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## CHARLES DICKENS'S *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* AND LEV TOLSTOY'S *WHERE LOVE IS, THERE IS GOD* ALSO: THE QUEST FOR THE MEANING OF LIFE

### *Opowieść wigilijna* Charlesa Dickensa i *Gdzie miłość – tam i Bóg* Lwa Tołstoja: W poszukiwaniu sensu życia

STRESZCZENIE: Uznanie Lwa Tołstoja dla Charlesa Dickensa, którego pisarz rosyjski podziwiał za demokratyczne i humanistyczne cechy jego pisarstwa, było trwale i niezmiennie. Proces odnajdywania sensu życia i powrotu do społeczeństwa jest jednym z głównych tematów *Opowieści wigilijnej* i *Gdzie miłość – tam i Bóg*. Jednak źródła samotności i izolacji bohaterów Dickensa i Tołstoja mają różne podłoża. Scrooge celowo odizolował się od swojej rodziny i unikał kontaktów międzyludzkich. Źródłem samotności Martina był smutek i żal jaki towarzyszył mu po śmierci żony i dzieci. Stąd też bohater *Turgieniewa* nie widział sensu swojego dalszego życia. Seria wydarzeń i spotkań prowadzi obu bohaterów do wypracowania nowego ładu moralnego i celu w życiu. Scrooge i Martin uświadamiają sobie wartość miłosierdzia, współczucia i życzliwości w relacjach międzyludzkich. Obie historie mają podtekst dydaktyczny, a rozwój osobowości głównych postaci jest ukazany poprzez ich działania i dobre uczynki. Dickens i Tołstoj skoncentrowali się na najpospolitszych i najprostszych rodzajach ludzkiej dobroci. U obu pisarzy szczegóły dotyczące opisu miejsca, czasu i ludzi są dla czytelnika bardzo realne. Są one dodatkowo zintensyfikowane za pomocą symboliki oraz motywów światła i ciemności, gorąca i zimna, a w przypadku Tołstoja również licznych motywów biblijnych. W końcowej części obu opowieści, bohaterowie nie pragną już izolacji. Martin pomaga potrzebującym i cieszy się z odwiedzin gości. Każdy Jego akt dobroci jest aktem miłosierdzia wobec bliźniego. Według Tołstoja wszyscy ludzie są zdolni do czynienia dobra ponieważ człowiek – dziecko Niebieskiego Ojca – jest z natury dobry, a jedyną przeszkodą, która nie pozwala mu być sobą, jest zło tego świata. Dążenie do Boga oznacza dążenie do dobra i postęp człowieka w dążeniu do własnej doskonałości. W końcowej części *Opowieści wigilijnej* Scrooge odnajduje swoje właściwe miejsce w rodzinie i w społeczeństwie. Bohater Dickensa odwiedza swojego siostrzeńca Freda, pomaga rodzinie Boba, żartuje z napotkanymi ludźmi. Chociaż tłem *Opowieści wigilijnej* jest chrześcijańskie święto, oraz ukazane są wartości moralne, takie jak życzliwość, hojność i troska o bliźnich, to, w przeciwieństwie do Tołstoja, powieść Dickensa nie ma wydzźwięku religijnego. Dickens skupia się głównie na świeckich aspektach Bożego Narodzenia, które jest radosnym świętowaniem połączonym ze spotkaniami w kręgu rodziny i przyjaciół.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Charles Dickens, Lew Tołstoj, samotność, rodzina, ludzka życzliwość, ewolucja moralna

ABSTRACT: Of the Victorian writers Tolstoy read, Charles Dickens was the most eminent, and his appreciation of the English author was permanent and unchangeable. Tolstoy admired Dickens for the democratic and humanistic qualities in his writings. The theme of social isolation and gradual re-adaptation into society is explored by Dickens in *A Christmas Carol* and Tolstoy in *Where Love Is, There Is God Also*. The story of Scrooge's mean-spirited solitude which was later replaced by open-hearted sociability was not like Martin's. Scrooge deliberately isolated himself from his family and avoided all human contact. Martin was unable to find a purpose and meaning in life after the death of his wife and children. A series of events and encounters with people lead both protagonists towards the development of a new moral understanding and make life worth living. The moral lesson is to treat all people with compassion. Dickens and Tolstoy took the commonest and simplest sorts of human kindness and showed them intensified. Both stories are also openly didactic, and the main characters are developed through their actions, and good deeds. The details of place, time and people are made very real to the reader. They are intensified through the use of imagery, motifs of light and dark; and cold and heat, which recur throughout *A Christmas Carol* and *Where Love Is, There Is God Also*. In Tolstoy's story there are also many examples of Biblical imagery which are used to add weight to the moral teaching of his story. In the final part of the stories the protagonists no longer desire isolation. Martin helps those in need and is glad to have guests. His every act of kindness is done as an act of charity, and accepted as such. According to Tolstoy, all people are able to do good if they will because man, as a child of the Heavenly Father, is himself good, and the evils of the world are obstructions which prevent him from being himself. What is more, striving towards God means striving for goodness and man's progress towards his own perfection. In the final part of Dickens's novel Scrooge visits his nephew Fred, where he has a wonderful time. Being a part of a family is equated for him with happiness. While the backdrop of *A Christmas Carol* is a Christian festival and moral values underpin the novel in the shape of kindness, generosity and care for others, there is little sense of solemn religious ceremony in the novel. Dickens's vision of Christmas is largely a secular one. He focuses on secular aspects of Christmas as a joyous holiday with parties and gatherings of friends and family.

