ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation:	ART AS LIVED RELIGION: EDWARD BURNE-JONES AS PAINTER, PRIEST, PILGRIM, AND MONK
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Dissertation directed by:	Professor William L. Pressly, Department of Art History and Archaeology

This dissertation presents the first analysis of religion in the life and work of the

artist Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) and establishes its centrality to his creative practice,

identity, and reception. As a young man, he dreamed of taking holy orders and founding

a monastic brotherhood. After forgoing the priesthood, he ornamented countless

churches as an ecclesiastical designer and maintained a proclivity for painting Christian

iconography, leading contemporaries to proclaim him one of the world's great religious

artists. Today, however, using an outmoded lens that characterizes the nineteenth century

as a period of precipitous religious decline, most art historians assume Burne-Jones

reflects the conventional narrative of lost faith and doubt. Confusing institutional

affiliation with personal belief, they have overlooked his unorthodox views, which defy

the customary parameters of denomination or broad, theological movement, yet signal an

ongoing, complex spiritual commitment. Moreover, misperceiving the secular as a

necessary condition of modernity, some have expunged the religious from his art in an anxiety to legitimize his place in the modernist canon.

Methodologies of lived religion and practice, however, offer a new means of understanding Burne-Jones. Reconsidering belief as something often expressed beyond the confines of corporate worship and creed, as behaviors and discursive patterns occupying spaces of vocation, creativity, identity, and the everyday, demonstrates that art served as a vehicle for enacting his spiritual convictions. In the overlapping, and at times conflicting, guises of a priest mediating the divine, an artist-monk for whom labor is a devotional act, and a pilgrim seeking salvation, Burne-Jones cast his artistic practice as a religious vocation meant to improve the world through the redemptive power of beauty and, in the process, secure divine favor.

In addition to explicating the religious role art-making served for Burne-Jones, this project seeks to reclaim his altarpieces' liturgical functions and reconstruct how Christian audiences adapted and consumed his art for various didactic and devotional purposes. Such analysis underscores his objects' multivalency and the subjectivity of sacredness. Consequently, Burne-Jones's example provides evidence that religion was not necessarily disappearing in the Victorian age, but was being transformed and exercised in increasingly personalized ways.

ART AS LIVED RELIGION: EDWARD BURNE-JONES AS PAINTER, PRIEST, PILGRIM, AND MONK
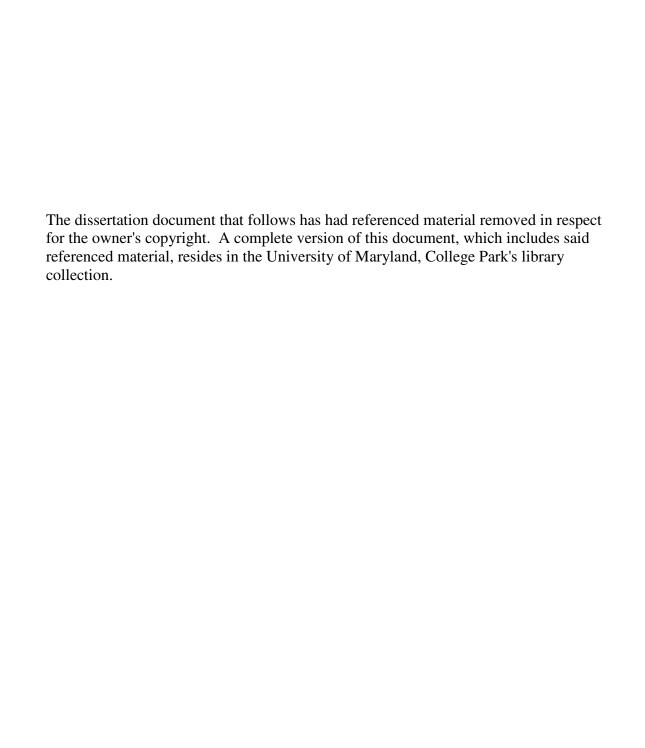

By

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and Yale Center for British Art.

As he painted in the studio, Burne-Jones penned imagined (and sometimes real) letters to his friends, and "into the picture they go many a time," he professed. "What pleasure it could be to you to know that you are imbedded in folds of drapery, or glints of sunlight on city walls," he told one acquaintance. Similarly, the warmth and sustenance of many cherished friendships are bound up in the pages of this dissertation. In their own unique ways, Vanessa Alayrac, Rachel Albin, Tiffany Alkan, Richard Baxstrom, Dave Behrends, Alex Bremner, Julie Buckley, Kim Butler, Donato Esposito, Judith Frank, Cara Fraser, Alex Holway, Chris Howlett, Liz Livingston, Anne Mallek, Mary Magnusson, Suzanne May, Margaret Morse, Evie Norwinski, Jason Rosenfeld, Kristy and Stuart Salsbury, Assane Sane, Dennis Shorts, Abbie Sprague, Kathy Wheeler, Kimberley Wiedefeld, Chloe Wigston-Smith, Amelia Yeates, and Devin and Suzanne Zuber offered up personal gifts of immeasurable benefit to this project. Like Burne-Jones, "I should fail to explain if I tried" how integral they have been to its creation.[1]

For Luis, there are no words, and so I borrow Burne-Jones's for his own most treasured companion and "perfect hero," William Morris: "he has tinged my whole inner being with the beauty of his own, and I know not a single gift for which I owe such gratitude to Heaven as his friendship."[2]

Finally, because language is hopelessly inadequate to convey my gratefulness and awe at their steadfast, loving support and endless generosity, I dedicate this dissertation to my parents.

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[1] Edward Burne-Jones to Sir Alfred [Lord Milner], July 6, 1898, Dep.182, f. 132-33, Lord Milner Papers, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford

[2] Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* (London: Macmillan, 1905), 1:96.

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Introduction: Art as Lived Religion

During his Italian tour with the art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) in 1862,

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) reported the following experience in Milan:

> I am drawing from a fresco...that has never been seen since the day it was
> painted, in jet darkness, in a chapel where candlesticks, paper flowers and
> wooden dolls abound freely. Ruskin…has wheedled the very candlesticks
> off the altar for my use, and the saint's table and his [*sic*] everything that
> was his, and I draw every day now by the light of eight altar candles; also
> a fat man stands at the door and says the church is shut if anybody comes,
> and when the priest himself put his head in, the fat man said 'hush-sh-sh-
> sh!' and frightened poor priest away![3]

Working within a consecrated space of creativity that is at once religious and artistic,

Burne-Jones infuses a typically secular activity with sacred import. His wife, Georgiana,

hazily remembered the site only as an unspecified "Monasterio," evoking a dream-like

environment indicative of her husband's repeated yearning for the carefully-guarded,

impenetrable seclusion of a monastic life marked by silence and a singleness of purpose.

The church can be identified, however, as San Maurizio, annexed to the Benedictine

convent Monastero Maggiore and covered in early-sixteenth-century frescoes by

Bernardino Luini (1482-1532). Burne-Jones's act of copying Luini's two "Christs"

transmits both the genius of the Italian Renaissance painters and what Ruskin called

Luini's "untainted simplicity of religious imagination" to himself.[4] He accumulates

additional traits of saintliness through the borrowing of the "saint's table and everything

that was his." The surrounding residual artifacts of Christian worship, devotional

practice, and Catholic Ritualism—the "candlesticks, paper flowers and wooden dolls"—

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[3] Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* (London: Macmillan, 1904), 1:248.

[4] John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin,* ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, vol. 21 (London: George Allen, 1906), 125. Ruskin directed Burne-Jones, "you must sketch the two [Luini] Christs for me please. This is more important than anything in Venice to *me*." G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:247.

intimate his own religious rite performed through the act of drawing. In this ecclesiastical setting, the "eight altar candles" by which he toils "every day now" invoke the traditional Christian symbolism of light as Jesus's illuminating agency in a fallen world. Burne-Jones thus metaphorically imbues his work with divine inspiration and implies a Christ-like potency to redeem humanity from "jet darkness." Drawing something "never…seen since the day it was painted," he positions himself as both a Neoplatonic unveiler of hidden meanings and a revealer of holy mysteries. By appropriating the altar lights, which serve in Christian liturgy as Eucharistic accessories marking Christ's presence, Burne-Jones declares his priestly function of mediating between God and humanity by translating the divine into visible form. The emptiness of the church—in his memory, populated only by lifeless "dolls" and remnants of corporate worship—speaks to the shift in Victorian Britain away from traditional, public rituals to increasingly privatized, individual forms of religious practice, a transformation which left a growing vacuum of religious authority for the artist to fill. The cleric attempting to enter, representative of orthodox Christianity, has been shut out of his domain. Superseding him are more personalized acts of religious observance and a new priesthood—that of the painter who proclaims God to the world through the redemptive and transcendent beauty of his art.

Although from childhood Burne-Jones already exhibited promising artistic inclinations, he initially pursued ordination in the Church of England. In 1856, however, he relinquished his ministerial plans and left Oxford University to take up painting and ecclesiastical design, partly in response to what he considered a divine calling. In addition to his well-known representations of medieval legend and mythology, as an

artist he remained committed to biblical subjects and Christian iconography. Such themes can be traced through every medium of his oeuvre, including his most intimate, introspective drawings, watercolors and caricatures, as well as commissioned paintings and those executed independently of patronage. Through his role as the principal designer of stained glass and tapestry for William Morris's decorative arts firm, he supplied the churches of England with enough angels, in his words, "to fill Europe."[5]

Upon the artist's death in 1898 the critic William Sharp observed, "Of Edward Burne-Jones this is certainly true,—that his work is his spiritual biography."[6] Contemporaries hailed him as one of the "great religious painters of the world" who instilled even secular subjects with "Christian thought and spiritual aspiration."[7] A century later, one of his foremost chroniclers, Martin Harrison, pronounced his stained-glass designs "anti-pietistic," "humanistic," and driven by a stalwart "secularism."[8] What has happened in the intervening years to expunge so thoroughly the religiosity of Burne-Jones's life and art? Looking back with the outmoded, twentieth-century presumption that the previous century was one of pronounced religious decline, many scholars have seen in Burne-Jones only what they expected to find: religious doubt or indifference, lost faith, or most of all, irrelevancy of religious belief to his life and work. Burne-Jones often conflated the religious and artistic, and yet his spiritual views have been marginalized or ignored because they do not fit neatly into the theoretical paradigm of secularization with which historians of British art overwhelmingly approach the

[5] Quoted in A. Charles Sewter, *The Stained Glass of William Morris and His Circle,* vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), 91.

[6] William Sharp, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," *Atlantic Monthly* 82 (Sept. 1898): 375.

[7] Alfred T. Story, "Great Religious Painters of the World: Sir Edward Burne-Jones," *Sunday Strand* 4 (July 1901): 32; R. P. Downes, "A Great Painter: Sir Edward Burne-Jones," *Great Thoughts* 4 (Apr. 1899): 8.

[8] Martin Harrison, "Church Decoration and Stained Glass," in *William Morris*, ed. Linda Parry (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 107.

nineteenth century. In a 2003 *Art Bulletin* essay, Sally Promey traced the powerful effect

this distorted framework has exerted on the scholarship of American art.[9] Accordingly,

Promey and an expanding number of her colleagues such as Charles Colbert, John Davis,

Gail E. Husch, Elizabeth Johns, David Morgan, Kathleen Pyne, and Kristin Ann Schwain

have innovatively reintegrated religion into the study of nineteenth-century American

visual arts over the last fifteen years.[10] Even though continental Europe presents a

different set of historical parameters (discussed below), scholars such as Maura Coughlin,

Michael Paul Driskel, Cordula A. Grewe, and Debra Silverman have nevertheless begun

reassessing the relationships between religion and French and German pictorial

representation in similarly fruitful ways.[11] For the most part, however, comparable

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[9] Sally M. Promey, "The 'Return' of Religion in the Scholarship of American Art," *Art Bulletin* 85, no. 3 (2003), 581-603.

[10] Charles Colbert, "A Critical Medium: James Jackson Jarves's Vision of Art History," *American Art* 16, no. 1 (2002): 18-35; John Davis, *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1996); Gail E. Husch, *Something Coming: Apocalyptic Expectation and Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Painting* (Hanover, NH: Univ. Press of New England, 2000); Elizabeth Johns, *Winslow Homer: The Nature of Observation* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2002); David Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999) and *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998); Promey, *Painting Religion in Public: John Singer Sargent's Triumph of Religion at the Boston Public Library* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999), "'The Ribband of Faith': George Inness, Color Theory, and the Swedenborgian Church," *American Art Journal* 26, nos. 1-2 (1994): 44-65, *Spiritual Spectacles: Vision and Image in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Shakerism* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1993); and *Visual Culture of American Religions*, ed. David Morgan and Promey (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2001); Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thinking in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1996) and "Portrait of a Collector as an Agnostic: Charles Lang Freer and Connoisseurship," *Art Bulletin* 78 (1996): 75-97; and Kristin Ann Schwain, "Figuring Belief: American Art and Modern Religious Experience," (PhD diss., Stanford Univ., 2001).

[11] Michael Paul Driskel, *Representing Belief: Religion, Art, and Society in Nineteenth-Century France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1992); Cordula A. Grewe, "The Invention of the Secular Devotional Picture," *Word & Image* 16, no. 1 (2000): 45-57, *Painting Religion: Art and the Sacred Imaginary in German Romanticism* (Ashgate, forthcoming), and "Reenchantment as Artistic Practice: Strategies of Emulation in German Romantic Art and Theory," in "Secularization and Disenchantment," special issue, *New German Critique* 94 (2005): 36-71; and Debra Silverman, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Search for Sacred Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000). At the 88th Annual Conference of the College Art Association (New York, Feb. 23-26, 2000), Grewe convened a session on "Reviving a Historical Corpse: Rewriting the historiography of nineteenth-century religious art" with papers by Alicia Craig Faxon, Maria E. Di Pasquale, Brian Grosskurth, and Joyce C. Polistena. At the 95th Annual Conference (New York, Feb. 14-17, 2007), Maura Coughlin chaired an equally illuminating panel on

revisionist accounts have yet to gain a footing in the history of British art.[12] This

dissertation, then, examines how religion intersected with Burne-Jones's artistic practice,

identity and reception in order to begin redressing this gap in the literature.

Victorian Religious Painting

To begin, it seems appropriate to set the stage by briefly establishing the broader

context of Victorian religious painting, the practice of which was far more pervasive than

the thin body of existing scholarship might otherwise suggest. By no means was Burne-

Jones alone in exploring art's sacred potential, adopting religious artistic identities, or

tapping into the market for biblical subjects. One thinks most immediately of the Pre-

Raphaelite Brotherhood (1848-54) and, in particular, due to extensive scholarship by

Judith Bronkhurst, Michaela Giebelhausen, and George P. Landow, England's celebrated

Protestant painter, William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), whose Orientalist projects

pursued ethnographic "realism" in the Holy Land.[13] Likewise, James Jacques Tissot

(1836-1902) sought in the Near East a more "authentic," mystical Christianity for his

seven hundred biblical watercolors, published as *The Life of Our Saviour Jesus Christ*

"Piety or Propaganda? Modern Religious Art in France, 1850-1927" with participants Judith Dolkart,
Emily Gephart, James D. Herbert, Neil McWilliam, Laura Morowitz, and Joyce C. Polistena.

[12] Michaela Giebelhausen has made significant strides toward this end in *Painting the Bible:
Representation and Belief in Mid-Victorian England*, (Aldershot, Hants, UK: Ashgate, 2006). David
Morgan's current project, *Print and Piety: British Missions, Evangelical Print Culture, and the Birth of a
New Christendom*, should also be a refreshing addition to the dialogue when published.

[13] Judith Bronkhurst, "'An interesting series of adventures to look back upon': William Holman-Hunt's
visit to the Dead Sea in November 1854,"in *Pre-Raphaelite Papers*, ed. Leslie Parris (London: Tate
Gallery, 1984), 111-125 and *William Holman Hunt: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press,
2006); Michaela Giebelhausen, "Holman Hunt, William Dyce and the image of Christ," in *The Victorian
Supernatural*, ed. Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ.
Press, 2004), 173-194; George P. Landow, *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows: Biblical Typology in
Victorian Literature, Art, and Thought* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) and *William Holman
Hunt and Typological Symbolism* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979).

(1897) and, posthumously, as *The Old Testament* (1904).[14] Donato Esposito's research

documents that an influx of newly-excavated Assyrian artifacts similarly fueled a surge in

Old Testament subjects in the 1860s, exemplified by painters such as Edward Armitage

(1817-96), Edwin Long (1829-91), and Edward Poynter (1836-1919), who attempted to

reconstruct the mood and settings of ancient Hebrew civilization with greater historical

accuracy.[15] After early medievalizing works such as *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1848-

49), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82) later transformed biblical women like Mary

Magdalene into sensual meditations on feminine beauty. Joseph Noel Paton (1821-1901)

treated Christian subjects in an academic, high Renaissance manner, while Gustave Doré

(1832-83) presented the Bible in dramatic, theatrical style at his gallery in New Bond

Street from 1868-92.[16] Simeon Solomon (1840-1905) painted androgynous or effeminate

rabbis as well as Catholic clergy and pagan high priests, underscoring the potential

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[14] Tissot's illustrations of the life of Christ appeared first in a French edition in 1896. See Jewish Museum, *James Tissot: Biblical Paintings* (New York: Jewish Museum, 1982), Nancy Rose Marshall and Malcolm Warner, eds., *James Tissot: Victorian Life, Modern Love* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1999), and Brooklyn Museum, *Selections from Tissot's "The Life of Christ"* (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1989). Burne-Jones strongly disliked Orientalism and was "so sorry" that Holman Hunt "went out to stay in the East, it always has seemed to me that it did his work immense harm." He felt similarly that Tissot's watercolors were "so overlaid with what he's picked up in Palestine, that some of it's hardly to be recognised." In particular, he criticized the "local colouring" as "obscur[ing] any sense of the subject," and refused "to be put off with turban and burnous." Tissot approached his subject, Burne-Jones concluded, "from quite the opposite side from any view I could take of it." Thomas Matthews Rooke, "Notes of Conversations among the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 1890-1899" photocopy of a typescript, 1900, 2:224-25, 178. II.RC.AA.16-19, Special Collections, National Art Library, London. Nevertheless, something in the designs struck a chord and he "went often to see them, sometimes with friends and sometimes by himself." G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:281.
[15] Donato Esposito, "*Dalziels' Bible Gallery* (1881): Assyria and the Biblical Illustration in Nineteenth-Century Britain," in *Orientalism, Assyriology, and the Bible*, ed. Steven W. Holloway (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006), 267-96 and "The Artistic Discovery of Assyria by British and French Artists, 1850-1925," (PhD diss., Univ. of Plymouth, forthcoming).
[16] The existing publications on Doré's religious work almost wholly focus on his illustrations, such as those for the Bible or Dante's *Divine Comedy*. There remains to be written a thorough evaluation of his religious paintings. *Fantasy and Faith: The Art of Gustave Doré* promises to advance the conversation about this long overlooked religious artist. Eric Zafran, with Robert Rosenblum and Lisa Small, *Fantasy and Faith: The Art of Gustave Doré* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, forthcoming).

diversity of religious subjects within a single artist's oeuvre.[17] Even at the Grosvenor

Gallery—the primary home for "art for art's sake" aestheticism—saints, creation

accounts, Hebraic heroes and heroines, nativities, Passion narratives, churches, visions of

the Holy Land, and religious genre scenes made scattered appearances. Alphonse Legros

(1837-1911), Thomas Matthews Rooke (1842-1942), Roddam Spencer Stanhope (1829-

1908), George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), and a host of lesser-known painters exhibited

such works alongside Burne-Jones's own persistent display of biblical subjects and

Christian virtues. At the annual Royal Academy exhibitions, Michaela Giebelhausen's

statistical analysis indicates religious painting comprised a relatively minor 1.5-4.5

percent in 1825-70, but this highbrow venue and the few prominent individuals cited

above paint only a partial picture of the state of Victorian religious art.[18]

In addition, countless moralizing "problem pictures," topographical renderings of

biblical lands, illustrations of scripture, architectural studies of ecclesiastical structures,

and familial genre scenes of Sabbath observance or Christian holidays undoubtedly

graced the sale rooms, commercial galleries, and other exhibiting societies of Victorian

Britain, executed in a broad range of styles and media. This prolific output of

commonplace religious work by lesser-known artists represents one gap in the literature

requiring further attention. Neither has there been much sustained inquiry into the

pervasive prosaic visual culture of Victorian Christianity as Britons would have

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[17] The recent Simeon Solomon exhibition organized by the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery demonstrated the complexity of the painter's oeuvre beyond merely its Jewish character. See in particular Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Solomon's Classicism" and Colin Cruise, "'Pressing all religions into his service': Solomon's ritual paintings and their contexts" in Cruise and others, *Love Revealed: Simeon Solomon and the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Merrell, 2005), 39-45, 57-63.

[18] Giebelhausen defines religious painting broadly, encompassing "all categories of paintings with religious connotations, such as scenes from the Old and New Testaments, historical scenes, domestic genre and allegory." She acknowledges the potential margin for error since many of the works are untraced and their precise nature can be difficult to discern from titles in exhibition catalogs. The statistics indicate religious painting reached its greatest peak in 1835-1840s. *Painting the Bible*, 31.

encountered it in mass-produced engravings, print shop windows, advertising, panoramas, theatrical performances, and in the profuse illustrated Bibles, prayer books, and devotional tracts for sale at superstore book retailers in London's West End.[19]

Most glaringly, scholarship on the topic of religious art during this era is almost solely limited to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood or painters who flourished in the earlier Victorian period such as William Dyce (1806-64), John Rogers Herbert (1810-90), and Ford Madox Brown (1821-93). Notwithstanding several projects on the mid-century, the most accomplished being those of Lindsay Errington, Michaela Giebelhausen, and George Landow, there is astonishingly little material on religious painting after the break-up of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1854 aside from isolated studies following the remainder of Holman Hunt's long career.[20] Yet, while Giebelhausen's statistics from 1825 to 1870 may show a marked drop in religious paintings exhibited at the Royal Academy after 1850, they equally indicate a peak again in 1858-65, if not to the same numbers as the previous decade. Old Testament subjects averaged the same number in 1858-65 as in 1835-50, while the average of New Testament subjects actually *increased* 33 percent during the later period.[21] Her charts track the presence of religious painting only up to 1870, and it would be interesting to examine how these trends continue over the remaining century. Apparently archaeological excavations, the legacy of Pre-

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[19] On panoramas see Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1978) and Ralph Hyde, *Panoramania!: The Art and Entertainment of the "All-Embracing" View* (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1988). Regarding Bible illustration, relevant studies include Thomas Sherrer Ross Boase, "Biblical illustration in nineteenth-century English art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29 (1966): 349-67 and Esposito, "*Dalziels' Bible Gallery*" (see n. 13 above). Esposito (270) documents the existence of London's giant book emporia and the massive quantities of religious publications they offered the Victorian consumer.

[20] Lindsay Errington, "Social and Religious Themes in English Art 1840-1860" (PhD diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, 1973). For Giebelhausen and Landow, see nn. 10-11 above.

[21] Giebelhausen speculates that the popularity of Pre-Raphaelite painting and the success of William Holman Hunt's solo exhibition of *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* in 1860 may have sparked this resurgence of interest in New Testament subjects in 1860-65. *Painting the Bible*, 31-33.

Raphaelitism, and the post-Darwinian climate, ignited further by the spread of biblical criticism in the 1860s and the proliferation of alternative spiritualities among other factors, provided fertile ground for artistic responses to religion that have yet to be adequately addressed.[22]

As the summary above also elucidates, a bewildering array of artistic possibilities that can loosely be categorized as "religious" accompanied the increased complexity and diversification of Victorian belief. One of the most pressing questions requiring further investigation, then, is the problematic issue of how, exactly, to circumscribe the "religious" in British art of the later nineteenth century. Painters such as Simeon Solomon offer a reminder that while Victorian religion was in many ways synonymous with Christianity, there was nevertheless a Jewish tradition of visual representation. Likewise, Orientalist mania produced scenes of Arabs engaged in Islamic practices. Similarly, the often overlooked strains of Unitarianism and various Nonconformist denominations should be accounted for visually. How do spiritualism and the occult fit into the discussion? In terms of subject matter, does one include landscapes of holy sites in the near East? Genre scenes in church interiors? Allegories of traditional Christian virtues? Portraits of eminent divines? This list only begins to scratch the surface but makes readily apparent the need for further, sustained attention to the topic of religious painting—and its fundamental definition—in the second half of the century.

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[22] Giebelhausen offers one way forward by suggesting in her conclusion that a "poetic" mode of painting began to dominate in the 1860s and "the 1870s registered a return to Blakean spirituality." Ibid., 193, 198.

Statement of the Problem

Indicative of this lacuna, studies combining issues of belief with analysis of Burne-Jones's work are exceedingly rare in spite of his prolific output of biblically-based paintings and ecclesiastical designs. Most art historians present his spiritual influences or convictions only as incidental biographical detail, detached from the discussion of an object's meaning or issues of artistic production, identity, and reception. Instead, attention is generally directed toward iconography and stylistic analysis, documentation about commissions, or interpretations that ignore issues of audience, theological context, or personal faith.[23] Richard Dorment offered an exception to this pattern in his 1976 dissertation on Burne-Jones's mosaics in St. Paul's Within-the-Walls, Rome, which attends to their physical environment, experiential aspect, doctrine, and relationship to the artist's beliefs.[24] More often, particularly in literature surrounding the Aesthetic Movement, Burne-Jones's paintings are read as secularized reincarnations of Christian subjects, stripped of any residual religious significance. Caroline Arscott and Beverly Anne Joyce have recently contributed refreshing, sophisticated analyses of how the intrinsic structure of his objects articulate an "almost pantheistic" faith in a "universal life force" and Neoplatonic "philosophically-based" spirituality, respectively, although their

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[23] Dorothy Mercer's dissertation on Burne-Jones's *Days of Creation*, for example, is primarily a detailed survey of iconographic sources which sidelines the artist's own beliefs and categorically rejects the idea that he was at all interested at all in Christianity. She defines the artist's motivations for painting the *Days of Creation* as a "passion for an ideal historical past," a protest against "the ravages of the environment," and the "pursuit of ideal feminine beauty." When she does finally address Burne-Jones's beliefs in her last chapter, she takes up the rhetoric of aestheticism and summarizes his religion as one "grafted to his love of beauty and art and his dream of an ideal woman and an ideal life." By interpreting "the Creation in Christian terms," Mercer argues, Burne-Jones showed no personal interest in the religion depicted and was merely responding to the "fact that his hexaemeral cycles were commissioned to decorate Christian churches and bibles." Dorothy Mercer, "*The Days of Creation* and Other Hexaemeral Cycles by Edward Burne-Jones" (PhD diss., Univ. of Georgia, 1989), 144-45, 150, 155, 148.

[24] Richard Dorment, "Burne-Jones and the Decoration of St. Paul's American Church, Rome" (PhD diss., Columbia Univ., 1976).

conclusions still marginalize Burne-Jones's Christianity.[25] Such projects, however, have

been limited to a single object, decorative scheme, or a small range of works.

In spite of the abundant literature on Burne-Jones, little material specifically

attempts to thoughtfully and thoroughly define his religious beliefs, and some critical

treatments excise any reference to religion at all.[26] More often than not, scholars address

his spiritual views with only a few cursory sentences, by and large all variations on the

same theme of faith lost, or at least shaken by science and modernity. Requisite facts

about Burne-Jones's Evangelical upbringing, youthful enthusiasm for the Catholic

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[25] Caroline Arscott's engagement with the overlapping modes of the pictorial and the decorative in Burne-Jones's stained glass is grounded in the physical medium and construction of the objects, creatively exploring the three-dimensional, sculptural effects of corporeality and entrapment encouraged by the structure and diffusion of light in Burne-Jones's windows in Birmingham Cathedral. She argues that the organic building up of form in the windows and their particular use of lead-lines reveal the artist's own "almost pantheistic" belief system in which the Holy Trinity and the Bible are rejected, and salvation rests not in faith in God but in "the positive potential of a universal life force." By asserting that the religion embedded in the windows' construction reflects Burne-Jones's personal beliefs, however, she ascribes a level of intentionality to the designs that cannot be substantiated since J. H. Dearle and studio craftsmen were responsible for the lead-lines upon which her argument hinges. Furthermore, her conclusions about his "pantheistic" religion and eschewal of Christian doctrine are based only on a single conversation isolated from its context, rather than a broader amalgamation of evidence, and do not acknowledge Burne-Jones's established Roman Catholic leanings during the 1890s. Caroline Arscott, "Fractured figures: The sculptural logic of Burne-Jones's stained glass," in *Sculpture and the Pursuit of a Modern Ideal in Britain, c.1880-1930*, ed. David J. Getsy (Aldershot, Hants, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 39-57. Using Neoplatonic, German Idealist and German Romantic philosophy, Beverly Anne Joyce demonstrates how his compositions are, at times, constructed dialectically to engage the beholder in a fantasy world and facilitate his or her momentary transcendence to a higher spiritual realm where he or she is reconciled with beauty, the embodiment of divine love. In this "philosophically based religion of art," Joyce argues, "attainment of this ultimate state of being would signify a sense of wholeness for society and reflect an expression of the infinite nature of God." She only traces this pattern, however, in a select set of mythological, classical and literary subjects, primarily from the 1870s. Although Joyce touches on the inherently religious element of this Neoplatonic paradigm, she fails to engage with its implications, seeing it only as a secular substitute for a failed Christianity. "'Sighing After the Infinite:' Masculinity, Androgyny, and Femininity in the Art of Edward Burne-Jones" (PhD diss., Univ. of Kansas, 2003), 57.

[26] Christine Poulson has been the only one to explicitly focus on his religious beliefs. The majority of her article, however, is given over to a historical recounting of the religious circumstances surrounding the Evangelicalism of his youth and the Anglo-Catholicism of his teenage and university years. She analyzes his religious transformation at Oxford University and, unlike most scholars, attempts to sketch his beliefs over the course of his remaining career. Poulson discerns a life-long mystical spirituality and, more explicitly, an escalating Catholicism, even seeing Burne-Jones's Christian faith as a divisive factor in his rift from Morris, an atheist. In the limited space of an article, however, her analysis is necessarily brief and she is unable to address how Burne-Jones's religious views impacted his art, modes of production, or public identity. "Morris, Burne-Jones, and God," *Journal of the William Morris Society*, 13, no.1 (1998): 45-54.

revival, his desire to become a priest, and his "religious perplexity" at Oxford are usually

recounted, and obligatory quotes about his affinity for "Medieval" or "Christmas Carol"

Christianity, "too beautiful not to be true," are often inserted to stand for an entire

theological system and subtly imply a superficiality in his attachment to religion after

departing university.[27] This is generally perceived as a pivotal break with Christianity, or

at least the church, dividing his religious biography into two distinct phases rather than

considering the fluid, shifting nature of belief over his lifetime. Scholars are tentative

and ambiguous about the degree and nature of his belief or unbelief after he left Oxford

and overwhelmingly downplay the role Christianity played in his life and work from this

point forward. Often, his unconventional views are misrepresented as the rejection of all

religious proclivities in favor of an agnostic, atheist, or humanistic perspective.[28] Others

suggest a secular "religion of art" or "worship of beauty" replaced Christianity as the

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[27] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:99; Edward Burne-Jones, *Burne-Jones Talking: His conversations 1895-1898 preserved by his studio assistant Thomas Rooke*, ed. Mary Lago (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1981), 27 (hereafter cited as Lago); G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:209.

[28] In her 1975 biography of Burne-Jones, for example, Penelope Fitzgerald claims the artist underwent "painful religious doubts" at Oxford and a "process of loss" that was "agony." Admitting that aspects of Evangelicalism exerted a lifelong grip on him, Fitzgerald adds, "He continued to believe in the Gospels, but transferred the meaning of the events…to the everyday life of humanity. The Redemption meant the alleviation of suffering in this world, and Judgement Day was a continuous process." *Edward Burne-Jones: A Biography* (London: Joseph, 1975), 34, 31-32. Similarly, Alan Crawford argues that, no longer an Anglican after Oxford, Burne-Jones approached Christian iconography from a secular standpoint: "when he abandoned the church as a career in 1855, he did not abandon its visual language. Annunciations spoke to him about feminine awakening, Crucifixions about the wonder of redemption. He felt their collective, historical force." Crawford, "Burne-Jones as a Decorative Artist," in *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, ed. Stephen Wildman and John Christian (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 8. Éva Péteri presents the most extreme scholarly secularization of Burne-Jones's paintings. Maintaining that he underwent a "loss of faith" and "lost his interest in and devotion to religion" at university, she insists, without any evidence, that the Oxford Movement's influence is "barely evident from his works" and concludes that his "late Biblical paintings have no more religious content than any of his other pictures produced at the time." She perceives an absence of originality in his biblical subjects and attributes this to his "lack of interest in matters of religion." She ends her study by declaring a decline in Victorian religious art after 1860 and pronouncing Pre-Raphaelite art after this point as based purely on historical tradition rather than personal conviction. Equating these questionable observations with the decline of religion's influence on society and the "candid acknowledgement that the centuries-old foundations of Christian belief were shaking," Péteri is a perfect example of an art historian approaching her subject with the expectation of secularization. *Victorian Approaches to Religion as Reflected in the Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (Budapest: Akadémi Kiadó, 2003), 117-19, 123-24, 129.

driving force behind his life and work.[29] More frequently, Burne-Jones's chroniclers

maintain that he disavowed *organized* religion (i.e. Christianity) and remained a spiritual

man, perhaps even with Christian morals, but have failed to clarify what constituted this

lingering, unorthodox religiosity.[30] The widespread assumption is that whatever belief

persisted, it held little relevance for Burne-Jones's art.

