Miller, p. 34.

53. Rogers, p. 23. 54. Gold, p. 21.

55. The Pickwick Papers, p. 660.

56. Ibid., p. 744. 57. Ibid., p. 665.

58. Ibid., p. 667. 59. Gold, p. 14.

60. Miller, p. 34. 61. Hornback, p. 14.

62. Miller, p. 35.

CHAPTER IV

AN ANALYSIS OF GOSPEL ELEMENTS IN DAVID COPPERFIELD

"Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show."[1] So reads the opening line of David Copperfield, and with it, Dickens proposes both a novel thesis and a thesis for his novel. Dickens, though tipping his hand in this opening line that others might very well exert considerable influence on David, lets the characters of the novel play out his answer to the question. He sets up a story in which the reader must examine the evidence presented and decide for himself if David is indeed his own hero. In so doing, Dickens makes "influence" and "control" a major issue from the outset: namely, "Is David (or indeed anyone) able to control his own destiny, or is he influenced by others to such a degree that he is not 'the hero of his own life'?"

Hinting at a possible religious dimension to the question, Stanley Friedman expounds upon Dickens' proposal, writing, "Indeed, the entire narrative can be regarded as an attempt to determine whether effort or providence or chance is the decisive factor in this world, whether suffering can

be redeemed, whether belief in divine justice can be reaffirmed."[2] And, what the characters play out is a classic struggle between forces of good and evil. David, as he lives out his life, is embroiled in the everyday battle of a Christian, trying to resist evil and do good.

Though David Copperfield is far from a plain religious allegory (as some have even proposed),[3] there is surely some validity in E. Pearlman's assertion, "Although David Copperfield is not a novel about religion, it is nevertheless infused with religious material."[4] It is this thesis of Pearlman, then, that can serve well as a backdrop for an analysis of various Gospel elements in this novel. Even more than just being "infused with religious material," David Copperfield is a novel where the religious and Gospel elements both set up and reinforce a Gospel pattern: namely, the structure of the novel is centered on David's "salvation" or "redemption" from the sin and evil around him.

Not surprisingly, influences of good and evil affect David Copperfield's life from the very beginning of the novel and continue throughout until good (Agnes Wickfield) triumphs over evil (mainly personified in Uriah Heep). Early influences of evil, mainly characterized in the Murdstones (David's stepfather and his sister), give way to the controlling bad influence of David's adolescence--James Steerforth and those others also in his grasp. Evil is finally personified in the detestable "heap" of evil, Uriah

Heep. The triumph over Heep is a major climax in the book.

All the while, though, David is also influenced by those who stand for good in the world. His childhood nurse, Mrs. Peggotty, and her relatives are portrayed as good, "salt-of-the-earth" people. As David becomes an adolescent, his Aunt Betsey Trotwood joins forces with her friend Mr. Dick, Dora Spenlow (whom David marries), and the financially insolvent but always good-hearted Micawbers, to exert good influences on David. Finally, it takes a collection of good, manifest in the person of Agnes, to counter the mass of evil heaped up in Uriah Heep.

A chart might help to visualize the struggle:

EVIL INFLUENCES		GOOD INFLUENCES
1. The Murdstones		1. The Peggottys
-Mr. Murdstone		-Mrs. Peggotty
-(Miss) Jane Murdstone		-Daniel Peggotty
		-Ham Peggotty
2. The Steerforth Group		-Emily Peggotty
-James Steerforth	DAVID	
-Rosa Dartle		2. Aunt Betsey et al.
-Littimer		-Mr. Dick
-Steerforth's mother		-Dora Spenlow
		-[The Micawbers]
3. Uriah Heep		
-[Uriah's mother]		3. Agnes

Early Influences on David

The novel begins with David recounting the story of his birth. Since his father died before he was born, David spent his earliest years with only his mother and his nurse, Peggotty. Thinking retrospectively about Peggotty, David recalls, "I see that good and faithful servant, whom of all

the people upon earth I love the best, and unto whom my childish heart is certain that the Lord will one day say: 'well done.'"[5] With this clear reference to Matthew 25:21,[6] David identifies Peggotty with the essence of devout Christianity, a life of Christian goodness.

Others of the Peggotty clan, and indeed the Peggottys in general, are also identified with goodness which springs from Biblical Christianity. Daniel Peggotty, Mrs. Peggotty's brother, is a seaman who has generously adopted two orphaned children (Ham and Emily) of friends who lost their lives at sea and also taken in the widow of another friend (Mrs. Gummidge). Everything about the Peggottys suggests that they are "good people," even down to the pictures on the walls of the Peggotty abode which suggest their tie to the God of the Bible: "On the walls there were some common colored pictures, framed and glazed, of scripture subjects, . . . Abraham in red going to sacrifice Isaac in blue, and Daniel in yellow cast into a den of green lions, were the most prominent of these."[7]

Furthermore, the Peggottys live in an old "Noah's ark" type of boat converted into a house. The first time David goes to visit the Peggottys and sees their house, he thinks, "I suppose I could not have been more charmed with the romantic idea of living in it. There was a delighful door cut in the side, and it was roofed in, and there were little windows in it."[8] The parallel between the Peggottys

house/boat and Noah's Ark, already clear, is made explicit when David asks Mr. Peggotty, "'Did you give your son the name of Ham, because you live in a sort of ark?'"[9] Instead of being filled with animals, though, it is filled with people. David, speaking to Steerforth about Peggotty's boat, says, "In short, his house (or rather his boat, for he lives in one on dry land) is full of people who are objects of his generosity and kindness. You would be delighted to see that household."[10] This is a place where goodness rules, a haven in an evil world. Stanley Friedman even refers to the Peggottys' ark as "Eden-like."[11]

All this considered, one is certainly tempted to identify Daniel Peggotty, the caretaker of this ark (and those under his care in it), as an anti-type of Noah, the chosen pilot of the Biblical ark. However, the text provides nothing more than very general similarities: both are righteous, God-fearing patriarchs who take care of others.

There is, however, an interesting parallel between the plot of the story about Mr. Peggotty and Emily and that of the Parable of the Prodigal Son.[12] Emily, engaged to Ham, is lured away by Steerforth, who promises to marry her, a circumstance which leaves Ham and the Peggottys greatly disgraced. Daniel, after this happens, becomes a man on a singular mission: to search out his "lost" daughter--not for retribution but for restoration and forgiveness. While Mr.

Peggotty takes a more active role (searching the countryside) than does the Biblical father (i.e., God who patiently waits) of the prodigal son, there are certainly parallels to the parable. For example, Mr. Peggotty says about Emily, "'My unchanged love is with my darling child, and I forgive her!'"[13] Their reunion and reconciliation is also akin to the story of the prodigal. Mr. Peggotty, finding Emily, says, "'I thank my heavenly father as my dreams come true! I thank Him hearty for having guided me in His own ways, to my darling!' With those words, he took her up in his arms."[14]

While this parallel (between Mr. Peggotty and the Father of the prodigal) is at least partially legitimate, it seems that a different and even better parallel can be drawn. First, Daniel Peggotty seems to have had some type of healing power or effect on people. Martha, a prostitute whom he encounters in his search for Emily, is brought out of the depths of despair by him and David. Recounting the event, David says, "She repressed the tears that had begun to flow: and, putting out her trembling hand, and touching Mr. Peggotty, as if there was some healing virtue in him, went along the desolate road."[15] The facts of this situation almost suggest Daniel as a type of Christ. It is a woman named Martha whom Daniel helps (reminiscent of the sisters Mary and Martha). Furthermore, this Martha helped by Daniel is a prostitute (one of those shunned by others but whom Jesus often helped). Also, when Daniel does help Martha, it

is "as if there was some healing virtue in him." One need only think here of the many miracles of healing performed by Jesus. This incident could perhaps be seen as a representative act (or "miracle") of Jesus' ministry.

Also, toward the end of the novel, Daniel Peggotty leads a remnant of the people left under his care to Australia. Although Ham has died, Daniel takes Emily, Martha, Mrs. Gummidge, Mrs. Peggotty (David's childhood nurse and Daniel's sister), and the Micawber family (his followers or even his "disciples"?) to a better life. These are people he has "saved" from ruin (although nowhere is the epithet "savior" used to describe him). Finally, it is not just to Australia where Daniel leads them: Mr. Micawber's letter to David speaking about Australia calls it "the fair land of promise lately looming on the horizon."[16] Thus, depending on whether Australia is called the "Promised Land," perhaps the New Jerusalem, or just Australia, Mr. Peggotty could be seen as Moses, Jesus, or just himself. However, it would seem a theory built on the thinnest of evidence to see Daniel Peggotty as a type of Christ or Moses figure.

Instead, there is much more cause to see Mr. Peggotty as a type of his Old Testament namesake, the Biblical Daniel (whose picture even hangs on the wall of his boat). After asserting as much, E. Pearlman goes on to explain: "After Emily's fall, Dickens gradually transforms Mr. Peggotty into

a mystic and a prophet, apparently to provide his change of heart with a wider significance. 'His hair was long and ragged'; 'His face was burnt dark by the sun' (ch. 40)."[17] Pearlman continues about Daniel Peggotty:

> On another occasion, he appears "as if he were awaking from a vision" (ch. 32). . . . He becomes a "pilgrim," and at "Our Saviour's Cross outside the village" townspeople come to comfort him and bring him sustenance: some even bring their little girls to sit on his knee (because he is a holy man . . . ?) He seems to be the recipient of supernatural intelligence. [Mr. Peggotty says] "I don't know wheer it comes from, or how 'tis, but I am told as she's [Emily] alive." David comments, "He looked almost like a man inspired" (ch. 46).[18]

One need only recall the Biblical Daniel to see parallels: he was a prophetic man (even one who saw visions) who also stayed steadfast to his "mission" by his faith in God. In short, Daniel Peggotty is meant to remind us of the Biblical Daniel.

In saying this, it seems appropriate again to see support for this as well as the suggestion of another "Gospel element" in the pictures in the Peggottys' boat-house. E. Pearlman writes:

> The illustrations [in Peggotty's boat-house] do more than enhance the Old Testament atmosphere. "Daniel" assuredly refers to Dan'l Peggotty . . . . [Also] Abraham and Isaac are a variant of the Murdstone-David relationship; the cruel father and the martyred, or potentially martyred, son. Murdstone himself is also an Old Testament figure. He is an unforgiving and wrathful father whose power is primeval and terrifying, perhaps Yahweh even more than Abraham.[19]

Though Pearlman's assertion about the natures of Yahweh and/or Abraham as a "wrathful and unforgiving father" is

certainly unScriptural, the identification of Mr. Murdstone as an instrument of evil is certainly interesting.

After the death of David's father (before David is born), his young mother marries the much older Mr. Murdstone. The name Murdstone is certainly descriptive, most probably a condensation of "murderer" plus "stone" (as in "stone cold"). Aunt Betsy says as much in stating that David's mother "'goes and marries a murderer--or a man with a name like it. . . . [and continues about Murdstone] He's as like Cain before he was grown up, as he can be.'"[20] Identifying Mr. Murdstone with Cain, the first murderer, furthers the association.

And, though Mr. Murdstone never literally kills anyone, he is a murderer of sorts. David's mother is one of three of his wives who die in the book. He chose young, frail brides whom he dominated so much that each of them wasted away and died with the life virtually "drained out of them" by his evil. He sends David to a terrible school run by a Mr. Creakle, where the students are whipped and beaten constantly for not learning their lessons. By doing this, Murdstone is also a "murderer" of David by causing some of the life and vitality of his youth to be drained out of him.

Moreover, Mr. Murdstone (along with his sister) emerges as not only a murderer but a conscious perversion of Christianity. The Murdstones profess to be religious, but their practice of religion misses the mark by far. David

describes going to church with the Murdstones: "Again the dreaded Sunday comes round, and I file into the old pew first, like a guarded captive brought to a condemned service . . . [where he sees Miss Murdstone] wearing black and emphasizing all the dread words with a cruel relish, . . . like miserable sinners."[21] In fact, Miss Murdstone always wears black and carries two little black boxes which contain "numerous little steel fetters and rivets, with which Miss Murdstone embellished herself when she was dressed."[22]

Twice David speaks of the Murdstone way of life in religious terms, saying, "The gloomy taint that was in the Murdstone blood, darkened the Murdstone religion, which was austere and wrathful"[23] and "The gloomy theology of the Murdstones made all children out to be a swarm of little vipers."[24] Such inversions in the Murdstone religion are noteworthy. While they make children out to be like vipers, David recalls that "the influence of the Murdstones upon me was like the fascination of two snakes upon a wretched young bird."[25] On another occasion, David is beaten unjustly by Mr. Murdstone but must repent and ask forgiveness from Mr. Murdstone.

Finally, years after he has last seen the Murdstones, David, as a grown man, runs across Mr. Chillip (the doctor who delivered him as a baby), who has recently seen the Murdstones. David asks, "'Does he, Mr. Murdstone, gloomily profess to be religious still?'" Mr. Chillip, the doctor,

says, "'Mr. Murdstone sets up an image of himself, and calls it the Divine Nature . . . [and adds] I don't find authority for Mr. and Miss Murdstone in the New Testament.'"[26] It seems clear, then, that Dickens intended the portrait of the Murdstones as a perversion of true Biblical Christianity; where Mr. Murdstone is the "unforgiving and wrathful father" and the love of God is absent.

