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The Resurrector, the Resurrected, and the Lost:

Theology and Virtue in *A Tale of Two Cities*

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Abstract

Christian faith seeks echoes of God and the Bible in daily life. Charles Dickens, a Christian author, wrote for the sake of entertaining his audience and pointing to the power of faith. "The Resurrector, the Resurrected, and the Lost" applies Catholic theology to Dickens's novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. This essay examines the theology of resurrection in the novel, as understood through the Catholic theology of resurrection, and analyzes the virtues and relationships that make resurrection succeed — as well as the vices and hatred that make it fail. The need for resurrection in *A Tale* can be understood through characters' damage to their intellects and wills, two Thomistic qualities that distinguish humans as rational beings. Virtuous relationships and sacrifice can resurrect characters' wills and intellects, allowing them to do the same for others. However, vice can harm characters' wills and intellects and prevent them from choosing resurrection later. Through these connections, the novel shows the reader how participating in virtuous, sacrificial, and loving resurrection guides one to new life.

Keywords: Catholic, Theology, Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, Religion

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Suffering saturates the plot of *A Tale of Two Cities*, begging for an answer to how people can find salvation in the midst of oppression. The beginning of the novel details the abject poverty of the people of Saint Antoine, "ground" and "worked . . . down" by suffering, with "Hunger . . . prevalent everywhere" (Dickens, 29). Oppression and hunger have worn down these people so much that "their choice on earth was stated in the prospect — Life on the lowest terms that could sustain it, down in the little village under the mill; or captivity and Death in the dominant prison on the crag" (Dickens, 91). The French peasants must face constant hunger, poverty, and oppression, given only a choice between suffering and death. However, Charles Dickens does not merely integrate suffering into his novel, but also provides a solution through the novel's theme of resurrection.

Dickens's answer to suffering through resurrection is rooted in religion and virtue. Virtues include the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity; cardinal virtues such as justice and temperance that function as "habitual and firm [dispositions] to do the good"; and humility, a form of temperance that functions as "a moderating virtue . . . to temper and restrain the mind . . . [from tending] to high things immoderately" (CCC, 1813; CCC, 1804; Aquinas, II-II, Q.161, A.4). Although Dickens's works were not explicitly didactic works of theology, Moody Bible Institute professor and scholar of Dickens and Christianity Gary Colledge notes that "it seems apparent Dickens thought of himself unequivocally as a Christian, and he was confident that his work was deeply rooted in the New Testament and that his characters exhibited the teachings of Jesus and were expressly disciples of Jesus" (Colledge, Kindle Locations 223-225). The strongest evidence of Dickens's Christian foundation in his writings is his use of resurrection. According to Colledge, resurrection is one of the distinguishing themes

of *A Tale of Two Cities* (Colledge, 3096-3097). As a Christian author, Dickens understood the power of resurrection in the Christian life, particularly in relation to suffering, and included it and other themes from Christianity in his works.

Resurrections in *A Tale of Two Cities* tend to exist in a metaphorical sense, as spiritual or emotional resurrections and not only in literally raising the dead to life. This paper will treat "resurrection" as the restoration of a person's intellect (reason) or volition (will), described by Saint Thomas Aquinas as the two faculties that distinguish humans from irrational animals, for good or evil ends. St. Aquinas states,

> Man differs from irrational animals in this, that he is master of his actions. . . . through his reason and will . . . Therefore those actions are properly called human which proceed from a deliberate will. And if any other actions are found in man, they can be called actions "of a man," but not properly "human" actions, since they are not proper to man as man (Aquinas, I-II, Q.1, A.1).

The chapter will argue that "true resurrection" is a resurrection guided by virtue, namely, the virtues of charity, hope, and humility.

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, resurrections happen through virtuous relationships, guided especially by humility. One must have humility to be resurrected through a relationship with the resurrector. Resurrection in such relationships leads to a change of self that then allows one to participate in the resurrection of others, resulting in an outward expansion of virtue and resurrection. This change is the proper response to resurrection and is characterized by love for the resurrector and others.

Several characters give lessons about resurrection through positive examples or negative warnings. The spiritual lessons of *A Tale of Two Cities* concur with the wealth of insight from Catholic theology, which provides a framework for understanding and applying these lessons. Therefore, although Dickens himself was not a Catholic writer, this article will use Catholic theology in interpreting his novel, including references to theological virtues, such as charity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) defines charity as the love of God above all else and "of our neighbor as ourselves" (CCC, 1822). This chapter focuses on the second part of this definition and uses "charity" to refer to love of one's neighbor as oneself for the greater good. Characters in *A Tale* exercise charity through their love and sacrifices. Another theological virtue that appears in the novel is hope, defined by the CCC as "the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of [H]eaven" (CCC, 1817-8). This chapter uses "hope" to refer to one's desire to experience the greater good and the desire to live oriented to that good. Characters exercise hope in *A Tale* through their choices to change for the better and their confidence that good will come from resurrection.