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[29] Russell Ash, for example, asserts, "the myth and mystery of his art became a substitute for religion." *Sir Edward Burne-Jones* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), pl. 18. Gail-Nina Anderson and Joanne Wright similarly conclude that in Burne-Jones's art Christian iconography "underwent the quiet translation from religious piety into the worship of Beauty and art itself." *Heaven on Earth: The Religion of Beauty in Late Victorian Art* (Nottingham: Djanogly Art Gallery, 1994), 18. In his monograph, Christopher Wood claims Burne-Jones's devotion was to the "religion of beauty," maintaining, "Beauty was his goddess, and he was her disciple." *Burne-Jones: The Life and Works of Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898)* (New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 1998), 6.

[30] In the 1971 catalog accompanying the first major exhibition of Burne-Jones's work since 1933, for instance, W. S. Taylor posited that although Morris and Burne-Jones "abandoned their theological studies," they "retained their spiritual beliefs, though not in the orthodox form of the Christian Church," but is silent on what these principles might have encompassed. *Burne-Jones* (Sheffield: Mappin Art Gallery, 1971), 3. Martin Harrison and Bill Waters contended in their 1973 monograph, "The act of creation was a religious and mystical experience." After foregoing his clerical plans, Burne-Jones always "treated the world and his experience of it, in his art, from a spiritual point of view resulting in a sacred treatment of secular themes." *Burne-Jones*, rev. ed. (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1989), 157, 172. In her recent monograph, Debra Mancoff similarly stated, "He was not religious in any conventional sense." He treated "the biblical world" as a mysterious "mythology" rather than "theology," she argues, and merely entertained a romantic attachment to the superficial, external, "medieval" and "mystical" forms of "Christmas carol Christianity." Citing the artist's refusal to neither "define nor debate the nature of faith," she concludes that he appreciated religion as a detached observer, objectively valuing its "inexplicable power to touch the soul and inspire the imagination." *Burne-Jones* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1998), 93. David Cecil elaborated on these remnants of Christianity, which he used to further his agenda of portraying Burne-Jones as an escapist dreamer in retreat from melancholy, modernity and religious doubt. The painter's youthful religiosity is cast as "a passing phase, never to be repeated," attributable to the motives of loneliness, the aesthetic appeal of worship, and a "moral sense" or "reverence for virtue." At Oxford, Cecil posits, he suffered a "loss of religious faith." Afterwards, all that remained was "a taste for the charm of Christian legend and a vague belief in God," as well as "moral sympathies" that informed his perception of life "in Christian terms" as "a search for spiritual salvation, to be achieved with the help of the specifically Christian virtues of charity, humility, mercy." He does points out that the artist "called himself a Christian" but "the central crucial doctrines of Christianity" such as the Fall, Atonement or Jesus "did not mean much to him" and his "longing" for faith "remained unfulfilled." *Visionary and Dreamer: Two Poetic Painters, Samuel Palmer and Edward Burne-Jones* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), 100-1, 112, 107, 110, 143, 150. Michael Robert Case sees the artist as a "representative product of the Victorian crisis of faith" who ended up with "a vague and undogmatic belief in a distant God" and ongoing "sympathy for Christian moral values." Unlike other scholars, however, he underscores the artist's immense respect for religion: "normally angered by displays of irreverence," Burne-Jones "would attack external forms, such as the clergy, but he would not mock the central faith." "An Annotated Edition of Letters by Edward Burne-Jones to Selected Victorian Poets," (PhD diss., Arizona State Univ., 1984), 45. Christopher Wood also casts the artist as "a moralist who lost his religious faith" but retained "Christian moral virtues, such as charity, humility and mercy." Wood, *Burne-Jones*, 6, 16. Suzanne Fagence Cooper, who acknowledges a greater degree of religiosity in Burne-Jones than most scholars, describes his "unconventional Christian practice" nebulously by citing his "long[ing] to recreate the spectacle of the pre-Reformation church," his

Contrary to popular opinion, however, Burne-Jones's faith was not a casualty of science, biblical criticism, or other modern developments. While not unaffected by these challenges, his inclination was to turn toward religion, not away from it, proclaiming "the more materialistic science becomes, the more angels shall I paint."[31] In addition to practicing prayer and calling himself a Christian, he "never doubt[ed] for a moment the real presence of God, I should never debate about it any more than I should argue about Beauty, and the things I most love."[32] At different points throughout his career, from its beginnings at Oxford until the last years of his life, he formulated his artistic practice as a religious exercise assuming a range of guises such as holy warfare, invocation of the divine, or ascetic discipline. In addition to tropes such as the seducer of models and melancholy genius, Burne-Jones variously adopted multiple religio-artistic identities, trying on the robes of a priest, the habit of a monk, the armor of a crusading knight, and the penetrating vision of a prophetic seer, among others. Ultimately, he conceived of his creation of beautiful objects as an altruistic contribution toward healing God's broken, suffering world and, accordingly, a sacred activity helping to secure his own salvation.

Secularization Theory and Its Discontents

Picking up on Sally Promey's argument that secularization theory has dramatically shaped the investigation of American art history, I would like to propose here that it has been an equally powerful, tacit determiner in the field of British art

"somewhat unorthodox response to the Anglicanism of his youth," his assertion that the Nativity was "too beautiful not to be true," and his frequent ruminating on heaven. In his art, she detects evidence of a belief in the overlapping of the material and spiritual worlds and the intervention of God. *Pre-Raphaelite Art in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2003), 138, 158.

[31] Reported by Oscar Wilde in his lecture "The English Renaissance of Art" on Jan. 9, 1882. *Essays and Lectures*, 2nd ed. (London, 1909), 132, quoted in Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 237.

[32] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:325.

history and Burne-Jones scholarship. While the condition of religion in modern society has been greatly debated in many disciplines, those who study the visual arts of Victorian England have largely failed to keep pace with the updated sociological and historical research that now recognizes religion to be an enduring, influential force both in the contemporary world and in the past. The particular hypotheses and assumptions once commonly held about secularization have been almost wholly discredited, and yet they still maintain a vice-like grip on discussions of nineteenth-century British art.

Before addressing how these operate within the discipline, it is important to clarify some terminology. Secularization is a difficult term to define in a straightforward, factual sense because many of its analysts and critics have often failed to clearly delimit their terms. Definitions of secularization are varied and frequently go beyond an objective description to venture inferentially into the realm of suppositions and predictions. Consequently, too often definitions of secularization serve to reinforce implicitly the theoretical conclusions the writer wants to draw. Thus it is essential to tease out here the distinction between *secularization* as an observable historical occurrence and *secularization theory*, which is presumptive, interpretive, and normative.

In the way it has traditionally been understood, secularization *per se* refers generally to an increased differentiation in society between the "secular" and the "religious" spheres, and, specifically, a reduction in the latter's significance as secular institutions, practices, and modes of thought usurp the spaces and power religion formerly occupied. A commonly cited definition is that of Bryan Wilson, one of the earliest writers on secularization, who described it in 1966 as a neutral term demarcating "the process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social

significance."[33] Yet, there are questionable elements even in these seemingly benign

definitions. The very notion of "the secular" as a distinct entity distinguishable from the

"religious" is contestable, and the terms *process* and *significance* carry certain

implications which must be qualified and attended to below.

It is more useful, therefore, to outline specifically the types of societal changes,

quantifiable with evidence, which can be considered part of "secularization" as a neutral,

historical meaning. These include, first and foremost, the disentanglement of religious

institutions from their formal control of social, economic, and political systems.

Disestablishment of a state church or the founding of an officially secular government

such as the United States is an obvious example of this trend otherwise known as

institutional differentiation. Secularization also incorporates the transfer of property or

resources from religious entities to the state or individuals, for example the dissolution of

the monasteries in Reformation Britain in 1538-41. John C. Sommerville delineates

another category, desacralization, which refers to the process by which religious

organizations such as the YMCA (founded 1844) gradually begin to perform more

secular rather than religious roles in society.[34] The Oxbridge universities' transformation

from their monastic medieval roots and primary theological purpose to modern secular

academies would fall into this category. Additionally, Sommerville classifies profanation

as another kind of secularization whereby secular bodies come to administer activities

religious groups once conducted, for instance governmental social welfare policies

supplanting the church's role as caretaker of the poor.[35] As advancements in science and

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[33] Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment* (London: Watts, 1966), xiv.
[34] John C. Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England: From Religious Culture to Religious Faith* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), 5.
[35] Ibid.

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knowledge take place, secularization sometimes encompasses a reorganization of human thought or social, political, and economic systems around principles purportedly based on reason or rationality instead of "superstition" (known as disenchantment). Finally, secularization can, but does not necessarily, refer to dwindling numbers of people who profess belief in a higher power, belong to conventional religious communities, and/or participate in public sacred rituals.

As anthropologist Talal Asad and Promey clarify, secularization *theory*, on the other hand, essentially maintains that religion is incompatible with modernity. Based on an evolutionary model of the world informed by Auguste Comte, G. W. F. Hegel, and Max Weber, secularization theory considers religion a characteristic of primitive agrarian societies reliant upon superstition. With advances in empirical knowledge and reason, society matures from this childlike state into an enlightened urban civilization where rationality supposedly displaces belief in the supernatural. Such development takes place in linear fashion and is necessarily accompanied by society's transformation from a "religious" to a "secular" condition. This propulsion toward disenchantment posits modernity, as Asad explains, as hinging on "a direct access to reality, a stripping away of myth, magic, and the sacred."[36] The patterns of secularization described above, the hypothesis goes, have thus "progressed" along a trajectory of decline during the last few centuries to the point religion is no longer relevant, powerful or influential for individuals or society at large. Instead, any lingering practice, ritual, or religious influence is relegated to the private sphere. Such changes are taken to be inevitable, universal, and irreversible characteristics of modernity.

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[36] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2003), 13.

Although elements of secularization have been occurring since the Reformation, the theoretical paradigm posits the nineteenth century, with its rapid "modernization," as the crucial moment when religious decline gained unstoppable momentum in Western Europe. Victorian England, as one of the most pronounced sites of industrialization, scientific discovery, intellectual activity, and urbanization, thus plays an integral role in the secularization thesis. Consequently, the conventional history of religion in nineteenth-century Britain usually mirrors the expected patterns of secularization theory: The century opens with a spirit of evangelical revival in revolt from the staid Anglicanism of the eighteenth century. Nonconformism, or those denominations outside the Church of England such as Methodism and Presbyterianism, spread as dissatisfaction with the established Church grew. In the 1830s a group of "High-Churchmen" at Oxford University promoted religious revival by resuscitating medieval liturgy and the Anglican Church's theological lineage with pre-Reformation Rome. Known initially as the Tractarians because of their polemical *Tracts for the Times* (1833-41), their ideas proved a polarizing force within the Church of England, especially after several members converted to Catholicism. Their destabilizing influence lingered through the century in the broader Anglo-Catholic movement and a particular sect of Ritualists who advocated greater integration of Catholic ritual and ecclesiastical ornament in Anglican worship. Other factions, such as Broad-Churchmen, who endorsed a liberal theology, and Christian Socialists, who emphasized the church's social responsibility, further fissured the established Church, undermining its authority. In 1846, George Eliot's translation of David Friedrich Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1835) introduced a new style of German biblical criticism into England and inaugurated an era of growing doubt about the infallibility of

Scripture, its divine inspiration, and the feasibility of biblical miracles that gained wider

currency from the 1860s. Geological discoveries and the publication of Darwin's *Origin*

of the Species in 1859, which chipped away at the existence of God and the Creation

account in Genesis, aided the critical dismantling of the Bible. The grim realities of

industrial labor and the poverty-stricken slums of the modern city further tested the

notion of a benevolent God. For all these reasons, the narrative posits, Victorian Britain,

especially in the second half of the century, was a country of widespread religious doubt.

By the fin de siécle, Christianity's significance had crumbled, leaving behind a mostly

secular nation where large numbers had stopped attending church and belief in God and

the Bible's credibility was greatly diminished, or so the story goes. As historian Callum

G. Brown elaborates, religious decline has been imagined as one of the key

characteristics of modern Britain, "caused by the advance of reason through the

Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment, and through the social and economic

dislocation of the industrial revolution."[37] Pursuant to these changes, Brown continues,

theoretically "the mind is liberalised, the people urbanised and urbane, literate and

educated, devoid of irrationality, and scientific in their understanding of this new world

of machines."[38]

While secularization itself has certainly taken place, in recent decades sociologists

and historians have critically dismantled its ties to modernity, while avidly debating the

nature and limitations of its parameters—how, when, where, and for whom secularization

takes place. Even one of the earliest champions of secularization theory, Peter Berger,

publicly reversed his position in the 1980s. Many suppositions and forecasts about

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[37] Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2001), 3.
[38] Ibid., 32.

secularization's universality, linearity, and inevitability have been disproved. Realities

such as the proliferation since 1960 of conservative Christianity under America's

officially secular government; the religiously-motivated conflicts in the Balkans, Middle

East, and Indian sub-continent; the terrorist activities of state-supported Islamic

extremists; the spread of Christianity in the southern hemisphere during the last two

decades; and the continuation of an established Church in Britain have made it clear that

religion has not, as predicted, completely lost its social significance. At the very least,

one must qualify the term "significance" and carefully weigh the extent and timing of its

loss. As anthropologist Talal Asad summarizes, contemporary evidence reveals that

"religion is by no means disappearing in the modern world" and a "straightforward

narrative of progress from the religious to the secular is no longer acceptable."[39]

Furthermore, beliefs, faith traditions, and religious values have not remained tidily

confined to a "private" domain of religion distinct from the "public" secular realm. Even

in a society where religion has been institutionally differentiated from government,

schooling, or economic markets, religion can still inform, directly or indirectly,

individuals' political votes, curriculum in schools, how people distribute their income,

and their activism in the community. Private and public, religious and secular are hazy

boundaries and better understood as overlapping spheres that intersect in often

unexpected ways. Asad further problematizes these distinctions by pointing out the

inherent interdependency of "religion" and "the secular," which have mutually given rise

to one another at various points in history and thus cannot be abstractly severed. "The

concept of the secular cannot do without the idea of religion," he concludes.[40]

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[39] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 1-2.
[40] Ibid., 193, 200.

In addition, historians and sociologists have demonstrated in recent decades that the precise rate of change, particular character, degree, timing, and results of secularization differ according to place and time. Timothy Larsen and others have established that religion does not relinquish its significance in a forward-marching, linear pattern. Its influence has surged, retreated, and reasserted itself in fluctuating and even contradictory ways at assorted moments in history.[41] Similarly, patterns of religious change differ depending on region, country, continent or hemisphere. Demarcating the multiple facets within the broad category of secularization—desacralization, differentiation, disenchantment, disestablishment, and profanation—also reveals that religious change is not a monolithic process but one with many moving parts that sometimes operate in tandem and other times occur independently of one another. Thus, while it is possible to speak of secularization as a verifiable historical phenomenon, it is no longer plausible as an inevitable, universal, and linear trajectory of modernity.

Secularization Theory, Britain, and Burne-Jones

Although the critical dismantling of secularization theory has been widely accepted in most other disciplines for decades, and more recently in scholarship on American art, it has yet to penetrate Victorian art history. Secularization theory is so entrenched in the field that most accounts of British art after 1860 begin with the tacit assumption that the period was one of endemic doubt whose visual material expresses dissatisfaction with Christianity and a loss of religious belief. Even when an object contains biblical subject matter or serves a liturgical purpose many writers on later

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[41] Timothy Larsen, *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Contexts of Victorian Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor Univ. Press, 2004).

Victorian painting detach it from its religious context. Burne-Jones's medievalism, for

instance, is often cast as an escape from industrialization and science and a wistful lament

for an idealized Christian past that no longer exists, while his ecclesiastical designs are

overwhelmingly discussed with little consideration of theological meaning or function.

Jude V. Nixon has noticed a similar tendency in literature studies on the period, where

there is a "glaring absence of critical attention to religion" and a need for more

"discussions that situate the religious not as something separate from but connected to an

overall interpretation and understanding of the text."[42] Even Michaela Giebelhausen's

Representing Belief in Mid-Victorian Britain, which in all other respects is an insightful

contribution, begins on page one with the familiar mischaracterization of the mid-century

as "an increasingly secular age plagued by repeated crises of faith." Such blanket

assertions undermine her sensitive acknowledgement elsewhere of the "discordant,

conflicting, and overlapping voices which cut across the diverse forms of Victorian

Christian belief" within aesthetic discourse of the 1840s-1860 and the complex way

external factors such as scientific discoveries reverberated and "refracted" throughout

religious painting.[43] It is secularization theory that has unwittingly shaped such

interpretive patterns in Victorian art history, instilling misassumptions about the

irrelevance of religion to both the maker and to his or her creation.

In particular, it is the perceived codependency of secularization and modernity

that has also been the most influential paradigm underlying art historical research on the

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[42] Jude V. Nixon, introduction to *Victorian Religious Discourse: New Directions in Criticism*, ed. Nixon (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 11.
[43] She follows up this statement with the common misperception that in a "Protestant culture" like Britain's, "established pictorial traditions held no sway and belief centred exclusively on the biblical text," but research by Morgan, Promey, and others increasingly challenges such presumptions. Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 1, 12.

Victorian period and which lies at the heart of scholars' reticence on the subject of

Burne-Jones and religion. Since a society must be secular in order to be modern, it

follows that a modern artist must also be devoid of religious belief. Burne-Jones's ardent

spirituality inconveniences those anxious to "rescue" him and other figurative painters

from the dusty attic of Victorian art, which has only been deemed worthy of scholarly

attention in the last thirty years. As witnessed by exhibitions such as The Age of

Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain 1860-1910 at the Tate Gallery

(1997), there is an uneasy sense that these recently-resuscitated Victorian artists must

somehow be transformed into "proto-modernists" and absorbed into the linear trajectory

of abstraction if they are to earn their place in the canon. On the occasion of Burne-

Jones's centenary his most prolific commentator, John Christian, declared the artist's

triumph into the canon of modern (i.e. worthwhile) art:

> Perhaps most exciting of all, art-historians are reversing the judgement of
> those who, during the long period when he was out of fashion, saw him as
> provincial and hopelessly irrelevant to the mainstream evolution of
> European art. On the contrary, it is now argued, he made a major
> contribution to international Symbolism and was a true forerunner of the
> modern movement, representing values which are central to modernist
> ideology.[44]

While Burne-Jones's impact on continental art movements is, of course, noteworthy, such

efforts perform a disservice by curtailing, however unintentionally, the religious contexts

and sacred meanings the objects carried for their maker and contemporary viewers. The

presumed secularity of modernity has led the majority of Burne-Jones's chroniclers to

write out any reference to religion after his "rebirth" as an artist in 1856, either because it

complicates their canonical modernist agenda or because they are so conditioned by

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[44] John Christian, "Edward Burne-Jones: An Address given at the service of commemoration in
Birmingham Cathedral, 19th June 1998," *Review of the Pre-Raphaelite Society* 6, nos. 2-3 (1998): 2-3.

secularization theory that they cannot imagine religion to be of any consequence in modern society.

Admittedly, the strong hold secularization theory still exerts on the history of Victorian art is due in large part to the particulars of Britain's religious climate in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Although in most countries religion has failed to lose its social significance in the way or to the degree theorists predicted, in northwestern Europe patterns of religious change have adhered more closely (at least at first glance) to the expected model than, for instance, the United States or the Middle East. Yet, sociologists such as Peter Berger and Grace Davie have suggested that even in European countries such as Britain religion retains more influence than may at first appear. Davie, for instance, argues that while institutional differentiation and a loss of belief have occurred to a greater extent in the region, religion still wields an indirect potency: the state is still closely tied to the church, the culture implicitly sanctions its activities, and citizens voluntarily participate in religious organizations with about the same frequency as other types of value-driven social organizations or leisure pastimes.[45] Danièle Hervieu-Léger's research similarly verifies that in this corner of Europe "the symbolic structures [that religious institutions] have shaped preserve, above and beyond the loss of beliefs and the collapse of observances, a remarkable potency to permeate culture."[46]

Nevertheless, the perception of Britain's more secularized contemporary circumstances has strongly colored interpretations of its past, and reconsiderations of its historical religious condition have therefore been slower to emerge. Revisionist accounts

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[45] Grace Davie, "The persistence of institutional religion in modern Europe," in *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion*, ed. Linda Woodhead with Paul Heelas and David Martin (London: Routledge, 2001), 101-11.
[46] Danièle Hervieu-Léger, "The twofold limit of the notion of secularization," in Woodhead, *Peter Berger*, 124-25.

of the nineteenth century have only surfaced in the last decade despite the fact that many

highly regarded historians have long recognized that, notwithstanding the monumental

societal changes occurring during Queen Victoria's long reign, the country's culture

remained steeped in Christianity. In 1861 the British and Foreign Bible Society

distributed four million Bibles in Great Britain, an increase of over three hundred percent

since 1831.[47] Riots over ritual innovations such as altar candles, incense, and ceremonial

garments were routine occurrences in the 1850s and 60s. Some students and all faculty in

the Oxbridge system were required to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church

of England as late as 1871. The British government routinely intervened in religious

controversies through the secular courts and parliamentary commissions. As George

Kitson Clark put it in *The Making of Victorian England* (1962), "it might not be too

extravagant to say of the nineteenth century that probably in no other century, except the

seventeenth and perhaps the twelfth, did the claims of religion occupy so large a part of

the nation's life."[48] Regardless of doubt, science, industrialization, empire, and biblical

criticism, religion stubbornly persisted as "an inextricable part of the cultural fabric,"

Richard D. Altick has observed.[49] Even for the non-religious such as doubters, skeptics

or atheists, Hillis Miller noted in *The Disappearance of God* (1981), "God is, in one way

or another, a starting place and presupposition."[50] The quintessential historian of the

Victorian Church, Owen Chadwick, condones aspects of secularization theory in his

intellectual history of the European mind but admits elsewhere that Britain at the end of

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[47] "Bible," *Illustrated London News*, Oct. 5, 1861, 344. Cited by Esposito, "*Dalziels' Bible Gallery*," 270.
[48] George Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (New York: Atheneum, 1962), 20, quoted in Walter Arnstein, Michael Bright, Linda Peterson, and Nicholas Temperley, "Recent Studies in Victorian Religion," *Victorian Studies* 33, no.1 (1989): 150.
[49] Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), 203, quoted in Nixon, *Victorian Religious Discourse*, 8.
[50] Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981), 15, quoted in Nixon, *Victorian Religious Discourse*, 8.

the century "felt itself to be still very Christian, without knowing in what precise formulas Christianity consisted."[51] Even if conflicts over science and biblical criticism remained, Chadwick maintains, such "intellectual difficulties…were little reflected in devotion."[52] For example, those with misgivings about God or Christianity more often than not remained in the church, suggesting the need for more sensitive differentiation between doubt and wholesale unbelief. As for the argument that religion influenced British society less as the century wore on, Chadwick warns, "evidence that public life was more secular in this sense is hard to find."[53] Even as formal relationships between government and the church eroded, "few claimed that these proceedings made the society more 'secularised.'"[54] He concludes his two-volume study of the Victorian Church by declaring, "the Victorians preserved a country which was powerfully influenced by Christian ideas and continued to accept the Christian ethic as the highest known to men."[55] The precise character of this religious culture would have looked different at various moments during the nineteenth century, but never was there a time when religion altogether ceased to inform British society. It is only with the recent invalidation of secularization theory, however, that new revisionist histories of Christianity in Britain have slowly emerged to examine more deeply the long acknowledged tenacity of religious culture in Victorian Britain, with several important results germane to the present study of Burne-Jones.

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[51] Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975); Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966-70), 2:423.
[52] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 2:469.
[53] Ibid., 2:423.
[54] Ibid., 2:427.
[55] Ibid., 2:472.

Methodology

For much of the twentieth century secularization research in Britain was heavily weighted, methodologically, toward broad trends such as developments in intellectual thought, changes in governmental systems, and historical events. Any projects considering individual belief and practice relied almost solely on statistical measures or organizational affiliations such as church membership, attendance at corporate worship, and participation in external rites such as baptism. However, as sociologist Steve Bruce has warned (in spite of his stalwart defense of secularization theory's viability) there is "danger" in forgetting that, quite simply, secularization "primarily refers to the beliefs of people."[56] All too often, he aptly observes, sociologists erroneously "suppose that a property of an abstraction such as 'society' also accurately describes the everyday lifeworld of people who make up the society."[57]

Accordingly, revisionist historians such as Callum Brown, Timothy Larsen, and Hugh McLeod have taken issue with the methods used to chart religion's demise in nineteenth-century Britain. In the last five to ten years, their projects and others have focused on the myriad individual nuances of personal belief rather than only church attendance statistics or the formal relationships between religious institutions and social, economic, or political systems. Replacing statistics and social surveys with case studies and oral histories, they have judged religion's standing by the experience of believers rather than broad social or intellectual trends and shed light on personal faith as it is enacted in everyday experience. Such strategies have helped build a more complex, nuanced understanding of religion in modern Britain. Not only does such a methodology

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[56] Steve Bruce, introduction to *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis*, ed. Bruce (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 6.
[57] Ibid.

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revise our understanding of religion in the nineteenth century, but it also has important

implications for art history and useful ideas for thinking about Burne-Jones's unorthodox

Christianity.

In *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Contexts of Victorian*

Theology (2004), Timothy Larsen, for instance, uses case studies derived largely from the

often overlooked Nonconformist denominations to explore the lives of "people at street

level."[58] "By watching and listening closely to specific people, events, and

controversies," he discerns that while Christianity did not go unquestioned, neither was it

"in crisis and retreat, being routed by doubt, crumbling on all sides against intellectual,

social, cultural, and political forces for which it was no match."[59] Far from a neat

progression, he argues, Victorian religion is better described as "contested Christianity

rather than the ebbing of the sea of faith."[60] Larsen cites, for example, intellectuals

whose narratives of faith found or sustained simultaneously ran counter to the prominent

lost faith stories of figures such as the novelist George Eliot. Larsen's account points to

"the intellectual resilience and vitality of Christianity in the nineteenth century," and he

urges other scholars "to explore the intellectual strength of the Christian faith in the

Victorian period, rather than to add to the tired historiography that is built upon the old

assumption of its intellectual weakness."[61] Larsen's greatest contribution is toward

disproving the evolutionary model of society's development from something called

"religious" to something called "secular." Rather, his research shows that there are many

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[58] Larsen, *Contested Christianity*, 190.
[59] Ibid., 1.
[60] Ibid., 4.
[61] Ibid., 192.

intertwined, disparate, and even competing threads comprising the Victorian religious condition.

In *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (2001), Callum Brown dismantles secularization theory by questioning the timing and redefining the measurement of religion's lost social significance. Demonstrating that nineteenth-century Britain was still a very Christian nation, he concludes that the secularization of its culture and identity is a postmodern phenomenon not occurring until the 1960s. He sharply critiques the "rationalist" sociological approach of statistical evidence, which privileges "'formal religion' and which denigrates or ignores 'folk religion,' 'superstition' and acts of personal faith not endorsed by the churches," claiming it "obliterates whole realms of religiosity which cannot be counted."[62] Instead, Brown demarcates Britain's religiosity by its "culture of Christianity," or the manner and extent to which "Christianity infused public culture and was adopted by individuals, whether churchgoers or not, in forming their own identities."[63] Self-imposed morality, rituals, behavior, economic activity, dress, and speech were all manifestations of what Brown terms "Discursive Christianity." Even when Brown's subjects were not conventionally Evangelical or church-going, he finds they structured their personal identity and history on or against patterns he describes as "the evangelical narrative," which interestingly converges at numerous points with Burne-Jones's own life story.[64]

Brown relies on first-hand accounts such as oral histories, letters, and autobiographies to reveal "how the discourses of religious identity…were internalized and made personal, each constructing his or her idea of 'self' and structuring the stories

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[62] Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, 12.
[63] Ibid., 8.
[64] Ibid., 12.

of their lives in symmetry to the expectations of Christian life stories."[65] The advantage

of using personal testimonies, he argues, is that one's religiosity is reconstructed "from

how they in their own words reflected Christianity."[66] For the same reasons, this

dissertation prioritizes Burne-Jones's first-person writings and objects as well as primary

source documentation by his family, friends, and contemporaries to excavate his manner

of religiosity. Fortunately, he was a prolific correspondent, and according to Georgiana,

his letters "recall his very voice…they are so like his spoken words."[67] Such claims,

however, must of course be tempered with an awareness of Burne-Jones's audience and

his tendency to exaggeration and self-posturing, particularly with more formal

acquaintances. At times, letters acted as a diary or intimate record of his internal

musings. For instance, he drafted letters to his close friend Helen Mary ("May") Gaskell

intermittently in a stream-of-consciousness manner while he painted, resulting in as many

as six letters to her a day. Consequently, Burne-Jones's correspondence is a crucial

source for ascertaining his spiritual views. As Georgiana explains, "it was in his letters

rather than in conversation that Edward touched upon what was sacred to him."[68] One

notable exception, however, is the four-volume typescript of conversations his studio

assistant, Thomas Matthews Rooke, recorded in the 1890s (National Art Library,

London), which is equally revealing. A major flaw in the existing literature is a tendency

to base conclusions about the nature of Burne-Jones's beliefs, or lack thereof, on one or

two isolated quotes lifted from the same few published sources. Many of his letters

remain unpublished, though, and those that do appear in print are often edited or

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[65] Ibid., 14.
[66] Ibid., 13.
[67] G. Burne-Jones to Charles Fairfax Murray, n.d., English MS 1278, no. 10, Charles Fairfax Murray Papers, John Rylands University Library, Manchester.
[68] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:325.

abridged. Therefore, I read as wide a range as possible in their full, original state, over fifteen hundred total, in order to obtain a thorough sense of his stance on religious matters. Although all of the letters cannot be incorporated here, and many turned out to be irrelevant for this project, they nonetheless inform the dissertation indirectly by contributing insight into Burne-Jones's character, attitudes, and habits.

Although historian Hugh McLeod believes secularization happened to a greater degree in nineteenth-century Britain than Brown or Larsen does, he also notes in *Secularization in Western Europe, 1848-1914* (2000) that in spite of declining church attendance and societal changes most people, even the religiously ambivalent, adhered to the "Christian rites of passage," believed in God, prayed, and "their view of the world, however unorthodox…was shaped more by religion than by secular thought."[69] Similarly to Larsen's "contested Christianity," he argues that secularization in this part of the world was not a linear "process" but one full of "tensions, ambiguities and variations."[70] Foreshadowing Brown and the methodological trend that has gathered momentum twenty years later in Britain, he suggested as early as 1978 that religion "be seen as part of the wider history of how men have patterned their lives, investing particular times, places, relationships with symbolic significance; of how they have accepted obligations and submitted to taboo; of how they have endured suffering and given meaning to their daily routine."[71]

The approaches of Brown, Larsen, and McLeod parallel the idea of "lived religion" historians of American religions such as David D. Hall and Colleen McDannell employ. Influenced by ethnography, ritual studies, and cultural anthropology, their mode

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[69] Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848-1914* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), 289.
[70] Ibid., 30.
[71] Hugh McLeod, "Recent Studies in Victorian Religious History," *Victorian Studies* 21, no. 2 (1978): 255.

of inquiry takes considerations of religion beyond solely its institutional manifestation to also examine how doctrine is transformed and adapted through everyday life. As McDannell explains, this method focuses on "religious *behaviors* rather than on historical movements, church-state issues, or theological developments. Religious thought and ethics are approached from the perspective of the lived experiences of average people."[72] Tactics examining the "extra-ecclesial, and a recognition of the laity as actors in their own right," David D. Hall contends, can "reclaim and establish the importance of texts and activities that all too readily are ignored or trivialized," as so often happens with Burne-Jones.[73] Complementing Brown's pattern of discursive Christianity, the strategy of lived religion is an excellent tool for understanding Burne-Jones's modes of piety, devotion, and belief as they were expressed not only through participation in worship or orthodox rituals, but also through spoken and written speech, self-presentation, environments, daily routines, reading, singing, ascetic discipline, and, most importantly, art-making. In addition to actual movements, gestures, rituals, and actions, however, McDannell points out that religious practice can encompass the "imagined": "In dreams, in visions, and fictional accounts," she clarifies, "people participate in worlds that are not a part of everyday life."[74] This is evident in Burne-Jones's pining for an idealistic medieval Christianity, for example in his incessant lament for a monastic existence or his vision of a Catholic procession along the banks of the Thames.

Hall warns that lived religion can constitute a messy mix of moral standards and transgressions or conflicting ideologies, but this "play of meaning" should be

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[72] Colleen McDannell, introduction to *Religions of the United States in Practice*, ed. McDannell (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), 1:1.

[73] David D. Hall, introduction to *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, ed. Hall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997), viii-ix.

