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IN MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT.

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CONVERSION AS THEME, STYLE, AND PURPOSE

IN MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the religious imagery in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. I have chosen to investigate the parallels between Dickens' use of theme, structure, character, tone, image, and scene, and those of the Bible and of the popular preaching tradition and religious doctrines of his day--Protestant and Catholic, Calvinist, Evangelical, Broad Church and Unitarian.

The importance of further research into the nature of Dickens' religion was a major conclusion of the 1962 Dickens Symposium in Boston, at which time George Ford suggested the study of nineteenth-century sermons because Dickens heard them, and a general historical examination of Dickens' views as "representative" of his age and as more than superficial sentimental Christianity. This matter of Dickens' relationship to religion and to his contemporaries regarding religious matters is a major part, Ford insists, of Dickens' role as a Victorian artist.¹ Each of these aspects of the subject is examined in this thesis.

The world of Martin Chuzzlewit will be shown to be intensely individual and Victorian, and at the same time, a reenactment in nineteenth-century dress of the Christian hierarchy of characters and pattern of events.

To look at Dickens' novel only in terms of its religious dimension is limiting; it is also expansive in the ties that it uncovers between Dickens and his world and between Dickens and his own metaphysical consciousness. Such an approach is creative, and, according to J. Hillis Miller, ought to be:

The redefinition of a work of literature by placing it in one context or another and thereby modifying it is perhaps the essential act of criticism.²

I wish to express a deep sense of obligation to Dr. Robert L. Patten, who has contributed both tireless sympathy and profound knowledge to the creation of this thesis. I would also like to thank my parents, to whom I am indebted for an early love of literature and for continuing moral and financial support during my graduate study.

²DCPPFD, pp. 25, 28.
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CHAPTER I

THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

The Bible was to the nineteenth century what the classics were for the eighteenth century—the major literary source of narratives, language, and imagery with which the cosmos and man's role in it were most often interpreted. The most popular book of Dickens' day, it was the basis for a tremendous oral tradition as well, in the form of weekly and often bi-weekly sermons, family devotionals, and daily conversation. In the words of one Victorian historian, E. E. Kellett, the society generally "knew its Bible."

Apart from the Church or Chapel services, with their First and Second lessons, family prayer, with its Old Testament chapter in the morning, and its New Testament in the evening, . . . the children were greatly encouraged to read the Bible in private. . . . The Bible was /also/ a stock quotation-book, and the slightest references to it were appreciated. . . . I knew people who could repeat the genealogy from Adam to Christ.¹

Horton Davies adds that family devotionals were "not exclusively Evangelical"; High Church families also gathered. The use of the Bible in the language of public affairs is best illustrated in R. J. Cruikshank's description of Gladstone: when discussing right and wrong in mundane affairs, the famous statesman would become transformed "with supernatural heat."

He would cry out as for the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, and he all but forced men to anticipate the audit of Judgment Day. . . . Religion to Gladstone was like ether, which penetrates all substances, all temporalities.

The written word was equally important to popular religion. Nineteenth-century English Protestants believed man could reach divine grace through the printed page, and the popular ritual of devotional reading inspired an incredible outpouring of publications. Richard Altick in *The English Common Reader* describes this voluminous amount of "admonition, guidance, and assurance" literature, of which the Bible was the main item. The sales of this largest single category of British publications included sixteen million Bibles and Testaments between

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1804 and 1854. Over twelve million copies of one author's religious tracts were sold. The annual output of the Religious Tract Society by 1861 was around twenty million, "in addition to thirteen million copies of periodicals." Religious literature was sold from house to house and throughout the countryside. Often the only available reading matter in poor homes, it became the means by which many learned to read. In Victorian homes, rich and poor, works of moral and theological guidance constituted the major body of children's literature. Countless spiritual biographies appeared, the narrative element being the most popular vehicle for a moral or religious message.⁴

The counterpart of the employment of narrative in popular religions writings was the century's conception of literature as religion. Fiction, because it fuses spiritual truth with personal experience, freed the nineteenth-century believer from a growing skepticism toward orthodoxy and formalism. Literature served both to strengthen faith in religion and to impose a sacred dimension upon the everyday. Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra* are both written from feeling and experience rather than from theological systems; and it was from these sources, as well as from individual prophetic voices like John Ruskin and

Thomas Carlyle, that the nineteenth-century popular mind gleaned its faith. The prose of these last two figures is rich with Biblical language and spirit. Inflamed by the writings of the Hebrews, Ruskin in Unto This Last (1862) takes verbal flight on the wings of the prophet Amos, who warned,

I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes. (Amos 2.6)\(^5\)

Typified by religious revival, which forced man to look again at the true spirit within external forms, and by Biblical scholarship and scientific discovery, which shook the grounds of belief with earthquake tremors, the Victorian period emerges as a time when it was almost impossible, even for the atheist or agnostic, not to indulge in some form of religious speculation.

Because of his own reticence resulting from a deep-seated skepticism toward religious professions of any kind, and because of his tendency toward humor and irony in describing the religious pretensions and uncharitableness of his day, the importance of religion to Dickens is often overlooked. Earle Davis sees his idealism as also hidden "behind a salesman's mask." Dickens' inclination to keep the deeply significant below the surface is the major hypothesis of Forster's biography. Forster insightfully

proclaims that his fictional creations, which, like his religion, appeared to leave little mark on their author, in truth "formed the whole of that inner life which essentially constituted the man."\(^6\)

Dickens consistently took the trouble to defend himself against accusations of irreverence or lack of belief. In reply to such criticism regarding a passage from *Pickwick*, he insists: "That every man who seeks heaven must be born again, in good thoughts of his Maker, I sincerely believe." Writing to the Reverend Thomas Robinson in April 1841, he reaffirms his constant moral purpose:

> While you teach in your walk of life the lessons of tenderness you have learnt in sorrow, trust me that in mine, I will pursue cruelty and oppression, the enemies of all God's creatures, of all codes and creeds, so long as I have the energy of thought, and the power of giving it utterance.\(^7\)

Within his intimate circle were a number of clergymen, and with these clerical friends he frequently exchanged such letters on moral and theological topics. Forster mentions "the Reverend James White, with whose name and its associations my mind


connects inseparably many of Dickens's happiest hours"; and Edgar Johnson notes his "lasting friendship with The Reverend Edward Tagart."\(^8\)

Friends and critics have found Dickens to be not only a novelist sent by God to expose society's "many evils and many woes," as the great Evangelical Shaftsbury described him, but also a sincere believing Christian.\(^9\) John Forster insisted that Dickens was never truly at odds with the essential dogma of the Established Church of England, and that throughout his life he maintained an "unswerving faith in Christianity itself, apart from sects and schisms."\(^10\) Dostoyevsky called him "that great Christian." Sylvère Monod uses the phrase "sincere believer." Angus Wilson finds him "a devout and practicing Christian" who valued deeply "all Christ's words," who believed in an afterlife in Heaven, and who created in his novels "essentially a Christian New Testament world, with transcendental overtones."\(^11\)


\(^9\) Shaftsbury is quoted by Cruikshank, p. 178.

\(^10\) Forster, II, 59.

His novels spring directly from the spiritual soil of this personal belief. Steven Marcus terms them an embodiment of Dickens' conviction that life on earth is the stage upon which our salvation or damnation is not only determined but also enacted—a conviction which represents one of the cultural tendencies of even the 'agnostic' mind in the nineteenth-century.\textsuperscript{12}

Pickwick Papers is a thoroughly Christian novel, according to Marcus; G. R. Stange concludes that "the final moral vision of Great Expectations has to do with the nature of sin and guilt"; and, in spite of J. Hillis Miller's definition of Dickens' world as neither orthodox Christian nor God-filled, he ultimately concedes that Dickens's novels are religious in that they demand the regeneration of man and society through contact with something transcending the merely human.

In Bleak House, Esther achieves this regeneration for herself and others, according to Miller,

\begin{quote}
from her direct relation, through prayer, to divine grace. Esther is the avenue through which
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12}Dickens from Pickwick to Dombey (New York: Basic Books, 1965), p. 77.
God's goodness, otherwise transcendent, descends into the human world.13

Dickens' own life and letters are full of expressions of faith in the major tenets of orthodox Christianity—namely, the belief in a personal God, in the supremacy of spirit over matter, in a divine purpose for the universe, in man's role in realizing that purpose, and in the necessity for 'conversion'. Even in his lighter business correspondence he is capable of identifying himself with the Christian faith: "Persecute me as you will, I am a Christian," he writes to Messrs. Bradbury and Evans in the summer of 1839. In a more serious vein he writes to the Reverend Robinson, "There are more roads to Heaven, I am inclined to think, than any Sect believes. . . ." His conviction that man must be reborn in order to reach Heaven is expressed in the reply regarding Pickwick, quoted above.14

A "regular attendant" at the foundling chapel while living on Doughty Street, Dickens found church-going a normal part of life. During his vacation in America in 1842, he writes to Forster:

I go to church for quiet, and there is


a violent rush to the neighborhood
of the pew I sit in, and the clergy-
man preaches at me.15

With the New Testament as a guide, he taught his children
Christian values, and in the 1840's he wrote a children's version
for them entitled The Life of Our Lord. He presented a copy to
each son as he left home, and with it a letter of Christian
admonition and guidance. In a representative passage from one
of these epistles, the son is told to obey the golden rule of
"our Saviour" and to read the New Testament he has been given:

It teaches you the best lessons by
which any human creature, who tries
to be truthful and faithful to duty,
can possibly be guided.

Dickens asks his son to

. . . remember that you have never at
home been harassed about religious
observances, or mere formalities. . . .
I now most solemnly impress upon you
the truth and beauty of the Christian
Religion, as it came from Christ Him-
self. . . . The more we are in earnest
as to feeling it, the less we are dis-
posed to hold forth about it.

In his own will, written twelve months before his death,
Dickens again professes faith in Christ and appeals to his
children to live by His Gospel:

I commit my soul to the mercy of God,
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;

15Letters, ed. House and Storey, II, 34n; Johnson, CD,
p. 383.
and I exhort my dear children humbly
to try to guide themselves by the
teaching of the New Testament in its
broad spirit, and to put no faith in
any man's narrow construction of its
letter here or there. . . .

The spirit and message of Dickens' theological exclama-
tions are echoed in the choric backdrop of his age, in the forms
of Evangelicalism and the Broad Church movement. A spiritual
revival was erupting at the heart of his culture during the
1830's and 1840's, and bringing with it an atmosphere of in-
clusiveness, a dependence on the authority of the Bible, and an
emphasis on feeling as the source of faith. Evangelicalism,
which the historian, John Moorman calls "the essence of Vic-
torianism," stressed "the authority of the Scriptures," and
"the priesthood of all believers." The greatest emphasis was
on 'conversion', which meant "a personal religious experience
of a new birth," and a powerful immediate awareness of the
divine as a personal force within one.

Evangelicals shared with Dickens a belief in warmth,
sincerity, spontaneity, and "the intimacy of a close fellowship,"
qualities which Horton Davies finds embodied in the early
Methodist worship service. Religion was subjective and feeling

\footnote{Forster, II, 241; III, 484-85; II, 60.}

\footnote{A History of the Church in England (London: Morehouse-
of Christianity (New York: Harper, 1953), pp. 1019, 1169; see
also Davies, pp. 210, 214, 303.}
was stressed. Their Christianity was New Testament in nature, emphasizing social reform and increased lay power. "...They must have seemed to have recaptured the lost radiance of the New Testament faith itself," Davies exclaims.\(^{18}\)

The effect of the religious revival was to shift the theological focus from Calvinistic exclusiveness to universal grace for all through conversion. "Under revival preaching," Kenneth Latourette records, "the inherited Calvinism was weakened, with its doctrine that only the elect could repent." Broad Churchmen also desired comprehensiveness, charity, and tolerance; and their view on this, as well as a number of other issues, was shared by F. D. Maurice, one of the century's most influential theologians.\(^{19}\)

Nineteenth-century Evangelicals, Broad Churchmen, and Maurice also agreed with each other and with Dickens regarding the return of religion to everyday life. Latourette describes the Evangelicals as "a new kind of fellowship" with a social conscience; and Maurice finds the major assumption of the Anglican Prayer Book to be "that the spiritual is also the practical--that it belongs not more to the temple than to the

\(^{18}\)Davies, pp. 190, 182, 197; see also Latourette, pp. 1020, 1022.

\(^{19}\)Latourette, pp. 1181; Davies, pp. 285, 297.
counting-house and the workshop."²⁰

Re-emphasis on feeling and imagination and the contemplation of one's own experiences was the century's major defense in rescuing the faith from the attacks of Biblical scholarship and scientific discovery. Maurice stresses the worship and service of God as opposed to the growing tendency to analyze Him. Tennyson, an early Broad Churchman, asserts in In Memoriam:

I found Him not in world or sun,  
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye.

His assurance comes rather from the knowledge that "I have felt."²¹

Davies calls Tennyson the Broad Church's movement's "most distinguished poet"; but he dwells on Coleridge as "the great progenitor of the movement," particularly in his belief that feeling and imagination are the real sources of faith, that Christianity is a process of living rather than a theory, and that truth is finally more important than Christianity. In Aids to Reflection, Coleridge insists:

He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or Church better

²⁰Latourette, pp. 1020, 1022; Maurice is quoted by Davies, p. 305.

than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all.\textsuperscript{22} One of Dickens' major juxtapositions of character is the man of verbal theory versus the man of genuine inner religious feeling, and he dramatizes repeatedly the specific stages of degeneration alluded to by Coleridge. Seth Pecksniff in Martin Chuzzlewit is Dickens' most brilliant example.

Beyond believing, with his age, in the tenets of Gospel Christianity, Dickens was intensely aware of the mythic, spiritual vibrations within the world. Supernatural forces are incarnated in Nature and in the pattern of human events. Describing to Forster his descent into the basin of Horseshoe Falls in 1842, he associates tremendous natural energy with the divine: "It would be hard for a man to stand nearer God than he does there."\textsuperscript{23} The later novels convey, according to A. J. O. Cockshut, "a vaguely-conceived but powerfully felt conviction of divine power and destiny." Forster finds pre-eminent throughout Dickens' life a delight in providential interrelationships between people:

On coincidences, resemblances, and surprises of life, Dickens liked especially


\textsuperscript{23}Forster, I, 404.
to dwell. . . . The world, he would say, was so much smaller than we thought it; we were all so connected by fate without knowing it; people supposed to be far apart were so constantly elbowing each other; and tomorrow bore so close a resemblance to nothing half so much as to yesterday. 24

Angus Wilson and Edgar Johnson attribute to the influence of Charles' nurse, Mary Weller, his very early and intense feelings regarding the world of spirit. Johnson records that, at eleven years of age, with poverty encroaching,

Charles began to hear of a mysterious and ominous something called 'The Deed', which he tremulously confounded with one of those satanic compacts in the tales with which Mary Weller had terrified him or with the dark deeds of the witches in Macbeth. What dreadful thing had his kind father done? What awful fate was about to descend upon him? The child's imagination shuddered with uncertainty and apprehension. 25

Charles went to lyings-in with his nurse, and on one of these occasions, when he refused to contribute the contents of his pocket to the collection, he was told he "must dismiss all expectations of going to Heaven." Wilson marks this experience as the beginning of Dickens' "lifelong aversion" for "Chapel Christianity with its hellfire sermons." 26 The clerical


25Johnson, CD, p. 28

26Wilson, World, pp. 24-34.
representatives of this negative theology appear frequently in Dickens' fiction, beginning with the service in *Sunday Under Three Heads* (1836). Men of grotesque features, they are as Jack Lindsay describes them, "oily characters of unmitigated hypocrisy and greed, crooks and parasites of the most revolting kind."\(^{27}\)

Like many nineteenth-century Christians, Dickens rejected total allegiance to any one system and its exponents, and reached back to the original source and record of all Judeo-Christian theologies—the Bible. Along with his contempt for the exclusiveness of sectarianism, and his disgust with "clerical bigotry and intolerance," Dickens gave his best fictional expression to a horror of joyless Old Testament Calvinism, with its dark visions of sin and punishment initiated by an avenging, arbitrary, and transcendental Jehovah.\(^{28}\) It was, in fact, the theological split between this view of the world and that of New Testament humanism presided over by an imminent forgiving Father, and not the more publicized political and institutional division between the Established Church and Evangelicalism, which captured the literary imaginations of the nineteenth century. The


\(^{28}\)Lindsay, *CD*, pp. 430, 39; see also *Letters*, ed. House and Storey, II, 257.
dramatic possibilities of this theological debate were exploited with tremendous effect by such writers as Charlotte Brontë, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville. In *David Copperfield*, dark vengeful Mr. Murdstone is contrasted with the meek New Testament ideal, Mr. Chillip; and the idolatrous Mrs. Clegg crumbles with her wicked house to make way for the true spirit of Christian love embodied in Little Dorrit. In letters regarding the education of children and of reformed women, Dickens strikes out against any method based on "the censorious thundering of the more vengeful parts of the Old Testament," and any effort "to hold the source of inconceivable mercy and goodness perpetually up to them as an avenging and wrathful God. . . ."²⁹

Critics and biographers are inclined to sum up Dickens' own life in the metaphor of Biblical evolution from Old Testament to New—the Eden of his Chatham days; the Hell of poverty and the blacking factory; his struggles up the Protestant hill of difficulty meeting financial and literary demands made upon him; and the regained Eden, the new spiritualized community based on New Testament ideals, the new Jerusalem fantasized at the conclusion of his novels. Jack Lindsay refers to this Dickensian ending as a "lost heaven of love" and as a "dream Eden." Dickens' life, as reconstructed by Edgar Johnson, is a three-part religious pattern of Eden, the exile journey, and home:

Follow the sensitive, imaginative child living in a bright-colored world of happiness; the drop into an abyss of an absolute despair; the rescue just in time to spare his nature from being coarsened or his courage from being broken, and the healing reprieve after that agonizing experience of cosmic injustice.³⁰

Guided by the precept and example of the hero of the New Testament, Dickens acted the role of healer-host to the poor and outcast, becoming involved in philanthropic endeavors with Miss Coutts and others. J. M. Connell recognizes that "like the Master, too, he was perpetually finding the kingdom of God in unexpected quarters." Through his journalism he asserted, as Jesus did, that the Old Law's decayed forms must be reborn in a new humanitarian spirit. He admonishes the Sunday legislators, in the conclusion to Sunday Under Three Heads, not to distort the Scriptures, and to remember the Master's words: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man to serve the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27) Of the Bible itself, Dickens is quoted as saying to an American racist, "...if any man can prove to me that it sanctioned slavery, I would place no further credence in it."³¹

⁳⁰Lindsay, CD, pp. 41, 50, 62, 81, 134-35, 313; Johnson, CD, p. 83; see also G. K. Chesterton, Charles Dickens, the Last of the Great Men (New York: Readers Club, 1942), pp. 20, 25; For Dickens' own description of his childhood as "Paradise" and the exile of an innocent "Cain," see Forster, I, 55, 59.

Sylvere Monod and Angus Wilson cogently argue that the New Testament and particularly the story-telling art of Jesus's parables are major influences on Dickens' style.  

Contrary to most critical opinion, however, Dickens is not simply a man of the Gospels. His style is equally vibrant with Old Testament overtones and specific references. "Perhaps the underlying irony of his life," Angus Wilson states,

is that a man who believed so deeply in the New Testament virtues, in the Sermon on the Mount, in humanity, forgiveness and mercy, who hated so much the angry God of the Old Testament, should have had so much of Jehovah in him (of the benevolent Jehovah as well as the fierce one) -- but then so did Jesus.  

Like the Hebrew prophets and their nineteenth-century counterparts--Melville, Carlyle, and Ruskin--Dickens issues a warning of social doom followed by consolation to the individual repentant heart. Jeremiah prophesies that Jehovah will destroy the Temple at Jerusalem, but in the interest of true religion, as Nathalia Wright recounts in Melville's Use of the Bible:

> The religion envisaged by Jeremiah... is one in which the old law of 'the sins of the fathers' is superseded by a 'new covenant' with each individual.

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33 Wilson, World, p. 222.
It is the beginning of the New Testament doctrine of personal salvation, quoted by Jesus himself. The law is now written in the heart of a man. . . . \(^{34}\)

Taylor Stoehr finds in Dickens' novels a symmetrical and cyclical structure of overlapping patterns which function to keep at a distance through ritual and ordered formula a world that is, in reality, magically alive and threatening. Freud gives the same explanation for the origin of Old Testament theology: the personifying and deifying of Nature in order to deal with its more terrifying aspects, explaining it in terms of an ordered spiritual law. The world of Dickens, like that of the Hebrew authors, is elemental, mysterious, and subjective. The line between the seen and the unseen is almost indistinguishable in the dreams, portents, supersensitive natures, and miraculous events. \(^{35}\)

Dickens' style is also Biblical in that it is concrete and metaphoric rather than abstract and analytical. He uses what Wright calls a favorite Hebrew device--the development of a thesis "by repetition instead of analysis, a practice which


often led the Biblical writers into excesses of language and imagery:

At times the spirit of the writer seems to become fired by the situation he is describing; the narrative is interrupted while he bursts into song, and not until he has unburdened himself is the story resumed. Familiar examples of this phenomenon in the Old Testament are the song of Moses and the Israelites after crossing the Red Sea and the song of Deborah.\(^{36}\)

Such outbursts occur frequently in Dickens; his loose form moves easily from narrative to lyric to didactic. Full of parallels and violent juxtapositions, of echoes and refrains and incremental structures built on a handful of contrasting images, Dickens' style is also Biblical in its structural use of character.\(^{37}\) Dickens' personages repeat certain thematic characteristics and reflect upon one another and upon the theme in the same way that Adam and Jonah prefigure Christ in Biblical narrative.

To these Biblical devices Dickens adds humor and irony, naturalistic scenes, and complicated suspenseful plots. The Bible is the cornerstone for him, however, as it is for his age.

\(^{36}\) Wright, p. 171.

\(^{37}\) Monod, pp. 30-46.
It is his literary link with the universe and with his own deepest spiritual concerns. Out of 845 quotations listed by James S. Stevens in *Quotes and References in Charles Dickens*, 365 come from the Bible; and his list, although extremely enlightening at the time of publication in 1929, is far from complete, as the ensuing analysis of *Martin Chuzzlewit* will show. Biblical strands of theme, plot, style, and character appear in the fabric of all Dickens' writings, both professional and personal; and he incorporates these elements with an ease that indicates great familiarity. Dickens' early penname, "Boz," was a comic form of "Moses," borrowed from Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and even before its use as a pseudonym, it was a familiar household word in the Dickens home. Throughout his personal correspondence Dickens' mind and pen flow smoothly from daily experiences to Biblical analogues and phraseology, such as "Cain," "Paradise," "Eden," "the Ark," "this land-ark," "Heaven," the "Creator," "the murder of Abel, and the Deluge," "Isaac," "Abraham," "the light. . . some more majestic bushel," "a fatted calf," "celestial host," "Eve and the Serpent," "Babel," "the apostles," "the Good Samaritan," "Hell," "the Flood," "Samson" and "the Temple," "Noah's ark," and "the Ark 'after the subsidence of the Deluge.'" In letters written to an affectionate friend named Mary Boyle, he signs himself "Joseph" or

38 (Boston: Christopher, 1929), passim; Monod, p. 30.
"Joe." 39

Besides the endless references to specific Biblical images, names, and events, Dickens uses phrases which echo vocabulary and syntax. Of his daughter's decision to marry an Italian, he remarks, "As my father would observe, she has sown and must reap." After viewing London's prisons, he writes: "I wish we were all in Eden again--for the sake of these toiling creatures." In an article in The Examiner (August 19, 1848) on "The Niger Expedition," admonishing England to solve her own social disasters before looking abroad, he exclaims: "To your tents, O Israel! but see that they are your own tents!" Regarding his continuing indignation toward those who turn for daily inspiration to The Court Circular rather than to the New Testament, he affirms: "...with God's leave, I shall walk in the same sense of outrage all the days of my life...." Disgusted that working people were exempted from enjoying Sunday entertainment by the Methodists, Dickens notes the inclusion of "not only the stranger within the gates, but cattle of every description, including Laundresses." 40


Paraphrasing humorously from the Anglican Prayer Book, he explains to a friend whom he has not recently encountered: "We have left unmet the people whom we ought to have met, and we have met the people whom we ought not to have met, and there seems to be no help in us." Declining an invitation, he pleads in the Biblical idiom, "Forgive the penitent and weeping Boz." Accepting another, he adds, "but at what hour the Coach starts, this Deponent knoweth not,—though he verily believes it is 10 from the Railroad."\(^{41}\)

One also encounters the major themes of the Old and New Testaments in Dickens' novels: exile and inheritance, sowing and reaping, false external forms and true inner spirit, money and hypocrisy, sin and sacrifice, love and pride, social decay and true community, fathers and children, death and resurrection, redemption and damnation. His theological vision is a paradox of idealism and absurdity, as any effort to fuse the real and the ideal may be. Like Jesus, he undertook to redeem his society by externalizing his vision—by fusing matter and spirit. In his sermon preached before Queen Victoria in 1857, John Caird stresses the fact that "to spiritualize what is material, to Christianize what is secular—this is the noble achievement of Christian principle." The interaction of matter and spirit

\(^{41}\)Letters, ed. Dexter, II, 551; Letters, ed. House and Storey, II, 74, 35.
in Dickens and in the nineteenth-century sermon renders all life metaphoric, often to a ludicrous degree. "...Detail to him was never neutral," Donald Fanger perceptively notes. Dickens indicates his own purpose in the following lines which he quotes in a letter in November 1840 and again in a speech in February 1842:

Find tongues in trees, books in running brooks, Sermons in stones, and good in everything. 42

Dickens' novels, which embody a specific design and purpose, recall John 1.14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. . . . ". By this incarnation of spirit, in turn, the world of matter and flesh is redeemed:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John 12.24)

Style becomes theme, and conversion is the essence of both. It is Dickens' desire, beneath "the salesman's mask," to change the hearts of his readers in the eternal now of conversion theology. Edgar Johnson finds the narrator of A Christmas Carol identifying himself with spirit; he is a divine intermediary counseling a change of heart. Scrooge sees, understands, and responds to

these symbols of spirit. Others of Dickens' characters, such as Jonas Chuzzlewit and Montague Tigg, are too limited in imaginative insight to see the divine in the world around them. In these narratives, as in the medieval morality play, with its equally obtuse protagonists, it thus becomes the insight of the reader or audience that is appealed to. The medieval and Dickensian genres present heightened images of ourselves. The most significant level of time in both thus becomes the eternal now when God enters history and when man is called upon to be reborn.\textsuperscript{43}

Conversion is at the core of Dickens' style, his subject, and his purpose. Dickens' narrator, because his intent is to move the reader emotionally, works to pull him in, alternating between voices that recall the thunderings of the Old Testament, the gentle healing tone of Jesus, and the lyrical praise of the Psalmist. The oratorical quality and rhetorical excesses of Dickens' style—the direct address, the declamatory tendency, the lapses into blank verse—have been noted by major critics including George Ford and Robert Garis.\textsuperscript{44} The popular oral


tradition which dominated his culture and from which he is likely to have drawn major persuasive devices in the sermon. The central image conveyed by the obituary material at his death is one of "a teacher sent from God," writing in the parabolic mode of the sermon. 45 A French critic to the period calls him "a great religious teacher." In a lighter vein, George Gissing says of Dombey and Son, ". . . his writing desk becomes a pulpit and is soundly thumped"; and, in a letter of April 1856 to Forster, Dickens humorously describes a foregoing moral outburst as having "the appearance of a small sermon." The heart of Dickens’ creative method, according to Forster, is the connection of

   singularities and eccentricities which ordinary life is apt to reject or overlook, with the appreciation that is deepest and the laws of insight that are the most universal. . . . It was the secret of the hope he had that his books might help to make people better. . . . 46

A revival of popular preaching occurred between 1740 and 1830, and its two major figures, John Wesley (1703-1791) and George Whitefield (1714-1770), affected the very centers of

45 Benjamin Jowett, The Times, June 20, 1870, p. 14; Jowett is quoted by Ford, Readers, p. 109; for Victorian affirmations of Dickens’ religious purpose, see also Forster, III, 383-84n.

religious orthodoxy. Both remained loyal to the Church of England, and Whitefield preached to High Church gatherings as well as Low.\textsuperscript{47} Wesley tended to be ethical and didactic; Whitefield preferred the narration and application of Biblical material. Conversion and resurrection were main themes in Wesley's sermons, and the subjects of his hymns are also found again in Dickens' fiction:

the return of the prodigal, . . .
the 'pleasantness of religion,' . . .
the goodness of God, the crisis of judgment, . . .the alternatives of heaven and hell, . . .the hollowness of formal religion, and. . .the greatness of inward religion.

Like Dickens, Wesley's religion was based solely on the Gospels:

"By preaching the law I mean explaining and enforcing the commands of Christ comprised in the Sermon on the Mount." He says elsewhere,

I take Religion to be, not the bare saying over of so many prayers, morning and evening, in public or in private, not anything superadded now and then to a careless or worldly life; but a constant ruling habit of Soul, a renewal of our minds in the image of God, a recovery of the divine likeness, a still-increasing conformity of heart and life to the pattern of our most holy Redeemer.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{47}Davies, p. 174.

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., pp. 153, 202, 235; The Selected Letters of John Wesley, ed. F. C. Gill (New York: Philosophical Society, 1956), p. 27; Wesley is quoted by Davies, pp. 194-95.
Whitefield exploited the dramatic incidents with which the Old Testament abounds, incidents upon which Dickens also draws: "the banishment of Adam and Eve from Paradise," and the narratives of Abraham, Moses, and Jacob. It was his style, however, which most profoundly influenced the popular preaching tradition of Dickens' age. The effectiveness of his pulpit deliverances depended upon such rhetorical devices as the formal introduction to an imaginative flight, antithesis, the intermingling of long and short sentences, and the enforcing of a point by a pithy saying; counter-attacks upon his critics by way of declamations; the comic interlude in which wit, satire, whimsy, humour, and even puns were used; the direct form of address to individuals or to groups in the auditory and particular applications in the exhortations of his sermons; the great range of his appeal to sentiment, arousing pity (he was a master of pathos), indignation, or terror, and the use of homely and telling illustrations. . . .

All of these are found in Dickens' prose as well: the formal lyrical interruption to narrative, direct address and declamation, juxtaposition, rhythmic sentences, summary phrases, proverbs, humor in all forms, and a wide range of extreme sentiments. Dickens also shared this charismatic figure's brilliance of presentation, which included, according to

49 Davies, pp. 165, 159-60, 162-63.
Horton Davies, a "magnificent bell-like voice" and "the whole range of an actor's gestures."