Influences on Adolescent David

While David is at Mr. Creakle's school where the Murdstones have sent him, he meets a student named James Steerforth. From the outset, Steerforth's name, like Mr. Murdstone's, is descriptive of the influence he has on David; that is, Steerforth seeks to "steer" David in the direction he wants David to go. David himself unwittingly testifies to this at the beginning of their relationship on two different occasions. Upon meeting Steerforth, David says about him, "He was a person of great power in my eyes."[27] Later, commenting on Steerforth's control of his own behavior, David intimates, "For to disappoint or to displease Steerforth, was of course, out of the question" and on another occasion calls him "irresistible."[28] In fact, David almost becomes the property of Steerforth. When David meets up again with Steerforth after a break from school, James says to David, "'I should like to hear what you are doing and where you are going, and all about you. I feel as

if you were my property.'"[29]

The fact that Steerforth is able to exert such influence on David is not, in and of itself, bad. In fact, Steerforth seems quite charming on the surface. He is the best student at school and quite protective of "his property" (David). David, in describing him to Mr. Peggotty, says, "'. . . he [meaning Steerforth] knows everything. He is astonishingly clever.'"[30]

It is only as the story unfolds that Steerforth is seen as something more than just influential on David. Others first and then David begin to realize that something about Steerforth is different. David, though, foreshadows this by observing about Steerforth, "He could become anything he liked at any moment."[31] But it is Agnes who first explicitly warns David about Steerforth. She says to David,

> ". . . I should set my heart...on warning you against your bad angel."
> "My dear Agnes," I began, "if you mean Steerforth--"
> "I do . . ." she replied.[32]

In fact, there is significant textual evidence to warrant casting Steerforth as a "bad angel." Chapter XXV, from which the previous quote is taken, is titled "Good and Bad Angels." Agnes (as will be seen later) is David's good angel and Steerforth is clearly meant as David's "bad angel." Steerforth even sees himself as a type of "fallen angel." Telling David about how he caused a bad scar that his friend

Rosa Dartle has on her face, Steerforth says, "I was a young boy, and she exasperated me, and I threw a hammer at her. A promising young angel I must have been!"[33] Another time, he refers to himself as a "prodigal son."[34]

He even seems to regret not having had a guiding influence in his life. (His father had died and his mother dotes on him.) Steerforth regrets, "'I wish with all my soul I had been better guided!' he exclaimed. 'I wish with all my soul I could guide myself better. . . . I have been afraid of myself. . . . It would have been well for me (and for more than me) if I had had a steadfast and judicious father.'"[35] It seems noteworthy that he uses the word "soul" twice and also uses the words "steadfast and judicious" (words traditionally used to described the attributes of God the Father). It is as if Steerforth has "sold his soul to the devil," become one of his bad angels, knows it and regrets it. There is no record of this type of event in the text, but it seems clear that Steerforth is meant to be seen as a bad angel, seeking to influence David in an evil way.

The case against Steerforth builds as people begin to see him as he really is. David recalls, "I believe I had at this time some lurking distrust of Steerforth. . . . I suspect the truth to be, that the influence of Agnes was upon me, undisturbed by the sight of him; and that it was the more powerful with me, because she had so large a share in my thoughts and interest."[36] It is Steerforth's despicable

"stealing" and corrupting of Emily, though, that really brings out commentary on his evil nature. Mr. Peggotty remarks about the deceit in Steerforth's face: that it was "smiling and friendly, when it was so treacherous." Rosa Dartle, slighted by Steerforth, says with spite, "I know that James Steerforth . . . has a false, corrupt heart, and is a traitor."[37]

The root of all Steerforth's trouble, writes Theresa R. Love, is pride: "Essentially, Steerforth is the incarnation of his ruling passion, pride, which denies human value to others."[38] This, of the "seven deadly sins" (which is the focus of her book, Dickens and the Seven Deadly Sins), is always considered as first (i.e., the worst). It is significant that pride--the great sin attributed to Satan in his fall from heaven--should also be the ruling passion in one called a "bad angel."

Interesting also are the people around Steerforth. Not only is he a bad influence on them but they perpetuate the evil in a vicious circle. Steerforth's servant, Mr. Littimer, is a cadaverous man who has "a peculiar habit of whispering the letter S so distinctly, that he seemed to use it oftener than any other man."[39] The association between the hissing Littimer and a serpent (the creature associated with Satan) is clear. It was also noted by David about Littimer that "no one knew his Christian name."[40] Perhaps this is because this serpentine creature was so closely

allied with the devil that any reference to a "Christian name" is incongruous. It is noteworthy that Steerforth is almost never called by his "Christian name" of James either, but just by his descriptive surname.

The relationship between Steerforth and Rosa Dartle is mutually destructive. It is not made explicit in the text, but the reader is led to believe that Rosa has designs on marrying Steerforth (a situation to which Steerforth seems agreeable) before he runs off with Emily. But Steerforth says about Rosa, "'Confound the girl, I am half afraid of her. She's like a goblin to me'" and later, "'She has been an angel, mother,' returned Steeforth, 'for a little while: and has run into the opposite extreme, since, by way of compensation.'"[41] Who is the bad influence on whom is hard to discern. While it seems at first that it is Steerforth who is the bad influence, David later says about Rosa, "The vaunting cruelty with which she met my glance, I never saw expressed in any other face that I have ever seen."[42] Whatever the case, the key point is that both are associated with evil and Steerforth exerts this influence on David.

Finally, the whole Steerforth house is saturated with the evil of those who abide there--namely James, Littimer, Rosa, and Mrs. Steerforth (James's mother). Upon visiting the Steerforth house to seek some cooperation in seeking out Emily (with whom Steerforth has run off), Mr. Peggotty says

to Mrs. Steerforth, "This has been too evil a house fur me and mine."[43] In this statement is a clear example of the incompatibility of the good of the Peggottys and the evil of the Steerforths.

Despite the bad influence of Steerforth, though, David does not succumb totally to the evil he encounters. Largely due to his Aunt Betsey Trotwood and ultimately, Agnes, David is enabled to make a break from the evil Murdstones of his childhood and then (mostly) resist the bad influences of adolescence. David runs away from the Murdstones after his mother has died (and they have put him to work in a factory under terrible working conditions). He goes to his Aunt Betsey's, his only relative in the world. She takes him in, sends him to a new, good school, and there he begins his life anew. In fact, the difference between the old school and the new one is spoken of in terms of good and evil; David notes that "Dr. Strong's was an excellent school; as different from Mr. Creakle's as good is from evil."[44]

Even more significant is that David receives a new name at Aunt Betsey's: she calls him "Trotwood," after herself. This is, in fact, a baptism of sorts. David is taken away from the evil Murdstone religion and given a "new life" along with his new name.

> He [David] receives a new Christian name, Trotwood which supersedes his former . . . praenomen. Dr. Strong's school is, ethically, the exact opposite of Creakle's. There, the first boy [i.e., the top student] initially

> "seems to be a mighty creature, dwelling afar off"--a person whom David holds in "reverential aspect" (ch. 18). But soon Trotwood replaces the old first boy, whose name is Adams; he becomes the new Adams.[45]

It seems reading into the text to suggest that by this one reference, David is the "new Adam(s)." Pearlman seems to suggest but stops short of explicitly saying that David as the new Adam(s) is the "second Adam" (i.e., that David is a type of Christ). It is, instead, enough to say that David's new life at Aunt Betsey's is marked by a new name (by which he is often called throughout the rest of the novel).

Also, there are several interesting suggestions about the significance and location of Aunt Betsey's house. On this subject, E. Pearlman suggests an interesting theory. There are three main centers of action for the novel: 1) Yarmouth-Blunderstone (Yarmouth is where the Peggottys live and Blunderstone is the name of David's childhood home); 2) Canterbury (where Aunt Betsey as well as Agnes and also Uriah Heep live); and 3) London (to which various trips are taken). Pearlman sees these three places as parallel to the Old Testament world, the New Testament world, and Babylon: "In a rough way, the center of Old Testament interest falls at Yarmouth-Blunderstone; the New Testament, of course, at Canterbury. London, the 'modern Babylon' (ch. 36) is neutral ground."[46]

Much of the significance of the Old Testament/New Testament theory of Pearlman seems based on the unScriptural

misunderstanding that the Old Testament is ruled by a God of wrath while the New Testament tells of a loving God manifest in Jesus Christ. For Pearlman this would mean, roughly, that the Old Testament world of Blunderstone corresponds to the Murdstones (evil and wrath). Yarmouth, also an "Old Testament site" with Noah's ark and the Peggottys, though, is only Old Testamental because of the obvious associations of Noah's ark and Daniel the prophet.

The New Testament, then, would neatly fit into the pattern where David is "saved" from this Old Testament wrath, brought into a fellowship of loving people (the church?), and even "christened" (baptized) with the new name of Trotwood. While this theory of Pearlman is not totally inaccurate (and even somewhat appealing), it stems from a basic misunderstanding of the Gospel. The Old Testament is not all Law (or evil and wrath) and the New Testament is not all Gospel (salvation, redemption from sin). Each contains both. One does not need to be saved from the Old Testament world/God by being taken to the kind and loving New Testament world where Jesus Christ is the incarnation of a loving God. Both Testaments were created and are overseen by the <u>same God</u>--He who shows wrath to unrepentant sinners and mercy to repentant sinners. Thus, Pearlman's proposal is, at best, an interesting (but distorted) suggestion for a Gospel pattern.

A more plausible theory about Aunt Betsey's house is

that it is a type of Eden. Her house is a pleasant place where "goodness" rules. Most interesting is the way that her lush, green front yard is the landmark of her house. It is described by David as "the sacred piece of green" which Aunt Betsey defended with her life; David recalled, "The one great outrage of her [Aunt Betsy's] life . . . was the passage of a donkey over that immaculate spot."[47] The spot is never called a garden (like the Garden of Eden) nor explicitly "Eden" or "paradise," but that "immaculate, sacred" spot seems very much reminiscent of Eden before the Fall--where life is pleasant, simple and good.

Also pleasant, simple and good is Mr. Dick, whom Aunt Betsey has befriended and taken into her house. While Aunt Betsey is convinced that he is brilliant, Mr. Dick is a man who has suffered some type of mental breakdown and always gives the most obvious answer to any question (into which Aunt Betsey reads great profundity). One interesting comment he makes is worth noting, though. When Mr. Dick meets David, we read, "'I shall be delighted,' said Mr. Dick, 'to be the guardian of David's son.'"[48] What is a point of almost no mention except here and in the title is that David is actually David Copperfield the Younger (i.e., Jr.). Thus, he is David's son. For the Scripturally minded, it is hard to see such a quote without thinking of Jesus, "in the line of David": the Son of David.

However, for the major character of a novel legiti-

mately to be seen as a type of Christ would require numerous epithets and actions of "saving" or "redeeming" people. Since (as will be seen), it is David who is actually "saved" by Agnes, this is just an interesting comment by Mr. Dick. So, lest we be guilty of the same fault as Aunt Betsey (reading profundity into a statement of Mr. Dick), it seems prudent to avoid unfaithfulness to the text and to see David as David.

The Major Forces of Good and Evil

To this point, we have seen various good and bad people affect David. The Murdstones and then Steerforth influenced him in a negative way while the Peggottys and then Aunt Betsey countered this with a positive influence. And, while almost all of them continue to have some role in his life, the battle between good and evil becomes more and more focused in Agnes as David's good angel and Uriah Heep as a personification of evil.

In connection with Uriah Heep, it is interesting to note a Biblical parallel. While David is probably not David's Son (i.e., Jesus) from the Bible, on one level (in his dealings with Uriah Heep) David and Uriah can be seen as the Biblical David and Uriah.[49] Harry Stone summarizes the parallels well:

> The complicated relationship between David and Uriah is hinted at also by their names. In the Bible David covets and lies with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, then sends Uriah to his death and marries Bathsheba. This sequence suggests Copperfield's actions as well. David, even

> when married, unconsciously covets Agnes (all the more so when he knows Uriah would like to marry her), then helps send Uriah to metaphorical death (David has often dreamed of murdering him) and marries Agnes. Given these parallels, it seems unlikely that Dickens would have chosen, in conjunction with the name David, the unusual and singularly allusive name Uriah (which he uses nowhere else in his writings), unless he wished to work changes on the David-Uriah theme. Yet the difference between the Biblical story and the novel are striking. In the Bible, David is sinful, Uriah innocent. In _Copperfield_, David is innocent, Uriah sinful. . . . In the Bible, David's sinfulness is open, in _Copperfield_ it is repressed and objectified in Uriah.[50]

However, on another level, Uriah Heep is much more than just a player in a twist on the Biblical David and Uriah story. As Stone comments, "Uriah's physical attributes suggest that he is more--or less--than an ordinary mortal."[51] On the most charitable level, Uriah can be seen as a sly fox. David once says, "The red fox [Uriah] made him say all this, I knew."[52] Theresa Love elaborates:

> First of all, he [Dickens] emphasizes Uriah's sly tendencies by using the traditional image of the fox. To make even more obvious the similarity between the characteristics of the fox and of Uriah, Dickens gives Uriah red coloring and red hair. Even this very obvious association does not sufficiently express Dickens' hatred of the man who would slyly camouflage his vicious pride under a covering of humility, and so he goes further and employs similes and metaphors which recall the most revolting of pictures.[53]

Indeed, the image of a fox is too good for the evil Uriah Heep. Dickens once describes Uriah and his mother as bats: "The mother and son, like two great bats hanging over the whole house and darkening it with their ugly forms."[54]

More often, though, Uriah is spoken of in terms of a serpent. The way he moved is almost always described as

"writhing"; a few examples can suffice:

> He had a way of writhing when he wanted to express enthusiasm, which was very ugly: and which diverted my attention from the compliment he had paid my relation, to the snakey twistings of his throat and body. . . . [and] He writhed himself quite often in his stool in the excitement of his feelings. . . . [and Aunt Betsey's comment to Uriah] If you are an eel, sir, conduct yourself like one. If you are a man, control your limbs, sir! Good God! . . . I am not going to be serpentined and corkscrewed out of my senses.[55]

Finally there is Mr. Micawber's unusually terse assessment of Uriah, "the detestable serpent HEEP!"[56]

It is more than coincidental that Uriah is often described as a serpent--the creature Satan manifested himself as in the Garden of Eden. In fact, there is much more physical evidence that suggests Uriah is specifically meant to appear as "devilish." David's first description of Uriah Heep recounts "a cadaverous face . . . and eyes of a red brown . . . dressed in black."[57] The evil eyes of Uriah Heep are in other places described as "like two red suns," "shadowless red eyes, which looked as if they had scorched their lashes off," and "sinister red eyes."[58] It is even said about Mrs. Heep, "His mother's eye was an evil eye to the rest of the world."[59]

Physical grotesqueness is not limited to Uriah's eyes, though. David remembers shaking Uriah's hand: "But oh what a clammy hand his was! As ghostly to the touch as to the sight! I rubbed mine afterwards to warm it, and to rub his off."[60] Also, David alludes to the legend of the devil

having a cloven foot in picturing Uriah with a splay foot: "If I had been obliged to look at him with his splay foot on Mr. Wickfield's head, I think I could scarcely have hated him more."[61] Harry Stone supports these "Satanic implications" of Uriah's appearance, writing,

> . . . another resemblance that Dickens carefully highlights in his emerging portrait [is that] . . . Uriah is a species of devil. . . . Dickens is quite self-conscious about the Satanic implications of the scene. . . . By the same token, Uriah's other red features--red hair and glowing red eyes--also mark him as a scion of Satan.[62]

Combined with this physical suggestion of Satan is, even more importantly, the litany of his actions. The mark of Uriah's personality is his guise of humility by which he means to hide his cunning and evil. The Heep credo is to "be umble" (humble). Uriah remembered, "'Be umble, Uriah,' says father to me, 'and you'll get on.'"[63] In fact, humble even becomes a euphemism for "craftily powerful"; the irony of this comment of Uriah suggests as much: "'I am well aware that I am the umblest going,' said Uriah Heep modestly."[64] Also, when Heep is finally exposed for the evil villain he really is, Mrs. Heep says, "'I know my son will be umble, gentlemen, if you will give him time to think.'"[65]

His evil personality manifests itself in many ways, his major sin being trying to cheat and defraud Mr. Wickfield (Agnes' father) out of his business and many others out of a lot of money. It is Agnes (the "good angel") who sees through Uriah and says to David,

> He professes humility and gratitude . . . but his position is really one of power, and I fear he makes a hard use of his power. . . . He is subtle and watchful. He has mastered Papa's weaknesses, fostered them, and taken advantage of them, until Papa is afraid of him.[66]

At one point, David thinks about Uriah, "I had never doubted his meanness, his craft and malice, but I fully comprehended now, for the first time, what a base, unrelenting, and revengeful spirit, must have been engendered by this early, and this long, suppression [i.e., suppressing his pride in false humility]."[67] It is significant, then, that all Uriah's evil springs from his pride. Legend tells us that it was pride that effected Satan's fall from heaven also. Moreover, that Uriah's pride is diguised puts him even more in line with the way the crafty Satan so often seems to diguise evil to lure people into it.