KEYWORDS: Charles Dickens, Lev Tolstoy, loneliness, family, human kindness, moral evolution

Lev Tolstoy (1828-1910) was clearly indebted to what Edwina Jannie Blumberg calls "the general aura of the English novel"<sup>1</sup>. Owing to Tolstoy's own diaries, the complementary diaries of his wife and the attentions of his contemporaries, there are not many factual uncertainties about the great Russian writer's life. Although his life is documented day by day, the difficulties rest entirely in how to interpret a personality at the same time so overwhelming and so inconsistent. Inconsistent, just to make the distinction, rather than multifariously complex in the sense that his great contemporary Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) was. Tolstoy's personality mystified the most acute observers in Russia, including at times himself. His nature had its own complexity that was different in kind from Dostoevsky. Of the Victorian writers Tolstoy read, Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was the most eminent, and his appreciation of the English author was permanent and unchangeable. According to Nicolas Birns, what prevents "Dickens from being part of Tolstoy's core Britain, however, is that Tolstoy saw Dickens very partially and took from him characteristics more discrete and, to most, atypical, than the eidolon of Dickens borrowed by Tolstoy's great peer, Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky"<sup>2</sup>. Tolstoy admired Dickens, who he considered was melancholy and more

<sup>1</sup> E.J. Blumberg, *Tolstoy and the English Novel: A Note on "Karenina"*, "Slavic Review" 1971, No. 30/3, pp. 561-569, 561.

<sup>2</sup> N. Birns, *The Novel Uncontained: Victorian Fiction, Tolstoy, and the Anglo-Russian Literary 'Channel'*, [in:] [https://www.academia.edu/8566986/The\\_Novel\\_Uncontained\\_Victorian\\_Fiction\\_Tolstoy\\_and\\_the\\_Anglo-Russian\\_Literary\\_Channel](https://www.academia.edu/8566986/The_Novel_Uncontained_Victorian_Fiction_Tolstoy_and_the_Anglo-Russian_Literary_Channel) (26.11.2020).

humorous than he (Tolstoy) was<sup>3</sup>. But, above all, he admired Dickens for the democratic and humanistic qualities in his writings. Although it is not possible to establish exactly when Tolstoy started reading Dickens, we know that he read *David Copperfield* in the 1850s. Before Tolstoy wrote *Childhood* (*Детство*), in his notebook – at that stage full of literary ambitions he wrote that *David Copperfield* had an “immense influence”<sup>4</sup>, and in 1852, when he was reading Dickens’s novel for the second time, he pronounced it “delightful”<sup>5</sup> in his diary. In 1854 Tolstoy read Dickens’s *Bleak House*, which was published in translation in “Sovremennik” («Современник»). This famous literary, social and political magazine used to publish Dickens’s works in Russian. In 1856, while working on *Youth* (*Отрочество*), Tolstoy read *The Pickwick Papers* and *Little Dorrit*. In his literary polemics, he chose the side of sympathetic portrayal, which he associated with Dickens and Alexandr Pushkin, over that of satire, associated with Nikolay Gogol<sup>6</sup>, In 1865 Tolstoy read *Our Mutual Friend*<sup>7</sup>, and in 1878, when his religious quest continued, and he started his memoir *My Life*, he turned to Dickens’s *Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Dombey and Son*<sup>8</sup>. In March 1880 Tolstoy started work on *A Translation and Harmony of the Four Gospels*, and in the afternoons was reading *Pickwick Papers* for relaxation<sup>9</sup>. On 12 December 1904, Tolstoy’s wife Sofya Andreevna Tolstaya wrote in her diary that Tolstoy “was reading Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* and laughed heartily”<sup>10</sup>. Even in the period of his spiritual crisis, when he rejected most of his own works, some inspired by Dickens, he did not change his positive attitude towards his favourite English writer.

In *What is Art?* (*Что такое искусство?*) (1897) Tolstoy wrote:

the best works of art of our times transmit religious feelings urging towards the union and the brotherhood of man (such are the works of Dickens, Hugo, Dostoevsky; and in painting, of Millet, Bastien Lepage, Jules Breton, L’Hermitte, and others); and added that “they strive towards the transmission, not of feelings which are natural to people of the upper classes only, but of such feelings as may unite everyone without exception”<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> C.P. Snow, *The Realists. Portraits of Eight Novelists*, London 1980, p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> D.T. Orwin, ed. *Chronology*, [in:] *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy*, Cambridge 2002, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> L. Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, tr. Aylmer Maude, New York 1898, p. 189. In Russian see: Л.Н. Толстой, *Что такое искусство?*, [в:] Л.Н. Толстой, *Полное собрание сочинений в 90 томах*, ред. В.Г. Чертков, т. 30, Москва 1928-1958, с. 177: «(...) лучшие произведения искусства нашего времени передают чувства, влекущие к единению и братству людей (таковы произведения Диккенса, Гюго, Достоевского; в живописи – Милле, Бастиян Лепаж, Жюль Бретона, Лермита и других); с другой стороны они стремятся к передаче таких чувств, которые свойственны не одним людям высших сословий, но таких, которые могли бы соединять всех людей без исключения».

According to Tolstoy, Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843), which unites people in compassion and love, is one of the examples of the highest literary achievement:

If I were asked to give modern examples of each of these kinds of art, then, as examples of the highest art, flowing from love of God and man (both of the higher, positive, and of the lower, negative kind), in literature I should name *The Robbers* by Schiller: Victor Hugo's *Les Pauvres Gens* and *Les Misérables*: the novels and stories of Dickens – *The Tale of Two Cities*, *The Christmas Carol*, *The Chimes*, and others: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Dostoevsky's works – especially his *Memoirs from the House of Death*: and *Adam Bede* by George Eliot<sup>12</sup>.

The aim of the article is to identify certain common themes and motifs created and intensified through the use of imagery, structural components and language which recur throughout Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* and Tolstoy's *Where Love Is, There Is God Also* (*Где любовь, там и Бог*, 1885)<sup>13</sup>, which is included in a volume entitled *Stories for the People* (*Народные рассказы*).

Gary S. Jahn points out that critics still argue over exactly which of Tolstoy's works should be classified as stories for the people, but certainly a number of stories written in the 1880s belong to the genre<sup>14</sup>. Of these the most popular are *What Men Live By* (*Чем люди живы?*), *Two Old Men* (*Два старика*), *Where Love Is, There Is God Also* (*Где любовь, там и Бог*), *How Much Land Does a Man Need* (*Много ли человеку земли нужно?*), *The Tale of Ivan the Fool* (*Сказка об Иване-дураке и его двух братьях: Семене-воине и Тарасе-брюхане, и немой сестре Маланье, и о старом дьяволе и трех чертенятах*) and *The Three Hermits* (*Три старца*).