The brevity of the sermon form forced Whitefield to fuse narrative illustration with explicit admonition:

Come, ye dead, Christless, unconverted sinners, come and see the place where they laid the body of the deceased Lazarus; behold him laid out, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, locked up and stinking in the dark cave, with a great stone placed on the top of it! ... Perhaps thou hast lain in this state, not only four days, but many years, stinking in God's nostrils.

Within the novel form, Dickens is able to describe in lengthy narrative the dark, decaying state of Jonas Chuzzlewit, who finally becomes inescapably "dead, dead, dead." The novelist's general metaphors, pattern, and purpose, however, are the same as those of the famous Evangelical preacher. The warning inherent in the example of Lazarus is articulated in Dickens' novel by Old Martin Chuzzlewit regarding Seth Pecksniff:

... take heed that having cast off all whom you might have bound to you, and tenderly, you do not become in your decay the instrument of such a man as this and waken in another world to the knowledge of such wrong as would

50 Ibid., p. 174.

51 Whitefield is quoted by Davies, p. 171.
embitter Heaven itself, if wrong or you could ever reach it!\textsuperscript{52}

Dickens' age was permeated with the ideas, style, and spirit of this popular oral tradition. Prevalent as well was a substantial body of literary satire on its representatives and particularly its most prominent and influential figure, Whitefield. His appearance, gestures, favorite phraseology, and doctrines were caricatured in The Minon, an eighteenth-century play by the comic actor, Samuel Foote, which ran for ten years.\textsuperscript{53} The fictional clergyman in Dickens' Sunday Under Three Heads conveys an equally ludicrous combination of message, expression, and gesture. Dickens' most successful contribution to the tradition of anti-clerical satire, however, is a character who is in actuality not a clergyman at all, Seth Pecksniff.

Though Dickens ridiculed the mannerisms and emotionalism of the Evangelical service, his fictional style reflects a number of its qualities. This brief discussion also makes clear that this popular tradition offered more varied devices of spiritual persuasion than the most often mentioned characteristics of terror, gloom, and great length. In fact, Dickens

\textsuperscript{52}Charles Dickens, The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867), pp. 496-504. Hereafter cited as MC.

\textsuperscript{53}Davies, p. 176.
appears either to deliberately draw upon or to unconsciously absorb religious elements from all available sources—his own experience, current religious theory and dogma, the Bible, and the sermon. The resulting Christian convictions and stylistics in turn come together within a central Dickensian myth—the orphan-outcast's search for place. This myth, which is defined by Donald Fanger, Hillis Miller, and George Ford, is the pre-eminent Biblical-Christian metaphor. It represents Dickens' conviction, as Steven Marcus puts it, that this life is not only the determining factor in our spiritual end, but also the actual incarnation of heaven and hell.⁵⁴

George Ford emphasizes the long literary tradition of Christianizing the orphan myth:

In many novels and plays, an orphan's search for the affection and authority of which he has been deprived can readily take on religious significance. Dickens' friend Carlyle represented the hero of Sartor Resartus as an orphan stripped not only of parents but of religious faith. At the climax of the book, the Devil addresses him: 'Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine.' Although Carlyle, for once, does not capitalize the word

in this passage, the implication is clear. His hero's search for a father is ultimately a search for the Father.55

Dickens' myth, like his life, parallels the general narrative structure of the Bible itself—the evolving relationship between the divine Father and his children from Eden to exile to redemption. A number of critics, including G. K. Chesterton, Donald Fanger, Edgar Johnson, J. Hillis Miller, Lionel Trilling, Lauriat Lane, Jr., and David Masson, see Dickens' characters as either partially or wholly supernatural, often representing Satan or his patriarchal opposite. Trilling describes Little Dorrit as

a novel in which a house falls physically to ruins from the moral collapse of its inhabitants, in which the heavens open over London to show a crown of thorns, and in which the devil has something like an actual existence. . . .

The religious dimension of Dickens' mythic method is best understood by an examination of the nineteenth-century view of religion as myth. J. W. Burrow, in his essay, "The Uses of Philology in Victorian England," reveals how the new German Biblical criticism drove theologians to see history as "a Divine

55 Ford, in Critics, p. 354.

56 Chesterton, p. 64; Fanger, pp. 67-70; Johnson, CD, p. 489; Miller, CD, pp. 217, 143, 246; "Little Dorrit," in Critics, p. 293; "The Devil in Oliver Twist," Dickensian, 52 (1956), 134; "Dickens and Thackeray," in Critics.
drama." He explains how the crisis of the attack on antiquated religious forms was met by quoting from a monumental three-volume work entitled *God in History or the Progress of Man's Faith in the Moral Order of the World*:

The crisis would only be overcome by men's grasping the spirit behind the letter and the form. The spirit of a thing is identical with its development... God reveals himself in the history of the world, and the essence of personal religion is our consciousness of the Divine activity in the History of Mankind.57

Eternal verities and their archetypal narrative patterns recur in history. The Genesis creation, the Deluge, the Tower of Babel, Jonah, and David are therefore dramatic narratives rather than history; they are metaphors for spiritual truths that are seen again in one's own everyday world. This idea leads to a de-emphasis on the external. "Religion," as Coleridge insists, "is within man."58

God is not only within man; He becomes indistinguishable in a certain sense from His humanity. The religious historian Owen Chadwick notes that


58 Coleridge is quoted by Moorman, p. 329.
Scientific history caused one change of outlook, or presentation, of the first importance to the churches. . . . The human Christ became more real to the world, and especially to the churches, in the later nineteenth century. For the churches he spoke the word of God, revealed the word of God, was the word of God. But always he revealed through his humanity. Though we must not exaggerate the change, for Christian doctrine had always insisted upon the humanity, later Victorian churchmen understood the childhood, the temptations, the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, even the suffering on Calvary, better than generations of their Christian predecessors. 59

This equality of spirit and flesh in which the divine is human and the human divine is different from allegory, in which the emphasis is on spirit, for which the form is merely a vehicle. This balance and fusion of God and history Erich Auerbach calls "figura," or incarnational reality. 60

Because eternal verities are continually embodied in new forms, people and events are not only inseparable from the divine but closely akin to one another. In the following passage from A Tale of Two Cities, the visible world suddenly cuts


60 "Figura," Scenes from the Drama of European Literature (New York: Meridian, 1959), pp. 11-76.
across time to reincarnate images from an earlier feudal age
and then from the New Testament:

Six tumbrils roll along the streets.
Change these back again to what they were, thou powerful enchanter, Time,
and they shall be seen to be the
carriages of absolute monarchs, the
equipages of feudal nobles, the
toilettes of flaring Jezebels, the
churches that are not my father's
house but dens of thieves, the huts
of millions of starving peasants.61

Forster articulates Dickens' conviction that

...the close relation often found
thus existing between things and
persons far apart, suggests not so
much the smallness of the world as the
possible importance of the least things
done in it, and is better explained
by the grander teaching of Carlyle,
that causes and effects, connecting
every man and thing with every other,
extend through all space and time.62

Because he saw the divine in the human and all things
interrelated within spirit, Dickens' method of characterization
and narrative is to mythologize the everyday world into nine-
teenth century versions of the great Biblical drama. He creates
new actors for the roles--some perfect for the part, some de-
lightfully or grotesquely miscast--and each brings his own

61 All the Year Round, ed. Charles Dickens 2, No. 31
(Saturday, November 26, 1859), 93.

62 Forster, III, 204.
individualism to the role. In this way the character participates in the eternal truths of Judeo-Christian theology. Bleak House begins at the end of the Deluge and moves toward the apocalypse of Judgment Day. Great Expectations begins with a rebirth on Christmas Day for a boy whose foster father's name is a form of Joseph, moves toward the recognition of a crime against a man named Abel, and ends in an exit from a ruined Eden. Martin Chuzzlewit opens with a reference to Adam and Eve and a genealogy of sinful man, and ends with a spiritualized community of twelve gathered around a forgiving resurrected father. The Biblical drama is repeatedly brought to life, like the great roles of the theatre, through performance after performance, each interpretation recalling previous ones. Thus human life is ennobled, as each Dickens character becomes a partial embodiment of the original Christian hierarchy.

All of these religious elements--Dickens' Christian convictions, his Biblical style, and his myth of the orphan's journey home--receive a new stimulus in the period of 1842-44, years which saw the conception and publication of Martin Chuzzlewit in the original twenty parts. The 1840's were a decade of religious revival, and Kathleen Tillotson describes this period as exhibiting an increased interest in popular religious fiction. 63

This ten-year span in Dickens' life saw the completion of *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), a narrative of religious conflict; and of *Dombey and Son* (1846-48), a story of conversion, in which Hillis Miller finds the sea to be "a genuine religious motif."64 Dickens' children's version of the New Testament, *The Life of Our Lord*, was probably written in 1846 and was completed in 1849. The Christmas stories, vehicles for the most explicit professions of Dickens' religious feelings, began in 1843 with the extremely popular *Christmas Carol*. Finally, in the years from 1842 to 1844, he was deeply moved by the dream of a dead girl, a disagreement with church officials regarding an article, and a series of personal meetings with an American minister.

The most traumatic experience of Dickens' life, after his childhood exile to the blacking factory, occurred in 1837. The sudden death at seventeen of his wife's sister, Mary Hogarth, brought on a long period of nightly dream visions. They stopped immediately after he recounted their content to his wife. Then, in September 1844, a year fraught with doubts and difficulties about religion, the dream of Mary suddenly came again. Her spirit appeared to Dickens, as before, in what he describes as the blue drapery of a Raphael Madonna. He implores the spirit to reveal to him "the True religion."

64 Miller, *CD*, p. 149.
'You think, as I do, that the Form of religion does not so greatly matter, if we try to do good? or,' I said, observing that it still hesitated, and was moved with the greatest compassion for me, 'perhaps the Roman Catholic is the best? perhaps it makes one think of God oftener, and believe in him more steadily?' 'For you,' said the Spirit, full of such heavenly tenderness for me that I felt as if my heart would break; 'for you, it is the best!' Then I awoke, with the tears running down my face, and myself in exactly the condition of the dream.  

Although the specifically Catholic answer does not seem to have had any influence on Dickens' doctrinal allegiance, the religious nature of the dream indicates the profound spiritual effect which the death of this young girl had upon Dickens. Gabriel Pearson calls it "a religious crisis"; and Sylvère Monod, in discussing the themes of Martin Chuzzlewit, finds that, as a result of Mary's death, "moral purpose seemed now to come to the forefront of his literary preoccupations."  

Other events of 1842 and 1843 contributed to a greater religious focus in Dickens' life and work, events which led him to attend Unitarian rather than Church of England services for a period of about two years. The defection was initially prompted,  

65 Forster, II, 148-49.  

according to Forster, by the Established Church's response to a proposed article on religious education for the young:

One of the last things he did at the close of the year 1843 was to offer to describe the Ragged Schools for the Edinburgh Review. 'I have told Napier,' he wrote me, 'I will give a description of them in a paper on education, if the Review is not afraid to take ground against the church catechism and other mere formularies and subtleties, in reference to the education of the young and ignorant. I fear it is extremely improbable it will consent to commit itself so far.'

Forster goes on to record that

his fears were well-founded. . . . and that it was his impatience of differences on this point with clergymen of the Established Church that had led him, for the past year or two, to take sittings in the Little Portland-street Unitarian chapel; for whose officiating minister, Mr. Edward Tagart, he had a friendly regard which continued long after he had ceased to be a member of his congregation.67

The third event of profound religious influence during these three years was Dickens' encounter with the famous Unitarian minister, Dr. William Ellery Channing. J. M. Connell, in his article, "The Religion of Charles Dickens," points out that, though Dickens had known Channing's ideas before visiting America in 1842, a number of personal meetings afforded the two

67 Forster, II, 59-60.
men during that trip led Dickens to express a great regard for Channing in American Notes. Two months after his return to London, he attended Mr. Tagart’s memorial service for Dr. Channing, who died October 2, 1842; and it was only one year later that Dickens joined the Portland Street congregation.68

To illustrate the spiritual kinship between these two figures, Connell quotes a passage by Channing, which reveals a strong faith in the divinity of man, and a confidence that, despite the world’s evil, good will triumph:

I do and must reverence human nature. Neither the sneers of a worldly skepticism, nor the groans of a gloomy theology disturb my faith in its god-like powers and tendencies. . . . I honour it for its struggles against oppression, for its growth and progress under the weight of so many chains and prejudices, for its achievements in science and art, and still more for its examples of heroic and saintly virtue. These are marks of a divine origin, and the pledges of a celestial inheritance; and I thank God that my lot is bound up with that of the human race.69

Divine-human, Christlike persons receive an inheritance which is celestial in its overtones in the final scenes of Martin Chuzzlewit. The world of the novel as a whole, however,

68 Connell, pp. 228-31.

is infinitely more complex. It is finally the product of a
century of Judeo-Christian influences, a decade of religious
revival within the popular culture, and a three-year period of
heightened religious consciousness for its author.
CHAPTER II

THEME AND STRUCTURE

In spite of poor sales, Dickens felt that Martin Chuzzlewit was

in a hundred points immeasurably the best of my stories. That I feel my power now, more than I ever did. That I have a greater confidence in myself than I ever had. That I know, if I have health, I could sustain my place in the minds of thinking men, though fifty writers started up to-morrow. But how many readers do not think.¹

Martin Chuzzlewit is Dickens' first novel to have a plan--to begin, in the Augustinian way, with an idea. John Forster explains that the design was "to show, more or less by every person introduced, the number and variety of humours and vices that have their root in selfishness." Forster also reaffirms Dickens' faith in the novel's greatness and in its deeper significance for the thoughtful reader: exploring beneath the surface the "springs of character," Martin Chuzzlewit presents

not only observation but the outcome of it, the knowledge as well as the fact. While we witness as vividly the life immediately passing, we are more

¹Forster, II, 70.
conscious of the permanent life
above and beyond it.²

Twentieth-century critics continue to discover the novel's all-inclusiveness and spiritual power. Earle Davis praises its success as a novel of multiple narratives illustrating a single theme, "the first such masterpiece in the history of English fiction." To Edgar Johnson it is "a world in itself." Steven Marcus sees the novel as "a supreme dramatization" of the development of the modern self, and as "a panoramic vision of the direction in which modern society was moving."³

Barbara Hardy argues that, in spite of Martin Chuzzlewit's possible ideological unity, it fails to present "integrating action" and "continuity in character."⁴ I quite agree and intend to show that the specific nature of this lack of continuity has its roots in the style of the Bible and of the nineteenth-century sermon, as we have already briefly seen. Both the Bible and the popular sermon form of Dickens' day exhibit moral unity combined with inconsistent action, a tendency toward exposition in place of dramatization, and a heavy reliance on "compressed rhetoric." Dickens thus shares not only the purposes of these

²Ibid., II, 45, 74, 76.

³Davis, p. 148; Johnson, CD, p. 469; Marcus, p. 213.

two genres but their weaknesses as well.

Among those modern critics who seek to discover the novel's thematic oneness, Jack Lindsay, Angus Wilson, and John Gross find at the center of Dickens' world—from the Carol and The Chimes to A Tale of Two Cities and Our Mutual Friend—a transformative process which ends in redemption and resurrection. Specifically in Martin Chuzzlewit, Jack Lindsay cites the themes of decay and renewal, of spiritual change, of conversion.5 Regarding the narrator's evangelical relation to the reader, Sylvère Monod asserts that, to a greater extent than any other Dickens novel, Martin Chuzzlewit "is found to contain many explicit moral lessons, . . . passages of preaching. . . ." J. Hillis Miller finds Dickens' consistent concern to be "the relation between man and the divine transcendence"; and, though Miller defines the world of this novel as cut off from any permanent spiritual realm, he recognizes the presence of a "semi-divine human providence," in the form of Old Martin Chuzzlewit.6

Underlying the manifold and protean language of Dickens are certain thematic patterns, which we need to see in their


6Monod, pp. 225-26; Miller, CD, pp. 132, 217, 331.
broad outline. The statement of theme and structure in this chapter will receive refinement and elaboration in the chapters that follow. For the time being, however, I will state briefly that *Martin Chuzzlewit* is about conversion as the prerequisite for salvation. It is concerned not only with man's role in that spiritual process, but with God's. This hypothesis is in keeping with the major critical views, just quoted, regarding the novel's link with spirit beneath and beyond the physical surface, its dramatization of the self's development and of that development as a process of transformation, the narrator's pulpit style, and the semi-divine nature of the central character.

Dickens takes the theological form of his day and plays in and out of it according to the demands of the novel genre. He writes a novel about wealth, inheritance, and sonship as they figure in the relationship between Old Martin and his children, employing and transposing the vocabulary of theology and that of economy. Shifting from one frame of reference to the other, he endeavours, like Ruskin and Carlyle, to overcome the loosely related dualism of wealth and spiritual goodness—a major paradox which the theology of his culture ultimately failed to resolve.

In nineteenth-century popular theology and in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, wealth, inheritance, and sonship are not only metaphors; they are outward and visible signs of salvation. Prosperity as the reward for piety is the theme of Proverbs,
Nathalia Wright points out in her book on Melville and the Bible. It continues "throughout the nineteenth century to be one of the most heavily emphasized themes in all Scripture." The overlapping dualism of riches and spiritual goodness occurs just as frequently in Dickens' personal writings. He describes a pending financial disaster in one letter by saying, "I shall be ruined past all moral hope of redemption." Humphry House notes that money metaphors "are abnormally common in Dickens's moral language."  

The stylistic counterpart of this unresolved relationship between wealth and spiritual purity is Dickens' failure to divorce myth from content, the Biblical narrative husk from its spiritual seed of truth. John Holloway is cognizant of this tendency not to demythologize when he argues, in "Dickens and the Symbol," that frequently no discrepancy or discontinuity exists between the symbol and the thing symbolized, the act and its signification. The divine is human and the human divine. 

7Wright, p. 97.


Wealth must be converted, spiritualized, saved; and salvation finally means wealth from a loving father. Because this dualism forms at the same time a metaphoric unit, and because the general imagery and theme are thoroughly and systematically grounded in the Biblical and nineteenth-century popular religious traditions, it becomes difficult finally to say that Dickens did not believe in the spiritual truths behind the religious images that he uses, and that he did not succeed in creating a genuine spiritual link between his fictional world and popular Christianity.

God and the wealthy human father are two other peculiarly related concepts in Victorian popular theology. The lack of distinction is also originally Biblical. The Old Testament God controls the socio-economic as well as the spiritual states of his children such as Adam, Job, and Jonah. He withholds wealth in order to purify them in exile, and he lavishes fertile lands and sons upon those whom He chooses to bless. In spite of the camel's difficulty with the needle's eye, the New Testament is full of examples of the same concept: the God of the New Testament is represented as the wealthy loving father of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15.11-32), as the owner of great vineyards who pays his labourers according to their work in the harvest (Matthew 20 and 21, Mark 12, Luke 20), and as the provider of a house with many mansions (John 14.2).
Dickens' style and theme both feed this popular lack of resolution between flesh and spirit, wealth and spiritual goodness. Converted characters such as young Martin Chuzzlewit, Mark Tapley, Tom Pinch, Ruth Pinch, John Westlock, Mercy Pecksniff, and Bailey are rewarded in the final scenes of the novel with a form of all-inclusive sonship in relation to the father figure, Old Martin. Martin, Tom, Ruth, John, and Mercy also receive the financial security of an inheritance; and Mark and Bailey are provided with permanent job security. Old Martin gives jewels to the brides. In another variation on this theme, we can hope that the slave whom Mark met in America will be able to buy his daughter's freedom and that father and child will be reunited.

Sonship and reunion with the forgiving parent are a complementary aspect of this nineteenth-century metaphor for salvation. When Mr. Fips reports to Tom that he has been employed by a mysterious figure, John Westlock exclaims, "I begin to think you must be somebody's son." While Seth Pecksniff seeks to become the substitute son and heir of Old Martin, the exiled Martin and Mark endeavour to be restored to their home country by sending a letter to their American benefactor, Mr. Bevan on a boat called the Esau Slodge. As Pecksniff, for the sake of an

\[10\text{MC}, p. 380.\]
inheritance, is deceiving Old Martin back in England, so the Biblical Jacob sought, successfully, to usurp the birthright from his brother, Esau, by disguising himself before their blind aging father, Isaac.

The act of fusing spirit and matter—wealth and spiritual goodness, God and the human father, salvation and sonship—as they are fused in the theology and prose of Dickens, is an act of conversion. This goal of spiritualized matter Dickens also seeks for his worlds—both fictional and actual. The key theological point made by the name of Pecksniff is the unresolvable duality, represented in that character, between sinful man and spiritual idealism. The two syllables reflect respectively the Latin word for sin (peccare) and that act of the human breathing apparatus which signifies pious judgment.\footnote{The use even among the provincial and relatively uneducated of the word peccare for transgression is indicated in George Eliot's 
\textit{Mill on the Floss} in \textit{The Writings of George Eliot} (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1908), V, 219: Tom Tulliver tells Maggie, "If we break anything, Mrs. Stelling'll make us cry peccavi."} Standing between Old Martin and his children and damning all besides himself, Pecksniff is the major obstacle to converting matter into spirit. He is the archetypal personality fostered by Dickens' hypocritical society, representing and presiding over dramatizations of the discontinuity between nature and grace, sinful man and God.
The second theological type in Dickens ideology is represented in the character of Jonas, who converts spirit into matter. Jonas sees not only his father but everything

as a question of property, and he had gradually come to look, with impatience, on his parent as a certain amount of personal estate. . . .12

As unredeemed dark matter, Jonas's secret sin fails to lead to repentance and redemption. Young Martin as the converted sinner is the third and ideal type dramatized by Dickens. In the swamps of Eden, faced with the possible death of the dangerously ill Mark, Martin discovers the truth about his own spiritual nature:

. . . in the hideous solitude of that most hideous place, with Hope so far removed, Ambition quenched, and Death beside him rattling at the very door, reflection came, as in a plague-beleaguered town; and so he felt and knew the failing of his life, and saw distinctly what an ugly spot it was.13

Suffering leads to repentance and then to redemption and reunion with Old Martin, as the true heir.

The fourth major variation on the conversion theme is embodied in Tom Pinch, whose innocent goodness is recognized and blessed by the father. Even this innocent, however, must be

12MC, p. 76.

13Ibid., pp. 329-30.
driven out of Pecksniff's cloistered environs before "his idol" can be "tumbled down headlong." Rescued from the lonely road and from London's disorienting labyrinth by the generosity of John Westlock, Tom soon makes a home with his sister Ruth and finds himself employed ordering books in the upper room of the Temple. The mysterious employer whom he serves, even while in spiritual darkness, turns out to be Old Martin.

As the father figure for this theologically significant foursome, Old Martin himself exhibits the characteristics not only of the wealthy Victorian man of power but of his Biblical counterpart, the thundering Old Testament Jehovah. Like both Victorian prototypes, Old Martin must descend and suffer and transform himself into the forgiving father of the New Testament who provides for the new community of the converted. Martin Chuzzlewit is about the conversion of wealth into a vehicle for spiritual and moral good, and the wealthy man into a good man. In the narrative of Old Martin, Dickens portrays the extreme conditions which will force such a transformation. Neither Marxist nor Romantic, Dickens does not believe in the redistribution of wealth or in the flight from wealth and society into Nature's ascetic purity. His prototypes are not lilies of the field but prodigal sons, Jonahs, and Jobs. He draws even upon the Biblical evolution of God Himself.

J. Hillis Miller's labelling of Old Martin as a semi-deity suggests the possibility that he embodies characteristics of the
Judeo-Christian Godhead found in Biblical narrative—a spiritual being described in very human terms. Old Martin is a transcendent, mysterious figure in the opening scenes. When he is heard knocking at Pecksniff's door in the final tableau of Part VIII, the image of this figure standing at the door of an unweeded moral garden, ready to bring light into its sinful closed darkness, seems to anticipate the most famous and widely reproduced of nineteenth-century religious paintings, Holman Hunt's "The Light of the World" (1851-53). Old Martin is also consciously submitting himself to humiliation and a form of crucifixion. His miraculous resurrection and appearance before the startled servant Tom in the upper room of the Temple at the end of Part XVIII is followed by the gathering of his new 'children' around him. His role in creating this final brotherhood has been, like that of the Christian God in the conversion process, one of priest-victim. Having suffered and evolved himself, he has also been instrumental in the conversions of Martin and of Tom, and indirectly participated in several of the other transformed lives.

The transformative process, which recurs in the novel's multiple narratives, Michael Steig finds reflected in the illustrations by Phiz. The characters can be seen progressing through various stages, which Steig calls Hogarthian "progresses" or "sequences."

14 "Martin Chuzzlewit's Progress by Dickens and Phiz," in manuscript form/ Simon Frazer University, Burnaby, B.C., Canada.
Spiritual development is also traceable in the final climactic moments of each of the twenty parts in which *Martin Chuzzlewit* originally appeared. For example, young Martin rebels against his grandfather and defects to the false temple of Pecksniff's house at the end of Part II. In the concluding scene of V he is exiled by order of Old Martin, and his journey toward the death-ridden swamp of Eden is the subject of the last pages of Parts VI and VII. The end of IX finds Mark and Martin in Eden. In a gradual ascent after his conversion, Martin is still an outside observer at the ceremony for Pecksniff concluding Part XIII; and in the closing moments of XVI, he finds himself again with his grandfather but still apparently unforgiven.

The three-part conversion process defines the structure of *Martin Chuzzlewit*. In each major narrative, and most of the minor ones, the character is controlled by or disguised within false external forms. Separated from these decaying or false elements, he or she suffers in exile. The self then reaches a moment of rebirth into a spiritualized form in touch with the true inner spirit and with some spirit beyond the self. Conversion is often metaphorically described by Biblical authors as the destruction of the false temple which makes way for the true religion of the spirit. The earliest prophets of ancient Israel endeavoured to rid the true religion of worthless and obstructive idols. Besides the false selves that are discarded by Dickens' characters, Pecksniff himself is associated, by the religious language used
to describe him, with the false external forms of organized religion. Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter Three, he embodies the major characteristics of its nineteenth-century clerical representatives. Called both "idol" and "priest" by the narrator, he presides over various temples including his horse, his carriage, and his house wherein stand "the altars of his household gods."\(^\text{15}\) Like the four apostles in the New Testament of similar nomenclature, Martin, Mark, Tom, and John reject or are rejected by this symbol of the organized church. After a period of alienation, these four form the nucleus of a spiritualized New Testament community of brothers under one father, Old Martin.

The leitmotif of conversion occurs in a wealth of fresh and subtle embodiments in every corner of Dickens' fictional world--reinforcing the fact of the inseparableness of myth and content, of matter and spirit in Dickens' theology. "Bailey Junior Transformed" is the running title which describes this young gentleman's mock-conversion from the depths of Todgers' Commercial Boarding House into the status position as Jonas Chuzzlewit's groom.\(^\text{16}\) Subsequently, he lies unconscious as the

\(^{15}\text{MC, pp. 310, 124, 305, 121.}\)

\(^{16}\text{Ibid., p. 265.}\)
result of a fall from Jonas's and Tigg's carriage in the storm, and is believed dead by his friend Poll Swedlepipe. Miraculously revived from this lifeless state, he is both physically and spiritually reborn in the midst of the final joyous community, embraced by Poll, and immediately made a beloved partner in the newly formed Swedlepipe and Company.

Unlike the remorseless Jonas, the other guilty party in the planning of Anthony's murder, the druggist Lewsome, suffers the feverish anguish of guilt and contrition. By confessing to John Westlock, he is restored to the human community. Employing the image of the phoenix in his parting comments on America, young Martin hopes for that country's spiritual rebirth as well. "...The Blue Dragon," we are told by its new proprietor, "will be con-werted into the Jolly Tapley," as a result of the marital union of Mark and Mrs. Lupin.\(^{17}\) The old clerk of Anthony Chuzzlewit, experiences another version of this theme when he begins to tell the truth about Anthony and his son. As if he were filled with the spirit of the dead man himself, the aging and senile Chuffey comes suddenly to life, and Jonas hears the truth about his father's death

proclaiming itself from the lips of an old man who had renewed his strength

\(^{17}\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 343, 505.}\)
and vigour as by a miracle, to
give it voice against him. 18

Sailey Gamp and Betsey Prig preside over scenes of birth,
death, death-in-birth and birth-in-death—aspects of physical
life which may be viewed as symbols of conversion, in which the
death of the old self is simultaneous with the birth of the new.
Mr. Mould, the undertaker, also lends the panoply of ritual to
moments of radical change. Poll Sweedlepipe, giving Sunday
shaves and haircuts, prevails over the sanctuary of Sabbath day
self-renewal.

The novel opens in a world of unconverted matter. A
reference to Adam and Eve is followed by a genealogy of sinful
man since Adam. The description of a dying day in late autumn
sets the stage for the mysterious entrance of a dying transcen-
dental, arbitrary, avenging patriarch of great wealth and power,
who heads the sinful family. Whipping over a firey forge at
night, the wind flattens at his door a character whose name re-
calls the Latin word for sin, Seth Pecksniff.

While damnation comes to the unconverted characters such
as Pecksniff, Jonas, and Tigg in the forms of death, poverty, and
exile; these same states, which are common religious metaphors
for the absence of God, also function as necessary prerequisites
to conversion. Martin, Mark, Tom, Ruth, John, Mercy, Bailey,

18 Ibid., p. 486.
and Lewsome each pass through a period of poverty, of loneliness in exile, or of near death in illness. From these depths they arrive at a new height of self-fulfillment. In the lives of the Biblical Jonah, Job, and Jesus, the Victorian preacher Charles Spurgeon finds a parallel evolution from dark depths to radiant heights:

What art thou lower down than poor Jonah was, when he went down to the bottom of the mountains... Look at Job there, scraping himself with a potsherd, and sitting on a dung-hill... And yet Job rose up, and was richer than before; and out of the depths Jonah came, and preached the word; and our Saviour Jesus hath mounted his throne.19

At the center of the Evangelical call to repentance—of which the passage from Spurgeon's sermon is an example—is the conviction that life on earth is itself a kind of death. Thus only in conversion can man strip away the husk of the external self, which is mortal, and encounter the true inner self, which is spirit and immortal. This view of life as death-ridden pervades Dickens' novel; and its most vocal prophet is Sairey Gamp. The events of Martin Chuzzlewit serve to dramatize her message that this "wale of life" is a "wale of grief," a "Piljjan's

Projiss of a mortal wale," a "walley of the shadder." Opening with a dying day in a dying year and the apparently imminent death of an ill old man, the novel keeps the fact of death always before the reader. The death and funeral of Anthony, the murder of Tigg, and the suicide of Jonas are periodic reminders, as is the repeated appearance of the undertaker Mould. The couple in Eden lose all their children to the fatal swamp fever which nearly conquers Mark and Martin. The unconscious Bailey, the feverish Lewsome, and the impotent figure of Old Martin at Pecksniff's house are presented as more dead than alive, as is Mercy during her dark imprisonment as the wife of Jonas.