[74] McDannell, *Religions of the United States*, 3.

acknowledged and the religious not "censured" simply because it does not conform to a

neat narrative.[75] This is especially applicable to the present study since Burne-Jones's

outward conduct often contradicted religious principles. It is certainly not my intention

to minimize the less seemly side of his character in the following chapters, but in case it

has inadvertently taken a backseat to the close investigation of his religiosity, it should be

acknowledged up front. Most flagrantly, he carried on a torrid extra-marital affair with

his model Maria Zambaco in the late 1860s, playing out the artistic trope of the

philanderer who seduces his sitters. He could be tiresomely self-indulgent, impatient,

and narcissistic, and his acerbic wit frequently took the form of satirical, even cruel,

caricatures or barbs directed at Morris and others. At times, his keen sense of humor and

proclivity for facetious speech creates a slippage between the pious and profane in his

conversations and letters. Although "the saint would suddenly slip off his halo and

become a lively and delightful sinner," his friend Walford Graham Robertson explained,

"neither attitude was a pose, both were equally natural and convincing."[76] Such internal

inconsistencies are valuable, however, because they often reveal important underlying

anxieties about Christianity, its tenets, practitioners, and clergy. Even more significantly,

Burne-Jones's alternating roles as sinner and saint, heretic and devotee reinforce the

impossibility of neatly divorcing the sacred from the secular. Religion, as it is lived out

in the modern world, refuses to conform to such limitations and does not divide neatly

along such arbitrary lines.

      The methodological shift Brown, Larsen, and McLeod represent and the lived

religion approach of Hall and McDannell elucidate three salient characteristics of religion

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[75] Hall, *Lived Religion*, x.

[76] W. Graham Robertson, introduction to *Letters to Katie*, by Edward Burne-Jones (London: Macmillan, 1925), vi.

in modern Britain pertinent to the present case study of Burne-Jones. First, there has

been a notable privatization of religious practice in British society since the nineteenth

century. Notwithstanding the fact that "public" and "private" are amorphous, often

intersecting, spheres, the trend has been toward performing one's faith in more personal,

idiosyncratic ways in the realm of the everyday rather than through the traditional outlets

of Sunday services, baptisms and other rituals, or denominational membership. Statistics

of declining church attendance or dwindling participation in traditional, formalized rites

can no longer be taken as indicators of lost faith. Rather than disappearing altogether,

religion has been transformed through a greater enactment of belief in daily life. As John

Bowden observes, "patterns of social behaviour did not necessarily reflect changes in

religious belief: a decline in religious social behaviour did not necessarily mean that

individuals were no longer religious; they might just be religious in a different way."[77]

This privatization of faith presents a compelling refutation of the secularization theory:

paradoxically, while religion may be undergoing greater institutional differentiation in

the regulated social, political, or economic arena, the beliefs that do persist are often

merging more seamlessly into the daily existence of individuals. The result is less a

secularization of the religious than a sacralization of the secular. Burne-Jones conformed

to this pattern as he jettisoned church membership and Sabbath-going after 1856 to infuse

his art-making and other commonplace activities with sacred meaning. Until now, his

chroniclers have looked only for evidence of conventional, external observances when

assessing his beliefs, but these can no longer be accepted as the only valid markers of

religiosity. "Religion" does not necessarily equal "Church," nor are declarations of faith

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[77] John Bowden, "Secularization," in *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Bowden (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), 1105.

or presence in the pew on Sunday the sole measurements of an artist's belief system. It is thus important to distinguish between the changes in Burne-Jones's outward practices and those regarding his core beliefs. One further caveat is in order, though: individualized belief cannot be wholly disentangled from organized religion since the denunciation, reformulation, or embrace of orthodoxy is in itself a response to religious traditions. In rejecting the Church of England, Burne-Jones nevertheless engaged with it and defined himself in relation to it.

Secondly, a rapid diversification in religious belief and practice has usually accompanied the privatization of faith, leading Chadwick to observe, "To think of 'Victorian religion' is to think of an infinite diversity."[78] McLeod demonstrates through mostly statistical evidence that the trend "was clearly towards a greater religious individualism" that did not necessarily discard Christian doctrine but incorporated "a degree of eclecticism" and "accommodation between old and new."[79] Nineteenth-century commentators such as Ernest Renan also noted how "religion has become so much more individualized."[80] Nonetheless, studies of British art frequently fall into the trap of making sweeping generalizations about Christianity without acknowledging the infinite varieties and degrees of faith that colored Victorian life. To cite just one example, Colleen Denney, in her study of the Grosvenor Gallery as a secular temple for the aesthetic worship of beauty, categorically claims that all the artists involved "had grave doubts about [traditional] religious convictions."[81] Yet, her statement overlooks

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[78] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 2:466.
[79] McLeod, *Secularisation*, 170.
[80] Ernst Renan, *Studies in Religious History* (New York, 1887), 371.
[81] Colleen Denney, "Acts of worship at the Temple of Art: the Grosvenor Gallery and the second-generation Pre-Raphaelites," in *Collecting the Pre-Raphaelites: The Anglo-American Enchantment*, ed. Margaretta Frederick Watson (Aldershot, Hants, UK: Ashgate, 1997), 66.

the religious subjects Burne-Jones, Alphonse Legros, Thomas Rooke, George Frederic Watts, and others frequently displayed and fails to acknowledge the particularities of the diverse beliefs they represented. Also, Burne-Jones's and Morris's religious views are occasionally still lumped together, when in fact they held quite disparate opinions on Christianity and its relevance for modern society. Scholars of Victorian literature have made greater headway in acknowledging this diversity, for instance in *Victorian Religious Discourse: New Directions in Criticism* (2004), which examines "the protean ways religion was negotiated in the nineteenth century," but historians of Victorian art have yet to take up similar projects.[82]

The diversification of belief and practice underscores a third important but under-recognized attribute of Victorian religion: a complexity which destabilizes the boundaries of religious denominations and demonstrates that individuals can no longer be neatly assigned to predefined categories such as "Evangelical," "Broad Church," "Tractarian," or "Christian Socialist." When religion is addressed in Victorian art, the discussion tends to present objects as merely the reflection, expression or by-product of broad doctrinal movements. Some well-known examples include the Tractarian symbolism traced in John Everett Millais's (1829-96) *Christ in the House of His Parents* (1849-50), the Evangelical zeal of much of William Holman Hunt's painting, and the Christian Socialism Ford Madox Brown's *Work* (1852-65) evidences. Without discounting the value of such insights, if investigation of religion stops at this level it too narrowly limits analysis to a formulaic paradigm and fails to account for works like Burne-Jones's which often elude easy alignment with any particular denomination. In fact, historians of religion have long challenged the mythical existence of such strong sectarian divisions.

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[82] Nixon, *Victorian Religious Discourse*, 14.

Dieter Voll, for one, has traced the Evangelical influence in Anglo-Catholicism during the second half of the nineteenth century.[83] Larsen also foregrounds this complexity in case studies such as that of the freethinker Joseph Barker, who turns out to have been more conservative in many ways than his Evangelical adversaries, or Charles Bradlaugh and other atheists, who were "surprisingly open to alternative spiritualities."[84] This also explains why after Burne-Jones ceases to affiliate formally with the Church of England his chroniclers largely fall silent on the subject of his religious beliefs, an omission attended to in this dissertation.

Due to the privatization, diversification, and complexity of Victorian religion, defining Burne-Jones's beliefs must necessarily remain a somewhat elusive exercise. He cut across denominational lines to encompass an array of theological positions, sampling tenets from Evangelicalism, Tractarianism, Christian Socialism, and Roman Catholicism. Accordingly, I introduce the term Anglo/Catholic to refer at times to a "high" church sensibility that could indicate either Anglican or Roman Catholic sympathies, rather than Anglo-Catholic, which specifically denotes Romanist tendencies within the Church of England such as the Tractarians, their followers, or the Ritualists, who expanded more radically on their cause in later decades. Since Anglo-Catholic and Roman-Catholic theology and liturgical practices shared many traits, it is at times difficult to distinguish in Burne-Jones's everyday, informal religious life whether he felt himself more in harmony with the Anglo-Catholics or the Roman Catholics. Yet, rather than limiting Burne-

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[83] Dieter Voll, *Catholic Evangelicalism: The acceptance of evangelical traditions by the Oxford Movement during the second half of the nineteenth century, a contribution towards the understanding of recent Anglicanism*, trans. Veronica Ruffer (London: Faith Press, 1963).
[84] Larsen, *Contested Christianity*, 5.

Jones's convictions to one category or another, his amalgamation of doctrines provides further evidence for the complexity of Victorian religion.

A similar difficulty occurs when trying to define "sacred" and "secular" in the Victorian age, an ambiguity which has further clouded discussions of Burne-Jones's work. As I use it here, the sacred is not a determinate category of *things* such as churches or beliefs, but a subjective and fluctuating *condition*. Asad uses the following example to demonstrate this point: Is a text like the Bible "essentially 'religious' because it deals with the supernatural in which the Christian believes"? Or, since "it can be read by the atheist as a human work of art," is it better defined as literature? Or, Asad proposes, "is it neither in itself, but simply a reading that is either religious or literary—or possibly, as for the modern Christian, both together?"[85] This hypothesis is borne out in Chapter Three, where Burne-Jones's religious audiences demonstrate that an object's sanctity is transitory and dependent upon the mindset of its beholder. In approaching his work it is useful to keep in mind Promey's observation that "sacred and secular are constantly in the process of formation and reformation. Along the spectrum that charts the two, the advance and retreat of one is always relative to the other…not just sacred or secular but how? and to what degree? and when? and for whom?"[86]

Religion in nineteenth-century Britain can no longer be viewed as a monolithic story of steadily declining influence and crumbling faith or a single, linear trajectory from sacred to secular. Rather, it is a pluralistic history in which "a variety of plots and sub-plots are intertwined" and sacred and secular co-exist and overlap.[87] This was the era, after all, when a critic could extol Burne-Jones as "whole-souled and single in his

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[85] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 9.
[86] Promey, *Painting Religion in Public*, 7.
[87] McLeod, *Secularisation*, 287.

devotion to…the cult of beauty" while simultaneously professing, "It does not seem as if [he and Morris] went much to church,...Yet both, I imagine, were religious men."[88] Scholars such as Brown, Davie, Larsen, and McLeod have demonstrated that Victorian belief was a complex, multifarious entity in which co-existing, competing narratives about individuals, the church, government, economics, society, and belief were played out, contested, and ever in flux. In order to assess correctly the visual material of the period, then, one needs to recognize first that religion was still very much a socially significant force, and secondly, that Victorian religious imagery, expression, and production may reflect a dizzying array of idiosyncratic beliefs embodying multitudinous forms. There are as many stories of Victorian religion to be told as there were Victorians, and Burne-Jones is another voice in this multivalent history shedding additional light on the persistence, privatization, diversification, and complexity of belief in modern Britain.

Chapter Summary

The dissertation takes as its starting point the revisionist perspective outlined above and investigates how its conclusions regarding modern religion can contribute to a deeper understanding of Burne-Jones's work. This being an art history dissertation, I do not claim to make the investigation of Victorian religious thought the central agenda, but I am interested in how the objects witness their maker's religiosity, how they might illuminate something about the nature or practice of Victorian belief, and in turn, how such discoveries lead us back to new meanings and understandings of the art itself. Consequently, visual analysis or interpretation is not always foregrounded. The artworks

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[88] Horace Gordon Hutchinson, *Portraits of the Eighties* (1920; repr., Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1970), 228, 231.

instead intersect and interweave with discussions of biography, ecclesiastical context, reception, artistic identity, and personal faith to construct an alternative, spiritually-informed narrative of his life and art. In addition, I attend throughout to the diverse, overlapping, and even contradictory identities Burne-Jones adopted to embody the religious in his life and work. When combined with his other acknowledged personas as an irreverent jokester, a fragile and melancholy genius, a seducer of models, or a worldly art celebrity, the messy mix of personalities he fronted creates a composite portrait further testifying to the complexity of Victorian religion and its intertwinement with the secular sphere.

The dissertation begins in Chapter One by reappraising Burne-Jones's religious influences as a child (1833-52) and at Oxford University (1853-56), supplementing the established facts of his Evangelical upbringing and fervent admiration of the Tractarian movement with deeper analysis and untapped archival documentation. The transformation of his beliefs at Oxford and his disaffiliation with the Church of England in 1855 represents a pivotal moment when Christianity became for Burne-Jones not only a manifestation of doctrine, a conclusion of intellectual inquiry, or a corporate ritual of worship but also an internalized and individualized belief performed in daily life. Relating his vocational shift from priest to artist in 1855-56 to the ecclesiology movement and situating it within mid-century discourse about the social responsibility of Christianity and the sacred potential of any earnest labor, I argue that Burne-Jones formulated his art career as an alternative religious ministry dedicated to improving God's earthly kingdom through the redemptive power of beauty. The chapter ends by summarizing Burne-Jones's beliefs over the remainder of his lifetime, tracing an

enduring if fluctuating affinity for the Anglo-Catholic cause and a steadily intensifying, but never formally recognized, identification with Roman Catholicism.

This crescendoing Catholicism is visibly apparent in Burne-Jones's four commissions for chancel and altar paintings (1860-1, 1882, 1888, and 1898), which form the subject of Chapter Two. Although these have been largely forgotten in modern scholarship, they were among the most important channels for implementing his social ministry of art. In contrast to most studies of his ecclesiastical design, which focus on stained glass and detach the objects from their physical environments and religious contexts, I attend to their devotional, didactic, and liturgical functions, disproving the widespread assertion that Burne-Jones ignored such concerns.[89] Going beyond the usual superficial application of Victorian religious sectarianism to explain iconography, my analysis engages more deeply with contemporary discourses of doctrine and ritual to reveal how Burne-Jones conveyed a consistently Anglo/Catholic theological agenda of Jesus's sacrificial nature and corporeal presence in the Eucharist that grew ever more Roman Catholic in tone as the century progressed.

When Burne-Jones began exhibiting publicly at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877 after a long hiatus, his art garnered a wide audience and tremendous acclaim. Chapter Three thus shifts from the pew to the gallery to reconstruct Burne-Jones's considerable reputation as a religious painter in the late 1870s-early 1900s by using Christian

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[89] The only studies to consider Burne-Jones's art in relation to its physical setting are Dorment's study of the Rome mosaics, Arscott's article on the Birmingham Cathedral windows (although she contends that Burne-Jones did not care about liturgical function), and a semiotic study by Fiona Black and Cheryl Exum of Burne-Jones's *Song of Solomon* window at Darley Dale. Recognizing his role as an interpreter of scripture for worshippers, Black and Exum assess how his representation adds new meaning to the original text. Using a semiotic approach, they untangle the myriad narratives available to viewers within the window, which is composed of numerous individual verses from the book and readable in multiple sequential orders. Black and Exum, "Semiotics in Stained Glass: Edward Burne-Jones's *Song of Songs,*" in *Biblical Studies/Cultural Studies: The Third Sheffield Colloquium*, ed. Exum and Stephen D. Moore (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 315-42.

periodicals and writings by Christian ministers from the period, many of which have never before been cited in the literature. Until now, his identity has been exclusively grounded in the fashionable, highbrow aesthetic cult of the Grosvenor Gallery's "religion of beauty." By considering those who primarily appreciated his art as a tool for religious instruction, a devotional aid, and a gateway to divine interaction, however, my research unearths a second but equally significant public, one in which sacred and secular co-mingle and for whom reading a painting was akin to biblical exegesis. David Morgan's and Sally Promey's recent scholarship on religious visual culture, which establishes how objects are re-envisioned as carriers of spiritual meaning by their viewers, provides the framework for analyzing how Burne-Jones's Christian audiences re-created his work through their interpretation, adaptation, and use.[90]

Turning away from the public, social ministry of the artist-priest, Chapter Four looks inward to reflect on Burne-Jones as the "artist-monk," whose private art-making functioned as an exercise of prayer, devotion, and performance of faith modeled on conventual prototypes. I investigate his self-constructed monastic "habit" as manifested both in a youthful, idealistic vision of communal brotherhood in the 1850s and 60s, and his subsequent lifelong adoption of an individual, contemplative lifestyle of prelapsarian withdrawal from the world. Although in tension with his claims to an outwardly-directed priestly identity, Burne-Jones's monasticism conveniently reinforced his claim to melancholy genius and demonstrates the multiplicity of religio-artistic tropes he embraced, sometimes simultaneously. His work routine, speech, self-presentation, and physical environments all incorporated the monastic traits of asceticism, discipline, seclusion, and an aura of sacredness. In particular, I examine how the model of the

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[90] Morgan and Promey, *Visual Culture*; Morgan, *Sacred Gaze*; and Morgan, *Visual Piety*. (See n. 8 above)

scriptorium informed two book illustration projects—*The Flower Book* (1882-98) and the Kelmscott *Chaucer* designs (1892-95)—and their function as meditative and devotional devices. Consequently, this is the chapter that foregrounds practice the most in order to demonstrate how Burne-Jones's artistic vocation operated in the everyday as lived religion.

In addition to the artist-monk, Burne-Jones conceived of himself as a religious pilgrim on the epic journey toward salvation. Chapter Five traces this overarching theme of pilgrimage, both physical and metaphorical, and its autobiographical significance throughout the course of his career using works such as *Sir Galahad* (1858), *The Land of Beulah* (1881), *The Flower Book* (1882-98), the *Star of Bethlehem* (1887-90), and the Holy Grail tapestries (designed 1890-91). By identifying himself verbally and visually with the Christian pilgrim, the chaste Sir Galahad, the fallen but repentant Sir Lancelot, and the Magi traveling great distances to adore the infant Jesus, Burne-Jones repeatedly inserted himself into narratives of spiritual travel encompassing trial and temptation in progression toward a sacred goal. By depicting his protagonists as perpetual pilgrims caught in a liminal state, however, he underscored the ongoing nature of the religious quest. Life is presented as a continual process of spiritual refinement and purification evocative of Christian sanctification, whose final reward will be attained only in the afterlife. Pilgrimage, I conclude, provided the template for Burne-Jones's life, beliefs, and art, which, as the manifestation of his privatized, individualized Christianity, was conceived as his lived religion and personal pathway to salvation.

Chapter 1: The Artist as Priest

"The most marked character in Victorian religion is the sense of vocation," Owen Chadwick deduces in his definitive study, *The Victorian Church*.[1] This concept maintained that God "called" his followers to a specific type of work in the world, potentially infusing any profession with religious meaning. Overwhelmingly, Chadwick explains, from 1860 Victorians conceptualized themselves as "servants of God, under his eye" in all avenues of life such as "mission, social reform, commerce, administration, empire, evangelism, ministry to the sick." Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) was no exception. In 1856 he left behind his unfinished Oxford degree and dream of taking holy orders to pursue painting. His clerical aspirations are often treated as if distinct from the art career that followed, but further analysis shows that his occupational change was one in form only, not in substance. Reassessing his early theological influences, his pivotal transition from pulpit to paint, and his long-term religious beliefs demonstrates that he traded the official priesthood of the church for an unorthodox priesthood of art, but one no less sacred in intent.

Toward the end of his life, in a rare statement of his religio-artistic philosophy, Burne-Jones elaborated on Ruskin's "awful" [i.e. awe-inspiring] truth "that artists paint God for the world." Evoking the trope of the divinely-inspired artist, he marveled,

> There's a lump of greasy pigment at the end of Michael Angelo's hog-bristle brush, and by the time it has been laid on the stucco, there is something there that all men with eyes recognize as divine. Think of what it means. It is the power of bringing God into the world—making God manifest.[2]

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[1] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 2:466.
[2] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:257.

He considered this priestly act of "making God manifest," channeling the divine to humankind, as his contribution toward healing the world's suffering: "It is giving back her Child that was crucified to Our Lady of the Sorrows."[3] Contemporaries recognized his artist-priest identity. To one friend, "his long coat and high waistcoat produced an impression indefinitely clerical…He might have been a priest newly stepped down from the altar, the thunder of great litanies still in his ears."[4] In another instance, the same friend related, "There was about him a suggestion of the priest, more than a touch of the mystic."[5] One of Burne-Jones's models described him as bearing "the expression of an apostle," aligning him with the early followers of Jesus who, in Christian tradition, are considered the first preachers of his message.[6] Burne-Jones reinforced his priestly persona by reading the Vulgate aloud to friends "in a sort of deep chant" or writing to May Gaskell hoping "something [will be]…of use to you—and, as I should say in the pulpit, of spiritual application."[7]

Scholars have occasionally remarked upon Burne-Jones's tendency to assume priestly attributes. An early biographer, Fortunée de Lisle, claimed that for Burne-Jones, "the artist's function assumed the character of a sacred priesthood, charged with its interpretation to mankind."[8] On the occasion of his retrospective in 1998, John Christian and Stephen Wildman concurred, writing that the artist "retained a measure of priestly significance. It was long before he outgrew the habit of referring to his prospects as an

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[3] Ibid.

[4] W. Graham Robertson, *Time Was: The Reminiscences of W. Graham Robertson* (London: Quartet Books, 1931), 75.

[5] Robertson, *Letters to Katie*, vi.

[6] Ignace Jan Paderewski and Mary Lawton, *The Paderewski Memoirs* (London: Collins, 1939), 186.

[7] W. Graham Robertson to Kerrison Preston, Apr. 22, 1921, in *Letters from Graham Robertson*, ed. Preston (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953) 62; quoted in Josceline Dimbleby, *May and Amy* (New York: Harmony Books, 2004), 94.

[8] Fortunée de Lisle*, Burne-Jones*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1906), 15.

artist in quasi-religious terms."[9] The "concept of the artist as a priest or magus [i.e.

sorcerer]" like that of the French Symbolists, they argue, was "one that he had been

prepared to countenance, at least in early life, when Ruskin and Carlyle were helping him

to make the transition from the altar to the painter's studio."[10] David Peters Corbett also

contends that Ruskin's "ethical and priestly role for the artist" informed Burne-Jones's

professional identity.[11] Aside from these brief comments, however, the pattern of art as

religious vocation has not been examined in his life and work.

In particular, Burne-Jones needs to be reconsidered in the context of ecclesiology,

a contemporary movement that regarded art and architecture as priestly occupations

dedicated to the service of the church. Additionally, Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), John

Ruskin (1819-1900), the Pre-Raphaelites, members of the Oxford Movement, and the

Christian Socialists preached the civic responsibility of Christianity and the divine and

redemptive possibilities of all forms of work, ideas redolent throughout Burne-Jones's

and his friends' writings in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856). Within these

frameworks, Burne-Jones's transition from clerical robes to artist's smock is understood

not as a dismissal of Christianity but as its transformation into what he envisioned as an

alternative ministry motivated by a belief in the redemptive power of beauty for a

struggling, suffering world.

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[9] Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 45.

[10] Ibid., 204.

[11] David Peters Corbett, *The World in Paint: Art and Visuality in England, 1848-1914* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2004), 27.

Part I: Burne-Jones's Early Religious Influences

Edward Burne-Jones's biography has been exhaustively repeated, and most readers will be familiar with his modest upbringing in industrial Birmingham by his widower father; his early artistic promise; his desire to be a clergyman; the High Church movement that propelled him to Exeter College at Oxford University in 1853; the friendship he formed there with William Morris (1834-96); their shared interest in Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites; and his informal apprenticeship with Dante Gabriel Rossetti. There remain, however, a number of details about Burne-Jones's religious influences during this formative period which compel further attention. His early engagement with various forms of Christianity, Judaism, academic scripture studies, logic, and philosophy significantly shaped his life-long theological and artistic views. In particular, the profound doctrinal change he underwent at university requires further scrutiny, having been widely mischaracterized as a "loss of faith" resulting in his replacement of Christianity with a secular "religion of art."

Childhood: 1833-1852

Burne-Jones's childhood in industrial Birmingham was a mix of religious influences, which shaped his individualistic, idiosyncratic beliefs. Edward's father raised him in the Evangelical tradition of weekly church attendance, Bible-reading, and a strict moral code. Rossetti's statement that the Bible was one of the two most important books in the world "savoured" to Burne-Jones "of my early youth, and my upbringing."[12] Evangelicals also encouraged meal-time and bed-time prayers, a tradition passed down

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[12] Frances Horner, *Time Remembered* (London: W. Heinemann, 1933), 22.

from Burne-Jones to his daughter, Margaret, who continued the habit with her own children.[13] Although Edward was baptized at St. Philip's, Birmingham, his father soon switched their membership to St. Mary's, an Evangelical church in Whittall Street in the gun-making district of Birmingham (fig. 1).[14] The senior Mr. Jones's piety is evidenced by the fact that he rented his own pew at St. Mary's, no small feat for a man who made only a modest income from a framing and gilding business.[15] When Edward visited his aunt Catherwood in London, she forced him to attend dreary Evangelical services at Beresford Chapel, which he later ridiculed in a satirical caricature (fig. 2).

St. Mary's incumbent, the famed Evangelical preacher J. Casebow Barrett, drew huge audiences to the classical building (1774, now destroyed), which featured an octagonal design ideal for preaching to its large crowds of up to 1,700 people. Barrett was known for his "theatrical delivery" and "rhapsodizing upon the pleasures of heaven and the pains of hell," but to Burne-Jones his most memorable trait was the "pomposity of his style."[16] He eagerly introduced Barrett to his friends, not out of respect, but to poke fun at his ridiculous character.[17] Hellfire-and-damnation Christianity may have drawn the masses to Barrett's sermons, but Burne-Jones reacted with discomfort and mockery. In 1892 he still avoided "sermons—which are always scolding me--& I can't

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[13] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, [July 1893?], MS Add 54217, vol. 1, fols. 162-5, British Library; Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 2:156.

[14] The Reverend C. Craven baptized him as Edward Coley Burne Jones on New Year's Day, 1834. "Baptisms solemnized in the Parish of St Philips Birmingham in the county of Warwick in the year 1834," Parish Registers, Birmingham City Archives. At the time of Edward's birth until 1837, St. Mary's incumbent was Edward Burn, a sympathizer with John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, who visited the church in 1786. It was given its own parish in 1841 and demolished in 1925. "Religious History: Churches built before 1800," in W. B. Stephens, ed., *The City of Birmingham*, Vol. 7, *A History of the County of Warwick* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), http://www.britishhistory.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=22975&strquery=whittall.

[15] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:39.

[16] Ibid., 1:38.

[17] Ibid.

remember that I ever liked to be scolded in my life."[18] His school, the prestigious King

Edward's, promulgated fear of eternal punishment as well: the headmaster's motto was

"*Salpisei*—'The trumpet of judgement shall sound.'"[19] Although Burne-Jones renounced

his father's evangelicalism, it did leave one lasting legacy. Throughout his lifetime, the

idea of the Last Judgment preoccupied him. "Though it did fill our childhood with

terror," he recalled in 1896, "it was an incitement to our imaginations, and there's no

telling what good there is in that."[20] The notion that eternal life was dependent upon his

performance in this one is a recurring theme throughout his life and art.

     Every week after church Burne-Jones and his father would visit the cemetery,

where the elder Mr. Jones would "sit at [his wife's] grave, the tears running down his

cheeks."[21] Sundays were thus a bleak conflation of death and judgmental doctrine that

contributed to Burne-Jones's life-long distaste of evangelical Christianity. In 1898 he

remembered "the Sabbaths at home" as so "mournful" that he "infinitely preferred school

and work to Sundays."[22] One wonders whether Edward would have pondered the failings

of the church where his father's "profound grief" was concerned.[23] In spite of his devout

Christianity, the elder Mr. Jones suffered greatly over his wife's death, and his

Evangelical faith appeared to offer little comfort.

     In addition to this strict Evangelical upbringing, Burne-Jones's housekeeper and

nanny, Miss Sampson, forced him to keep both the Christian Sabbath on Sunday and the

Jewish Sabbath on Saturday out of respect for their next-door neighbors, the Neustadt and

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[18] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, [1892], MS Add 54217, vol. 1, fol. 4, British Library.
[19] Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 18.
[20] Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 95.
[21] Elizabeth, Lady Lewis, "Recollections of Edward Burne-Jones, compiled for Philip Burne-Jones," n.d., fol. 9, Dep.d.840, Lewis Family Papers, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.
[22] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 4:568.
[23] Lewis, "Recollections of Edward Burne-Jones," fol. 9.

Barnett families.[24] In contrast to his bleak, sad home life, his memories of these Jewish

neighbors are ones of religious celebration and exuberance. They included the lonely boy

in their playtime and warmly teased him about his Protestantism. One of the Jewish girls,

Matilda, was his "first love."[25] The family invited Edward to participate in their Jewish

holy days and festivals such as the Feast of Purim, when he "dressed up with the other

children, and was so eager for the merry-making that when the day came round he was

always the first guest to arrive."[26]

> This early exposure to Judaism fostered a lifelong appreciation for the Old

Testament and biblical history, which he would also have learned about from the sermons

at St. Mary's. As a boy he imagined that an area of the Birmingham suburbs called

"Nineveh" was the same as the ancient biblical kingdom and constructed play cities out

of stones called "Jerusalem."[27] His knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures remained

extraordinary throughout his life, and his many stained-glass cartoons of Old Testament

subjects testify to his fascination with Judaic history. Many years later he wrote to a book

dealer to request a "Genesis according to the Talmud" and "any readable bit of Talmudic

literature" in French or German (although he "would much rather have it in the former")

that would "give me some idea of the poetic legends and wise sayings that seem buried in

[*sic*] Talmud" and inspire "the admiration I want to give" to the writings.[28] Looking

back on his youth he recalled in 1895, "Oh I loved [the Bible], all except the Acts and St

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[24] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:4.
[25] Lewis, "Recollections of Edward Burne-Jones," fol. 9.
[26] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:4.
[27] Ibid., 1:5-6.
[28] Edward Burne-Jones to "Dear Sir," n.d., MS Add 54316, fol. 392, British Library.

Paul's epistles, they had a poor protestant sound about them. But the older parts and Genesis above all: I must have known it by heart."[29]

His education from age eleven at King Edward's (fig. 3) fostered Burne-Jones's intellectual curiosity about history, especially biblical history. One teacher offered him particular encouragement in 1847-48: Abraham Kerr Thompson, whom Burne-Jones fondly remembered as "the only man with any brains at all who had to do with my teaching nay right up the end of Oxford days, no one could compare with him…I worshipped him when I was little...yes no one ever taught me anything but he only."[30] Burne-Jones utilized Judeo-Christian language to describe him, a practice he continued throughout his life to characterize important people or events: "I used to think Abraham of Ur of the Chaldees was like him—and I am sure if he had bought a piece of land to bury his Sarah in he would have been just as courteous as the first Abraham."[31] Thompson was largely responsible for encouraging Edward's love of history and geography, and his style of teaching opened up numerous possibilities for his imagination. In 1894 he fondly remembered how Thompson could bring alive even the driest texts: "with the flattest sentence in the world he would take us to Aegean waters & the marshes of Babylon & hills of Caucasus & wilds of Tartary and the constellations & abysses of space."[32] Thompson's legacy, however, lay in the approach to knowledge he instilled in his students. As Burne-Jones recalled, "he taught us few facts but spent all the time drilling us that we might know what to do with them when they came."[33]

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[29] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:72.
[30] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, July 23, 1894, MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 257, British Library.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., fol. 258.
[33] Ibid.

As a child Burne-Jones embodied a "power of independent study and…instinct for finding out authorities and sources of information on a subject," eagerly pursuing questions of history and religion outside of school.[34] The boy whom classmates called "Bigbook Jones" grew into a man obsessed with diverse subjects such as archaeology, classic literature, biographies, history, science, and theology.[35] At one examination in "general knowledge," including topics such as the Fortunate Islands and the religions and geography of Lebanon, he answered all of the questions, many of which "no one knew but me."[36] His favorite library books, George Catlin's *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* (1841), Robert Curzon's *Visit to the Monasteries in the Levant* (1849), Alexander von Humboldt's *Cosmos* (1845-62, trans. 1848-65) and *Views of Nature* (1808, trans. 1849), and Austen Henry Layard's *Nineveh and Its Remains* (1849), testify to the diversity of his interests.[37] At fifteen he had already amassed "quite a Museum" of "Fossils, Coins, Minerals, Shells, and other curiosities," and in 1850 the British Museum enamored him with its multifarious array of fossils (which he identified by their scientific names), Assyrian sculpture and bas-reliefs, ethnographic rooms, Etruscan vases, zoological specimens, Greek marbles, and Egyptian antiquities.[38]

"Religion as associated with the history of the Christian Church and with its actual position in modern times" also enthralled Burne-Jones.[39] A visit with a

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[34] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:21. Around 1847, for instance, he compiled a "very intricate History of the States of Asia Minor" as a hobby with his schoolmate Crom Price. Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:138.

[35] His own library was extensive and he continually sought new publications, often having friends or studio assistants read to him aloud as he worked.

[36] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 4:454.

[37] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:58.

[38] Ibid., 1:37, 45-47.

[39] Ibid., 1:51.

Nonconformist "Calvinist Methodist" in 1848 prompted sophisticated research into

doctrinal differences among Protestant variants such as Calvinism and Arminianism,

early church debates over the person of Jesus, and the nature of grace.[40] This "first

theological quest" resulted in his own affirmation of belief in "the doctrine of human

depravity, salvation by Christ, justification by faith, and sanctification by the Holy

Ghost."[41] By 1850 he was writing an "Ancient History" of the church, "an Epitome of

Ancient Chronology, from the creation of the world to the birth of our Lord," and an

"elaborate 'Table of the Kings of Israel and Judah.'"[42] It is noteworthy that in an era

which had begun to question the commonly-held 4,000-year age of the earth these

projects all view history through the lens of the Bible, defining time by "the creation of

the world," "the birth of our Lord," or the ancient kings who ruled during Old Testament

times. As a child, history and religion were inextricably bound together for Burne-Jones.