This article will examine Lucie's role as resurrector, Doctor Alexandre Manette and Sydney Carton's roles as resurrected individuals, and the mob's unique roles as both the resurrector and the resurrected. Lucie extends resurrection in the form of charity to Manette and Carton. Manette's experiences demonstrate how resurrection leads to further resurrections, but they also demonstrate that the effects of sin in one's old life can still damage one's new life. Carton shows the importance of having both the humility and volition to accept the offer of resurrection. The mob's resurrection fails because they claim power without any

recognition of virtue or goodness. The mob demonstrates how one can employ a process which is meant to be life-giving to achieve a harmful end.

LUCIE: WHAT RESURRECTION REQUIRES

Lucie has a vital role as the moral guide and primary resurrector of the novel. She is the best model of a resurrector in the novel because her sacrifices come from charity, the resurrections she enacts lead to life, and she shows that true resurrection takes place in the context of community. Throughout the plot, Lucie resurrects her father, Alexandre Manette, and her friend, Sydney Carton.

Compassion

Lucie's role as a resurrector in the novel and the way she carries out resurrection, through charity and sacrifice, make her a Christ figure. She imitates Christ by having compassion toward those in her life and inviting them to be "recalled" to better lives. Like the Good Samaritan in Jesus' parable, she is "sensitive to the suffering of others, . . . 'is moved' by the misfortune of another," and expresses compassion for people in her life (John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, Part IV, Section 28). The novel indicates the resurrectional power of Lucie's compassion by connecting her with the "recalling" of Manette and Carton to life. Lucie resurrects Manette as a function of filial duty, "to restore him to life, love, duty, rest, comfort" (Dickens, 26). In contrast, Lucie chooses to accept and resurrect Carton not from duty but by her own choice. In both situations, she exercises compassion by her choice to resurrect others.

In Lucie's resurrection of Manette, she shows that the process requires the resurrector to act in charity toward the resurrected. Lucie resurrects Manette when she meets him at the beginning of the novel. She recalls him to awareness by approaching him and giving him

physical contact, which his imprisonment had deprived him of for so long. After Lucie's father first makes eye contact with her, she sits next to him, "[laying] her hand upon his arm" and proceeding to move it to his shoulder (Dickens, 39). Her closeness allows him to discover a lock of Lucie's mother's hair in a pouch around his neck, which leads him to question if Lucie is her mother. Instead of telling him directly who she is, Lucie "[holds] him . . . round the neck, and [rocks] him on her breast like a child," asking him to weep for the agony he endured (Dickens, 41). As Manette recovers from the reunion, he has "sacred blank wonder in his face" and only recovers from his confusion by the "pleasure [taken] in the mere sound of his daughter's voice" (Dickens, 42). In the next chapter, five years later, the narrator describes him as a normal member of society. With Lucie, Manette sits at Darnay's first trial as "a man of a very remarkable appearance in respect of the absolute whiteness of his hair, and a certain indescribable intensity of face: not of an active kind, but pondering and self-communing" (Dickens, 53). The charity Lucie shows to him as his daughter helps him recover his intellect and re-enter society.

Lucie resurrects Carton by reawakening his volition, thereby rehumanizing him, through her presence. Just as Lucie saves her father from his anguished and dissociated state and motivates him to live as himself again, she saves Carton, reminding him by "kindling [him] . . . into [a] fire" of yearning for a better life (Dickens, 117), that he can live for more than degradation. He uses language of volition in an emotional confession of love to Lucie, which he ends by telling her how she has inspired in him an ability to choose sacrifice for her sake, shown in his desire "to give his life, to keep a life [she loves] beside [her]" (Dickens, 117). Lucie

resurrects him by helping him desire to choose the good, giving him hope that he can begin a new, virtuous life.

Renewed Life

True resurrections in the novel lead to renewed life for the resurrected. When Lucie resurrects Manette, he recovers from dissociation and re-enters his true life as a physician and father. She helps her father recover to a point beyond the hope of his former colleague Lorry of his returning to "life, love, duty, rest, [and] comfort," to returning to work and full participation in family life (Dickens, 26). When Lucie resurrects Carton, he reasserts his volition and chooses to die in the place of her husband Darnay. The charity she has for Carton, Modernist literature scholar Kevin Rulo writes, "[awakens] love within him, and not mere desire but agape, Christian self-sacrificing love. This awakening is followed by real change," shown in his death for Darnay and the sobriety with which he carries it out (Rulo, 20). As nineteenth-century literature scholar Kenneth Sroka notes, Carton's response of "selfless and unrequited love for Lucie Manette" activates his transformation, evolving him from "a dead man, a wastrel always more intoxicated than not, exiled from all the living . . . to become human and then to survive even his own physical death" (Sroka, 158-9). Carton develops from a drifting loner to someone who can live beyond his death in the memories of his loved ones. Although Lucie does not literally raise Manette or Carton from the dead, she resurrects them by restoring their intellects and volitions, inviting and guiding them into new life.