Six of the twenty parts of the novel end in settings of confined darkness. Parts III and VIII close prophetically with two unredeemed figures, Pecksniff and Jonas, together in a dark coach. In XVI the two join Tigg in a dark corner of the Blue Dragon. Tigg and Jonas depart by coach in a storm at the end of XV. The storm-driven ship which carries Martin and Mark toward the death-ridden swamp is the concluding image of Part VI. No. XVII terminates in the dark entangled woods which conceal the murdered body of Tigg, and from which Jonas springs "as if it were a hell." This world of unconverted matter in darkness and

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20 MC, pp. 390, 254, 290, 260, 469, 439.

21 Ibid., pp. 157-452.
in bondage must either decay and die or be infused with light, freed, and reborn.

Noah in the arc and Jonah in the whale are the two Biblical analogues which Dickens employs. Noah, whom God chooses from among all men to be saved from the Deluge, at the end of the rains sends out a dove to find land where the occupants of the Ark might dwell in their reborn state. The place from which the dove returns with an olive branch represents a regained Eden, a heaven for the saved. (See Genesis 8) Believing himself the chosen one to receive the inheritance of the avenging Old Martin, who has called him to a secret meeting in London, Pecksniff gaily compares his departure with that of Noah's "dove of old" and his "unpretending luggage" with the "olive branches." The ship which Martin and Mark take to Eden is described as "an unwholesome ark."\textsuperscript{22}

The analogies between the character of Jonas Chuzzlewit and his Biblical prototype Jonah (spelled "Jonas" in Matthew 12.39-40) will be enumerated in Chapter Three of this thesis. It will be valuable, however, at this point to note that references to whales occur in the climactic scenes of two of the novel's parts. Discovered in the dark coach with Pecksniff and his daughters at the end of No. III, Jonas alludes to whales.

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., pp. 55, 157.
Tigg again refers to them in that diabolical meeting with Pecksniff and Jonas at the Blue Dragon in the concluding moments of No. XV. When Jonas endeavours to flee, like his Biblical namesake, into the black innards of a departing Antwerp packet, Sairey Gamp is inspired to recall "Jonadge's belly."  

Sairey Gamp's mispronunciation of the word 'vale' creates a linguistic association between 'vale' and 'whale' (or 'wale') and makes a constant thematic refrain of both. The free transposition by nineteenth-century Londoners of the letters "v" and "w" was a popular source of humour among the educated. The actor Charles Mathews whom Dickens knew from the theatre, had a well-known story regarding this "most striking and offensive error in pronunciation," which is recorded in the Reverend Henry Christmas's Anecdotes of the English Language:

The late Mr. Mathews used to describe very humorously the distress of a citizen, who on the deck of a Margate steamer had lost his hat and wig by the too rude greeting of Boreas. 
Cit.--Oh Lor, Missus! my hat and vig's overboard. Wife.--My eye and Betty Martin, and there's a wale! Passenger.--A whale! Where? where? I'd give a fi-
pun note to see a whale. Captain.--

23 Ibid., pp. 76, 390, 427.

24 The thematic significance of Dickens' linguistic patterns is the subject of a study by Rudolf Quirk, Charles Dickens and Appropriate Language (Durham: University of Durham, 1959).
There ain't never no vale no wheres, Sir; it's the gen'elman's mispronunciation, Sir; it's his wife's wail vat she years over her vig, Sir, that's all.25

Dickens puts this popular linguistic joke to thematic use: he creates an image cluster symbolizing the theme of death, which includes also 'valley,' 'value,' 'veil,' and 'wail.' Biblical in origin, these metaphors of dark enclosures and decaying forms are related to false temples and idolatry, another type of unconverted matter. False value in the novel is reflected in the greed of the Chuzzlewits--particularly Pecksniff and Jonas--and in the fraud of the Anglo-Bengalee Loan and Life Assurance Company and Scadder's Eden Land Corporation. To reinforce this association, 'valley' and 'value' are interchangeable in the language of young Bailey. In Chapter 11 he tells the Pecksniff girls that he plans to become a drummer in the army:

> Ah!... why not? There's a many drummers in the Tower. I'm acquainted with 'em. Don't their country set a valley on 'em, mind you! Not at all!26

The valley of moral darkness, bondage, and deception is also to be found in the anatomy of such an unredeemable hypocrite as

25 Johnson, CD, p. 60; (London: J. B. Nichols, 1844), pp. 65, 66. For the discovery of this relevant historic data, as well as for a number of valuable details and insights throughout this thesis, I am indebted to my advisor and friend, Dr. Robert L. Patten.

26Mc, p. 119.
Pecksniff:

His very throat was moral. You saw
a good deal of it. You looked over a
very low fence of white cravat (whereof
no man had ever beheld the tie, for he
fastened it behind), and there it lay,
a valley between two jutting heights of
collar, serene and whiskerless before
you.27

Behind the veil of mystery and the appearance of death Old
Martin is initially hidden. The curtains of his bed at the Blue
Dragon recall the veil which hides the arc of the covenant in
the temple (Exodus 40) and the veil which was rent at the
crucifixion (Mark 15.38).

The world of spiritual death is also linked in Christian
theology with the Biblical character of Adam. The Chuzzlewits,
we are told on the first page of the novel "descended in a direct
line from Adam and Eve"; and the point is repeated a few pages
later: men are "descendents of Adam." Upon the sudden arrival
of Old Martin at his house, Pecksniff assumes the pose of rustic
innocent, but his allusion recalls more than rural purity:
"...Adam was the first of our calling," he reminds his guest.
"My Eve, I grieve to say, is no more sir, ...but I do a little
of Adam still." Childbirth, which means, according to Sairey's
theology, entrance into a world of death, is referred to as "the

27Ibid., p. 8.
curse pronounced on Adam."28

Exits from gardens, which recall the Genesis prototype, are frequent enough in the novel to suggest thematic significance. Pecksniff, and later Tom and Ruth Pinch, depart in an atmosphere of hostility from the garden of the copper-and-brass founder. Mark chooses to leave and John, Martin, and Tom are driven from that fertile area where Pecksniff imitates the first gardener. From "the Wdalley of Eden" Martin and Mark barely escape with their lives.29 Though Merry Pecksniff is warned by Old Martin beneath the tree in the verdant churchyard near her father's house, she is nevertheless successfully "tempted" by Jonas Chuzzlewit, and thereby exiled, like Eve, to a death-ridden world. As his wife, she crosses with "sorrowing tread" the "fatal, ill-omened, blighted threshold" of Jonas's "cursed" house.30

These examples imply that in Dickens' theology the Edenic garden is simply another stagnant enclosure which must be escaped if the new self is to emerge. Similarly, Adam had to leave the garden and be reborn as Christ in the New Testament; and the Old

28Ibid., pp. 173, 81, 83.
29Ibid., p. 216.
30Ibid., pp. 250, 491.
Testament God who presides over that garden must also evolve, in order to become the suffering humanized Father. The need for conversion--both personal and social--explodes Dickens' earlier theory, expressed in *Pickwick Papers*, in *Oliver Twist* and in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, that man is born with an inheritance which needs only to be recognized. The Manichean universe which divides people into good and evil has been exchanged for a world in which good and evil are within and the locus of generation is therefore internalized. This emphasis on inner potential over external determinism and the necessity for the conversion of the inner self also mark an end to Dickens' belief in the pastoral.

One must leave the pastoral retreat in order to grow, and spiritually there is no return. The converted characters in *Martin Chuzzlewit* discover a new heaven and a new earth in the spiritualized Temple at the heart of the city. Furthermore, the restored family unit at the end is not limited to father and child, but has become an all-inclusive community under One Father. The nineteenth-century divorce of man from Nature demanded that man now look to his brothers as instruments of salvation and as symbols of the divine.

The most vivid dramatization of this separation of Nature and spirit occurs in the American scenes. In England, storms, wind, and darkness convey a mystery which is spirit and which pervades the world of matter. The lyrical refrains used to describe Tom's travel along the sunny roads are equally transcendental.
But in America, where all has been "melted down into dollars," the dramatic spiritual dimension is lost. The English commercial boarding house of Todgers' is "in a labyrinth, whereof the mystery. . . is known but to a chosen few," and its cellarage is an equally "grand mystery." Its American equivalent, the boarding house of Major and Mrs. Pawkins, though filled with the language of moral and national hyperbole, is without that mysterious element:

The Colonel led the way into a room at the back of the house upon the ground-floor, light, and fair dimensions, but exquisitely uncomfortable: having nothing in it but the four cold white walls and ceiling, a mean carpet, a dreary waste of dining-table reaching from end to end and a bewildering collection of cane-bottomed chairs.

Most of the names in America are without the Biblical associations prevalent in those of the English characters. American nomenclature tends to become weighted down with consonantal sounds and affinities with inanimate objects: Brick, Kettle, Fladdock, Chollop. General Chollop's "head was like an old black hearthbroom."

The languid Mr. Pogram shook hands with Martin, like a clock-work figure.

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31Ibid., p. 81.
32Ibid., p. 168.
that was just running down. But he made amends by chewing like one that was just wound up.\textsuperscript{33}

The fixed, and thus unredeemable, quality of Pogram is also symbolized in the statue of the Elevated or Goblin School, in which his figure appears "in a very high wind, with his hair all standing on end, and his nostrils blown wide open."\textsuperscript{34} The lively wind in England, which fills the opening pages of the novel, which levels the proud Pecksniff, which reappears often in the form of storms and in the company of rain, and which is usually associated with the wrath or joy of heaven, in America makes only this brief appearance in the lines of a rigid statue.

In the unredeemable sameness of the swamps of Eden, all the children die. The unchanging natures of Kettle, Brick, and Chollop are devoid of conversion potential. Compared by Martin with "stale weed/\textsuperscript{37}," they all do and say "the same things" until finally they become indistinguishable.\textsuperscript{35} Dickens has created an airless Dantesque Hell of arrested suspension, in which words are repeated, chanted rather, by static characters, with no relationship to reality. This spiritual state makes possible the dis-passionate act of mass murder for profit in the form of sending

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 325, 334.

\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 341.

\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 170, 221.
innocent people to Eden. Dickens implies, through the imagery of decaying nature, that America has buried herself under her own myth of Edenic purity. Refusing to face her own sinful nature, she cannot move forward to penitence and redemption. Belief in the Edenic myth precludes not only the knowledge of one's own sin, but an awareness of a spirit beyond, against which to measure one's own inadequacies. Without air, the insular garden has begun to rot.

However, like the Prodigal's pigstye, like Job's dunghill, and like Teufelsdröckh's "one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference," this emblem of despiritualized nature has a function in the lives of those still able to be reborn. "Only in the hideous solitude of that most hideous place" does Martin face his own dual nature and desire to recover both the spiritual self and his relationship with the father.

The element of mystery and spirit still lurks in and around the dark, decaying forms of England. It still functions as a secret redemptive force in the lives of the exiles and nineteenth-century Adams who reside there. When Mark Tapley, in his endless efforts to cheer up, cook for, and keep warm the

other passengers on The Screw, becomes "the life and soul" of the steerage, this pervading spirit takes the form of Christian charity.\textsuperscript{37} The mystery of Todgers' reappears with specific religious significance in Nature, Nadjett, and Old Martin. Spiritually unaware, Jonas sleeps on his way to murder Tigg, failing to discover Nature's watchfullness or to hear its call to repentance:

Riding on among those sentinels of God, he slept, and did not change the purpose of his journey.\textsuperscript{38}

Nadjett, with his secret seal and the heiroglyphics he scribbles, is "another of the phantom forms of this terrific Truth," a symbol of "pursuing Fate" which wraps itself, until the end, in a cloak of mystery. The subject of a final tableau in Parts XI and XIV, he is compared with the cross that continually observes human events from atop St. Paul's Cathedral.\textsuperscript{39} Called "mysterious" in the title of Chapter 29, he appears in the second illustration of Chapter 14 in the original parts, entitled "Mr. Nadjett breathes, as usual, an atmosphere of mystery."\textsuperscript{40} The second

\textsuperscript{37}MC, p. 159.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., p. 450.

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., pp. 491, 374, 369.

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 289; see Thomas Hatt\textsuperscript{on} and Arthur H. Cleaver, A Bibliography of the Periodical Works of Charles Dickens (London: Chapman and Hall, 1933), p. 205. Hereafter cited as Bibliography.
figure of mystery, Old Martin, infuses both the character of Tom Pinch and the Temple with new spirit. In the Temple's "Mysterious Chambers," occurs the "Mysterious Installation of Mr. Pinch," and he is left there to organize and catalogue the dust-covered books. John Westlock suspects even the go-between in this arrangement, Mr. Fips, of being a "supernatural visitor."

Within the structure of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the major changes are common religious metaphors for conversion—darkness to light, matter to spirit, mystery to revelation, transcendence to immanence, external falsehood to inner truth, exile to reunion. In the story of Jonah, as told by Father Mapple in *Moby Dick*, "...God came upon him in the whale. ..." According to Mircea Eliade, in *The Sacred and the Profane*, "it is the eruption of the sacred into the world...that establishes the world as a reality." Rudolf Otto, quoted by Eliade, describes all religious experience as that which induces a sense of terror before the mystery of divine power. The sudden revelation of spiritual forces in *Martin Chuzzlewit* is not always as terror-ridden, however, as the exposure of Jonas. The moment of Christian conversion is more an event of spiritual and

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41 MC, p. 387; the second title is for the Phiz illustration Plate #30, on page 460 of the original parts; see Bibliography, p. 206; MC, p. 380.
psychological reinforcement, in which God's personal grace is felt within. John Wesley says of his experience at Aldersgate in 1738, "My heart felt strangely warmed."\(^{42}\)

Like the secret of Nadgett, which suddenly explodes into revelation before the horrified Jonas, the mystery of Old Martin is unexpectedly revealed to the ecstatic Tom at the door of the Temple room. Seeing the resurrected old man, "...such a light broke in on Tom as blinded him."\(^{43}\) This detail recalls the conversion experience of Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 26), and the whole scene reminds one of the resurrected Lord's appearance to a doubting Thomas in another upper room (John 20.24-28).

The same light metaphor is carried over into the title of Chapter 51, which "Sheds New and Brighter Light Upon The Very Dark Place."\(^{44}\) In this chapter of revelation, the dark secret of Jonas's guilt is exposed under the piercing light of Truth. Spiritualized light continues to pervade the sunny and starlit


\(^{43}\) MC, p. 481.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., p. 482.
scenes to the end of the novel. The submerged forces of spirit, like the light invading darkness, burst through the false facades. Old Martin's true nature (his wrath toward Pecksniff and his love for Tom, Martin, and the others), the truth of Jonas's guilt, and the romantic love of the several couples are all metaphorically represented in the laughing singing fountain which flows forth at the center of the Temple court. The dark decaying forms have been replaced by respiritualized objects and men. The exiles are reunited. Adam is replaced by reborn men.

Within the three-part structure of Martin Chuzzlewit, based on the theme of conversion, the false and irrelevant religious structures of the architect Pecksniff are replaced by the Temple at the heart of the secular world, full of spirit, and in tune with the human community of love, represented by Old Martin and his 'children'. Architectural designs are superseded by spontaneous music. Sadistic exclusiveness, the essence of Old Testament Calvinism, is replaced by a charitable spirit of all-inclusiveness; mediation between man and the Godhead, in the forms of Pecksniff and Sairey Gamp, is removed and the possibility of inner conversion and immediate access to redemption is offered to every man. Instead of artificial, fixed, inherited familial relationships, such as the Chuzzlewits and the Pecksniffs, man forms voluntary unions—familial, marital, and commercial (as in
Sweedlepipe and Co.). In order to arrive at true freedom, Martin, John, and Tom leave the bondage of Pecksniff's; Ruth escapes the oppression of the brass-and-copper founder's; and Mercy and Bailey are released from the cruel confinement of Jonas Chuzzlewit's. Sterile marriages such as Mercy's and Charity's are ended; and healthy unions between Martin and Mary, Mark and Mrs. Lupin, and Ruth Pinch and John Westlock begin. Life Assurance is exchanged for life; and business for what Marley's ghost calls the business of mankind.  

The structure is thus a subtle weave of fragmented and symbolic threads, which are various kinds of spiritual change.

This multiple evolutionary process which determines the structure of Martin Chuzzlewit is similar to that of another all-inclusive work, the Bible. Dickens borrows extensively from the book of Genesis. Opening with references to Adam and Eve and the genealogy of the Chuzzlewits, he presents two versions of disobedience against the father—Jonas's and Martin's—and makes specific reference to Cain, Seth, Sarai, and Noah's ark. The role of Sairey Gamp in Jonas's damnation parallels the Genesis description of Abraham's wife Sarai (Genesis 16.6), who causes Ishmael to be driven into exile; and Old Martin, like the

45 A Christmas Carol (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843), p. 33: "Business! cried the ghost, wringing its hands. "Mankind was my business."
aging Isaac, is apparently deceived into giving the birth-right to the wrong son (Genesis 27). Of the thirty-one specific Biblical allusions in Martin Chuzzlewit cited by James Stevens in Quotes and References in Charles Dickens, seventeen are from the Old Testament and six of the seventeen are from Genesis.

The major Old Testament conflict is between the avenging Jehovah and his sinful children, and particularly the representatives of the false temple of idolatry. Dickens' novel establishes a parallel seige between Old Martin and Seth Pecksniff. The Bible also records the evolution of God and the conversion of Adam to Christ. Similarly, grandfather and grandson, of the same name, both experience descent to near-death and then a form of physical and spiritual rebirth. While the Old Testament focuses on the sin of idolatry and false religion, the New Testament, under the influence of more ascetic writers such as St. Paul, tended rather to attack pure mammonism and to juxtapose the lustful mind with the pure in heart, treasures on earth with those in heaven, and the things of Caesar with the things of God. In Dickens' novel the same two types of sin are presented in the same order. The rise of the false priest, Pecksniff, which climaxes with the ground breaking ceremony at the end of Part XIII, dominates the first half of the novel; Jonas's pure monetary greed is the major subject of the second half. Though nothing about Jonas echoes the priestly role of Pecksniff, his house does have some affinity with the false or decaying temple.
At the end of Part X, when his narrative begins to take the center stage, he and Mercy return from their honeymoon and the old prophet Chuffey greets them with "Oh! woe, woe, woe, upon this wicked house!" 46

A nineteenth-century human form of the Last Judgment--in the exposure of the guilty Jonas and the unleashing of Old Martin's wrath against Pecksniff--and a Victorian version of the disciples gathered around a risen Lord conclude Martin Chuzzlewit. The evils of exclusiveness and mediation in man's relationship to God, of falsehood and sadism, and of dilletanist and mammonism have been eliminated by the exile of Pecksniff, the death of Jonas, and the conversion of Old Martin. Like the Biblical authors, also, Dickens adds to the Genesis beginnings and New Testament eschatological details a kaleidoscopic array of vision, pastoral, tragedy, prophesy, and fictional history, as well as his own variety of humor.

That society toward which the whole novel moves--a community without dilletantes or worshippers of mammon, thoroughly infused with divine harmony--is also the vision of Dickens' contemporary, Thomas Carlyle. The importance of this nineteenth-century prophet to any discussion of Dickens is widely recognized. Dickens met Carlyle at a social gathering in 1840. Carlyle's major works were published in the late 1830's and early 1840's,

46 MC, p. 268.
and, according to Kathleen Tillotson, he became a major influence on the literature of the forties, giving the novel a new poetic, symbolic, and visionary quality.47

The world of Martin Chuzzlewit, like that envisioned by Carlyle, is an organic universe run by eternal moral laws. A unity in Spirit lies within the crowded visual scenes, just as unified world view rests beneath the cluttered and deceptive prose. In this world of contrasting and intertwining symbolic threads, the eternal forces drive men and events toward the destruction of old, false, despiritualized forms in an inevitable apocalyptic resurgence of Truth and Spirit.

Both Dickens and Carlyle describe this development in terms of a death and rebirth pattern of Christian conversion, of a search for the Father, and of a transition to the new Christianity. They are also able to objectify and fictionalize these serious religious insights, and even to use the comic ironic style. Carlyle speaks of Sartor Resartus as a "Satirical Extravaganza."48 Carlyle's prose is a loose patchwork of images, symbols, and cross references, and organization is not within it so much as behind it, in the best lyric tradition. All symbols,

47 Tillotson, pp. 152-56.

he insists, are concealed divinity, which is revealed to those who can read the symbols. One loses meaning and unity by focusing on the crowded physical world of appearance. Discovering the symbols, however, organizes the world. Carlyle does not allegorize the images he uses, but instead depends upon his reintroduction of them in various places for the reader's comprehension, as with Midas and the Sphinx. Analogously, in Dickens' novel, we encounter, begin to relate, and then to see spiritual significance in the piling up of temple imagery—Salisbury Cathedral, the golden calves of Baal, St. Paul's with the cross atop it, the Temple in the heart of London, and the barrage of metaphoric temples associated with Pecksniff. The same gradual insight occurs with regard to the words 'veil,' 'valley,' 'vale,' 'wale,' 'whale,' and 'wail.'

In two chapters from *Sartor Resartus*, entitled "Symbols," and "Natural Supernaturalism," Carlyle expresses his view of Nature as symbol in a universe that is animated and spiritualized and whose true essence is music. His world contains intrinsic symbols, which, like music or the human body, are unified by an immanent God. The false view of the world, which he violently attacks, is one of extrinsic symbols, which, like a machine or a piece of architecture, lack both relationship and spirit. God is believed transcendent. *Martin Chuzzlewit* begins in such a mechanically conceived world. The wrathful Old Martin is unreachable; Pecksniff and his designs—architectural and
otherwise--are on the rise; and discord reigns among the Chuzzlewit clan. The ranks of self-seeking malcontents swell to include young Martin, John Westlock, and even Mark Tapley. By the end of the novel, the Father figure appears among his children to embrace them in love, and at the center of the community is the music of Tom and the laughing, singing fountain. The world is spiritualized and in harmony.

In keeping with the Christian view, Carlyle sees time as man's seed-field which enables him to carry out this process of spiritualization. As critical as Carlyle is of his age, he has faith in man's divinity and in history. Because all of human life is interrelated through Love and the eternal laws of Spirit, this collection of seeds called mankind evolves inevitably within a Providential universe—a universe moving toward Spirit in a state of continuing revelation.

The violent juxtaposition between the mechanical and the organic views of the world—between the Hell of matter, disorder, and falsehood, and the Utopian vision of the One Life—Carlyle presents in "Characteristics." In Sartor Resartus the two world views become a single continuous three-part development. Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, who is a symbol for man the Wanderer, must go through self-annihilation and dark exile in order to purify himself of the old decayed forms of the world and self, and to discover, in a moment of conversion, the divinity of self and cosmos, the Fatherhood of God, and the organic unity of all
men and things in Spirit. The reawakening from within and discovery of one's eternal spirit which is immortal is the true definition of religion, according to both Dickens and Carlyle. Failing to achieve this insight, Jonas Chuzzlewit sleeps on, riding through the "sentinels of God," ignoring the warning from Paul's epistle to the Romans (13:11):

...now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than we believed.

Both Jonas and Pecksniff illustrate Carlyle's pre-Freudian observation that true spirit will emerge through a pattern of organic inevitability, and the longer people refuse to recognize the truth beneath appearance, the more disastrous the consequences. Any brief illusion of freedom or separateness, Jonas discovers, opens a Pandora's box of consequences and newly discovered relationships and meanings. Conscience, which Jonas lacks, is defined by Carlyle as the awareness of this greater web of meaning and purpose and man's dutiful role in it. The sign of social health is rather a form of spontaneous unconscious existence, like that of Tom Pinch—a man loyally working, like an organ of the body, within the whole. Conformity is part of Carlyle's ideal: "The true liberty of a man... consisted in his finding out, or being forced to find out, the right path, and to walk thereon."[49] The plans of Old Martin for

his children and the loyal service of Tom--to the false god first, and then to the true Father--illustrate what Carlyle calls the religion of work. Like divine creation, work of any kind converts matter to spirit and creates order out of chaos.

The nineteenth-century, Carlyle was convinced, suffered from a breakdown in unity caused by the disease of self-consciousness. Faith and harmony had been replaced by the gospel of dilettantism, and the gospel of mammonism. In Past and Present (1843), Carlyle describes a world in which fact has been replaced by semblance and brotherhood by cash payment relationships. The true wealth of life has been exchanged for the sham wealth of material things. Language as the spontaneous expression of Truth has become jargon; and the heroes are quacks.

God's absolute Laws, sanctioned by an Eternal Heaven and an eternal Hell, have become Moral Philosophies, sanctioned by able computations of Profit and Loss, by weak considerations of Pleasure or Virtue and the Moral Sublime.50

The Victorians generally felt themselves in a transition period awaiting the New Christianity. In "Characteristics," Carlyle expressed the idea that Christianity's extrinsic symbols have lost their power to lead men, and that the spiritual reality needs new forms in which to clothe itself. The real germ of Christianity is always true; God reveals Himself daily in

50 Ibid., X, 136.
the events of history. Therefore, any stumbling block to belief is only a decayed form which needs exchanging for a living symbol of true inner spirit. This exchange is inherent in the conversions of Martin Chuzzlewit and in the novel's overall development from Old Testament Calvinism to New Testament humanism.

The creator of the new Christian society is Carlyle's semi-divine Hero, who is "the audible God's voice." Like Old Martin, he is an older man with tremendous perception as well as power. Carlyle's major symbol of this concept is Abbot Samson, who creates and presides over the medieval monastic society in Past and Present. Having trained himself, as Old Martin does, in obedience and humility, the Abbot becomes the vital center of a completely organized paternalistic community of brothers, all responsible for one another. Challenging the wrongs of the secular world, Abbot Samson settles both the monetary and spiritual affairs of his community and builds a new monastery. Such a society, like the one envisioned at the end of Dickens' novel, fuses religion and daily life, the temple and the counting house.

Though Past and Present are juxtaposed, Carlyle actually sees Past, Present, and Future as part of the same life tree.

51 Ibid., X, 221.
As in Dickens' narrative, in which the generations are reunited in a new spirituqlized time and place, Carlyle's three periods of history must be merged in order for man to live in the Everlastiny Now.

The characters created to embody such a world view must necessarily be complex. A dualistic unit of matter and spirit, they both disguise and reveal the divine. Dickens' fictional personages, like those of Carlyle, complement and repeat one another as they embody variations on a handful of eternal verities. They serve at the same time to violently contrast and conflict with one another in a cosmos that only grows through the strife of opposites.
CHAPTER III

CHARACTERIZATION

Judeo-Christian religion, at the center of Dickens' world, had come to be viewed as the mythic vehicle of universal truth. According to this conception of religion as myth, each moment in history was one of divine revelation. Simultaneously, nineteenth-century religion was moving back toward a humanistic and psychological emphasis. Both human and divine, the characters in Dickens' novels embody this transitional state. Whether the product of confident belief or of wish-fulfillment, they act out typically Victorian versions of the great Biblical drama; and, at the same time, they participate to some degree in the original spiritual significance of their roles.

Dickens employs the familiar Biblical analogues--the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, Ruth, Jonah. His characterization is also interspersed with numerous briefer and more obscure Biblical parallels, suggested by a name or some other characteristic detail. Reflected in these fictional personages, too, is Dickens' keen sense of the religious prototypes of his own time, found in sermons and popular attitudes. John Westlock, Martin Chuzzlewit, Augustus Muddle, and Montague Tigg can be nominally identified with recent religious history, in the persons of John Wesley, Martin Luther, and a less prominent but well-known figure,
Augustus Montague Toplady. The historian Kenneth Latourette labels Toplady an important late eighteenth-century figure associated with the doctrine of election. The author of the hymn "Rock of Ages," he would have had ideological affinities with a fictional devotee of irrevocable destiny, such as Augustus Maddle, and with the chairman of a life assurance company, such as Montague Tigg.

In any effort to draw complete parallels between a Dickens character and even the larger analogues, the association will break down. Dickens sees character as complex, altering with each action and situation. Man plays many roles, which are serious if they connect at some point with the true self, and comic if they do not. Human and divine, fragmented and complex, a Dickens character is inseparable from other similar natures in the novel, in history, and in the Bible. For example, Martin, Mark, and Tom are specifically linked by their relationship to a common Biblical prototype. Like the Prodigal Son, Martin in exile from his grandfather suffers as the victim of poverty and dishonest gamblers, and ends up in an environment very similar to the Prodigal's pig sty, including the pigs themselves. Driven from Pecksniff's house, Martin stops to have breakfast and sees a picture of the Prodigal on the wall.

In the same exiled state, Tom sees in his room at the Salisbury inn an oil painting of "a remarkably fat ox" and a portrait of "some former landlord." Upon the return of Martin and
Mark from America, at which point the latter has been embraced by the loving hostess of the Blue Dragon, Mrs. Lupin, Mark is referred to by Pecksniff as "the Prodigal returned." The Good Samaritan theme specifically links two unlikely figures--Mrs. Todgers and General Choke. Near the end of the novel, the narrator pays brief tribute to the hostess of the commercial boarding house for her kindness to Mercy Pecksniff by noting her "lean lank body" and recalling that "perhaps the Good Samaritan was lean and lank, but found it hard to live. Who knows!"

General Choke, who brings Martin to be fleeced by Scadder and his phony land company, sits down to await the completion of the transaction "like a good Samaritan waiting for a traveller."¹

Adding to the mythic dimension of these characters is their patterned appearance, in juxtaposed groups of two or three. Mary Graham and Ruth Pinch function in contrast with Merry (Mercy) and Charity Pecksniff. Mrs. Lupin and Mrs. Todgers are similarly contrasted. Three trinities which balance and shed light upon one another are Old Martin Chuzzlewit, young Martin, and Tom Pinch; Anthony Chuzzlewit, Jonas, and Chuffey; and Montague Tigg, Jonas, and Seth Pecksniff. The ritualistic roles of certain characters also contribute to the sacred and patterned element in Dickens' characterization. Mr. Mould, the undertaker,

¹Ibid., pp. 55, 237, 317, 414, 518, 224.
looks down "with an artist's eye, upon the graves," while Sairey Gamb and Betsey Prig oversee birth and death and combinations thereof.² Mr. Pecksniff, the architect and man of ceremony, is a creator of forms—both verbal and environmental. Mrs. Todgers, Mrs. Lupin, and Mark Tapley host the communal rites of rest, warmth, and feasting at frequent intervals in life's journey along the dark road. Poll Sweddlepipe, the barber, performs the weekly ceremony of physical renewal.

Because these characters are related to spirit and to each other, they can finally function as example. Dickens concludes from the opening genealogy of sinful Chuzzlewits since Adam:

because

they must have had by reason of their ancient birth a pretty large share in the foundation and increase of the human family, it will one day become its province to submit that such of its members as shall be introduced in these pages have still many counterparts and prototypes in the Great World about us.³

²Ibid., p. 253.