One of the problems with which Dickens was concerned in one way or another in nearly all his novels was the influence of environment, especially in childhood, upon habits and character. Two things are in conflict – the desire to show the immense

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, pp. 166-167. In Russian see Л.Н. Толстой, *Что такое искусство?*, с. 160: «Если бы от меня потребовали указать в новом искусстве на образцы по каждому из этих родов искусства, то как на образцы высшего, вытекающего из любви к богу и ближнему, религиозного искусства, в области словесности я указал бы на *Разбойников* Шиллера; из новейших – на *Les pauvres gens* V. Hugo и его *Misérables*, на повести, рассказы, романы Диккенса: *Tale of two cities*, *Crames*» и др., на *Хижину дяди Тома*, на Достоевского, преимущественно его *Мертвый дом*, на *Адам Бид* Джоржа Элиота».

<sup>13</sup> In 1881 a French Protestant pastor and author, Ruben Saillens (1855-1942) wrote a short story *Le Père Martin* (*Отец Мартин*), which is about a cobbler who “learns a lesson in faith after the death of his son”. Tolstoy adapted the story as *Где любовь, там и Бог* (*Where Love Is, There Is God Also*). *Особенное Рождество Папы Панова* (*Papa Panov's Special Christmas*), *Удивительный день папаши Панова* (*Papa Panov's Special Day*) and *Удивительное Рождество старого сапожника* (*The Old Shoemaker's Christmas*) – dramatized adaptation of the story, are versions of *Where Love Is, There Is God Also*. The moral lesson of Tolstoy's universal spiritual story for children and teenagers is to treat all people with compassion. Cf. <https://clausnet.com/articles/literature/papa-panovs-special-christmas-r50/> (30.11.2020).

<sup>14</sup> G.S. Jahn, *Tolstoy as a writer of popular literature*, [in:] *The Cambridge...*, p. 117.

damage that bad environment and upbringing can do, and the desire to demonstrate that the fundamental goodness of human nature can survive almost everything.

As Christmas means the breakdown for a season of the restraints imposed by normal social life, it is obvious that at Christmas-time, when love and celebrations last at most two or three days, moral adjustment is fairly easy and derives a great deal of its force from the knowledge that Christmas time is only an interlude. But how can the new view of society for which it stands be prolonged throughout the year? Can anyone be kind and happy for twelve months? How is the spirit of generosity to be reconciled with the necessities of ordinary economic life? It must have a rationale; and in the attempt to find one, Dickens returns to those great Victorian problems – the relations between the employer and employed, and the use of charity. Dickens loved Christmas, and *A Christmas Carol*, the first of his long series of Christmas stories, was hailed with enthusiasm. The tale appeared in 1843, a few days before Christmas, and six thousand copies were sold the first day<sup>15</sup>.

Ebenezer Scrooge, the protagonist of the story, is a selfish old man who hates Christmas. We learn that Jacob Marley, who was Scrooge's business partner, died on Christmas Eve, exactly seven years earlier. We also get information that Scrooge works in a counting house, or accountant's office with a clerk Bob Cratchit. On Christmas Eve Scrooge has several visitors. First, his nephew Fred, who comes to invite him to dine with him and his wife on Christmas Day. He is then visited by two charity workers who ask for a donation to help the poor at Christmas. Scrooge allows Bob Cratchit to have Christmas Day as a holiday, although he insists he comes to work earlier on Boxing Day to make up for it. The theme of the supernatural is introduced by a visit of the ghost of Marley, who tells Scrooge that he will be visited by three more spirits who will offer Scrooge an opportunity to escape Marley's fate.

The three ghosts are the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present and the Ghost of Christmas Future. Dickens chose to write the novel in the third person, using the device of the Spirits and their capacity for time travel to allow Scrooge to see events that he would be unable to see in a story that was more firmly rooted in realism.

Dickens ends the story by showing the reader how Scrooge totally changes his outlook on life. He moves from a state of ignorance and miserly selfishness to a state of paternal benevolence. This is typical of many nineteenth-century novels which involve a series of events or encounters that lead the central character towards the development of a new moral understanding. This is also the case in Tolstoy's *Where Love Is, There Is God Also*.

Tolstoy's story is about a shoemaker Martin Avdeitch. He is a fine cobbler who does his work well and never promises to do anything that he cannot do. He lives in "a tiny room in a basement, the one window of which [looks] out on to the street"<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> A. Edward Newton, *Introduction*, [in:] Ch. Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, Boston 1920, p. VI.

<sup>16</sup> L. Tolstoy, *Where Love Is God Is*, [in:] *Twenty-three tales*, tr. Louise and Aylmer Maude, Oxford 1906, p. 118. (All subsequent parenthetical citations come from this edition of the book, followed by the

Through this window he can see only the feet of those who pass by. He is able to recognize most people by their shoes as he works with most of the shoes at least once. He has “plenty to do, for he [works] well, [uses] good material, [does] not charge too much, and [can] be relied on”<sup>17</sup> (WLI, 118). He had a wife, but she died, and all their children died in their infancy except a three-year-old son.

Martin had no luck with his children. No sooner had his only son “reached an age when he could help his father and be a support as well as a joy to him, than he fell ill and, after being laid up for a week with a burning fever, died”<sup>18</sup> (WLI, 118). Martin buried his son, and in his overwhelming grief, he denied God and “left off going to church”<sup>19</sup> (WLI, 119).

One day an old missionary from Martin’s native village visits him and Martin tells him of his sorrow. The old man advises Martin to live his life for God and not to deny Him because God’s will is the ultimate deciding factor, and we cannot question that. The missionary assures Martin: “When you have learnt to live for Him, you will grieve no more, and all will seem easy to you”<sup>20</sup> (WLI, 119). He tells Martin to buy “the Gospels, and read them: there [he] will see how God would have [him] live”<sup>21</sup> (WLI, 119). These words “sank deep into Martin’s heart”<sup>22</sup> (WLI, 119). He buys a large print Testament, and begins to read it every night. The more he reads, the more he understands what God requires of him, “and how he might live for God”<sup>23</sup> (WLI, 120). His life becomes peaceful and joyful.

The theme of social isolation and gradual re-adaptation into society is explored through the presentation of Scrooge and Martin.