Community

True resurrection in the novel takes place in the context of community. Lucie enacts Manette's resurrection when she invites him to experience family life with her. The novel's jump in time between Manette's initial liberation and his second appearance at Darnay's first trial gives the reader no information about the details of his being "recalled" to life. However, at Darnay's trial, a judge asks Manette about the lapse of memory between his imprisonment and his life with his daughter. Manette tells the judge, "My mind is a blank, from some time . . . when I employed myself, in my captivity, in making shoes, to the time when I found myself living in London with my dear daughter here. She had become familiar to me, when a gracious God restored my faculties; but, . . . I have no remembrance of the process" (Dickens, 58-60). Manette's resurrection became possible when he returned to his family at Darnay's trial, described by the Catechism of the Catholic Church as "an initiation into life in society" (CCC, 2207). Manette's return to a family was his first step toward reintegrating into society.

Community is also an essential component of Lucie's resurrection of Carton. Lucie catalyzes Carton's resurrection when she invites him into her life as a household guest and friend of the family. Her relationship with Carton is not a close friendship; the night that Carton confesses his love for Lucie, her embarrassed reaction to his arrival at her house suggests that "she had never been quite at her ease with him" (Dickens, 116). However, it is a relationship characterized by great care. In their conversation, she recognizes that "she had never seen him softened [as he was then], and [becomes] much distressed" (Dickens, 117). Recovering from his usual condition of apathy, he promises Lucie, "for you, and for any dear to you, I would do anything. . . . Think now and [in the future] that there is a man who would give his life, to keep

a life you love beside you" (Dickens, 116). When Carton switches places with Darnay in prison to help Darnay escape, he says to Lucie in a letter, "If you remember . . . the words that passed between us, long ago, you will readily comprehend this when you see it. . . . I am thankful that the time has come, when I can prove them" (Dickens, 261). Carton experiences community with the help of Lucie; in making good on his promise to her, he secures her community for the future.

MANETTE: THE FRUIT OF RESURRECTION

Manette's need for resurrection arises from the trauma of being imprisoned for eighteen years in the Bastille after trying to report an aristocrat's rape of a peasant. To cope with the harsh conditions of the prison, Manette "[asked] leave to teach himself" how to make shoes during his imprisonment and "[had] made shoes ever since" (Dickens, 37). He had dissociated so far from himself that he could only identify himself as his cell number, "One Hundred and Five, North Tower" (Dickens, 38). The effects of the sin he experiences show most strongly in his darkened intellect because his traumas led him to dissociate from his intellect entirely. This effect shows most strikingly in the fact that Manette displays no memory of having been a doctor and his memory only goes back as far as his imprisonment.

Lucie resurrects Manette, helping him return to himself, by recognizing him as her father and devoting herself to him at their reunion. Even when Manette cannot recognize Lucie as his own daughter, she acknowledges him, a man she hardly remembers, as a beloved father. When they reunite in France, Manette has only memories of Lucie's mother to compare to Lucie, but she still tries to reach him on those terms. She approaches him and comforts him in the hope that he could "hear in [her] voice any resemblance" to her mother's voice "that was

once sweet music in [his ears]" or, "in touching [her] hair," recall her mother's head "that lay in [his] breast when [he was] young and free" (Dickens, 41). Even before Manette can fully recognize Lucie, she devotes herself to him and promises to give him the home and comfort he had missed for almost two decades. From the cell in which the two first meet, Lucie tells him of the near future and of the "Home [that] there is before [them]," where she would devote herself to him "with all [her] duty and all [her] faithful service" (Dickens, 41). Lucie's self-giving love to Manette from their first meeting shows plainly the charity she expresses toward him. The charity she expresses through her dedication to Manette makes his resurrection possible, from which he can go on to resurrect others himself.