Finally, it is Mr. Micawber who best describes Uriah, saying, "What is not the matter? Villainy is the matter; baseness is the matter; deception, fraud, conspiracy, are the matter; and the name of the whole atrocious mass is--HEEP!"[68] It is clear to see from Mr. Micawber's assessmnet that Uriah's surname is meant to be descriptive of the "heap" of evil that he is.

After being physically described like Satan and then showing his personality of evil incarnate, Uriah is finally "convicted" of being the Satan in so many words. It is Mr. Micawber, who goes to work for Uriah Heep as a clerk, who finally exposes him with an overwhelming amount of evidence.

But, while employed by Heep, Micawber sinks to the depths of despair. The worried Mrs. Micawber writes a letter to David saying, "I have become accustomed to hear Mr. Micawber assert that he has sold himself to the D."[69] Clearly, this is a reference to Micawber working for Uriah/the Devil. Mr. Micawber calls Uriah, "Probably the most consumate Villain that has ever existed . . . ,"[70] a title most appropriate for Satan. Mr. Wickfield adds about Uriah that he is "one whom it were superfluous to call Demon."[71]

Ironically, even Uriah seems to testify about about himself being the Devil. When Uriah is exposed we read, "'The Devil take you!' said Uriah, writhing in a new way with pain. 'I'll be even with you.'"[72] Though it is perhaps a slip of Uriah's tongue or perhaps dramatic irony (that Uriah doesn't realize the truth of his own words), Uriah connects himself with Satan. The phrases can be seen as synonymous: "the Devil taking you" is the same as Uriah "getting even with you."

Because Uriah is Satan and stands for evil, David is caught up in the battle against him. It is Uriah who is one of the main forces with whom David wrestles in the attempt to "become the hero of his own life." The struggle is clear in some of the exchanges between David and Uriah. Uriah acknowledges as much to David, saying, "'You see . . . you are quite a dangerous rival, Master Copperfield. You always was, you know.'"[73] Many of David's feelings are evident in a

confrontation he has with Uriah toward the end of the book. David says,

> "You villain," said I, "what do you mean by entrapping me into your schemes? . . . I have shown you often enough . . . that I despise you. I have shown you now, more plainly that I do. Why should I dread your doing your worst to all about you? What else do you ever do? [and concludes] You may go to the devil!"[74]

Another exchange expresses their sentiments toward each other:

> "Copperfield, I have always hated you. You've always been an upstart, and you've always been against me."
>
> "As I think I told you once before," said I, "it is you who have been, in your greed and cunning, against all the world. It may be profitable to you to reflect, in future, that there never were greed and cunning in the world yet that did not do too much and overreach themselves."[75]

However, it is not David who is in the end "his own hero" in successfully combatting the evil he encounters. It is only by the influence of Agnes Wickfield that he does not succumb to both Steerforth and Uriah. Agnes is indisputably David's good angel. Though David does not immediately recognize Agnes specifically as his good angel, he knows from the beginning that she represents "goodness." Her first impression on David is that she is like "a stained glass window in a church . . . a tranquil brightness."[76]

It is not long, though, before David sees her as his good angel. Numerous times he explicitly calls her such: "'You are my good angel, Agnes. Always my good angel'" and "I felt then, more than ever, that she was my better angel" and also "'Dear Agnes!' said I. 'What should I do without

you! You are always my good angel. I told you so. I never think of you in any other light.'"[77] Other times David refers to her "angel face" or her "heavenly face."[78]

And though she is primarily David's good angel, she is also spoken of as a good angel to others. David's young wife Dora, for whom life seems too much and who just fades away and dies, is also the beneficiary of Agnes' angelic presence. David says to Agnes, "'When you were sitting by her [Dora], . . . you seemed to be no less her guardian angel than mine: and you seem so now, Agnes.'"[79] At another time, David thinks about Agnes, "My counselor and friend, the better angel of the lives of all who come within her calm, good, self-denying influence, is quite a woman."[80]

It is not only the fact that Agnes is called a good angel, though. She also performs the "duties" of a good angel. First and foremost, she tries to "protect" David (and even others) from evil influences. In this sense, she takes on a servantlike role in the novel. As John Kucich notes, "Agnes in David Copperfield [is] also seemingly without desire; hence David's sense of her as an 'angel.' Most explicitly, Agnes is willing to negate herself. . . . [and] like Esther [Summerson in Bleak House], Agnes is willing to dissolve herself in duty."[81] Agnes's personality is never developed much beyond a piling together of good and pleasant and comforting adjectives. She is seen best in her positive effect on others--most notably, David.

Also like a "good angel," Agnes guides and directs not toward herself but toward God. When David begins to despair or think things are hopeless, Agnes points him to the eternal hope of a Christian which is in God. When David asks Agnes about the seemingly hopeless situation of Uriah swindling her father, Agnes says to David, "'But is there nothing to be done? There is God to trust in!'"[82] Again, recalling the comfort from Agnes at the time of Dora's death, David remembers that Agnes "commended me to God."[83] Toward the end of the novel, David again testifies about Agnes, saying, "'[You are] ever pointing upward, Agnes; ever leading me to something better; ever directing me to higher things!'"[84]

Finally, David lays upon Agnes the ultimate duty of a good angel--to watch over the death of a Christian that he might be transported to heaven in faith. After David has married Agnes and has a family and a successful career--after things have turned out "happily ever after"--the novel can conclude in no other way than with David giving charge of his death to his good angel Agnes. The novel ends with David thinking, "Oh Agnes, Oh my soul, so may thy face be by me when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me like the shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward!"[85]

Conclusion

If Agnes is indeed only David's good angel, the story ends here. David's good angel has successsfully kept him from the evil of Steerforth and Heep (the former has drowned in a shipwreck and the latter is in jail for his crimes, still the writhing heap of evil); good has triumphed over evil. However, it is at least plausible if not very likely that Agnes can be called David's "savior." It is granted that nowhere in the novel is Agnes explicitly called David's "savior." Still, Agnes is portrayed as uniquely good.

David says about Agnes even early in the book, ". . . you are like no one else. You are so good, and so sweet-tempered. You have such a gentle nature, and you are always right," and also, "But I feel that there are goodness, peace, and truth, wherever Agnes is: and that the soft light of the colored window in the church seen long ago, falls on her always and on me when I am near her, and on everything around."[86]

These ascriptions of praise to Agnes' goodness are at least somewhat reminiscent of descriptions of Jesus' perfect life. Even more so is the unique presence and embodiment of virtue David feels when he says, "She was like Hope embodied to me. How different I felt in one short minute, having Agnes at my side!"[87] Also reminiscent of Jesus is the simple and straightforward message of Agnes as highlighted by Stanley Friedman. He quotes Agnes, writing, "Agnes' message is simple: 'I hope that real love and truth are stronger in

the end than any evil or misfortune in the world.'"[88] It seems difficult to be any more explicitly in line with the hope which is in Jesus Christ (the Savior)--that real love and truth are stronger than any evil in the world. This is nothing else than the pure Gospel: that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

With this lies the fact that it is Agnes who has overseen the defeat of evil in the story. In a novel like David Copperfield, a classic struggle of good and evil, there is very much of the feel of a morality play where the protagonist (David) is caught in the middle of a struggle between heaven and hell. Thus, in the defeat of Uriah (Satan) and evil and the triumph of good (Agnes/the savior), David is "saved." In short, in response to the opening line of the novel, it is Agnes who is the true "hero" of David's life. As Stanley Friedman writes, ". . . any effort to disparage Agnes must contend with the fact that Dickens, in his working notes, refers to her as 'the real heroine,'" and continues, "Although David Copperfield never explicitly settles his intial question about being the hero of his own life, the answer is clear. He is the hero--or rather, he and Agnes, referred to in Dickens' notes as 'the real heroine,' serve together as the hero of David's life."[89] It seems the case can be stated even more strongly and simply: Agnes is the "hero" of David's life.

Finally, while "hero" is not by itself synonymous with "savior," it seems that one final piece of evidence to be weighed in favor of Agnes as "savior" is her name. As E. Pearlman writes,

> At the conclusion of the novel she [Agnes] rescues David from a romantic equivalent of Despair; if this were genuine religious allegory she would be Grace. . . . The apparatus which connects Agnes with godhead at the conclusion of the novel is not afterthought, but is implicit in her presentation throughout. . . . Agnes is therefore, at least in part, agnus.[90]

It seems strange that Dickens would choose the name Agnes, so aurally reminiscent of "agnus," for one whose role so closely parallels the role of the Savior, the agnus Dei ("Lamb of God")--Jesus Christ.

David puts his faith, even his life in the hands of his Agnes/agnus, relying upon deliverence from evil to come from her. As noted Dickensian scholar J. Hillis Miller writes, "David has that relation to Agnes which a devout Christian has to God, the creator of his selfhood, without whom he would be nothing."[91] Indeed. For David, Agnes is inextricably tied up with God and is the "hero of his life," without whom he would be nothing.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

1. Charles Dickens, The Oxford Illustrated Dickens, David Coppperfield, (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1989), p. 1.

2. Stanley Friedman, "Dickens' Mid-Victorian Theodicy: David Copperfield," Dickens Studies Annual 7 (1978):128.

3. See Jane Vogel, Allegory in Dickens (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1977). "I propose a novel thesis: . . . it is that David Copperfield is allegory," p. 1.

4. E. Pearlman, "Two Notes on Religion in David Copperfield," The Victorian Newsletter 41 (Spring 1972):18.

5. David Copperfield, p. 131.

6. "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'" (NIV) The master in the parable is Christ; the happiness refers to eternal life in heaven.

7. David Copperfield, p. 30. 8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 32 10. Ibid., p. 294.

11. Friedman, p. 149. It is one of three places Friedman calls "Eden-like": the other two being David's childhood house in the pre-Murdstone days with his mother and Peggotty and the Wickfield house where Agnes abides.

12. See Luke 15:11-32.

13. David Copperfield, p. 473.

14. Ibid., p. 723.

15. Ibid., p. 686. 16. p. 783.

17. Pearlman, p. 20. 18. Ibid.

19. Pearlman, p. 19.

20. <u>David Copperfield</u>, p. 197.

21. Ibid., p. 52. 22. Ibid., p. 48.

23. Ibid., p. 52. 24. Ibid., p. 55. 25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., p. 834. 27. Ibid., p. 88.

28. Ibid., pp. 93, 297. 29. Ibid., p. 290.

30. Ibid., p. 142. 31. Ibid., p. 342.

32. Ibid., p. 367. 33. Ibid., p. 295.

34. Ibid., p. 426. 35. Ibid., p. 322.

36. Ibid., p. 386. 37. Ibid., pp. 469, 471.

38. Theresa R. Love, <u>Dickens and the Seven Deadly Sins</u> (Danville, IL: The Interstate Publishers and Printers, 1979), p. 100.

39. <u>David Copperfield</u>, p. 299.

40. Ibid. 41. Ibid., pp. 302, 436.

42. Ibid., p. 667. 43. Ibid., p. 470.

44. Ibid., p. 237. 45. Pearlman, p. 19.

46. Ibid.

47. <u>David Copperfield</u>, pp. 207, 195.

48. Ibid., p. 214. 49. See 2 Samuel 11.

50. Harry Stone, "Dickens and Fantasy: The Case of Uriah Heep" <u>The Dickensian</u> 75 (Summer 1979):100.

51. Ibid., p. 95.

52. <u>David Copperfield</u>, p. 518.

53. Love, p. 35.

54. <u>David Copperfield</u>, p. 572.

55. Ibid., pp. 235, 236, 517.

56. Ibid., p. 711. 57. Ibid., p. 219.

58. Ibid., pp. 221, 377, 607.

59. Ibid., p. 571. 60. Ibid., p. 225.

61. Ibid., p. 380. 62. Stone, p. 97.

63. David Copperfield, p. 575.

64. Ibid., p. 234. 65. Ibid., p. 755.

66. Ibid., p. 369. 67. Ibid., p. 575.

68. Ibid., p. 711. 69. Ibid., p. 703.

70. Ibid., p. 750. 71. Ibid., p. 756.

72. Ibid., p. 750. 73. Ibid., p. 573.

74. Ibid., pp. 619-20. 75. Ibid., p. 760.

76. Ibid., p. 223.

77. Ibid., pp. 367, 368, 515.

78. Ibid., pp. 839, 567.

79. Ibid., p. 612. 80. Ibid., p. 268.

81. John Kucich, Excess and Restraint in the Novels of Charles Dickens (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1981), pp. 126-27.