These studies clearly had a lasting impact, as he later advised his son Philip,

> As to knowing the parallel kings of Judah and Israel…Read the Book of
> Kings yourself, and the lovely stories will fix the history in your mind, and
> you will never forget those that are important to remember; Ahab and
> Jehu, Ahaziah, Hezekiah, Josiah and Manasseh—those six only matter,
> after the division of the kingdom. But read the book itself as constantly as
> you can, for it's a glorious heap of antiquity, and if you ever need to learn
> a theology you shall find it there for yourself the day you need it.[43]

At King Edward's, he excelled in religious studies, but his mischievous personality,

wicked sense of humor, and tendency to daydream displeased his schoolmasters.[44]

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[40] Ibid., 1:21-27.
[41] His friend Canon Dixon later noted how "striking" it was that Burne-Jones "should have touched on the two first great successive tendencies of theology" at such a young age. Ibid., 1:27.
[42] Ibid., 1:27, 42.
[43] Ibid., 2:89.
[44] Controversies over Burne-Jones's entitlement to certain prizes, examinations, scholarships to Oxford, and strange incidents such as being caught by the Head Master loitering about the hall "watching the motes in the sunbeams from a window" marked his tenure at King Edward's. Another time he smashed a stained-

Consequently, Burne-Jones alleged, in spite of winning "all the prizes" in a special examination, including those for divinity and classics, Headmaster Reverend E. H. Gifford (1820-1905), the future Archdeacon of London, refused to award him first place.[45]

Burne-Jones found an outlet for his frustrations in art, for which he showed a talent from a young age. As a boy "drawing was evidently already considered his characteristic occupation," one often partnered with religious symbolism to express his anxieties, wit, and creativity.[46] Prolific caricatures of angels, devils, and priests in his notebooks and letters (fig. 4) led classmates to dub him "the boy…who could draw devils."[47] As a desire to assume holy orders took hold, his caricatures morphed into clergymen. These were less frivolous; an "oft repeated" motif was "a young priest standing robed before an altar," which he showed to his friend Richard Watson Dixon with the comment, "that is what I hope to be one day."[48] Burne-Jones's visual self-identification with Christianity was manifest as early as age seven, when he sat for a portrait and requested that the artist depict him drawing a church on a slate, conflating his two passions of art and ecclesiasticism.[49] This pattern of self-expression through Christian iconography continued throughout his life.

With Burne-Jones's "growing thoughtfulness" about theology and church history, Evangelicalism became increasingly "repellent" and impelled him toward the High

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glass window during a period of "momentary insanity" and was "decreed incapable of taking any prizes that year." Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:137-38.

[45] Ibid., 4:454. Burne-Jones may have been exaggerating his accomplishments, as another school-mate remembered him as "not overly brilliant or diligent in his lessons." "Reminiscence of Burne-Jones," *Current Literature* 25 (Mar. 1899): 248. Gifford was Headmaster from 1848-62.

[46] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:10.

[47] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:82; G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:20.

[48] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:38.

[49] Ibid.

Church movement.[50] In 1833 three Oxford Fellows, John Keble (1792-1866), John

Henry Newman (1801-90), and Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-82), began publishing

Tracts for the Times (1833-41), which advocated revitalizing the Anglican Church

through the reclamation of its medieval, Catholic roots. A desire for greater piety,

holiness, and reverence in the Church of England motivated these "Tractarians." The

Oxford Movement, as their broader influence was known, revived medieval liturgical

practices including sung Morning and Evening Prayer, more frequent celebrations of

Holy Communion (which, like Catholics, they called the Eucharist), robed choirs,

candles, and, less commonly at this time, vestments, incense, bowing and genuflection,

and preaching in surplices instead of black gowns (fig. 5). Beauty of ritual and a

reverence for the sacramental mysteries characterized their services, which opponents

decried as "mystical" and "papist." Mysticism, however, accompanied by the sensory

experience of High Mass, appealed to Burne-Jones's aesthetic temperament. Once, he

was "taken to a Catholic Chapel and saw how they did their service and snuffed up the

odour of the incense" eagerly but was dismayed to learn it was all "wicked."[51] The

"restoration of beautiful ceremonial and dignity of office" within the Anglican Church,

which Edward first witnessed when visiting Hereford Cathedral, thus "commanded his

deepest sympathy."[52]

Around 1848-49 the Joneses transferred their membership to St. Paul's Church in

St. Paul's Square (fig. 6), where the "service and doctrine were 'high'" and a strong

social agenda focused on alleviating the negative effects of rapid urbanization on the

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 50.

[52] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:38, 52.

city's working and uneducated poor.[53] Burne-Jones's future wife, Georgiana, found it

"impossible to decide what first drew [Edward] towards the High Church movement" but

supposed the "barren ugliness of the Evangelical churches" was partially to blame.[54] St.

Paul's, however, was hardly a radical architectural departure from St. Mary's. Built in

1777-79, it was designed in the classical style of John Gibbs and featured Ionic columns,

pilasters, and a three-light east window of Benjamin West's *Conversion of St. Paul*. The

sung Psalms of High Mass, at least, were more to Burne-Jones's taste than the plain

hymns of the Evangelicals, which he remembered later "made one hate that word [hymn]

when we were little."[55] Coincidentally, the incumbent who had recently stepped down in

1847, Rann Kennedy (1772-1851), had also enjoyed a prominent career as a master at

Burne-Jones's school from 1807-35. The Reverend George Burton Potts Latimer (1809-

after 1871), who Edward thought "preached positive doctrine, most firmly and withal

most gently," succeeded Kennedy.[56] Burne-Jones's new friendship with Tractarians such

as the Reverends John Goss and J.W. Caldicott further encouraged his Anglo-Catholic

inclinations, as did a visit to the Trappist monastery of Mount Saint Bernard's Abbey,

which left a deep impression and sparked his yearning for the seclusion of the religious

life, discussed in Chapter Four.[57]

The ideological shift to a high church may seem surprising for an Evangelical like

Burne-Jones's father. In the 1840s, however, this was not yet an unusual, rebellious or

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[53] Ibid., 1:40.
[54] Ibid., 1:38.
[55] Ibid., 2:178.
[56] Ibid., 1:82
[57] Burne-Jones met Goss in Hereford. The newly ordained minister and the future Minor Canon of Hereford was at Oxford with Newman during the peak of the Tractarian movement and "must have been almost alone in the High Church views which he held" in Hereford. Burne-Jones met Caldicott during his last years at King Edward's. Caldicott, originally from Birmingham, was "an ardent Tractarian" and a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford. He took Burne-Jones under his wing at university. Ibid., 1:38-40, 56.

controversial move. The tendency in art historical accounts of the Victorian period is to draw distinct boundaries between high (Anglo-Catholic) and evangelical Christianity, but historians of religion acknowledge a great degree of overlap between them. As Owen Chadwick has demonstrated, aspects of evangelicalism underlay most versions of Victorian religion. "If we look at the religious map of all England," he explains, "from Brompton Oratory among Roman Catholics to the simplest Quaker meeting-house in Rochdale, we trace at unexpected points the evangelical mind."[58] Tractarianism grew out of an evangelical impulse for greater piety in Christian worship, and the two groups shared the conservative goals of preserving the heritage, liturgy, and authority of the Anglican Church. Many of those who participated in the Oxford Movement, such as Burne-Jones, were brought up as Evangelicals, and, Nigel Yates relates, in the beginning Evangelicals such as the elder Mr. Jones "welcomed a good deal of Tractarian teaching."[59] It should be remembered as well that although Newman had seceded to Rome (1845), in 1848-49 the storm had not yet broken over the Gorham Judgment (1850) and the reinstatement of Roman Catholic bishoprics in Britain (1850). In the late 1840s Tractarianism was still primarily a political and doctrinal movement focused on the relationship between church and state, medieval liturgy, baptismal regeneration, and Eucharistic theology. Its more extreme ritual practices and liturgical innovations were steadily advancing, and indeed had sparked isolated "surplice riots," but would not gain a broader foothold until after the 1850s.[60]

Newman, who founded an Oratory in Birmingham in 1848, further motivated Burne-Jones's shift to High Churchism. Anna Jameson described its community of

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[58] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 1:5.
[59] Nigel Yates, *The Oxford Movement and Anglican Ritualism* (London: Historical Association, 1983), 13.
[60] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 2:308-25.

priests modeled on the order of Saint Philip of Neri in sixteenth-century Rome as "young

ecclesiastics, members of the nobility, and students…devoted…to the task of reading the

Scriptures, praying with the poor, founding and visiting hospitals for the sick."[61] The

Oratory's urban missionary work and Newman's notoriety assured it an unmistakable

presence in Birmingham. Although it is not known whether the Joneses ever heard

Newman preach, his arrival coincided with Edward's growing investigation of theology

and church history. Newman's profound impact on him is legendary:

> He taught me so much I do mind—things that will never be out of
> me…and it has never failed me…So he stands to me as a great image and
> symbol of a man who never stooped, and who put all this world's life in
> one splendid venture, that he knew, as well as you or I, might fail, but
> with a glorious scorn of everything that was not his dream—of course it
> touched me.[62]

The artist reported years later how Newman "in an age of sofas and cushions…taught me

to be indifferent to comfort… in an age of materialism he taught me to venture all on the

unseen."[63] Newman's message of looking past earthly things to God's eternal reward

was attractive to a child brought up with few luxuries and little material wealth. In

contrast to the moralistic preaching at St. Mary's, the non-judgmental character of

Tractarianism also appealed. Burne-Jones explained that Newman's teachings stayed

with him "because he said it in a way that touched me—not scolding nor forbidding nor

much leading."[64]

It was more than a superficial aesthetic attraction to Ritualism, however, which

drove Burne-Jones's fascination with the Oxford Movement; he also had great sympathy

for Tractarian doctrine and politics. The Tractarians' original agenda was to defend the

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[61] Anna Jameson, *Legends of the Monastic Orders*, 2nd ed. (London, 1852), 162.
[62] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 120-21.
[63] Ibid., 120.
[64] Ibid.

Church of England's sacred authority, which they argued derived from apostolic succession and its Roman Catholic roots, as independent from the English government. Consequently, they fought Parliament's and the secular courts' interference in ecclesiastical affairs. Burne-Jones and his friends "openly discussed" politics and religion, and in 1850 when the Gorham Controversy broke out, it elicited "great interest" among his schoolmates.[65] A legal battle between the Bishop of Exeter, Henry Phillpotts (1778-1869), a High-Churchman, and George Cornelius Gorham (1787-1857), a clergyman, erupted into a national scandal over the doctrine of justification and the secular court's jurisdiction over spiritual matters.[66] According to Georgiana, this "collision which [the Oxford Movement] led to between ecclesiastical and state authority excited [Edward] so much that he threw himself eagerly into the strife."[67] He took up the cause of the Tractarians with "conviction and vehemence" in opposition to the majority Evangelical position of his peers.[68]

Georgiana relates that from the late 1840s, "the importance of ecclesiastical matters…grew rapidly in his mind" and he threw himself "fervidly" into "all the throes of the English Church."[69] Goss's prompting led Burne-Jones, already contemplating a ministerial career, to solidify his goal of attending university and taking holy orders. As the origin of the Tractarian movement, Oxford University was the logical choice. Goss urged him to attend Exeter College over Pembroke, the usual place for King Edward's boys, and perhaps the college's close ties with Bishop Phillpotts further affected his

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[65] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:51.
[66] The bishop refused Gorham his benefice on the grounds that the clergyman did not believe in baptismal regeneration. This doctrine, held by Tractarians, maintained that baptism constituted the moment of justification rather than a "conversion experience" later in life, as Evangelicals argued.
[67] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:51.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 1:21, 40.

choice. Role models such as Thompson, a doctor of divinity, also may have influenced Burne-Jones's professional aspirations.[70] King Edward's cultivated clergymen; several alumni from Burne-Jones's era achieved prominent religious careers including Bishop Joseph Barber Lightfoot (1828-89); Bishop Brooke Foss Westcott (1825-1901); Edward White Benson, the Archbishop of Canterbury (1829-96); and Burne-Jones's friend Richard Watson Dixon (1833-1900), honorary Canon of Carlisle.

Some art historians have downplayed Burne-Jones's clerical intentions, dismissing them as merely his father's wishes or a practical economic decision, but such claims cannot be substantiated.[71] In the early 1850s the priesthood was considered a serious spiritual obligation, particularly by the Tractarians Burne-Jones admired. Before 1830 men entered the profession for the comfortable life it offered, courtesy of wealthy patrons, and the clergy's powerful socio-political role within the community. The Oxford Movement, however, sought to re-infuse the clergy with a renewed sense of holiness and responsibility. As Nigel Yates explains, after the Tractarians, "priesthood was a vocation. The priest was set apart from secular society to provide spiritual leadership to represent man to God, and God to man."[72] With the introduction of more frequent Eucharist services and a renewed gravitas regarding the clergy's sacramental duty, the priesthood was no longer merely a comfortable living but perceived as a sacred calling. Having read Newman and the Oxford Movement's *Tracts for the Times*, Burne-Jones knew the pious nature of the priesthood he was entering. His pursuit of the ministry,

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[70] Thompson was Burne-Jones's tutor in the Commercial Schools, which prepared boys for more practical careers as opposed to university degrees. It was probably Thompson who suggested to Mr. Jones that his son be allowed to switch to the Classical Schools and prepare for a clerical career at Oxford.

[71] Only Richard Dorment argues against this mythology, concurring, "This intended career was not the whim of a young man, for Burne-Jones was an intensely serious, committed person, and his early vocation was the expression of a genuine religious impulse." Dorment, "Decoration of St. Paul's," 125.

[72] Yates, *Oxford Movement*, 38.

then, cannot be attributed solely to economic necessity; religious zeal must also have been a motivation.

Oxford University: 1853-1856

Burne-Jones matriculated at Exeter College (fig. 7) in July 1852 but, no rooms being available during the fall Michaelmas Term, it was January 1853 before he went up to Oxford.[73] He summarized his beliefs at this point as "a school-boy, stuffed to the finger-nails with rawest knowledge, inclined to High Churchism, with marvellous respect for the powers that be, whether in Church or State, a strong Tory, and with a political creed, consummating in Charles the First."[74] The physical environment of Oxford, its "dreaming spires," and proliferation of new Gothic Revival structures encouraged his love of medieval Christianity. Architectural spaces such as the cloisters of New College and the recently-finished Merton College Chapel, his "chief shrines," gave the university a romantic, ecclesiastical air enhanced by consultations of illuminated manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and routine "pilgrimages" to the ruins of nearby Godstow Abbey. Burne-Jones's experience was typical; as Paul Deslandes observes, Victorian Oxbridge "undergraduates, in discussing the physical spaces that they inhabited, emphasized…their links with the glorious events of the past," which often reminded them "of men who have worked for the Christian Church and the Christian faith."[75] The first two years there were

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[73] This was probably because Exeter, according to Nicholas Shrimpton, was one of the two largest Oxford colleges in the 1850s—only Exeter and Christ Church had over 100 undergraduates at that time. Nicholas Shrimpton, "Ruskin, Morris, Burne-Jones…and Exeter," *Exeter College Association Register* (2000): 27.
[74] Edward Burne-Jones to Maria Choyce, Oct. 1855, Burne-Jones Papers, XV: 3, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[75] Paul R. Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men: British Masculinity and the Undergraduate Experience, 1850-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2005), 20; Ralph Durand, *Oxford: Its Buildings and Gardens* (London: Grant Richards, 1909), 2-3, quoted in Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men*, 22.

"quite the happiest time of my life," Burne-Jones wrote, partly because "faith was very firm and content, and will[power] strengthening every day."[76]

Burne-Jones attended not only the required daily college chapel services but also "daily morning services" with his new friend William Morris at the high church of St. Thomas the Martyr (fig. 8), the first parish church to reinstate daily worship since the Stuart dynasty.[77] The Reverend Thomas Chamberlain (1810-92), a Fellow of Christ Church and one of the most prominent Tractarian parish priests in Oxford, presided over this almost-hidden little twelfth-century church near the train station. In spite of its modest appearance, however, it played a central role in the Oxford Movement, many of whose leading divines preached from its pulpit.[78] In the words of one detractor, it retained "long-established celebrity as the most consistent development of the ritual of Oxford popery."[79] Burne-Jones and Morris sang plain-song during its highly ritualized Mass, when their attention would have been drawn toward the newly-installed Eucharistic window over the altar in the north aisle (fig. 9). It featured the Catholicizing elements of a priest celebrating Mass in the eastward-facing position, a vision of the sacrificial lamb on an altar, and saints kneeling in adoration, causing critics to rail against it for decades as "an illustration of the licence which is allowed to the clergy in inculcating the pernicious doctrines of a ritualizing Romanism by the process of teaching

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[76] Edward Burne-Jones to Maria Choyce, Oct. 1855, Burne-Jones Papers, XV: 3, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[77] J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* (London, 1899), 1:66. Oxford required all residential students to attend daily chapel services every morning and evening. University of Oxford, *Regulations and Ordinances for the Amendment of the Statutes of Exeter College, in the University of Oxford, made by the Rector and Scholars, under the Authority of 17 and 18 Victoria, c.81, and approved by the Commissioners appointed for the purposes of that Act* (Oxford, 1855), statute VII.
[78] Edward Bouverie Pusey, Henry Parry Liddon, John Mason Neale, Charles Fuge Lowder and Edward King, all influential Tractarians, preached at St. Thomas the Martyr.
[79] P. Maurice, *Dr. Macbride's Legacy, Ritualism of Oxf. Popery* (London, 1869), 163, quoted in "Churches," in Alan Crossley, ed., *The City of Oxford,* Vol. 4, *A History of the County of Oxford.* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=22821.

through the eye."[80]   Additionally, in 1854 St. Thomas the Martyr became one of only two parish churches in England to implement Eucharistic vestments, a material signifier of its extreme Romanism.

Little research has been conducted on Burne-Jones's coursework at Oxford but the University Archives and two surviving volumes of his notes in the Fitzwilliam Museum are useful for reconstructing his educational experience, much of which directly concerned Christianity or the philosophical basis for religion. His dense, copiously compiled writings corroborate his friend Cormell (Crom) Price's (1835-1910) claim, "his books seemed neater than others, and superior altogether. He had a way of filling them with finely written notes."[81] Oxford's records reveal that Burne-Jones took his first set of exams, Responsions, on February 17, 1853, and was evaluated on Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Antigone*, Euclid, and Virgil's *Georgics*.[82] Crom wrote to congratulate Burne-Jones "on the successful issue of [his] 'little go'," to which he replied, "the congratulation is tardy but nevertheless acceptable—'Smalls' is a more cheery name decidedly than 'little go', the latter is almost as slow as Responsions."[83] A surviving schedule from Trinity Term 1853 documents that his lessons consisted of Logic at 9 am, Demosthenes at 10 am, and St. John at 11 am on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. On Tuesdays and Thursdays he studied Latin and Greek Verse at 9 am, Greek Chorus at 10 am, Agamemnon at 11 am,

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[80] The window was installed in 1854 and around 1870 "was the subject of an unsuccessful appeal to the Privy Council." Church of England, "St. Thomas the Martyr, Oxford," *A Church Near You*, Oxford Diocesan Publications, 2006, www.acny.org.uk/page.php?V=214&P=37. For more on the controversy surrounding such iconography, see chap. 2.

[81] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:57.

[82] "Examination Register: Responsions, 1851-70," UR 3/1/3/1, Oxford University Archives. Oxford required students to demonstrate knowledge of one Greek author, one Latin author, Euclid or Algebra, and general arithmetic. University of Oxford, *New Examination Statutes. Abstracts of their principal provisions; with A Catalogue of Books, either expressly mentioned, or treating of the subjects required*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1854), 1.

[83] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Mar. 5, 1853, fol. 1, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.

and Prose Composition at 1pm. At 10 am on Saturdays he worked on "Essays."[84] He clearly had a substantial knowledge of Greek and Latin; many notes appear in both these languages.

Academic Studies

Much of Burne-Jones's first notebook is given over to dry notes on the Hebrew Scriptures and Gospels.   His detailed account of Leviticus, for instance, chronicles Judaic laws, burnt offerings, and instructions for dealing with transgressors, while Deuteronomy's chapters are summarized in narrative form. In both, he emphasized the recurring theme of how men should atone for their sins by making offerings to God. Oxford's dry approach to the arcane laws and procedures of the Old Testament was a sharp departure from his youthful imaginative interaction with Jewish history, and it seems to have wearied him. The number of pages allotted to each biblical book diminished as the term wore on—to Leviticus he devoted twenty-two pages; to Numbers, eighteen; and to Deuteronomy, nine. The books of Joshua, Judges and Ruth received even less analysis. Alongside the Old Testament, Oxford encouraged its students to consult *Grave's Lectures on the four last books of the Pentateuch* (1850) and the *Synchronistical Annals of the Kings of Israel and Judah* (1843).[85]

Burne-Jones's notes on the Gospels are no less monotonous. The Gospel of Matthew is recorded as a concise, straightforward index of events by chapter. From one who later claimed a fascination with the beauty and mystery of the Nativity story, it is surprising to read only that "The wise men of the East are directed unto Christ by a star.

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[84] Edward Burne-Jones, "Notebook kept by the artist while a student at Oxford 1853-1856," 1070(1), Fitzwilliam Museum.
[85] Univ. of Oxford, *New Examination Statutes*, 34.

They worship him, and offer presents. The craft of Herod, and presentation of the Magi." In the back of his notebook he undertook a comparative study of the Gospels of Mark and Luke, perhaps as preparation for his First Public Examination in 1854. Oxford required students to demonstrate knowledge of the Four Gospels in the original Greek and encouraged them to seek help from *Elsley's Annotations on the Gospels and Acts, and Slade's on the Epistles* (1841-46), *Trench's Notes on the Parables and Miracles* (1854), and *Harmonia Evangelica, atque Actus Apostolorum Graece* edited by E. Greswell (1845).[86] Burne-Jones duly noted the "harmony" between the two Gospels, the probability that Saint Mark was the son of Saint Peter, and the possibility that in Luke's Gospel Saint Mark was the "man who fled at the betrayal and left his garments." Among the distinguishing features of Mark's Gospel he listed the prevalence of foreign words in the original Greek text, none of which appear in the other Gospels; "peculiar parables" such as "the seed [which] grew imperceptibly;" and the abundance of miracles such as the "cure of blind man at Capernaum." His notes on Luke are shorter and primarily address whether Luke was a "Gentile born at Antioch (or Philippi?)" and the locations where the book could have been written.

Burne-Jones detested Oxford's clinical approach to the Bible, and the legalistic books of the Pentateuch were a particularly inauspicious start to his university education. Tutors were full of "mental apathy and spiritual sluggardliness," and he blamed his forsaking of holy orders on the fact that "I can't think like my betters, and conform to their thinking, and read my bible."[87] When his son Philip struggled with scripture studies at Oxford years later he sympathized, "as to divinity…they have an unlucky way of

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[86] Ibid., 2, 34.
[87] W. Sharp, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," *Atlantic Monthly*, 379; Edward Burne-Jones to Maria Choyce, Oct. 1855, Burne-Jones Papers, XV: 3, Fitzwilliam Museum.

making one learn the Jewish history in any clumsy, crabbed, ill-written, dry book they can get made for money, rather than teach it out of the wonderful ancient book itself, and I expect it is that which hinders you."[88] An anonymous scathing 1856 article about Oxford's religious instruction, which Burne-Jones may have partially authored, corroborates these impressions. Wishing for a devout yet intellectually liberal institution unafraid to tackle the difficult questions of its day, the author lamented, "of Divinity [the student] will find little or none," only "a modicum of names, places, texts, and articles to be learnt by heart; and the public lectures being chiefly valued as a required qualification for Orders."[89]   He dismissed the authoritarian, reactionary religion a student did gather from Oxford, "if he gathers any," as "that kind which is least creditable to a place of Education, viz. the *un*thoughtful or *un*fruitful kind."

Nevertheless, Burne-Jones emerged with an excellent knowledge of the Bible, evident in his many biblical paintings and designs. He also gained an understanding of the Judeo-Christian scriptures in Greek and Latin, and for the rest of his life the Vulgate remained one of his favorite texts. He never lost his affection for the Bible nor subjected it to scrutiny, in spite of being an avid philologist.[90] In response to the tide of biblical criticism that swept Britain after 1860 and refuted the possibility of its divine inspiration and miraculous events, Burne-Jones lamented,

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[88] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:89. He was probably referring to texts such as Horne's *Introduction to the Critical Study of the Scriptures* (1846), Parkhurst's Greek and English *Lexicon to the New Testament* (1851), and various *Connection[s] of Sacred and Profane History* by Prideaux (1851), Russell (1827), and Shuckford (1848), some of the recommended texts at Oxford to be read alongside the scriptures. Univ. of Oxford, *New Examination Statutes*, 33-34.

[89] "Oxford," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 4 (1856): 248. Penelope Fitzgerald has suggested that Burne-Jones was one of the authors of this anonymous article. Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 40.

[90] According to Georgiana he had a "keen interest…in questions of philology." G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:58. Malcolm Bell also described him as "a deep and learned scholar" of philology. Malcolm Bell, *Sir Edward Burne-Jones: A Record and Review* (London, 1892), 16.

> I hate these sacred things under the microscope…well, they will have said all there is to say very soon & will have dissected their God and found the elements of him and got rid of the whole business & can sit down then in an emptied world and wish so much of the old dream was true and then there should come a swift end of it all.[91]

He also complained in 1896 about those who "say that David isn't the author of even a single one of the psalms—that if he made anything it was only war songs." After all, "There's no telling whether they really can know," he criticized, and "for the very little they gain they don't know how much they lose."[92] "The new Bible which these scholars wish to create is not my Bible, our Bible, the Bible that has influenced humanity," he declared.[93]

In the nineteenth century, Oxford dedicated another significant portion of its curriculum to the study of Logic and Moral Philosophy, overlapping disciplines inextricably bound up with questions of ethics, religious systems, and the existence and nature of God. Oxford's 1854 Examination Statutes reveal that clergymen authored over a third of the prescribed logic and moral philosophy texts, attempting to prove Christianity, or at least a deity, through rational means.[94] With Caldicott's prompting, Burne-Jones had already "devoted himself heart and soul to the study of logic" in Birmingham while awaiting his place at Oxford and developed "a perfect rage for logic and metaphysics."[95] Georgiana also recalls her husband read "Philosophy and religious polemics" simultaneously in preparation for university.[96] At Oxford, Burne-Jones gained

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[91] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Jan. 30, 1894, MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 177, British Library.
[92] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 3:297.
[93] Joseph Jacobs, "Some Recollections of Sir Edward Burne-Jones," *Nineteenth Century* 45 (Jan. 1899): 130.
[94] Univ. of Oxford, *New Examination Statutes*, 47-48.
[95] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:57.
[96] Ibid.

a reputation for "his metaphysical knowledge."[97] His studies there reflect a particular focus on natural theology, typical of his time, which based belief in a God on reason and external evidence in the physical world, rather than on divine revelation or *a priori* knowledge. His many notes on the "proofs" of religion also reveal an interest in the relationship between faith and logic.

The logic of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) and John Stuart Mill (1806-73) featured prominently in his studies, but he disliked the latter immensely, recalling decades later how he "read his logic…at Oxford, as we all did, and resented it, for I smelt heresy in it—nor would the schoolmen have accepted it—nor Rome."[98] His notes indicate he devoted more time to the Christian logicians Henry Aldrich (1648-1710) and Richard Whately (1787-1863) than the agnostic Mill. Extensive discussions of Aldrich, derived from *Artis Logicae Rudimenta*, the Reverend Henry Longueville Mansel's revised edition of Aldrich's 1691 text (1847), span both notebooks and include topics such as "the origin of language" as "a natural divine gift," the definition of logic, and whether logic is an art or a science. The only significant logic textbook since Aldrich, Whately's *Elements of Logic* (1826), also surfaces often in Burne-Jones's notes. Whatley, the Archbishop of Dublin and a liberal Broad-Churchman, spent his life building a rational basis for Christian belief.[99] In the *Elements*, Whately relied on Aristotle's deductive, syllogistic method to demonstrate that logic was crucial for safeguarding Christianity. "Among the

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[97] E. R. Robson to A. W. Taylor, Dec. 9, 1865, "Letters between A. W. Taylor and E. R. R.," fol. 21ff, Burne-Jones Papers, Fitzwilliam Museum, quoted in Dorment, "Decoration of St. Paul's," 123.
[98] Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, n.d., Burne-Jones Papers, XXVII, fol. 72, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[99] His first and most successful work, *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Buonaparte* (1819), for instance, was a satirical treatise on the irrationality of skepticism. Using logic, he showed how the criticisms skeptics levied at Christianity were equally applicable to the bizarre story of Napoleon, and suggested that by such measures Napoleon, thus, could not exist (even though in 1819 he was living on Alba). This humorous tactic was used to demonstrate how similar efforts to debunk biblical miracles were equally absurd. Just because something sounds implausible, he argued, does not mean it is untrue.

enemies of the Gospel now," he warned, "are to be found men not only of learning and ingenuity, but of *cultivated argumentative powers*, and not unversed in the principles of logic. If the advocates of our religion think proper to disregard this help, they will find, on careful inquiry, that *their opponents do not*."[100] He urged those like Burne-Jones "engaged in, or designed for the Sacred Ministry" as well as any who recognize "that the cause of Religion is not a concern of the Ministry alone" to cultivate their powers of logic in order to defend their faith.[101] Consequently, his arguments often addressed Christian theology, for instance in a sample fallacy regarding predestination that Burne-Jones annotated.[102] Notably, Newman worked closely with Whately on the *Elements* and wrote it "had a gradual, but a deep effect on my mind."[103]

By October 1853 Burne-Jones was studying ethics, which he defined as "the art of formation of character," and moral philosophy, whose object was "to answer the question, what is virtue?"[104] Students aspiring to honors had to attend two courses of public lectures on subjects of their choosing before their final examination; certificates in the Oxford University Archives reveal Burne-Jones attended lectures on Moral Philosophy during Michaelmas Term 1855.[105] One of the frequent philosophers in his notes is William Paley (1743-1805), the archdeacon of Carlisle, whose *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* was one of the most popular ethics books of its time and

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[100] Richard Whately, *Elements of Logic*, 3rd ed. (London, 1829), xxxiii.

[101] Ibid., xxxii.

[102] "An ambiguous term," Burne-Jones noted, "is that of 'faith,' 'elect' in Theology: The Elect can never fall. Christians are Elect. [Therefore] Christians can never fall." The fallacy lies in the fact that "Elect" means different things in the first and second sentences, Burne-Jones pointed out. "Those who are ultimately chosen to receive a final reward" can never fall, but Christians are "Elect" in the sense that they are "chosen to certain privileges and advantages." Edward Burne-Jones, "Notebook kept by the artist while a student at Oxford," c.1853-56, 1070(4), Fitzwilliam Museum.

[103] John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (London, 1864), quoted in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 190, s.v. "Richard Whately" (by William F. Naufftus). Accessed online at Literature Resource Center.

[104] E. Burne-Jones, "Notebook" 1070(4).

[105] "Certificates of Attendance for Moral Philosophy," Oxford University Archives.

an instant best-seller when published in 1785. It laid out Paley's theory of Theological

Rule Utilitarianism, which argued for human happiness as the fundamental good and

asserted that the pursuit of happiness accorded with divine will. He defined virtue as

"doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting

happiness."[106] In other books such as *Horae Paulinae* (1790) and *A View of the*

Evidences of Christianity (1794), Paley argued for the historical accuracy of the Bible

and defended God's benevolence.[107] Since Burne-Jones was expected to know the

Evidences for his Final Schools he would have been familiar with this three-volume

defense of Christianity based on the proof of biblical miracles, various forms of historical

evidence, and refutations of common skepticisms through logic. Paley also offered his

famous "watchmaker analogy," one of the earliest arguments for intelligent design, in

Natural Theology; or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected

from the Appearances of Nature (1802), a text Burne-Jones probably knew.

     Analogy of Religion (1736) by the theologian and philosopher Bishop Joseph

Butler (1692-1752), who offered a logical defense of Christianity based on its

reconciliation with moral philosophy, also appears often in Burne-Jones's notes. A

treatise appended to the *Analogy*, "On the Nature of Virtue," additionally laid out

Butler's ethical system. In opposition to those who argued for a detached deity

unconcerned with human affairs, his *Analogy of Religion* insisted that God engaged with

man and revealed himself through nature. Furthermore, it attempts to substantiate Jesus's

efficacy as a redeemer of mankind. In his notes Burne-Jones illustrated Butler's method

by citing his comparison of "the world of nature and the world of grace." Recounting a

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[106] *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 252, s.v. "William Paley" (by Frederick Ferré). Accessed online at Literature Resource Center.

[107] Univ. of Oxford, *New Examination Statutes*, 36.

faulty double syllogism based on the Aristotelian model, Burne-Jones stated the

superiority of Butler's style of simple syllogism: "The world of nature, though attended

with many difficulties is the work of God. The world of grace is like the world of nature.

[Therefore] the world of grace, not withstanding many difficulties may be the work of

God." In this example, Burne-Jones concurred, "the argument would stand."[108]

One of Burne-Jones's notebooks lists potential examination questions on logic

and moral philosophy. Two of the four he prepared to answer use logic to analyze

religion.   The first, a syllogism, proposes, "existence is necessary to perfection, and

perfection is implied in our notion of the Deity, [therefore] the Deity necessarily exists."