³MC, p. 4.
Central to the ritualistic sacred dimension of Martin Chuzzlewit, as well as to the theme of conversion, is the nature of God. The unifying theme of the Old and New Testaments is the conversion of the judging father who exiled and punished his children into a good father who waits to embrace his penitent son in a new heaven and new earth created for him. This is the heart of the eschatological expectation, the messianic hope, and the apocalyptic spirit of the Bible. The god of vengeance proves himself a loving father by becoming a suffering man. Such is the religious significance of the role of Old Martin Chuzzlewit.

The importance of the parental metaphor to Dickens cannot be exaggerated. In a letter of December 1839, he speaks of God as "The Great Father who required that His children love him." In Bleak House, Jarndyce warns Skimpole that the universe is "a rather indifferent parent"; and an American questions young Martin about England, referring to that country as "the unnat'ral

"Letters, ed. House and Storey, p. 620; God is frequently a father in the parables of Jesus; in a famous sermon preached in 1848, Maurice designates as one of the most significant aspects of the Prayer Book the fact that its authors "...set out with assuming God to be a Father, and those that worship Him to be His children."; Maurice is quoted by Davies, p. 305."
old parent." 5 The divine nature of Dickens' father figures has recently been recognized by J. Hillis Miller, Angus Wilson, and Steven Marcus; and of all of the fictional patriarchs Old Martin is the most formidable, distant, mysterious, and ultimately controlling. 6 The full title of the novel, as it appears on the front wrapper of each of the parts, spotlights the theme of a father with an inheritance and with definite if not justifiable ways. A possible expanded title of the Bible itself, it reads:

The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit His Relatives, Friends and Enemies. Comprising All his Wills and his Ways: With an Historical Record of what he did, and what he didn't: showing, moreover, who inherited the Family Plate, who came in for the Silver Spoons, and Who for the Wooden Ladles. The whole forming a complete Key to the House of Chuzzlewit. Edited by Boz. 7

The image of wills suggests not only the major Biblical metaphor for the nature of salvation, but also the many covenants that the Old Testament God made with his children--Noah, Abraham, Job. Emphasis on the "Ways" of this formidable patriarch, whose family traces back to Adam, also echoes the well-known Miltonic purpose for writing Paradise Lost. Like Milton's God, Old Martin sternly

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6 Miller, CD, p. 217; Wilson, World, p. 222; Marcus, p. 276.

7 Bibliography, p. 188.
reminds Pecksniff that the evil he has done has been "of his own free will and agency; nay that he had cautioned him against it."\(^8\) Jonas's free will and deliberate impenitence also function significantly in his spiritual destiny.\(^9\)

The Biblical Job discovers that beyond the natural scene as beyond a veil exists an unpredictable and unknowable deity. This spirit, whose effects are felt in nature and in human events, relentlessly pursues Jonas Chuzzlewit, as it followed the flights of Job, Cain, and Jonah. Related in its major qualities to the character of Old Martin, this spirit is both mysterious and ever-present. All of Old Martin's entrances occur with supernatural suddenness, and his designs for his children remain a secret until the very end when he chooses to reveal himself. In the opening scenes, he emerges without warning from a dark coach in the middle of the night and immediately wraps himself in the private and dimly lit innards of the Blue Dragon. Hidden beneath the coverlet and behind a veil of "thick neutral hangings," he fiercely scribbles new wills and then destroys them by the fire of a candle; finally extinguishing the light, he lays immobile with his head completely covered. Referred to by Pecksniff as

\(^8\)MC, pp. 504-05.

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 445.
"beyond our reach," he slips away while the Chuzzlewit clan quarrel over the inheritance he controls.\textsuperscript{10} An ever-present force in the lives of young Martin, Pecksniff, Tom, and others, Old Martin makes use even of the diabolical character, Montague Tigg, sending him with a bank note to the exiled young Martin in London.

Except for a brief secret appearance to Pecksniff in which he vows to damn all of the others, Old Martin remains hidden until he reveals himself to Tom in church at the end of Part VIII. Immediately after, he is heard knocking at the door of Pecksniff's house. Thus he descends from his transcendent position to suffer humiliation and near crucifixion while a guest in the house of Seth Pecksniff. The inexorable Old Martin maintains his privacy even among those in the Pecksniff household: he
came and went in his own strange manner, or sat among the rest absorbed within himself, and holding little intercourse with any one.\textsuperscript{11}

Forced by Pecksniff to play the role of the unforgiving judge before his returned and penitent grandson, he next appears in a seemingly resurrected state before the astonished Tom Pinch in

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., pp. 18, 20, 37.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 249; Maurice asserts, according to Davies, "that a personal God takes flesh in the Incarnation. . . . and His\textsuperscript{7} divine condescension to our low estate \textsuperscript{7}\textsuperscript{7} . . . 'a mighty act of divine humiliation'"; Davies, p. 310; see The Kingdom of Christ (American edition, 1843), pp. 339 f.
the upper room of the Temple:

    Old Martin Chuzzlewit! The same
    whom he had left at Mr. Pecksniff's,
    weak and sinking!\textsuperscript{12}

Truth and Old Martin arrive simultaneously at Jonas Chuzzlewit's
house in a blaze of light, exposing the dark hidden guilt of its
occupant. The equally unprepared Pecksniff is struck down by
his angry rod.

    Old Martin like the Judeo-Christian God has been made the
    passive instrument of rigid and hypocritical Puritanism, hidden
as he is from the penitent sinner young Martin by a pious moral
mediator. In submitting to Pecksniff's manipulation and dis-
tortion, however, Old Martin is following the pattern of the
Jehovah of Jeremiah. The deity recognizes the traitor Babylon
and seems to sanctify this false temple in order ultimately to
spiritualize King Josian's court and purify his Temple. Meanwhile,
His chosen people must learn through suffering and exile:

    Thus saith the Lord, the people which
    were left of the sword found grace in
    the wilderness; even Israel, when I
    went to cause him to rest. (Jeremiah 31.2)

Young Martin, who is converted while exiled in America, confesses
to his grandfather, who has cared for him and planned his salvation
throughout, "I little thought that you were interested in my

\textsuperscript{12} Mc, p. 481.
fate."^{13}

Like the God of Exodus and of Jeremiah, Old Martin exalts the wicked and exiles the chosen in order also to make the destruction of the wicked more terrible. In their secret meeting he tells Pecksniff:

> I confide in you to be my ally; to attach yourself to me by ties of Interest and Expectation; he laid great stress upon these words. . . . and to help me to visit the consequences of the very worst species of meanness, dissimulation, and subtlety, on the right heads.

Subtlety, however, and in such a manner that Pecksniff will not read the true meaning of his statement, Old Martin reveals his real purpose:

> . . . to mark my contempt for the rabble whom I despised, I choose from among them the very worst, and made him do my will, and pampered and enriched him at the cost of all the rest. . . . After casting about for the means of a punishment which should rankle in the bosoms of these kites the most, and strike into their gall, I devised this scheme. . . .^{14}

The Old Testament God, in his most negative form, is defined by the critic Lawrance Thompson and by the sociologist Svend Ranauf as transcendental, unpredictable, jealous,

^{13}Ibid., pp. 502, 503.

^{14}Ibid., pp. 100, 103-04; see also Wright, pp. 86-87.
self-glorifying, and demanding total obedience. 15 This is the way many nineteenth-century writers, such as Dickens and Melville, interpreted the Calvinist deity, and this is the way Old Martin initially appears. He confesses his desire, in the beginning, to make young Martin "penitent," "humbled," and submissive; and young Martin describes him in his "caprices" as obstinate and "abominably selfish," "full of jealousy and distrust," and demanding complete "respect, and submission and self-denial when his wishes were in question." "Every man for himself, and no creature for me!" the old man jealously laments at the end of Chapter Three. 16 Ranulf's major thesis is that these same qualities are to be found in Jehovah's English Puritan followers, and Dickens dramatizes the same idea in Martin Chuzzlewit. Old Martin's Old Testament pose stimulates the pious hypocrisy of Pecksniff and the self-seeking of the rest of the Chuzzlewit clan,

15 According to Lawrance Thompson, John Calvin's God combines remoteness with arbitrary will, impersonal order, and hatred and jealousy of man, and within the doctrine of predestination, God can be made to be the author of Sin; see Thompson, p. 22; see also Svend Ranulf, Moral Indignation and Middle-class Psychology (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1938), pp. 12, 62-63, 66, 72-74; Humphrey House notes the importance of the Old Testament to Dickens' culture: "It contained the worst distortion of the idea of Fatherhood upon which his own religion was based"; see House, p. 123; the historian E. E. Kellett finds Victorian children's literature permeated with "stories of the terrible results of disobedience" of a God who was "a jealous tyrant, whose eyes were in every place, watching for the slightest delinquency. . . ." All would be revealed at Judgment Day. This is the legacy of the high church movement as well as Evangelicalism; see Kellett, pp. 66, 68, 69, 70, 75, 140.

and Anthony Chuzzlewit's selfishness inspires and justifies the sadism and greed of his son, Jonas. As a child, young Martin "unconsciously reasoned... 'My guardian takes so much thought of himself that unless I do the like by myself, I shall be forgotten.'" 17

The God of the Old Testament was a major topic of popular nineteenth-century sermons. In 1834, Hugh MacNeil preached from the text of Isaiah 45:15: "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself..." "Of him and through him, and to him are all things," MacNeil proclaims, and all "things are in the sovereign disposal of God in his providence." Jabez Bunting speaks of "the thunderbolts of his wrath" directed against any disobedience or ignorance of Him. His judicial harshness, which seems more human than divine, is explained, according to James B. Mozley, by the fact that "we cannot separate our Lord's divinity from his humanity..." 18

17Ibid., p. 329; see Old Martin's realization of his negative influence, p. 498, and Anthony's p. 489; Ranulf's thesis is that the sadistic qualities of the Old Testament Calvinist God are reflected in his followers, who have an inordinate desire to see people, even the innocent suffer; see Ranulf, pp. 12, 16, 58, 66, 72.

Theodor Reik, in *Myth and Guilt*, finds this lack of distinction between God and the human father at the heart of the Judeo-Christian beginnings in Genesis:

> We have to assume that there was once a very human figure behind that elevated image of the deity, that the idea of the God father developed from that of a most powerful and terrifying chief of the tribe, a despotic father of the family. . . whose will was law for its members. . . . God, like his human model, was jealous of man and afraid man could usurp His powers or magic.19

Like the human-divine God of Genesis, who walks in the garden in the evening and speaks to Adam in a human voice, Old Martin prefers to walk outside in the evening, and he has a number of key encounters with his children in a garden-like churchyard setting. Blind to the negative theological implications of his own action, Pecksniff consciously poses as Adam in the garden when Old Martin arrives at his door. In a second garden meeting, the old man agrees to bring Mary Graham from the Blue Dragon to be a potential wife to Pecksniff. In a third scene, this one with Merry Pecksniff beneath a shade tree, he forms a shadow between the young girl and the sun, and he warns her of what exposure and exile from such shade will mean. Just after he asks if she has been "tempted," Jonas enters at the other gate. He then rises, Godlike, saying, "let it go on," and "looking full upon her."

After the sin and exile of this Victorian Eve, and after Old Martin himself has evolved into the forgiving personal father of the New Testament, he admits to having judged her "hastily" and calls her out of the depths of Todgers' Commercial Boarding House to come home with him.\textsuperscript{20}

Within the pattern of evolution, which is both Biblical and Carlylean, the good motives and forgiving natures of both Old Martin and Anthony are revealed in the closing scenes of the novel, and the reader sees for the first time the true meaning of their earlier selves. The emergence of God's true spirit in the New Testament similarly redefines the Old Testament avenging role as both an old self to be discarded, and a disguise. The Carlylean divinity is also concealed in the world of appearance and hidden to the eye of reason. As one of Carlyle's worn out institutions to be respiritualized, Old Martin evolves from a symbol of cash value to Pecksniff and the Chuzzlewit clan to a spiritual mystery in the Temple. He also represents the object of the orphan's search, ultimately embracing, as he does, not only his grandson, but also Tom Pinch and others outside his immediate family. He has more affinities with Carlyle's older examples of divinity incarnate, such as Odin and Abbot Samson, than he does with the nineteenth-century captains of industry before whom Carlyle would have society kneel. He is, nevertheless, Carlyle's

\textsuperscript{20}MC, pp. 245, 249-251, 241, 301, 516, 517.
Hero as priest-victim, as paternal creator of the new Christian society, and as the human voice of God. A man who can do anything, he is the object of worship.

Secretive even in the final scenes, Old Martin erupts, like Carlyle's repressed Spirit of Truth, with great tidal energy, which comes both from "the energy and determination natural to his character," and from "all the forced and unnaturally nurtured energy consequent upon their long suppression." His outburst against Pecksniff, described in the imagery of a flood, is apocalyptic; and like its Biblical predecessors, it results from the same pent-up wrath that Jehovah unleashed against the lust, falsehood, and materialism of Babylon, false temples, and idolatry of any kind.

The novel's two father figures—Old Martin and Anthony Chuzzlewit—form a symbolic unit, embodying a modified pattern of God's voluntary submission to death and resurrection, and His nature as concealed spirit working through time and matter. Anthony appears suddenly to Pecksniff and his daughters in the dark corner of a night coach. He rises from his deathbed to point an "eternal finger" at Jonas and to speak "in an unearthly tongue"; and we learn from his clerk Chuffey at the end that the true purpose of this final reappearance is to forgive. Pecksniff compares the seeming decline of Old Martin while in his house with that of the

\[21\] MC, pp. 496-97.
dying Anthony. The true spirit of Anthony is resurrected in the confessions of the druggist Lewsome and of the prophet Chuffey, but even before these final revelations, the dead man has exerted a constant spiritual force in the haunted life of his son. Finally, driven to a self-inflicted punishment, Jonas takes the rest of the poison meant for his father. The thematic oneness of the two Chuzzlewit patriarchs is articulated by the inspired and revitalized Chuffey. When Old Martin calls the old clerk to come home with him, Chuffey cries,

> Just his old way! . . . looking up into his face. I almost believe it's Mr. Chuzzlewit alive again.\(^\text{22}\)

The Judeo-Christian God experiences death and rebirth. His image evolves from mystery to revelation, and from transcendence to immanence. From the beginning, however, His effects are felt in the intermediary forces of Nature and human events. In this respect Old Martin and Anthony become associated with the God of Nature in Martin Chuzzlewit—the wind that flattens Pecksniff at his own door, the voices in the woods where Tigg is murdered. Full of spirit and mystery are the storms that accompany Martin and Mark into exile and the thundering and rain that surrounds Jonas on his evil journey.

The nineteenth-century idea of God in Nature is, according to Nathalia Wright, "in the great tradition of the Hebrews, who

\(^{22}\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 75, 195, 299, 489, 490.}\)
regarded the creation, for all its mystery and terror, as the garment of Jehovah."\(^{23}\) The opening wind that knocks Pecksniff down suggests the warning of Jeremiah 23.19:

\[
\text{Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.}
\]

The storm that surrounds the journey of Tigg and Jonas also implies a spiritual life beyond the natural scene: "...like Heaven's wrath... Louder and louder the deep thunder rolled, as through the myriad halls of some vast temple in the sky..."\(^{24}\) Henry Parry Liddon's sermon, "Influences of the Holy Spirit," on the use of nature as a metaphor of divine spirit, is built entirely upon the image of the wind:

\[
\text{an appropriate symbol of an irruption of the Invisible into the world of sense, of the action, so tender and so imperious, of the Divine and Eternal Spirit upon the human soul.}\(^{25}\)
\]

E. E. Kellett describes the Victorian period's powerful sense of God in Nature:

\[
\text{There were notions, hardly to be dignified with the name of doctrine, which the attendant at chapel in the 'forties}'
\]

\(^{23}\)Wright, pp. 184-85.

\(^{24}\)MC, p. 403.

\(^{25}\)SES, p. 374.
would inevitably hear expounded. The most commonly proclaimed of these was that of special providences; and it would be hard to exaggerate the effect of this idea on the lives and habits of the people. The laws of Nature were constantly suspended for the benefit of the good or for the punishment of the bad. Wesley's Journal is full of narratives of these Providences; a shower of rain or a sudden cessation of a shower, a stumbling of his horse, an illness or a recovery, everything, in fact, marked that he was being watched by some invisible messenger from on high.

One such description tells of "how a storm of thunder and lightning drenched and terrified a man going on an evil errand."

In Dickens' novel, the joy and purity of Ruth Pinch, and Tom Pinch, and Mark Tapley are also reflected in their surroundings, particularly in the sunny rhythmic scenes on the road and in the celestial scenes filled with light and music that end the novel.

As in the Old Testament and in Sartor Resartus, the violent movements of murder, exile, wind, fire, and storm in man and in nature serve a positive purpose. They are the evil energy needed to destroy the decaying forms and to move toward a new re-spiritualized order. Dickens believed, as did Carlyle, in that organic ethical determinism called Providence and in art's imitation of it. Liddon, in his sermon, also speaks of the "designs of providence" and of


27 Letters, ed. Dexter, III, 125.
that Eternal Spirit, ... who breatheth where he listeth, not in caprice or by accident, but because he knows exactly whereof each of his creatures is made, and apportions his distinctions with the unerring decision of perfect Love and perfect Justice.  

The concluding moments of exposure and reunion convey an inevitable erupting of spirit in the character of Old Martin, in the revelations of Nadgett, in the revitalized figure of Chuffey, and in the emotional energy for justice which fills the city like the "roaring of the sea." Collectively they signify

the truth, which nothing would keep down, which blood would not smother, and earth would not hide; the truth, whose terrible inspiration seemed to change dotards into strong men; and on whose avenging wings, one whom he /Jonas/ had supposed to be at the extremest corner of the earth came swooping down upon him.  

In Martin Chuzzlewit, as in the Victorian world, then, God appears in five guises. The Old Testament God of Calvinism evolves into the New Testament forgiving Father. The third manifestation is the God of the burning bush, known only through his effects in Nature. In His fourth form, He is the inevitable organic fulfillment of the seeds of human action and divine evolution called Providence. The fifth is that fairly inconsequential Victorian figure smiling down on praying children, whose

\[28\text{Liddon, in } \text{SES, p. } 390.\]

\[29\text{MC, p. } 488.\]
beds display his chubby angels. Associated periodically with Tom Pinch in his moments of childlike purity He is "that Being from whom such hearts and such affections come."30

Dickens' own temporary transfer of sectarian allegiance to Unitarianism and the recurrence of the dream of Mary Hogarth, both in the early 1840's, reflect a conflict and concern regarding the nature of God and his relationship to his children--one event suggesting an open commitment to a faith in which the divine and the human were essentially one, and the other implying an intense emotional attraction toward the stability and passive surrender possible in the highly structured and God-centered religion. The nature of the Father and man's relationship to him as a unifying symbol in Dickens makes the psychological, social, and metaphysical levels of Dickens' meaning equally relevant and difficult to separate. He shares the view of the Hebrews, as summed up in the Victorian sermon by Robert William Dale:

The Hebrews, while maintaining firmly the unity of God and his transcendent greatness, escaped the desolation of philosophical Deism by finding the activity of the 'Spirit of God' in the visible creation and in the life of man. They approached . . . the conception of the divine immanence. . . . Transcendence, immanence, and the power of self-revelation--these are all included in the Christian conception of God in relation to man. . . . 31

30Ibid., p. 515.

31"The Trinity," in SES, p. 408.
Crimes Against the Father

Martin

Like The Brothers Karamazov, Martin Chuzzlewit deals with archetypal acts of rebellion against the father figure. Like the novel’s many exits from gardens and destructions of false temples, the theme of crimes against the father recurs in numerous variations, just as it does in the Old Testament. Theodor Reik points out that Adam’s was

the first of a series of disobedient acts against Jehovah, followed by the fratricide of Cain, the increasing bloodthirstiness of Lamech, the general depravity calling for the Deluge, and so on.\(^{32}\)

The betrayal of Judas and of Peter and the cowardly judgment of Pilate continue the theme in the New Testament.

The Fall of Genesis is an act of sexual disobedience, and a nineteenth-century version of this event occurs in the narrative of young Martin Chuzzlewit. The other significance of this Biblical transgression—the eating of the forbidden fruit—is dramatized in Jonas’s story, and symbolizes the devouring of the God figure in order to become infused with His power. Regarding the first version of the fall, represented in Martin’s story,

\(^{32}\)Reik, p. 328.
Freud reports that in early primitive society the sons wished to kill the strong despotic father in order to consume his force and thereby possess the women. This tendency became a part of primitive religion, according to Freud's sexual interpretation. Female idols, who were "very earthly predecessors of the Holy Virgin," had son-gods as lovers--Osiris, Attis, and Adonis. Punished and sometimes killed for his rebellion, the lover of the mother-goddess is resurrected to sit in Heaven at the side and sometimes in the place of the old god. The rescue and resurrection of the dead god occurs often with the very active help of the mourning goddess. . . . 33

Biblical history may be read according to the same archetypal pattern. Adam is exiled for his sin with Eve and then reborn as Christ to be the bridegroom of Mary.

In Dickens' novel, Martin is exiled by Old Martin Chuzzlewit because of his private love of Mary Graham--a love which ironically, as with Adam and Eve, was initiated by the Father figure who exiles him. Like the God of Genesis, Old Martin tortured himself with the reflection that they, so young, to whom he had been so kind a benefactor, were already like the world, and bent on their

33Ibid., pp. 163, 271-72.
own selfish, stealthy ends; . . .
the grace of his design was lost. . .
and they separated in wrath. 34

Both Pecksniff and Mrs. Lupin suggest that the relationship
between Old Martin and Mary is morally equivocal. Although we
are not supposed to take their suspicions seriously, the platonic
intimacy between the old man and his young female companion helps
to explain Old Martin's anger when young Martin takes the
initiative in forwarding his relationship with her. It also
links this threesome with Reik's interpretation of Genesis.

Martin, having suffered near death in America, is reborn
in a new self, reconciled with the old man, and reunited in
marriage with the original object of his rebellious love. The
same pattern is found in the exegetical tradition in which Reik
explains, "Adam is not only the precursor and herald of Christ,
but His earlier form." 35 As the "mourning goddess," Mary Graham
provides both spiritual and financial help toward his salvation,
giving him a ring to be exchanged for money while he is in exile.
The prefiguring of the Biblical Mary in Eve is more obviously
relevant in the narrative of Merry Pecksniff than to that of
Mary Graham; but in both, temptation in the garden is followed
by lonely exile which in turn leads to reunion with the forgiving

34MC, p. 504.
35Reik, p. 247.
father who formerly judged her. While Merry Pecksniff surrenders to the temptation of Jonas, in spite of Old Martin's warning beneath the tree, Mary Graham remains pure both in her farewell scene with Martin in St. James' Park and in the face of Pecksniff's lustful advances in the churchyard.

The religious significance of Mary's character is due not only to her relationship to the two Martins, but also to the fact that her major scenes take place either in a church or in a garden full of Edenic detail. The idealized object of a number of characters, she is pursued by the inheritance-seeking Pecksniff and secretly worshipped by the pure and innocent Tom Pinch. The narrator notes also the "high honour he [Old Martin] designed for Mary." The deeper significance of her name to Dickens is indicated by the fact that Mary Weller was his childhood nurse, Maria Beadnell was his first love, Mary Dickens is the first child named in his will, and the letters to his good friend Mary Boyle are signed "Joseph." The vision of the dead Mary Hogarth is full of religious imagery, and it is reflected in two specific descriptions of Mary Graham's role in the novel. When the lovers meet in St. James Park, Mary appears in a veiled mist as did the draped figure in Dickens' dream. Later, Tom Pinch describes his love of Mary to his sister Ruth in language which recalls Dickens' own experience:

\[36^{MC}, p. 412.\]
...somebody who is precious to you may die, and you may dream that you are in heaven with a departed spirit, and you may find it a sorrow to wake to the life on earth... It is sorrowful to me to contemplate my dream, which I always knew was a dream, even when it first presented itself... 37

The role of Martin as the rebellious son forgiven and rewarded is both mythic and mimetic, for it also reflects the Victorian concern with the nature of salvation. Conversion and the nature of sin and its consequences are common topics of nineteenth-century sermons and religious debate as they are central to Dickens' message. William Connor Magee, like Dickens, finds the story of the Prodigal Son to be an ideal illustration for the "eternal promise of free forgiveness." The boy says, in Luke 15.18,

'I will arise and go to my Father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee.' Such is our gospel of hope and of joy... 38

The characterization of young Martin Chuzzlewit depends heavily upon this Biblical analogue. When Pecksniff leaves for

37Ibid., p. 479.

38"The Ethics of Forgiveness," in SES, pp. 367-68.
London, he encourages Martin to "be jovial," and to "kill the fatted calf if you please!" Driven from the same house into the rain, Martin notices on the wall of the first inn where he stops a picture of the Prodigal Son returning to his father in rags. Following the pattern of his Biblical counterpart, Martin goes on to suffer poverty, loneliness, and humiliation at the hands of foreigners in a distant land, to be cheated out of his money by gamblers (the pawnbroker and then Scadder and his phony land company), and to end up in a swamp among the pigs. Penitent, he returns to be reembraced by a forgiving grandfather.

Salvation through one's companion is the subject of Frederick W. Robertson's sermon, "The Restoration of the Erring":

The charity which desires another's goodness above his own well-being; that alone succeeds in the work of restoration. ... God has given man the power of elevating his brother man.\footnote{\textit{MC}, pp. 55, 136.}

The selfless Mark thus leads Martin to see his own selfishness, and Martin comes to realize that Mark is "the best master in the world."\footnote{\textit{The Restoration of the Erring," in SES, pp. 318, 315.}} The suddenness of Martin's conversion in Eden is also in keeping with the ideas of popular religion. According to J.R.H. Moorman, the Evangelical experience of conversion began with "the crushing sense of sin and defilement," and, according \footnote{\textit{MC}, p. 348.}
to Horton Davies, it was "instantaneous change from darkness to light." Suffering from a feverish sickness in the swamps of Eden, Martin

felt how nearly Self had dropped into the grave and what a poor dependent, miserable thing it was. . . . So low had Eden brought him down. So high had Eden raised him up. 43

Returned to his grandfather, he is overwhelmed by three feelings, which are essentially Christian: a remembrance of Old Martin's "ancient love," a recognition of him as "the guardian of his childhood," and the recollection of a "reproachful and irrevocable Past." At this point, too, he expresses the great Christian paradox: "... I should have best remembered myself in forgetting myself. . . ." 44

To the Victorian preacher, James Bowling Mozley, conversion is comparable to the harvest of a seed which bursts out of its false husk. If the seed has been sown, regardless of the obstacles, it will finally bear the "sublime fruit": in the good man, sin holds

42 Moorman, p. 319; Davies, p. 240.

43 MC, pp. 329, 330; according to Nathalia Wright, "Job, condemned by men, is driven by his own misfortunes to find in Jehovah the source of wisdom, power, even of justice. The redemptive power of suffering, to be fully expressed by Deutero-Isaiah and the writers of the New Testament, has its beginning here"; see Wright, pp. 185-86.

44 MC, pp. 415, 417.
its place by custom, an outside and coating, just as virtue does in the deteriorating man, till at last, by a sudden effort and the inspiration of an opportunity, the strong good casts off the weak crust of evil and comes out free. We witness a conversion. 45

Similarly, "Martin's nature was a frank and generous one," but in his grandfather's house, and in a world which reinforces social and economic snobbery, he had taken on an insensitive and self-vaulting personality, which is stripped away by his suffering. 46 Pecksniff's facade crumbles, exposing a bad self; Jonas Chuzzlewit unaware and striving against remorse, essentially refuses to surrender the evil self and release the true spiritual self beneath.

Discovering latent goodness beneath the selfish surface, Martin is cured of the modern disease of self-consciousness and self-seeking; and he returns to the Father, to the brotherhood of man, and to unconscious obedience. Like Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, Martin finds that the intuitional moment of conversion does not lead immediately to a new heaven and a new earth. Carlyle's protagonist feels increased unrest, but the sense of complete hopelessness is gone. Martin, like Carlyle's wanderer, moves

45 Mozley, in SES, p. 301.

46 MC, p. 329.
between decayed forms and a new spiritualized unified world. Though he is rebuffed in his first reunion with Old Martin at Pecksniff's house and is only an outside observer at the ceremony rewarding Pecksniff, the decayed forms are gradually replaced by spiritualized ones and the world moves toward One Life.
Jonas

By the time of Genesis, according to Reik, the atrocious deed of God-murder was mitigated to an act of disobedience and the devouring of the God-Father was displaced to eating forbidden fruits.\textsuperscript{47}

In the Victorian world, the sin of killing and devouring the father in order to be infused with his spiritual powers is expressed in the greedy desire to inherit money, that symbol in a capitalistic society of spiritual power. Such is the motivation of Jonas's plans for his father's death. The atheistic dimension of Jonas's act is implied in Chuffey's prophetic refrain--"Who's lying dead upstairs"--which Sairey Gamp refers to as his "Bible language."\textsuperscript{48}

The two disobedient sons--Jonas and Martin--are paralleled in the novel by a number of details. Each rides in a straw-covered wagon on his way into exile. The ladders which appear in Jonas's dream are used as metaphor to describe Martin's descent into poverty and insignificance. Ladders, with angels moving up and down them, also figure in the dream of the Biblical Jacob, who deceives his blind aging father in order to steal his

\textsuperscript{47} Reik, pp. 145-46; Jonas is described as compulsively devouring his food on pages 200-01, 203, and 756.

\textsuperscript{48} MC, pp. 441, 447.
brother Esau's birthright (See Genesis 28.12). The name of Esau appears on the ship which rescues Martin (by carrying his letter to Mr. Bevan) from obscurity in the swamps of Eden to true sonship. 49

Four other Biblical analogues are reflected in the character of Jonas, his actions, and the language of his narrative. As in the story of Judas, Jonas's betrayal for the sake of money leads to the death of the Father and to his own despair and suicide. In the exchange between Pecksniff and Jonas on the dark road, Peter's denial of his Lord is also recalled. Jonas reacts violently to Pecksniff's mention of his deceased father: "I'm not going to be crowed over by you, because I don't like dead company." "Crowed over, Mr. Jonas!" Pecksniff repeats. 50

He shares with his Biblical namesake, Jonah (whose New Testament name is Jonas), a tendency toward excessive anger. Like Jonas's sleep aboard ship during the storm, the frequent sleeping or drunken states of Jonas have a religious interpretation:

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Riding on in the coach on his way
to kill Tigg among those sentinels
of God, he slept, and did not change
the purpose of his journey. If he
forgot it in his troubled dreams, it
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49Ibid., pp. 450, 142; the ship, the Esau Slodge, is mentioned on page 331.

50Ibid., p. 209.
came up steadily, and woke him. But it never woke him to remorse, or to abandonment of his design.  