The narrator tells us that Scrooge was as “secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster”<sup>24</sup>. It is only when Scrooge visits his own past that we begin to perceive him

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abbreviation WLI and the page number indicated in the text). In Russian see: Л.Н. Толстой, *Где любовь, там и Бог*, [в:] Л.Н. Толстой, *Полное собрание сочинений в 90 томах*, ред. В.Г. Чертков, т. 25, Москва 1928-1958, с. 35: «Жил он в подвале, в горенке об одном окне. Окно было на улицу...». (All subsequent parenthetical citations come from this edition of the book followed by the abbreviation PSS and the page number indicated in the text).

<sup>17</sup> «Работы было много, потому что работал Авдеич прочно, товар ставил хороший, лишнего не брал и слово держал» (PSS, 35).

<sup>18</sup> «Только подрос мальчик, стал отцу помогать, только бы на него радоваться, напала на Капитошку болезнь, слег мальчик, погорел недельку и помер» (PSS, 35).

<sup>19</sup> «Перестал Авдеич и в церковь ходить» (PSS, 35-36).

<sup>20</sup> «Когда для Него жить станешь, ни о чем тужить не станешь, и всё тебе легко покажется» (PSS, 36).

<sup>21</sup> «Купи Евангелие и читай, там узнаешь, как для Бога жить. Там все показано» (PSS, 36).

<sup>22</sup> «И запали эти слова в сердце Авдеичу» (PSS, 36).

<sup>23</sup> «И что больше читал, то яснее понимал, чего от него Бог хочет и как надо для Бога жить» (PSS, 36).

<sup>24</sup> Ch. Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, Waiheke Island 2009. (All subsequent parenthetical citations come from this edition of the book followed by the abbreviation AChC and the page number indicated in the text).

in a slightly more sympathetic light. We see, for example, Scrooge as “a solitary child, neglected by his friends” (AChC, 49). He is alone in a “long, bare, melancholy room” (AChC, 50). The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge back to his lonely schooldays. Later we see Scrooge with his younger sister Fan, who has come to bring him home for Christmas.

Unlike the adult Scrooge, the child is described as lonely, rather than solitary. He comforts himself with imaginary characters from his story books which become his friends. We learn that Scrooge has spent other Christmases shut away from his family in the over-strict school and that his father appears to have been cruel towards him. Dickens explains that he actively avoids all human contact. We then see his refusal to spend Christmas with his nephew Fred, his dismissal of the charity collectors and his chasing of the carol singer as he leaves to spend Christmas Eve alone, taking “his melancholy dinner at his usual melancholy tavern” (AChC, 20) in the company of his newspapers and his banker’s book. Repetition of the word melancholy emphasises Scrooge’s sad and lonely existence. His isolation extends to his home as he lives in a building where he is the only inhabitant as the other rooms are all let out as offices. “He lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman or a child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that” (AChC, 127). This means that he has no community or local network to support him. Even the building itself is out of the way, “up a yard where it had so little business to be, that one could scarcely help fancying it must have run in there when it was a young house, playing hide-and-seek with other houses, and forgotten the way out again” (AChC, 21). Jacob Marley is also used to warn both Scrooge and the reader of the perils of isolating oneself from one’s community.

Towards the end of the novel, we see the terrifying spectacle of his corpse lying on a bed in the dark, stripped of any dignity by the theft of his possessions which are haggled over by old Joe, Mrs Dilber, the charwoman and the undertaker’s assistant. This is ironic, since his isolation in life has led to the invasion of his house and the violation of his corpse. His business associates and men “of great importance” (AChC, 116) appear quite indifferent to his demise, despite Scrooge having “made a point always of standing well in their esteem” (AChC, 117). In the final part, we see a Scrooge who no longer desires isolation. He walks among humankind, never having dreamed that a walk could make him so happy. Finally, he visits his nephew Fred, where he has a wonderful time. His recovery appears complete when we see him actually touching another human being on the following day, when he jokes with Bob, poking him in the ribs and clapping him on the back. He went to church, and “walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows, and found that everything could yield him pleasure” (AChC, 138-139).

Dickens himself was deeply concerned by the plight of the poor and was involved with a number of charities, and this is reflected in his exploration of the theme of

poverty. He uses the character of Scrooge to exemplify the attitude of the more affluent to the underprivileged in Victorian society.

The roots of Martin's solitude differ from Scrooge's. Unable to find a purpose and meaning in life after the death of his wife and children, Martin becomes overwhelmed with negative emotions and grief. He is not able to accept God's will and sees no hope in his life. One day a pilgrim visits Martin. He gives him wise advice: "[God] gives you life, and you must live for Him. When you have learnt to live for Him, you will grieve no more, and all will seem easy to you"<sup>25</sup> (WLI, 119). Martin follows the pilgrim's advice. Through reading the Bible he is beginning to grow spiritually and to accept his life. One night Martin reads the passage about a Pharisee who invited Jesus into his house, and in the house a woman washed Jesus' feet with her tears. As Martin sleeps he hears the voice of God telling him that He would visit him the next day. The next morning he sits by the window in hope to see God: "looking out into the street more than he worked, and whenever any one passed in unfamiliar boots he would stoop and look up, so as to see not the feet only but the face of the passer-by as well"<sup>26</sup> (WLI, 122). While he is searching for God he notices Stepanitch clearing away snow before his window. Martin calls him in to warm and have some tea. Stepanitch is thankful for the "food and comfort both for soul and body"<sup>27</sup> (WLI, 125). When he leaves Martin pours out the last of the tea and drinks it up. Then he sits down to his work, "stitching the back seam of a boot. And as he stitched he kept looking out of the window, waiting for Christ, and thinking about him and his doings"<sup>28</sup> (WLI, 125). After a while Martin sees a young woman with a baby not properly dressed for the cold. He invites her in for some food and gives her warmer clothes and some money. The woman is amazed with Martin's generosity. She bursts into tears and says to him: "Surely Christ must have sent me to your window, else the child would have frozen. It was mild when I started, but now see how cold it has turned. Surely it must have been Christ who made you look out of your window and take pity on me, poor wretch!"<sup>29</sup> (WLI, 127). With a smile on his face Martin answers: "It is quite true; it was he made me do it. It was no mere chance made me look out"<sup>30</sup> (WLI, 127). Then he sees a young boy stealing an apple from an older lady. The old woman "was pulling the boy's hair and

<sup>25</sup> «Он тебе жизнь дает, для Него и жить надо. Когда для Него жить станешь, ни о чем тужить не станешь, и всё тебе легко покажется» (PSS, 36).

