

CHARLES DICKENS' VIEWS ON SOCIETY AND CHRISTMAS



A native of London, England, Charles Dickens wrote A Christmas Carol in 1843, when he was at the height of his career. He was a proud, successful writer whose novels brought tears to the eyes of devoted readers as far away as America.

At 31, Dickens had worked his way from the humble, often brutal experiences of a poverty-stricken childhood to the drawing rooms of London's literary set. He was the head of a large and costly household, and he felt hounded by the necessity to earn money and, at the same time, to maintain a brilliant career.

One of his greatest wishes as a writer was to expose the suffering and hopelessness of the poor working class in England during the Industrial Revolution. Written in just a month's time, A Christmas Carol contains Dickens' philosophy about the brotherhood of man and the necessity of good

will in human conduct.

The characters and story of A Christmas Carol actually represent the problems that existed in England at the time. Scrooge represents the middle class society that was more interested in wealth and profit than brotherhood and equality. The Cratchit Family represents the poor working class. Scrooge mistreats Bob Cratchit in the same fashion that Dickens saw the middle class society treating the working class.

Perhaps Dickens chose Christmastime as the timeframe for his story because he truly believed in the power of Christmas to unite fellow men. Some of his thoughts on Christmas were included in his *Sketched by Boz*, written in 1836:

"Who can be insensible to the outpourings of good feeling, and the honest interchange of affectionate attachment which abound at this season of the year? A Christmas family-party! We know nothing in nature more delightful! There seems a magic in the very name of Christmas. Petty jealousies and discords are forgotten; social feelings are awakened in bosoms in which they have long been strangers. Father and son, or brother and sister, 'who have met and passed with averted gaze or a look of cold recognition for months before, proffer and return to the cordial embrace and bury their past animosities in their present happiness. Kindly hearts that have yearned towards each other but have been withheld by false notions of pride and self-dignity are again reunited, and all is kindness and benevolence! Would that Christmas lasted the whole year through (as it ought) and that the prejudices and passions which deform our better nature were never called into action among those who they should ever be strangers."