82. David Copperfield, p. 579.

83. Ibid., p. 815. 84. Ibid., p. 843.

85. Ibid., p. 877. 86. Ibid., pp. 276, 233.

87. Ibid., p. 233. 88. Friedman, p. 144.

89. Ibid., pp. 144, 150. 90. Pearlman, p. 18.

91. J. Hillis Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 157.

CHAPTER V

AN ANALYSIS OF GOSPEL ELEMENTS IN

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

> The phrase "Recalled to Life," the title of the First Book [of A Tale of Two Cities], reveals at once that the novel is about the relation between life and death, that it embodies the rebirth theme. . . . we know that A Tale of Two Cities is about rebirth through death, the essential Christian paradox, but we cannot reduce to a simple statement all that it says about this.[1]

In this statement from William Marshall is the essence of A Tale of Two Cities. It is clear from the very beginning of this novel that Dickens intends to explore the life and death theme. But it is not just the most obvious example of the heroic Sydney Carton who is a manifestation of this theme. Dickens' method is akin to the musical technique of presenting a theme and variations. In other words, life and death (and resurrection) is Dickens' central theme in this novel, but he presents it in a number of different ways, through a number of characters. As Stanley Tick adds,

> Before A Tale of Two Cities is concluded, its major elements and all the principal characters have been integrated and thus made interpretable by the announced theme of resurrection. . . . its appropriate symbolic elements are wine and water. Among the characters, Dr. Manettte, Jarvis Lorry, Charles Darnay, Sydney Carton, and the Defarges are, each in his own way, "recalled to life" by the story's dynamics.[2]

All is not necessarily literal with this theme, though. Dickens, in the several characters through whom the theme is presented, shows life and death on several levels. The idea of imprisonment as death is put forth here. There is also the literal life and death of the French Revolution, the backdrop for this novel. Jerry Cruncher, the "Resurrection Man," is even a parody of the theme. So as John Carey points out, various degrees of the theme emerge; he writes, "Taking resurrection as his central theme, Dickens provides on the one hand thoroughly imagined, earthbound illustrations of it, while on the other hand he insists on a transcendental meaning."[3]

While it is hard to imagine a more patently "Christian" theme than resurrection, not all manifestations of it are "Christian" and that of Jerry Cruncher is even blasphemous. So, while Sydney Carton is certainly the main literal illustration of the Christian theme of life, death and resurrection, the whole novel is tied to this theme--tied with everything from "the golden thread" of Lucie Manette to the tangle of knitting of Madame Defarge and company.

"The Golden Thread" and Other Threads

Lucie Manette is referred to as "the golden thread" more than once during the novel. In fact, "The Golden Thread" is the title for the Second Book in which Lucie

figures prominently. More than simply a correlation to her long, golden hair, this epithet is descriptive of her role. Though she is herself a rather flat and undeveloped character, she serves well in tying together much of the action and the characters of the story. John Kucich maintains, "Lucie Manette is the primary reconciler and preserver. Dickens' reference to her as a 'golden thread' echoes her attempt to weave together factions and to inhibit the tendency of her men to displace each other."[4]

While it is debatable that she is the _primary_ reconciler, Lucie certainly has a hand in the salvific work of the men who surround her, especially in the beginning of the novel. K. J. Fielding writes, "Each of the three men grouped about Lucie Manette is 'recalled to life'. Her father regains his, on release from the Bastille; her husband's life is restored by his deliverance from La Force; and Carton finds his by seeking to lose it."[5]

The First Book (of three) of the novel centers around the rescue of Dr. Manette, Lucie's father, from the Bastille. Manette has been unjustly held prisoner for eighteen years, so long that Lucie, in her early twenties, doesn't really know or recognize her father. Jarvis Lorry, a banker and friend of the Manettes, takes Lucie with him from London to Paris (the two cities of the _Tale_) to "save" the Doctor. Lorry tells Lucie, "'Your father has been taken to the house of an old servant in Paris, and we are going there: I, to

identify him if I can: you to restore him to life, love, duty, rest, comfort.'"[6] The frightened Lucie gives voice to her apprehension, saying, "'I am going to see his Ghost! It will be his Ghost--not him!'"[7]

From these two statements--that Lucie fears her father will be "a ghost" and that she is to "restore him to life . . ."--it is clear that the first rescue from death to life occurs here. The title of this First Book, "Recalled to Life," says as much. In this case it is Lucie and Jarvis Lorry who are the "saviors."

Not only here, but also later in the book, imprisonment is a type of figurative death from which one must be rescued to life. The people in prison are often labeled "gaunt" or "ghostly" or skeleton-like. It is true that they literally are skeleton-like from hunger; but even more, this description suggests that they are "dead." Toward the end of the novel, when Charles Darnay is locked up in prison, we read, "When the gaoler was gone, he [Darnay] thought in the same wandering way, 'Now am I left, as if I were dead.'"[8] Also later in the book, when the revolutionaries storm the Bastille, the prisoners who are set free are described as ". . . all scared, all lost, all wondering and amazed, as if the Last Day were come, and those who rejoiced around them were lost spirits."[9] To be released from prison is, in this case, even more: it is a celebration of the Second Coming and Judgment Day, when all the dead rise and all the

faithful are rescued from death. For the French Revolution, the significance is multiplied: this is the day of ultimate "justice" and those faithful to the cause are brought to life.

The second instance of death-to-life is in the form of literal justice in an English court of law. William Marshall notes the progression, writing, "Dr. Manette is the first 'recalled to life.' Then Charles Darnay is once 'recalled' from death under English Law and twice under French Terror."[10] Charles Darnay is saved from execution (literal death) when he is acquitted of charges of treason. In fact, when Darnay leaves the courtroom, people "congratulated him [Darnay] on his escape from death."[11] That Darnay faced death if convicted was certain; during his trial, two people talk to each other of the horrible executions they had heard of and speculate as to what Darnay might get.

Even more clearly, Dickens specifically ties Darnay's acquittal to Dr. Manette's rescue, making it clear that these are two parallel life-and-death episodes. Jerry Cruncher, Jarvis Lorry's messenger, is to carry a message from the courtroom to let Lorry's associates know the verdict. Jerry had also carried a message to Jarvis to let him know that Dr. Manette was "Recalled to Life." When Jerry reads the message telling of Darnay's acquittal, we read, "Hastily written on the paper was the word 'ACQUIT-

TED.' 'If you had sent the message, "Recalled to Life," again,' muttered Jerry, 'I should have known what you meant, this time.'"[12] That Jerry Cruncher equates the two messages as, in essence, the same thing (to him, the messages are interchangeable) is a manifestation of these two episodes as being parallel fulfillments of the death-to-life/ resurrection theme.

Thus Jarvis Lorry has played a role in both of these first two resurrections from death to life. Not necessarily the "savior" per se, Lorry is still integral in the enacting of the salvation. John Kucich writes of Lorry's role, "His conservative role as a banker even allows Lorry to travel safely between the two cities; he is a kind of international reconciler. Moreover, his functions in the plot are always rescue missions; his two dramatic messages [are] 'recalled to life' and 'acquitted'."[13] In the great final salvation by Carton, Lorry also plays a part. As Carton unfolds his plan to Jarvis Lorry, Carton entrusts the safe execution of the escape plan to Lorry, saying, "'. . . Don't look so horrified. You will save them all.'"[14] So while Jarvis Lorry doesn't single-handedly "save" anyone, he is a faithful rescuer/reconciler.

Lucie Manette is also not primarily a "savior" but a reconciler who facilitates saving. She does nurse her father "back to life" after he is resurrected from prison. This, however, is not a Cartonesque sacrifice. Lucie acts

out of the natural filial love of a daughter; she is no worse off (but even benefits herself) by having her father well. With respect to Sydney Carton, though, Lucie performs her other saving/reconciling act. By "saving" Carton from despair, Lucie really enables all he is later able to do. Indirectly, then, she has a hand in saving not only her husband, but her daughter, herself and her father--all whom Carton saves in his climactic sacrifice.

A despondent Sydney Carton comes to Lucie with the idea that he would like to marry her. He sees his life as too tragic for that, though, regarding himself as fit for nothing short of martyrdom. Thus the only proposal Sydney makes to Lucie is this: "'If my career were of that better kind that there was any opportunity or capacity of sacrifice in it, I would embrace any sacrifice for you and for those dear to you.'"[15] The dramatic irony drips heavily from these words, for this is exactly what he does later.

Lucie comforts Carton, making him at least partially a new person. Branwen Pratt describes the scene as such: "As frequently happens in Dickens, an innocent, beautiful, moralistic young woman preaches the sinner into a state of sanctity."[16] While Lucie does not exactly "preach" and Carton might be described better than "sinner," the point is well-taken: Lucie is "helping" Carton. Better is Pratt's comment later in her article when she says, "With her [Lucie] as confessor and absolver, Carton's better nature

revives and he repents the life he has led in the Victorian underworld."[17] Shortly later, Lucie stresses the seeming inevitability of Carton's tragic days ahead but the overriding good she sees in him. She intimates, "'I fear he [Carton] is not to be reclaimed; there is scarcely a hope that anything in his character or fortunes is reparable now. But, I am sure that he is capable of good things, gentle things, even magnanimous things.'"[18] Indeed. For Carton is destined to do "a far, far better thing than he has ever done before."

Carton as Christ

Sydney Carton's first saving act is his intervention on behalf of Charles Darnay in the treason case spoken of earlier. With this saving of Charles Darnay, Dickens introduces the concept of vicariousness in the person of Sydney Carton. A key and unexpected part of Darnay's defense is that Sydney Carton, a barrister in the courtroom, looks so like Darnay that the two could easily be mistaken for each other. As G. Robert Stange points out, the two are doubles: "The shiftless Carton and the virtuous Charles Darnay are doubles. Darnay is tried as an enemy of the state both in England and in France; in both cases he is unjustly accused, and in both is saved by Carton."[19]

Carton steps forward to "save" Darnay. By showing their physical similarity, Carton puts himself in Darnay's

place, resulting in the "salvation" of Darnay from "death." This is clearly reminiscent of Christ, taking our place for any sins (crimes) that might be charged against us. The courtroom metaphor is even appropriate: we are declared just (justified) or found innocent only because Christ has stepped in and taken our place--not because we are inherently just. This is true vicariousness and a clear allusion to the Gospel. At the end of the novel, Carton is even more a Christ-figure, carrying out this vicarious salvation literally to death.

What is interesting about Carton, though, is that while he is a sacrificial figure, he is not clearly Christ-like in character. He seems to need saving himself, yet there is an incongruity between the Carton that we see and the Carton of ill-repute. As Branwen Pratt points out, "Consistently, we hear about Carton's laziness, profligacy, and wickedness, but see him doing only good deeds--as if the narrator, or the author, were of two minds about the character. Carton talks foolishly and sometimes drunkenly; in action he is always godly, righteous and sober."[20]

In one sense, Carton's previous life or misdeeds have no bearing on what he does and is able to do in the novel. When he is "needed," he is always there. He steps forward to save Darnay the first time. He goes to Paris by his own volition to be able to save Darnay a second time. Furthermore, he is the one who devised the plan to save Darnay: it

is his idea. Thus any bad part of Carton's character is supplanted by the good.

The most we ever see of Carton's misdeeds is his drinking too much (very early in the novel) and his sometimes moody or despondent nature. While talking to his double, Darnay, Carton explains his drinking to excess. Sydney says, "'Then you shall likewise know why [I drink so much]. I am a disappointed drudge, sir. I care for no man on earth, and no man on earth cares for me.'"[21] In one sense, Carton parallels Christ in this uniqueness in the world. Carton is, like Christ, "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief." He feels no place in the world for him; in a sense, he is "despised" and "rejected." While this bears similarity to Christ's fitting all these epithets, the orthodox Christian sees differences. Jesus, though despised by the world, was anything but "a disappointed drudge . . . [who] cared for no man on earth." Nonetheless, parallels remain.

Another similarity between Carton and Christ relates again to the vicarious and sacrificial nature of their lives. Sydney Carton recalls from his boyhood, "'Even then, I did exercises for other boys, and seldom did my own'"[22] and later says, "'I am like one who died young. All my life might have been.'"[23] Both these statements suggest that Carton views his life not as his own. He does other boys' homework yet not his own; he sees his life as having ended

already. It is as if Carton exists solely for others--that his life is not his own. The parallel to Christ is strong here. Christ came not for Himself but for others, that He might save others by vicariously sacrificing Himself for them.

Most suggestive of Carton as Christ, however, is Carton's self-sacrificing role in dying to save his double, Charles Darnay, from death. This is the third time Darnay has been saved: twice by Carton and once by Dr. Manette. A French aristocrat who denounced his title and name, Darnay had moved to London and married Lucie Manette to escape the "sins" of his fore-fathers. Later, however, he is arrested in France after his first trial and acquittal in London. The revolutionists seek to have Darnay executed. However, Dr. Manette is able to save Darnay because of the former's great reputation in France. Manette's eighteen years of unjust imprisonment in the Bastille and subsequent "resurrection," made him a hero and allow him great influence. He is able to speak in Darnay's behalf and save him. Darnay witnesses to Dr. Manette's great act, saying, "'No other man in all this France could have done what he [Manette] has done for me.'"[24] Manette himself attests to his salvation of Darnay, telling Lucie, "'. . . don't tremble so. I have saved him.'"[25]

Darnay is soon re-arrested and this time not even Dr. Manette can save him. It is only Carton's plan to die for

Darnay that can allow his double to escape. Carton is able to get himself smuggled into the prison where Darnay is held through the services of a spy named John Barsad. Not insignificant is the description of Barsad: ". . . a hired spy and traitor, an unblushing trafficker in blood, and one of the greatest scoundrels upon earth since accursed Judas--which he certainly did look rather like."[26] Though Carton voluntarily goes to die for Darnay, one compared to Judas delivers him over to be killed; such a detail by Dickens is clearly meant to remind us of Christ's death and thus constitutes another Gospel element.

Carton, once inside the prison where Darnay is held, quickly orders Darnay to change clothes with him. Because he looks so much like Darnay, Carton is thus able to go to the guillotine and die in Darnay's place. A scene could not be more clearly suggestive of the vicarious death of Christ in the place of a sinner. Christ takes the place of the sinner; He is the only one who can save; He must die in satisfaction for the crime (sin).

Even more overt is Carton's repetition of the famous statement from Christ, "'I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.'"[27] The night before Carton enacts his saving plan he remembers these words from his father's funeral years ago. Carton thinks of these words as well on

his way to the guillotine. The Gospel is so clearly presented in these signs, it almost speaks for itself.

But there is even more. Carton sheds his blood for Darnay by dying on the guillotine, the most vicious form of execution of the day. Christ died on the cross, the form of death chosen for lowly criminals. Dickens, however, makes the guillotine into the cross. Dickens writes of the guillotine, "It was the sign of the regeneration of the human race. It superseded the Cross. Models of it were worn on breasts from which the Cross was discarded, and it was bowed down to and believed in where the Cross was denied."[28]

The French revolutionaries turned the world upside-down, believing that liberation was to be found in death and hate rather than life and love. Joseph Gold notes this succinctly when he writes, "The destroying guillotine has replaced the salving cross and all things in God's order have become inverted."[29] Carton, however, rights this upside-down world with his Christ-like death on the "cross"/ guillotine. William Marshall writes,

> But by his death Sydney Carton makes the guillotine in reality what the people imagine it to be. Carton is clearly the agent through whom good destroys evil. Motivated by love, he undoes what Madame Defarge [one of the leading revolutionaries], who has been moved solely by hatred, has wrought.[30]

Joseph Gold makes the parallel of Carton to Christ even stronger in writing this:

> It is Carton who at one moment, on the new cross which

> is the guillotine, transforms the city from Fallen into Redeemed, turns the guillotine into the instrument of salvation and looks through "the little window" [the place for the head in the guillotine] into an endless union of Grace.[31]

Already supported by a wealth of evidence, Carton fulfilling a Christ-role has even more support. Building on the words "I am the resurrection . . . ," William Marshall highlights the resurrection theme even more.