<sup>26</sup> «Сидит Мартын у окна, и столько не работает, сколько в окно смотрит, и как пройдет кто в незнакомых сапогах, изогнется даже, выглядывает из окна, чтобы не одни ноги, а и лицо увидеть» (PSS, 38).

<sup>27</sup> «Мартын Авдеич, угостил ты меня, и душу, и тело насытил» (PSS, 39).

<sup>28</sup> «Мартын [...] сел к окну за работу – строчить задник. Строчит, а сам всё поглядывает в окно – Христа ждет, всё о Нем и об Его делах думает» (PSS, 39).

<sup>29</sup> «Спаси тебя Христос, дедушка, наслал, видно Он меня под твое окно. Заморозила бы я детище. Вышла я, тепло было, а теперь вот как студено завернуло. И наставил же Он, Батюшко, тебя в окно поглядеть, и меня горькую пожалеть» (PSS, 41).

<sup>30</sup> «И то Он наставил. В окно-то я, умница, не спроста гляжу» (PSS, 41).

scolding him, and threatening to take him to the police”<sup>31</sup> (WLI, 128). Martin goes outside, separates them and settles their argument. Martin says that God “bids us forgive”<sup>32</sup> (WLI, 128) and as an example tells the old woman “the parable of the lord who forgave his servant a large debt”<sup>33</sup> (WLI, 128).

That night, in his dream, the three figures appear in his home to whom he showed hospitality to that day. They say that when he helped them he was helping God. “Martin’s soul grew glad”<sup>34</sup> (WLI, 131). He puts on his spectacles, and begins reading the Gospel just where it opened; and at the top of the page he reads: “I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in”<sup>35</sup> (WLI, 131). And at the bottom of the page he reads: “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me”<sup>36</sup> (*Matt. XXV*) (WLI, 131). Martin realizes that God visited him, and he welcomed Him well. He understands that his dream came true, and that Christ really came to him that day. By helping others Martin comes closer to God. He understands that what he does for others, is what he does for God. In being kind and charitable, Martin reaches Jesus.

Tolstoy identifies the good and brotherly love with God and insists that there is no goal beyond these for man. According to him, striving towards God means striving for goodness and man’s progress towards his own perfection. Tolstoy’s Martin is a humble, craftsman who has realized the right way to live by appeal to natural moral sentiments. He stopped being concerned with himself and started to work exclusively for the happiness of others. All egotistical life is the result of an erroneous assessment and is opposed to a true life. According to Tolstoy, the true life grounded in love for others and in the desire for the happiness of all humanity is the origin of human happiness.

In the early 1880s Tolstoy began to see himself more as a sage and moral teacher than an artist. Unlike artists – Donna Tussing Orwin argues – sages “depend upon an articulated moral teaching, and Tolstoy spent the first half of the decade developing one”<sup>37</sup>. The essence of God’s will is that we should love others and do them no violence. If we do God’s will we must accept that the consequences are in accordance with what He wants, and although we may not comprehend this, we must trust in Him. Natural moral sentiments like love, sympathy and compassion are considered to be the right guide to moral knowledge and happiness. A person may chose a path of living for oneself or of doing good for others. The person who takes the first path, will not be

<sup>31</sup> «старуха малого треплет за вихры и ругает, к городовому вести хочет» (PSS, 43).

<sup>32</sup> «Бог велел прощать» (PSS, 43).

<sup>33</sup> «И рассказал Авдеич старухе притчу о том, как хозяин простил оброчнику весь большой долг его» (PSS, 43).

<sup>34</sup> «И радостно стало на душе Авдеича» (PSS, 44).

<sup>35</sup> «И взалкал Я, и вы дали Мне есть, жаждал, и вы напоили Меня, был странником, и вы приняли Меня...» (PSS, 45).

<sup>36</sup> «Так как вы сделали это одному из сих братьий Моих, меньших, то сделали Мне (Матфея 25 глава)» (PSS, 45).

<sup>37</sup> D.T. Orwin, *Introduction, The Cambridge...*, pp. 55-56.

able to achieve happiness. In contrast, the person who chooses the second path, will be happy because that is the reason for living. As Lev Shestov points out, Tolstoy's definition of God, and his exaltation of the brotherly living together of all men as the highest goal of life "were purely polemical acts, intended to endow him with the right to demand of everyone love of neighbour as a moral duty and to hurl accusation and anathema at those who failed to fulfil their obligation"<sup>38</sup>.

But, in Tolstoy's opinion, philanthropy was not the solution to societal injustices. Instead, the rich must abandon their idle way of life and model a good life for the poor and for the whole society. This solution was also to apply to the artist. In the 1880s Tolstoy tried very hard to change his life and to make it conform to his new ideas, and his wife's opposition to this led to their estrangement. Tolstoy insisted that personal moral reform was more important than social action, which without the proper moral attitude would not have lasting results.

In *A Christmas Carol* and *Where Love is, There is God Also*, happiness is equated with being a part of a family. The only kindness that Scrooge seems to have known as a child is connected with his sister, Little Fan, who comes to him one year to take him home from school. His connection to Fan is represented by her surviving son, Fred, who persists in inviting "Uncle Scrooge" to dinner, presumably because of the family connection. Dickens uses Fred to present the case for Christmas as "a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time" (AChC 11) spent with family. Scrooge's bitterness about love and marriage is expressed in his rejection of Fred's invitation and his mockery of the fact that Fred, unlike Scrooge, married for love.

After briefly showing Scrooge a family of miners, who "labour in the bowels of the earth" (96), but never forget about Christmas, and two lighthouse keepers and some sailors on a ship, all celebrating Christmas, the spirit takes Scrooge to the party at his nephew's house. About twenty people gathers there. They have Christmas dinner and then sing, dance and play all kinds of games. Everyone has fun. Fred raises a toast to Scrooge's health and promises to visit him every year. He hopes that his uncle will eventually change his negative opinion on Christmas. He thinks:

the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. I am sure he loses pleasanter companions than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his mouldy old office, or his dusty chambers. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him (AChC, 102).

