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Notes on Some Burne-Jones Designs for Stained Glass in American Collections

The interesting loan exhibition entitled *The Pre-Raphaelites*, which was shown at the Herron Museum of Art, Indianapolis, and at the Gallery of Modern Art, including the Huntington Hartford Collection, New York, in February–May 1964, contained several little known or previously unpublished works by Sir Edward Burne-Jones which are connected in various ways with his work as a designer of stained glass. Since no comprehensive reference work on this aspect of the artist's activity is yet available, the compilers of the catalogue were unable to supply the relevant documentation of these designs, which thus remained in several instances undated, or dated only within very wide brackets. It may therefore be worthwhile to fill in some of this information.

Three of the exhibited items are related to windows made by the firm of Morris & Co.¹ for Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. This connection was, indeed, noted in one case, the drawing entitled *Dabit Tibi Dominus in Omnibus Intellectum*,² which represents Timothy, and is a design for the main figure in the right-hand light of the Vyner memorial window in the east wall of the Lady Chapel (*figure 1*). The drawing, in charcoal, pen and ink, belongs to The Art Institute of Chicago, which acquired it in 1912 from the collection of Charles Eliot Norton, together with its companion piece (not shown at the Indianapolis and New York exhibitions) representing the young Samuel, and inscribed in the scroll behind his head: *Loquere Domine Quia Audit Servus Tuus* (*figure 2*). This is the design for the left light of the same window, which was made in 1872–1873. The designs for it were entered in Burne-Jones's account-books³ under two dates: 1) 4 March 1872: "Last Supper £12:10:0. David and Goliath £12:10:0"; and 2) 11 March 1872: "Eli and Samuel £12:10:0. Timothy & Eunice £12:10:0. Big Timothy £12. Big Samuel £12." The Chicago designs, therefore,

Figures 1 and 2. *Timothy and Samuel*, drawings in charcoal, pen, and ink (ex coll. Charles Eliot Norton). The Art Institute of Chicago. 1912.1675/76.



are precisely datable to the week between March 4 and 11, 1872. The Indianapolis catalogue states, somewhat categorically, of the Timothy, that "The drawing is a study (not a cartoon) for the Vyner Memorial Window," without making clear the reasons for such an assertion. The primary question here is that of scale: not having measured the actual glass, I cannot be positive that the scale of the drawing⁴ is identical with the figure in the window; but it is at least similar. As for differences of design between the drawing and the window, the only significant one is the addition of a halo in the glass. If the author of the catalogue note was thinking that a cartoon, in the full sense of the term, must include the indication of cutting lines or lead joints, he must have been unaware of the frequent practice in the Morris firm of adding these not to the artist's original cartoon, but to a copy-cartoon produced in the firm's own studio. In my view both Chicago drawings are properly described as cartoons.

The Indianapolis catalogue note also observes that "in some of the lines of the drapery, although not consistently, Burne-Jones approaches the 'pot-hook' style of Gothic drawing, as seen for instance in the sketches of Villard de Honnecourt." This interesting remark could, however, be misleading. Such a tendency to mannerism is, indeed, observable not only in the Timothy cartoon, but also in the great series of cartoons for the Angelic Hierarchy in the south transept south window of Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge, prepared in April 1873 and now in the Birmingham City Art Gallery.⁵ It must be doubted, however, whether the draughtsmanship in these cartoons is entirely—or even principally—that of Burne-Jones himself. As it happens, the Vyner window is one of the very few instances in which we know the identity of the actual glass-painter: it was Charles Fairfax Murray.⁶ A comparison between the drawing of the figures in the Vyner window, the Cambridge Hierarchy window, and the relevant cartoons leaves little doubt in my mind that Fairfax Murray had a large share of responsibility for the execution of the cartoons, as well as for the painting on the glass. His line is harsher than Burne-Jones's, and his style places considerably more emphasis upon the edges of figures and drapery than Burne-Jones would have done, with his stronger sense (especially at this date) of three-dimensional form. These cartoons were, presumably, enlargements from small sketches by Burne-Jones himself (the present locations of which are not known to me), and probably produced in Burne-Jones's own studio, or under his personal supervision. Indeed, there are signs in one or two of the Hierarchy cartoons⁷ of Burne-Jones's active participation or collaboration in the execution, which help to underline the rather sharp differences of style in the rest.