> The "solemn words" are most familiar perhaps in the service for the burial of the dead, but they are first those of Christ in St. John (xi, 25), spoken after Lazarus has been recalled to life; as the recall of Lazarus in the Gospel anticipates the resurrection of Christ and the salvation of Man, so the recall of Darnay through Carton's sacrificial death and the rebirth of the spirit of Carton prefigure the redemption prophesied in the final chapter.
>
> The Christ-like image of Carton is now . . . inescapeable, and--aware of the significance of the blood and wine imagery--we look backward and forward seeking signs. The guilt of Darnay is not really his own but, like Original Sin, that inherited which he himself cannot remove and from the effects of which he must be saved by one who, closely resembling him in his physical being, will take upon himself through his own death the burden of guilt.[32]

Finally, Jane Vogel proposes some interesting parallels between Carton's death and Christ's death. In a mammoth sentence, Vogel highlights some details of Carton's death:

> In triumphal glory of a death on the "Cross" mounted in three--Darnay apprised "that the final hour was Three" ([p.] 332); the mob looking eagerly "towards the third cart" to discover "which is he" (354); Barsad in agony, fearing betrayal, searching the faces of the condemned, his face clearing "as he looks into the third" (354); the City clocks chiming "on the stroke of three" (355); Jerry Cruncher and Miss Pross, two among many ransomed by this death, fleeing the City exactly "at three o'clock" (345); the words: "I am the resurrection and the life" sounding in full text a third and final time

> as an unnamed "he," number Twenty-Three, dies and is born into Life Everlasting, as his prophetic words uttered from Beyond at the end make clear--Dickens in full, fervent, soaring power of his Christian faith and art celebrates Christ: crucified at the third hour (Mark 15:25), risen on the third day, in the Trinity one with the Father. "RECALLED TO LIFE," the hopeful message long before carried in darkness, symbol of man's age-old, long-cherished hope of deliverance from death, is realized at last in Christ.[33]

It seems significant that it is specifically three o'clock when the Christ-figure Carton dies--the same hour when Christ was crucified. Beyond this, Vogel's string of threes seems more that--a coincidental stringing together of occurrences of the number three--than any specific or intentional pattern of Dickens.

Wine and Blood

Another Gospel element in A Tale of Two Cities is the correlation of wine and blood. Though only mentioned a few times, the association of spilled wine and shed blood is clearly intended. In the very beginning of the novel, a cask of wine breaks open, staining the streets and providing a short-lived scavenge to drink some of the "free" wine. Dickens writes,

> The wine was red wine, and had stained the ground of the narrow street in the suburb of Saint Antoine, in Paris, where it was spilled. . . . [and also] . . . one tall joker so besmirched, his head more out of a long squalid bag of a night-cap than in it, scrawled upon a wall with his finger dipped in muddy wine-lees--BLOOD. The time was to come, when that wine too would be spilled on the street-stones, and the stain of it would be red upon many there.[34]

G. Robert Stange elaborates upon this analogy, writing,

> In the scene of the broken wine cask . . . Dickens makes it obvious that the wine symbolized blood, and the multiple meanings of wine and blood are then developed. Defarge's wineshop is the center of revolutionary action; we are led to reflect that the fellowship of blood and wine has many guises.[35]

Even more significantly, the blood shed on the guillotine/cross is referred to as wine. Dickens describes the transportation of the prisoners to their execution as such: "Along the Paris streets, the death-carts rumble, hollow and harsh. Six tumbrils carry the day's wine to La Guillotine."[36] William Marshall states the significance of the blood/wine parallel, already suspicioned by the thoughtful Christian. Marshall writes, "The association of blood and wine is probably archetypal but certainly, within the Christian tradition, orthodox. The Eucharistic suggestions should be quite apparent."[37] How strongly Dickens intended this idea of Eucharist is debatable. The wine or blood does not seem to have any salvific or restorative value and wine/blood drinking does not figure prominently in the novel.[38] That Dickens did intend the association between blood and wine, though, is apparent.

A Parody of Christianity and Resurrection

Just as apparent as Dickens' presentation of the blood and wine parallel or the resurrection theme with Sydney Carton is a parody or perversion of resurrection theme. A final variation on the theme of resurrection stems from the perverted state of Christianity during the

revolution.

In a general sense, the breakdown of Christianity is manifest in the breakdown of law and order. By the end of the novel, the Revolution had degenerated to a reign of terror where true justice was not a concern of the crowds. That Charles Darnay's trial would end in an execution was a foregone conclusion. Dickens' comment on the injustice is telling:

> Before the unjust Tribunal, there was little or no order of procedure, ensuring to any accused person any reasonable hearing. There could have been no such Revolution, if all laws, forms, and ceremonies, had not first been so monstrously abused, that the suicidal vengeance of the Revolution was to scatter them to all the winds.[39]

Dickens is more specific, though. The aristocracy is presented as unholy and blasphemous, consciously having sold itself to evil. Typifying the unholiness is this description of the aristocracy "boldly reading the Lord's Prayer backwards for a great number of years, and performing many other potent spells for compelling the Evil One. . . ."[40] In this description, Dickens presents a conscious inversion of Christianity; those in power had forsaken Christ.

No better, though, were the revolutionaries who usurped the power from them. Already mentioned was the unholy of the Revolution: La Guillotine. Also, Dickens includes this description of Madame Defarge: ". . . with her work in her hand [she] was accustomed to pass from place to place and from group to group: a Missionary--there were many

like her--such as the world will do well never to breed again."[41] One of the leaders of the Revolution, Madame Defarge is described as one of many "missionaries" of the movement. The use of the Christian term highlights the perversion of their unholy mission: their motivation was hate and their goal was vengeance. Thus, not only the aristocracy but also the revolutionaries had perverted Christianity. Juxtaposed with the "pure" motivations of Sydney Carton for "the resurrection and the life," their hate and death highlights his love and life.

Finally, another perversion of the resurrection theme is Jerry Cruncher. As Joseph Gold writes, "Cruncher is much linked with Christianity and it is clear that we are meant to understand him as a parody of Christ, a parody adapted to Dickens' savage presentation of a Christian world that has sold itself to false gods and to Satan."[42] To begin, Cruncher's last name is descriptive: he beats his wife, who is a pious Christian woman, because she prays for him. (He calls it "flopping" [on her knees].) This alone is enough to put him in the unholy camp of non-Christianity.

As mentioned earlier, though, a much more explicit parody of the resurrection exists: Jerry Cruncher is a "Resurrection Man." Joseph Gold explains, saying, "Thus it is that Jerry Cruncher is one of that bank of 'tradesmen' know as 'Resurrection-men,' body-snatchers who raise the dead by robbing graves to supply the schools of anatomy.

Jerry Cruncher's initials are those of Jesus Christ."[43] That Cruncher's initials are "J.C.," that he is called "Resurrection Man," and that he mocks the resurrection of the dead by literally digging them up are more than coincidence.

Two things about him are significant in supporting the purity of Dickens' motive for a true, Christian theme of resurrection elsewhere in the novel rather than a parody of it. First, Cruncher is not even a successful resurrectionist. John Gross points out, "Jerry . . . is a 'Resurrection Man,' but on the only occasion that we see him rifling a grave it turns out to be empty."[44] John Carey explains further, "Another contributor to the resurrection theme is the secret agent Roger Cly who feigns death and comes to life again. He arranges an elaborate funeral for himself, but the coffin contains only pavingstones and earth."[45] This is the grave Cruncher digs up--a failed "resurrection."

Second, Cruncher repents at the end of the novel. He confesses his "sins" to Miss Pross, who doesn't really understand what Cruncher is doing. Nonetheless, it is remorse for his past ways and, moreover, acknowledgement that his was not true resurrectionism.

Conclusion

Where, in the end, is Dickens on the presentation of

the life and death/resurrection theme? Unsurprisingly, critics cover the spectrum on the question. Some allow the parody of Cruncher as much validity as the sacrificial act of Sydney Carton. In light of Cruncher's recanting and the Defarge's general ruthlessness, this interpretation seems inconsistent with the Carton's final words, which have a sincere hope in true resurrection and life.

Others, such as Michael Timko, allow that the message "preached" by Dickens is humanism rather than Christianity. He writes,

> To point out the parallels between Carton and Christ is easy enough to do, and to deplore these if one is so inclined; however, the thrust of the passages dealing with Carton's final moments seems directed not so much at presenting a "Christian message" as conveying Dickens' sense of the human potential, particularly in the development of the celestial that is part of the Carlylean Invisible Me.[46]

Carton's sacrifice seems more, though. If it was "just" a noble sacrifice--only "a far, far better thing . . ."--why does Dickens specifically make the guillotine the cross? Also, why the contrast to and triumph over a "Resurrection Man" parody? And why the repetition of "I am the resurrection and the life . . ."?

These questions seem to be "answered" most easily by simply allowing Dickens to come out as Christian on this. John Gross writes, "For all the sense of horror which he must have felt stirring within him when he wrote A Tale of Two Cities, Dickens remained a moralist and a preacher, and

it was his saving strength."[47] Rather than deny that Dickens is attesting to the hope of Christ's death and resurrection for us, why not take him at his word? For the words that emerge as most memorable are those thrice-repeated words of Christ: "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

John Carey's commentary on these words in the novel seems to say this well. He writes,

> The quotation, inserted into the narrative with no explanation of who in the novel it's supposed to be occurring to, represents a stout effort on Dickens' part to shove his readers onto a higher plane so they won't mind too much the injustice of Carton's death. And it works.[48]

By looking above our humanness to Christ's all-saving sacrifice, there is faith and hope. The Christian knows that the sorrow of Good Friday was erased by the eternal joy engendered by Easter. With belief in the resurrection (and the resurrection theme), the sad scene of Carton's death is not the end of the novel. The hope of the resurrection is.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER V

1. William H. Marshall, "The Method of A Tale of Two Cities," The Dickensian 57 (September 1961):184-85.

2. Stanley Tick, "Cruncher on Resurrection: A Tale of Charles Dickens," Renascence 33 (Winter 1981):86.

3. John Carey, The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens' Imagination (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p. 107.

4. John Kucich, Excess and Restraint in the Novels of Charles Dickens (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1981), p. 115.

5. Gordon N. Ray, gen. ed., Riverside Studies in Literature (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964), Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction, 2nd ed., rev. and enl., by K. J. Fielding, p. 200.

6. Charles Dickens, The Oxford Illustrated Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1989), p. 24.

7. Ibid. 8. Ibid., p. 244.

9. Ibid., p. 210. 10. Marshall, p. 184.

11. A Tale of Two Cities, p. 74.

12. Ibid., p. 73. 13. Kucich, p. 115.

14. A Tale of Two Cities, p. 327.

15. Ibid., p. 146.

16. Branwen Bailey Pratt, "Carlyle and Dickens: Heroes and Hero-Worshippers," Dickens Studies Annual 12 (1983):244.

17. Ibid.

18. A Tale of Two Cities, p. 198.

19. G. Robert Stange, "Dickens and the Fiery Past: A Tale of Two Cities Reconsidered," The English Journal 46 (1957):386.

20. Pratt, p. 243.

21. A Tale of Two Cities, p. 79.

22. Ibid., p. 83. 23. Ibid., p. 143.

24. Ibid., p. 273. 25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., p. 70.

27. Ibid., p. 298 et al. and John 11:25.

28. Ibid., p. 260.

29. Joseph Gold, Charles Dickens: Radical Moralist (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), p. 233.

30. Marshall, p. 188. 31. Gold, p. 239.

32. Marshall, p. 188.

33. Jane Vogel, Allegory in Dickens (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1977), pp. 76-77.

34. A Tale of Two Cities, p. 28.

35. Stange, p. 389.

36. A Tale of Two Cities, p. 353.

37. Marshall, p. 187.

38. The possible exception is the Defarge's wineshop. The Defarges are among the leaders of the revolution and people frequently pass in and out to have some wine. Usually with the wine is some type of clandestine information or encouragement for the cause of the revolution. In this sense, wine-drinking associated with shedding blood can be seen as "liberating." Times are so bad, though, that it is usually watered-down wine, weakening the liberating or restorative or salvific effect of the wine.

39. A Tale of Two Cities, p. 300.

40. Ibid., p. 223. 41. Ibid., p. 177.

42. Gold, p. 237. 43. Ibid.

44. John Gross, "A Tale of Two Cities," in Dickens and the Twentieth Century, eds. John Gross and Gabriel Pearson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 195.

45. Carey, p. 107.

46. Michael Timko, "Splendid Impressions and Picturesque Means: Dickens, Carlyle, and the French Revolution," Dickens Studies Annual 12 (1983):193.

47. Gross, p. 197. 48. Carey, p. 108.

CHAPTER VI

AN ANALYSIS OF GOSPEL ELEMENTS IN

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

"From the beginning of Great Expectations we know that this is an imperfect world. . . . Dickens's challenge is to find and justify 'Great Expectations' in spite of this 'dismal wilderness' (GE, p. 30) of a world afloat in the chaos of Creation or the disaster of the Flood."[1] Great Expectations is, in fact, not only a novel about expectations (and even great expectations) in such an imperfect world, but also about the progression from sin to forgiveness and redemption in such a world. Not only about learning to forgive, the novel is also about learning to be forgiven.

It is these three elements of sin, forgiveness, and redemption in which the characters and events of the novel are tied up. As Pip grows from boy to man, seeking to become a "gentleman" and marry a "lady" (his chief great expectations), he is changed by those he meets to such a degree that his life turns out quite different from how he expected it would. In short, he is changed; and not only Pip but other people are changed as well. As Dickensian scholar Bert Hornback notes, "Both Pip and Estella have

changed at the end, and change is what the novel is about."[2]

Certainly it is the main character Pip who first and foremost discovers this triad of sin, forgiveness, and redemption in relation to himself. However, several of those whom Pip encounters throughout the story also come to realizations about sin and forgiveness and redemption. Quite interestingly, Miss Havisham and Estella are transformed in the book as is Abel Magwitch also.

In unfolding all these changes and Pip's "great expectations," Dickens uses three major settings for the novel. Each of the three settings is closely tied to the people who live there, so much so that the places take on the good or bad characteristics of their inhabitants. Pip's boyhood home, in the country and out in the marshes, is characterized by the forge of the good Joe Gargery, the blacksmith guardian of Pip. Also in his boyhood, though, Pip is influenced by his numerous visits to Satis House, the strange abode of the even more strange Miss Havisham. Finally, Pip goes to London to become a "gentleman," making the acquaintance of the benign and amiable Herbert Pocket and also coming there under the influence of the manipulative lawyer, Mr. Jaggers.