The second is also theological:

> The duration of God's dominion must be Eternal, if any thing which is be
> immortal. For, being every thing is therefore his, because it received its
> being from him, and the continuation of the creative is as much from him
> as the first production; it followeth, that so long as it is continued it must
> be his and consequently being some of his creatures are immortal, his
> dominion must be eternal.[109]

Elsewhere, Burne-Jones created religious examples to demonstrate common flaws in

syllogisms. To show the mistake of having "a negative minor premise instead of an

affirmative," he writes, "the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the body. Hymenaeus

was not a Saducee. [therefore] Hymenaeus did not deny the resurrection of the body."[110]

A second example highlighting the error of "not having a negative premise at all" is

offered: "the cruel Roman Emperors persecuted the Christians. Trajan persecuted the

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[108] Butler's own words, however, are actually "the state of things which religion reveals;" it is Burne-Jones's own interpretation that presumes religion to be a "world of grace." E. Burne-Jones, "Notebook" 1070(4).

[109] E. Burne-Jones, "Notebook" 1070(1).

[110] E. Burne-Jones, "Notebook" 1070(4).

Christians. [Therefore] Trajan was a cruel Roman Emperor."[111] At a time when many searched for empirical "proof" of Christianity, Burne-Jones explored its doctrine through the rational disciplines of logic and moral philosophy.

Personally, Burne-Jones found this "science of the processes of thought" futile and unsatisfying as a means of understanding God or an aid to the religious life. After all, "a geologist walks none the better, because he is acquainted with the underlying strata—and a botanist has no keener sense of smell because he knows the classification of flowers," he told Crom.[112] He felt logic was an ineffectual tool for a preacher, since the "multitude is moved by passion & feeling and not reason, therefore you must impel them by Rhetoric before you can convince them by Logic."[113] The logic and moral philosophy texts he encountered were unlikely to have instigated religious doubts; to the contrary, they were intended to allay any such concerns. Butler's *Analogy*, for instance, mainly served to "strengthen the convictions of believers and perhaps assist those who are uncertain or wavering in their faith."[114]

German philosophy, unlike the logic and moral philosophy of Whately, Butler and Paley, provoked more confusion over issues of belief. As early as August 1853 Burne-Jones engaged with "Transcendentalism and all the host of German systems," which had a sobering effect on his circle and contributed to the dissolution of their plans to found a monastery in London.[115] He reported in October 1855 that the experience of "reading and thinking, philosophy chiefly, both French and German," had "shivered the

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[111] Ibid.
[112] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Oct. 29, 1854, fol. 6, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.
[113] Ibid., fol. 5.
[114] *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 252, s.v. "Joseph Butler" (by Terry G. Harris). Accessed online at Literature Resource Center.
[115] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Aug. 5, 1853, fol. 8, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.

belief of one [referring to Morris] and palsied mine, I fear for years."[116] Although it is

tempting to interpret this as a "loss" of faith, it should be noted that the word "palsied"

does not indicate annihilation but rather paralysis. The contrast between himself and

Morris makes it clear that this encounter with German philosophy tested but only

temporarily hindered Burne-Jones's beliefs.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is frequently interspersed with Aristotle and Aldrich

in Burne-Jones's notes, a context suggesting it may have been *Logic* (1800), the first

volume of *The Metaphysical Works*, which he was studying. Translated into English in

1819 by John Richardson (expanded 1836), *The Metaphysical Works* also included *The

One Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God* (1763). Burne-Jones,

therefore, likely knew Kant's most extensive early argument in favor of a deity, which he

wrote before his critical turn and disavowal of empirical argument and experience as

valid means of knowing and proving God.[117] It seems probable he would also have

encountered the English translation of *Critique of Pure Reason* upon its publication in

1855. What he would have learned from Kant, particularly if he read *Critique of Pure

Reason*, is that religion is not necessary for a moral system, but, nevertheless, "morality

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[116] Edward Burne-Jones to Maria Choyce, Oct. 1855, Burne-Jones Papers, XV: 3, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[117] Burne-Jones could also have known *Essays and Treatises on Moral, Political, and Various
Philosophical Subjects*, another selection of writings by Kant which had been translated into English in
1798. It contained a number of essays focused specifically on religion including "What It Means: To
Orient One's Self in Thinking" (1785); "On the Failure of All the Philosophical Essays in the Theodicae"
(1791), which ponders the book of Job's ramifications for practical reason; and "The End of All Things"
(1794), addressing a recurring theme in Burne-Jones's life: the Last Judgment in Revelations and its moral
implications. A number of other works included in *Essays and Treatises* touched more obliquely on Kant's
views of God and religion, such as "What is Enlightenment" (1784), which addresses religion's role in the
public sphere and the issue of religious tolerance; "An Idea of an Universal History in a Cosmopolitical
View" (1784); "The Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals" (1785); "The Conjectural Beginning of the
History of Man" (1786), which draws from Genesis to address a philosophy of history; and "Eternal Peace"
(1795).

leads inevitably to religion."[118] These later writings offered an alternative to logic and reason that allowed for the inherent unknowability of unseen things, including the divine. Not all of Kant's principles, however, particularly those from his critical period, would have appealed to aspiring clergymen like Burne-Jones. Kant, Bernard Reardon explains, approved of Christianity "for its approximation, closer than of any other religion, to the ideal of a purely ethical theology" but, unlike Burne-Jones, refuted the Incarnation and valued Jesus only for his moral influence.[119] As Reardon further clarifies, Kant's contention that moral "duty must be pursued for its own sake and not from hopes of a celestial reward" is also antithetical to Burne-Jones's life-long preoccupation with eternal life and the Day of Judgment.[120]

Burne-Jones was also well acquainted with the German romantic philosophy of Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829) and Goethe (1749-1832), whom he praised in 1856 as "a heaven-sent interpreter."[121] Schlegel offered a welcome contrast to logic and Kant, with whom he differed on several key points. As Frederick Beiser explains, "his ethics preached radical individualism and love against the abstract formalism of Kant's ethics."[122] In particular, Schlegel refuted Kant's idea of "pure reason," arguing that man is not a strictly rational being. Instead, he contended, the human consciousness is a mix

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[118] Quoted in Philip Rossi, "Kant's Philosophy of Religion," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2005 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2005/entries/kant-religion/. Kant promoted faith as the basis of religion over that of reason, but morality was the key to that faith. It is the existence of man's moral nature which testifies to the existence of God. Kant does not necessarily endorse Christianity, but admits that its kingdom of God or the church roughly equates with this "ethical commonwealth" of agreed-upon standards of morality. Furthermore, Kant offered an alternative to the various doctrines of salvation by baptism, a conversion experience, sacraments, or good works, by essentially arguing that salvation lies in recognizing one's own inner moral nature.

[119] Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: A Survey from Coleridge to Gore* (London: Longman, 1980), 7.

[120] Ibid.

[121] [Edward Burne-Jones], "Essay on the Newcomes," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1856): 51.

[122] *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Friedrich von Schlegel" (by Frederick Beiser), http://www.rep .routledge.com/article/DC070.

of material and spirit, intellect and emotion, to which the philosopher must attend. This idea of Schlegel's permanently affected Burne-Jones's perspective on human nature; regarding the "multiplicity" of life, he explained to a friend in the 1890s, "I suppose all these antitheses, material and immaterial and so on, really mean ultimately just this, that consciousness itself necessarily implies a duality. There is something, call it what you please, which is conscious, and something, call it also what you please, of which it is conscious."[123] Burne-Jones seemed to empathize more with Schlegel and experiential knowledge than Kant's "practical reason" or empirical logic. In May 1853 he quoted Schlegel to explain the profound emotional effect of Alfred Tennyson's poetry:

> There are some passages here and there so strangely accordant to that unutterable feeling which comes on one, like a seizure, at certain times, and which Schlegel writes of under the term "sighing after the Infinite"—that it is sometimes an inexpressible relief to know and be able to utter them aloud: as if the poet had in an inspiration hit upon some Runic words to give voice and form to what were otherwise painfully ineffable.[124]

The phrase comes from Schlegel's late eighteenth-century writings on Romantic aesthetics in which he began linking his ideas to Christianity and turning away from earlier pantheistic tendencies. A straining toward "the infinite," which translates as a longing for God, for an ideal good, and for aesthetic and ethical perfection, he asserted, distinctively marked modern culture. He equated this yearning with the feeling of love. The Romantic artist's duty, Schlegel argued, was ultimately to express this love, this "sighing after the infinite." Far from being an expression of despair or doubt, "sighing after the infinite" stems from desire for unification with the divine.[125]

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[123] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:251-52.

[124] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, May 1, 1853, fol. 2, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.

[125] Beverly Anne Joyce, the only scholar so far to analyze Burne-Jones's philosophical influences at Oxford, relies heavily on Schlegel's idea of "sighing after the infinite" for her argument about the way his

At first a revolutionary and proponent of neoclassicism, Schlegel converted to Roman Catholicism in 1808, and his subsequent writings were increasingly infused with reactionary ideas and a defense of the Catholic faith. Consequently, in Britain he was a key figure for the Catholic revival and associated with "Puseyism and Popery."[126] After Schlegel's conversion to Catholicism he concluded that only God could satisfy the soul's yearning for the infinite, a theory he finally summarized in his *Philosophy of Life* lectures in 1827. Burne-Jones's notes verify that he read these at Oxford.[127] Because of the Fall, Schlegel contended, human consciousness is perpetually struggling with four competing forces: understanding, will, reason and fancy. His philosophy aimed at solving these internal conflicts, rectifying man's fallen state, and moving the soul closer to what he believed was its intended harmony with God. Schlegel argued that the purpose of philosophy was essentially spiritual, and "must in every case take God for the basis of its speculations" since he is the only possible solution for attaining "true and permanent unity."[128] This fundamental concern with man's progression toward spiritual unification echoes Christian sanctification, a recurring theme in Burne-Jones's life and art discussed in Chapter Five, as well as Neo-Platonism, already an acknowledged influence on him.[129]

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paintings functioned dialectically to invite the viewer into a transcendent moment of unification with "divine love," but she does not tie this to any religious meaning. She also assumes Burne-Jones read German Idealist philosophers such as Friedrich Hegel, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and F. W. J. Schelling at Oxford. While it would not be surprising if he did, they do not appear in his surviving notes. Joyce, "Sighing After the Infinite." (see also intro., n. 23)

[126] John Stuart Blackie, "Frederick Schlegel," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 54 (Sept. 1843): 311-24.

[127] Next to the notations, "Materials towards an enquiry into Anamnesis" and "Quote from the 'two voices,'" a reference to Tennyson's poem of the same name, Burne-Jones wrote, "Schlegel. Phil. Life." Schlegel addresses Plato's concept of anamnesis in the *Philosophy of Language*. Friedrich von Schlegel, *The Philosophy of Life, and Philosophy of Language*, 1827, trans. A. J. W. Morrison (London, 1847), 423-26. Just below, "Schlegel Phil. Life." appears again in relation to "Enquiry into the nature of Angel and Spirit." E. Burne-Jones, "Notebook" 1070(1).

[128] Schlegel, *Philosophy of Life*, 97.

[129] See Joyce, "Sighing After the Infinite," and John Franklin Martin, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones's *The Legend of St. George and the Dragon*: A Neoplatonic Quest" (PhD diss., Univ. of Louisville, 1997).

Additionally, Schlegel rued the rupture he perceived man as having forged between God and Nature and tried to bring empiricism and spirituality closer together.

Schlegel's post-conversion Catholic romanticism also praised the socio-political world of the Middle Ages and framed history as a biblical narrative. In his journal *Concordia*, for instance, his writings equate modern society with paradise lost and look backwards to the medieval period as a Golden Age, a pattern Burne-Jones also adopted. Schlegel's advocacy of medieval architecture, particularly its integration of stained glass, was a significant point of congruence with Burne-Jones and Morris; the German philosopher was one of the first to promote the Gothic style as the greatest form of Christian architecture over classicism or the Baroque. Moreover, Schlegel was one of the earliest champions of early Italian painting over that of Raphael and other High Renaissance artists, contributing to the development of British Pre-Raphaelitism. In particular, Schlegel emphasized the intrinsic spirituality of painting. In *Philosophy of Life* Schlegel argued, "as the light, with its ceaseless variety of tints and hues, is the most spiritual element of nature, and as the eye is the most spiritual of man's senses, so painting, as concerned about these, is the most spiritual of the arts."[130] It was "intimately related" to religion "by the strictest ties of affinity and association."[131] The "true inspiration" of both art and life, as Schlegel saw it, was man's perpetual longing for the infinite. In his framework, art was therefore "intimately bound up with a feeling of…a divine presence, and with a belief therein."[132] Schlegel's aesthetic paradigm underscored the emblematic, transcendent possibilities of painting.

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[130] Schlegel, *Philosophy of Life*, 264.
[131] Ibid., 270.
[132] Schlegel, *Philosophy of Language*, 426.

Significantly, romantic philosophy also played an important role in shaping Oxford Movement theology. In Anglo-Catholicism, the Romantic impulse expressed itself as a rejection of empirical knowledge and an emphasis on the poetic imagination, both of which appealed to Burne-Jones's character. While Newman understood "to reconcile theory and fact is almost an instinct of the mind," he concluded, like Burne-Jones, that rational "deductions have no power of persuasion."[133] After all, he argued, "many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion."[134] He did not reject reason altogether but contended it was not adequate as a sole basis for religious belief—ultimately faith was required. Imagination, in turn, made faith possible because, as Hilary Fraser outlines, for Newman "belief is itself an act of the 'illative' imagination."[135] Drawing from romantic metaphysics, he proposed that the imaginative faculty is what allows one to comprehend things unseen. He concluded, for example, that "the heart is commonly reached, not through reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions."[136] Likewise, Burne-Jones asserted religion was "the philosophy of the Imaginative" with "the philosophical part…tak[ing] a back seat…in my school."[137]

Consequently, for Newman truth lay "not in prescribed formulae or in abstract argument but in the direct apprehension of personal experience."[138] This was, in effect, what all High Church ritual and liturgy was meant to inspire—a profound and immediate

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[133] Newman, *Apologia*, 401 and John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (London, 1870), 89-90, both quoted in Hilary Fraser, *Beauty and Belief: Aesthetics and religion in Victorian literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), 47.

[134] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 89, quoted in Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, 47.

[135] Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, 29.

[136] Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 89-90, quoted in ibid., 47.

[137] Edward Burne-Jones to Elizabeth, Lady Lewis, Sept. 3, 1897, Dep.c.832, vol. 3, f. 146, Lewis Family Papers, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

[138] Reardon, *Religious Thought*, 67.

encounter with God. As Newman articulated in *Essays Critical and Historical* (1871),

such elements combined in a poetic manner, making the Catholic Church

> wonderful in story for the imagination of the romantic; rich in symbol and
> imagery, so that gentle and delicate feelings, which will not bear words,
> may in silence intimate their presence or commune with themselves. Her
> very being is poetry; every psalm, every petition, every collect, every
> versicle, the cross, the mitre, the thurible, is a fulfillment of some dream
> of childhood, or aspiration to youth.[139]

As Bernard Reardon summarizes, "the past which these men venerated was no enshrined

corpse but…a living and active principle, a spur to the imagination and the feelings."[140]

Newman, Fraser explains, decided "the interrelationship of images and Sacraments, the

order of words, all had a poetic meaning in the Catholic Church alone" and converted to

Rome.[141] He wrote extensively about Catholicism's poetic qualities, arguing the Mass

was a holistic imaginative experience analogous to reading and responding to a poem.

This variant of Christianity appealed to Burne-Jones, who spent his dreary childhood

yearning for beauty and whose mind comprehended things more imaginatively than

rationally. In 1894 he still maintained that imagination, when combined with beauty,

brings one "close on the secret of all things, the hidden recesses of God."[142]

Extracurricular Religious Encounters

Outside of his uninspiring formal lessons at Oxford, Burne-Jones continued his

personal investigation into Christian theology. Unlike the clinical dissection of scripture

his tutors forced upon him, Burne-Jones "loved dogmatic theology."[143] Years later when

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[139] John Henry Newman, *Essays Critical and Historical* (London, 1871), 2:442-43, quoted in Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, 63.
[140] Reardon, *Religious Thought*, 67.
[141] Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, 60.
[142] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Sept. 7, 1894, MS Add 54217, vol. 1, fol. 274, British Library.
[143] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:66.

Sydney Cockerell posited that "theology had killed religion," Burne-Jones retorted, "ah, that's rubbish…religion that could be killed by theology wasn't religion."[144] He and Morris "omnivorously" consumed "theology, ecclesiastical history, and ecclesiastical archaeology," and "eagerly conversed upon doctrinal points" with their friends from Pembroke College, several of whom went on to ministerial careers.[145] Apparently, walking "round Christ Church meadows, discussing questions of theology" was a common pastime of Oxford undergraduates during this period.[146] Back in Birmingham, Crom served as a correspondent on religious matters until he joined Burne-Jones at Oxford in 1854. His extracurricular reading was generally Anglo-Catholic or Broad Church in outlook, both of which imparted a new, heightened sense of Christianity's social obligation and the urgent need to demonstrate one's beliefs through action.

Newman's and other Anglo-Catholic writings remained Burne-Jones's primary focus. He characterized himself during these years as "quite Tractarian now, no mistake about it, omniscient in all questions of Ecclesiastical rights, state encroachments, church architecture and priestly vestments."[147] He added John Mason Neale's *History of the Eastern Church* (1854), Henry Hart Milman's *Latin Christianity* (1855), the *Acta Sanctorum* ("Acts of the Saints," 1643-1940) and "ecclesiastical Latin poetry" to his continued study of *Tracts for the Times*.[148] Burne-Jones read through "the greater part"

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[144] Ibid.

[145] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:37; G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:76. Edwin Hatch became ordained and emigrated to Canada to be a "Dean, Professor and I don't know what else with an enormous income, and an influence, which, as he truly observes, is of more weight than any amount of riches." Edward Burne-Jones to Algernon Charles Swinburne, n.d., fol. 1v, MS Ashley 941, British Library. Hatch privately published a book called *Between doubt and prayer* in 1878 but is best known for his hymn *Breathe on me, breath of God*. Richard Watson Dixon became Canon of Carlisle.

[146] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:6.

[147] Edward Burne-Jones to Maria Choyce, Oct. 1855, Burne-Jones Papers, XV: 3, Fitzwilliam Museum.

[148] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:37-38.

of Saint Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-74), pronouncing him "exceedingly interesting."[149] As

Richard Dorment has pointed out, Aquinas was significant since his writings provided

one of the key apologies for the Roman Catholic Church during the nineteenth century.[150]

Elizabeth Prettejohn conjectures that Burne-Jones also read Newman's *The Idea of a*

University (1852).[151] By October 1853 he had "deeply studied" the controversial trilogy

The Doctrine of the Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ in its Relation to Mankind and

to the Church (1848), *The Doctrine of Holy Baptism* (1849), and *The Doctrine of the*

Holy Eucharist (1853) by the Tractarian Archdeacon Robert Isaac Wilberforce, who

converted to Catholicism the following year.[152] Burne-Jones decreed the *Holy Eucharist*,

which he devoured during mealtimes, "the most controversial and truly theological work

that has come out for ages." "It will be a book for you in after time," he advised Crom.[153]

It was, as Owen Chadwick sums up, "an austere scholastic treatment" of the Real

Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, a pivotal Anglo-Catholic tenet only a degree away

from transubstantiation.[154] Burne-Jones also pronounced Cardinal Wiseman's

republished writings from the Catholic *Dublin Review* (1853) "learned and spirited."

These three volumes, *Essays on Various Subjects*, covered "Taste, some few on

polemics," as well as "a remarkable one on Sacrilege and its curse" that pointed out the

unfortunate lapse of monasteries in Britain.[155] At the time, Wiseman was best known for

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[149] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:66.

[150] Dorment, "Decoration of St. Paul's," 132. As further proof of Aquinas's Roman Catholic character in the nineteenth century, Dorment observes that in 1880 Pope Leo XIII decreed Aquinas the basis for all religious study in all Roman Catholic schools and seminaries.

[151] Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Edward Burne-Jones and Exeter College: The artist as scholar," *Exeter College Association Register* (1998): 32.

[152] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:38.

[153] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:89.

[154] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 1:95.

[155] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:84-85. Wiseman helped found the *Dublin Review* in 1835 as a forum for Catholic thought in Britain and served as editor until 1863.

advocating a new school of Catholic art for Britain, academic in style and dependent upon the artist's own devotion and religious belief.[156]

In early November 1853 Burne-Jones heard Pusey preach on justification at the university church of St. Mary's, a sermon he praised as "magnificent…profound and exhaustive." The co-founder of Tractarianism "came out now and then gloriously—full of liberality," he reported to Crom.[157] Based on James 2:22, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect," Pusey's sermon defined salvation in a way that united Protestantism's belief in the sufficiency of God's grace with the Roman Catholic necessity of good works. Being justified by grace, he argued, one's Christian faith must be translated into active repentance and good works, which are "essential to a living faith, and necessary to our salvation."[158] Statements such as "faith is not for a moment separate from action" were to have a profound effect on Burne-Jones's sense of religious duty.[159] "Thoughts and feelings…die away; words…evaporate," Pusey reminded his listeners, but "acts concentrate and give them an intensity of strength."[160] Finally, he ended by exhorting believers to "embody thy faith in acts. Faith without acts of faith is but a dream."[161] Although the form might vary depending on one's denomination or personal theology, in all cases, he implored, "what thou doest, do, not for the praise of men, not for thine own exaltation, not for any worldly end, but for God."[162]

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[156] For more on Wiseman and religious painting, see Michaela Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, 5-7.
[157] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*,1:90.
[158] Edward Bouverie Pusey, *Justification. A Sermon preached before the University at S. Mary's on the 24th Sunday after Trinity, 1853* (Oxford, 1853), 10.
[159] Ibid., 29.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid., 45.
[162] Ibid., 46.

At the same time, Burne-Jones was exposed for the first time to the Broad-Churchmen, a loose coalition of like-minded theologians united by their embrace of theological liberalism. Arthur Stanley (1815-81), Regius Professor of History at Oxford, later dean of Westminster, and Benjamin Jowett (1817-93) at Baillol, "the leading Oxford [Fellow] of German philosophical divinity" in the 1850s, both received high praise from Burne-Jones.[163] He admired them for bringing "a gentle kind of liberalism into religious questions" at a time when people (like himself perhaps) "were beginning to weary of the vehement ardour of Newman."[164] Those Broad-Churchmen known as Christian Socialists such as Charles Kingsley (1819-75) and Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-72) emphasized especially the social responsibility of Christianity. Maurice, for example, conceived of society as a brotherhood in Christ. Believing Jesus to be the central unifying factor of all humanity, Maurice argued that he was the only possible cure for all manner of social problems. In 1853, Maurice was a particularly well-known figure owing to his controversial forced resignation from Kings College, London, in November over his unorthodox views on eternal punishment. Burne-Jones pronounced the issue "a hard question to decide upon, but I am very sorry—for the Christian Socialists, if Maurice and Kingsley are fair examples, must be glorious fellows."[165] He and his circle collectively poured over Kingsley's writings, through which, Fiona McCarthy observes, "they came to see themselves as young men with a mission."[166] Especially in *Alton Locke* (1850), Burne-Jones would have encountered a grim portrayal of the conditions of the working poor, as well as a critique of selfish clergymen motivated only by social

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[163] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 1:551.
[164] He professed, however, that while Dean Stanley was a "clever man of course" he was "not anything like such a fine creature as Newman." Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 145.
[165] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:92.
[166] Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 64-65.

status and greed. The Christian Socialists' philanthropic outreach aligned them with

Thomas Carlyle's gospel of work and contemporary social reform movements, while

their call to action in the public sphere dovetailed with Anglo/Catholicism's emphasis on

good works. From two directions, then, Burne-Jones was being shaped by religious

dogma advocating active implementation of one's Christian faith for the betterment of the

human condition. For Burne-Jones, whose childhood experiences in the grimy, slum-

riddled, rapidly industrializing city of Birmingham deeply affected him, this idea proved

compelling.

Disillusionment with Oxford

Overall, the dissipation of radical Tractarianism at Oxford and the absence of

religious zeal among its students and dons gravely disappointed Burne-Jones. Georgiana

relates that he expected to find the university "still warm from the fervour of the learned

and pious men who had shaken the whole land by their cry of danger within and without

the Church" but soon realized that he and Morris had "lighted on a distasteful land in our

choice of College."[167] "Gloomy disappointment and disillusion" set in, Burne-Jones

recalled, and "the place was languid and indifferent; scarcely anything was left to shew

that it had passed through such an excited time as ended with the secession of

Newman."[168] To her husband, Georgiana adds, "it was like a room from which some one

he loved had just gone out."[169]

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[167] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:71; Shrimpton, "Exeter," 26.

[168] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:35.

[169] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:71. Much of Burne-Jones's unhappiness may simply have been caused by practical matters of university life. When he arrived in Hilary Term 1853, there was still no space in the college halls so he was forced to take rooms in town. Since university rules required all undergraduates to sleep in college, he spent nights in another Exeter student's cramped study.

This is puzzling however, since although the religious landscape of the university had certainly changed, Nicholas Shrimpton demonstrates that during Burne-Jones's time Exeter was, in fact, still "a religious—and more specifically a Tractarian—college."[170] It had a long history of association with the Oxford Movement and until 1854 employed the only Tractarian Rector, Joseph Loscombe Richards. The sub-rector, William Sewell, was also a "celebrated Tractarian" whom Burne-Jones admired.[171] He reported to Crom in March 1853, "when the present Rector dies—an event wh: cannot be very distant—Sewell will be elevated to his post," but regretted that he would never be made a bishop, presumably for his High Church allegiance.[172] Exeter's aggressive architectural projects also reflected Tractarian ideals. Between 1854 and 1856 Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-78) built the New Buildings on Broad Street, the Library, and began designing a new chapel, all in the Gothic Revival style of Anglo-Catholicism.

The apparent disparity between Burne-Jones's account and the historical facts of Exeter's lingering Tractarianism hinges on the attitude of Anglo-Catholicism he encountered there. By 1853 the heat of controversy had subsided, and, as Shrimpton shows, at Exeter "the youthful spiritual revolutionaries of the 1830s had turned into middle-aged Sub-Rectors, and Tractarianism (at Exeter at least) into a form of uncontested orthodoxy."[173] Burne-Jones found the Oxford Movement legacy, but it was their rebellious spirit he sought and missed. Furthermore, he complained that "when I got there, I saw nothing like what I had left in the grimy streets of Birmingham," suggesting the socially-minded, practical application of Tractarian ideals were also lacking at

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[170] Shrimpton, "Exeter," 26-27.
[171] Ibid., 28.
[172] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Mar. 5, 1853, fol. 1, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.
[173] Shrimpton, "Exeter," 28.

Oxford.[174] Religious life at university was instead a sphere of rarefied, intellectual divinity with little real-life implementation of Christianity's social mission.

The same anonymous 1856 article on Oxford mentioned above sheds further light on the university's religious failings. "Where might a parent hope for his son to become religious," the author queried, "if not in Oxford, the city of churches, ruled by clergymen, filled with embryo clergymen?"[175] According to his account, however, students neglected their spiritual lives and were more interested in making social connections. The average young man would "attend College Chapel as he attends a lecture, because he must" but rarely worship at the high services of St. Mary's, "where he has to sit on backless benches through learned homilies or epideictic harangues called sermons."[176] Morris's biographer, J. W. Mackail, described a rowdy environment at Exeter antithetical to Burne-Jones's shy personality and delicate constitution: "On the one hand were the reading men, immersed in the details of classical scholarship or scholastic theology; the rest of the college rowed, hunted, ate and drank largely, and often sank at Oxford into a coarseness of manners and morals distressing in the highest degree."[177]

Moreover, Tractarianism's beginnings as an appeal for greater piety within the Church of England had devolved into abstract ecclesiastical debates. Oxford's environment was one of "Church parties, High Church and Low Church, vigorously contending against each other," the article reported, "ready to combine to prefer Sabbatarian petitions, or protests against admission of Dissenters; or to cast out from

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[174] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 120-21.
[175] "Oxford," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 248.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:33.

Oxford, on a charge of heresy, her best tutor and her best divine."[178] Burne-Jones likewise found "the lack of Christian unity" at Oxford troubling, and described its religious atmosphere as one of "foul heresy, and discord, and prejudice, and bigotry, and all uncharitableness."[179] Within "all this bitterness," he complained, there was "so little of knowledge, or sympathy, or liberty, wherein this strange land doth so boast itself, that the contemplation is most pitiful." The blame lay not on "one side only, or of one party only," he reported to Crom, "but all conspire together…to choke up the only passage unto Truth in these days."[180]

It was not the doctrinal disagreements themselves which bothered Burne-Jones most, however, but the alienating consequences of such intellectual navel-gazing. Ironically, sectarianism resulted in the neglect of parishioners' real, spiritual needs. William Holman Hunt (1827-1910) famously criticized this effect of denominational infighting in *The Hireling Shepherd* (1851) (fig. 10), where the lover in the foreground represents the clergy, preoccupied with his own selfish concerns and oblivious to the imminent danger of his flock. Under the pseudonym "Cardinal de Birmingham," in homage to Rome, Burne-Jones vented similar frustrations to Crom as early as 1853: "Our people most chiefly desire to know what they must believe, and…also what they must avoid," he urged, but their needs were overlooked by academic men who argue stubbornly over "Romanism" versus "Rationalism," oblivious to the fact that "the time is urgent and dangers thicken."[181] The result is "unprofitable" preaching, "nay absolutely

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[178] "Oxford," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 248.
[179] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:81-82.
[180] Ibid., 1:82.
[181] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Aug. 5, 1853, fol. 4, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.

ruinous to unity, and tending to Infidelity—for what shall it profit the unlearned to know

arguments against Eclecticism, or Rationalism or the rest?"[182]

Burne-Jones also found that the growing isolation of High Church clergy from

their congregations further tarnished Anglicanism. The practices of confession, celibacy

and vestments, Nigel Yates recounts, encouraged ritualistic clergy to become "very much

detached from secular society, even where they were held in great affection by their

parishioners." The clergy had established itself as "a profession apart." As the

priesthood took on greater status as a holy office it was also "given outward expression in

new styles of dress and the introduction of high waistcoats, frock coats and stiff

collars."[183] Burne-Jones articulated his disgust at this dilution of theological purpose and

regression to external status symbols. "Save me from that," he pleaded, "for I have

looked behind the veil, and am grown sick of false hair and teeth, and rouge."[184] He

wrote that he could no longer in good conscience "preach immaculate doctrines in

stainless gloves and collar, and be a 'dear man,' and have slippers worked for me,

without stint of wool and canvas, till I marry into a respectable family—perhaps grow fat,

who knows?"[185] In 1896 he still felt, "the fashionable parson's one of the shadiest of

characters."[186] The quality of men Oxford was ordaining as clergymen deeply

disappointed him, and he complained to Crom,

> You entirely mistake the nature of an English bishop if you think that
> good or clever or progress men stand the least chance before the ideal of
> episcopacy. The subject is too grave for my mood—I will lecture to you
> sometime on what goes on behind the scenes—I don't wish to disconcert
> you…in your enthusiasm, but I get touchy on these points since I have

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[182] Ibid.
[183] Yates, *Oxford Movement*, 38.
[184] Edward Burne-Jones to Maria Choyce, Oct. 1855, Burne-Jones Papers, XV: 3, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 2:263.

seen a little more of the world—a very little more, you will say, but enough to disenchant a good deal of my quondam notions—ask [William] Fulford, we talk of nothing else night and day.[187]

In 1895 he reiterated to his studio assistant, Thomas Rooke, "if you'd seen at college the sort of material that was being made into parsons there, your small respect for the cloth would be very much lessened I can tell you."[188]

"Mental Troubles" and the Forging of an Individual Faith

1854 marked a turning point in Burne-Jones's academic career, vocational goals, and religious beliefs. He wrote in March that it was his "happiest" term yet, but by October he was "suffering greater mental troubles" than ever before and in his despair tried to run off to the army in November.[189] Burne-Jones's intensified exploration of Catholicism, his encounters with Broad Church liberalism, and his disgust at the degradation of the clergy finally converged in a climax Crom described as "nothing less than agony."[190] While Burne-Jones's anguish partly stemmed from growing dissatisfaction with the Anglican Church, it also had more practical causes. The cholera epidemic delayed the start of Michaelmas Term, which made Burne-Jones "very angry for I was sick at home and idleness and longed with an ardent longing to be back with Morris and his glorious little company of martyrs."[191] He was also sick of Oxford's lackluster instruction. His "respect for authorities" had "gradually subsid[ed]—partly from the perpetual presence of fat, musty dons, in whose case, whatever distance might have done, close and continual approximation decidedly did not lend enchantment to the

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[187] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Mar. 5, 1853, fols. 2-3, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.

[188] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:28-29.

[189] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Mar. 1854, fol. 1; Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Oct. 16, 1854, fol. 1, both MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.

[190] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:99.