Jonas's flights end, or occur in, a dark enclosure—a coach, his own mouldy back room, the bowels of a departing ship which he never reaches; and three times reference is made in his presence to whales or to Jonah. Denied conversion by water, Jonas is told by the coachman that he will not be drowned.\(^{52}\) God comes to him to expose his dark guilt but no penitence or redemption follows. The Biblical pattern is incomplete.

His nature is also parallel to Ishmael's, a fact which Forster notes in his early analysis of the character.\(^{53}\) One of the many Genesis figures reflected in the novel, Ishmael is described by the angel to his mother Hagar:

> And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. (Genesis 16,12)

Jonas is equally devoid of sympathetic interaction with any other character. His hand is either literally or figuratively raised against his father, his father's disciple, his wife, his

\(^{51}\)Ibid., p. 450. 

\(^{52}\)Ibid., pp. 76, 390, 427, 451; the proverb is also used in The Tempest, Act I, scene 1. 

\(^{53}\)Forster, II, 81.
business partners, and his kinsmen. All of these in some manner, even the innocent Tom Pinch, strike out at him in return and drive him to suicide. Finally, he is forced to remain in the midst of them, in spite of efforts at disguise and flight.

While in Eden, Martin must confront Nature totally unspiritualized. Jonas, however, suffers from Nature animated by his guilty imagination and by the forces of moral guidance and divine punishment. Having deliberately stripped his world of those three elements which save Martin—a forgiving father, a compassionate brother, and his own conscience—Jonas must flee alone in a world of guilt and terror which drives him finally to self-destruction. The language and imagery of guilty fear associated with such Biblical figures as Cain, Job, Jonah, and the victims of the apocalypse of Revelation must have been in Dickens' mind as he recounts Jonas's descent. On his way to murder Tigg, Jonas feels his feet "already moist and clogged with the red mire that stained the naked feet of Cain!" (See Genesis 4.10). When after the murder "a dark shade emerging within him seemed to overspread his face and slowly change it," one recalls Job 4.14-15:

Fear came upon me, and trembling,
which made all my bones to shake.
Then a spirit passed before my face,
and the hair of my flesh stood up. . . .

54MC, pp. 449, 448.
Nadgett, that "pursuing Fate," who represents both Old Testament mystery and Providential design, follows and exposes him. The woods which hide the murdered Tigg become a hell and are sought out by the sun, which is the light of Truth. The drops of blood become voices crying murder. The church bells, which madden him and keep him awake, are heard again as Nadgett enters his house to reveal his guilty secret. The religious atmosphere of this narrative is further heightened by the analogy between the storm during his evil journey and "Heaven's wrath" resounding through the halls of some great temple in the sky.\textsuperscript{55} The effect in nature and in the character resemble those described in the apocalypse of Revelation, which in turn draws much from Old Testament natural catastrophes—the breaking open of the seals, the pale horse of Death followed by Hell, the earthquake, the blackened sun and bloody moon, and the premature death of a tree's fruit when shaken by a great wind. This eruption in Nature is the result of man's inner corruption and creates in him torment, fear, and despair:

\begin{quote}
And in those days shall men seek death and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. (Revelation 9.6)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., pp. 374, 452, 488, 454, 449, 445, 372, 491, 403; William Magee asserts in a famous Victorian sermon, "There has been no drop of blood that has ever been shed on this earth, since the blood of righteous Abel, that has not cried for justice to the Lord God of Sabaoth"; see Magee in \textit{SES}, p. 362.
As in the morality play tradition, Jonas is torn between the forces of the devil within and without, and the forces of good within nature, man, and conscience.\textsuperscript{56} Like the morality play protagonist, he exhibits most of the standard vices—pride, anger, greed, sloth, envy, gluttony, and lechery. The last, as in the character of Tulkinghorn in \textit{Bleak House} and in other Dickens villains, is distorted into the sadistic urge for power; however, it appears in its true form to some extent in the incestuous marriage of Jonas to his cousin Mercy. Like his medieval counterpart, also, Jonas is without dignity or insight in the hands of this barrage of moral influences, and his development is one of slow disintegration. Redemption and insight are the goal of the reader and not the character in both the older genre and in the Jonas narrative.

Serving as a warning to the reader, Jonas’s story also relates to the many illustrations of the damned life that fill the nineteenth-century terror-sermons. One of these, by the famous Charles Spurgeon, ends:

\begin{quote}
There is a night coming, when a song shall be sung, of which misery shall be the subject, set to the music of wailing and gnashing of teeth; there is a night coming when woe, unutterable woe, shall be the matter of an awful,
\end{quote}

terrific miserere—when the orchestra shall be composed of damned men, and howling fiends, and yelling demons; and mark you, I speak what I do know, and testify the Scriptures. There is a night coming for a poor soul within this house to-night; and unless he repent, it will be a night wherein he will have to growl and howl, and sigh and cry, and moan and groan forever. 'Who is that?' sayest thou. Thyself, my friend, if thou art godless and Christless. . . . Dost thou repent tonight? . . . . List thee, thou mayest be saved. . . .

After being accused, the damned Jonas sways and groans like a savage crouching in the corner. In chanting tones throughout, the narrator has employed the imagery of night, blackness, hell, and death to describe this sinful character. Earle Davis complains that Dickens' heavy-handed approach in the telling of Jonas's tale is "painfully plain." We are told that he is "fettered" by a "devil inside"; that he shows the deep "impression of somebody's hoof"; that he has a "devil within him," an "imprisoned devil"; and that he is "animated by a demon." His feelings as he is gradually found out are those of "having fallen down into a pit of deepest ruin." A brief moment of escape through the murder of Tigg becomes "one red glimmer in a sky of blackness."


Dickens repeatedly stresses Jonas's lack of "remorse," "penitence," or "contrition." He also affirms that ". . . the fatality was of his own working. . . and the pit was of his own digging. . . ." Henry Melvill's popular sermon on this topic, entitled "The Reproductive Power of Human Actions," is built upon the text from Galatians 6:7: "For whatever a man soweth, that shall he reap." Melvill insists that

God destroys no man. Every man who is destroyed must destroy himself. . . 
by stifling an admonition of conscience. . . . The Holy Spirit strives within every man. Conscience is but the voice of Deity, heard above the din of human passions. 59

Like Dickens and Carlyle, Melvill believes that conscience is divine and that the organic evolution of a man's nature from a fixed seed does not exclude the element of free will and choice.

Augus Wilson notes Dickens' obsession with murder and "his belief that the criminal is a special kind of person set apart from all others--Cain wandering the face of the earth." In this state of being pursued in exile, Henry Melvill relates, a man's determination toward evil turns into despair, hunted as he is by "a never-wearying fiend." The popular Victorian

59 MC, pp. 450, 453, 483, 445; Melvill, in PENC, pp. 507-16; Hugh MacNeil sees sin as the result of forgetting the omnipotence of God by those who "magnify human free-will"; see MacNeil in PENC, p. 765; Jonas's suicide is in keeping with the prophesy of Jabez Bunting's sermon in PENC, p. 566, "the wicked man shall surely die."
preacher, F. W. Robertson, also recounts the sinner's degenerating, haunted state:

One fault leads to another, and crime to crime. The soul gravitates downward beneath its burden. ... until he can grasp nothing—he does not stand on fact—he is living as in a dream—himself a dream. All is ghastly, unreal, spectral. A burden is on him as of a nightmare. ... One fixed idea—one remembrance, and no other—one stationary, wearing anguish. ... passing into despair; itself the goad to fresh and wilder crimes. ... That soul will not grow henceforth. 60

The spiritual forces in Jonas's guilt-ridden world and his response to those forces can be defined as both Romantic and modern. Falling, in the date of its composition, between Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner (1797-98) and Kafka's The Trial (1916-17), the Jonas narrative in Martin Chuzzlewit shares characteristics of both these works. 61

A mariner shoots a harmless albatross, and, as a result of the guilty act, becomes alienated in a terrifyingly hostile and arbitrary universe. He is subjected to the rejection and accusation of others, and to physical misery; and comes to feel contempt for man, Nature, and himself. When he surrenders to


this harsh world and his guilty relationship to it, it suddenly becomes loving and forgiving. Oneness and life are restored.

Joseph K, an orderly industrious bank clerk, is arrested on his thirtieth birthday and spends the rest of his life trying to manipulate himself out of a guilty state which he completely fails to comprehend. Unenlightened and unredeemed, he dies a humiliating death at the hands of two insignificant representatives of the Law.

Both Coleridge and Dickens combine a sacred and interrelated universe with an Old Testament world of capricious terror and unresolved tensions. Robert Penn Warren in his article on The Rime, entitled "A Poem of Pure Imagination," sees Coleridge's world as totally sacramental and unified. E. E. Bostetter cogently argues, however, that "even as Warren sees it, it is the Old Testament morality of the avenging Jehovah." In Dickens' novel, following the murder of Tigg in the woods, the narrator tells how "a dark, dark stain...dyed the whole summer night from earth to heaven," and how...

...the sun, which looked into the wood, and gilded with its rising light a dead man's face, had seen that man alive, and sought to win him to a thought of Heaven, on its going down last night.62

62"The Wanderings of Cain," in The Complete Works of S. T. Coleridge, VII, 303; Dickens uses the same phrase to describe the feverish mental suffering of Lewsome on page 261; in both narratives, as in the Gothic ballad, the hunter becomes the hunted, persecuted by all the nature and spirit world; for both writers the animal, human and spiritual worlds fuse, as do the elements of fairy tale, Hebraism, Christianity, naturalistic detail and psychology, into one Carlylean duality of matter and spirit.
In both the swamps of Eden, where Martin suffers near death, and in the mariner's ocean are found the red sun, the slimy stagnation, and the prevalence of death over life. In *The Wanderings of Cain*, Coleridge describes the Old Testament deity and his effects in nature:

> The Mighty One that persecuteth me is on this side and on that; he pursueth my soul like the wind, like the sand-blast he passeth through me; he is around me even as the air!... The torrent that roareth far off hath a voice: and the clouds in heaven look terribly on me; the Mighty One who is against me speaketh in the wind of the cedar grove; and in silence am I dried up.\(^{63}\)

Dickens also shares with Carlyle and with the prewar Austrian Jew, Franz Kafka, a powerful sense of the Old Testament Father as "that Freudian terror the Primal Sire, energetic, overbearing, capricious, successful, respectable."\(^{64}\)

All three protagonists--Jonas, the mariner, and Joseph K--discover that their respective destinies are other than they had planned. In keeping with Carlyle's theory, the central guilty


act releases nightmarish forces in the universe. Caught in a
tangle of error and incomprehensibility, all three suffer from
the sins of pride and ignorance, which were Cain's. Finally,
more acted upon than acting, they passively and determinis-
tically leave themselves open to sinister influences. All strive
piteously and grotesquely to evade spirit in a world of inesc-
capable spiritual law. The story of Jonas and that of the
mariner are realistic until the killing; that compulsive act
strips away the illusion of freedom and transforms the nature of
the man and the world.

After the murder of Tigg, Jonas suffers, like the mariner
and Cain, from totality of exposure to weather and to self. He
begins to feel the same hell of crushing weight, monotonous
stagnation and spiritual draught, the constant hostile observation
of Nature and man, self-pity and contempt for the living, and
finally despair and the desire for death as an escape from this
punitive state. The mariner wears his victim around his neck.
In the same way,

    the weight of that which stretched out
stiff and stark in the awful chamber
above-stairs so crushed and bore down
Jonas that he bent beneath the load.

After Tigg's murder in the woods,

    if he been condemned to bear the body
in his arms and lay it down for recog-
nition at the feet of every one he met,
it could not have been more constantly
with him or cause of more monotonous
and dismal occupation than it was in this state of mind.\textsuperscript{65}

Jonas experiences not only the dismal decay of the dark, mouldy back chamber but the feeling of dryness and heat which is the mariner's: it is a "raging thirst" from "the fire that burnt within him." He dreads most "the eye of Night"; and just as the fellow mariners stare in judging silence, everything in the night landscape watches Jonas passing through:

> It is a common fancy that nature seems to sleep by night. It is a false fancy, as who should know better than he?\textsuperscript{66}

Like the mariner, Jonas suffers from the same kind of isolation when the accusers who have gathered at his house move away from him

> as if a pestilence were in his breath. They fell off, one by one just as the souls of the fellow mariners fly by him one by one, from that part of the room, leaving him alone upon the ground.\textsuperscript{67}

His relationship to Mercy, his wife, is one of increasing contempt; and when he rejoins his household from the back chamber where he has hidden,

\textsuperscript{65}MC, pp. 201, 483.

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., pp. 454, 449.

\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., p. 493.
he dared not look at them to see
if they observed him, but he
thought them very silent. 68

Going home, the mariner's heart is repentant and opens to
the wells of divine grace, just as Martin's does. Jonas, how-
ever, lacks both intuition and remorse--the two central redemp-
tive elements for Coleridge and Dickens. Without them, Jonas
cannot relate to this world that actively seeks his salvation,
and this fact renders him both unnatural and bestial. The
narrator wonders that men do not shrink from Jonas in the streets
and that dogs and rats do not attack him. Crouched and swaying
in the corner like an animal or savage in the scene of his ex-
posure, he is earlier cut by the coachman's whip and called "a
surly dog." 69

The most modern of sinners in Dickens' novel, Jonas lacks
not only the imagination and intellect to relate to the divine,
he is without Father or brother to guide him, having sought to
destroy both by his own hand. Also uniquely modern is Jonas's
entrapment in the physical and spiritual darkness of a back room
in the labyrinthine city, from which there is no escape no re-
demption. Neither free on the wide sea nor exiled to a semi-
deserted swamp, he is enclosed in a crowded physical world which

68 Ibid., p. 455.
69 Ibid., p. 451.
is both inescapable and illegible with regard to its connection to the self. Just so, the cellar of Todgers' reportedly full of wealth, a symbol for salvation, is cut off from the life of the boarding house. Like Joseph K, Jonas is alienated from the invisible world, being unable to read its visible hieroglyphics. From an early age, he had developed a habit "of considering everything as a question of property." To use Carlylean language, he is unaware of the spirit beneath matter and of the interrelatedness of all things, because he functions on the level of understanding rather than intuition. He represses that spark of the divine in man, which is conscience. The descendental nature takes over and Jonas is reduced to a non-verbal animal state. This is the result of the gospel of mammonism, by which Jonas lives.

Like his fellow bourgeois modern protagonist, Joseph K. Jonas is concerned not with his own spiritual condition but with the influential manipulation and evasion of his guilt—with the external rather than the internal, which for him is only a place of terror. Both men rationalize and ignore agents which might lead them to repentance and redemption. For example, Jonas is reassured by two men walking by who are discussing an undiscovered murder, while he never recognizes the significance of the ever

\[70\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 76.\]
watchful detective, Nadgett. He seizes upon Chuffey's story about his father's death as grounds for his acquittal. In Kafka's parable in The Trial, K stares at the irrelevant door-keeper and evades the main issue, which is himself and what is beyond the door. Jonas studies Chuffey in the same obsessive manner. Rather than accept his guilt, Jonas like K becomes increasingly hardened and maddened, as he becomes increasingly haunted and watchful. He listens to every sound and every silence and is fearful of a knock at the door. He seeks to read his guilt in the faces of others and in the mirror. The most Kafkaesque figure in the novel is Nadgett. In his secretive, amoral existence and fatelike pursuit of the truth of Jonas's inner guilt, he is miraculously present at every key moment which would give a clue to that guilt.

Jonas's haunted and semi-realistic dream reads like a summary of Kafka's novel. By moonlight the old clerk Chuffey beckons Jonas from his bed and leads him into a confused and crowded city scene, which is both strange and familiar. Vaguely recognizable companions appear and disappear, and Jonas is subjected to absurd and helpless strivings in which

\[
\ldots \text{he must descend great heights from one to another by ladders that are too short and by swaying ropes that moved deep bells.} \ldots
\]

\[71\text{Tbid., p. 449.}\]
He feels no emotion except a certain anxiety about the appropriateness of his dress. A terrible figure is always about to appear to bring about a judgment against him, a figure whom he struggles to suppress.  

The ancient mariner achieves spiritual power through passive surrender to the spiritual forces of judgment. He becomes in fact a symbol of those forces, with his abrupt charismatic appearance and his hypnotic glittering eye. But the power and strength which Jonas sought to gain from his dead father's money, and for which he planned his father's death, never comes to him. In fact, as the result of that spiritually ignorant and proud act of cutting himself off from a Father, he becomes, like K, the impotent victim of every outside force. In Kafka's "The Judgment," the son exults in the fact that he is stronger than his invalid father and is in control of everything including a decision to marry. Suddenly, however, his supposedly helpless and almost lifeless father emerges from the bed clothes as from the grave to reassume overpowering and arbitrarily vengeful control, stripping the son of power and confidence and driving him immediately to an unspectacular and little noticed suicide.  

72 Ibid., p. 450.

73 Stories, pp. 3-18.
before his death, Jonas's father, Anthony Chuzzlewit, rises up from his bed to confront his son in a final terrifying vision at the door. Even in death his spirit is resurrected in Jonas's own guilty fear, in the Truth known by Lewsome and Chuffey and discovered by Nodgett, and in the powerful and very alive figure of Anthony's brother, Old Martin. The overwhelming nature of this resurrected spirit crushes the overconfident Jonas and drives him to take the rest of the poison meant for his father.

Given "five minutes' grace" by Chevy Slyme, Jonas is too cowardly and weak to take his own life. 74 Huddled in the corner, he is hauled out into the departing straw filled wagon, where he manages finally to swallow the poison. K, given a similar opportunity, is too weak to stab himself, and both protagonists die like dogs in front of insignificant representatives of the Law. Even from their low social-spiritual positions, Slyme and the executioners look down in pity upon these two humiliated, weak, dehumanized creatures.

Jonas, then, is both the victim of an older Hebrew-Calvinist theology, engulfed in the Puritan blackness of inescapable sin and damnation, and the modern despiritualized bourgeois businessman who has killed his spiritual father and repressed his own moral conscience in order to be free to pursue monetary gain, but finds himself still entrapped by spiritual

74MC, p. 495.
forces with which he now has no relationship. Unlike Ruth and Tom Pinch and the fountain of Temple Court in their Edenic pre-conscious state of oneness in a spiritualized world, Jonas has eaten of the tree and is alone in consciousness and rationality and design, which lead in turn to bestiality and self-destruction.

The lyrical dreamlike scenes with Tom, Ruth and John Westlock convey the same relationship with divine spirit which allows the mariner to unconsciously bless the watersnakes and thereby to humanize and deify nature. Punitive nature and its dark decay in Martin Chuzzlewit exists alongside a world of flowers, light, growth, rebirth, morning and caressing winds. An act of passive submission on the part of Tom and, finally, Martin restores organic unity with this sacramental universe—with the great I Am and His spiritual community of man. The childlike artist finds this surrender easiest. Martin and Jonas have buried conscience in the civilized acquisitive world. Jonas cannot recover it, and Martin does so only with the help of several redemptive sources.

The most important difference between Martin Chuzzlewit and the other two studies in guilt is that, in spite of Spilka's point about Dickens' 'humanizing the criminal, our sympathies in the Jonas narrative are finally with the religiously defined cosmos. The mariner's act is one of "wicked ignorance" (to use Humphry House's phrase), and Kafka almost always deals with an unspecified crime.75 Jonas, however, has cold-bloodedly planned

the murder of his own father, is unrelentingly sadistic towards
his wife, and brutally murders his business partner with a
budgel in the woods.

By the end of Martin Chuzzlewit, the forgiving goodness of
both Anthony and Martin Chuzzlewit has been revealed, and
Nature is suddenly totally benevolent, with laughing fountains
and sunshine, the calm of twilight and a flowering garden. The
punitive Calvinist God of damnation has disappeared along with
his victim Jonas. Jonas in fact misread the true nature of the
Father, for beneath the harsh, selfish, vengeful facade had been
a loving parent, waiting in forgiveness to embrace a penitent
son.
The substitute son: organized religion and the clergy

Pecksniff

Thematically juxtaposed in the novel are the character of Old Martin, who makes covenants with his children from behind the veil, and the character of Pecksniff, who establishes himself as priest and idol of the false temple. In what is essentially an act of self-worship, he sets himself up as a mediator between the old man and his family. Having driven young Martin from his home at the end of Part V, Pecksniff, like Seth, Jacob, and the Prodigal's brother, seeks to become the substitute son and heir of Old Martin. At the height of his glory as false idol, son, and clerical mediator, he is rewarded at a public ground breaking ceremony for an architectural design stolen from the drawing boards of young Martin.

Like the Prodigal's jealous brother who remained at home, Pecksniff pleads with Old Martin not to forgive his repentant grandson who has just returned from America, and to "think of Me." He has endeavoured, like the Biblical Jacob, to steal his brother's birthright by deceiving the aging father figure, for he has said and done everything possible to separate Old Martin from the true heir, young Martin. (See Genesis 27) Jacob is also

76 MC, p. 417.
the archetypal Biblical representative of the Elect, and as such is the subject of Charles Spurgeon's famous sermon, "The Immutability of God." Steven Marcus defines Pecksniff as a symbol of the Elect, because he sees himself as invincible and both himself and his selfishness as instruments of God's will. Pecksniff purposed "to wall up the old gentleman... for his own use," and "he began to think he heard old Martin's cash already chinking in his own unworldly pockets." Like the Calvinists, whom Svend Ranulf describes as taking delight in another's punishment, Pecksniff's pleasure in being inside a warm coach depends on his knowledge that in such cold weather, "many other people are not as warm as you are." He sees himself as a nineteenth-century Noah, a chosen one protected amidst a drowning world, because Old Martin has called him to a secret encounter in the city:

77 FES, pp. 289-314.

78 Marcus, pp. 236-38; MC, p. 299; for further discussion of the nineteenth-century relationship of religion and economic self-interest, see Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (New York: Scribners', 1958), passim; on pages 117-18, Weber makes a key statement in the understanding of the Pecksniff type and his relationship to the theme of conversion: "There is no place in Calvinism or in the nineteenth-century protestant ethic for the very human Catholic cycle of sin, repentance, atonement, release, followed by renewed sin. . . . Only a life guided by constant thought could achieve conquest over the state of nature."
'We shall go forth to-night by the heavy coach--like the dove of old, my dear Martin--and it will be a week before we again deposit our olive-branches in the passage. When I say olive-branches,' observed Mr. Pecksniff in explanation, 'I mean, our unpretending luggage.'

The lyrics for the drunken farewell to Pecksniff and his daughters at Todgers' apply the same Genesis imagery to this man who believes himself the only one saved from Old Martin's vengeful wrath: "All hail to the vessel of Pecksniff the sire!" 79

The first name of Seth Pecksniff appears in a brief reference in Genesis 5.3 and 5.6-8, in which a third son, Seth, is born to Adam and Eve to take the place of the exiled Cain and the dead Abel. A popular medieval legend grew up around this substitute son and continued through the nineteenth century. It recounted the return of Seth to the Garden of Eden to seek the oil of mercy for his dying father. In her recent study of the legend, Esther C. Quinn calls Seth the archetype of the "perfect intermediary between sinful man and the divine creator; he is, in short, a type of Christ." 80

79 _MC_, pp. 74, 55, 118.

80 _The Quest of Seth for the Oil of Life_ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 4; for another summary of the legend, see _Myth and Guilt_, pp. 280-82.
Because Pecksniff most often assumes the role of Christian martyr, his language and that used to describe him often recalls the sacrifice of Christ for man. Regarding his treatment of John Westlock, for example, Pecksniff refers to himself as "one who would have shed his dearest blood to serve him." At the ground breaking ceremony Pecksniff stands at the right hand of "the member of the Gentlemanly Interest," and helps to lay the cornerstone; and when the member digs, the air is "rent," as the veil was at the crucifixion.  

The self-appointed mediator between Old Martin and his children, Pecksniff also represents in nineteenth-century form the Old Testament priest-prophets of Baal (I Kings 18.17-40, Exodus 32.24, and Jeremiah 7.9), the false prophets who will come in His name about whom Jesus warns his disciples (Matthew 24.4-5), and all the idols and false temples of the Old and New Testaments. At the gala Todgers gathering, when Pecksniff delivers to Mrs. Todgers a sermon on the golden calf of Baal, the Biblical image is immediately applied to Pecksniff himself:

Just, most just, thy censure, upright Pecksniff! Had it been for the sake of a ribbon, star, or garter; sleeves of lawn, a great man's smile, a seat in parliament, a tap upon the shoulder from a courtly sword; a place, a party, or a thriving lie, or eighteen thousand pounds, or even eighteen hundred;--

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81 MC, pp. 13, 346-47.
but to worship the golden calf for
eighteen shillings a week! Oh
pitiful, pitiful.\(^{82}\)

He is Tom's "idol" which comes tumbling down, and his
self-idolatry is apparent in the illustrations by Phiz of the
interior of his house. His picture hangs over the mantle, and
a bust of him stands to the right. In Plate No. 3 his physical
relationship to the other Chuzzlewits is one of preacher to
congregation, and in Plate No. 7 Miss Pinch is seen bowing to
him. He comes to view young Martin as "a sacrilege upon the
altars of his household gods"; and, assuming "an apostolic
look," he calls himself "a messenger of peace," and is des-
cribed, also like Christ, as a "lamb" and a "dove." In the
New Testament, Jesus warns his disciples about the deceptive
powers of these mock-Christ figures who will come; and Michael
Steig points out that, until his downfall at the hands of Old
Martin, "Pecksniff has partially disarmed even the reader
. . . ."\(^{83}\)

Anti-clericalism and anti-Catholicism both figure
prominently in the religious revival of the early nineteenth

\(^{82}\)Ibid., p. 107.

\(^{83}\)Ibid., pp. 97-98, 310; these two plates appeared in
the original parts, but are not included in the 1867 edition;
see Bibliography, pp. 191, 193; MC, p. 34; "Martin Chuzzlewit:
Pinch and Pecksniff," North Texas Quarterly, 1, No. 2
(Summer, 1969), 185.
century. Pecksniff, who delights in excluding and punishing, comes to represent religious formalism and exclusiveness in its most negative aspects. Like Pilate he is the representative of organized religion in whose hands Old Martin suffers humiliation and near death. Instead of washing his hands of guilt, Pecksniff is seen warming them conspicuously before the fire "as if they were somebody's else's."84

In the role of self-vaulting mediator, he fits the description of the typical Victorian minister given by E. E. Kellett:

He ruled and...he meant to rule. Obedience was the business of the laity, to give commands the right and duty of the pastor...They magnified their office, and thought it right to do so.

Cruikshank notes rebellion against the clergy as a major issue of nineteenth-century Evangelicalism.85 This demand for lay power was based partly on the belief that any mediation interfered with the all-inclusive nature of God's grace and with the immediate access to that grace through inner feeling.

84 Mc, p. 21.

85 Kellett, p. 42; Cruikshank, p. 184; for the importance of the church in the novels of Dickens, see House, World, p. 110; see also Johnson, CD, p. 1133.
The best example from *Martin Chuzzlewit* is the scene of the repentant Martin's return to his grandfather at Pecksniff's house. Besides giving a running moral commentary on the evil aspects of the scene before him and the need for punitive measures rather than forgiveness, Pecksniff physically interposes himself between the old man and his contrite grandson. He claims to know old Martin's thoughts, and Old Martin never takes his eyes off of Pecksniff. Mary tells young Martin that his grandfather will "have no opinion upon any question, but that which is forced upon him by this treacherous man." In a similar situation much earlier, Jonas hides behind his father to avoid his look and only reads how he looks "in Mr. Pecksniff's eyes."86

Pecksniff may be said to stand for the whole group of canting clergymen who prefer doctrine and duty to feeling, who use their position to achieve wealth and power, and who have adopted the Old Testament God of Calvinist Election in order to sanction their own acquisitive actions and enforce their sense of spiritual and moral superiority toward those they exploit. In 1843-44, Dickens was still resentful about the censorship of the Ragged School article because of clerical insistence upon liturgical formalities. Forster calls Pecksniff

86MC, pp. 415-21, 194.
"the French modern Tartuffe," associating him with another villain whose role was clerical. In 1868 Dickens wrote a story called "George Silverman's Explanation," in which a dissenting lay preacher looks after an orphan and manages to cheat him out of a fortune left him by his grandfather. Dickens tells a friend that the story was something "which I should never get out of my mind."87

In one of his many sermons--this one delivered to Mrs. Lupin--Pecksniff's free application of metaphor recalls the styles of Whitefield and Spurgeon:

'Bethold the wonders of the firmament, Mrs. Lupin! How glorious is the scene! When I look up at those shining orbs, I think that each of them is winking to the other to take notice of the vanity of men's pur- suits. My fellow-men!' cried Mr. Pecksniff, shaking his head in pity; 'you are much mistaken; my wormy relatives, you are much deceived! The stars are perfectly contented (I suppose so) in their several spheres. Why are not you? . . . . Look up there with me!' repeated Mr. Pecksniff, stretching out his hand; 'with me, an humble individual who is also an Insect like yourselves. Can silver, gold, or precious stones, sparkle like those constellations? I think not. Then do not thirst for silver, gold, or precious stones, but look up there, with me!'

87 Forster, II, 78; Lindsay, CD, p. 33.
Horton Davies notes that eighteenth-century church goers endured

the monotonous ramblings of their interminable parsons. . . Filled
with the didacticism that reduces the marvellous and holy mystery of
God, divined in symbols rather than defined in theologies, to the pigmy
dimensions of one man's mind, and brief and limited experience.88

Dickens may also be striking a subtle blow at the
Victorian cleric when he likens Pecksniff to "a direction-post,
which is always telling the way to a place, and never goes
there."89

"Keep the path, and go straight through the little wood
you'll come to. The path is narrower there, but you can't
miss it."90 This is the final advice that Pecksniff gives to
Tigg--advice which echoes the well-known Scriptural message in
Matthew 7.14 regarding the road to salvation. Tigg is in fact
being sent to his death, for his murder in the woods follows
shortly. Recalling Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale, Pecksniff,

89MC, p. 8.
Jonas and Tigg move from the tavern to the woods; they seek to slay death (by membership in a Life Assurance company), and their stories collectively end in betrayal and death as the result of an overwhelming desire for gold.