The first idealised vision of family life is shown in the description of his lost love Belle and her husband and children. She released Scrooge from his engagement to her because she could see that he no longer loved her as money – another "idol" – "has

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<sup>38</sup> L. Shestov, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche*, tr. Bernard Martinand Spencer Roberts, Ohio 1978, p. XI.

displaced” (AChC, 63) her. Scrooge witnesses Belle as a “comely matron” (AChC, 67) with her daughter, a beautiful young girl. Belle’s children rush to the door in excited anticipation as their father returns home, and it is clear that the sight of their enthusiastic affection is painful to Scrooge, since he knows that he threw away the opportunity to become Belle’s husband and father to her children. Although they are not as rich as Scrooge, they are happy. From this experience Scrooge learns that he was more in love with money than his fiancé.

The Cratchits are also used to suggest that a happy family life without much money is preferable to a prosperous, single life. The Cratchits are a highly sentimentalised portrait of a working-class family. Bob Cratchit has six children. Tiny Tim, the youngest child of the Cratchits, is an invalid, but full of spirit. He uses “a little crutch” to get around, and has “his limbs supported by an iron frame” (AChC, 85). In Scrooge’s opinion such cripples should be allowed to die, so as to cut down the surplus population. “Man”, said the Ghost,

if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered  
 What the surplus is, and Where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men  
 shall die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to  
 live than millions like this poor man’s child. Oh God! To hear the Insect on the leaf  
 pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust (AChC, 91-92).

Despite the stress of their economic situation and Tim’s ill health, they do not appear to complain, quarrel or fight among themselves. Dickens says that “they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being water-proof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker’s. But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time” (AChC, 94). Marriage and family are presented as a source of support as the Cratchits help each other deal with their grief when Tiny Tim “dies”.

Scrooge is only happy when he reconnects with Fred and becomes a second father to Tiny Tim. In addition to smiling and being friendly to everyone, he sends a boy to buy a turkey for the Cratchit family, makes a large donation to the charity collectors and decides to spend Christmas with his nephew. On Boxing Day he tells Bob he will raise his salary, and becomes a “second father” to Tiny Tim (AChC, 152).

For Dickens, Christmas is about celebration: family gatherings, parties, food, drink and music. Those who enjoy these benefits should be generous to their neighbours and give charity to those in need. The theme of family is closely related to that of Christmas, since happiness at Christmas seems to equate primarily with the warmth and love of a family at Christmas.

Family was very important to Martin. Tolstoy’s protagonist, contrary to Scrooge, who was valuing money above marriage and family, had a wife and children, but none “of his elder children had lived, they had all died in infancy”<sup>39</sup> (AChC, 118). When his

<sup>39</sup> «Дети у них не жили. Старшие все прежде померли» (PSS, 35).

wife died “leaving him with a three-year old son”<sup>40</sup> (AChC, 118), at first Martin thought of sending his little son to his sister’s in the country, but then he felt sorry to part with the boy, thinking: ‘It would be hard for my little Kapitón to have to grow up in a strange family; I will keep him with me’<sup>41</sup> (AChC, 118). When the boy reached an age “when he could help his father and be a support as well as a joy to him, he fell ill and, after being laid up for a week with a burning fever, died”<sup>42</sup> (AChC, 119). Martin buried his son, and “gave way to despair so great and overwhelming that he murmured against God”<sup>43</sup> (AChC, 119). In his sorrow he prayed “that he too might die” and left off going to church<sup>44</sup> (AChC, 119).

For the old apple-woman in Tolstoy’s story, family is one of the most important and valuable gifts of life. She had seven children, “and only one daughter is left”<sup>45</sup> (AChC, 129). The old woman “began to tell [Martin] how and where she was living with her daughter”<sup>46</sup> (AChC, 129), and how many grandchildren she had:

‘There now,’ she said, ‘I have but little strength left, yet I work hard for the sake of my grandchildren; and nice children they are, too. No one comes out to meet me but the children. Little Annie, now, won’t leave me for any one. ‘It’s grandmother, dear grandmother, darling grandmother.’ And the old woman completely softened at the thought<sup>47</sup> (AChC, 129-130).

It appears that the traditional opening phrase of the fairy tale is present in both stories. Other elements of a fairy tale in both stories include three spirits and the magic element of flight over the city in *A Christmas Carol*; magic, a visit of a wise man and divine voice in *Where Love Is, There Is God Also*.

The motifs of light and dark, and cold and heat, which recur throughout *A Christmas Carol* and *Where Love Is, There Is God Also*, are used to enhance the reader’s understanding of the themes and ideas presented in both stories.

Dickens’s story begins on a day which was quite dark, and this helps to create the sombre atmosphere of Scrooge’s Christmas, which appears to grow darker as he approaches his home. We are told that he likes darkness because it was cheap, but the physical darkness might also be used to symbolise the darkness of his soul

<sup>40</sup> «И остался после жены один мальчик – трех годов» (PSS, 35).

<sup>41</sup> «тяжело будет Капитошке моему в чужой семье расти, оставлю его при себе» (PSS, 35).

<sup>42</sup> «Только подрос мальчик, стал отцу помогать, только бы на него радоваться, напала на Капитошку болезнь, слег мальчик, погорел недельку и помер» (PSS, 35).

<sup>43</sup> «укорял Бога за то, что Он не его, старика, прибрал, а любимого единственного сына» (PSS, 35).

<sup>44</sup> «не раз просил у Бога смерти» (PSS, 35).

<sup>45</sup> «одна дочь осталась» (PSS, 43).

<sup>46</sup> «И стала старуха рассказывать, где и как она живет у дочери» (PSS, 43).

<sup>47</sup> «сила моя уж какая, а всё тружусь. Ребят, внучат жалко, да и хороши внучата-то; никто меня не встретит, как они. Аксютка, так та ни к кому и не пойдет от меня. Бабушка, милая бабушка, сердечная... И совсем размякла старуха» (PSS, 43-44).

as well as the darkness of ignorance in which he lives. The first day of the transformed Scrooge is marked by “clear, bright” weather and “Golden sunlight” (AChC, 143). Furthermore, it is noticeable that the first two spirits are linked with light, the Ghost of Christmas Past with its “bright clear jet of light” (AChC, 44) illuminating Scrooge’s past, and the Ghost of Christmas Present turning Scrooge’s room into a glade of “bright gleaming berries” which “reflected back the light” (AChC, 74).