[191] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Oct. 16, 1854, fol. 1, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.

view," an attitude consistent with that of other Oxford undergraduates who, according to Deslandes, uniformly "viewed dons, in this period, with a critical or suspicious eye."[192] Students perceived dons as "impediments to the assertion of undergraduate independence" for preventing them from "cultivat[ing] their intellects by reading in their own way" or otherwise expressing themselves individually.[193] Morris likewise had "long since ceased to hope that I should learn anything at his tutorials which I did not know before…we gradually limp through a page or two which none of the men has bestowed ten minutes upon, and leave the room for another exhibition of crib-repetition."[194]

Most of all, Burne-Jones's distress in fall 1854 was an absolutely normal response to the ordeal of university examinations; Oxford records reveal he passed his First Public Examination on November 22.[195] Such "overt expressions of anxiety," Deslandes explains in his study of *Oxbridge Men*, "occupied a prominent place in undergraduate representations of this experience."[196] Deslandes demonstrates that Oxbridge undergraduates unanimously characterized the ritual of examinations as a "defining moment" in the rite of passage to manliness, "a severe test of character capable of pushing even the ablest of young British men to their limits, a foreboding and horrific ordeal, or a simple mechanism for determining merit and progress."[197] Oxbridge exams, which consisted of both written and oral (viva voce) assessment conducted over several days, up to six hours per session, were momentous undertakings announced in

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[192] Edward Burne-Jones to Maria Choyce, Oct. 1855, Burne-Jones Papers, XV: 3, Fitzwilliam Museum; Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men*, 60.
[193] Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men*, 62; Alfred Douglas, "An Undergraduate on Oxford Dons," *Spirit Lamp* 2, no. 3 (1892), 72, quoted in Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men*, 62.
[194] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:34.
[195] "Examination Register. First Public Examination (Moderations) 1852-70," UR 3/1/5/1, Oxford University Archives.
[196] Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men*, 145.
[197] Ibid., 124.

intimidating regulatory circulars, occurring in special buildings, and accompanied by ritual uniforms. Preparation required extraordinary self-discipline and consisted largely of independent study during term and vacation as well as lectures, tutorials, and reading groups.

Feelings of "uneasiness and restlessness" were common among students facing examinations.[198] As Deslandes explains, they frequently employed metaphors of torture, illness and horror to describe the experience, while "occasional bouts of melancholia" such as Burne-Jones's were a common side effect.[199] A Cambridge student conveyed the frenzy Oxbridge examinations induced in 1871:

> I have been so wretched you can't imagine—I really think you would hardly know me if you met me in the Streets. Whenever I try to read…I see the word TRIPOS [Cambridge's final examination] in flaming Letters all across the Page of wherever I turn my Eyes—and perhaps worst of all when I try to shut them. The same Nightmare follows me to my Coach, and even in Hall the Dishes remind me of *Liddell* and *Scott* and of the Notes to *Aristophanes*.[200]

Forty years later, similar nightmares of being examined in subjects he knew nothing about still plagued Burne-Jones.[201] Deslandes reports that such "descriptions of dreams and nightmares were used to express pressing concerns about failure and its various implications by invoking sinister or demonic images."[202]

Significantly, Burne-Jones did not present himself for the First Public Examination at the earliest opportunity, in May 1854, as Morris and other friends did.[203] Either he had already fallen behind academically or he needed additional time to prepare

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[198] [Christopher Wordsworth], "Tripos Fever," *Tatler in Cambridge*, no. 28 (Nov. 1871): 31, quoted in ibid., 133.

[199] Ibid., 138-39, 136.

[200] Wordsworth, "Tripos Fever," 29, quoted in ibid., 139.

[201] Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 255.

[202] Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men*, 139.

[203] "Examination Register (Moderations)." Since they matriculated together Burne-Jones should have been on the same schedule.

for Honors requirements. Although biographers sometimes downplay his academic

potential at university and Burne-Jones himself was self-deprecating about his resignation

to "go in for a pass, and leave the first hour I can," Georgiana maintained that he intended

to compete for an honors degree, still relatively rare at this time.[204] Burne-Jones's

concentrated attention to Logic and Moral Philosophy bear out this claim; they were

critical requirements for obtaining honors.[205] This exam mandated that he demonstrate

knowledge of the four Gospels in the original Greek "with special reference to an

accurate knowledge of the text;" one Greek and one Latin author, covering both Poetry

and Oratory; and Logic.[206] Candidates for Classical Honours were "required especially"

in this First Examination to cover Cicero, Homer, Virgil, and Demosthenes, who, it will

be remembered, was on Burne-Jones's schedule for Trinity Term 1853. As if the process

of exams was not stressful enough, he had the disadvantage of facing the rigorous ritual

alone. As Deslandes shows, the academic exercise of examinations was usually a

collective experience that built a sense of masculine community, for instance, through the

act of studying with fellow students, sharing the emotions of awaiting the public posting

of results, or celebrating successes together.[207] Lagging behind Morris and the rest of his

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[204] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Mar. 5, 1853, fol. 3, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art; G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:126. All undergraduates were entitled to pursue Honors "no matter how talented or intelligent," Deslandes reports. The number of students qualifying for honors increased over the years until by the turn of the century only 16% of Oxford undergraduates took a Pass degree. Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men*, 131, 127.

[205] The *Examination Statutes* state that Logic, in particular, had "great weight in the distribution of Honours" and "highest Honours cannot be obtained without it." Univ. of Oxford, *New Examination Statutes*, 2.

[206] There is no record of which texts he was tested on, but his choices were Homer's *Iliad* or *Odyssey*; any three plays of Aeschylus, Euripides, or Aristophanes; Pindar's *Olympic and Pythian Odes*; or a selection of works by Demosthenes. Sophocles was also an option but not for Burne-Jones since he covered Sophocles in the Responsions. Accepted Latin authors included Virgil, Horace, Terence, Juvenal, or Cicero. Although he could have addressed Euclid and Algebra it seems certain he chose Logic instead, both because of his extensive Logic notes and its requirement for honors. Ibid., 1-2.

[207] Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men*, 133-34.

"set," Burne-Jones was left to survive these trials without the benefit of friends undergoing shared circumstances.

Stirred by Christian Socialism, disillusioned with the Anglican priesthood, and entranced by Roman Catholic doctrine and ritual, Burne-Jones also found himself in the difficult position of sympathizing with several Christian factions but not wholly conforming to any. His growing dissatisfaction with the Church of England had obvious, severe consequences for his planned ministerial career, and knowing his father had staked everything to send him to Oxford to become an Anglican priest must have weighed heavily on his mind. Much modern scholarship on Burne-Jones interprets his "mental troubles" as a crisis of religious doubt that ended with his rejection of Christianity. In spite of her suggestion, for instance, that his change was one of "direction" not "faith," Penelope Fitzgerald paints a gloomy picture of his beliefs during this period. The "process of loss was agony," an "acute crisis" of "painful religious doubts," resulting in his loss "of belief in any doctrinal form of Christianity."[208] Beverly Anne Joyce writes that this "agony" was Burne-Jones "succumb[ing]" to the "deep religious skepticism" German philosophy engendered.[209] Éva Péteri as well claims he "suffered…from…religious uncertainties" and grew "so unsure of basic doctrinal questions" that he finally underwent a "loss of faith."[210] However, this is a mischaracterization; his torment was not due to religious doubt but rather confusion over how his beliefs fit within the prescribed denominations of Christianity and a longing to find a socially-minded Church in harmony with his own views.

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[208] Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 39, 31-32.
[209] Joyce, "Sighing After the Infinite," 53.
[210] Péteri, *Victorian Approaches to Religion*, 118.

Burne-Jones expressed his religious state during this time in an "allegorical portrait" Georgiana described in the *Memorials*.[211] Above the inscription, "When shall I arise and the night be gone?" a man sits "in mournful dejection," eyes closed and head resting "wearily upon one hand." Together with the typical *vanitas* symbol of an hour-glass, "from which but few of the sands have run," and a background of "heavy rain falling into a dark sea," John Christian observes, the overall effect recalls Albrecht Dürer's *Melencolia I.* [212] On a desk "lies an unfinished drawing of an angel," perhaps indicative of Burne-Jones's "palsied" state of faith. A "small broken statue of an angel also lies at his feet," symbolic of his rupture with the Anglican Church he had until this point intended to serve. Compared to the emblematic childhood portrait Georgiana described, when Edward eagerly requested to be portrayed in the act of drawing a church on a slate, it is obvious that a fractured vision of religious torment and confusion had replaced the youthful, Tractarian enthusiasm for holy orders.

The *Memorials* and Burne-Jones's writings make clear that his "religious perplexity" from 1854 stemmed specifically from a struggle over whether to remain within the Anglican Church or take the controversial action of converting to Roman Catholicism.[213] Infused with a new sense of Christian social mission and with severe reservations about Anglicanism, he was drawn closer to Rome. Newman was reportedly his "teacher" during this difficult time, and one of his Oxford notebooks evidences his personal exploration of the parallels between the two Churches.[214] A chart of "Roman and English Saint's Days and Festivals" written in ornate Latin script in the manner of an

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[211] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:103.
[212] John Christian, "Early German Sources for Pre-Raphaelite Designs," *Art Quarterly* 36, nos.1-2 (1973): 64.
[213] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:99.
[214] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 121; E. Burne-Jones, "Notebook" 1070(4).

illuminated manuscript compares Catholic traditions with those of the Anglican Church. Another unfinished table on the following page titled "Councils, and Eccl: Events" prepared to outline the history of the Christian Church, reflecting the Oxford Movement's insistence on Anglicanism's continuity with the pre-Reformation Church and, consequently, its Roman Catholic roots.

Burne-Jones and Morris both contemplated "going over" to Rome, and this urge reached its peak in the fall of 1854. It is telling that as early as 1850 Burne-Jones assumed the Roman Catholic persona of "Edouard, Cardinal de Birmingham" in his correspondence.[215] Many prominent Anglicans had already converted to Catholicism, Newman being the most notorious. His hero's "simple and lofty exhortations had sunk into his heart" so deeply that Edward refused to condemn his conversion, and, as Georgiana recorded, "time alone could shew whether he himself might not feel bound to follow" in his steps.[216] Archbishop Robert Isaac Wilberforce (1802-57) had also just seceded to Rome in 1854 after publishing his *Enquiry into the Principles of Church Authority*, and "he all but carried" Burne-Jones with him.[217] "At one time in his distress," Georgiana records of this troubled time at Oxford, "he was all but ready to silence questioning and accept the tenets of the elder Church en bloc."[218] He sought advice from "Newman's old friend and disciple, Charles Marriott (1811-58)," a fellow Anglo-Catholic and "the learned and saintly Vicar of St. Mary's." This encounter "gave some

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[215] Edouard Cardinal de Byrmyngham to her most Celestial Highness, ye Ladye Annie Catherwood, June 8, 1850, quoted in Harrison and Waters, *Burne-Jones*, 6-7; Edouard. Cardinal de Birmingham. Unto our trusty and beloved brother, Cormell, of the order of St. Philip Neri, Elect, Aug. 5, 1853, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.
[216] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:71.
[217] Ibid., 1:89.
[218] Ibid., 1:99.

relief," but overall, she concludes, "the whole-hearted, enthusiastic and unenquiring days were gone."

Burne-Jones emerged on the other side of this trial in 1855 more assured than ever of his sympathies with the Roman Catholic Church, in contrast to Morris, who seems to have left Oxford more agnostic than Christian. Crom reported in May 1855, "Morris has become questionable in doctrinal points, and Ted [Burne-Jones's nickname at Oxford] is too Catholic to be ordained. He and Morris diverge more and more on views though not in friendship."[219] Regulations required all clergy to affirm their allegiance to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and from Crom's statement it seems safe to assume Burne-Jones was incapable of conceding to this fundamental Reformation statement of the Anglican Church's theology and independence from Rome. In 1855 he still participated in Anglo-Catholic worship; Mackail reports Morris and Burne-Jones continued for "a long time" to attend their daily morning services at St. Thomas the Martyr.[220] They also belonged to the Plain-Song Society, which included the Anglo-Catholic painter William Dyce, long after they discarded their plans for holy orders.[221]

The question then remains: Why did Burne-Jones not convert to Catholicism? Regardless of his sympathy for Rome, the stigma of conversion in the mid-1850s was probably still too great. Negative sentiment toward Catholics had escalated since the reinstitution of the Roman hierarchy in Britain in 1850, the Gorham Judgment, and the growth of extreme ritual practices. As Deslandes addresses, Catholics remained a

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[219] Ibid., 1:109.
[220] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:66.
[221] Mackail records that the Society included "men of very varied tastes and ideals: zealous churchmen and freethinking antiquarians; moderate Anglicans like Liddon and Oakely, votaries of the Eastern Church like Neale and Palmer; Street and Woodward the architects, Dyce the painter." Ibid., 1:66.

threatening "other" in the Oxbridge system.[222] Furthermore, Catholic converts were

often left "without livelihood or professional standing," Edward Norman explains.[223]

Burne-Jones's sensitive personality never bore scandal or controversy well. He read

Kenelm Henry Digby's eleven-volume *Mores Catholici* (1831-42) in secret, "a little

ashamed" of his ardent admiration for what was essentially a handbook for Catholics.[224]

Regarding a difficult situation Crom was facing in 1853 Burne-Jones advised, "I think

you are quite right to the vows you take, but how far is it expedient to brave public

opinion is another question." In the end, he admitted, we all "modify our expressions to

the expediency of the time."[225] There were two notorious events in 1854 which

heightened tensions against Catholicism and underscored the alternate difficulty of

coexisting as an Anglo-Catholic priest within the Church of England. Both the Anglican

Archdeacon George Anthony Denison (1805-96) and Robert Liddell, vicar of St. Paul's,

Knightsbridge, faced doctrinal charges in ecclesiastical court—the first for preaching the

doctrine of the Real Presence, and the second for "alleged liturgical illegalities" such as

using an altar cross, candles, colored frontals and a credence table.[226] Such rulings

attacked both the physical trappings of Anglo-Catholic ritual and its Eucharistic theology.

Whereas a decade earlier, the idea of following the religious rebels of the Oxford

Movement over to Rome appeared idealistic and adventurous, by the 1850s it may have

seemed impossible to do so without severe consequences.

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[222] Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men*, 212-13.
[223] Edward Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 210, quoted in Camille Cauti, "The Revolt of the Soul: Catholic Conversion Among 1890s London Aesthetes" (PhD diss., Columbia Univ., 2003), 4.
[224] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:38.
[225] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Oct. 29, 1853, fols. 4-5, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.
[226] Yates, *Oxford Movement*, 30.

A statement regarding Dean Stanley and Benjamin Jowett provides further insight into Burne-Jones's reluctance to defect to Rome. In spite of their doubts about Christianity and Anglicanism, they stopped short of wholesale unbelief and therefore decided to remain in the Church of England. As Jowett explained, "although we are in a false position in the church, we should be in a still more false position out of the church."[227] Burne-Jones admired how "they wanted to keep up the Church. Its downfall would be the signal of much mischief, and they saw no good in handing it over to those who they thought would bring it to ruin by intolerance."[228] He was not alone in this opinion; many took the position that dissention among the ranks and defections to Rome only undermined Christianity as a whole. They preferred to uphold the integrity of the church universal by minimizing conflict and affecting change from within the Anglican establishment.

Thus, by summer 1855 Burne-Jones found himself in the irreconcilable position of being "too Catholic" for the Anglican priesthood but unwilling to undergo the ignominy of conversion to Rome. Realizing "no particular division of the Church was likely to hold him long," he resigned himself to an irresolvable rift with the Anglican Church and embraced the idea that operating strictly under church authority was unnecessary for living a religious life.[229] He followed his own advice to Crom: "Don't be afraid…of being independent in thought. It is a prerogative of man," he wrote, reassuring him that in any case, "you can fall back upon Faith."[230] Unfortunately, his idiosyncratic beliefs left him without any occupational prospects. When his growing passion for

[227] Jowett to Florence Nightingale, 4 Dec. 1873, Balliol College MS, quoted in Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 2:143.
[228] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:309.
[229] Ibid., 1:81.
[230] Ibid., 1:89.

painting combined with a heightened consciousness of his Christian duty to society, however, the possibility of an alternative religious vocation emerged. A few months later, Burne-Jones embarked on what he conceptualized as his own, individual pursuit of salvation through the vehicle of art.

Part II: From Pulpit to Paint

Burne-Jones's exposure to Pre-Raphaelite art and the writings of John Ruskin opened up new vocational potential at the same time his original clerical plans were crumbling. By summer 1853 he was enthralled with Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* (1851-53) and subsequently read *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *Edinburgh Lectures* (1854). In early 1854 his first sight of a Pre-Raphaelite painting, John Everett Millais's *Return of the Dove to the Ark* (1851), in an Oxford shop window left him spellbound.[231] Soon after, he began his first artistic venture, a series of pen-and-ink illustrations for Archibald MacLaren's *The Fairy Family* (1857). In May, while visiting his aunt in London, he eagerly attended the annual Royal Academy exhibition, where William Holman Hunt's *Awakening Conscience* (1853) and *Light of the World* (1853) (fig. 11) were among the highlights. His especial reverence for Hunt's religious paintings is evident in his later awe-struck description of *The Light of the World* which, notably, Carlyle reviled as "a mere papistical fantasy:"[232]

> The Son of Man standing before us, in all the beauty and the sadness of
> our common humanity: we could call Him Brother, and inexpressibly
> beautiful the thought seems to us: but another look, and it is the Son of
> God, risen and glorified, the royal crown upon His Head, and the royal

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[231] Burne-Jones was so struck by Millais's painting that he incorporated a similar motif of a dove being held to the breast in one of his earliest stained-glass designs for an Annunciation.

[232] William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (London: Macmillan, 1905), 1:355.

robes enfolding Him, starred with jewels: so we are bowed down with awe before the Judge of quick and dead; yet are there signs of comfort, making the God whom we worship, and the Brother whom we love, one; and these are the crown of thorns budding with new leaves, and the pierced hands;—the perfect God and Perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.[233]

In May 1855 he again sought out the Royal Academy exhibition and had the further occasion to see Ford Madox Brown's *The Last of England* (1855) and a "picture of a lady in black" by Millais, both of which B. G. Windus owned.[234] Shortly after, a visit to the home of Pre-Raphaelite patron Thomas Combe in Oxford finally provided his first glimpse of a Rossetti painting, *The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice* (1853-54). Alongside this picture in Combe's collection hung Charles Collins's *Convent Thoughts* (1851) and two works by Hunt, *A Converted Christian Family Sheltering a Christian Priest from the Druids* (1849-50) and "a portrait of some surpliced friend of the Combes in Oxford, with part of the Cloisters of New College for a background."[235] Significantly, religious or moralistic content is markedly present in these earliest encounters with Pre-Raphaelite painting, and Burne-Jones admired how the movement had at last "linked [art] again to faith and religion, its natural home and source of inspiration."[236]

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[233] [Edward Burne-Jones], "Mr. Ruskin's New Volume," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1 no. 4 (1856): 223. Burne-Jones's early admiration of Hunt, who enjoyed a reputation as a pre-eminent Christian painter, is further evidence that his initial artistic interests were driven by religious concerns. For Hunt's influence on Burne-Jones see Frank C. Sharp, "Crossing the Generation Gap: The Relationship of William Holman Hunt with Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris," *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* n.s., 3, no. 1 (1994): 24-33.

[234] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:110.

[235] Ibid.

[236] [E. Burne-Jones], "Ruskin," 222. As Alastair Grieve points out, the priest's costume in Hunt's *Converted Christian Family* recalled High Church surplices and vestments, and the missionary's "persecution" by pagan Druids may have evoked thoughts of the contemporary "ritual riots" such garments had recently sparked. Alastair Grieve, "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Anglican High Church," *Burlington Magazine* 111 (May 1969): 295. Rossetti's watercolor also had Christian overtones. In it, Dante marks the first anniversary of Beatrice's death by drawing an angel, commemorative of both her life and her afterlife. In the background, a Byzantine-style Madonna and child preside over his lodgings, while Dante and his central male companions' garments recall monastic robes. Moreover, on Burne-Jones's first

Against this spiritual dimension of Pre-Raphaelitism, and having realized the

futility of pursuing holy orders with religious beliefs neither wholly Anglo- nor Roman

Catholic, Burne-Jones set off on a three-week tour of French Gothic cathedrals in July-

August 1855 with Morris and Charlie Faulkner (1833-92). Inspired by "The Nature of

Gothic" and Ruskin generally, their sole intention on this religio-artistic pilgrimage was

to study ecclesiastical architecture; they "stopp[ed] at every Church we could find" in

Normandy.[237] Burne-Jones's favorite was Rouen Cathedral, which "almost broke my

heart."[238] There, he was eager to attend vespers on both Saturday and Sunday, of which

Morris excitedly proclaimed, "O! my word! on the Sunday especially, when a great deal

of the psalms were sung to the Peregrine tone, and then, didn't they sing the hymns!"[239]

On July 22 in a moment of ecstasy during High Mass at Beauvais Cathedral (fig. 12),

Burne-Jones finally discerned what he believed to be his religious calling. The uniting of

ecclesiastical aesthetics, music and ritual at last engendered the kind of transcendent

spiritual experience he had sought and missed at Oxford. The impression stayed with

him for a lifetime, as expressed in a breathless letter to May Gaskell decades later:

> Do you know Beauvais, which is the most beautiful church in the world? I
> must see it again some day—one day I must. It is thirty-seven years since
> I saw it and I remember it all—and the processions—and the
> trombones—and the ancient singing—more beautiful than anything I had
> ever heard and I think I have never heard the like since. And the great
> organ that made the air tremble—and the greater organ that pealed out
> suddenly, and I thought the Day of Judgment had come—and the roof,
> and the long lights that are the most graceful things man has ever made.[240]

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visit to Rossetti's studio, the picture on the easel was *Fra Pace* (1856), a scene of a medieval monk
painting an illuminated manuscript (see fig. 136).

[237] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:114. The theme of religious pilgrimage in this journey is discussed in
chap. 5.

[238] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 3:401.

[239] William Morris to Cormell Price, Aug. 10, 1855, in *The Letters of William Morris to His Family and
Friends,* ed. Philip Henderson (London: Longmans, Green, 1950), 11-14.

[240] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:112.

Shortly after this episode, and after the culmination of weeks of cathedrals, Masses and vespers (which Burne-Jones wanted to attend daily), he devoted his life to painting. "While walking on the quay at Havre" one night, Burne-Jones reported, "we resolved definitely that we would begin a life of art, and put off our decision no longer—[Morris] should be an architect and I a painter."[241] He credited Beauvais with setting him on this vocational path. "If I took account of my life and the days in it that most went to make me," he told a friend, "the Sunday at Beauvais would be the first day of creation."[242] It was a profoundly religious "conversion" to art, stimulated by his sense of encountering the divine through aesthetics. For Burne-Jones, the liturgy, "ancient singing," medieval architecture, stained glass, incense, and other sensory details of Roman Catholic worship marked his spiritual rebirth into the priesthood of art.[243] He recognized in the physical trappings of the Mass the makings of an alternative Christian vocation which could simultaneously fulfill his religious, social and artistic convictions.

Tractarianism had prepared Burne-Jones for this religio-aesthetic response to Catholic worship. As Hilary Fraser summarizes in *Beauty and Belief*, Keble and Newman believed "sacred truths find their most satisfactory expression in the recondite imagery and allusive suggestiveness of art forms."[244] Christianity, Newman argued, encouraged a visual expression of faith because such a "vast and awful subject of contemplation" prompts one's mind to "give utterance to its feelings in a figurative style; for ordinary words will not convey the admiration, nor literal words the reverence which

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[241] Ibid., 1:114.
[242] Ibid., 1:112.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, 27.

possesses it."[245] Regarding the Catholic Church's compelling urge toward artistic response, Newman explained: "Such poets as are born under her shadow, she takes into her service; she sets them to write hymns, or to compose chants, or to embellish shrines…nay, she can even make schoolmen of them…till logic becomes poetical."[246] Oxford may not have been able to make Logic "poetical" for Burne-Jones, but the Catholic Mass in Beauvais presented him with an alternative way to serve the church— "embellishing shrines" with works of art. Correspondingly, the majority of his earliest commissions were ecclesiastical designs for Anglo-Catholic churches.

After their trip, Burne-Jones and Morris returned to Oxford for the fall term, but not before Burne-Jones nervously broke the news to his father about his change in vocation. This understandably came as a shock to the elder Mr. Jones, who had wagered everything to finance his son's education and secure his living as a clergyman. In a long, rambling letter to his cousin Maria in October 1855, Burne-Jones revealed his anxiety, guilt, and doubt over his decision. He had been "so anxious to do well" at university and yet "so unfortunate" to have disappointed his family and friends. Their "friendly sympathy" was "growing colder as the void broadens and deepens," he told her. "I am offending everybody with my 'notions' and 'way of going on'—general uselessness in fact.…I shall not grace my friends now by holding that highly respectable position of a clergyman, a sore point that, giving up so much respectability, going to be an artist too, probably poor and nameless." "Weary work this is," he confided, "doubting, doubting, doubting."[247] In the context of its paragraph, however, this comment refers not to wavering religious faith, but to Burne-Jones's reservations about quitting university and

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[245] John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (London, 1833), quoted in ibid., 43.
[246] Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, 63.
[247] Edward Burne-Jones to Maria Choyce, Oct. 1855, Burne-Jones Papers, XV: 3, Fitzwilliam Museum.

his insecurity about embarking on an artistic career at this relatively late stage. At this point, however, Edward's father still believed that his son would at least finish his degree before taking up painting.

Burne-Jones and Morris returned to Oxford and busied themselves preparing for their Second (and final) Public Examination. Morris secured a Pass degree on October 26, 1855, but Burne-Jones's delayed First Examination meant his Final Schools would not have been scheduled until the following spring.[248] Their classical school, Literae Humaniores, the most prestigious at Oxford, demanded knowledge of the four Gospels and Acts in Greek; Sacred History; the books of the Old and New Testaments; the Evidences of Christianity; one Greek or Latin philosopher; and one Greek or Latin historian.[249] As Morris took up an architectural apprenticeship with George Edmund Street (1824-81) in January 1856, Burne-Jones went home to Birmingham to spend several months "reading for honours."[250] At Easter Term he returned to Oxford for Final Schools, which began April 10, but for unknown reasons moved to London by May 6 without taking his exam.[251] Georgiana reports only that he was "restless" and tired of Oxford, and "within the first week…gave up the idea of going in for honours,"

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[248] "Reg. Schol. Lit. Hum. 1842-63: (Final Schools)," UR 3/1/13/4, Oxford University Archives.

[249] Acceptable texts included Aristotle's *Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, or *Politics*; Plato's *Republic* or other Dialogues; or Cicero, Herodotus, or Xenophon, among others. The "Evidences" referred to texts such as Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* and *Horae Paulinae*, Sumner's *Evidence of Christianity, derived from its Nature and Reception* (1848), Sewell's *Dialogues on the Evidences of Christianity* (1843), and Butler's *Analogy*, which addressed "Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion" and presented rational arguments for Christianity. According to the examination statues they would also have been required to sit for Mathematics, Natural Science, or Law and Modern History, a very recent development. Univ. of Oxford, *New Examination Statutes*, 3-4, 39-43. In 1854 the Hebdomadal Council debated whether to add a fifth alternative, a Theological School, but this action was not taken. "Hebdomadal Board Minutes, 1841-54," WP Γ/24/6, Oxford University Archives.

[250] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:126.

[251] Ibid., 1:131. Mackail's biography of William Morris dates his removal from Oxford slightly earlier, saying he returned to university in Lent Term and left at Easter, which fell on March 23 in 1856. Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:102. Georgiana, however, seems the more reliable source, and her account accords with the examination dates.

concluding, "it was no use to think of taking even a pass degree until the October term."[252] Burne-Jones's leaving Oxford without a degree was not as uncommon as it sounds; Deslandes reports that in the 1850s a "significant percentage of the student population" took a Pass "or left with no degree at all."[253]

Burne-Jones's impatience to begin a painting career or inadequate preparation for exams may have driven him to abandon his degree, but this decision may have an additional, religious impetus. It is possible that his doctrinal convictions resulted in his desertion of the exam. In 1856 the Final Examination included a test on the Thirty-Nine Articles and required all students to profess allegiance to their doctrine.[254] The Oxford Act of 1854 created some clemency, allowing Dissenters or other non-Anglicans to take a degree if they formally declared themselves to be outside the Church of England. Oxford did not abolish the religious test itself, however, until 1871, and as the Hebdomadal minutes of 1854-56 evidence, university authorities intensely debated how the exam should be adapted, if at all, for students who objected to the Thirty-Nine Articles on religious grounds.[255]

Morris expressed his reservations about the requirement to Crom in October 1855: "I don't think even if I get through Greats that I shall take my B.A., because they won't allow you not to sign the 39 Articles unless you declare that you are 'extra

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[252] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:131. Harrison and Waters state that Burne-Jones returned "to Oxford fully convinced that he was right in his decision to leave before he took his final examination," but Georgiana's records contradict this. Harrison and Waters, *Burne-Jones*, 23.

[253] Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men*, 127.

[254] Suggested readings for students included both the English and Latin translations of the Articles; several expositions or discourses on the Articles by Beveridge (1847), Burnet (1846), Welchman (1849), and Browne (1854); Kidd's *Testimonies and Authorities, Divine and human, in confirmation of the Thirty-Nine Articles* (1848); a history of the Articles by Hardwick (1851); and Cornish's *Connection between the Catechism and Articles of the Church* (1846). Previously, students had been required to provide "Scripture proofs" for the Articles. Univ. of Oxford, *New Examination Statutes*, 36, 8.

[255] "Hebdomadal Council Minutes, 1854-66," HC 1/2/1, Oxford University Archives.

Ecclesiam Anglicanam' which I'm not, and don't intend to be, and I won't sign the 39 Articles."[256] Morris apparently capitulated and either signed the Articles or announced his secession from the Church of England. Burne-Jones, "too Catholic to be ordained" in the Anglican Church and a vocal critic of its current state, may have felt too strongly about his theological views to concede to the Articles. A cryptic passage in his October 1855 letter to Maria talked of "acting honestly by publishing my defection," presumably from the Church of England.[257] On the other hand, with a strong aversion to scandal, publicly renouncing Anglicanism was no less appealing now than when he was deciding the issue of Catholic conversion. While this was probably not the sole reason Burne-Jones failed to sit his Final Schools, it may have provided the additional motivation he needed to walk away from his degree and commence his art career. As he was making this pivotal decision, validation came in the form of an anonymous article in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, which Burne-Jones possibly authored and which contended man's obligation was to God alone, not any earthly authority. Dismissing Oxford's dictatorial attitudes to learning and religion, the writer proclaimed, "allegiance to kings, promises to friends, oaths to founders, are as nothing when weighed with a solemn sense of personal responsibility to God." "Our little systems have their day/They have their day and cease to be," the author wrote of the university, for "they are but broken lights of Thee—And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."[258]

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[256] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:82.

[257] Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 38.

[258] "Oxford," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 240-41. For speculation on the authorship of the article, see n. 89 above.

The Cambridge Camden Society and Ecclesiology

The concept of art and architecture as Christian vocations circulated among ecclesiastical builders and designers precisely during the years Burne-Jones was at Oxford, a significant influence on his career that has yet to be acknowledged. Oxford may have been the theological and philosophical center of the Anglo-Catholic movement, but it was at Cambridge that theory met practice in new ideas about ecclesiastical architecture and decorative arts. A Tractarian-minded group of architects and clergymen had formed the Cambridge Camden Society in 1839 (from 1845 the Ecclesiological Society) to promote the "correct" form of ecclesiastical design, arrangement, and decoration that would best facilitate Anglo-Catholic ritual, namely the Gothic style, realized most fully in All Saints, Margaret Street, London (fig. 13).[259] In contrast to bland, functional Evangelical churches, ecclesiological interiors were polychromatic, ornate, medieval affairs. It was not merely the structure, however, but the attitude of apathy and hypocrisy they aspired to change, hoping to "remove worship from the comfort of domesticity to the solemnity of true religion—from the drawing room of the Lord to the temple of the Most High."[260] The Reformation, in their view, led to not only the demise of Christianity but also aesthetics. This prompted one anti-Romanist to declare,

> Romanism is taught *Analytically* at Oxford, it is taught *Artistically* at Cambridge—that is inculcated theoretically, in tracts at one University,

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[259] The group developed architectural standards for an "ideal church," which emphasized the sacramental space of the chancel over the preaching of the pulpit. Ecclesiology dictated an east-west orientation; a long, dignified chancel; moveable chairs rather than pews and galleries; authentic materials; a brass eagle lectern and litany desk; high altar raised by several steps; a baptismal font; choir stalls; side chapels; and representational stained glass. See James F. White, *The Cambridge Movement: The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1962). See chap. 2 for more on ecclesiological principles of altar and chancel design.

[260] Christopher Webster, postscript in *"A Church as It Should Be": The Cambridge Camden Society and Its Influence*, ed. Webster and John Elliott (Stamford, UK: Shaun Tyas, 2000), 353.

and it is *sculpted, painted* and *graven* at the other…in a word,…the 'Ecclesiologist' of Cambridge [the Society's journal] is identical in doctrine with the Oxford Tracts for the Times.[261]

The concerns of the Cambridge Camden Society and its followers were at once architectural, liturgical, and spiritual; they upheld decorative art and design as vehicles for numinous experience, theological expression, and sacramental worship. These men, known as ecclesiologists, were largely responsible for the revival of mosaic, tiles, stained glass, and ornate liturgical objects in Victorian church interiors. It is no coincidence that the Society's younger members such as George Gilbert Scott, John Pollard Seddon (1827-1906), George Edmund Street, and G. F. Bodley (1827-1907) became the primary patrons of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, and Co., Morris's and Burne-Jones's first decorative arts firm.