In his role as clergyman, Pecksniff reflects not only the negative qualities of the Protestant ministry but all of those evil elements that Protestants saw or imagined existing among the Catholic priesthood during the early nineteenth century. In his article, "Popular Protestantism in Victorian Britain," G. F. A. Best elaborates on the nature and extent of this hostility: Catholic priests were considered

a special class of men who could alone, so they claimed, mediate between the soul and its salvation. . . .
The protestants denounced their claims as superstitious, fallacious and delusive. . . . Salvation could /not/ be secured by anything but their own direct converse with their Saviour.91

Catholicism was looked upon as the worldly church, as opposed to the true spiritual community, and one popular work refers to "the voice of the Serpent-Priest." Pecksniff regards his carriage as a "temple," and views his horse as "a sacred animal, only to be driven by him, the chief priest of that temple. . . ." Recovering in his usual calm manner from Mary Graham's revulsion and violent rejection of his serpentine

advances in the garden, he returns home "with as beneficent
an air as if he had been the High Priest of the summer weather."
The mysterious Latin phrase on the stone at the ground breaking
for Pecksniff's building might recall to the anti-Catholic
reader the service of the mass as well as the general verbal
meaninglessness and deception of the priesthood. 92

Charles Kingsley, reviewing Froude in Macmillan's,
writes: "Truth for its own sake, has never been a virtue with
the Roman clergy." It was charged that, because Papists be-
lieved ends justified means, a priest could release a man from
Christian rule and even encourage criminal actions. Pecksniff
consistently interprets situations in order to rationalize his
own pursuit of selfish goals. When he pays Jonas to marry his
daughter Mercy, the narrator ironically explains his justifi-
cation by interpreting a verse from Scripture:

. . .there being a special Providence
in the fall of the sparrow, it follows
. . .that there must also be a special
Providence in the alighting of the
stone, or stick, or other substance
which is aimed at the sparrow. 93

Celibacy was also suspect as unnatural, according to
Best. The pious chaste facade was said to cover the most

92 Best, pp. 118; MC, pp. 89, 124, 305, 346.

93 Kingsley quoted by Best, p. 123; MC, 207.
licentious of natures. While Pecksniff righteously questions
Old Martin's relationship with Mary Graham and drives Tom Pinch
from his house for his improper association with her, Pecksniff's
own ludicrous behaviour with Mary and then with Mrs. Todgers
constitute the only examples of sexual indiscretion in the
novel. Recalling his pawing entreaties in the garden, Mary
exclaims to Tom:

'What is he... who receiving me in
his house as his guest, his unwilling
guest: knowing my history, and how
defenseless and alone I am... and
winding all these cruel snares about
me, explains their purpose to me, with
a smooth tongue and a smiling face,
in the broad light of day; dragging
me on, the while, in his embrace, and
holding to his lips a hand... which
I would have struck off, if with it
I could lose the shame and degradation
of his touch?'

94 Best, p. 126; MC, p. 309; the nature of Pecksniff's
pious but lustful professions of love to Mary in the garden is
echoed in the poem which Best quotes—a poem which was
originally cited without a source in E. Wingfield-Stratford's
The Victorian Tragedy (London, 1930), p. 178—and which ends:

His lips bent forward near her ear,
'Come, cast away your foolish fear;
Confess the sins that on you press—
Confess to me, sweet girl, confess!'
Save heavier sighs, no answer came.

The vicar's breath came quicker then;
'Dear Alice!'—for he knew her name—
Burst forth that villain among men—
'I quite forget my own distress
In telling you I love you well;
So well, that all the pains of Hell
I'd bear for one long close caress
The story of the innocent warm-hearted girl talked into joining a convent where she is both sexually and mortally threatened is the subject of a popular anti-Catholic genre and of numerous court cases which appeared in the 1830's. One of these, Best records, is a best-selling pamphlet later in the century entitled "The Confessional Unmasked" (1865). According to their prurient obsession with the confessional, protestants were convinced that priests used this spiritually intimate situation behind the curtain "in order actually to seduce their penitents." Fortunes were also stolen: "the naive youngster, wax in the hands of the Jesuits, would make over his or her fortune to the convent community." Immediately following the scene in which Pecksniff lustfully pursues Mary in the garden, he stops to rest in church and manages to hear, hidden behind the "red-curtained" pew, Mary's confession to Tom of her love for young Martin and of Pecksniff's pursuit of her. When the two have gone, Pecksniff adjourns to the clergyman's room

I claim you, who should dare say nay,  
Or tear you from my arms away?  
Come darling, we are all alone;  
One hour will all past pain atone;  
Come, let no longer 'aught divide--  
Come, darling, be the Church's bride!

"This last stanza comes from 'Jon Duan in the Aisles of Rome', the elaborate parodies in Weldon's 1847 Christmas Book, a pulp production which must, one imagines, have enjoyed a large sale"; see Best, pp. 135-36.
next to the sanctuary where he uses the parson's glass and his brush and helps himself to the wine and biscuits. He then goes home to excommunicate Tom from his house, as he has John Westlock and young Martin. It is for the purpose of acquiring a fortune under false pretences that he first seeks out these young men to be his pupils.  

In its most vicious and extreme form from 1830 to 1870, this hatred of Catholicism and its clerical representatives was to be found in the most respectable Anglican and Evangelical literature and conversation, according to Best. Dickens' general agreement with this attitude is well-documented. The Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Assurance Company might also have been associated, by Dickens and by the Victorian reader, with the Anglo-Catholic Society of the Holy Cross, prominent during this period. The Anglo-Catholic Society and the Anglo-Bengalee Company share the element of foreignness, which made the former the object of attack by English super-patriots from the Revolution on. Montague Tigg, its chairman, is described in the imagery of the devil, as the Catholic head


96 Best, pp. 138-39; for Dickens' views on Catholicism, see Forster, II: 260, 275, 299; see also Johnson, CP, pp. 553, 562, 1133.
in Rome often was; and, like the Catholic Church, the Anglo-Bengalee Company offered salvation ("life assurance") simply as a consequence of membership and assured its members eternal wealth regardless of the state of the inner soul. This last aspect of Catholicism had been highly criticized by protestants since Martin Luther. John Wesley also used the term "assurance" as proof of a man's converted or saved state, but he meant one's own inner knowledge from God of his future salvation. The most brilliant version of this satiric theme of salvation as something to be bought is the selling of shares in Eden.\footnote{97}

The quarreling scene with the Chuzzlewit clan at Pecksniff's house over the subject of who deserves the inheritance is comparable in nature to the doctrinal religious arguments of the day, which Dickens found so revolting.\footnote{98} Bombarding the old man with "letters, messages, and parcels," they were "the jealous, stony-hearted, distrustful company, who were all shut up in themselves; . . . no one branch of the Chuzzlewit tree had ever been known to agree with another.

\footnote{97}{Best, pp. 133-34, 120; Davies, p. 205.}

\footnote{98}{Johnson quotes from a letter in which Dickens expresses his disgust with "the indecent squabbles of the priests of most denominations"; see Johnson, \textit{CD}, p. 1016.}
within the memory of man. . . ." Old Martin realizes that it is his inheritance that has bred these "avaricious plots and hopes within them."

In the cave scene of William Blake's, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, monkeys finally tear each other apart in a theological dispute. Dickens similarly compares the warring Chuzzlewits to "hedgehogs" and "porcupines"; and in Dickens' poem written for Lady Blessington in July 1843, snarling religious figures tear not themselves but the Bible apart "in struggles for the binding."

In religious terms, this argument over who is to be saved and how began historically with Martin Luther's rebellion against that earliest voice of the organized church, Catholicism. In an equally skeptical stance, Mr. Spottletoe remarks upon Pecksniff's "preposterous desire to be regarded as the head of the family." The basis for both Martin Luther's and John Wesley's exit from the Catholic and Anglican forms of their respective eras was a desire to reemphasize inner feeling over forms and

99 MC, pp. 33-34, 25.

100 The Portable Blake, ed. Alfred Kazin (New York: Viking, 1946), pp. 261-62; Dickens' poem on the same theme with similar imagery of physical struggling and destruction, ends:

And yet, where they who should have opened the door
Of charity and light, for all men's finding
Squabbled for words upon the altar-floor,
And rent The Book, in struggles for the binding.

See Forster, II, 52-53 n.
honesty in place of the hypocrisy which such formalism allowed. John Westlock explains his exit and anticipates the reasons for young Martin's eventual departure from the Pecksniff home and tutelage by pointing to Pecksniff's "treatment of Tom Pinch, ... the hypocrisy, the knavery, the meanness, the false pretences, the lip service of that fellow, and his trading in saintly semblances for the very worst realities. ..."\footnote{101}

The connection between architecture and organized religion is also a keynote of the early nineteenth century. The historian Latourette reports "the erection of new church buildings to care for the growing urban population and ... the restoration of older church fabrics." Great activity was combined with little taste or imagination. "Sham medieval" Moorman calls them, and, according to Davies, they were "the sorry reflection of a Philistine attitude." Related to the significance of the novel's architectural imagery also is the fact that the Deists, against whom the Evangelicals, the Romantics, Thomas Carlyle and the whole nineteenth century reacted so violently, believed God to be the great architect of a mechanical universe.\footnote{102}

\footnote{101}{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 35, 127.}

\footnote{102}{Latourette, pp. 1166, 1004; Moorman, p. 334; Davies, p. 237.}
Pecksniff, through language, is in fact the architect of his own reality in much the same way that Robert Browning's protagonists often are. Like Johannes Agricola, who belongs to a strange Calvinist sect in which the elect can do anything, Pecksniff asserts a capricious dignity in the total lack of association between morality and election. The incredible audacity of both figures finally commands the reader's admiration. Browning and Dickens both succeed in sustaining a delicate ambiguity regarding the extent to which these architects of reality believe in their creations. 103

The universal nature of this Dickensian character, like that of Old Martin, of young Martin, and of Jonas, is one of the major subjects of the popular nineteenth-century sermon. John Angel James exclaims

> We have cathedrals, churches, chapels, and schools—in short, a wondrous and complicated mass of means, instrumentalities, and agencies—but WHERE IS OUR CHARITY? All these things are but means to an end, and that end is charity out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. 104


The confusion of the spiritual and the worldly, which results in self-idolatry, James Bowing Mozley conveys, as does Dickens, by combining spiritual and monetary imagery. The man accumulates "egotistical capital" until the self-image becomes a mirror, a "great abstraction," a "reflection, and adumbration of himself," which "becomes his one measure. . . of everything he does." In this "very mint. . . the great mass of false spiritual coinage is made." 106

Pecknif, who is called "the Great Abstraction," consistently speaks of virtue and love in monetary imagery. His heart he insists is not "a royal mint, with patent machinery to work its metal into current coin," but what it produces "is sterling gold." He tells Jonas that his daughter Charity is "my staff, my scrip, my treasure"; and that "my conscience is my bank." 107

105 Robertson, in FES, p. 287.


107 MC, pp. 315, 206, 207; see also pp. 422-23.
Idolatry of self is the first motive for such behaviour; avarice is the second, according to Mozley. "... Stronger..." and more corrosive because it was under... the disguise of a high profession, ... it exists under the special profession of religion, and a religion of humility..." It represents "a deflection from simplicity" and "from charity to pride" which is "not religion but power." 108

Mozley employs the same four images that Dickens uses—the interchangeable metaphors of money and morality, the "counterfeit profession," the idolatrous temple, and the false prophet. He also identifies as

a pervading thought in gospel prophesy --the extraordinary capacity for deceiving and being deceived that would arise under the gospel... so that it is the parting admonition of Christ to his disciples--'Take heed, lest any man deceive you'--as if that would be the great danger... even that Antichrist, who as God should sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

The success of the deception, seen in the blind credulity and adoration of Tom Pinch, of Pecksniff's fellow villagers, and even of the people in London, is also part of Mozley's analysis:

... a great growth of specious and showy effects will issue in a great variety of high gifts and activities,

108 Mozley, in SES, pp. 290, 292, 294, 284.
much zeal and ardour. . . \underline{\text{and}} \underline{\text{the popular judgment. . . sets them}}
\underline{\text{those idols of worldly religion}} \underline{\text{up morally and spiritually upon the pinnacle of the temple. . . .}}

In Carlylean terms, Pecksniff embodies the joint diseases of consciousness and self-seeking. His language for its own sake is not the spontaneous expression of Truth, but a whole surface deception out of harmony with the spirit within. The repression of true spirit has disastrous consequences, reflected in Pecksniff's ultimate downfall. In this representative of the gospel of dilletantism, God's eternal laws have become a moral philosophy governed by profit and loss, and pleasure.

Regarding Pecksniff's final retribution, the Victorian preacher John Angel James explains that in order to insure a man's damnation, it is necessary that the self-idolator,

\text{while he is living in his sins,}
\text{and posting down to destruction,}
\text{. . . should be perfectly persuaded}
\text{that he was one of God's elect,}
\text{. . . because, that delusion would}
\text{prevent repentance and would, more than any thing else, deepen and per-}
\text{petuate his sleep in sin.}\underline{110}

Up to the moment of his judgment beneath the rod, he is assuming vocally that he alone is the object of Old Martin's "election,"

\underline{109}\text{Ibid., pp. 281, 282-83, 296.}

\underline{110}\text{James, in PENC, p. 544.}
and calling on the other "vermin and swarmers" to "begone! 
... Wander over the face of the earth..." However, 
both Robert William Dale and James Bowling Mozley quote Jesus's 
warning from Matthew 7.21-23:

Not every one that saith unto me, 
Lord, Lord, shall enter into the 
kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth 
the will of my Father which is in 
heaven. Many will say to me in that 
day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy 
in thy name, and by thy name cast out 
devils, and by thy name do many won-

Pecksniff suffers a number of punishments, which are 
Biblical in nature and which foreshadow the end of his nar-
native. In the opening scene, he is flattened at his own door by 
the wind, recalling the warning in Jeremiah 23.19. He falls 
into the fire in a drunken state at Todgers. After telling 
Martin he must leave, he steps back to avoid Martin's angry 
advance and falls over a chair onto the floor. His state pre-
ceding each of these tumbles is the same as that which he ex-
hibits prior to being beaten by Old Martin's rod and exiled--
one of pride. Thus he repeatedly calls to mind the popular 
Biblical warning: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an

111 MC, p. 500; Dale, in SES, p. 410; Mozley, in SES, p. 
284; see also Jabez Bunting, in PENC, p. 564.
haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16.15)
Sairey Gamp

Sairey Gamp's role may be viewed as a brilliant and delightful parody of the nature of the clergy. As a mid-wife, she presides over the human rituals of birth and death and the various combinations thereof related to childbirth, "the curse of Adam." The Christian experience of conversion and that of salvation both embody this paradoxical fusion of death and birth. A creator and torturer of exiles and outcasts, she nurses Lewisome and Chuffey with less than compassion; and, like her Biblical namesake, Sarai, who was the wife of Abraham, she functions significantly in the events which lead to the nineteenth-century Ishmael's permanent exile through suicide (See Genesis 11:16). Presiding over the death-ridden house after Anthony Chuzzlewit's demise, she becomes the priestess of a false temple doomed to destruction. She also preaches periodic sermonettes on the novel's three major religion themes--death, change (conversion) and the road to salvation. Her wisdom sheds light upon the nature of this "mortal wale"; and upon the frequently enacted ritual of "follerin' the order-book to its long home in the iron safe." In order to enlighten her audience regarding the nature of human goodness, she tells of her son who
lost a penny and subsequently offered "to drown himself if that
would be a satisfaction to his parents." The world she sees
is full of changes and ritual and "more changes, too, to come,
afore we've done with changes"; and in such a world her compassion
for suffering has reached so many as "would take a week to
chris'en at Saint Polge's fontin." She also issues dark warn-
ings to the sinner. Criticism of Mrs. Harris is a thing that
"lambs could not forgive...nor worms forget"; and "rich folks
may ride on camels, but it ain't so easy for 'em to see out of
a needle's eye." (See Matthew 19.24) 112

Like Pecksniff and a number of other characters in the
novel, Sairey Gamp creates a God figure whose purpose is to
sanctify the self. Pecksniff makes God, represented by Old
Martin, into his own image, and then manipulates him for his own
ends. Sairey looks to the opinions of the invisible Mrs. Harris
for proof that she is guiltless and loved. This woman, whose
name is "a talisman against all earthly sorrows," is "created
for the express purpose of holding visionary dialogues with
[Sairey] on all manner of subjects, and invariably winding up
with a compliment to the excellence of her nature." 113 It is

112 MC, pp. 254, 255.

113 Ibid., pp. 291, 473, 256.
through drink that Sairey transcends from the real to the ideal, becoming one with this symbol of the divine in her world:

'Mrs. Harris, ma'am,' I says to her, 'we gives no trust ourselves, and puts a deals o' trust elsewere; these is our religious feeling, and we finds 'em answer.'

The "twining serpent" with a "diabolical laugh" who challenges the existence of this deity is Sairey's friend and fellow nurse, Betsey Prig. Betsey's "I don't believe" in the middle of their communal and transcendental ritual of "tea" causes a dramatic rift in their friendship and a temporary state of delirium in Sairey's delicate nature.\textsuperscript{114} In masterful parodic form, Dickens embodies in the character of Sairey Gamp the themes of mediation and the clergy, of change and conversion, and of man-created false Gods and the worship thereof.

\textsuperscript{114}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 474, 255, 290, 471, 472.
The ideal son: the orphan's search for place

Tom Pinch

The positive prototypes in Martin Chuzzlewit, in spite of all critical efforts to the contrary, must finally be accepted as dramatically less complex and less interesting than the negative or mixed personages. Some consideration, however, is essential because they provide a kind of structural balance in the novel, and because they, too, are the product of Dickens' familiarity with Biblical analogues. The first example to be considered from this idealized group of figures is Tom Pinch.

Functioning structurally as the opposite of Pecksniff, Tom has a capacity for unconscious loyalty and for spontaneous genuine feeling, which like his organ and its music, exist at the heart of the true church. The rebirth of music during the Wesleyan revival was part of the larger rebirth of emotive ethics, also found in the Romantic movement. The innocent child with a vision is an emblem for the Romantic artist, who exists in a continuing communication with spirit—the priest in the nineteenth-century religion of art. Tom, like the Romantic artist, is a willing instrument, a harp in the wind.

Blessed by Old Martin on his deathbed, Tom is the most religiously praised character in Martin Chuzzlewit. He embodies
those qualities ascribed by nineteenth-century Christians to Jesus—retiring meekness, mildness, holiness, virginity, optimism, innocent suffering, and devotion to ethical idealism. A pastoral figure and a moralist, Jesus is the new Moses who founds a society based upon his own moral principles.\textsuperscript{115} In \textit{The Life of Our Lord} and again in "A Christmas Tree," which appeared in \textit{Household Words} in 1850, Dickens describes this human-divine hero of the New Testament as

a baby in a manger, a child in the spacious temple, talking with grave men; a solemn figure, with a mild and a beautiful face, raising a dead girl by the hand; . . . the same, in a tempest walking on the water to a ship; again, on a seashore, teaching a great multitude; again, with a child upon his knee, and other children round; . . . again, dying upon a Cross, watched by armed soldiers, a thick darkness coming on, the earth beginning to shake, and only one voice heard. 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do!'\textsuperscript{116}

Recreating Jesus's parable (Matthew 5.40-42) on the sharing of one's coat and cloak with a fellow traveller, Tom adds to his own burden cheerfully by carrying Martin's great coat as well.

\textsuperscript{115} Chadwick, VII, 63-67.

\textsuperscript{116} 2, No. 39 (Saturday, December 21, 1850), 292.
By giving Martin his last sovereign, Tom reenacts the parable of the widow's mite (Mark 12. 42-43).\textsuperscript{117} New Testament characters are judged by their treatment of God's son; Pecksniff, young Martin, and John Westlock are judged by their treatment of Tom, who turns out to be the blessed servant of Old Martin. The first character whom Old Martin trusts, and the first to whom he reveals himself in the Temple, Tom recalls also the sixth beatitude (Matthew 5.8): "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

Among the popular sermons of the day, Tom's characteristics are also lauded. John Caird praises "a meek heart." Jabez Bunting quotes from the epistle to Timothy: "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men. . . ." Mozley juxtaposes the self-vaulting spectacular life with

\begin{quote}

\textit{goodness. . . in unseen quarters and in those disappointments which are specially not extraordinary, and make no show. . . . \textit{And which have} a probing force grander strokes have not. . . .} \textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{MC}, pp. 131, 135.

Tom's love for Mary Graham is his painful secret. In accordance with Mozley's prophesy for such a character type, Tom's quiet life is seized upon by the secret love of Old Martin and given sudden direction and order.

The ideal, which John Caird describes, of "quite, constant, unobtrusive earnestness, amidst the commonplace work of the world...in cheerfulness and contentment" is also Thomas Carlyle's idealized state of unconscious obedience.¹¹⁹ In the period between Tom's discovery that his idol, Pecksniff, is a false one, and his revealing encounter with Old Martin in the Temple, work serves him, as Carlyle maintained it should, as a way to avoid doubt until true belief comes. Tom's is a loyal, unselfish role within a larger movement toward a spiritualized society. Unconscious and in harmony with the true spirit of the universe, Tom is presented in highly lyrical, dreamlike scenes of communion with nature and with other men. The religion represented in this Dickens character is one of joy in faith, and embodies the message of Spurgeon's "Songs in the Night": one should sing from the heart to lift one's own spirits and to witness the faith to a despairing brother,

¹¹⁹ Caird, in SES, p. 344.
just as David played the harp to relieve Saul. 120

Like the Biblical David, Tom is not only musician and true servant, but a man of righteous anger. As Jesus turned over the tables of the money changers, and as David levelled the giant Goliath, Tom faces the brass-and-copper founder in a state of controlled moral rage over the exploitation of his sister Ruth. He gives an injuring blow to the lurking Jonas who blocks his path in the dark. On the wharf, he delivers a letter to the fleeing Jonas, which stops his flight, and the effect on Jonas of this fateful meeting is compared with that of being struck by "a stone from a sling." 121

The idea of the true servant pervades New Testament theology, and it is in this role that Tom primarily appears—loyal first to Pecksniff and his pupils and finally to Old Martin. This shift of loyal servitude dramatizes Carlyle's pattern of leaving the decayed, false forms and wandering in exile, finally reaching true and worthy objects of unconscious devotion in a new spiritualized world. Mark Tapley is another innocent who must leave the old position at the Blue Dragon and struggle for "credit," before he can return to the "converted" tavern, now the Jolly Tapley, and to the loving arms of

120 Spurgeon, in PENC, pp. 616-17.

121 MC, p. 393.
its hostess, now to be his wife. A number of his roles repeat those of the historical Jesus—specifically those of a healer, a host, a servant, a Good Samaritan, a carpenter in Eden, the saviour of Martin, and a generally life-giving force.

\[122\] Ibid., pp. 71, 348, 505.
Ruth Pinch

Ruth Pinch, like her brother, dwells initially in an alien land of false gods. She must leave her position as governess to the daughter of the copper-and-brass founder to make a true home with Tom and then with Tom and her husband John Westlock. Her story not only fulfills Dickens' orphan myth; it also recreates in nineteenth-century form the life of the Biblical Ruth, who goes with her mother-in-law to a strange land to seek bread. Known for her loyalty even in exile, she tells Naomi: "...whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. ..." (Ruth 1:16) Twice Ruth Pinch makes this commitment to her brother Tom—once when she sets up house with him in the mysterious labyrinth of London, and again when she has promised to marry John.

In the Biblical narrative,

...Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. (Ruth 2:1-2)

Tom brings Ruth and his wealthy friend John Westlock together, and just as Boaz is deeply affected by the Biblical Ruth's kindness toward Naomi as well as her beauty, John notes both Ruth Pinch's charming appearance and her love for Tom. The Biblical character
lives with Naomi while she toils in the fields and beats the barley until she is noticed by Boaz. Ruth Pinch toils delightfully in the kitchen of her and Tom's lodgings and in the presence of Tom and John, preparing the flour for the dough of a beef pudding.

The end of both stories is financial security, feasting and marriage. The mother-in-law and the brother also gain a new identity, an inheritance, and a permanent place. The role of Boaz in Dickens' novel is played in part by Old Martin. A rich self-appointed kinsman, he also provides security and identity for the two orphan exiles.

Dickens' characters thus reflect a variety of familiar analogues, moving from one to the other in a manner intrinsic to the more didactic, expository genres, such as the sermon. His fictional people serve a structural and illustrative purpose. The roles that each figure plays are momentary, fragmented, and incomplete in their paralleling of prototypes, but always they suggest a tenuous connection with some larger spirit of eternal truth. Both mythic and mimetic in his method of characterization, Dickens has borrowed, whether consciously or unconsciously, from the religious life and thought of his own world as well. Figures like Old Martin, young Martin, Pecksniff, Jonas, and Tom are individual versions of recurring archetypes presented from the pulpit every week. These illustrations in the preacher's interpretation of a Biblical text, are, like Dickens' characters,
spiritually linked in turn with Biblical personages. The breadth with which Dickens' religion is representative of his age is also indicated by the qualities that his characters share with various religious dramatizations by his contemporaries—Dostoyevsky, Blake, Coleridge, Browning, Tennyson, and Arnold—and the modern religious writer, Kafka.

Collectively, Dickens' fictional world may be viewed as embodying the myth of conversion, which involves a difficult journey toward salvation or damnation. These two states are firmly grounded in the reality of the everyday world: rebellion is followed either by actual exile and death, or by reunion with the human father in a new world of converted selves and matter. Crimes against the father and the orphan's search for place become two halves of a single pattern of sundering and reconciliation. In fact, true reconciliation is dependent upon an initial sundering and growth. An exit from the garden is an essential prerequisite to the conversion of the Dickensian Adam. Mark tells Martin: "...we must all be seasoned, one way or another. That's religion, that is, you know."123

Dickens' view of human life as interrelated and thematically unified is as representative of his age as are his Christian concepts and Biblical stylistics. Tennyson believed that

123Ibid., p. 241.
... every human being is a vanful of human beings, of those who have gone before him, and of those who form part of his life.

Defending the peculiar aesthetic quality of *Maud*, he explains that "... different phases of passion in one person take the place of different characters." 124 Herman Melville wrote to Hawthorne of their friendship: "I feel... that the Godhead is broken up like the bread at the Supper, and that we are the pieces." 125 Perhaps the most important nineteenth-century study of man is Emile Durkheim's *Les Formes Elementaires de la Viev Religieuse*; and one of Durkheim's major assertions is that every individual "I" is in fact a "we" and that the social "we" may be treated as an "I." This collective nature of man Durkheim cites as the source of the sacred, the religious in human life. 126

The unique quality of Dickens is his ability to combine these archetypal, collective, spiritual characteristics within a keenly individual personality such as Sairey Gamp or Old Martin Chuzzlewit. That paradoxical unit called a Dickens character also

124 Hallam, Lord Tennyson, Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir (New York: Macmillan, 1897), I, 323n1, 396.


earns its distinction for uniqueness from the combination of comedy and dead seriousness with which he or she is presented. Thus, in order to understand the religious dimensions of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, we must consider not only characterization, but tone and image.
CHAPTER IV

TONE AND IMAGE

Humphry House recognizes the affinities between Dickens' language and the "medieval glossing" of evangelical speech.¹ Other critics, such as Angus Wilson and Jack Lindsay, note the Judeo-Christian themes of sin, guilt, conversion, redemption, and resurrection. The time has come, however, for a more detailed joining together of Dickens' cluttered literal surface and the symbolic thematic framework beneath--the kind of joining together required by Carlyle's prose, Holman Hunt's Victorian paintings, and Chaucer's medieval narratives.

John Ruskin, in his review in The Times (1851), stresses that every detail of a Hunt painting--the birds, the music, the gardens--contains a seed of moral truth, and that the elaborate literal surface of "The Light of the World" or of "The Scapegoat" is no less spiritually significant for its concreteness.² One is expected to bring his own associations to the painting, and in the Victorian period this meant a wealth of Biblical analogues.

¹House, World, pp. 116-118.

In the first painting, a very human Jesus knocks at a weed-strewn door, before which he stands with a light. These physical details serve to recreate the spiritual truth of Revelation 3.20:

    Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:  
    If any man hear my voice, and open the  
    door, I will come in to him, and will  
    sup with him, and he with me.

The abundance of specific Biblical references and the numerous suggestions by detail of Biblical theme, character, and event in Martin Chuzzlewit suggest that Ruskin's theory regarding Hunt's method and purpose and the audience's contribution of Biblical knowledge applies equally well to the prose of Dickens. The fictional world of Dickens, like that of Hunt's art, is rich in concrete detail. It is very individual, very comic, often very absurd. Still it is in every detail a vehicle of spirit. This is the special flavor, indeed the special tension, of Dickens' tone--particularly with regard to his humor, parody, and satire. Dickens' fiction, according to John Forster, embodies a unique oneness of humor and spirit by discovering

the affinities between the high and the low, the attractive and the repulsive, the rarest things and things of every day, which bring us all upon the level of a common humanity. It is this power of perceiving relations which gives humour an immortal touch . . .; the property which in its highest aspects of Carlyle so subtly described as a sort of inverse sublimity, exalting into our affections what is
below us as the other draws down into our affections what is above us.³

To see the seemingly worthless and absurd as ultimately of spiritual value, and to find redeeming laughter and joy in the most serious action is a cardinal principle of Christian theology. The impetus to convert the unessential to the essential is grounded not only in Dickens' own reformist impulses, but in the Evangelical spirit of the day. His ultimate purpose is to involve the reader vicariously in the theme of conversion.

In his own remarks on Martin Chuzzlewit, Dickens laments the predominance of the unthinking reader. The obstacles to 'seeing', however, are more deliberate than this remark suggests. Dickens' style conceals and distracts from the real point, while it offers great rewards for those who have eyes to see. The deceptive secular surface and light tone, which also appear in the narratives of Chaucer, are thereby justifiable in terms of medieval theology. Augustine saw the mask—the physical obstacle of matter and mood—as functioning to separate the literalists from those seeking spiritual sustenance. It divided the seeing reader from the non-seeing.⁴ To see, under these conditions, is

³Forster, III, 342.

an act of conversion, for it implies transforming the world of pure matter into one of spirit or of spiritualized matter.

Angus Wilson seizes upon the image of the Mask as a metaphor for Dickens' world. Carlyle, whose style and purpose are similar to those of Dickens', calls nature "the Time-version of God," and as such, it "reveals Him to the wise, hides Him from the foolish."\(^5\) In such a deceptive world of appearances, man either uses understanding—that limited instrument of the spiritually blind—or intuition—the faculty by which one looks beyond appearance to the reality of spirit.

A third religious purpose inherent in Dickens' humorous tone and abundance of concrete imagery is to heighten our critical faculties so that we may correctly read the surface. Carlyle and Dickens both reflect the radical disorder between matter and spirit, which pervaded the unconverted world of the nineteenth century. Like the Biblical authors, with their endless examples of false prophets and idolatrous temples, the two Victorians were concerned with the growing number of decaying and deceitful forms. The Dickensian incongruity between the ideal and the real is illustrated again and again in the scenes with Seth Pecksniff, with Sairey Gamp, and with the Americans. The discontinuity between spiritual reality and appearance is further dramatized in

Old Martin's initial role playing with Pecksniff, young Martin's self-deception, Tom Pinch's misplaced devotion to Pecksniff, and the failure of Jonas to intuit the spiritual forces that surround him. Among the best single dramatizations of this theme is the arrival of Pecksniff at Sairey Gamp's to employ her as a nurse for the dying Anthony, at which time he is mistaken for a nervous husband seeking a midwife.