In Manette's character arc, his resurrection leads to further resurrection. Manette shares the fruit of his resurrection most clearly in his work as a physician while Charles Darnay is imprisoned in Paris. The reader would expect the violence and imprisonment so characteristic of the Revolution to trigger Manette's relapse into his dissociative shoemaker state. Instead, he returns to work as a doctor, treating those hurt in the Revolution. He remains above his trauma and the Revolution: "silent, humane, indispensable in hospital and prison, using his art equally among assassins and victims . . . He was not suspected or brought in question, any more than if he . . . were a Spirit moving among mortals" (Dickens, 206). Through the comparison of Manette's presence to a spiritual presence, the narrator describes how Manette's resurrection has removed him from the chaos of the situation and allows him to help others who are suffering. His resurrection is a type of renewal of life that can lead to the resurrection of others.

However, Manette's attempt and failure to resurrect Darnay toward the end of the novel show how his past interferes with his ability to resurrect. Manette gives testimony to free

Darnay from his first imprisonment, but his power to save disappears when the court uses an old letter he wrote in the Bastille to testify against Darnay. The letter condemns the Evrémonde family in scathing terms: “Now I believe that the mark of the red cross is fatal to them, and that they have no part in [God’s] mercies. And them and their descendants, to the last of their race, I Alexandre Manette, . . . in my unbearable agony, denounce to the times when all these things shall be answered for. I denounce them to Heaven and to earth” (Dickens, 247). In the letter, he pronounces that condemnation on the brothers because they do not tell him any news of his wife during his imprisonment; “if it had pleased God to put it in the hard heart of either of the brothers . . . to grant me any tidings of my dearest wife,” Manette writes, “I might have thought that he had not quite abandoned them” (Dickens, 247). Though it was written in the past, this statement, motivated by grief and loneliness, still fatally weakens Manette’s ability to resurrect Darnay.

Beyond the tangible consequences of Manette’s letter, its condemnation of a family as a method of revenge also demonstrates the character’s misconceptions about true justice. Victorian literature scholar Carolyn de la L. Oulton explains that Manette’s motivation to condemn the Evrémonde family aligns with “[an] attitude towards religions as an insidious instrument of revenge . . . Manette’s manuscript denounces the brothers as being deserted by God, on the strength of their treatment of him” (Oulton, 72). Because Manette acted as if he were God in condemning and cursing the Evrémonde family, his effort to resurrect Darnay, an Evrémonde, fails. Furthermore, Manette condemned the aristocratic Evrémonde family the same way the mob would come to condemn them, denouncing the brothers “and their descendants” as evil people who must someday “[answer] for their sin” (Dickens, 247). By

writing a general condemnation of all Evrémondes, Dr. Manette unknowingly condemned his future son-in-law, an Evrémonde, for the crime his relatives committed.

Manette's arc in the novel portrays him as a good and kind doctor who suffers terribly for doing the right thing, is resurrected out of love to save others, and collapses back into his state of suffering when he fails to save his son-in-law. The resurfacing of his past choice to act in wrath rather than charity threatens his resurrection because his wrath opposes the charity that resurrected him. According to the CCC, wrath, as a deliberate desire for excessive revenge and the desire to harm one's neighbor, opposes charity as a capital sin (CCC, 1866; CCC, 2302). Wrath overextends justice, to the desire to inflict suffering. After Manette fails to save Darnay due to his past wrath, Manette is reduced to his former state and ends the novel as the "helpless, inarticulately murmuring, wandering old man" he was at the beginning (Dickens, 263). In contrast, Sydney Carton provides a strong model of resurrection and its fruits.

CARTON: VOLITION AND RESURRECTION

Sydney Carton's character arc shows how powerful a resurrection can be when borne out of volition and humility. Carton's need for resurrection comes from a weakened volition, expressed in a depressed state of inactivity and dissipation. Carton maintains this state by identifying almost completely with his lack of agency, calling himself "a dissolute dog, who has never done any good, and never will" (158). While one can make an argument that Carton's disordered passions, specifically, a disordered desire for alcohol and apathy for all else, are the strongest manifestations of his sin, his attitude about those passions suggests that his sin actually originates in a dead volition. The narrator writes of Carton's presence within the Manette household: "When he cared to talk, he talked well; but, the cloud of caring for

nothing, which overshadowed him with such a fatal darkness, was very rarely pierced by the light within him" (Dickens, 116). His lack of concern for anything, urged by his boss's "driving and riving and shouldering and pressing," leads him to believe that "[he has] no chance for [his] life but in rust and repose" (Dickens, 73). Carton suffers the death of his volition because he spends his life in meaningless subservience to others, particularly to the loathsome Stryver. Carton sacrifices his will to his passions and to Stryver. Instead of making his constant subservience to others significant, circumstances and Stryver lead Carton to resign himself to an aimless life.