Burne-Jones was surely familiar with the Society and its agenda. By 1845 it drew its membership primarily from Oxford University rather than Cambridge, and he knew Street personally through the Plain-Song Society.[262] *The Ecclesiologist* reported in 1853 that William Butterfield's "most beautiful and religious" restoration of Merton College Chapel, one of Burne-Jones's favorite haunts, was "the most interesting [ecclesiology] work" being done in Oxford.[263]

Within the ecclesiology movement was a strong current of thought that viewed the practice of art and architecture as a priesthood dedicated to the service of the church. The Society's architects and designers would have been apt role models for Burne-Jones

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[261] Rev. Francis Close, quoted in Geoffrey K. Brandwood, "'Mummeries of a Popish Character:' the Camdenians and Early Victorian Worship" in Webster and Elliott, *A Church as It Should Be*, 74.
[262] Brandwood, "'Fond of Church Architecture:' the Establishment of the Society and a Short History of its Membership," in Webster and Elliott, *A Church as It Should Be*, 59. In 1857 Burne-Jones and Morris were also members of the Medieval Society, a group of men committed to the arts of the middle ages, along with Burges and J. P. Seddon. Harrison, "Church Decoration," 107.
[263] "Ecclesiological Works at Oxford," *Ecclesiologist* 98, no. 62 (1853): 301.

in this respect since many began as, or originally intended to serve as, clergy in the

Anglican Church. They did not view their newfound careers as any less religious but

instead, considered them alternate religious vocations, and church building and

decoration, a Christian ministry. John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb (1819-85)

explained their agenda in *The Ecclesiologist*:

> Architecture has become too much a profession: it is made the means of gaining a livelihood, and is viewed as a path to honourable distinction, instead of being the study of the devout ecclesiastick, who matures his noble conceptions with the advantage of that profound meditation only attainable in the contemplative life; who, without thought of recompense or fame, has no end in view but the raising of a temple, worthy of its high end, and emblematical of the faith which is to be maintained within its walls…We do protest against the merely business-like spirit of the modern profession, and demand from them a more elevated and directly religious habit of mind.[264]

The movement shared its ideological roots with mid-Victorian moral art history, which

maintained a direct correlation between an artist's faith and the quality of his work.

Bodley, for instance, asserted "architecture, and all art, should be animated by some great

and leading principle" of which "religion is the highest. The noblest buildings in the

world have ever been those consecrated to her service…Art requires, as it were, the salt

of noble sentiment to keep it elevated and pure."[265] According to ecclesiology, artists and

architects could only benefit the church if they believed in the religion they served: "the

beautiful effect of every building is attributed to the architects' religious calling and

lives," *The Ecclesiologist* proclaimed. It pictured the architect as one "pondering deeply

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[264] J. M. Neale and Benjamin Webb, *Symbolism of Churches* (Leeds, 1843), xx, quoted in Christopher Webster, "'Absolutely Wretched': Camdenian Attitudes to the Late Georgian Church," in Webster and Elliott, *A Church as It Should Be*, 15.

[265] G. F. Bodley, "On some principles and characteristics of ancient architecture," *R.I.B.A. Journal* 7 (1899-1900): 139-40, quoted in Victoria and Albert Museum, *Victorian Church Art* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1971), 111.

over his duty to do his utmost for the service of God's holy religion and obtaining by

devout exercises of mind a semi-inspiration."[266]

As Christopher Webster astutely observes, the Oxford Movement's renewed

concept of the priesthood as a holy and sacred calling "precise[ly] parallel[ed]…the new

breed of church architect the Society sought to encourage."[267] In this paradigm the

ecclesiastical architect or artist, like the officiating priest during Anglo/Catholic

sacraments, served as the conduit between God and man. Schlegel had also intimated the

priestly nature of the artist, arguing in the *Philosophy of Life* that painting was "the most

appropriate" means "to exhibit, or rather to suggest, the high mysteries of divine love in

religion and revelation."[268] Art, he contended, was fundamentally of "divine origin" and

derives from "divine power and sanctity," rhetoric that implicates the artist as prophet or

channel to God.[269] Younger architects of Burne-Jones's generation upheld and expanded

on ecclesiology's idea of the ecclesiastical designer's priestly function. John Dando

Sedding (1838-91), for instance, summarized in 1893, "Because his office thus seems to

be that of interpreter or mediator between nature and man…we hail him priest in God's

universe by the grace of God, and see around his head the aureole of a Divine

commission."[270] He continued,

> by his divine craft the priest of form can fold in one the magic in nature
> and man's emotion…he can put the glamour of the woods into his timber
> roof or stone vaultings--, can bring the night of the tall cliffs into his walls
> and fluted columns, can entice the soul of the tangled thicket into the
> mazes of his carved and beaten work, can give to the temple of God such
> an air of religiousness—fill its recesses with such an air of mystery and

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[266] *Ecclesiologist* 4 (1845), 279, quoted in Webster, "Absolutely Wretched,"14-15.

[267] Webster, "Absolutely Wretched," 14-15.

[268] Schlegel, *Philosophy of Life*, 264.

[269] Ibid., 270.

[270] J. D. Sedding, *Art and handicraft* (1893), 28-29, quoted in V & A Museum, *Victorian Church Art*, 120.

stillness, that you get a strange thrill of expectancy as you enter, and say, involuntarily, "Surely the Lord is in this place."

Sedding's conflation of nature, art, beauty and divinity was rooted in Romanticism, as well as the Oxford Movement's concept of natural sacramentalism. Building on the theology of both natural and revealed religion, natural sacramentalism held that nature was a means of encountering God and, like scripture, a vehicle through which he reveals himself to man. For the Oxford Movement, Hilary Fraser explains, comprehending the divine through beauty and goodness was thus an act "comparable to the giving and receiving of Christian sacramental grace."[271] According to Fraser, this paradigm included any "material object created for the purpose of revealing God's presence."[272] For Keble, she continues, "anything in the world that brought man into communion with God by symbolizing one of His attributes was a Sacrament."[273] Hence, any religious painting, building or decorative object could channel sacramental grace to its audience and creator, making art a facilitator of divine interaction and the artist, an officiating priest. In 1892 Burne-Jones defined art as "the power of bringing God into the world—making God manifest," a credo which, even at this late date, still evoked both the natural sacramentalism of the Tractarians and the theology of revealed religion.[274]

The priesthood of art also had roots in the long-standing tradition of the divinely-inspired genius, with its origins in Plato's concept of divine frenzy. In the Italian Renaissance, this coalesced in a theory of genius, expanded to incorporate the visual arts, which attributed creativity to the inspiration of God and conceived of the artist's and poet's roles as transmitters of divine teaching and prophecy. To Giovanni Boccaccio, for

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[271] Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, 40.
[272] Ibid., 41.
[273] Ibid., 41-42.
[274] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:257.

instance, poetry "is a certain exquisite fervor of invention…which proceeds from the bosom of God."[275] The effect, Noel Brann observes, was to turn poetic theory "into a form of theology—that is, *theologia poetica*" and the poet into "a kind of holy theologian and mystic who dresses his vision of sacred truth in allegorical symbols of fiction."[276] Similarly, Coluccio Salutati declared, "at the very moment when the poet composes, he has proclaimed a prophecy."[277] These ideas culminated in Marsilio Ficino's framework of human genius, which integrated divine frenzy with the added component of Aristotelian melancholy, a paradigm lasting to the present day.

The ecclesiologists and their legacy, as well as Ruskin and moral art history, breathed new life into this trope of the divinely-inspired genius, which persisted throughout nineteenth-century Britain. Sedding, for instance, proclaimed in 1893, "God makes the artist…He gets his credentials straight from heaven. Hence his special faculties and his special mission in the world."[278] Burne-Jones reiterated this sentiment around the same time, stating, "it is God that creates, and the more that man can create, the more God he has in him."[279] It should be remembered, too, that one of the logic arguments

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[275] *Boccaccio on Poetry: Being the Preface and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of Boccaccio's "Genealogia Deorum Gentilium,"* ed., trans. Charles G. Osgood (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1930, 1956), 39, quoted in Noel L. Brann, *The Debate over the Origin of Genius during the Italian Renaissance: The Theories of Supernatural Frenzy and Natural Melancholy in Accord and in Conflict on the Threshold of the Scientific Revolution* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 73.

[276] Brann, *Origin of Genius*, 73.

[277] Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, lib. I, cap. 2, 1:16, quoted in ibid., 74.

[278] Sedding, *Art and handicraft* (1893), 28-29, quoted in V & A Museum, *Victorian Church Art*, 120.

[279] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:263. He never succumbed, however, to the delusion that artists could rival God. A friend "once…compared the creative impulse of the artist to that of the divine creation," to which Burne-Jones wittily replied, "that may be, but the Powers have their revenge for our presumption when they see our vain struggles to realize our own ideals." Jacobs, "Recollections of Burne-Jones," 128. In 1895 he warned Rooke, "once an artist gives himself over to thinking about his personal estimation there's no saying where he may step—it's the beginning of insanity. There's the possibility of getting to envy even God Almighty Himself." Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:49. He joked that this was "why Lucifer fell who was a mighty artist. Did you know that the blackness of night is made by his hosts still falling? Poor artists, I say." Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, n.d., Burne-Jones Papers, XXVII, fol. 44, Fitzwilliam Museum.

which resonated with Burne-Jones at Oxford posited the creative faculty as an extension of God: "the continuation of the creative" in humankind "is as much from [God] as the first production" at the beginning of the world.[280] Aside from a revelation of his lingering Catholic tendencies, his often-cited quip, "there are only two sides of Christianity for which I am fitted by the spirit which designs in me—the carol part, and the Mystical part," also stems from this tradition.[281] The "spirit which designs" in him invokes the trope of supernatural inspiration.

G. E. Street, one of the Cambridge Camden Society's most prominent and influential members, exemplified their ideal union between piety and professional practice. According to his son, "his religion, not an acrid one nor ostentatiously worn, was intimately bound up with his work…This was the secret of his love for the men of the Middle Ages and their handiwork."[282] In 1848 Street had laid plans for an unrealized religio-artistic monastery similar to the one Burne-Jones and Morris dreamed of, where craftsmen would live "under certain religious ordinances and…in strict accord with the lofty character of their work."[283] Touched by the same medievalism, "he saw that those glorious monuments, which are the boast of Europe, owe their pure and exalted type of beauty to the devotional and self-obliterating faith of the men who built them."[284] Morris's later agnosticism and socialism has eclipsed the fact that, at least early on, he seems to have shared in the vision of an architectural career infused with holiness. He

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[280] E. Burne-Jones, "Notebook" 1070(1).
[281] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 112.
[282] Arthur Edmund Street, *Memoir of G. E. Street* (London, 1888), 57, quoted in Dale Dishon, "Three Men in a Gondola: Ruskin, Webb and Street," in Webster and Elliott, *A Church as It Should Be*, 208.
[283] A. E. Street, *Memoir of G. E. Street*, quoted in MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 68.
[284] A. E. Street, *Memoir of G. E. Street*, 57, quoted in Dishon, "Three Men in a Gondola," 208.

echoed the ecclesiologists when he wrote to his mother about his decision to pursue architecture:

> I wish now to be an architect, an occupation I have often had hankerings after, even during the time when I intended taking Holy Orders…if moreover by living [in Oxford] and seeing evil and sin in its foulest and coarsest forms, as one does day by day, I have learned to hate any form of sin, and to wish to fight against it, is not this well too?…Perhaps you think people will laugh at me, and call me purposeless and changeable; I have no doubt they will, but I in my turn will try to shame them, God being my helper, by steadiness and hard work.[285]

At the time Morris began his apprenticeship, Street was employed in Oxford as diocesan architect to Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, and the Gothic Revival style he would have encountered there was precisely the kind the ecclesiologists promoted for its ability to invoke the divine, facilitate medieval liturgy and articulate Anglo-Catholic theology.[286] Significantly, Morris's writings from 1856 such as "The Story of the Unknown Church," "The Churches of Northern France," and "A Night in a Cathedral" feature devout ecclesiastical architects.[287]

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[285] William Morris to his mother, Nov. 11, 1855, repr. in Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:83-86.

[286] For the Gothic as a facilitator of religious experience see Simon Bradley, "The Roots of Ecclesiology: Late Hanoverian Attitudes to Medieval Churches," in Webster and Elliott, *A Church as It Should Be*, 22-44. While in Oxford, Street was engaged in building St. Peter, Bournemouth; All Saints, Boyne Hill, Berkshire (1854-65); Cuddesdon theological college (1852-54); an East Grinstead convent; and the Church of Saint Philip and Saint James in Oxford (1858-65), "one of the earliest and purest examples of a return to the architecture of the thirteenth century." Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:63. Morris eventually developed stylistic differences with the ecclesiologists and historic preservation principles that opposed their restoration practices.

[287] The narrator of "The Story of the Unknown Church" is the long-dead architect of a Catholic Abbey who joined the monastery after completing his work, underscoring the piety of medieval builders. *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1856): 28-33. "The Churches of Northern France," surely inspired by their pilgrimage the previous summer, admires the ancient builders of cathedrals for their "great love of God." *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 2 (1856): 99-110. The protagonist in his fictional Gothic story, "A Night in a Cathedral," locked in a church after dark, consoles himself from nightmares and ghostly visions by walking through a full Catholic Mass in his imagination. He also meditates on the church's earliest congregation, "vague figures of bishops and priests in rochet and cope, knights in chain armour, crusaders with the cross on their left shoulder," as well as its ancient builders. The master architect is a "workman like the rest," and as he carves a statue of the Virgin Mary her face "grew beneath his hands with such pure loveliness as I had never seen in face before, either in art or in actual life." *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 5 (1856): 310-16.

In addition to their friendship with Street, Burne-Jones and Morris may have been familiar with the ecclesiologists through their knowledge of Pre-Raphaelitism. The need for architectural fittings such as murals, stained glass, tiles, furniture and liturgical objects naturally parlayed into numerous commissions for decorative artists. Over the years the Society became more and more a function of the arts; its ranks swelled with artists and architects, their membership growing from under 5% prior to 1845 to almost one-third of the total after that point.[288] The original members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and their followers benefited greatly from the new demand for ecclesiastical design. They were often mentioned at meetings of the Ecclesiological Society, which considered Pre-Raphaelitism another branch of the same revivalist movement. As William Burges (1827-81) explained, "the Praeraffaellites had tried to do in painting all that the Cambridge Camden Society did in architecture" by going "back to the first elements just in the same manner that architects were referred to the old churches."[289] Street was one of the most vocal supporters of Pre-Raphaelite art. Before a meeting of the ecclesiologists he asserted, "the Pre-Raphaelite movement is identical with our own" and encouraged collaboration between the two groups. He argued that the Society's work was "as nearly as possible identical" with the Pre-Raphaelites' goal of "throwing off the eclecticism and errors of current artistic trends."[290] As late as 1860, six years after the dissolution of the original P.R.B., the Ecclesiological Society devoted their twenty-first anniversary meeting to "The Tendencies of Praeraffaellitism, and its connection with the Gothic movement." Notably, the collector responsible for giving Burne-Jones one of his

[288] Brandwood, "Fond of Church Architecture," 59.

[289] "Ecclesiological Society. Twenty-first Anniversary Meeting," *Ecclesiologist* 21, no. 139 (Aug. 1860): 249. Most scholars overlook the P. R. B.'s ties to the High Church movement, but Alastair Grieve has pointed out some overlap between the two groups. Grieve, "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," 294-95.

[290] George Edmund Street, "On the Future of Art in England," *Ecclesiologist*, 19 (Aug. 1858): 234.

earliest glimpses of Pre-Raphaelite painting, Thomas Combe, was a Tractarian and edited an illustrated volume on baptismal fonts for the Cambridge Camden Society in 1844.[291]

Ruskin, whom Burne-Jones read with great enthusiasm during his Oxford years, was another bridge to the ecclesiologists. It is true that as an Evangelical (in the 1850s) his theology was opposed to Anglo-Catholicism, but, as already noted, the divide between the two religious sects was narrower than usually supposed. Ruskin's anti-materialism, prelapsarianism, and call for piety in artists was not so far removed from Anglo/Catholic monasticism and the devotional asceticism of Tractarian Christianity. Although Ruskin's aesthetic ideology might appear at odds with the ecclesiologists, Dale Dishon identifies a number of intersections between his and the Society's architectural principles, demonstrating there was more sympathy for Ruskin's ideas about Gothic among the Cambridge group than previously recognized.[292] Street, in particular, "managed to be a firm favourite with the ecclesiologists as well as with Ruskin" and formed "a vital link between Ruskinism and ecclesiology."[293]

Burne-Jones's vocational transition from priest to artist needs to be reconsidered as an outgrowth of ecclesiology, which provided a framework for conceiving of art as a religious ministry, revitalizing the church through beautiful objects rather than sermons. His extensive theological training and knowledge of Judeo-Christian history especially equipped him for church decoration. Pouring his enthusiasm for religious reform,

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[291] Combe was also a primary patron of two of Oxford's most ritualistic High Churches—St. Paul and St. Barnabus. He was a churchwarden at St. Paul's before founding St. Barnabas in 1868-69. An intimate friend of Newman's, who presided over his wedding in 1840, Combe was such an ardent Anglo-Catholic that Millais dubbed him "the Early Christian." Grieve, "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," 295.
[292] See Dishon, "Three Men in a Gondola," 190-210.
[293] Ibid., 198, 209.

Anglo/Catholicism and medievalism into art, Burne-Jones went on to earn renown as one of Britain's foremost producers of ecclesiastical decorative arts.

The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine

In January 1856 Burne-Jones and his friends founded *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, a venture inspired by Christian Socialism. It lasted only one year but is an invaluable tool for reconstructing the context of his transition to painting. The journal's overt religious and political agenda indicate it was Burne-Jones's desire to enact his beliefs and his urgent sense of a religious duty to humanity that impelled his artistic ambitions. The magazine served as a polemic of the group's "warfare against the Age" of materialism and social ills, with an accent on the arts and literature.[294] In addition to Kingsley and Maurice, Thomas Carlyle, Ruskin, and the Tractarians are strong voices in its pages.[295] The majority of articles, which encompass poetry, fiction, literary criticism, current affairs, philosophy, and reviews of historical and theological publications, promote Christian virtues and the believer's responsibility to his fellow man. Among them is a discernible thesis that God destines every person to a particular vocation, it is his or her religious duty to obey that calling, and any form of labor is noble and spiritually meaningful if done in the name of Jesus.

All the submissions were anonymous, but a few of Burne-Jones's contributions, at least, are known. These include the short fiction stories "The Cousins," "A Story of the North," and "The Druid and the Maiden," and reviews of William Makepeace

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[294] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Aug. 5, 1853, fol. 7, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.
[295] Anglo-Catholics emphasized outreach to the working classes and often situated their churches in slums and poor urban areas. While this is a point of overlap with Evangelicals, the difference lay in their agenda. Anglo-Catholics viewed missionary work as a Christian duty in itself, while Evangelicals' goal was usually conversion.

Thackeray's *The Newcomes* (1853-55) and Ruskin's fourth installment of *Modern Painters* (1856). Burne-Jones's only known literary endeavors, they present compelling evidence that upon leaving Oxford his beliefs had coalesced into an intensified awareness of his religious duty to social improvement. When his emerging painting career is considered in light of the *Magazine*, it is evident that, at least at this point, he viewed art as his religious duty and a means to improving the world around him.

The magazine has strong Christian overtones, both throughout Burne-Jones's writings and those of his colleagues. In his review of Thackeray's *The Newcomes*, for instance, Burne-Jones offered an impassioned aside about marriage as a holy sacrament, arguing its primary function should be as a reminder of Jesus's love and covenant with the church. "It was ordained to bear the burden of a great mystery," he explained, "the secret of the marriage of the Lamb, that we might not be without a continual symbol whereby to comprehend that holy union, that when the Bridegroom came we might know him and receive him worthily." He defended this idea against charges of Catholic "mysticism," saying it is merely "forgotten truth." Thus, in Burne-Jones's view, broken marriages have greater consequences than merely "broken hearts" and "dishonoured children;" they defile God by doing "infinite dishonour and despite to the holy thing signified."[296] His fiction stories are also peppered with references to Christianity. In "A Story of the North," his narrator thanks "Our Father and blessed Him for the sympathy of sea and wind and cloud" then pauses to contemplate ancient "deeds of love and holy sacrifice."[297] The tale is a Norse romance riddled with messianic symbolism, which ends with the conversion of the land to Christianity. Similarly, "The Druid and the Maiden" is

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[296] [E. Burne-Jones], "Newcomes," 55.
[297] [Edward Burne-Jones], "A Story of the North," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 2 (1856): 81-82.

a story about a pagan civilization experiencing distressing times because of diminished faith and a failure to observe prescribed worship rites. To redeem their sins, they are required to make "one grand propitiation." Drawing an allusion to the Hebrews of the Old Testament, Burne-Jones writes that animal sacrifice is no longer sufficient; "one man must die for the many."[298] In addition to its messianic overtones, the story reflects Burne-Jones's jaded opinion of Anglican clergy; the Druid priest is a liar and traitor who manipulates prophecy for his own selfish purposes.

Burne-Jones's friends also expressed Christian ideals in the pages of the magazine. Wilfred Heeley, for instance, insisted, "God is as surely present in the history of nations now, as he ever was in the history of the Jews."[299] Vernon Lushington reiterated, "even our sins and sufferings and sorrows we feel to be His judgements, our deserved trials, containing within them gifts for higher spiritual attainments than we have yet reached."[300] In a three-part essay, William Fulford defended Alfred Tennyson's *In Memoriam* against skeptics who read it as an expression of profound religious doubt. The poet, he rejoined, was divinely-inspired like Job or David, whose verses celebrate the glorious triumph of Christian faith over skepticism.[301] In a series of essays, Lushington even re-made Thomas Carlyle, whom many perceived as an atheist, into a Christian hero and "builder up of Faith."[302]

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[298] [Edward Burne-Jones], "The Druid and the Maiden," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 11 (1856): 690.

[299] [Wilfred Heeley], "Kingsley's Sermons for the Times," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1856): 62.

[300] [Vernon Lushington], "Carlyle," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 4 (1856): 203.

[301] [William Fulford], "Alfred Tennyson. An Essay. In Three Parts. Part II," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 2 (1856): 76-80.

[302] [Vernon Lushington], "Carlyle," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1 (1856): 193-211; 292ff.; 336-52; 697ff.; 743-71.

Duty, Calling and Vocation: Labor in Service to God and Humanity

The theme of fulfilling one's Christian duty by improving society is a continual thread running throughout the magazine. One of the ways the group intended to achieve this goal was through the founding of a monastic community dubbed the "Order of Galahad," discussed at length in Chapter Four. It was not meant to be an insular rural abbey, however, but an urban brotherhood actively working to better the conditions of the poor in the heart of London. "The scene of life," one magazine author asserted, "is laid for each one on the highway or in the mart; perchance, even in the bustle of the Battle; but never, for long, in the calm quiet of the cloister." Instead,

> man must mix with his fellow men, and work and live for them. And those even who love the life of the recluse, and would strive to conjure up images of the Middle Ages, as they pore, in some quaint Gothic nook, over the stirring Chronicles of olden days…must learn to conquer self, to go down to the busy city, to mingle with the common herd; even they must be reapers in the harvest field of men, fishers offering their baits of civilization amidst shoals of hungry men.[303]

Inspired by the Christian Socialists, these friends concluded that the noblest kind of religious work lay not in the isolated existence of the monastery but in improving others' lives in the secular world. As the century progressed, however, such beliefs were in growing tension with Burne-Jones's personal desire for the solitude and seclusion of the cloister, expressed through his artist-monk persona addressed in Chapter Four.

Furthermore, the magazine maintained that every man was divinely designed for a specific vocation. In this framework, it was his Christian duty to obey God's will by performing the task assigned. "Ideas of duty and calling," Tim Barringer observes in his insightful study *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain*, derived from

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[303] "The Work of Young Men in the Present Age," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 9 (1856): 563-64.

Protestant evangelicalism, one of the predominant religious influences in Burne-Jones's upbringing.[304] Kingsley further taught them, Wilfred Heeley related, "that heaven consists in doing God's will, and hell in doing one's own selfish will."[305] In September, an essay titled "The Work of Young Men in the Present Age" declared,

> To do a certain work each man was born. It is the noble duty of each man, in youth, to learn his own peculiar work; and steadily and earnestly to pursue that work, whatever it may be; to pursue it amidst evil report and good report, for weal or woe, with a zeal enough to satisfy his conscience and his God, this, surely, is to do God's own work upon earth; this, surely, is for man to become a fellow-worker with God, because it is to carry out in its entireness the Perfect Will of the Eternal Mind.[306]

"For it seems to us," the author continued, "that in each man's peculiar profession, or station, or business, there is noble work enough." Whatever his "natural bent of mind" leads him to do, "he is called upon to do by the very voice of God."[307] Many people, Burne-Jones admitted in 1893, never heard God's "call" to a vocation; but the "real fool," he continued, "is the man who hears the call and doesn't obey it."[308]

Such ideas transformed a mere job into a "vocation," an outgrowth of what Barringer identifies as the "expressive" theory of work. Carlyle and Ruskin, who both feature prominently in the magazine's articles, were principal players in formulating a new concept of labor as the expression of one's core identity rather than the mechanical, "slavish" toil of industrialization and capitalism. As Barringer points out, Ruskin's "Nature of Gothic," which Burne-Jones and Morris read their first year at Oxford, was one of the earliest statements of this "expressive" theory of labor.[309]

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[304] Tim Barringer, *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2005), 28.
[305] [Heeley], "Kingsley's Sermons," 62.
[306] "Young Men," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 559.
[307] Ibid., 560.
[308] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:255.
[309] Barringer, *Men at Work*, 28.

The primary feature of the expressive theory of labor, Barringer elucidates, was its confidence in the divine meaning and potential of work.[310] Accordingly, the magazine affirmed that although a man's toil might take many different forms, each was noble if executed for the glory of God, an idea Burne-Jones adopted in his personal concept of art as religious ministry. Fulford, for example, underscored how human beings' fundamental nature as "spiritual creatures," infused "their daily working and playing" as much as "their most ordinary occupations."[311] Another article asserted that any vocation, whether "politics, or teaching, or labours of love for others, or whatever else he may choose, may be made…a holy and a noble work, nay, must be made so," for "there is no work on earth, however mean, however poor, in which we may not do God and man good service."[312] Burne-Jones's philosophy still reflected this idea at the end of his life, when he commented in 1893, "to express yourself—utter yourself, turn out what is in you—on the side of beauty and right and truth" is one's duty.[313]

In his three-part essay on Carlyle, Vernon Lushington put a similarly religious spin on Carlyle's "gospel of work," which maintained the nobility and virtue of labor in any form.[314] Repeating the monastic motto, "Laborare est orare; Work is Worship," Lushington insisted, "all labour is sacred, because it is the will of God that men should work…the hand is a sacred gift."[315] Accordingly, he distilled Carlyle's message as follows:

> Every stroke of genuine human work is…worthy of deep reverence; even
> work of the commonest, sorriest kind; that of the housemaid…and so on,

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[310] Ibid.
[311] [Fulford], "Alfred Tennyson," 76.
[312] "Young Men," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 560-62.
[313] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:255.
[314] [Lushington], "Carlyle," 203.
[315] Ibid., 753.

up to the ministry of a true High Priest, or the faithful life-work of a righteous King. To *him* all this is sacred…may it be to us too![316]

In Carlyle's framework, he concluded, anyone "who would guide the bodies and souls of men, is no other than a…Priest of Righteousness and Truth," regardless of his trade.[317] As Lushington interpreted it, work was not only to be pursued with vigor and enthusiasm but also intentionally consecrated to God. "Service to Him," Lushington reported, Carlyle "passionately recommends, and urges with voice of command, entreaty, expostulation, denunciation, with laughter and with tears, the duty of purpose, of choice, of earnest, earnest work."[318]

Along these lines, Lushington implored, it was imperative that a man's labor, in whatever form, visibly demonstrate his faith. He drew attention to Carlyle's argument in *On Heroes and Hero Worship* (1841) that a man's actions, not his creed, define his religion and inevitably "creatively determin[e] all the rest" of his life. [319] "The sum of all," Lushington concluded, "is that Carlyle judges Men by what they have really believed, and what they have really done….Belief is the parent of Action."[320] He educed from Carlyle an emphatic biblical pronouncement, "By the fruits ye shall know them." It is "by their deeds—not their long prayers in the synagogue and charities at the street corners, but what they have actually accomplished for men" that people's beliefs are revealed, wrote Lushington.[321] This principle, that religious conviction belongs in action not abstract doctrinal debate or insular ecclesiasticism, aligned with Burne-Jones's own criticisms of the Anglican Church.

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[316] Ibid., 196.
[317] Ibid., 753.
[318] Ibid., 203.
[319] Ibid., 194.
[320] Ibid., 350-51.
[321] Ibid., 351.

Carlyle's insistence upon the virtue of work and living out one's beliefs opened the door to conceiving of art as an alternative priesthood and the artist as the agent of God. John Christian and Stephen Wildman have pointed out how Carlyle's idea of the "hero" provided a framework for the "prophet or man of vision who interprets for ordinary mortals the transcendental will."[322] Lushington, for example, concluded his essays with Carlyle's high praise for the Craftsman in *Sartor Resartus*, who "is seen toiling for the spiritually indispensable; not daily bread, but the Bread of Life," especially "when we can name him Artist; not earthly Craftsman only, but inspired Thinker, who with heaven-made Implement conquers Heaven for us!"[323] Fulford likewise maintained that art could and should be a means of honoring God. The Pre-Raphaelites, he declared, exemplified how the "divine mind" could be discerned in "the creations or interpretations of imagination." Their realist style paid homage to nature and "the things which God has created by His word," which are "altogether nobler and more beautiful than any that man may seem to create by his fancy."[324] Another writer in the magazine even suggested that art might hold the key to mediating "the hard divorce between the natural and divine."[325] A review of Ford Madox Brown's and Rossetti's paintings further alleged such pictures had the capacity to "quicken our faith in God and man."[326] According to the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, art, in other words, could fortify belief and serve as a form of ministry.

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[322] Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 45.
[323] [Lushington], "Carlyle," 753.
[324] [Fulford], "Alfred Tennyson," 80.
[325] "Oxford," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 251.
[326] "Two Pictures," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1 no. 8 (1856): 479. The author equates Brown's *Last of England* (1855), for instance, with a modern-day biblical Exodus and interprets it as an expression of God's grace.

John Ruskin

John Ruskin's writings presented yet another model of priestly artistic identity. As Hilary Fraser explains, Ruskin "adopts a sermonising tone and Scriptural language to imply the visionary authority of the artist…The artist is conceived of as a visionary high priest, a mediator between God and man, an interpreter of eternal truths to men."[327] Ruskin's framework of the "prophetic role" of the artist, John Christian and Stephen Wildman observe, combined with Carlyle's ideas to provide Burne-Jones with "the assurance that by indulging his love of drawing imaginative subjects he was doing something that was socially valuable and even retained a measure of priestly significance."[328]

Burne-Jones's overwhelming attention to Ruskin's ideas about religious art and the spirituality of the painter, a topic usually overlooked in the abundant literature on their relationship, is most evident in his review of *Modern Painters* Volume 3, Part 4, "Of Many Things (1856)," in the April issue of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*.[329] Significantly, Christian artists—principally early Italian painters—are the heroes of Ruskin's volume. Encapsulating the creed of moral art history, he asserted faith and purity were the keys to their excellence. Burne-Jones's review focuses specifically on Ruskin's discussion of "High Art, and the Ideal," which argues that the highest form of art depends on sacred subject matter and "spiritual beauty." Burne-Jones agreed that

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[327] Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, 120.

[328] Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 45.