Of the Oxford designs shown at Indianapolis and New York, the earliest in date of origin is the figure of *Hope*,⁸ in oils on canvas, which belongs to the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston. This has been mentioned a number of times in the Burne-Jones literature, and its symbolism and iconography have been discussed in an article by W. G. Constable.⁹ This painting resulted from a commission from Mrs. George Marston Whitin of Boston in 1896; but the design is in all essentials except its background identical with the *Hope* which Burne-

Jones drew in January 1871 for the left light of the west window of the south nave aisle at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. The window represents *Faith, Hope and Charity*. The documentation of the figure of *Charity* is considerably confused; but there is no doubt at all about the *Faith* and *Hope*, which were entered in the artist's account-books for January 1871 at £15 each. Between that date and the time of Mrs. Whitin's commission, Burne-Jones had designed at least two other figures of *Hope*, for windows at Meole Brace in 1873, and Llandefeilog in 1894. It would be interesting to know whether his reversion, in the painting done for Mrs. Whitin, to the design made twenty-five years earlier reflected his own judgment of its quality, or the choice of his patron. Possibly some correspondence may eventually come to light which will resolve this question.

The third of the Oxford designs was entitled *A Musical Angel*,¹⁰ and very tentatively dated in the catalogue note to the period 1878–1896. It belongs to the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City. According to the catalogue, it seems “not to have been connected with any specific decorative project.” Carried out in opaque watercolor on paper mounted on canvas, it may possibly be a worked-up cartoon, or a later work following the same design; but in any event it is based upon the *Angel with Palm and Violin* in the right light of the east window of St. George's Chapel at Oxford Cathedral, made in 1875. Two such angels, each with a palm of martyrdom and a musical instrument, are placed one on either side of the central figure of St. Cecilia, with three small subjects in panels below. Burne-Jones's account-books record the charge to the Morris firm in an entry dated August 1874: “Oxford Ch. Church. Cecily window £90.” The date of the Kansas City watercolor version, however, may well be twenty years later, when it first appeared in exhibitions in Oldham and Paris.

In the case of the cartoon of *Christ Ascending*,¹¹ lent by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the catalogue supplied neither date nor any information save a very unspecific mention of stained glass. It is, in fact, the cartoon for the figure in the central light of the south aisle east window at All Saints Church, Ruskington, Lincolnshire. The design was entered in Burne-Jones's account-book in August 1874: “Ruskington, 3 lights of Ascension—(when will this deluge of Ascensions stop?) £10 ea. £30.” In explanation of this slightly exasperated note, in the short period from December 1873 to August 1875 Burne-Jones was called upon to design no less than five *Ascensions*, including this one for Ruskington. It is not the most brilliant of his cartoons, in spite of the attractively involved interlinked oval patterns of the draperies; but he certainly managed very successfully to convey the effect of the upwards rising motion of the figure—an effect enhanced in the window itself by the placing of the figure, with its two attendant scroll-bearing Angels, high up in the lights, of which the lower parts are filled with pale quarries.

Next, we may briefly consider a painting in oils on canvas of *St. Matthew*,¹² in the Ponce Museum of Art, Puerto Rico. Contrary to the suggestion in the Indianapolis catalogue note linking it with a design of 1893, this figure is related to the design prepared in 1873 for

the center light of a window in the east wall of the south transept of Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge. The relevant entry in the account-book is dated 11 September 1873: "St. Matthew. Jesus S Trans No 1—hastily executed I admit but altogether a bold conception. Bold conception £15." The series of Evangelists and Sibyls to which it belongs marks, perhaps, the summit of Burne-Jones's achievement in figure design for stained glass. They are dramatically conceived, in somewhat Michelangelesque postures, with a much more strikingly sculpturesque character than in Burne-Jones's earlier or later work. As eventually carried out, the *St. Matthew* differed considerably from the Puerto Rico painting, but the basis of the two designs is the same—the left foot resting upon a rock, the raised knee supporting the book held in the left hand, while the head is turned over the right shoulder to listen to the inspiration of the Angel. I do not know the present location of the cartoon, but two drawings for this figure belong to the Birmingham City Art Gallery,¹³ one a nude study, the other a study for the drapery. Presumably, Burne-Jones was sufficiently impressed with his own "bold conception" to attempt a version as an independent painting. Whereas, however, in the window the concentration of the entire composition within a single foreground plane, devoid of any real indications of its spatial setting, poses no special problems, since this is only part of a larger design, in the painting the effect is a little disturbing and unsatisfactory.