Then, in this triad of settings, Dickens makes a triad of conclusions. At each place, Pip has a forgiveness/reconciliation experience: first at Satis House with Miss Havisham, next in London with Abel Magwitch, then with Joe

at the forge. By not only forgiving but being forgiven, each of the three experiences puts Pip closer to realizing the full extent of his Fall (into sin). Then, finally, the three conclusions combine to result in Pip's redemption.

Joe and the Forge

As a young boy, the orphaned Pip is raised by his sister's husband and his sister, Joe Gargery and Mrs. Joe (as she is called throughout the novel). In recalling his "adoption" of Pip, Joe says to Pip, "'And bring the poor little child [Pip]. God bless the poor little child,' I said to your sister, 'there's room for him at the forge! . . . Ever the best of friends: ain't us, Pip?'"[3] Joe's kindness toward Pip attests to Joe's nature. His comment, "Ever the best of friends," is his summation of their friendship.

The loyal and true Joe would never dream of forsaking Pip (as Pip later does him). As scholar K. J. Fielding writes, "In his simplicity and goodness, and in his love for children, Joe is of the Kingdom of Heaven."[4] Joe is of the simple and guileless country stock which Dickens admired; Joe represents the same type of Christianity as the Peggottys in David Copperfield.

Far from cherubic or naively innocent, though, Joe's Christianity is physical and earthy. It is "real." He is a blacksmith whose grammar is poor and whose boots are dirty.

As Stanley Tick summarizes, "Joe Gargery is not angelic but a perfectly good being who endures both the querulousness of Mrs. Joe and the ingratitude of Pip."[5] For Dickens, this is the most "real" Christian goodness.

Both Pip and Joe, in their life at the forge, must endure two obstacles to their happiness. The lesser of the two evils is the contentious and tyrannical Mrs. Joe. Much worse is Joe's journeyman assistant named Orlick who is basically raw and incarnate evil. In fact, Pip refers to Joe and himself as "fellow-sufferers" in that house.[6] Pip remembered, "Home had never been a very pleasant place to be, because of my sister's temper. But, Joe had sanctified it, and I believed in it. . . . I had believed in the forge as the glowing road to manhood and independence."[7] The forge was a sanctified place in a world of evil, a place where one could become a true gentleman, something Pip didn't realize until much later. Such is also the view of Anny Sadrin in writing, "Joe . . . is of all the characters in the novel the one who best qualifies for the name of 'true gentleman.'"[8]

Coupled with Joe in standing for good at the forge is Biddy. One day, Mrs. Joe is attacked and struck on the back of the head, turning her into an invalid. Biddy then comes to help keep house and take care of Mrs. Joe. As Pip put it, "Biddy became a blessing to our household."[9] Later, Pip thought of her in the same glowing way he did of Joe,

thinking, "Biddy would have derived only pain, and no pleasure, from giving me pain: she would far rather have wounded her own breast than mine."[10] Like Joe, Biddy was of self-sacrificing, salt-of-the-earth stock.

But even the forge has evil all around it--specifically in the person of the journeyman Orlick. As Stanley Tick writes, "The polarities are denoted early in the story and quite unambiguously. Joe Gargery embodies perfect good, Orlick primordial evil."[11] Pip remembered:

> Now, Joe kept a journeyman at weekly wages whose name was Orlick. He pretended that his christian name was Dolge--a clear impossibility. . . . when he went away at night, he would slouch out, like Cain or the Wandering Jew. . . . When I was very small and very timid, he gave me to understand that the Devil lived in a black corner of the forge, and that he knew the fiend very well.[12]

Harry Stone elaborates, saying, "Orlick, in his role as the archetypal personification of evil, slouches in and out of the book 'like Cain or the Wandering Jew.' . . . Orlick's infernalism is no metaphor; Dickens, combining Christian, classical, and fairy-tale motifs, gradually builds him into a Satan-like image of evil."[13] Orlick is in the same mold as the evil Uriah Heep, making no attempt to be falsely charming. And, even for his relatively small role, Orlick represents evil in its crudest form. In short, Orlick is meant to remind us of the devil--or at least one of his cronies. Even for all his lurking and slouching, though, he is not Pip's major nemesis, but only one among several.

Pip's major nemesis, actually, is his own "great expectations." He wants to be a wealthy gentleman, which leads him to begin to stray from the purity and goodness of Joe represented by the forge. One day Pip says to Biddy, "Joe is a dear good fellow--in fact, I think he is the dearest fellow that ever lived--but he is rather backward in some things. For instance, Biddy, in his learning and his manners."[14] It is at this point that Pip begins his Fall; he is attracted by the fine things of ladies and gentlemen to the point of being lured away from Joe's goodness. Then, as K. J. Fielding points out, "Money, he [Pip] thinks, will do anything."[15]

More than being attracted by money and fine things, though, Pip errs in the quick and easy way that he forsakes Joe in pursuit of becoming a gentleman. When Pip has the chance to become a gentleman, he jumps at it; staying apprentice to Joe quickly becomes a distant second best to Pip's new opportunity. As Mary DeHaven notes, "Pip's real sin, however, which he recognizes as an adult looking back to his youth, and acknowledges in the story, is his treatment of Joe."[16]

Miss Havisham and Satis House

While Pip is still a boy living with Joe at the forge, he is the recipient of a strange request. An eccentric old recluse named Miss Havisham desires a boy to come

to her house so she can watch him play. Here Pip's Fall becomes concrete when he is attracted to Estella and the ways of gentility.

As Pip comes to her strange old house, he is met by the young Estella, whom Miss Havisham has adopted. Estella says of the house:

> "It's other name was Satis House . . . which is Latin or Greek or Hebrew . . . for 'enough.'"
> "Enough House!" said I: "that's a curious name, Miss."
> "Yes," she replied: "but it meant more than it said. It meant, when it was given, that whoever had this house, could want nothing else."[17]

What is ironic is that Miss Havisham really has nothing but the house. Her life is an empty, lonely, embittered existence, void of all happiness and void of the thing she wanted most of all: love.

In fact, Miss Havisham's "estate" can be seen as a fallen Eden. It is the example of a world fallen into sin with no love and no Savior. The grounds physically suggest as much before the house is even entered. In reference to Miss Havisham's garden, Pip notes, "The garden was too overgrown and rank for walking in with ease."[18] Even more explicitly tying Miss Havisham's garden to the fallen Eden is that it is twice referred to as "the ruined garden." Pip says, "It was with a depressed heart that I walked . . . about the ruined garden" and again near the end of the novel, "I made my way to the ruined garden . . . so lonely, so dreary all!"[19]

Mary DeHaven concurs with the picture of Miss Havisham's garden as a "ruined" Eden, writing,

> Pip enters . . . [the] garden, the rank, weed-infested garden of Miss Havisham, which, with its very contrast with the image of the garden of Eden, suggests a spurious Eden, an Eden which Pip enhances with his notions of gentility. Both Miss Havisham's name and her garden suggest the fraudulence of the values Pip absorbs there.[20]

When Pip enters the house, this image of a ruined Eden--a sinful world without a savior--is only reinforced. He makes the acquaintance of Miss Havisham, in Pip's own words, "the strangest lady I have ever seen, or ever will see." He partially describes her by saying, "She was dressed in rich materials--satins, and lace, and silks--all of white. . . . I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago and had lost its luster and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress."[21] He compares her also to both a skeleton and a figure in a wax museum, which he'd seen before.

What Pip actually beholds is an old lady who was jilted on the day of her wedding many years ago: a lady who has kept everything just as it was at that moment many years ago. She has stopped all the clocks at twenty minutes to nine--the time of her tragedy. She wears her decrepit wedding dress, sitting in her decrepit house to preserve the moment of her tragedy. Her house is dark, closed off from the sun. The rotting wedding cake and a table set up for

the celebration sit waiting for a never-to-be consummated wedding celebration.

Her singularity of purpose for perpetuating such decay is also seen by Pip later in the book; Pip noted that ". . . her mind, brooding and solitary, had grown diseased, as all minds do and must and will that reverse the appointed order of their Maker."[22] She does not want any part of love: either loving or being loved. Hers is a world of lovelessness and a strange sort of revenge which she takes out on herself. Absent here is any kind of forgiveness: she can neither accept it nor give it.

What she does have, though, is the child named Estella whom she has adopted. Estella soon becomes her "creation." Miss Havisham vicariously lives through Estella, desiring for her the love she has never had, though unable to love Estella herself. But Miss Havisham and the lovelessness of the environment have turned Estella into a cold, cruel and vindictive child who would use her beauty much as Miss Havisham uses her jilting: to breed vengeance on the world.

Pip, who falls in love with Estella, hopes that when he is a "gentleman," he will be able to marry the beautiful Estella. But in this ruined world, there is too much evil for real love to flourish. "Love" comes to take on a vengeful and twisted meaning, as is seen in Miss Havisham's words to Pip:

> "Hear me, Pip! I adopted her to be loved. I bred her and educated her to be loved. I developed her into what she is, that she might be loved. Love her!"
>
> She said the word often enough, and there could be no doubt that she meant to say it: but if the often repeated word had been hate instead of love--despair--revenge--dire death--it could not have sounded from her lips more like a curse.
>
> "I'll tell you . . . what real love is. It is blind devotion, unquestioning self-humiliation, utter submission, trust and belief against yourself and against the whole world, giving up your whole heart and soul to the smiter--as I did!"[23]

In Miss Havisham's world, it is as if love has become a curse--a weapon to use to manipulate people.

This "world" without love and forgiveness that Miss Havisham has built has led at least two authors to make even more explicit Christian (or rather unChristian) parallels with Miss Havisham. Anny Sadrin suggests Miss Havisham as a perverse type of anti-Christ (not with the weight of the theological term "antichrist" but merely as an opposite of Christ). Building specifically on the image of the table set for the feast, Sadrin writes:

> The table laid for a feast which we know never took place, the traditional symbol of communion, will, we presume, call up the phantom of Judas. . . . With Christic masochism and unchristian motivations, Miss Havisham offers herself as a sacrifice to people she hates and despises. The Eucharist in her performance becomes a ceremony of lovelessness and damnation, and unholy sacrament.[24]

Miss Havisham has spoken to her relatives, the inheritance-seeking Pocket family, about how they will take their places at the table around her body when she has died.

The "feast" she wishes for her family is exactly the

opposite of the Lord's Supper. Miss Havisham's "supper" for others is one motivated by lovelessness. Her (dead) body will perpetuate hate and death, exactly the opposite of the life-giving and love-engendering Lord's Supper. The opposite of Christ's saving others by His death, Miss Havisham would have others destroyed by her death.

Seeing Miss Havisham as anti-Christ, the "master" of her world of the loveless and ruined Garden, is certainly appealing. Her evil is not the all-encompassing evil which we would ascribe to a Satan-character, but the sacrifice for hate and unforgiveness, the antithesis of Christ's sacrifice for love and reconciliation. However, she is not an all-encompassing anti-Christ: she really only fulfills this role to the Pockets, and only imperfectly to Estella and Pip. Also, as will be seen, Pip changes roles and becomes somewhat of a Christ-figure in saving/changing Miss Havisham.

Author Jane Vogel sees Miss Havisham in a different light. Vogel instead sees Miss Havisham as a parallel to the bride in the traditional bride/bridegroom theology of Scripture. Where Christ is the Bridegroom and His Bride is the church, Vogel views Miss Havisham as representing the Old Testament Israel:

> In Satis House, the clock in Miss Havisham's room, her watch, and the clock on the outer wall of the brewery, long still, have all stopped at twenty minutes to nine. Christ is crucified in the ninth hour, the climactic Christian hour the bride holds at a distance. In Satis House, it does not arrive. Miss Havisham, with no first or Christian name, significantly enough, will not enter A.D. Instead, refusing to surrender the ambition for

> vindictive triumph, she impresses two children [Estella and Pip] into the service of that old hate. . . . In the incapacity of the bride to believe herself forgiven (forgiving her, Pip is a surrogate Christ . . .), the whole tragic History of Israel According to Dickens is retold, as though to say, the Kingdom of the Father was spread bountifully upon the earth, yet they saw it not.[25]

While this is interesting (and creative to say the least), it surely was not Dickens' intention to make a statement about Old Testament Israel in the person of Miss Havisham. It is instead much more fitting to see Miss Havisham as epitomizing a loveless and fallen world.

London: (Mr. Jaggers) and Reconciliation with Magwitch

Certainly one of the enigmas of the novel is Mr. Jaggers, the lawyer who lives in London. Not a part of the Gospel pattern of the novel, Jaggers has no interest in participating in any of the forgiveness and reconciliation which takes place. And though he does not quantitatively play a big part in the novel, Jaggers "arranges" or has arranged for many of the pivotal events to take place. For the way he executes this role, though, he is worth brief mention.

While Pip is still living with Joe and making visits to Satis House, the lawyer Jaggers comes with some surprise news for Pip. An anonymous benefactor has set aside a very large sum of money for Pip's education in London, that he may become a "gentleman." This is, in fact, Pip's "great expectations." Jaggers is to be the facilitator for this.

Jaggers also has some connection with Miss Havisham, whom Pip incorrectly guesses to be the benefactor.

In executing his various duties as a lawyer, Jaggers' handling of people is what is significant about him. In describing Jaggers, Pip says, "I embrace this opportunity of remarking that he washed his clients off, as if it were a surgeon or a dentist."[26] He, like Pontius Pilate, tries to "wash his hands of" people with whom he deals. Geoffrey Thurley suggests the parallel of Jaggers to Pilate:

> Surely Jaggers doesn't treat moral malignancy at all: he gets people off whether they're guilty or not. And the soap, . . . is not in fact antiseptic but scented: the Pontius Pilate routine is one he knows becomes him very well. . . . The Pilate parallel itself suggests this reading: Jaggers can "wash his hands of it," though he would have answered Pilate's famous question with his own formula: "Truth is evidence."[27]

Jaggers doesn't really care about forgiveness of sin and reconciliation: his objective is to deny guilt and sin, not to seek reconciliation and forgiveness of sin. In Jaggers, like Pilate, we see the unwillingness to confess sin and subsequently be forgiven. So deeply entrenched is he in the law, Jaggers does not see the value of the Gospel. Thus, in a novel so much about sin and forgiveness and reconciliation, Jaggers' denial of sin and the need for forgiveness highlights by contrast the central theme of reconciliation by forgiving and being forgiven.

London is also where Pip meets up with and is reconciled with Abel Magwitch. In the very first episode of

the novel, before he has ever met Mr. Jaggers or gone to London, the young Pip encounters a frightening man alone in a graveyard. The man--who turns out to be an escaped convict--seizes Pip and frightens him into stealing both food and an iron file (to remove the chain from his leg) for him. As Pip recalls his decision to steal the things, he intimates, "In a word, I was too cowardly to do what I knew to be right, as I had been too cowardly to avoid doing what I knew to be wrong."[28] Though Pip does not know it at the time, this act of mercy toward the stranger will change both of their lives.

