

Analysis of salvation by langston hughes



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ Salvation” by Langston Hughes is a part of his autobiography found in the third chapter of his memoir, *The Big Sea*. It’s a short narrative on a significant part of Hughes’ childhood as a Christian whereby it gives a description of a religious service that is taking place in an African-American church that sees the need for an individual to be ‘ born again’ as a basic requirement for salvation. Furthermore, individuals that are not saved are considered to be sinners. In “ Salvation”, Langston Hughes uses the element of symbolism to illustrate his childhood experience with the Christian doctrine in regards to color and collectivity.

It is worth noting that during the beginning of the 20th century, revivals were quite popular when compared to the current world. They provided platforms for people to meet, be prayed for and obtain deliverance from their ‘ sinful’ ways (Fisher 22). The revival meetings always attracted a large crowd such that most children were encouraged by their parents and guardians to attend. In such meetings, being saved implied experiencing the Holy Spirit and ‘ seeing the light’ such that once a person is ‘ born again’ he or she was not considered a sinner. The meetings were characterized with singing, dancing and lots of prayer (Fisher 22).

One of the notable forms of symbolism is color symbolism. The people taking part in the revival come from the African-American community; including Hughes. He states, “ Several old individuals came near us and took on to their knees and prayed,” (Hughes 31) emphasis being on the phrase “ jet-black faces” as the description of the crowd. Another symbolic aspect regarding color is the revival taking place at night, when it was dark, and that the salvation process is regarded as bringing people to the light. Hughes

explains that his aunt told him that when an individual experienced salvation, something took place in their bodies such that Jesus became part of their lives (Hughes 31). Still on color symbolism, the children are being referred to as lambs in various parts of the text. A good example is Hughes statement that "" to bring the young lambs to the fold."" (Hughes 31) in explaining the gathering of children into a small meeting for them to be 'born again'. From a Christian perspective, Jesus is often associated with a lamb without blemish and most of the times, the lamb is considered to be white in color. From Hughes' narration, the salvation or the assimilation of the African-Americans into Christianity depicts the assimilations of the people into the white community. Therefore, Hughes uses the element of symbolism to illustrate his childhood experience with the Christian doctrine in regards to color.

Hughes uses the collective force of the attendees to symbolize his physical placement of being part of a group of children seated on a bench; then becomes part of two people still on the bench; then being left alone on the bench and then finally joining the whole congregation by sacrificing his self-will. He states, "" The entire flock prayed for me , in a huge moan of sighs and singings."" (Hughes 32). Hughes shows that the whole congregation acted as a single force instead of the actions rising from an individual impetus. Therefore, Hughes uses the element of symbolism to illustrate his childhood experience with the Christian doctrine in regards to collectivity.

As stated earlier, in ' Salvation', Langston Hughes uses the element of symbolism in regards to color and collectivity in illustrating his childhood experience with the Christian doctrine. It may be perceived that the

salvation experience for Hughes was ironical as he did not actually convert into Christianity but rather into atheism as he states, “ and that now I didn't believe there was a Jesus anymore; (Hughes 32). He cries for deceiving the church that he had seen Jesus while in the real sense he did that to prevent more trouble.;

Work Cited

Fisher, George Park. ; Discussions in History and Theology;. New York: Routledge, 2015. Print.

Hughes, Langston. ; The Big Sea: An Autobiography;. New York: Paw Prints, 2008. Print.;