A reflection of this Victorian disassociation of matter and religious significance is the period's extensive debate regarding the nature of God. Dickens' characters in Martin Chuzzlewit tend to create gods in order to sanctify the self. Among those created in man's less-than-perfect image can be counted Old Martin himself. The Chuzzlewit clan, and Pecksniff in particular, distort and manipulate the nature of this figure of wealth and power for their own ends. Jonas projects his own greed into an image of his father that is only partially accurate. Chuffey, the faithful disciple, is an empty shell which finds its source of life and joy in the paternal figure of Anthony Chuzzlewit. In a demonically equivalent example, Chevy Slyme's existence depends upon Tigg, in whose presence he "swelled into a Man by contrast." The undertaker Mould has his "household gods"; and

\[^{6}\text{MC, p. 68.}\]
Augustus Moddle is overpowered by Fate, "the Scorned," and "the Elements." Sairey Gamp creates Mrs. Harris.

When seen through the kitchen window by her father and Jonas, Charity Pecksniff is portrayed as a mock-deity, complete with keys and candle, and surrounded by cherubic onions. Augustus Moddle barely escapes being sacrificed on the altar of her vanity. "Omnipotent Dollars" is the running title which Dickens uses to describe America. In a scene which suggests a parody of Genesis and of Carlyle's industrial hero as divine, the brass- and-copper founder orders Pecksniff out of his garden from the window above. One of the long line of Chuzzlewits, Toby, is asked on his death bed who his grandfather was, and he answers, "The Lord No Zoo." A novel full of false gods, Martin Chuzzlewit is also rich in mock-religious scenes. Mr. Mould's "household sanctuary" stands next to the churchyard. Mr. and Mrs. Mould are compared with cherubs, and the wife sings a song about a tree, accompanied in the background by the sound of coffin making. A second figure

7Ibid., pp. 252, 367.
8Ibid., p. 173.
9Ibid., p. 3.
10Ibid., pp. 252-53.
of ritual in the novel presides over a commercial boarding
house and is enveloped in symbols of the Judeo-Christian God.
Mrs. Todgers, the "deity" in residence, with her keys, candle,
and warm hearth, rents rooms called "sanctuaries" in that dark
temple whose "mystery is known to the chosen few." She pro-
vides a communal feast of fish, that Biblical symbol of God,
about which Bailey warns the Pecksniff girls: "There's a fish
to-morrow. Just come. Don't eat none of him!" After delivering
this message, Bailey later "returned to lay the cloth."

Death and decay pervade this setting, as they do the
Mould household. Mrs. Todgers' head is covered with a cobweb-
like net. Sterile and aging, she is contrasted with the "high
priestess" of the Blue Dragon "temple," whose fertile and bloom-
ing nature represents Christianity's spirit of eternal rebirth
and joy. Unlike Mrs. Todgers', who plays hostess to the mock-
courtship of Charity and Augustus, Mrs. Lupin joins the joyous
gathering of marital partners at the end. Todgers' is the London
home for the Pecksniffs. The Blue Dragon holds rather that
mysterious and powerful writer of covenants; it receives in joy
the returned prodigals, Martin and Mark; and, converted into the
Jolly Tapley, it indirectly provides the truly communal feast for
those reunited in Love.

\footnote{Ibid., pp. 79-81, 90.}

\footnote{Ibid., p. 411.}
Unlike the rural sunny setting of the Blue Dragon, Todgers' neighborhood is "festering" and the boarding house itself is "black, begrimed, and mouldy." London stands "perpetually between it and the light." Its boarders have moved away from the family unit, and, as strangers in this urban commercial establishment, they must pay Mrs. Todgers to be their Good Samaritan and "presiding deity." The commercial relationship is substituted for the familial, brotherly one, as Carlyle indicated in Past and Present. The spiritual dimension, symbolized by the unvisited mysterious cellar, is now locked away, divorced from this secular world. Though "reported to be full of wealth," it has "no connection with the house."¹³ In Dickens' idealized community at the end, the spirit of Christian Love and rebirth again infuses every part of the industrial-urban-secular-human world. It is nausea produced by the initial shift from the rural-familial-spiritualized environment to the urban-commercial-unspiritualized one that the narrator is describing in the view from Todgers', a view which Dorothy Van Ghent finds germane to the novel's metaphysics.

In Chapters 11 and 18 Dickens creates around the dark trinity of Anthony, Jonas, and Chuffey two mock-religious scenes in front of the hearth. Reference is made in the first scene to

¹³Ibid., pp. 79, 81, 83, 518.
Anthony's right and left hand, and to the bread, wine, and cloth connected with the communal meal. Before the fireplace, that warm altar of the decaying house, Chuffey admonishes the father to bless his only son; and Jonas, whose initials are "J C," quotes his own version of the Golden Rule: "Do other men, for they would do you." In the second mock-communal meal, Jonas appears holding the candle and the keys to that material kingdom which he awaits, symbolized by his father's will in the locked drawer. In the tableau at the Anglo-Bengalee, where life assurance is sold, a figure called "David" sits at the right hand of Tigg, the satanic chairman, as secretary and resident director. These mock-religious scenes are often feasts. Sairey and Betsey share a repast of pickled salmon, "cowcumbers," and "tea," at which Mrs. Harris is worshipped. Those disciples of the omnipotent dollar who stampede to the table at Mrs. Pawkins' boarding house indicate their devotion to acquisitiveness in greedy overeating.

In the best of Martín Chuzzlewit's mock-religious scenes--Pecksniff's ground breaking ceremony--the landlord relates to Martin that the great architect Pecksniff will "help to lay the first stone." A few moments later, the narrator's reports to the

\[14\] Ibid., pp. 111-116, 188-195.

\[15\] Ibid., pp. 30-31, 271f.
reader that the stone is now "firmly fixed."

Just as the Victorian viewer of Hunt's painting would have read in it the message of Revelation 3.20, so the Victorian reader would have been inspired by the phrasing and imagery of these two remarks to remember four popular Scriptural references. Jesus warns the crowd gathered around the woman taken in adultery, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast a stone at her." (John 8.8) The stone which is fixed before the cave opening where Jesus is buried, and which is rolled away at the resurrection, appears in Luke 24.2. Ironically, the image recalls Ephesians 3.18-20 and thereby anticipates the novel's final community:

> For through him we both have access by One Spirit unto the Father. 
> Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

Jesus also decides that "upon this rock," which is the weak but penitent character of Peter, he will build his church. (Matthew 16.18)

The stone of Pecksniff's building becomes thus theologically symbolic of death, deception, unrelenting judgment, and, by ironic inversion, the opposite of the faith's true foundation. The fixed

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16Ibid., pp. 345, 346.
stone, like the unforgiving theology of Old Testament Calvinism, signifies death without rebirth for the majority of men. Because the design is stolen from Martin, the placing of the stone also suggests the desire to seal up truth forever beneath the deceptive impenetrable surface. In an act similar to Pecksniff's in this respect, Jonas murders Tigg, only to discover that the Truth he thought he had "walled..up" with"the murdered man ..'in a rock" has been miraculously resurrected in the confessing figures of Lewsome, Nadge, and Chuffey. 17

Collectively, these mock-communal moments are juxtaposed to a series of positive ritualistic encounters, in which Tom Pinch, Ruth, and John Westlock create moments of harmonious union between matter and spirit. These idealized gatherings lack the Carlylean disease of self-consciousness and of surface deception which typify false religion and life, and they therefore exhibit a state of animated, unconscious joy. The lyrical emotionalism of these idealized scenes is related to Truth which erupts from the shackles of secrecy and rational design in the narratives of Pecksniff and Jonas. Tom, we are told, "might have been the Spirit of Truth, in a homely-dress--it very often wears a homely dress, thank God!" 18

17Ibid., p. 493.

18Ibid., p. 476.
In the language of the Psalms and of the Romantic lyric, Dickens seeks to convert the reader by creating in him a Coleridgean willing suspension through which he passively surrenders to these positive moments. In both the idealized character and the reader volition ceases and is replaced by a dreamlike state. Alan Grob, in his article, "Tennyson's 'The Lotus Eaters': Two Versions of Art," discusses the pulsating life beneath the surface of consciousness in that poem and in "The Hesperides." Throughout Arnold's poetry, it is present as "the buried life." In Martin Chuzzlewit it surfaces at the end as the merry fountain and the confessed feelings of all three characters, having existed prior to that time as a submerged spiritual vibration in the interaction between the three. Because of the nineteenth-century sense of discontinuity between matter and spirit, this inner force is frequently suppressed below the false surface. The conscious life of verbal communication must cease, therefore, in order for the three Dickensian characters, Tennyson's lotus eaters, and Arnold's scholar gypsy to know the deeper currents of feeling and truth. In the rhythm of incantation, of repeated phrase, and of heightened rhetoric, the reader is also caught up in the powerful overflow of feeling. He surrenders to the symbols that the priest-

narrator presents, and is converted to a feeling of hope and a sense of joy in a universe pervaded by Spirit. In A Christmas Carol both the reader and Scrooge are converted by the joy of the Cratchits, as well as by the fear of death.

Dickens' persuasive methods, then, are three. The ironic or mock-examples, presented in the comic or ironic tone, heighten the reader's critical faculties so that he may better see true spirit in a world of deceptive symbols. Through the positive rhetoric used to describe the idealized characters, he conveys like the preacher or Psalmist, the joys of goodness and the divine reward awaiting the contrite and honest heart. Finally, in the thundering tones and dark images of the terror-sermon, he admonishes his audience by negative example, bursting in to interrupt the narrative from time to time with explicit warnings:

Oh woman, God beloved in old Jerusalem! The best among us need deal lightly with thy faults, if only for the punishment thy nature will endure, in bearing heavy evidence of us, on the Day of Judgment!

O late-remembered, much-forgotten, mouthing, braggart duty, always owed, and seldom paid in any other coin than punishment and wrath, when will mankind begin to know thee!

See the lyrical apostrophes to Tom on pages 385-86, 249, 40-41, and 135; incantory praise of Ruth appears on pages 374 and 385; see also the use of refrains--"Yoho" and "Better than a gig" --on pages 350 and 124-25 respectively.
In his longest exposition regarding man's precarious spiritual condition, the narrator describes young Martin's deterioration as the result of exile and poverty in London. He begins, "O moralists," and employs such Biblical terminology as "the righteous forsaken," the Pharisees, and the degeneration of men into beasts.21

This is the style of the symbolist rather than the allegorist—a style of endless connections, ideal and ironic, between the spiritual and the secular worlds, and between religion and sinful man. Dickens thus becomes both the orphan seeking a home and the priest-artist uniting flesh and spirit, man and God.

As the concrete world of Martin Chuzzlewit is infused with spirit and meaning, so the spiritual truths are firmly grounded in concrete experience and language. This Biblical style is employed to describe the mystery of Jonas which John Westlock and young Martin endeavor to solve:

*In a word, they were wholly unable to discover any outlet from this maze of difficulty, which did not lie through some perplexed and entangled thicket.*

Seeking Chuffey's help, they encounter

*the difficulty of striking, in an instrument so out of tune and so*

21MC, pp. 289, 313, 142.
Ann Wilkinson, in her article on spontaneous combustion in *Bleak House*, notes that the physical laws of that novel are "almost exact analogues to moral laws." In the popular sermons of the day, Thomas Chalmers asserts that "what is true of natural landscape, is also true of that moral landscape." Henry Melvill maintains that "...nature wears the appearance of having actually been designed for the illustration of the Bible"; and according to William Connor Magee,

> It needs as much a moral miracle on the part of God to save the sinner from the consequences of his sin, when he transgresses the moral laws of the universe, as it would need a physical miracle to snatch him from the storm or an earthquake.23

In the Bible the repercussions of sin and human goodness and the anger and pleasure of God are reflected in the world of nature—in the withering of the fig tree, in the tearing of the temple veil, in the crumbling of the false temple, and in the springing of the fountain from a desert rock. In Dickens' humanized and moralized universe, Tom's goodness and God's

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22Ibid., pp. 464, 465.

pleasure in it are expressed in the sunny and lyrical scenes in which Tom appears. In the narrative of Jonas Chuzzlewit, both the nature of the character and the divine response to it are felt in the menacing tone and dark, decaying, stormy images. The spiritual natures of God and man also become analogous in Dickens' cosmos to any detail in the physical world—a temple, a vessel, a house, an animal, or an inanimate object. The list of major images found in the group of famous sermons perused for this thesis are the major ones in Martin Chuzzlewit, and would have had religious significance for a church-going author or reader. In the sermons are references to architecture, houses, wind, rocks, money, music, garments, darkness, terror by night, everlasting light, cup, harvest, book, fountain, lamp, moon, stars, Sun, husbandman, reward, a title to mansions, streets, gates, walls, harps, pearl, jasper, gold, songs of bliss, the valley of the shadow of death; steps in a ladder, the irrigation and enriching of soil, adverse winds, star-light, compass, undercurrents in the ocean; lyre, organ, harmony, (which stand for "the combining love of God"); "travellers through the woods at night, when the sky is hidden and all things seem to be other than they are"; fire, bride, bridegroom, labourer in the vineyard; money, crime, "the case of the Divine Creditor and the human debtor" (metaphors for sin); blight, volcanic fire, dried up and scorched vegetation, fruit, seed, "root of selfishness," and "the dark labyrinth of evil in which there are unexpected
outlets."

Dickens' imagery is often literal, as John Holloway has indicated, participating in the concrete reality of the moment as well as in the eternal truths it embodies. Martin, like the Prodigal Son, finds himself cheated by real gamblers and poverty-stricken without food among real pigs. Bailey's spiritual death occurs in the form of a state of unconsciousness resembling physical death. Martin's preconversion state of near fatal feverishness is another illustration. The brass-and-copper founder actually deals in the material which St. Paul makes a metaphor for the absence of Love. Ruth's flour is as real as that of her Biblical counterpart; and Martin's rod is as solid as the fire, into which the drunken Pecksniff stumbles, is hot. All of the Old Testament presentiments--wind, lightning, and purification by fire and water--are physical actualities in Dickens' narrative, as are crime, inheritance, exile, and reunion.

The imagery of Martin Chuzzlewit is Biblical; it is literal as well as figurative; and it appears in clusters which often form linguistic patterns as well. As several images are

related within one theme, so one moment in the action can reflect several of the major ideas in the novel. The mock-religious ceremony for Pecksniff, in which a stone is lowered in honour of a stolen design, represents the theological concepts of death and rebirth, of pious judgment and crucifixion, of stolen birthright and sonship, and of the false temple and worldly reward. The theme of sowing and reaping is also introduced by the tribute which the member of the Gentlemanly Interest pays to Pecksniff: "To a gentleman who, I am happy to believe, will reap both distinction and profit from this field. . . ." The possible influence of the nineteenth-century sermon on the literalness, variety, fragmentation, free association, and free application of imagery found in Dickens is suggested by the following passage from one of Spurgeon's pulpit presentations:

\[
\text{I beseech thee, go to the river of thine experience, and pull up a few bulrushes, and weave them into an ark, wherein thine infant faith may float waftly on the stream. . . . What! hast thou buried thine own diary? I beseech thee, man, turn over the book of thy remembrance.}^{26}
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The importance of tracing an image and those related to it through the entire novel in order to discover the structure of spiritual truth beneath the crowded surface has already been noted.

\(^{25}\text{MC, p. 347.}\)

\(^{26}\text{Spurgeon, in PENC, p. 611.}\)
Among the images in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, two overlapping clusters emerge as thematically significant. The first group is that of 'valley,' 'vale,' 'veil,' 'wale,' 'whale,' and 'wail'. Linked with these images of death and deception are those of nature: wheat and chaff; roots, seeds, and harvest; Eden, trees, and serpents; and animals. The novel begins in winter and ends in spring. Like the earth, the valley of human life is a place of death and rebirth, of decay and growth. Sowing and reaping in this vale of darkness earns one an inheritance, which is either a harvest of wealth and family security or of poverty, exile, and eternal death. Upon learning of Jonas's plot to kill his father, Old Martin cries out:

> Oh, brother, brother! Were we strangers half our lives that you might breed a wretch like this, and I made life a desert by withering every flower that grew about me! . . . But the accursed harvest of our mistaken lives shall be trodden down.

Anthony has realized much earlier, regarding his son, "I have sown, and I must reap." 27

Dickens frequently presents a character metaphorically as a plant or garden. Pecksniff strikes "himself upon his breast, or moral garden," where he later finds young Martin to be "a

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27MC, pp. 487, 489; for other references to sowing and reaping, wheat and chaff, see pp. 347, 139, 199, vi, 27; two examples of the use of this major image in the Bible are found in Job 1.8 and Revelation 22.11.
leper and a serpent." Major Pawkins is like a stale weed himself: such as might be hoed out of the public garden, with great advantage to the decent growth of that preserve, and tossed on some congenial dunghill.

Augustus Muddle is announced in the title to Chapter 32 as "Another Blighted Plant Besides the Plants Upon the Leads." The name of Chevy Slyme, like that of Mould, represents the putrification of nature infiltrating Dickens' world. Martin describes America as "one great growth, which is rotten at the root." The English characters and actions symbolize "the flowering of the same pregnant seed. Self!...the root of the vile tree." Healthy growth takes place as well. Mary Graham's goodness "blossomed without cultivation and it ripened without heat"; and the mystery and supernatural atmosphere surrounding the job at the Temple becomes "a full blown flower of wonder in the garden of Tom's fancy." The literal gardens of the novel, which are full of echoes from Genesis, include Pecksniff's garden and the churchyard, the garden of the copper-and-brass founder, St. James Park where Mary and Martin meet prior to his

28 **MC**, pp. 133, 170, 317, 337; the poem on page 175 also presents America as a rotting garden: "Oh but for such, Columbia's days were done; /Rank without ripeness, quickened without sun, /Crude at the surface, rotten at the core, /Her fruits would fall before her spring were o'er!"

exile, the valley of Eden (reported to have "lots of serpents"), and even Sairey's and Betsey's "garden-stuff" for their salad.\textsuperscript{30}

A number of references to trees in the novel recall the famous apple tree in Genesis, which caused sin, knowledge, and rebellion. Jonas calls Tigg the top of the Anglo-Bengalee tree. In pursuit of Mary Graham, Pecksniff stumbles over a tree root. Jonas explains the blow Tom has given him by saying, "I ran against a tree." As a limb is separated from the trunk, we are told, so Charity leaves her father's home to go to London.\textsuperscript{31}

There were beasts in the first garden, and Dickens' "mortal wale" also contains not only real animals--birds, rabbits, serpents, pigs, and horses--but a number of metaphoric ones used to reveal man's nature. In the garden where Pecksniff courts Mary, "the birds, so many Pecksniff consciences, sang gaily on every branch. . . ." The feigning of natural goodness among the three Pecksniffs is again symbolized when "one staggering old sparrow" is "borrowed expressly from the kitchen" to adorn the girls' room when young Martin arrives. However, the artificial world crumbles in the face of true spiritual forces in the novel, and this apocalyptic reversal is foreshadowed as Pecksniff stands

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., pp. 148, 216, 469, 792.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., pp. 423, 247, 295.
before Old Martin in their secret meeting in London: Old Martin happens

to catch his eye in its descent:
for until now it had been piously upraised, with something of that
expression which the poetry of ages
has attributed to a domestic bird,
when breathing its last amid the
ravages of an electric storm. . . . 32

Mercy Pecksniff, who is exploited by her father in her marriage
to Jonas, and Poll Swedlepipe, whose home is "one great bird's
nest," are both associated with the gentler birds, the dove and
the sparrow. Balanced with these are the birds of prey, with
which Martin compares the Americans. Tigg explains the Anglo-
Bengalee to Jonas: "We companies are all birds of prey: mere
birds of prey." 33

These exploiters in Dickens' social vision tend to view
men as horses to be driven. "I drive B, in point of fact," says
Tigg, "and a thorough-bred horse he is." The ultimate self-
destruction of these unconverted men of power Mark Tapley des-
cribes as a kind of Satanic conversion: man will be humble in
simple circumstances.

But set any on 'em up with a coach and
horses, sir; and it's wonderful what a


33Ibid., pp. 206-07, 267, 343, 263, 277.
knowledge of drivin' he'll show, and how he'll fill his vehicle with passengers, and start off in the middle of the road, neck or nothing, to the Devil! Bless your heart, sir, there's ever so many Tiggs a passing this here Temple-gate any hour in the day, that only want a chance, to turn out full-blown Montagues every one!

What is actually being driven even Pecksniff realizes: "our passions are the horses, and rampant animals too."

These images from Nature and their free association with the world of human nature illustrate the truth of Henry Parry Liddon's statement from the Victorian pulpit that "Nature is a shadow of something beyond itself," just as physical birth foreshadows spiritual rebirth and a life after death. With Liddon, Chaucer, and Carlyle, Dickens shares not only this view but the medieval idea that the spiritual is inseparable from the jolly, fertile, and healthy life. The overflow of powerful feeling in the scenes with Tom, Ruth, and John, Mrs. Lupin's healthy radiance and "ripe lips"; the merry wind that flattens Pecksniff; and the fusion of romantic love and marriage with the salvation of the converted characters at the end--these are contrasted with the mouldy decaying settings and the equivalent human natures of Mould, Slyme, Sairey Gamp, and Jonas. Pecksniff's

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34 Ibid., pp. 280, 269, 74, 503.

35 Liddon, in SES, p. 373.
lustful but sterile courtship of Mary and then of the cobweb-covered Mrs. Todgers lacks the physically appealing and luxuriant quality of some of the other romances. The marriage of the sadistic Jonas is apparently never consummated, and the flower he offers Mercy in courtship is a hothouse one which mistakenly ends up in the coachman's hand.\textsuperscript{36}

The second image cluster is composed primarily of objects in man's world rather than of details from nature, although there is a certain amount of overlapping in the two categories. The second group includes houses, temples, churches, darkness and light, windows, keys, objects of guidance or direction, architecture and music, money and brass. Biblical authors refer both to the inner chamber of the heart and to the Temple as a place where an altar, hidden by a veil, holds the arc of the sacred covenant with God. Also symbolic of the truth and falsehood of the heart, Pecksniff's churches and architectural designs are contrasted with Tom's organ and with the spiritualized Temple at the end. Mrs. Todgers' mysterious sanctuaries are contrasted with the rural temple over which Mrs. Lupin presides. Nadgett watches Jonas like the cross atop St. Paul's. The downfall of the wicked house of Anthony Chuzzlewit is prophesied by Chuffey, just as the false temples and Babylons of the Old

\textsuperscript{36} MC, pp. 72, 121.
Testament were doomed by the prophets of Jehovah.

Human nature is reflected in these man-made objects as it is in the world of Nature. Pecksniff's home, on the night of Martin's arrival, is full of thoughts and dreams: "Thus in the quiet hours of the night, one house shuts in as many incoherent and incongruous fancies as a madman's head." Expounding upon the secrets hidden in man's heart, Sairey Gamp describes this organ as having windows with "the shutters up."\footnote{Ibid., pp. 54, 292.} The window, a recurring image, either invites the exiled traveller on the dark road to the light of communion within, or becomes the means by which the light of divine spirit infuses the dark decaying interior to expose, revitalize, and save. Just before Mark re-appears to Mrs. Lupin at the Dragon upon return from America, the narrator describes as part of the stormy scene

\begin{quote}
the tearful leaves shivering and cowering together at the window, and tapping at it urgently, as if beseeching to be sheltered from the dismal night.
\end{quote}

Pecksniff and Jonas sneak up from the dark road to the kitchen window to see Charity with her keys, surrounded by light and cherubic onions.\footnote{Lindsay, CD, pp. 97-98; MC, pp. 408, 209-10.}
Pecksniff discovers Jonas first through the window where the latter is seen perusing the will just before his father's death. In the scene exposing Jonas's guilt, Pecksniff appears again at the window. From a nearby window, Nudgett watches Jonas endeavor to conceal his murderous designs. Suffering in feverish anguish, Lewsome imagines hundreds of men with black crepe on their arms passing "in at the window and out at the door." In the romantic twilight scene at Furnival's Inn, the window is a source of expansive vision and an invading spirit which does not involve guilt. Tom plays the organ while Ruth and John gaze out at the stars—"one of the divinest regions on earth."  

Keys also provide both entrance into the warm communal hearth and the means of exposing guilty secrets within. Martin in London feels "shut out, alone, upon the dreary world, without the key of it." John Westlock leads the search for the metaphoric key to Jonas's secret, gives his key to the homeless Tom, and provides Ruth, through marriage, with the keys to her own home. Martin forgetfully calls him "Northkey" and when corrected by Tom, he says, "I knew it had something to do with a compass and a door." In the back room of his house before he leaves to murder Tigg, Jonas places the key in the lock to obstruct anyone from

\[39\] MC, pp. 261, 433.
looking through at him. 40

Direction points form a major thematic pattern in Martin
Chuzzlewit. In the novel's vignette title, which originally
appeared in the second illustration of Part II, a crossed sign-
post stands next to the coach in which Tom Pinch will convey
young Martin to Pecksniff's house. Pecksniff himself is compared
"to a direction-post, which is always telling the way to a place,
and never goes there"; and prior to young Martin's dismissal from
his house, he piously laments that young man's "voluntary with-
donal. . .from the flowery paths of purity and peace." Tom's
spiritual disillusionment with this paragon of virtuous
appearance is made analogous to the total loss of physical
direction:

   His compass was broken, his chart des-
   troyed, his chronometer had stopped, his
   masts were gone by the board; his
   anchor was adrift, ten thousand leagues
   away.

The image appears again in the description of that least appealing
Chuzzlewit kinsman, Chevy Slyme, "whose great abilities seemed
one and all to point towards the sneaking quarter of the moral
compass." 41

Architecture and music are juxtaposed throughout the novel.
Tom at his organ is the center of the novel's frontispiece, and

40 Ibid., pp. 139, 123, 447-48.

41 Bibliography, p. 191; MC, pp. 8, 133, 30.
surrounding him are images of both architecture and music. Leaving Pecksniff's, Tom feels the lyrical ecstasy of moving through nature in the lively coach: the sounds of her various parts moving together resemble "one great instrument of music." Mark Tapley whistles; Ruth and Mary at different times sing with the organ; and Pecksniff's accusation of Tom regarding his supposed secret plans with Mary touches "the deepest chord within" Tom's innocent self. Chuffey is described as an instrument out of tune.\textsuperscript{42}

In its negative and ironic form the image recurs in a reference to the "infernally finely touched chords" in Chevy Slyme's nature. The drunk Jonas in the coach with Tigg sings loudly of the storm and of death, and an equally inebriated crew at Mrs. Todgers' serenade the departing Pecksniff girls. The two daughters are also heard singing as they descend the stairs of their own home to meet Old Martin. Mrs. Gamp, in one of her verbal performances, "added daily so many strings to her bow, that she made a perfect harp of it; and upon that instrument now began to perform her concerto."\textsuperscript{43}

Metaphors of brass and money are associated in the Bible with false temples, worldly religion, and the absence of true

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., pp. 350, 434, 249.

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., pp. 69, 100, 439.
spirit. St. Paul compares the absence of Love with sounding brass, and, as Mrs. Gamp reminds us, the rich man will have great difficulty getting into heaven. Ruth works for the copper-and-brass founder in the beginning; and Tom's idol, Pecksniff preaches to Mrs. Todgers regarding the golden calf of Baal. In the opening scenes, Old Martin's voice is compared with brass, and he refers to the falseness of other men's "metal." Tigg is "bold as brass," according to Jonas. Money, as the object of worship, is lauded as a "talisman," and "the master key to all the brazen gates." 44

The rich variations upon these two image clusters make possible a thematically unified view of the novel. The repeated juxtaposition in the author's mind of such images as architecture and music or darkness and light indicates that Dickens saw beneath his cluttered realistic world an interrelated set of spiritual truths. These truths, in turn, are the result of Dickens' cultural exposure to Biblical Christianity. Like Dickens' characters, these images interact and overlap with one another in an evolving revelation of eternal spirit. The major sources from which he draws his images are Nature, the Bible, and the established church, with its theology, its ritual, and the style and content

of its sermons. These three are equally important and interrelated vehicles of spirit. The fusion of the true church, of the Bible, of Nature, and of the individual's spiritual rebirth is found in the imagery of Hunt’s paintings, of Augustine's theology, of Chaucer's poetry, and of Carlyle's prophesies. In the following passage from Dickens’ last novel, *Edwin Drood*, these four sources work together to create a single hopeful image:

A brilliant morning shines on the old city. Its antiquities and ruins are surpassingly beautiful, with the lusty ivy gleaming in the sun, and the rich trees waving in the balmy air. Changes of glorious light from morning boughs, songs of birds, scents from gardens, woods, and fields—or, rather, from the one great garden of the whole cultivated island in its yielding time—penetrate into the Cathedral, subdue its earthy odour, and preach the Resurrection and the Life.\(^{45}\)

Nature gives new life to religious forms. The church itself is reborn. Spiritual change is, in turn, symbolized by the play of light on natural objects. Dickens portrays not the insular decaying garden with its false idolatry but the cultivated garden at the end of the journey, which is inseparable from the church and the city.

The same imagery is used in *Martin Chuzzlewit* to describe a similar redemptive entrance of spirit into dark matter. As Old

Martin moves toward his first meeting with Pecksniff at Todgers', aware of the mental anguish and humiliation to which he is voluntarily submitting himself:

...there were grains of hesitation in his mind, which made him now avoid the house he sought, and loiter to and fro in a gleam of sunlight, that brightened the little churchyard hard by. There may have been, in the presence of those idle heaps of dust among the busiest stir of life, something to increase his wavering; but there he walked, awakening the echoes as he paced up and down, until the church clock, striking the quarters for the second time since he had been there, roused him from his meditation. Shaking off his incertitude as the air parted with the sound of the bells, he walked rapidly to the house, and knocked at the door.46

By this act Old Martin begins a secret design which ends in the creation of a divine-human community of secular saints. His success in this endeavor is the subject of the novel's four culminating chapters, and of the next chapter of this thesis.

46MC, p. 99.
CHAPTER V

THE FINAL SCENES

The Little Portland Street Chapel, toward which Dickens directed his loyalties from 1843 to 1845 "stood for the ideal or principle of a catholic community, in which Unitarians and non-Unitarians could, with mutual respect for each other's convictions, worship together in spirit and in truth."¹ This characteristic of all-inclusive fellowship, to which J. M. Connell refers, is a major feature of the early Christian church, of the Evangelical and Broad Church Movements, and of Maurice's influential religious treatise, The Kingdom of Christ. In Carlyle's Utopian vision, Nature also participates in the sacred oneness: "The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnal-house with spectres; but godlike, and my Father's."² The Bible and the Victorian sermon are filled with examples of ideal human-divine societies. Because the idea of a new world, a new Christianity, was not only part of Dickens' personal religious experience but pre-eminent in the popular culture, its characteristics were probably in Dickens' mind when he created the idealized ending of Martin Chuzzlewit.