When Carton is resurrected by Lucie, her process involves recognizing the resurrected as someone with the capacity for goodness and inviting him to resurrection. Lucie resurrects Carton by recognizing his need for human connection, inviting him from the beginning of the novel into her family's household. She shows charity to him by offering, as the woman of the house, to treat and serve him as a household guest. Her kindness to him inspires an emotional confession of love:

> I have been troubled by a remorse that I thought would never reproach me again, and have heard whispers from old voices impelling me upward, that I thought were silent for ever. I have had unformed ideas of striving afresh, beginning anew, shaking off sloth and sensuality, and fighting out the abandoned fight (Dickens, 117).

Carton's expression of love to Lucie mirrors the language of Christian conversion in two ways. First, he describes his conscience returning to him, in "remorse [he] thought would never reproach [him] again" and "whispers from old voices impelling [him] upward, that [he] thought were silent for ever" (Dickens, 117). Carton's sense of remorse and desire to raise himself recall

the language of interior repentance, described in part by the CCC as "a radical reorientation of our whole life, . . . [and] a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed . . . It entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his grace" (CCC, 1431). In the same way that a Christian returns to the faith and grows in virtue by a continual reorientation of the self from evil to good, Carton expresses to Lucie the beginnings of a desire to lift himself from vice to goodness. Second, he describes the conversion he wants to make as one from vice to virtue, "fighting the . . . fight" he had abandoned (Dickens, 117). Carton's language of "fighting the abandoned fight" mirrors the beginning of 1 Timothy 6:12 (ESV), in which St. Paul urges Timothy to "Fight the good fight of faith." The Biblical connections to Carton's wording signals that he experiences a true conversion to goodness.

The language of Carton's confession to Lucie also signals that he realizes a choice to change from vice to virtue. In their conversation, Carton describes a rekindled desire to shake off his vices of "sloth and sensuality" (Dickens, 117). Although Carton's tendencies do not apply specifically to his spiritual practices, the depression of spirit they are associated with is reminiscent of *acedia*, "a form of depression due to lax ascetical practice, decreasing vigilance, [and] carelessness of heart" that lines up closely with sloth (CCC, 2733). This classification of Carton's behaviors indicates a contrast between distinct vices and virtues that he exhibits throughout the novel. That contrast reaches a resolution when he dies for Darnay at the end of the novel, choosing a death of virtue over a life of vice.

The fruit of Carton's resurrection lies most clearly in his sacrifice at the end of the novel. The night before Carton dies in Darnay's place, Carton wanders throughout the city and repeats

a Bible verse read at his father's funeral: "'I am the resurrection and the life'" (John 11:25, KJV). The use of the verse and its context in Carton's history suggest that Carton spends the night completing a funeral or vigil for himself. It also suggests that he spends the night thinking of his sacrifice as a "resurrection" of Darnay, by dying in Darnay's place. When Carton enters Darnay's cell, Carton instructs Darnay to write a letter while exposing him to a sedative and the two have a physical altercation. The language describing that struggle, as one between Darnay and "the man who had come to lay down his life for him," echoes John 15:13 (KJV), in which Jesus says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Love for Lucie appears to be the greatest motivation for Carton's sacrifice because he mentions early in the novel that he would make a sacrifice, as large as his life, for her sake. Carton's actions reference John 15:13 further in that he really does lay down his life to save a friend. Love, therefore, leads to a purposeful sacrifice and a true resurrection.

Carton's sacrifice for Darnay allows him to resurrect Darnay by returning Darnay's life to him. In enacting resurrection, Carton acts in charity instead of careless self-hatred and apathy (CCC, 1829). His cycle of self-hatred is a perversion of the Christian vocation to sacrifice and service. He spends his entire life serving others, but his service has nothing life-giving in it; rather, it leads to his self-hatred and the continuation of his dissolute lifestyle. Through Lucie, however, Carton makes the turn toward virtuous self-sacrifice. Carton dies in the service of others, doing "[his] part faithfully" to deliver the Darnay-Manette family to England (Dickens, 257). Carton's self-sacrifice for Darnay is different from his previous subservience because it is done freely and in love, as a gift. The narrator reveals the earnestness and agency of Carton's sacrifice in describing his hands: "as true to his purpose [of sacrificing himself for Darnay] as his

heart was" (Dickens, 261). Carton's last words in the novel are words of acceptance and a recovered volition, acknowledging that "it is a far, far better thing that [he does], than [he has] ever done; it is a far, far better rest that [he goes] to, than [he has] ever known" (Dickens, 278). He sacrifices himself in both stages of his life, but only his virtuous sacrifice for the Darnay family is an action of charity that redeems his own legacy. His ability to be at peace with his sacrifice underlines the hope he expresses at the end of the novel.