Unbeknownst to him, this man is Abel Magwitch, who later turns out to be the anonymous benefactor of Pip's "great expectations." It is not until much later in the story that Magwitch shows up again and makes himself known to Pip as his benefactor. But this strange man plays an interesting role in the novel.

He is a seeming contradiction: both victim and criminal, good and bad. And his name--Abel Magwitch--serves to highlight this. Joseph Gold writes, "'Mag' means, among other things, to steal, and this stealing witch, this sorcerer, has it in his power to transform Pip's life."[29] Harry Stone adds, "Magwitch's ambiguous role as corrupter and savior is clarified by his fairy-tale attributes. . . . His Christian name is a more trustworthy clue. Criminal and outcast though he is, he is named Abel; he is more sinned

against than sinning."[30] Bert Hornback also highlights the good in Magwitch, writing, "Magwitch has never been a bad man . . . [but] a victim, of society and of the corrupt world over which society presides. Significantly, he is the namesake of the first victim, Abel, the son of Adam."[31]

Magwitch is caught again (after his prison escape) and banished to Australia, where he takes on a self-sacrificing role for the sake of Pip--all to repay the small kindness Pip showed to him. He becomes a shepherd in the wilderness, working hard that he may send all his money for Pip's education and rise to the ranks of gentility. But Magwitch cannot resist coming back to London to see what his efforts have produced in the person of Pip. As Magwitch explains to Pip, "I lived rough, that you should live smooth: I worked hard that you should be above work."[32] Not wanting any thanks or praise but just to see Pip, Magwitch explains, ". . . it was a recompense to me . . . to know in secret that I was making a gentleman."[33]

Magwitch's sincere desire to "repay" Pip for his small original kindness leads Magwitch to sacrifice his whole life for Pip's sake. Instead of being thankful to Magwitch, though, Pip is repulsed that his benefactor is a lowly, common criminal. Much the same way Pip rejected the commonness of the benevolent Joe, Pip rejects Magwitch. This is Pip's sin: embarrassed by the rough exteriors of both Joe and Magwitch, Pip forsakes them both, the two

people in the novel most loyal and true to Pip. As Mary DeHaven writes, "His [Pip's] fall is not a matter of a single act, but of many acts based on his false values: most particularly, his initial and continued rejection of Joe and his initial and continued horror of Magwitch."[34]

Because Magwitch has been banished and his discovery would lead to his arrest again, Pip and his friend hide Magwitch until they can devise a plan for his escape. However, just as Magwitch is about to be delivered onto a ship to take him safely out of the country, Pip's plan is foiled. Magwitch's old partner in crime, Compeyson, intercepts Magwitch and the two tumble into the water while scuffling. Compeyson is killed instantly when a boat strikes the pair and Magwitch is seriously injured.

Pip then takes Magwitch back to London to care for him. In doing this, and even in his erstwhile hiding of Magwitch, Pip has begun to realize how badly he has treated Magwitch (and also Joe). Attending to Magwitch, Pip says to him, "I will never stir from your side. . . . Please God, I will be as true to you as you have been to me!"[35] In saying this, Pip begins to rise from his sinful fall. As G. Robert Stange notes, ". . . in sympathizing with Magwitch Pip assumes the criminal's guilt; in suffering with and finally loving the despised and rejected man he finds his own real self."[36]

Even Pip's remorse and love for Magwitch cannot heal

his wounds, though: Magwitch soon after dies. But this is redemptive for Pip. As George Kennedy notes, "With Magwitch's death, Pip's redemption is begun, but Dickens does not forget his connection to Joe."[37] This is truly an enlightenment for Pip. He learns something about sacrifice from Magwitch. He realizes that his life has been changed because of Magwitch. Moreover, Pip sees that, like Magwitch, he is both forgiver and forgiven; he has sinned and been sinned against. This is significant in relation to Pip's closing comment on the life of Abel Magwitch. After Magwitch dies Pip recalls, "I thought of the two men who went up into the Temple to pray, and I knew there were no better words that I could say beside his bed, than 'Oh Lord, be merciful to him a sinner!'"[38]

Such a seeming misquotation of the familiar parable[39] is explained by Harry Stone. He points out the clever parallel Dickens was highlighting by his (intentional) inversion of the parable:

> Pip murmurs a prayer for his rough counterpart, a prayer which is an adaptation of a line from the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The message of that parable --"every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"--epitomizes Pip's journey from Pharisaism to understanding, and presages his salvation. But Pip's adaptation of the publican's prayer does more than recall the parable's moral. By displacing the publican's "to me" with "to him," Pip again calls attention to his alter-ego relationship to Magwitch, and he underscores his new self-awareness and self-inculpation: "O Lord," he pleads, "be merciful to him a sinner!"[40]

Reconciliation with Miss Havisham

Even before his reconciliation with Magwitch, Pip had begun to rise from his Fall. Actually, the reconciliation with Miss Havisham precedes the reconciling with Magwitch. When Pip finds out that Abel Magwitch is his benefactor, and not Miss Havisham (as he thought), Pip is devastated. Most devastating for Pip is that this also means that Miss Havisham has not been "preparing" Estella to marry him either, and he cannot marry this girl whom he loves.

When Miss Havisham sees the lovelessness she has fostered manifest in Estella, she begins to see the error of her ways. Pip has confronted her and brought all of her past deeds to light. Now robbed even of her Estella, Miss Havisham breaks down, saying to Pip:

> "My name is on the first leaf. If you can ever write under my name, 'I forgive her,' though ever so long after my broken heart is dust--pray do it!"
> "Oh Miss Havisham . . . I can do it now [Pip replies]. There have been sore mistakes: and my life has been a blind and thankless one: and I want forgiveness and direction far too much, to be bitter with you."[41]

Both Pip and Miss Havisham have learned enough about forgiveness that this scene can take place. Pip's first step toward salvation and Miss Havisham's crucial step toward salvation, this scene is pivotal in the novel. Anny Sadrin has noted,

> Miss Havisham also is given respite. When we last see her, she is feverishly repentant, supplicating for pardon, rehearsing the same sentences over and over again, and Pip's parting kiss, if it does not soothe her instantaneously, is a kiss of forgiveness, the prelude,

> we assume, to regain serenity.[42]

Sadrin continues:

> It is of some significance that the great melodramatic scene in which Miss Havisham asks to be forgiven for what she has done should take place 'not in her own room, but . . . in the larger room across the landing.' . . . Miss Havisham's last crossing of the landing is indeed a journey away from selfishness to selflessness and from ceremonies of hate to a ceremony of love, which at last breaks the spell of revenge and vanity.[43]

Even more, this reconciliation is ratified by action in the next scene. Pip leaves Miss Havisham sitting by the fire and as he looks in the window from outside, sees that she is on fire. Rushing up and literally saving the one he has just "saved" through forgiveness, Pip seals the very reconciliation they have just spoken. In the process, Pip himself is burned on his arms and hands. Anny Sadrin again notes the symbolism:

> Miss Havisham's repentance redeems her before she dies, but in teaching Pip forgiveness it spares him a fate like hers. In the following scene she will be burnt to death, but, trying to save her, he will so to speak be burnt to life. Purified by fire, he will henceforth be a new man, loving, tolerant, forgiving.[44]

Miss Havisham dies shortly after from her burns in the fire, but only after she knows Pip's forgiveness. Both Magwitch and Miss Havisham have died, but only after they have been redeemed and reconciled through forgiveness. Indeed, Pip has learned what forgiveness is by giving it to Miss Havisham and then receiving it from Abel Magwitch. Being reconciled to both, Pip then begins his trip back to the forge, seeking forgiveness from Joe.

Reconciliation with Joe

Before Pip can be reconciled with Joe, he has an encounter with Orlick, Joe's evil journeyman. Late at night out on the marshes, Pip is held captive and threatened with death by a drunken Orlick. Waving a fiery torch in Pip's face, Orlick is clearly cast in the role of the devil. Harry Stone writes, "Pip has been lured by Orlick to his lair upon the marshes. His journey to the lair--simultaneously a journey to the underworld and an encounter with the devil--is introduced by foreboding symbolism. . . . Pip is in hell, the captive of the devil."[45] Stone continues:

> . . . salvation can begin only after Pip has been purged by the hellish fires his sins have kindled. Pip has passed safely through hell, but his throbbing arm (throbbing from his previous burning and present trussing and symbolic of his unexpiated sin) is a reminder that he has not yet been regenerated. Some months in the future he must undergo another, spiritual death and rebirth.[46]

Pip is rescued from Orlick, exhausted from the experience as well as from his efforts for Magwitch and Miss Havisham. Appropriately, then, it is none other than Joe Gargery who nurses Pip back to health. Pip remembers, ". . . I did slowly and surely become less weak, and Joe stayed with me, and I fancied I was little Pip again. . . . There was no change whatever in Joe. Exactly what he had been in my eyes then, he was in my eyes still: just as simply faithful, just as simply right."[47]

This physical healing that Joe fosters in Pip

parallels the spiritual healing and sustenance that Joe has provided by support and example throughout the whole novel. George Kennedy notes as much when he speaks of ". . . Joe Gargery, the ultimate vehicle of Pip's salvation. He possesses abundant resources of service, compassion, loyalty, and love, and he is able to use his own sensitive strengths to bolster the faltering Pip."[48]

Mary DeHaven goes one step further, saying,

> Joe, leading a life of brotherly love, charity, and humility, is something of a Christ figure. Sacrificed by Pip for Pip's selfish, materialistic ends, he rises from the grave of abandonment to succor Pip and heal him, physically and spiritually. He rises as well in Pip's esteem as Pip is redeemed.[49]

And it does not seem going too far to see Joe as a type of Christ. Living in a world surrounded by evil, only Joe (and with him, Biddy, his eventual bride) remains untainted by evil. A plain tradesman--a blacksmith parallel to Christ the carpenter--his simple and unfailing love and forgiveness are his trademarks.

George Kennedy concurs, adding,

> Pip invokes Joe . . . as his vehicle of salvation; it is in that relationship that expiation must still be made. . . . Only when Pip returns to the forge himself, seeking Joe and his love, is his penance complete; only then can he begin a new life truly washed, as Dickens conceived of it, in the blood of the lamb.[50]

It is only appropriate that the literal reconciliation between Joe and Pip take place back at the forge. When Pip "confesses" his shortcomings (sin) to Joe, Joe's forgiveness is a foregone conclusion:

> "Oh dear old Pip, old chap, God knows as I forgive you, if I have anythink to forgive!"
> "Amen! And God knows I do!" echoed Biddy.[51]

Even before Pip had arrived back at the forge, he resolved "that I would show . . . how humbled and repentant I came back."[52] As Pip approached his boyhood home, he recalled, "For my heart was softened by my return, and such a change had come to pass, that I felt like one who was toiling home barefoot from distant travel, and whose wanderings had lasted many years."[53]

Certainly Dickens means to remind us here of the great parable of God's forgiveness--the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Especially when we think of Pip's whole story, his life really has paralleled that of the prodigal. After going to the "big city" (London), suffering the disappointments of his "great expectations," and learning about love and forgiveness in the process, he resolves to return home and ends up reconciled in the loving arms of his father.

Conclusion

In the end, we can agree with Joseph Gold's summary. He writes:

> Faced with choices, burdened by fear and obligation, what else is Pip undergoing but the Fall? First Birth, then Fall and finally Redemption through understanding and love: this is the story of *Great Expectations*. Even the hint of the redemption to come is contained in this first chapter, for the boy has the capacity to feel compassion for the man, the compassion that is later to reassert itself when Pip returns to the best impulses of childhood.[54]

There has been a progression. "Each of the stages of Pip's expectations reveals the graduations of his sin and finally the way he is able to extricate himself from it."[55] Only by forgiving and being forgiven has Pip made his way back to the forge, symbolizing the ultimate and complete forgiveness which is from God. As K. J. Fielding points out, "Throughout the last stage of his expectations, Pip grows more and more to realize how much everyone is in need of forgiveness."[56]

Through forgiveness, Magwitch began an incipient salvation in Pip. Pip could thus "save" Miss Havisham. Finally, after going through the "hell" of Orlick's torture, Pip was able to be "fully" saved by Joe. This is perhaps one of Dickens' most unclear presentations of salvation and reconciliation. Joe is the only clear "savior" or Christ-figure. The others, however, are able to "save" each other; thus, salvation is a type of "group effort." This clearly undercuts the idea of Christ being the <u>only</u> savior and the <u>only</u> reconciler. In fact, Dickens' final reconciliation is apart from Joe.

Dickens saves his final point for the last page and the last reconciliation. After all has been said and done, Pip encounters Estella, the girl he first loved at Satis House. Then follows one of two conclusions.[57] What is important about the ending, though, is pointed out by Bert

Hornback when he says,

> Both of them [Pip and Estella] learn finally Dickens's kind of love. . . . For both of them, change has come through adversity and adversity's teaching; that "suffering has been stronger than all other teaching" (GE, p. 460) is the one significant line which occurs in both conclusions. Suffering is what brings them in contact with the world as it is; a suffering world.[58]

This is what Dickens was telling us. They have learned to forgive and they have learned to love; and what else but life and life's adversity has been their teacher?

NOTES FOR CHAPTER VI

1. Bert G. Hornback, "Noah's Arkitecture": A Study of Dickens's Mythology (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1972), p. 125.

2. Ibid., p. 129.

3. Charles Dickens, The Oxford Illustrated Dickens, Great Expectations (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1989), p. 44.

4. Gordon N. Ray, gen. ed., Riverside Studies in Literature (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964), Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction, 2d ed., rev. and enl., by K. J. Fielding, p. 211.

5. Stanley Tick, "Toward Jaggers," Dickens Studies Annual 5 (1976):144.

6. Great Expectations, pp. 6, 8.

7. Ibid., p. 100.

8. Anny Sadrin, Great Expectations, Unwin Critical Library Series (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 94-5.