¹Connell, p. 232.
²Works, I, p. 150.
Chapters Fifty-one through Fifty-four bring together in an ultimate vision the confessions, the revelations, the conversions, the reunions, and the apocalyptic explosion of Truth through the bonds of deceptive appearance, toward which the novel has been moving. In Chapter Fifty-one, the subject is revelation and death. We discover the truth about the murderer Jonas, the designing Old Martin, the forgiving Anthony, the watchful Nadgett, and the kinsman Chevy Slyme. Just as God comes to Jonah in the whale, the light of truth pierces the dark innards of the Chuzzlewit house. The imagery of rebirth from that narrative is present: as Nadgett slowly reveals the rescue of the blood stained clothes from the river, the impatient Chevy Slyme completes his sentence: "To be fished up... Be alive, Mr. Nadgett." Truth also means an organic inevitability within events. What occurs is a "harvest" of the "pregnant seed" of "self."  

Everything is found to be connected. Even Chevy Slyme is a Chuzzlewit. Mankind since Adam is a collective unit, and separateness an illusion. This fact, which is apparent in the interrelated nature of Dickens' characterization throughout, becomes suddenly true of events as well.

The apocalyptic image of the harvest is exchanged for that of the flood in Fifty-two, in which the tide of Old Martin's wrath is unleashed against Pecksniff. As these three products of Old

\(^3\text{MC, pp. 493, 487, 496.}\)
Testament Calvinism--Jonas, Pecksniff, and the vengeful side of Old Martin--are eliminated, the new world of sacramental unity begins to assert itself. Chapter Fifty-one, which unfolds in the dark house, ends with "Dead, dead, dead." This next chapter, which begins in the morning in the Temple, shifts from Pecksniff's judgment to the reappearance of the revived Bailey; the announcement of the Blue Dragon's conversion, the plans for a joyous feast; and the pairing off of the three romantic couples, and Tom and Mr. Chuzzlewit.\(^4\)

Spiritualization of matter and the fitting together of originally disparate parts in this fictional world continue in Chapter Fifty-three. It opens on "a summer's day" before a laughing, singing fountain in "Garden Court \(\sqrt{\text{which}}\) ends in the Garden, and the Garden \(\sqrt{\text{which}}\) ends in the River." This protected shady world is "celestial," having "no distance, and no time." It is transformed by the love of Ruth and John, and made sacred by the communal feast in the Temple, at which Tom is loved by everyone and all is joy.\(^5\) In this chapter Old Martin gives jewels to the brides and assumes the role of father of all. Dickens makes several specific connections to indicate the all-inclusive oneness of this converted world. For example, Mark Tapley, as

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 496.

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 509.
servant-host of the festive occasion,

felt himself, indeed, the landlord of
the Jolly Tapley, and could almost de-
lude himself into the belief that the
entertainment was actually being held
under the Jolly Tapley's roof. 6

The reappearance of Martin's and Mark's neighbors from Eden re-
unites parent and orphan: Mark, who immediately invites them to
come "home" with him to the Jolly Tapley, recalls, "Shouldn't we
have both died without 'em! Hav'n't they come a-strugglin' back,
without a single child for their consolation!" In the running
title, "Eden in Monument Yard," which describes their arrival,
Dickens also makes explicit the union of garden and city that
their presence creates. In a world of all-encompassing fellow-
ship, each man is responsible for his brother. The two from Eden
have been good neighbors to Martin and Mark; Mrs. Toddgers, in this
chapter, is compared with "the Good Samaritan"; Mark plays host;
and Old Martin provides for his new family. 7

In Chapter Fifty-four, after Charity's marriage plans end
disastrously, and Old Martin rescues Mercy Chuzzlewit from the
chaos, the last moments focus on Tom at the organ at home with
Ruth and John. A child is in the room. In the final tableau, with
Ruth and Tom in the garden with flowers, children, and music, the

6Ibid., p. 513.

7Ibid., pp. 519, 518.
word "home" which has been a refrain toward the end is replaced by the final word "Heaven."  

The conversion that has taken place in these climactic four chapters is not only personal but social, indeed cosmic. Pecksniff's churches have been replaced by the Temple. The quarreling Chuzzlewits around that false priest-idol have become a newly formed family of Love gathered around the true spiritual center, Old Martin. The Spirit of Love infuses the Temple, and the Temple is in fact the heart of the business world of London. The place of law, it has come alive through the New Law of Christ. This is the new Eden where the eternal fountain flows. From the very beginning of the novel, this positive image of the living church has been established. The church that appears on the opening landscape is "in sympathy with the general gladness" in nature. Like the nearby husbandman sowing his seeds—a popular metaphor for God—this structure on the horizon gives a patterned ritual to Nature, bringing together the sacred and the profane. At the same time, like the church at the end of Edwin Drood, the religious architectural form receives new growth and health from the forces of Nature.

8 Ibid., pp. 343, 408, 428, 519, 522.

9 Ibid., p. 5.
What has been created at the conclusion of *Martin Chuzzlewit* is an imaginative unity of man and nature, the world and the church, form and spirit, the human and the divine. Because the concrete surface and the spirit beneath are no longer discontinuous, the enobling music that surrounds Tom and Ruth in the garden "resounds within thee and without." Taking this fact of spiritual oneness, the theme of conversion, the novel's major images, and the role of Old Martin together, we discover in the midst of Sairey Gamp's confused religious pronouncements a perfect epigraph for these four scenes: in Chapter Forty-six, the prophetess of the "mortal wale" looks forward to the day when "this tearful walley would be changed into a flowerin' guardian."

This community is finally inseparable from Dickens' worldly hopes for security, inheritance, love, fatherhood, brotherhood, and a happy marriage. These Biblical images represent both the interrelated worldly and religious values of Dickens' society. J. Hillis Miller recognizes Dickens' desire to establish a kingdom on earth: referring to *The Pickwick Papers* as an early example, Miller compares Pickwick at the end of the novel with

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God at the center of his universe, diffusing benevolence all around, and receiving it back in reciprocal influences and reflections.\textsuperscript{12}

The de-institutionalized society of sympathy, fairness, and non-aggression between true friends, which concludes \textit{Pickwick Papers}, and which closely resembles that of \textit{Martin Chuzzlewit}, is also singled out by Steven Marcus for religious comment:

No novel could move further... toward asserting not only that the Kingdom of God is within each man but that it is possible to establish something that resembles the Kingdom of God on Earth..., the life promised by the Gospels; these meek ones have indeed inherited the earth....\textsuperscript{13}

In contrast to the Calvinistic cosmos of wrath, Angus Wilson argues that those

... feasts and social occasions... throughout Dickens' work may stand for the reign of love on earth. This sort of New Testament Christianity, with its hostility to dogma and ceremony, and its dislike of ostentatious piety and works... and its concept of the Redemption was central to Dickens' belief.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Miller, \textit{CD}, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{13} Marcus, pp. 90-91, 51; see also Davis, pp. 93, 100-01; and Monod, p. 25.

Hypocritical exclusiveness and sadistic lack of faith--Carlyle's dilletantism and mammonism--are absent from this new spiritual community. Jack Lindsay perceives that "...the end of Chuzzlewit symbolically expresses the reformation off the earth of 'society,' all the forces of greed and falsity."\textsuperscript{15} Pecksniff is excluded as the symbol of Election, for Sonship is the potential state of all men, no matter how sinful. The organized church and its clerical representatives, which Pecksniff symbolizes, are also inappropriate because of their exclusive formalism. Neither Jesus's disciples nor the secular saints of Dickens' ideal society come from the formal church.

Jonas, who embodies the second type of evil, has acted out of greed and spiritual blindness regarding the true nature of his father. The unmasking of Pecksniff and the exposure of the guilty Jonas both involve a revelation of the true forgiving natures of the patriarchs they serve. If the nature of these two older men reflects Dickens' view of God, then it is possible to conclude that he shared Svend Ranulf's theory that the Calvinist concept of God was to a great extent a matter of projecting one's own self-seeking, unforgiving nature onto a divine image. Dickens possibly saw, as Max Weber did, that belief in such a punitive selfish Godhead would lead a greedy society eventually to discard

\textsuperscript{15}Lindsay, \textit{CD}, pp. 248-49.
Him for materialistic atheism. The seeds of destruction are thus inherent in that image of the Old Testament personality. If the Christian religion is to survive, then the concept of God must evolve, as it did from the Old to the New Testaments, and from seventeenth-century Puritanism and eighteenth-century Deism to nineteenth-century liberal humanism.

Charity Pecksniff, whose downfall occurs in Chapter Fifty-four, symbolizes a third major evil to be eliminated—the religion of tyranny and sacrifice. There is a great deal of Blake's Female Will in Charity. She intends to sacrifice Augustus Muddle on the altar of her own ego, having manipulated him into a proposal, and only the last-minute flight of the scapegoat prevents this sacrificial ceremony from being performed.

The end of Dickens' novel, like the conclusion of Hopkins' "Spelt from Sybil's Leaves," is a sudden change from rich colorful multiplicity to the winding of two skeins at Judgment Day—one for the damned and one for the saved. The damned in Dickens' world, however, with the exception of the dead Jonas and Tigg, only wait in exile. The evil that lurks beyond this final cultivated Eden—those remaining members of the Anglo-Bengalee Company and their American counterparts, such as Scadder—wait like Grendal and his dam in the mere beyond the joyful hall of Heorot. This characteristic of Dickens' ideal ending is in keeping with New Testament Christianity, in which the crucifixion represents the eternally irreconcilable conflict between good and evil. Dickens apparently
shares with Carlyle and with the author of Revelation the belief that all things, including superstition and evil itself, are part of the process of eternal good. As in the Bible, the evil in *Martin Chuzzlewit* is not cosmic but social, like the false temple, Babylon, or the Tower of Babel. Destroyed in an apocalypse to make way for the new heaven and the new earth, these evils also contribute to the creation of the new world. Wickedness and deception exist in order to know good and truth. Energy is assimilated within order. In the cosmic simplicity of this early novel, Old Martin exhibits near omnipotence and omniscience, and emerges as the true architect of the new society, the new Temple, and the new church.

The tone and imagery of these concluding scenes, and particularly the role of Old Martin, suggest that Dickens may have had on this mind a variety of Biblical elements from the books of John, of Ezekiel, of Exodus, and of Amos. The nature of the New Testament deity, reflected in the transformed Old Martin, is best summed up in the words of John 16.33: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." In Chapter Forty-three of Ezekiel, God descends to the Temple to fill it with Spirit and to re-establish Israel. The author of the Book of Exodus employs the imagery of the temple, the veil, the gate, candles, and jewels to describe Moses' creation of the new community across the Red Sea. Finally, Amos warns his people
\(5.18\) that the coming of the Lord may occur in a form that they do not expect.

From the New Testament and the conclusion of religious history according to Revelation come the images of the city, the temple, and the bride. The holy city comes down from God in heaven as a bride. Also part of this apocalyptic moment is a fountain, a light, a gate, a river, and a tree with fruit. In Dickens' ending the scene shifts from the upper room of the Temple to the gushing fountain in the middle of the Temple area of the city and ends in the flowering garden which runs into the river. The removal of the veil in Revelation is part of the symbolism of marriage, but also the Temple veil is rent by the wrath of God to expose corruption and sin within. The exposure of Jonas and then of the more metaphorically veiled Pecksniff is also part of Dickens' Judgment Day ending. Old Martin has also emerged from behind the dark veil of the bed curtains at the Blue Dragon, where he enters the story, to become visible and suffer. He gives jewels to the brides Mary and Ruth. The keys which appear from time to time throughout the novel, and which finally Ruth has for her home with Tom and John, and which both Tom and Old Martin have to the Temple, are an image of salvation, of freedom from hell. The phrase "keys of the kingdom" occurs in Matthew 16:19.

Regarding the nature of those who are saved at the end of the novel, and the nature of their salvation, the Victorian sermon has a great deal to say, and both the ideas and the imagery from
this popular genre are present in Dickens' final scenes. John
Henry Newman's sermon on "The Invisible World" explains the
coming of the kingdom:

...the kingdom of God is among us
...though unseen... and in due
season it shall be revealed. Men think
that they are lords of the world, and
may do as they will. They think this
earth their property, and its movements
in their power; whereas it has other lords
besides them, and is the scene of a
higher conflict than they are capable
of conceiving. It contains Christ's
little ones whom they despise, and his
Angels whom they disbelieve; and these
at length shall take possession of it
and be manifested.

He describes the coming as a sudden burst of spirit from within
the world of matter, and says "...it will be but the removing
of a veil."\textsuperscript{16}

James Bowling Mozley and James Martineau also use the
coming of the kingdom as a warning to the selfish. Mozley refers
to the Gospel's"warning note to the pomp and flattery of human
judgments, to the erection of idols... which points to the day
of great reversal."\textsuperscript{17} According to Martineau,

...just when the low temper of
society and greedy negligence of man
have brought us to believe in self-
love alone, some sudden outbreak of

\textsuperscript{16}SES, pp. 257-58, 259, 261.

\textsuperscript{17}Mozley, in SES, pp. 303-04.
this passion breaks through the crust of our philosophy /and/
...in place of an affliction that looked up, and a sorrow that
looked down, there is a reciprocal sympathy standing eye to eye with
a mild and manly brotherhood.\footnote{18}

Of the sudden coming of this new world, which involves
the revelation of a mystery, Thomas Binney preached in 1851:

All is so arranged that we may 'judge nothing before the time, until the
Lord come, who shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make
manifest the intentions of the heart.' 'Then shall every one have praise of
God'--or blame: then shall all men be seen to be what they are, and each receive 'according to what he hath
done, whether it be good or bad.' 
...With hosannas by those angelic spectators...they shall...proceed
to the possession of their everlasting inheritance, amid the welcome of those
who shall hail their success with sympathetic delight, heralding them to
their home with joy and acclamation, shouting and songs.\footnote{19}

Binney also refers to this final group as "sons of light" and
"children of the resurrection" and to mankind in general as "the
human family."\footnote{20}

\footnote{18}Martineau, in \textit{SES}, p. 269.

\footnote{19}"Life and Immortality Brought to Light," in \textit{PENC}, p. 592.

\footnote{20}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 583, 592, 585, 593.
In a final example of the connection, through imagery, between the preachers of his day and Dickens, John Caird's sermon, "Religion in Common Life," prophesies the unifying of the world and particularly of the world and the Temple:

.. .the world shall become one. . .
where the worker shall never quit the temple, nor the worshipper the place of work, because 'there is no temple therein, but the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof.'

The religious theorists of the day--men such as Wesley, Arnold, and Maurice--were not without their ideal communities; and these communities, which were usually related in some way to a new spiritual state of man and sometimes to the nature of life after death, shared a great deal of imagery with the final scenes of Dickens' novel. For example, the conversion of Martin who also becomes the new heir, the glimpse of Tom and Ruth coming from the garden, and the great love that Old Martin feels for those around him at the end each recalls Cruikshank's description of Wesley's convert was a "New Man" who became "heir to the fields of Paradise." These reborn souls "felt in their mortal substance the pressure of the Divine Love." Thomas Arnold, who was

\(^{21}\) Caird, in SES, p. 350.

\(^{22}\) Cruikshank, p. 182.
appointed to Rugby in 1828, envisioned an idyllic Christian community of One Church embracing all religions and with no distinction between secular and sacred.23

Maurice, Ludlow, and Kingsley—the three leaders of the Christian Socialists—"established the doctrine and fact of the Incarnation of Christ and His establishment of the Kingdom of God as the plan and motivation of the new order." The idea of "an idealized primitive Church" among the Tractarians of the same period, was, according to Horton Davies, a reaction against liberalism. "Their primary concept was never 'merit'—they spoke chiefly of obedience and submission to the will of God and, above all, of the empowering of His grace." In the words of St. Athanasius, "He became man that we might be made divine."24

While the narrative of Jonas and that of Pecksniff shows Dickens' dramatic interest in the darker Calvinist theology of Adam, his final scene represents the Christian Socialist and Tractarian emphasis on Incarnation rather than Atonement. Davies explains that

... whereas the Evangelicals, in making the Atonement the centre of the theology, had stressed the utter unworthiness, even

23 Actually Arnold excluded Roman Catholics, Quakers, and Unitarians; see Moorman, pp. 331-32; see also D. C. Somervell, English Thought in the Nineteenth Century (New York: D. McKay, 1964), p. 113.

24 Davies, pp. 262, 281, 264, 268.
depravity of man, and the corruption of the world from which a converted being was to be saved, the theology of the Incarnation stressed the possibility and the intention of the Divine restoration of man's whole nature, soul and body, and potentially the redemption of his social context. In brief, a theology of the Incarnation stressed the continuity between nature and grace, while the Evangelical theology of the Atonement stressed the radical discontinuity between nature and grace. 25

The final gathering is primarily Old Martin's doing, which makes it, like the religion of the Tractarians, objective and sacramental in nature--formal and ritualistic in its pattern of action--from the encounter in the upper room of the Temple to the feast, and the tableaux of Tom and Ruth in the garden at the very end. 26 Old Martin has made himself available to suffering. He has loved and blessed in secret so that he could eventually bless, reward, and love openly. The idea of God and His creation as related in terms of the Fall is Western and Augustinian, and it typifies the first part of Dickens' novel. The emphasis on grace rather than on sin is Eastern, and it sets the tone for the novel's

25 Davies, p. 269; this idea of Incarnation as preferable to Atonement is related to Auerbach's aesthetic juxtaposition of "figura" (incarnational reality) and allegory, in which the former makes body (or history) as important as spirit, while the latter is primarily other worldly.

26 Davies, p. 269.
conclusion. A theologian of grace, Maurice felt his job was to preach the Gospel of that Kingdom, the fact that it is among us, and not to be set up at all. . . by proclaiming society and humanity to be divine realities, as they stand, not as they become.27

Jonas and his impenitence are related to this optimistic theological view, for Maurice believes, according to Latourette, that All that men need to do to be reconciled is to recognize their sonship, repent, and give God the love which is the natural relation of a son to the Father.28

One of the central Christian truths, Maurice states in The Kingdom of Christ, is "God's Absolute Fatherly Love, of the Incarnation, of the Sacrifice for all. . . ."29 The importance of sacrament or ritual rather than words to express the inner feelings of the heart, which is also found throughout Martin Chuzzlewit, but especially at the end, is explicable in terms of Maurice's central conviction

27 Ibid., p. 294; this quotation from a letter to Ludlow in 1852 appears in The Kingdom of Christ, II, 137.

28 Latourette, p. 1174.

29 Davies, p. 297; Kingdom of Christ, II, 9-10.
that the real unity that men have is to be expressed only in worship, where they make their common acknowledgment that God is their heavenly Father and that they are therefore brothers. Moreover, it is an acknowledgment of fealty by the heart, in which men are one, rather than in the intellect, in which they differ.\textsuperscript{30}

The best example of this idea in the novel is the final group of scenes with Ruth and Tom and John. In a dreamlike surrender to feeling, intensity of emotion is combined with strict ritual or pattern, including the making of the pudding, the daily ritual of Ruth's putting a flower in Tom's buttonhole, their walks at the same time every morning, and the fixed nature of their daily parting. Pecksniff, who is all words and intellect, is the negative example for Maurice's theory.

The conclusion of \textit{Martin Chuzzlewit} is perhaps the clearest illustration of the way in which Dickens' fictional world is a partial product of his own theology and that of his age. In that imagined cosmos, according to Steven Marcus, "...all experience and suffering may be construed as but the proving of one's individuality and election. Earle Davis notes Dickens' "argumentative belief in man's perfectability" through "God, the spirit of eternal good," who, "like Nature" will guide us toward perfection. Dickens' world, as described by Monod, is one in which

\textsuperscript{30} Davies, p. 298.
"evil is never triumphant, even where misfortune prevails. The bad...are invariably punished, even where the good, the ex-
cellent...perish."31 Though Dickens' reformist efforts were not always successful or even well received in the real world of industrial England, he was able in the fictional realm to make Christian values work in the most concrete, individual, and typically Victorian of situations. What he has ultimately conceiv -ed in Martin Chuzzlewit is the conversion of the world.

31 Marcus, pp. 90-91; Davis, pp. 93, 100-01; Monod, p. 25.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The audience of a comic artist is inherently skeptical about the ultimate seriousness of his message. Bernard Shaw complained that when he wrote his plays in the form of sugar coated pills, the audience would swallow the sugar and leave the pill. A second difficulty with interpreting the metaphysics of Dickens was summed up by Cruikshank when he said that religion is the embarrassment of our age as sex was embarrassment of the Victorians.¹ The critical tendency is either to write off Dickens' Christianity as sentimental and Rousseauistic, or to render his fictional world in terms of existentialism or some other popular twentieth-century metaphysics.

Dickens was a man of his age, and reflected the religion of his age. The subject of Dickens' Biblical Christianity and its embodiment in his fiction is more significant than other historical criticism because it encompasses both mimetic and mythic aspects of the novels. Historically, Christianity was a flourishing--written and oral, public and private--tradition in the nineteenth century, and the attacks made upon it by Biblical scholars

¹Cruikshank, p. 171.

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and scientists, if anything, broadened the concern with its true significance, drawing even the atheist and agnostic into religious debate. The state of seige also drove those believers to seek that simplistic mythic core which was indestructible by the two new weapons. The turning to literature as a religious vehicle allowed the proof of personal feeling and experience to replace that of theological argument. In spite of Dickens' preference for dramatization over explicit religious professions, he clearly shared with the Evangelicals and Broad Churchmen a belief in the religion of inner feeling, of personal experience over dogma, of all-inclusiveness, and of the inseparability of spiritual and practical matters. Considering the question of Dickens' religion ontologically, one recognizes also that spiritual forces pervade his imaginative world. His fictional personages are both human and divine, in keeping with the nineteenth-century view of religion as myth. The idea of men as a collective body, ritualistically acting out eternal truths in simple archetypal patterns, is both Dickensian and Victorian. His fictional world is unified not by character and narrative but by image and theme. Exits from gardens, crimes against the father, crumbling false temples recur again and again, as this Victorian Moses seeks to create a new society according to his own ethical idealism, and to the process found in the Bible, in Christian theology, and in the sermons of his day. That process is called conversion.
The judgment and retribution of Pecksniff and of Jonas are a personal version of the more social, indeed cosmic apocalyptic scenes envisioned in *Barnaby Rudge*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and to a lesser extent in *Little Dorrit* and in *Bleak House*; but all have as a common source those warning visions of doom found in the prophesies of Amos and Jeremiah. The Old Testament thunderings are only one Biblical style which Dickens employs in order to lead his world and his reader to the conversion that follows awareness. All the voices and rhetorical devices of the Bible and the Victorian sermon appear in the dramatization and exposition of the Dickensian religious message. He borrows the language of economics from worldly Victorian utilitarianism, and fuses it with the language of theology. The key Biblical metaphors--wealth, inheritance, and sonship--are the major images of his novels from *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Dombey and Son* to *Great Expectations*, *Bleak House*, and *Little Dorrit*, and in their physical reality, these three items are equally the obsession of his own social environment.

His world embodies real and metaphoric heavens and hells and the various roads thereto. Again and again, the rebellious son commits a crime against the father and then repents and is restored. Cains are juxtaposed to Good Samaritans, and bad Old Testament type fathers contrasted or converted to good New Testament ones. These scenes and characters are as real as they are religiously metaphoric. Holloway's comment on the lack of
distinction between symbol and thing symbolized may be expanded to include a whole series of loosely related dualisms found in Dickens' world--Biblical myth and content, the divine and the human, flesh and spirit, wealth and spiritual goodness, the Victorian man of power and wealth and the Christian God. Because of this lack of distinction, it is difficult to say finally that he failed to create a genuine spiritual link between his fictional world and the divine reality of Christian theology.

Dickens' style grows out of a general tendency to reproduce objects in a peculiarly animated spiritualized form; at the same time he imposes the Word--a Christian theological pattern--upon the concrete Victorian world. Spiritually transforming character, Nature, society, and the total cosmos is his theme. Changing the hearts of his readers is his purpose. This study of Martin Chuzzlewit, which deals with multi-level conversion, becomes finally a paradigmatic reading of Dickens. It also reveals the increasingly difficult metaphysical struggle of the nineteenth century between matter and spirit.

The problem of creeping materialism became a matter of great concern to the more sensitive minds of industrialized England. The world of rapidly expanding unspiritualized matter was suffocating the individual and its spiritual core, which was believed immortal. Escape to Nature is no longer feasible. Nature indeed was disappearing. As in our own era, thinking men saw that the goal of wealth and material goods was insufficient, indeed
disastrous. In his economic treatise, Unto This Last, Ruskin endeavours to counteract the problem by arguing that "...there is no Wealth but Life."² Dickens, like Carlyle, seeks rather to convert wealth into life, to infuse with the new life of eternal spirit and of Christian Love the dark world of unconverted objects and people. His purpose is to put the crowded physical surface in touch with the spiritual organicism of eternal moral laws. One essential quality of the age that he recreates is its blindness toward the spiritual core. To illustrate this blindness and to separate the seeing reader from the non-seeing one, his humorous individual creations both disguise and reveal the spirit beneath.

He also chooses to convey the darkness as well as the possibility of light, the warning of damnation as well as the possibility of salvation, the Old Testament theology as well as the New. The world of Martin Chuzzlewit is a valley of the shadow, just as Bleak House takes place in the "valley of the shadow of the law."³ Its pervading death and dark enclosures are spiritually linked with the garden of Genesis, the whale of Jonah and the ark of Noah. This is the world of Old Testament transcendental


³Bleak House, p. 336.
mystery and vengeful wrath symbolized by Murdstone, Chancery, and the Circumlocution Office. From within this dark vision can be heard the Evangelical call to the Victorian Adam to repent, to be converted not only through suffering but through the discovery of grace or universal possibility. The grace or possibility for change, growth, and transformation in man is symbolized by the parallel processes in nature and by Dickens' favorite color (green). Evil is the opposite of growth; it is the petrification, the permanent ordering of human life, of the kind we find in the opening mud of Bleak House, the swamp at the beginning of Great Expectations, the prison at the start of Little Dorrit. To this dark enclosure, in the theology of Dickens, comes some spirit of light and life which brings about to some degree the conversion of that world. As in Pickwick Papers, one must move out of the fixed environment, whether swamp or garden, onto the road, where growth, struggle, and what Mark Tapley calls religious seasoning can take place. Even the innocent, such as Mr. Pickwick, Oliver, and Tom Pinch, must be tested and developed. The Prodigal Sons--George Rouncewell, Pip, and Martin--must go into exile in order to repent and be reembraced. The sin that one discovers is social as well as personal, and one must face not only one's guilty self but one's victim, whether it is Abel Magwitch, the Cratchits, Tom Pinch, or Florence Dombey. Dickens recognizes the need for a sense of the sacredness of the individual and for social bonds which man has lost in the large economic
complexity of nineteenth-century society. He argues through his fiction that the collective life must replace the goals of self if the individual is to be truly recognized. Within the collective view of human life, a spiritual pattern may be completed by two or more characters. Thus the death of one man allows the rebirth of another in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Similarly, the dead figures such as Anthony Chuzzlewit or John Harmon continue to affect the lives of their survivors.

Because the human world exhibits a sacred oneness, the conversions of Scrooge, Dombey, Gradgrind, Pip, and Martin are to some extent the products of their fellow men--Marley, Florence, Cissy Jupe, Abel Magwitch, and Mark Tapley. Esther Summerso brings the sun to the post-diluvian darkness of *Bleak House*. The final cultivated urban Eden of converted men is achieved by a total apocalypse in *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Barnaby Rudge*, by water in *Dombey and Son* and *Our Mutual Friend*, by a woman in *Little Dorrit* and *Dombey*, and by a wealthy and benevolent father in *Oliver Twist*. All four instruments for spiritual conversion function in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, in the suffering and near death of Mark, which leads to Martin's self-realization, in the ocean that the two cross and that Jonas is prevented from experiencing, in the figure of Mary, and in the controlling figure of Old Martin. In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the father figure, who in *Bleak House*, *Our Mutual Friend*, and *Little Dorrit*, is dead and who exerts little or no control over those who carry out his will, is still living.
He both executes his own will and prepares his children to receive it. Revelation 3:19 defines his role: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent." The converted society at the end is the result both of providence and of miraculous intervention on the part of this semi-divine character. Dickens is able in the final "celestial" scenes, as he is not in later novels, to overcome the metaphysical threat of animated otherness, represented in Martin Chuzzlewit by the view from Todgers; of terrifyingly unreadable and inescapable hieroglyphics in the universe, symbolized by Jonas's guilt-ridden world; and of a despiritualized Newtonian universe of moral indifference, recreated in the American setting of Eden.

The theme of inheritance from a supreme and secret source which is a good father is also central not only to Martin Chuzzlewit but to the general Dickensian universe, recurring in Great Expectations, Little Dorrit, Our Mutual Friend, Oliver Twist, and Bleak House. Bleak House is the best example of the way in which the later fictional worlds invert the positive spiritual patterns in Martin Chuzzlewit. A novel without a center, Bleak House deals with an inheritance completely removed from its source, lost as it is in the muddy, foggy chaos of Chancery and inaccessible to its deserving heirs. The process of growth has been inverted. Putrification has set in and the general trend is from spirit to matter. Esther can bring the redeeming sun to only a small corner. Instead of the Temple being converted into a
gathering of Love around a Father, we have a church converted into the law offices of Kenge and Carboy's.

In *Martin Chuzzlewit* the positive spiritual forces are still present in heaven, in nature, in human events, and even in human form. Some form of distributive justice is still operative: nature and one's fellow man are active moral agents in one's moral growth. Old Martin is a human metaphor for the God Dickens wished for—a God present at moments of human communion and love, a father who provides his children with a mansion and a fortune not only in heaven but on earth. Like Carlyle, he has overcome the temporary moments of existential emptiness, embracing these in a traditional topocosm in which the Christian apocalypse comes from a dominating divine-human figure whose goals are reinforced by Providence and Nature. The spiritual processes in *Martin Chuzzlewit* occur on all levels in the natural, inanimate, and human worlds, and the evolution is steadily toward spirit. This struggle toward conversion—from darkness to light, from mystery to revelation, from transcendence to immanence, from exile to reunion, and from external falsehood to inner truth—becomes more and more complex and difficult as Dickens moved toward the later novels. This fact, our discovery of a highly complicated structured religious imagery in this middle novel, and our knowledge of the heightened religious consciousness that Dickens experienced during these years, lead to the conclusion that, of the fourteen and a half novels which are
Dickens' triumph, *Martin Chuzzlewit* is the most deeply significant fictional vehicle for Dickens' Christianity.
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