

ENTERING INTO THE KINGDOM: CHARLES DICKENS AND THE SEARCH FOR SPIRITUAL REGENERATION



Name: 8116964.PDF

Size: 14.08Mb

Format: PDF

[View/Open](#)

Author

HATTAWAY, KAREN ANN KENNETT

Date

1981

Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

Not only did Charles Dickens respond to the political and social scene of Victorian England, he was touched by the religious climate as well. He was particularly affected by the serious and long term attention given to discussions of doctrines about spiritual regeneration, conversion, and baptism which coincided with his own interest in the "discipline of the human heart" as a prerequisite for personal and social reformation. Although Dickens was significantly touched by the secular humanism of Carlyle, his thought and writing indicates equally important influence by the Evangelical, Sacramental, and Incarnational groups active in nineteenth-century religious life. There appears valuable, and as yet unnoticed, evidence indicating influence on Dicken's thought by Frederick W. Robertson, a Broad Church Anglican who preached in Brighton. Dicken's interest in spiritual rejuvenation and his concern about the role of the church in English life are clearly indicated in his reportage, his letters, and his minor prose. There is even some evidence of his interest in certain of the controversies over baptismal ritual and doctrine that occupied national attention in the 1840's and 1850's. Dickens's interest in spiritual rebirth and baptism is indicated in his fictional creation of complex patterns of baptismal immersion arranged in a typological manner in *Our Mutual Friend* which indicate his increasingly Incarnationalist attitude toward human spiritual growth. In this novel, a pattern of water crossings and water immersions, together with subsidiary motifs of fairy tales and biblical allusion, reaches its most potent and resonant development. Beginning early in his fiction, the pattern of patriarchal "god father" and the plot element of water crossing that figures prominently in novels like *Martin Chuzzlewit* becomes a pattern of water immersion accompanied by growing emphasis on the responsibility of each character to make his own life rather than to accept the imposed scheme of a benevolent "father" figure. As Eugene Wrayburn, John Harmon/Rokesmith, Lizzie Hexam, and Bella Wilfer become regenerate, they acknowledge the fact of their shared mortality and recognize the reciprocal mutuality that must characterize regenerated human relationships. Consequently, they work together to establish a redeemed community within the City that appears able to touch the world of Society and require it to notice their refusal to accept its values. Finally, Dickens's exploration of the possibilities of human regeneration permitted him a way to work toward the reunion of his own personal psychic disjunction arising from his childhood "Blacking Warehouse" trauma. Approaching a resolution to his own psychic disjunction, Dickens celebrates the baptismal recognition of the necessity of unselfish love for the redemption of humanity and himself.

Keyword

English literature

Citation

HATTAWAY, KAREN ANN KENNETT. "ENTERING INTO THE KINGDOM: CHARLES DICKENS AND THE SEARCH FOR SPIRITUAL REGENERATION." (1981) Diss., Rice University. <https://hdl.handle.net/1911/15619>.

Metadata

[Show full item record](#)

Collections

[Rice University Electronic Theses and Dissertations \[13084\]](#)

Dickens, Charles, 1812-1870; Cruikshank, George, 1792-1878; Browne, Hablot Knight, 1815-1882; Frye, Northrop. Publication date. 190 V.1. A tale of two cities. A child's history of England -- v.2. The Pickwick papers -- v.3. Oliver Twist. The uncommercial traveller -- v.4. Christmas books. Master Humphrey's clock. The mystery of Edwin Drood -- v.5. Great expectations. Reprinted pieces -- v.6. Dombey and son -- v.7. Nicholas Nickleby -- v.8. David Copperfield -- v.9. Christmas stories -- v.10. Bleak house -- v.11. Hard times. Charles Dickens (1812 - 1870). English novelist. We have the following works by Charles Dickens Search for Charles Dickens at Amazon.com. [Back to Author Index]. Search for text within these titles: (c) 2003-2012 LiteraturePage.com and Michael Moncur. All rights reserved. For information about public domain texts appearing here, read the copyright information and disclaimer. Regeneration The Holy Spirit Giving Life Born Again, Produced By Holy Spirit, Types Of Christ Telling The Truth New Birth, Described As Baptism, in the Gospels The Outpouring Of The Holy Spirit, Jesus Statements About The Spirit. Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Luke 18:17. Verse Concepts.