Light is associated with goodness, and with Christ in particular, who is referred to in the Bible, as the light of the world. It is also a source of knowledge, a symbol of understanding, spiritual illumination and truth.

At first Martin:

meant only to read on holidays, but having once begun he found it made his heart so light that he read every day. Sometimes he was so absorbed in his reading that the oil in his lamp burnt out before he could tear himself away from the book. He continued to read every night, and the more he read the more clearly he understood what God required of him, and how he might live for God. And his heart grew lighter and lighter<sup>48</sup> (WLI, 120).

Light is also said to conquer darkness and to bring order out of chaos. Martin noticed a lamplighter “passing on his way to light the street lamps. ‘Seems it’s time to light up,’ thought he. So he trimmed his lamp, hung it up, and sat down again to work”<sup>49</sup> (WLI, 130).

The contrast of cold and heat as a motif is also interesting. Scrooge is described in terms of being cold from the inside out. “A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him (AChC, 7). Scrooge’s office and home are both poorly heated, and Marley’s ‘death-cold eyes’ exert a “chilling influence” (AChC, 27) on Scrooge. Belle and her daughter, on the other hand, sit in comfort next to the “winter fire” (AChC, 67).

Martin’s warmth and compassion is linked with happiness and hospitality. It is clearly visible when he offers some hot tea to Stepanitch who was clearing “away the snow”<sup>50</sup> (WLI, 123), and when he invites a poorly dressed woman with “a baby in her arms”<sup>51</sup> (WLI, 125) to have some hot soup and bread: “Why do you stand out there

<sup>48</sup> «Хотел Авдеч читать только по праздникам, да как начал читать, так ему на душе хорошо стало, что стал каждый день читать. Другой раз так зачитается, что в лампе весь керосин выгорит, и всё от книги оторваться не может. И стал так читать Авдеч каждый вечер. И что больше читал, то яснее понимал, чего от него Бог хочет и как надо для Бога жить; и всё легче и легче ему становилось на сердце» (PSS, 36).

<sup>49</sup> «Видно надо огонь засвечать, подумал он, заправил лампочку, повесил и опять принялся работать» (PSS, 43).

<sup>50</sup> «Стал против Авдечева окна Степаныч счищать снег» (PSS, 38).

<sup>51</sup> «с ребенком, стала у стены» (PSS, 40).

with the baby in the cold? Come inside. You can wrap him up better in a warm place”<sup>52</sup> (WLI, 125). The woman is thankful for Martin’s help:

The Lord bless you, friend. Surely Christ must have sent me to your window, else the child would have frozen. It was mild when I started, but now see how cold it has turned. Surely it must have been Christ who made you look out of your window and take pity on me, poor wretch!<sup>53</sup> (WLI, 127).

Imagery and symbolism are used throughout *A Christmas Carol* to paint a vivid picture for the reader. A number of similes are used to describe Scrooge. Dickens says that his protagonist, who is devoid of feelings, is “hard and sharp as flint” (AChC, 7). Scrooge is appealing to the senses when he describes his ecstatic state: “I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man” (AChC, 142). Dickens also uses powerful metaphors. Scrooge is an insect “on the leaf” with plenty of food. The image stresses how small and powerless he is, so he does not have the right to decide whether the less fortunate “in the dust” should live or die (AChC, 91-92).

*A Christmas Carol* is rich in symbolism throughout, from the fog of ignorance to the glorious bright light of redemption. Characters too act as symbols; for example Scrooge could be seen to symbolise all selfish business people in the same way as Tiny Tim might represent all poor and vulnerable children. The Ghost of Christmas Past may symbolise memory, the Ghost of Christmas Present embodies the warmth and generosity of the Christmas spirit, and the faceless Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come suggests the unknown future.

Dickens also uses dramatic irony when the reader knows something that a character or characters are not aware of. For example, Scrooge is unaware that the dead man who is being discussed is himself, while the reader has a growing sense that this is the case. This involves the reader, as by this stage in the novel it is apparent that Scrooge is beginning to change and so his words create sympathy for him as he does not yet know the awful truth.

Verbal irony is also used in the description of the neglected graveyard where Scrooge sees his tombstone. In describing it as a “worthy place” (AChC, 138), Dickens could be suggesting the exact opposite.

One of the stylistic features in *A Christmas Carol*, is Dickens’s use of long, often complex sentences, for example, a list of nouns is used in the description of the throne of gourmet food on which the Ghost of Christmas Present sits. Rather than using a single adjective Dickens often chooses to use lists of adjectives for emphasis. For

<sup>52</sup> «Что же так на холоду с ребеночком стоишь? Заходи в горницу, в тепле-то лучше уберешь его» (PSS, 41).

<sup>53</sup> «Спаси тебя Христос, дедушка, наслал, видно Он меня под твое окно. Заморозила бы я детище. Вышла я, тепло было, а теперь вот как студено завернуло. И наставил же Он, Батюшко, тебя в окно поглядеть, и меня горькую пожалеть» (PSS, 42).

example, while waiting for the first visit of a spirit, the hour bell is ringing “with a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy ONE” (AChC, 43).

Written to exemplify ethical truths, Tolstoy’s stories for the people resemble other late works of Tolstoy, which are also, for the most part, didactic. Thus, it is not the themes, or the motives of Tolstoy which ultimately set the stories for the people apart from the rest from his work, but their style, which was developed specifically and consciously as an apt and accessible medium for conveying moral concepts to an unsophisticated audience.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the stories, which are told by a third person narrator, is their language. Events usually take place in a simple chronological order. The plot in these stories does not take on a complex form; there are no flashbacks or shifting points of view. Most commonly the narrator’s voice resembles that of the simple people who appear in the stories, and his outlook is sympathetic to them. Major characters are drawn from among the common people. Characters are developed through their actions and words. Occasionally the narrator characterizes his heroes directly, but usually he confines himself to brief physical descriptions.