Carton's repeated phrase, "I am the resurrection and the life," the night before his death demonstrates Carton's hope and emphasizes that his resurrection is a true resurrection. Carton's sacrifice did not simply come from a realization that he could turn from vice to reveal the good person he always was. Rather, the clear "salvific sense" with which Dickens perceived the Bible verse supports the claim that Carton's repetition and embodiment of it happens with a true conversion to goodness (Colledge, 2002-12). The day that Carton dies, the narrator describes "the prayer that had broken up out of his heart for a merciful consideration of all his poor blindnesses and errors" as one that "ended in the words, 'I am the resurrection and the life'" (Dickens, 236). Throughout *A Tale of Two Cities*, Lucie reminds him of the mercy he is worth by welcoming him into her home and loving him. Her charity leads him to desire the mercy of God and gives him the confidence to raise as a prayer Jesus' words, "I am the resurrection and the life." When Carton repeats the Bible verse, it conveys his faith and hope in resurrection, but it also shows that he can sacrifice himself to resurrect Darnay, recalling Darnay to life (Sroka, 159).

As Carton dies to resurrect Darnay, he offers future resurrection to the mob. In Victorian English scholar E. D. H. Johnson's description of the resurrection theme in Dickens's novels, he

explains that characters go through despair, experience resurrection, and act to affirm the resurrection "by some deed of expiation" (Johnson, 142). That final act of redemption and atonement incarnates love's triumph over evil in that it saves others. The narrator of *A Tale of Two Cities* shares the thoughts Carton experiences as he dies, describing Saint Antoine as "a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from this abyss, and, in their struggles to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long long years to come . . . [with] the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out" (Dickens, 277). In his vision, the French people experience the resurrection they could not achieve for themselves. Therefore, in Carton's death and final vision of a France redeemed, the narrator shows us that Carton, "in saving the husband of his beloved, at the same time redeems both the inhumanity of Darnay's aristocratic forbears and . . . the matching inhumanity of the revolutionary tribunal" (Johnson, 142-3). The novel makes the mob's resurrection possible through one person's choice to sacrifice himself for a group that did nothing to merit it. Carton's role in the mob's future expiation and resurrection cements his place in the novel as a Christ figure. His journey illustrates how one can humbly and virtuously accept an invitation to resurrection and bring good to others through it.

THE MOB'S FAILURE TO RESURRECT ITSELF

The mob's resurrection of violence in *A Tale of Two Cities* shows the harm that comes out of resurrection focused on revenge and death. One must experience death before resurrection, and the beginning of the novel portrays the French as a people dying slowly under oppression. The reader sees the mob's death most clearly in the personification of the mob's neighborhood, Saint Antoine.

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator describes the neighborhood of Saint Antoine as a being with no light in its face, accompanied only by “cold, dirt, sickness, ignorance, and want,” the strongest of which was want (Dickens, 29). Although the peasants undergo a death of sorts through their poverty, they are never resurrected, but instead attempt to resurrect themselves. The novel foreshadows their self-resurrection in an early scene of Saint Antoine, in which peasants swarm a broken wine cask. In the scene, an individual “[scrawls] upon a wall with his finger dipped in muddy wine lees — Blood,” and the narrator hints that “the time was to come, when that wine too would be spilled on the street-stones, and when the stain of it would be red upon many there” (Dickens, 29). The foreshadowing consists of the consumption of wine, treated as blood: an imperfect mimicry of Catholic Eucharist, in which believers consume “bread and wine [which] become, in a way surpassing understanding, the Body and Blood of Christ” (CCC, 1333; Rosen). A central difference between the foreshadowing of death in the wine cask scene and the concept of Eucharist is that the Eucharist is a sacrifice of blood that leads to life, while the wine cask scene foreshadows sacrifices of blood that do not redeem or lead others to good. The mob’s mimicry turns into an outright perversion when the peasants attempt to resurrect themselves in violence through the actions of a mob.

The mob acts as a resurrector by acting in the oppression and violence of the French Revolution. At the beginning of the Revolution, the mob’s anger seems just and even righteous. When the carriage drivers of the Marquis St. Evrémonde run over a child and kill him, the Marquis looks at the gathered crowd “as if they had been mere rats come out of their holes” and complains that the poor cannot take care of themselves or their children (Dickens, 89). He does not offer the father of the dead child an apology, or even the slightest sympathy, but

instead throws a gold coin to the grieving father. When the novel describes the dead Marquis the next morning, "[his face] like a fine mask, suddenly startled, made angry, and petrified . . . [with a knife] driven home into the heart of the stone figure," his death seems justified (Dickens, 101). However, the peasants' quest for justice soon devolves into a quest for vengeance when they form a mob and storm the Bastille. On that night, "The hour was come, when Saint Antoine was to execute his horrible idea of hoisting up men for lamps to show what he could be and do. Saint Antoine's blood was up, and the blood of tyranny and domination by the iron hand was down" (Dickens, 101). The French Revolution, a period of multitudinous deaths, follows. The mob resurrects oppression and violence by forcing themselves into a position of power and enacting a plan to execute all aristocrats who had grieved the peasants.