9. Great Expectations, p. 115.

10. Ibid., p. 123. 11. Tick, p. 141.

12. Great Expectations, p. 105.

13. Harry Stone, "Fire, Hand, and Gate: Dickens' Great Expectations," Kenyon Review 24 (Autumn 1962):669.

14. Great Expectations, p. 141.

15. Fielding, p. 214.

16. Mary Alice DeHaven, "Pip and the Fortunate Fall," Dickens Studies Newsletter 6 (June 1975):44.

17. Great Expectations, p. 51.

18. Ibid., p. 224. 19. Ibid., pp. 292, 380.

20. DeHaven, p. 43.

21. Great Expectations, pp. 52-53.

22. Ibid., p. 378. 23. Ibid., pp. 226-27.

24. Sadrin, p. 228.

25. Jane Vogel, Allegory in Dickens (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1977), pp. 93, 113-14.

26. Great Expectations, p. 199.

27. Geoffrey Thurley, The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 286.

28. Great Expectations, p. 37.

29. Joseph Gold, Charles Dickens: Radical Moralist (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), p. 243.

30. Stone, p. 676. 31. Hornback, p. 133.

32. Great Expectations, p. 304.

33. Ibid., p. 306. 34. DeHaven, p. 45.

35. Great Expectations, p. 424.

36. G. Robert Stange, "Expectations Well Lost: Dickens' Fable for His Time," in The Dickens Critics, eds. George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1954), p. 298.

37. George E. Kennedy, "The Weakened Will Redeemed," The Dickensian 79 (Summer 1983):82.

38. Great Expectations, p. 436.

39. The familiar parable of the Pharisee and the publican is recorded in Luke 18:9-14. Dickens, a man quite familiar with Scripture and especially the life of Christ, would not unintentionally misquote Scripture (as some have thought; see Alexander Welsh, The City of Dickens [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971], esp. p. 108--"In that final scene Dickens blunders, by reversing Christ's parable....") at such a significant point in the novel. See also Dickens' New Testament paraphrase for his children, The Life of Our Lord (London: Association Newspapers Ltd., 1934) where he

correctly paraphrases the parable (pp. 76-77).

40. Stone, pp. 689-90.

41. Great Expectations, p. 377.

42. Sadrin, p. 215. 43. Ibid., p. 238. 44. Ibid.

45. Stone, p. 672. 46. Ibid., p. 674.

47. Great Expectations, pp. 442-43.

48. Kennedy, p. 77.

49. DeHaven, p. 45.

50. Kennedy, p. 77.

51. Great Expectations, p. 455.

52. Ibid., p. 447. 53. Ibid., p. 453.

54. Gold, p. 243. 55. Kennedy, p. 81.

56. Fielding, p. 213.

57. Dickens originally concluded the story with an ending that had Pip and Estella going their separate ways, but each wiser from their experiences in life. A friend convinced Dickens to change the ending, though, so that Pip and Estella remained friends, with Pip stating, "I saw no shadow of another parting from her." (see Great Expectations, p. 460. The original conclusion is included as an "Appendix.") Critics are highly divided on which ending is "better" or better in keeping with the theme of the novel. I think Bert Hornback has cut to the heart of the issue in the comment which serves as the final quote for this chapter.

58. Hornback, p. 129.

CONCLUSION

> Dickens' use of "Gospel elements" in the works studied is both intentional and fundamental to the themes and structures of the novels. The Gospel elements present are no afterthought or coinci-dence but significant in Dickens' intent and meaning. Finally, Dickens' inclusion and use of Gospel elements is a helpful means of relating literature to the true Gospel.

So is the thesis stated in the introductory chapter. Having supported it with both an analysis of Gospel elements in the four selected works and also Dickens' personal view of the Gospel, I end with a few final conclusions.

Perhaps most obvious but necessary to restate is that Gospel elements are present in each of the four novels studied. Dickens himself virtually said as much in the comment that "veneration for the life and lessons of our Saviour" in his works was an intention of his. Moreover, the four novels studied provide ample evidence to attest to the _significant_ role of the Gospel elements in the respective novels.

In _The Pickwick Papers_, Samuel Pickwick is clearly the hero, playing the role of a Christ-figure. He departs from Eden with his "disciples" and his innocence. Only when he is forced to interact with the world does he "redeem" or "save" both himself and Mrs. Bardell. But there is no

really serious threat of evil or sacrifice called for. Thus Pickwick is only a savior in a world that barely seems to need saving.

David Copperfield, on the other hand, is caught in a very real battle between good and evil. The Murdstones, Steerforths, and Heeps would lead him to evil while the Peggottys, Aunt Betsey, and Agnes Wickfield act as good influences and protectors. The ultimate "hero" of David Copperfield is also Christ-like: Agnes becomes David's "agnus" ("Lamb" of God, paralleling Jesus' role) by defeating the Satan-like Uriah Heep. Thus, here is portrayed Christ's victory over Satan by Agnes/Christ saving David from the evil of Uriah/Satan.

A Tale of Two Cities also has a Christ-figure, perhaps the clearest one in all of Dickens. Sydney Carton literally dies on the "cross" of the guillotine in the place of Charles Darnay. Vicariousness and sacrifice come to full expression in this act, also paralleling Christ in Carton's threefold repetition of Christ's words, "I am the resurrection and the life . . . ." Even Carton, though, can save only a few from the reign of evil in the French Revolution.

Finally, Great Expectations highlights the theme of forgiveness. "Salvation" here is inextricably tied to forgiving and being forgiven. Thus Pip can be forgiven by Magwitch and so be enabled to forgive Miss Havisham. Joe "fully" saves Pip by his unconditional forgiveness and most

closely fulfills a Christ-like role. However, this novel is not really about one character saving others; Dickens' message in Great Expectations is most about people perpetuating forgiveness to save each other.

From Agnes Wickfield as David Copperfield's "agnus" to Pickwick and his Pickwickians as Christ and His disciples to Sydney Carton's death for Charles Darnay and even to Joe Gargery's Christ-like life and purity, Christ-figures are present in the novels. Similarly, such dominant themes as forgiveness, sacrificial love, grace, and vicariousness are manifest in many and various ways. In short, none of the four novels is void of Gospel elements.

In conjunction with this--that there are Gospel elements in these works--it must be noted that Gospel elements are not necessarily orthodox presentations of the Gospel from a conservative Christian point of view. Samuel Pickwick is certainly not the type of savior Jesus Christ is: Pickwick was an incomplete savior (many in the Fleet Prison could not be saved by him) who got drunk on occasion. Similarly, Sydney Carton is a man of ill-repute, who can "save" only a handful of people by dying for Charles Darnay. None of Dickens' "saviors" are perfect (as Jesus led a perfect life) and only Sydney Carton must die to save others.[1] One must look to authors like C. S. Lewis for more orthodox Gospel presentations in literature.

However, it should be clearly noted that Dickens did

not intend or achieve a full presentation of the Gospel in any of his works--individually or, necessarily, corporately. We cannot hope to find the subtleties and nuances of Jesus' sublime saving work in the character of Samuel Pickwick or Joe Gargery. There are not parallels to all aspects of Christ's life and death as He lived and died for our salvation; this was not Dickens' intent. All (or even most or even many) of Christ's attributes are not necessarily embodied by Dickens' "redeemers" or "saviors." Neither can we "combine" the characters and themes and heroes and villains of all Dickens' novels and, in that way, hope to emerge with a systematic Dickensian theology or a composite Christ-figure. Elements (pieces or component parts) are what Dickens included in his novels.

Furthermore, Dickens' novels do not follow one specific Gospel "pattern."[2] Dickens had no specific formula for his heroes; they did not come out of one mold. There is no intention to have one theme or moral to his books and then present it in different settings with different characters. Thus, Samuel Pickwick's way of "saving" people is different from Joe Gargery's or Agnes Wickfield's or Sydney Carton's. Dickens' rogues whose evil must be overcome are different also: they vary from the base and crude Uriah Heep and Orlick to the polished Steerforth and the slippery Alfred Jingle. His "saviors" are men and women, rich and poor, educated and uneducated. This testifies to Dickens'

concept of Christianity--anyone can do good and "save" another.

Dickens' major themes are also different. The characters' needs and situations are not always the same. Pip needs forgiveness; David Copperfield needs guidance; Miss Havisham needs love; Charles Darnay needs a "double"; and Mrs. Bardell needs literal redemption, to name a few. Thus the themes of forgiveness in Great Expectations, good (and bad) influence in David Copperfield, vicariousness (or sacrifice) in A Tale of Two Cities, and benevolence in The Pickwick Papers emerge as dominant themes. These name only a few. All these themes are part of the (one and only) Gospel--Christ's saving work of His life and death.

At this point, there is a great urge to ask of Dickens, "Why?" Why did Dickens consciously include these "Gospel elements"--sometimes hazy, unorthodox, incomplete, and inconsistent--in his works? The answer is, in short, uncertain. Authors, like magicians, are wary about explaining their craft in so many words: they are more content to let their readers find meanings on their own. Unlike Scripture, literature can (and usually does) have more than one meaning. One literary interpretation may be as valid as another while both are faithful to the text. In one sense, most meaning that one finds in a novel is valid (as long as it does not contradict the author's "clear" intentions and the "spirit" of the novel).

But this does not mean that we cannot engage in some worthwhile (and even necessary) possibilities of why Dickens included Gospel elements in his works. First, though Dickens was no theologian or evangelist, he did hold up (if not promote) "Christian" morals. At times, in fact, he appeared as somewhat of a preacher. What he wrote were not sermons nor artistic and imaginative allegories or paraphrases of the Gospel or its substance, though. These are novels that allude to the Gospel in theme and (sometimes) plot. An early twentieth English preacher suggested as much in an article about Dickens and Christianity. Rev. W. A. C. Chevalier wrote, ". . . as a weekday preacher [in his novels] Charles Dickens touched more hearts and ameliorated more lives than half the pulpits in the land on any given Sunday."[3] Chevalier continued:

> In one of the newspaper notices at the time of his death Dickens was called an "Apostle of the People," meaning . . . that he had a mission which he fulfilled in a style and fashion of his own, a gospel message, bright, joyous, gladsome, which the people understood . . . for it was the gospel of kindliness, of brotherly love, of sympathy in the widest sense of the word.[4]

This was not just secular humanism, though. It is possible to promote Christian values and/or morals (in the way of secular humanism) without any acknowledgement of Biblical Christianity or Jesus Christ (e.g., a novel promoting Christian ethics with no "Gospel elements"). However, Dickens specifically included Gospel elements/ allusions; there is intent to allude to specific aspects of

the Biblical Gospel.

So we again ask, "Why?" It may be that Dickens' Gospel elements involved readers more closely in the story. To see parallels between Pickwick and Christ might have the effect of engaging readers on a deeper level than merely that of entertainment or intellect. To see Sydney Carton's act as in some way reminiscent of Jesus' saving work may "spiritually" engage the reader and make Dickens' theme have more universal application.

Moreover, it must be remembered that whether a "conservative" Christian considers the beliefs of Dickens or the characters in his novels "orthodox" or true Gospel, Dickens considered himself a Christian. He in no way meant to mock the Gospel or Jesus Christ or present it falsely, but on the contrary, to express veneration for Jesus Christ. Dickens' themes and characters are to remind the reader of the Gospel work of Christ, to jog his memory and create new associations for the Gospel to his "everyday" life. Allusions to the Gospel strike a chord in Christian readers and even non-Christian readers in a Christian culture (such as nineteenth-century England and, one would hope, twentieth-century America). For the Christian reader with the Gospel in the back of his mind, the themes emerge as trium-phant remembrances of the Savior Jesus Christ--as revealed in His full glory and greatness in the Holy Scriptures.

There is temptation for the conservative Christian

to see Dickens as a "false apostle" or a preacher of a different gospel (which is no gospel at all). It is true that Dickens presents a view of the Gospel which the conservative, Biblical Christian cannot wholeheartedly swallow. What Dickens "preaches" or presents in his novels is a sometimes hazy, sometimes inconsistent (perhaps felicitously inconsistent, to put the best construction on his own faith), usually incomplete gospel. Whether this is something that could cause a weak Christian to be led astray from the true Gospel is a debatable point. This is perhaps one caution that must be exercised when dealing with the Gospel in literature. It seems more likely, though, that Gospel elements in a "secular" work of prose can serve well as an introduction for the Gospel rather than a substitution for it.

Related to this is a final question that must be asked: "Of what value is it to find and analyze Gospel elements in works of Charles Dickens?" I would argue that one of the main values (if not _the_ main value) of finding Gospel elements in literature is the "common ground" they provide between "secular" and "sacred." John R. W. Stott, in his book _Between Two Worlds_ (about effective preaching in the twentieth century), states that this common ground is exactly what is necessary for effective preaching. There exists a great cultural chasm between the Biblical Word and world and the twentieth (or any other) century, he main-

tains. Stott suggests that effective preaching (or any communication of the Gospel) needs to build bridges across this chasm. Dickens, it seems, as well as other authors with "Gospel elements" in their works, have begun building these bridges and provide valuable concrete and girders for the bridging of this gap. Whether Dickens or any author ever intended to help build such bridges, they have. This is the value of the Gospel in literature. Not only for the Christian reader but even especially for the non-Christian reader, there can be value in Gospel elements in literature.

Literature is no substitute for the Gospel. It can, however, serve the Gospel by opening up new avenues for Gospel proclamation. Dickens, by including Gospel elements in his novels, is proof that the "sacred" can enter the secular realm and medium and be proclaimed there. The Gospel can permeate culture (and has already in Dickens, Dostoyevsky and others). Francis Rossow has suggested as much in an article titled "Echoes of the Gospel-event in Literature and Elsewhere." He writes:

> God's invasion of our history in the person of His Son, the God-man Christ Jesus, has hit our world with such impact that the ripples have spread out in ever widening, not yet ceasing, circles. Discovering some of the ripples is a pleasurable and edifying activity. And may not the activity also be to the glory of God and His Gospel? Is it too irreverent, in view of the "whatsoever ye do" the passage contains, to amend Paul's words to read: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink [or read], or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31)?[5]

Such is the testimony of much of literature to the Gospel's effect on the world; and such is the testimony of Dickens.

NOTES FOR CONCLUSION

1. Miss Havisham and Abel Magwitch also die. However, they are really not the primary saviors but only "secondary saviors."

2. A Gospel "pattern" may be defined as "Gospel elements" occurring frequently enough in one work to suggest a major theme of the novel or motif. Pickwick's similarities to Christ and the Pickwickians' to the disciples are more Gospel elements than part of a pattern. Though Pickwick shows a number of (other) similarities to Christ, their frequency and importance really only suggest a nominal "pattern" at best.

A work such as _A Tale of Two Cities_, though, with the repetition of the line "I am the resurrection and the life . . ." and the accompanying sacrificial death of Sydney Carton for Charles Darnay combine with sacrifice and vicariousness to give a clear resurrection theme and a Gospel _pattern_ (a pattern even parodied in the person of the "Resurrection Man" Jerry Cruncher).

3. W. A. C. Chevalier, "Dickens and Christianity: A Meditation in 'Poets' Corner'," _The Dickensian_ 2 (April 1906):93.

4. Ibid., p. 96.

5. Francis Rossow, "Echoes of the Gospel-event in Literature and Elsewhere," _Concordia Journal_ 9 (March 1983): 58.

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