The syntactic foundation of all the stories is a simple sentence. Longer sentences tend to be constructed of a string of principal clauses rather than subordinate clauses grouped around the main one. Constructions have either a Biblical or popular colouring, or both. The popular flavour is achieved by the constant inversion of literary word order in the sentence, e.g., «работал Авдеич прочно» (PSS, 35), «Хотел сначала Мартын сынишку сестре в деревню отдать» (PSS, 35), «Жизнь стала его тихая и радостная» (PSS, 36). The lexical material is often proverbial and sometimes from folklore, for example, the traditional opening phrase of the fairy tale (сказка), e.g., «Жил в городе сапожник Мартын Авдеич» (PSS, 35), «Да не дал Бог Авдеичу в детях счастья» (PSS, 35). On the other hand, Tolstoy often, especially in the moralizing conclusions, introduced a tone of solemnity reminiscent of Biblical language. The influence of Biblical language affects nearly all of the stories. They are united thematically by the Christian teaching as Tolstoy had come to understand it in the late 1870s and 1880s. Tolstoy quoted freely from Scripture and adopted some mannerisms typical of the Bible and other religious literature. This element is most frequently found in the epigraph or at the climax of the story or, where there is a moral, in the passage where it is explained. Martin was reading Luke’s Gospel, parables

about the centurion, the widow’s son, and the answer to John’s disciples – and he came to the part where a rich Pharisee invited the Lord to his house; and he read how the woman who was a sinner, anointed his feet and washed them with her tears, and how he justified her<sup>54</sup> (WLI, 121).

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<sup>54</sup> «Прочел он про сотника, прочел про сына вдовы, прочел про ответ ученикам Иоанновым и дошел до того места, где богатый фарисей позвал Господа к себе в гости, и прочел о том, как женщина грешница помазала Ему ноги и омывала их слезами, и как Он оправдал ее» (PSS, 37).

His reading of the Bible pushed him to follow the examples and help the poor and the needy. When Martin saw a woman punishing a boy for stealing an apple, he

told her the parable of the lord who forgave his servant a large debt, and how the servant went out and seized his debtor by the throat. [...] ‘God bids us forgive,’ said Martin, ‘or else we shall not be forgiven. Forgive every one; and a thoughtless youngster most of all’<sup>55</sup> (WLI, 129).

The old woman “wagged her head and sighed”<sup>56</sup> (WLI, 129). The more Martin read the more he understood what “God required of him, and how he might live for God”<sup>57</sup> (WLI, 120).

To a common reader, Biblical language would be both familiar and authoritative, Tolstoy may have used it to add weight to the moral teaching of his stories. The author does not examine the working of the human mind but, rather what goes on outside, in the world a human being inhabits. It is clearest in the language of divine characters – the angels, or the heavenly voice in *Where Love Is, There Is God Also*.

Except many examples of Biblical imagery, Tolstoy also makes use of metaphors and similes, but not to such extent as Dickens. The pilgrim’s words “sank deep”<sup>58</sup> (WLI, 120) into Martin’s heart. He continued to read the Bible every day and his heart “grew lighter and lighter”<sup>59</sup> (WLI, 120). Before, when he went to bed he used to lie with a heavy heart. Stepanitch smiled and vanished “like a cloud”<sup>60</sup> (WLI, 130).

The process of breakdown is one of the themes of *A Christmas Carol* and *Where Love Is, There Is God Also*. The story of Scrooge’s mean-spirited solitude which was later replaced by open-hearted sociability was not like Martin’s. Scrooge deliberately isolated himself from his family and avoided all human contact. Martin was unable to find a purpose and meaning in life after the death of his wife and children. A series of events and encounters with people lead both protagonists towards the development of a new moral understanding and make life worth living. The moral lesson is to treat all people with compassion. Dickens and Tolstoy took the commonest and simplest sorts of human kindness and showed them intensified. Both stories are also openly didactic, and the main characters are developed through their actions, and good deeds. The details of place, time and people are made very real to the reader. They are intensified

<sup>55</sup> «И рассказал Авдеич старухе притчу о том, как хозяин простил оброчнику весь большой долг его, а оброчник пошел и стал душить своего должника. Выслушала старуха, и мальчик стоял слушал. – Бог велел прощать, – сказал Авдеич, – а то и нам не простится. Всем прощать, а несмысленному-то и поготово» (PSS, 43).

<sup>56</sup> «Покачала головой старуха и вздохнула» (PSS, 43).

<sup>57</sup> «И что больше читал, то яснее понимал, чего от него Бог хочети как надо для Бога жить» (PSS, 36).

<sup>58</sup> «И запали эти слова в сердце Авдеичу» (PSS, 36).

<sup>59</sup> «и всё легче и легче ему становилось на сердце» (PSS, 37).

<sup>60</sup> «как облачко разошелся» (PSS, 44).

through the use of imagery, motifs of light and dark; and cold and heat, which recur throughout *A Christmas Carol* and *Where Love Is, There Is God Also*. In the final part of the stories the protagonists no longer desire isolation. Martin helps those in need and is glad to have guests. His every act of kindness is done as an act of charity, and accepted as such.

According to Tolstoy, all people are able to do good if they will because man, as a child of the Heavenly Father, is himself good, and the evils of the world are obstructions which prevent him from being himself. What is more, striving towards God means striving for goodness and man's progress towards his own perfection.

Scrooge visits his nephew Fred, where he has a wonderful time. Being a part of a family is equated for him with happiness. Scrooge's recovery appears complete when we see him helping the Cratchits, joking with Bob and clapping him on the back.

While the backdrop of *A Christmas Carol* is a Christian festival and moral values underpin the novel in the shape of kindness, generosity and care for others, there is little sense of solemn religious ceremony in the novel. Dickens's vision of Christmas is largely a secular one. Although Christian beliefs underpin the story in the references to church going – the bell in the church tower “always peeping slyly down at Scrooge” (AChC, 17), and the church clock which chimes out the hours in the waiting for the spirits – Dickens focuses on secular aspects of Christmas as a joyous holiday with parties and gatherings of friends and family. We have to be aware that the Christmas spirit is not confined to the Christmas stories, or descriptions of Christmas in Dickens's novels: it is present in every attempt to hold up benevolence as a social ideal.

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