The slaughters of the French aristocrats carried out by the mob manifest their disregard for individual human life. As a class risen from oppression after their period of rebellion, the peasants could elect to seek justice for their suffering. However, the group decides to turn the aristocrats' violence back on them. The people reject love, mercy, and redemption when they form a mob and carry out the executions of the French Revolution. One such execution is that of Foulon, an aristocrat hated by the peasants because he "told the famished people [of Saint Antoine] that they might eat grass" as a solution to their starvation (Dickens, 168). The scene of Foulon's execution shows what Carolyn de la L. Oulton describes as an implicit condemnation of the mob "for their reluctance to let [Foulon] be forgiven by God" (Oulton, 74). Instead of giving Foulon the option to face true justice and continue his life, "[he] is denied the choice [by the mob]. The mob is castigated by the subtext of the narrative . . . for attempting to deny him the mercy of God. This marked contempt for the value of human life quite deliberately denies the

worth of individual salvation as the ethic of retribution comes to seem increasingly arbitrary in its failure to respect individual life" (Oulton, 74). Foulon failed to exercise the virtue of justice when he disrespected the lives of the peasants, but the peasants respond with disrespect and injustice in kind by taking his life in their hands.

When the mob expands the scope of its executions to include fellow peasants, it manifests an obsession with death to the point of disregard for individual and community life. The creation of the guillotine marks a turning point from evil actions — unjustly killing aristocrats — to systemic evil — killing anybody with hardly any cause. "The figure of the sharp female called La Guillotine" emerges from the revolutionary tumult just as the Revolutionaries institute "a law of the Suspected, which struck away all security for liberty or life, and delivered over any good and innocent person to any bad and guilty one" and "gorged [prisons] with people who had committed no offence, and could obtain no hearing" (Dickens, 205). Right when the mob could have ended an already-senseless bloodbath directed at eradicating aristocrats, it creates the Guillotine to take even more lives and begins to name enemies among the common people. The mob comes to attack the very people for whom it once tried to advocate.

The mob's false resurrection could not have resulted in good because its objective was focused on the evil of death. From the beginning of the novel, even before the reader encounters the French people, the narrator discloses that "It is likely enough that in the rough outhouses of some tillers of the heavy lands adjacent to Paris, there were sheltered . . . rude carts . . . which the Farmer, Death, had already set apart to be his tumbrils of the Revolution" (Dickens, 10). Death led the Revolution from the start. The night before Carton's self-sacrifice,

he speaks to the wood-sawyer near the La Force prison, who brags that the executioner killed "sixty-three [that day, and the number killed per day] shall mount to a hundred soon" (Dickens, 234). The wood-sawyer's tone, laughing and grinning as he "held out the pipe he was smoking, to explain how he timed the executioner," demonstrates the cavalier view which the mob held toward the lives of other citizens. When the number of deaths one causes becomes an achievement, a society's lack of concern about human life becomes obvious. The mob only wanted death to come from resurrecting violence.

Furthermore, the mob's self-resurrection could not have led them to goodness because their actions and motivations fundamentally opposed any idea of God, love, or redemption. Saint Pope John Paul II describes the historical mob's rejection of any fundamentally Christian idea, detailing how the mob "knocked down the altars dedicated to Christ, tossed crucifixes into the streets, introduced the cult of the goddess Reason. On the basis of this, there was a proclamation of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. The spiritual patrimony and, in particular, the moral patrimony of Christianity were thus torn from their evangelical foundation" (John Paul II and Messori, 52). The novel's portrayal of the mob demonstrates a rejection of Christian virtue and the Christian tradition similar to that of the historical mob's. Dickens does not refuse or fail to resurrect the mob. He simply does not give them what they oppose and reject. For the Catholic believer, the cross that stands above the altar of a sanctuary is a reminder of love, sacrifice, and resurrection into new life. In the novel, the mob turns its back on their faith to worship the guillotine and its members wear models of it "on breasts from which the Cross was discarded, and [bow down] to [it] and [believe] in [it] where the Cross [is] denied" (Dickens, 205). The guillotine falls far short of its predecessor as an object of worship because it is not a

sign of love, sacrifice, or resurrection, but only one of hatred and death from "the raging fever of a nation" (Dickens, 205). Choosing the guillotine over the cross is a terrible choice in itself, but upon closer examination, the mob's actions reflect an even more fatal error: a complete denial of their faith. Their invitation to atonement comes only at the end, through the sacrifice of Carton. In contrast, the protagonists of *A Tale of Two Cities* show how virtue expressed in suffering always allows for redemption.