Since the above paragraphs were written, my attention has been kindly drawn by Mr. Joseph R. Dunlap to an article by John H. Reed in the *Ohio Wesleyan Magazine* of 12 February 1970, describing two stained glass windows recently made by the Franklin Art Glass Studios of Columbus, Ohio, from two Burne-Jones cartoons in the possession of Ohio Wesleyan University, to which they were presented by Georgiana Long Gunsaulus. These cartoons were not included in the Indianapolis and New York exhibitions; but, since Mr. Reed's article is unfortunately full of inaccuracies, this may perhaps provide a suitable opportunity for correcting some of them, and for supplying information as to their dates and original purposes. They represent *King David as Harpist* and the *Resurrection of Christ*. Mr. Reed seems to believe that both were designed for windows at "Christ Church, Cambridge" which were destroyed during World War II. There is, in fact, no such church, and the *David* was actually designed in 1868 for the easternmost window in the nave south aisle of Llandaff Cathedral, Wales, where it occupies the main part of the left light of a three-light scheme, accompanied in the other two lights by figures of St. Stephen and Samuel, with three small scenes of The Nativity, Presentation in the Temple, and Christ blessing Children in panels below, and a series of three minstrel angels by William Morris in the tracery above. The *David* was a popular design, and was repeated some nineteen times in other windows by the Morris firm, down to as late as 1923. A drapery study for it belongs to the Birmingham City Art Gallery.¹⁴

The other cartoon, wrongly described by Mr. Reed as *The Ascension of Christ* was drawn in 1872 for a panel in the upper part of a window of two lancets and a single tracery

opening, in the north aisle of St. Martin's church, Brighouse, Yorkshire. The relevant entry in Burne-Jones's account books is dated June, 1872: "Resurrection £15. As I live! another." The corresponding left panel, representing *The Transfiguration*, was not a new design, but repeated one drawn in the previous year. The lower part of the window contains four further subjects added twenty-four years later. The Brighouse window is the unique translation into glass by the Morris firm of the Resurrection design. Burne-Jones's comment appears to imply that he had made, about that time, a number of versions of this subject. This, however, was not the case: of his four designs of the subject for stained glass, only one, made in 1861 for All Saints, Selsley, Gloucestershire, pre-dates the Brighouse design, while the others, for St. Margaret's, Hopton-on-Sea, Suffolk, and for All Hallows, Allerton, Liverpool, followed respectively in 1881 and 1885.

Some of Burne-Jones's finest work went into his designs for stained glass. He had an excellent understanding of the limitations imposed by the medium, which prevented him from indulgence in the over-finished elaboration which, to present-day tastes, seems to mar many of his later pictures, and which encouraged a reliance upon expressive linear pattern, for which he possessed a remarkable natural gift. The importance of his influence in the formation of *l'art nouveau*, recognized in recent years, is largely due to the rhythmic flow of his line, always displayed in purer form in his cartoons for glass than in any other aspect of his work.

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NOTES

- 1 The Morris firm was called Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. from its foundation in 1861 until 1874, when the name was changed to Morris & Co.
- 2 Indianapolis, Herron Museum of Art, and New York, Gallery of Modern Art (including the Huntington Hartford Collection), *The Pre-Raphaelites / A Loan Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by Members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and Their Associates*. Indianapolis, Ind., 1964. Catalogue no. 38.
- 3 Burne-Jones's account-books with the Morris firm now belong to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
- 4 Accession no. 1912.1675, *Dabit Tibi Dominus in Omnibus Intellectum* (Timothy); 1912.1676, *Loquere Domine Quia Audit Servus Tuus* (Samuel). Drawings in charcoal, pen, and ink, each 69½ x 24½ inches. The Art Institute of Chicago.
- 5 All ten cartoons have the same accession no. 411.27.
- 6 His initials, indeed, are on the window itself.
- 7 Most noticeably in the *Imago Dei* (Adam).
- 8 Indianapolis catalogue no. 31.
- 9 *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, 39:12-14, Feb. 1941.
- 10 Indianapolis catalogue no. 23.
- 11 *Ibid.*, no. 36.
- 12 *Ibid.*, no. 37.
- 13 Accession nos. 530 and 531.27.
- 14 Accession no. 143.04.