CONCLUSION: VIRTUES GUIDE RESURRECTION

Suffering and evil connect in that both are issues of sin. Suffering occurs as a result of Original Sin's existence in the world, and Jesus offers resurrection as a solution. As described by Saint Pope John Paul II, "It can be said that man suffers whenever he experiences any kind of evil. In the vocabulary of the Old Testament, suffering and evil are identified with each other. . . . Only [in] the Greek language [of] . . . the New Testament . . . [does] suffering . . . [express] a situation in which man experiences evil and in doing so becomes the subject of suffering" (John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, part II, section 7). In other words, the source of suffering is in the experience of evil, a violation of the goodness and love in which people are made. All suffering in the novel comes from evil, whether one does an evil action, receives the results of an evil action, or witnesses evil.

The novel's answer to evil and suffering is virtuous resurrection. However, not all who need or desire resurrection can achieve it. Manette's character development shows that the key to re-entering life is having the humility to be resurrected by someone through love. His resurrection to a cognizant state and his return to family life with Lucie occur together, indicating that his resurrection had to take place in the context of community, as opposed to

his isolation in prison. Yet, Manette does relapse into dissociation at the end of the novel, demonstrating how his ability to participate in resurrection is damaged when his past refusal to extend mercy to the Evrémonde family comes to light.

Carton's resurrection in the novel shows that humility and virtue were required in order to reassert his volition. Lucie's presence in Carton's life and her invitation for him to be a guest in her house reawaken his volition, giving him a desire to "shake off the sloth and sensuality" of his old life (Dickens, 117). The resurrection of his volition allows him to choose to resurrect Darnay at the end of the novel by dying in his place.

While Manette and Carton show how one's orientation to virtue and humility allows an individual to choose resurrection, the mob shows that resurrection will fail without virtue and humility. The mob's resurrection from being oppressed by aristocrats to oppressing aristocrats develops from pride and the desire for revenge. Once in power, the mob lays extensive condemnation not only on all aristocrats but also on all whom it sees as a potential threat to liberty. Manette and the mob mirror each other in their excessive condemnations of others for the sake of revenge, even unto all descendants: Manette condemns all Evrémondes and the mob condemns all aristocrats.

When Carton goes to the guillotine in the last chapter, the narrator describes the French people as being so resigned to Revolutionary violence that "in many windows there are no people, and in some the occupations of the hands is not so much as suspended, while the eyes survey the faces in the tumbrils" (Dickens, 274). Violence is normalized to the point that one wonders how the situation could change, but Carton provides a glimmer of hope for the French people's future. In Carton's last thoughts, his vision of a recovered and free France offers true

resurrection to a people who tried to resurrect themselves but failed. He exercises hope in the people's return to goodness and the Darnay-Manette family's future prosperity, and he acts in love through his charity toward both parties' good, even as he dies for them.

The mob always has a choice to rise from its suffering without choosing vice and hatred. Suffering and salvation connect closely in that the answer to suffering is salvation. The chance to share in Christ's sufferings is the chance to share in Christ's salvation. Jesus extends the offer of salvation to all. Whether one takes that chance, not whether it exists, determines whether salvation develops in one's life. Saint Pope John Paul II explains in *Salvifici Doloris* how the suffering of Christ's Passion, and the triumph of his Resurrection, offers continual redemption to all who suffer. The redemption achieved by Jesus "remains always open to all love expressed in human suffering . . . [In redemption in love,] the Redemption which has already been completely accomplished is, in a certain sense, constantly being accomplished" (John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, part V, section 24). Dickens offered all of the characters in *A Tale of Two Cities* a similar redemption in Carton's innocent sacrifice at the end of the novel. Carton's Christlike sacrifice recognizes the suffering of the French mob and their failure to resurrect themselves from it. His death, a sacrifice chosen in love, offers a model and a chance of resurrection to the people who took his life. The end of the novel assures the reader that resurrection will bring good out of evil.

Reading *A Tale of Two Cities* and examining its themes through a theological lens inform the reader of the goodness and life that result from choosing virtue. Manette's need to be restored to life through Lucie, Carton's humility and choice to sacrifice in love for Lucie, and Lucie's charity for both men all show what it means to experience theologically guided virtue

and to live in love. Most of all, the novel shows us the power of one's volition in choosing to accept the invitation to resurrection. Each of us has the choice to be "recalled to life" in goodness and charity.

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