[329] [E. Burne-Jones], "Ruskin," 212-25. In "The Nature of Gothic," which became a "new gospel and a fixed creed" (Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:38) to Burne-Jones and Morris in 1853, Ruskin established a relationship among a society's religion, its approach to aesthetic production, its architectural style, and its quality of craftsmanship. Gothic served as a marker of its society's faith and piety, in contrast to ancient pagan civilizations and the deplorable state of modern, industrial Britain. As Tim Barringer points out, "Ruskinian naturalism" was also bound up with the belief in natural theology, a theme that would have resonated with Burne-Jones as he simultaneously read Paley and Butler. Barringer, *Men at Work*, 255-58.

purists such as the Italian primitives best represent this ideal, their minds "more than

ordinarily tender and holy, incapable of dwelling on the evil that seems bound up with

existence by an ordinance for ever; perhaps not even seeing it, except under a veil of final

good, which transfigures it with a beauty not its own."[330]

Burne-Jones's review is riddled with praise for Ruskin's religious convictions,

which he defined as,

> moved by things holy, unseen, eternal; counting everything on earth to be
> soluble only by reference to Heaven; seeing humanity bounded not in
> death but Godhead, temporality bounded, not in decay, but eternity;
> whose philosophy begins and ends with this, that 'The invisible things of
> Him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by
> the things that are made.'[331]

For Burne-Jones, Ruskin was God's "interpreter," a prophet "speaking if ever a man

spoke, by the Spirit and approval of Heaven."[332] His reverential sketches of Ruskin in

halo and nimbus in a January 1856 letter to Crom (fig. 14) evidence the critic's saintly—

even God-like—status. In his review Burne-Jones paid special attention to Ruskin's

opposition of the "false religious ideal" of Raphael and the "passionate," or true, ideal of

Fra Angelico. He upheld Ruskin's religious ideal as a "great and noble thing," marveling

at "how divine a work it has set itself to do, what a gospel it has to preach, and woe

impending if it preaches it not."[333] Like Ruskin, he saw hope for a renaissance of the

religious ideal in the "true sacred art" of Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites.[334]

Burne-Jones used the remainder of his *Modern Painters* review as a platform for

his own artistic creed, taking to heart Ruskin's message (and Schlegel's) that the religious

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[330] [E. Burne-Jones], "Ruskin," 219.
[331] Ibid., 212-13.
[332] Ibid., 212.
[333] Ibid., 221.
[334] Ibid., 222.

ideal was the most noble pursuit and one demanding spiritual excellence. In a statement

directly opposed to the "art for art's sake" aestheticism with which he would later be

associated, Burne-Jones explained how he finally understood "art which ends in art is

ignoble" and "ever false, *Unclean, unclean*," the "pestilential breath which comes from

the abyss, the spirit of death."[335] Instead, "good and true" art, he contended, should

express "the breath of life, which the Master of Life at the beginning did breathe into

man." Ruskin's decrees propelled Burne-Jones toward action, the "names most

honoured" there, "God and Truth, Faith and Christ, increasing like a chorus, with a

'dominant persistence, till it must be answered to.'"[336] The repeated names of "Truth and

Faith guarding every page" instilled him with "a spirit of deep solemnity" and left him

"purified and exalted."[337] At times, Burne-Jones's tone is unmistakably

autobiographical. Ruskin's "fiery trial of Truth," for instance, reportedly left him with

"some fancies quickened, some doubts directed, some aspirations ennobled, some

emotions deepened and confirmed."[338] Ostensibly about the encouraging state of the

religious ideal, the following statement evidences his own joy at finding what he believed

to be his calling in the priesthood of art:

> I believe now that we are come out of a certain dark and mournful night,
> and are living in the dawning of a great day….Oh! it is happy; after
> infinite wanderings, strangest misconceptions, wofullest repulses, to come
> again at last to this, having found the point of our divergence and cause of
> all our failure.[339]

"At the feet of Giotto and Orcagna, therefore, and Albert Dürer," he continued, "we have

begun again, and God be with us." Thankfully the "road onwards is clear" now that

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[335] Ibid.
[336] Ibid., 213.
[337] Ibid., 224.
[338] Ibid.
[339] Ibid., 222.

Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites had established "the rule of faith in art" as service to "the honour of God, namely, and ennobling of humanity."[340]

In other autobiographical passages, Burne-Jones took up Ruskin's assertion that "man's use and function are, to be the witness of the glory of God, and to advance that glory by his reasonable obedience, and resultant happiness."[341] In his review of *The Newcomes*, for instance, he defended his unconventional career against the criticism of family and friends and argued its validity as a religious vocation. Sympathizing deeply with the character of Clive, the painter whose father cannot understand nor accept his profession, Burne-Jones bemoaned with overtones of Carlyle, "when shall we waken" from the demands of "respectability" and recognize "the true dignity of work in any kind?"[342] Justifying his own decision to pursue painting over a career in the church, he insisted, "I know that God will suffer no good work to fall to the ground fruitless. I know that He will honour the seed of His sowing, and raise up a harvest of good."[343] It is one's duty, he concluded, to do "what they are most fitted for, what they can do best, what they can honour God most by doing"—in his case, through painting rather than preaching.[344] At last, Burne-Jones's son-in-law reported, "strong direction was given to a true vocation."[345]

Burne-Jones's Doctrine of Art as Salvation

While Carlyle and others stressed the "duty" and intrinsic virtue of labor versus

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[340] Ibid.
[341] Ibid., 224.
[342] [E. Burne-Jones], "Newcomes," 56-57.
[343] [E. Burne-Jones], "Ruskin," 224.
[344] [E. Burne-Jones], "Newcomes," 57.
[345] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:46.

idleness, Burne-Jones prioritized the vocational "calling" to serve God and others through one's work. Carlyle, Ford Madox Brown and others promoted the redemptive power of physical activity itself and its inherent moral benefit to the individual, but in his magazine contributions Burne-Jones emphasized the altruistic implementation of vocation with a particular sense of urgency.[346]

In Burne-Jones's short story "The Cousins," a tale of repentance and redemption, the protagonist, inspired by faith, seeks to improve the deplorable conditions around him. Wandering the city streets, Charles witnesses a barrage of social ills—homelessness, hunger, beatings, murder, promiscuity—and stops at a bridge to contemplate the common occurrence of suicides. In an epiphanic moment his eyes are opened to this "great city tragedy that is played every night" and he asks, "Is it enough…to thank God night and morning for home and life?"[347] When "it be asked…chiefly at one great time, 'Where is thy brother?'" he wonders how his actions will answer the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"[348] Regretting "all the years of my life, spent in thoughtless indifference to misery so near me," he is struck with "cowardly dread" at the thought of his inevitable Day of Judgment "lest I should not go unpunished."[349] Charles's moment of spiritual transformation is strikingly reminiscent of Burne-Jones's solemn resolution to undertake a "crusade and Holy Warfare against the age, 'the heartless coldness of the times:'"[350]

> I was suddenly aware of a change come over me; knew that all the joy
> and pleasure of life had passed in a moment, and a new order had begun;
> felt a shiver pass through every limb that the night wind had not caused;

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[346] For Brown, see Barringer, *Men at Work*, 21-82.
[347] [Edward Burne-Jones], "The Cousins," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1856): 21.
[348] Ibid., 19.
[349] Ibid., 21.
[350] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Aug. 5, 1853, fol. 7, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.

knew afterwards it was the unsheathing of the sword for battle by the angel of my life.[351]

Finally, a symbolic death—a three-day period of illness and unconsciousness—from which Charles is resurrected, Christ-like, and passes literally and metaphorically "into my father's presence," completes the process of his redemption.[352]

In Burne-Jones's essay on *The Newcomes* he insisted the "primary fact" of life, its "essence," is "present action, present virtue."[353] Unfortunately, he argued, at times "we have strangely forgotten" this truth and left "a world neglected at our feet." He spoke "thankfully and with the deepest reverence" for Tennyson, Holman Hunt, Ruskin, Carlyle and Kingsley, who had led a "most godly crusade against falsehood, doubt, and wretched fashion, against hypocrisy and mammon, and lack of earnestness." In Burne-Jones's paradigm, it is not any battle against social inequality, poverty, and the evils of modern life, but a specifically *religious* one. If only men would realize that everything in the universe and on earth "is bound indissolubly to the feet of God" and every deed on earth has otherworldly ramifications, he implored, the result would be "less mockery and jesting in the world and more earnestness, less doing for fashion's sake and more for Christ's."[354] Summarizing these convictions in his defense of Thackeray's "poor Clive," Burne-Jones issued a fervent declaration that can be read as his own artistic manifesto:

> I claim at once an express assent to the position, that the work we do we do not for ourselves, nor our own pleasure nor advancement, but in the name of Christ, according to his commandment; and then for our children's sake, that we may make them better, happier; and then for the sake of all who have gone before us, that the travail and sorrow of their hard battle may not be unfruitful, may not become the desolation of wasted energy. It is the only premise upon which I can worthily found the

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[351] [E. Burne-Jones], "Cousins," 21.
[352] Ibid., 22.
[353] [E. Burne-Jones], "Newcomes," 53.
[354] Ibid., 55.

conclusion that our work, whatsoever it be, must be the best of its kind, the noblest we can offer…"What is the best that any man can give?" And God has given us an answer, "that in which he finds most happiness," for this testimony he has sealed with truth…not transitory, idle pleasure, but enduring happiness.[355]

There was more at stake, however, than simple philanthropic goodwill. In the 1840s and 50s, Barringer observes, when Burne-Jones was formulating his artistic mission, "the ultimate theme of the 'expressive' theory of work…was the religious transformation of man through hard work, of hard work as a step on the road to salvation."[356] Catchphrases such as Thomas Carlyle's, "For there is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in work," Barringer argues, gave work "a defining role…in the saving of the individual's soul at the moment of judgement." In diligent toil, Carlyle proposed, lay the key to securing God's favor. This "notion that work tests, and displays, the moral fibre of the individual, by which each can earn a place for himself, not only on earth but also thereafter," Barringer points out, was also "deeply embedded in Protestant theology." Always concerned with how his deeds on earth would be judged in the afterlife, Burne-Jones assumed what, in his mind, was a divine calling to beautify a suffering, beleaguered world through diligent labor. In the process, he sought to attain his own salvation. As contemporaries recognized, Burne-Jones united Ruskin's "gospel of spiritual duty," Carlyle's "gospel of work," and Rossetti's "gospel of beauty" with Christian Socialism, Tractarianism, and ecclesiology to develop an individual creed positing art as a religious vocation, sacred activity, agent of social transformation, and pathway to eternal life.[357]

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[355] Ibid., 57.
[356] Barringer, *Men at Work*, 28-29.
[357] W. Sharp, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," *Atlantic Monthly*, 381.

Part III: A Summary of Belief

After leaving Oxford, Burne-Jones never again formally subscribed to a particular church and rarely attended Sunday services. As Christine Poulson points out, "he was a congenital non-joiner who never felt comfortable as part of any association," a sentiment encapsulated by his repeated exclamation to Rooke, "Belong to the Church of England? Put your head in a bag!"[358] Because he eschewed traditional modes of Christian expression and practice, from this point forward in Burne-Jones's biography many art historians overlook his religious beliefs, misperceiving him as having "lost" his faith.[359] However, "too Catholic to be ordained" and disillusioned with Anglicanism, he instead adopted the unorthodox position that he could practice his beliefs beyond the confines of the established Church through the creation of beautiful objects.

Certainly, Burne-Jones was "touched by the agnosticism of his time," as one friend confirmed.[360] The essential unknowability of God, first encountered through German philosophy, always perplexed him, and he longed for definitive proof of the divine. He once countered the saying, "Remember from whence you come, from a foetid drop, and then remember before Whom you stand, before the Lord of lords, the King of kings," with the reply, "I don't mind whence I come if I could only be sure I was standing before the Lord of lords."[361] A description he offered of *Hope* (1871) (fig. 15) reveals his own yearning: "'Hope' isn't stretching her hand into heaven," he maintained, "then she

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[358] Poulson, "Morris, Burne-Jones, and God," 50; Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 27.
[359] See intro., nn. 26-28.
[360] Jacobs, "Recollections of Burne-Jones," 130.
[361] Ibid.

would have her arm well out of the bars of the prison—she is pulling heaven into her room by the force of her hoping."[362]

Burne-Jones found consolation in a story about how Saint Augustine came to terms with the inexplicable aspects of religious belief. Perplexed over doctrinal questions and "the laws of the containing and the contained, and the measurable and the immeasurable and so on," Augustine had a vision of a boy "ladling the sea into a little hole in the sand." Perceiving the nature of Augustine's anxiety the boy pointedly asked, "How then shall thy mind, Augustine, hold and comprehend the infinite, the immeasurable?" As Burne-Jones told it, the vision vanished but left "such a reflection in the mind of Augustine that he was troubled never again."[363] Additionally, his childhood schoolmaster Thompson instilled in him an ability to distinguish between different categories of knowledge, which offered another means of resolving the disjuncture between faith and reason. Thompson instructed him "to place my knowledge as it came, to learn its proportion…& always afterward if ever I heard or saw or read of a thing I know in what little pocket of the mind to put it."[364] When a friend asked about the formation of rainbows, for instance, Burne-Jones replied, "'The Lord set his bow in the clouds.' Then, after a pause: 'There are other reasons given in the books.'"[365] Religion and science were, to him, equally valid but separate domains. An amateur astronomer late in life, he simultaneously accepted the notion of a divine Creator and the rainbow's meteorological explanation.

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[362] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, n.d., MS Add 54218, vol. 2, fol. 269, British Library.
[363] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 142.
[364] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, July 23, 1894, MS Add 54218, vol. 2, fol. 257, British Library.
[365] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:209.

In spite of his own uncertainties, Burne-Jones continued to profess his belief in the existence of a God. "Fool," he rebuffed, is the man who "saith in his heart, There is no God."[366] Ultimately, for Burne-Jones, any remaining religious questions were inconsequential. "I never doubt for a moment the real presence of God," he insisted, "I should never debate about it any more than I should argue about Beauty, and the things I most love."[367] In 1895 he confided to May Gaskell, "I never change—& have to-day the faith I had at seventeen—it was never hopeful, but it was never cast down."[368] Religious belief surfaced facetiously as well in his colloquial speech. Once, lamenting the encroachment of the railway, he quipped, "the sight of an iron girder is the only argument against the existence of a beneficent God that I admit has a moments [*sic*] validity."[369] Far from the escapist "dreamer" so many scholars have portrayed, Burne-Jones conceived of his art as an attack on the encroaching, secularizing forces of scientific thought, modernization, and urbanization, declaring, "The more materialistic science becomes, the more angels shall I paint: their wings are my protest in favour of the immortality of the soul."[370] In 1894 he vituperatively complained, "Even to watch the world—even to see it—is getting hateful: I can't influence it one tiny little bit—so omnipotent it is, can only break myself to bits struggling against it, and now I am downright mad."[371] His personal beliefs, however, remained mostly a private affair, unexplainable and irrational but

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[366] Ibid., 2:255.
[367] Ibid., 2:325.
[368] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Apr. 17, 1895, MS Add 54218, vol. 1, fol. 83, British Library.
[369] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Sept. 4, 1894, MS Add 54217, vol. 1, fols. 268-69, British Library.
[370] Wilde, "The English Renaissance of Art," 132 (see intro., n. 29). David Cecil established this dreamer trope in 1969 in *Visionary and Dreamer: Two Poetic Painters, Samuel Palmer and Edward Burne-Jones* (see intro., n. 28). The theme is repeated in nearly every major subsequent study on the artist, culminating in the 1998 centenary exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, and the Musée d'Orsay, "Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer."
[371] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:285.

constant. To explain his attitude, he adopted the words of a legendary Samoan chief who told a missionary, "We know that at night-time someone goes by amongst the trees, but we never speak of it."[372]

By no means did his belief system assume a moralistic bent, as his transgressions with Maria Zambaco in the late 1860s and his bouts of tiresome self-absorption attest. In revolt against the intolerant, high-minded evangelicalism of his youth and denominational infighting, his views expanded to encompass the liberalism of Broad-Churchmen. In a provocative conversation with his friend Sebastian Evans (1830-1909) in 1893, he laid out a statement of his creed, which indicated his loyalty was now to the church universal: "There is only one religion…'Make the most of your best for the sake of others' is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved." "Of course," he added, "you can translate it into any religious language you please; Christian, Buddhist, Mahometan, or what not. 'Have you faith?' I suppose means the same thing." Rather than Maurice's concept of "brethren and sisters" in Christ though, Burne-Jones now perceived "collective humanity" as a pseudo-Marian "Mother—more nearly Mother than Mother Nature herself."[373]

Although this conversation might indicate Unitarian tendencies, Burne-Jones's other comments and actions suggest that his beliefs remained mostly, if non-denominationally, Christian. In 1897 he proclaimed, "I am a Christian—at least in principle," and explained life as a religious test to his son Philip in 1875: "God…gives us hard exercises because it makes us stronger. He could have easily made us without faults, but what would have been the fun of that—and now it is something to save a bit

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[372] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 139.
[373] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:255.

out of the day for him, and he knows how hard it is."[374] He continued to pray, read the

Bible (which served as a frequent artistic source) and the Apocrypha, and found solace in

books such as Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1643), Sabine Baring-Gould's *Lives

of the Saints* (1872-82), and Digby's *Mores Catholici*, which he kept by his bedside.[375]

He sent a "little book of the words of Christ" to May Gaskell pronouncing it "a blessed

little book…there is no going back from those sayings—what can compare with

them!"[376] He liked "praise of the dead, and keeping Saints' days and holy days for

them."[377] Against charges that Christianity was less effective than Socialism, Burne-

Jones retorted in 1897, "what the Socialists don't do the Christians have done a thousand

times over…Ineffectual? Its triumphs are the biggest the world has ever seen."[378] Other

times he spoke about the visceral appeal of Christianity's "carol" and "mystical" sides,

and how the Nativity was "too beautiful not to be true."[379] These religious impulses

intensified as he approached the end of his life, and, as Christine Poulson has noted, it

was particularly the "pull of his youthful beliefs" which "grew more powerful."[380]

Accordingly, both Poulson and Richard Dorment have commented on Burne-

Jones's enduring and escalating sympathy with Rome. Especially after 1880, Dorment

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[374] Edward Burne-Jones to Katherine Elizabeth Lewis, Nov. 19, 1897, Dep.c. 841, vol. 1, fol. 129, Lewis Family Papers, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford; G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:63. Speaking of his "Ladder of Heaven" design in *The Flower Book*, he also avowed, "Pagans…may call it Iris, but Christians like you and me will have it to be a soul." G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:119.

[375] To his son Philip at school he wrote: "As I walked back from Turnham Green I thought about you and wanted you terribly—so I made a prayer or so, and prayed till I began to think of other things, and then it was time to leave off." G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:62. In addition to quoting frequently from the Bible in common speech he reported reading the book of Job in 1898. Dimbleby, *May and Amy*, 172. Apocrypha reference: Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Nov. 1892 or 1893, MS Add 54217, vol. 1, fol. 9, British Library. Ref. to other books: G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:237; Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, 1891[?],Burne-Jones Papers, XXVII, fol. 26, Fitzwilliam Museum.

[376] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Apr. 13, 1895, MS Add 54217, vol. 1, fol. 65, British Library.

[377] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:66.

[378] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 4:481.

[379] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 112; G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:209.

[380] Poulson, "Morris, Burne-Jones, and God," 50.

contends, Catholicism "exerted a particular attraction" for him.[381] This coincided with a

broader fashion for Catholic mysticism in the 1890s, which resulted in the conversion of

many British aesthetes and intellectuals.[382] Writing to Ruskin in 1889, Burne-Jones

alluded to the aesthetic attraction of the faith: "we ought to belong to a church that writes

its gospels on gold and purple vellum, every kind of purple that Tyre could devise, from

indigo purple to rose purple—let's go, on condition that the Pope makes a great fuss of us

and sings himself, in his finest cope."[383] In 1890 he declined a request by "Wesleyan

Methodists" to decorate their chapel with the excuse, "as an Englishman I was proud of

the distinction with which they had honoured me—but…as a Romanist I had psychical

difficulties which I knew they would appreciate as gentlemen though they might deplore

them as divines."[384] Another opportunity for large-scale ecclesiastical work came in

1881 from St. Paul's Within-the-Walls, an American Episcopal Church in Rome. While

designing its mosaics Burne-Jones dreamed of "influenc[ing] the mind of Dr. Nevin," its

Rector, "to give the church to the Pope."[385] He "hope[d] pastoral France will always

keep Catholic and pious" in 1897, and he once queried of Frances Horner (née Graham),

"Can you withhold your consent any longer to my going under that standard? What stops

me?…doesn't your heart leap to it? What a banner! Did you read about the Pope's life

from morning till night—Ah! so bonny."[386] The sight of a "Luther Protestant Van" on

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[381] Ibid.; Dorment, "Decoration of St. Paul's," 130.

[382] See Cauti, "Revolt of the Soul." In the last quarter of the century, Chadwick reports, "we find an interest in that which in a Catholic context is called mysticism," marked by renewed interest in medieval Christianity and appreciation of the "saints or devotional writers of the Counter-Reformation." Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 2:471.

[383] Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 27.

[384] Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, Dec. 15, 1890, Burne-Jones Papers, XXVIII, fol. 21, Fitzwilliam Museum.

[385] Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, n.d., Burne-Jones Papers, XXVII, fol. 5, Fitzwilliam Museum.

[386] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 3:401; Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, n.d., Burne-Jones Papers, XXVII, fol. 48, Fitzwilliam Museum.

Rottingdean green in 1893 emblazoned with the sign, "Established to Maintain a Protestant Character in the Church of England" made him "quite sick" and he vowed, "tomorrow I join the Church of Rome."[387] It seems, however, that for Burne-Jones, being raised in the Roman Catholic Church was acceptable in a way that conversion never was, a fact he always regretted. "I really want to end in that faith," he explained to Frances in 1886; "Somehow it isn't a banner to rally to, but what a lovely one to have been born under."[388] He confided a similar thought in 1890, "I wish I was a Catholic, I wouldn't have left it: if I had been born to it."[389]

Natural theology and natural sacramentalism were ideas that also stayed with him throughout his life. In 1856 he professed, "all things here…are but dim revelations of a hidden glory…every finite thing in this vast universe is…bound indissolubly to the feet of God."[390] His *Days of Creation* (1872-76) (fig. 16), which Debra Mancoff observes resembles "a shrine to divine creation," also reflects natural theology.[391] In this six-part watercolor encased in a massive altarpiece-like frame (now lost), God himself is not pictured but rather implied by the absent seventh day. His powerful presence is instead conveyed via the evidence of his handiwork in nature, mirrored in miniature in six globes, one for each day of the creation account in Genesis.

Theologically, his beliefs regarding salvation congealed in an amalgam of Protestantism and Catholicism colored with the altruistic aims of Christian Socialism, reflecting his multifaceted doctrinal background. Even in his expanded, universalistic

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[387] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Aug. 3, 1893, MS Add 54217, fol. 102, British Library.
[388] Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, n.d., , Burne-Jones Papers, XXVII, fol. 5, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[389] Horner Letters, fol. 15, Burne-Jones Papers, Fitzwilliam Museum, quoted in Dorment, "Decoration of St. Paul's," 130.
[390] [E. Burne-Jones], "Newcomes," 55-56.
[391] Mancoff, *Burne-Jones*, 71.

dogma the Protestant doctrine of justification through faith held firm. It was "Faith, not

amount of achievement—which, at best, must be infinitesimally small—that is the great

thing."[392] Salvation, he averred, was conditional upon belief: "You are a true believer—

you enter the Kingdom of Heaven. You are a heretic—you are damned."[393] Nevertheless,

Evangelicalism's notion of divine judgment still inspired his actions but evolved into a

feeling of constant accountability rather than a distant moment awaiting him in the

afterlife: "Day of Judgment? It is a synonym for the present moment—it is eternally

going on. It is not so much as a moment—it is just the line that has no breadth between

past and future. There is not—cannot be, if you think it out—any other Day of

Judgment."[394] Georgiana concurred that he lived life as a "world-long day of those who

seek no rest or reward but that of contenting the rigour of the Judge Invisible."[395] In

addition, for Burne-Jones, the Catholic mandate of good works was continually at the

forefront, driving his compulsion to relieve what he interpreted as the suffering of "Our

Lady of the Sorrows" through the creation of beautiful objects.

Burne-Jones retained his views on the altruistic, ministerial purpose of art

throughout his lifetime. His 1893 conversation with Sebastian Evans confirmed that

toward the end of his life he still characterized his vocation as a divine calling and

religious obligation:

> How are you going to help the poor old world to any advantage, if you
> don't know how to make the most of any help you have in you to give?
> And this is why I say that Carlyle's 'Work at the task that lies nearest'
> may be atheism. If I had followed that, I should have been a parson, and
> what I mean when I say 'atheist'—that is, a man who, having it in him to
> do something to help the world, deliberately does less than he might by

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[392] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:257.
[393] Ibid., 2:255.
[394] Ibid.
[395] Ibid., 1:201.

choosing an uncongenial medium in which to work. If God says, 'You can do this better than that,' and you choose to do that rather than this, you are an atheist—you don't believe in the voice of God.[396]

As much as he admired Carlyle, even at this late date he refused to concede that the "gospel of work" was an adequate replacement for traditional religion. Its premise, "Make the most of your best," he dismissed as merely "common sense and morals" unless partnered with a humanitarian aim, and consequently described *Sartor Resartus* (1838) as "sheer atheism…neither morality nor religion."[397] A grave sense of religious duty to improve the human condition continued to propel his vocational aspirations at this time:

> To me, this weary, toiling, groaning world of men and women is none other than Our Lady of the Sorrows. It lies on you and me and all the faithful to make her Our Lady of the Glories. Will she ever be so? Will she? Will she? She shall be, if your toil and mine, and the toil of a thousand ages of them that come after us can make her so![398]

In this framework, painting was Burne-Jones's toil, his vehicle for improving God's kingdom. He envisaged it as a means to bring beauty and relief to a world struggling with poverty, social inequality, and the undesirable effects of industrialization. He offered this additional explanation of his doctrine of salvation through self-sacrificing labor:

> We are a living part, however small, of things as they are. If we believe that things as they are can be made better than they are, and in that faith set to work to help the betterment to the best of our ability however limited, we are, and cannot help being, children of the Kingdom. If we disbelieve in the possibility of betterment, or don't try to help it forward, we are and cannot help being damned. It is the 'things as they are' that is the touchstone—the trial—the Day of Judgment. 'How do things as they are strike you?' The question is as bald as an egg, but it is the egg out of

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[396] Ibid., 2:255.
[397] Ibid.
[398] Ibid.

which blessedness or unblessedness is everlastingly being hatched for every living soul.[399]

For Burne-Jones, it was not day to day industrious toil—the mere fact of laboring—that secured God's favor (although discipline and asceticism certainly aided the cause), but the philanthropic purpose of one's labor. "I cover an acre of canvas with a dream of the deathbed of a king who you tell me was never alive—why?" he asked, "Simply because for the life of us we can't hit on any more healing ointment for the maladies of this poor old woman, the world at large."[400] Likewise, a passage in the *Arabian Nights* spoke to him of this principle in 1895: "how pretty it is…when a man does a kind act not for love of the one befriended but 'that I may see the face of God.'"[401]

Although some have treated Burne-Jones's 1893 conversation with Sebastian Evans as the definitive statement of his doctrine, there is danger in presuming any one quote represents a lifetime of belief, which likewise cannot be assumed to be a static and unchanging entity.[402] A life-long repertoire of comments, writings, and visual evidence exists in both public and private documents addressing Burne-Jones's religious views, and adds important qualifications to this one explanation of belief. Religious vocabulary, scripture, and Christian symbolism surfaced throughout Burne-Jones's various forms of expression—in his speech, appearance, objects, jokes, and private drawings. Peppered throughout this dissertation are myriad quotations and other primary source material that shed light on the artist's spiritual values. Considered within the contexts of ecclesiological design and Eucharistic theology, audience reception, artistic identity,

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[399] Ibid.
[400] Ibid.
[401] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, n.d.[1895], MS Add 54218, vol. 1, fol.76, British Library.
[402] Dorment ("Decoration of St. Paul's") and Poulson ("Morris, Burne-Jones, and God") are the only scholars to thoughtfully consider the changing nature of his beliefs over his lifetime (see intro., n. 24).

monasticism, and pilgrimage, they demonstrate that his religious beliefs expanded

beyond the borders of the church and played a central role in his artistic philosophy.

In his study, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000*, Callum G. Brown demonstrates how certain modes of self-imposed morality, rituals, behavior, economic activity, dress, and speech functioned as a marker of Victorian Christianity. Brown argues that even as belief became more diverse, private, and complex, Victorians remained essentially Christian in that they absorbed the religion's discursive patterns into their everyday lives and identities. Significantly, the predominant "evangelical narrative" he discerns within this "discursive Christianity" converges in notable ways with Burne-Jones's life story. The male narrative, Brown explains, usually begins "from the starting point of a 'religious' childhood which has been 'lost'" and continues on a journey "dominated by the pursuit of 'useful knowledge' and awakening to the personal freedom, the personal democratisation of the intellect, which learning brought."[403] This is mirrored in Burne-Jones's own history of Evangelical upbringing, Tractarian fervor, and "religious perplexity" at Oxford, where he was exposed to new intellectual ideas and finally disaffiliated formally from the established Church. "Helplessness" in childhood, as in an alcoholic father or, in Burne-Jones's case, an absent mother, is gradually replaced by "moral improvement through education and then marriage to a 'good woman'," the virtuous Georgiana being a perfect example.[404] Many men recalled similar "pressure from parents to become a parson, minister or priest," although it should be noted that in Burne-Jones's case, it was also his own wish. In Evangelical households like his, "boys were strongly encouraged to look

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[403] Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, 122, 125.
[404] Ibid., 125.

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upon clergymen as heroes to emulate."[405] Tales of Burne-Jones tottering around the

studio mimicking "a wicked old cardinal" and reciting the Vulgate, or reading aloud to

family and friends in the mock-pompous styles of various preachers mirror Brown's

finding that discursive Christianity often "affectionately satirised" the clergy, for instance

through lighthearted family games.[406] Music was also "one of the important male

connections to religiosity," although Burne-Jones's affinity for plainsong chant was a

more feminized version than the robust, Evangelical brass bands Brown discusses.[407]

Such patterns, for Brown, were stronger markers of one's intrinsic "Christianity" in the

nineteenth century than church attendance or membership. By absorbing and reinforcing

these elements, Burne-Jones's self-representation, behavior, and speech denote his

persistent religiosity.

Burne-Jones's art was not, as some have asserted, a religion unto itself. Rather, as

he conceived it, painting and decorative arts were in part vehicles for religious

expression, performance, and service—religion *through* art, not a religion *of* art. As the

Oxford and Cambridge Magazine reflects, his diverse spiritual influences—the Oxford

Movement, Broad Church liberalism, the medieval revival, Christian Socialism, Carlyle

and Ruskin—converged as he left Oxford in a conflation of beauty, faith, and social

mission. Taking a cue from the ecclesiologists, he parlayed his beliefs into a conception

of art as an alternative ministry in the secular sphere and adopted the role of an artist-

priest who reveals God to others through beauty. Self-ordained in this priesthood of art,

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[405] Ibid., 136-37.

[406] Ibid., 137. Joseph Jacobs reminisced of Burne-Jones, "He once declared laughingly that his proper career would have been to be a wicked old cardinal, listening to Gregorian chants, and then, with a sudden transition, he proceeded to act the scene, tottering about and repeating in cracked but sonorous tones some verses of the Vulgate." Jacobs, "Recollections of Burne-Jones," 130. Georgiana wrote of their early days with the Morrises at Red House: "Occasionally also Edward would take some trifle as text and preach us a sermon in exact imitation of the style of different preachers." G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:280.

[407] Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, 138.

Burne-Jones perceived his vocation as a sacred activity, charitable social cause, and

pathway to personal salvation. In Burne-Jones's belief system, which transcended the

bounds of the conventional Church, art-making served as his form of religious practice,

one modeled on an altruistic theory of labor's divine, redemptive and transforming

potential.

Chapter 2: Burne-Jones, the Altar, and the Eucharist

Having established Burne-Jones's ties to ecclesiology and his self-constructed identity as a high priest of art in Chapter One, this chapter will examine his role as an ecclesiastical designer through a case study of his four sets of paintings for church altars and chancels. These include a triptych in two versions for St. Paul's Brighton (1860-61); a triptych for St. Peter's, Vere Street, London (1882-93); two canvases for the chancel of St. John's, Torquay (1888); and a painted reredos for Christ Church, Woburn Square, London (1897-98). The reasons for focusing on these objects are two-fold. First, the altarpieces reveal more about Burne-Jones's approach to ecclesiastical decoration than his stained-glass windows. For the latter, the patron or William Morris often chose the subject, and the studio insertion of lead lines, color, and background details affected their final appearance. The paintings were all commissioned independently of Morris and Company and therefore directed solely by Burne-Jones. Secondly, the altar had become the nexus of controversy over "high" versus "low" doctrine in the Church of England. The contentious space of the chancel and its decoration were inextricably bound up with heated debates over the Eucharist, an important context in which Burne-Jones's art has yet to be situated.

In addressing Burne-Jones's altarpieces and chancel paintings this chapter has four goals. First, basic documentation needs to be recovered on these objects, all of which have been dispersed from their original locations. Questions about the degree of studio involvement in some of the paintings have led most modern scholars to overlook designs which were nevertheless among Burne-Jones's most popular during his lifetime. Secondly, his ecclesiastical objects—and his altarpieces in particular—need to be

resituated in their intended religious contexts. As Robert L. Nelson observes, starting

with John Ruskin the overwhelming tendency has been "to aestheticize and thus

secularize churches, something that today happens so frequently in art history that it goes

unnoticed."[1] Recent trends in Renaissance art history have attempted to reestablish the

relationship between altarpieces and theology, liturgy, devotional function, ecclesiastical

legislation, architectural space, and audience, but similar scholarship has yet to be carried

out on Victorian objects.[2] Moreover, some scholars have argued with little supporting

evidence that Burne-Jones was categorically unconcerned with art's liturgical function.

Preferring to cast him as a humanist and aesthete, such studies resist the idea that he

showed any concern for theology in his ecclesiastical art.[3] However, the commissions

addressed here demonstrate his sensitivity to liturgy, audience, doctrine, and architectural

space. Finally, his altarpieces and chancel paintings uniformly promoted a high doctrine

of the Eucharist that transitioned from Anglo-Catholicism to a stronger Roman Catholic

tone as the century progressed.

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[1] Nelson argues that Ruskin's admiration for Venetian Gothic architecture, a product of the Catholic Church, was at odds with his evangelical Protestantism and that of his mainstream Victorian audience. Consequently, he focused on the aesthetics of his subject and avoided its theological context. Robert L. Nelson, "Art and Religion: Ships Passing in the Night?" in *Reluctant Partners: Art and Religion in Dialogue*, ed. Ena Giurescu Heller (New York: Gallery at the American Bible Society, 2004), 103.

[2] See for instance, Eve Borsook and Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi, eds., *Italian Altarpieces 1250-1550: Function and Design* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); Peter Humfrey and Martin Kemp, eds., *The Altarpiece in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990); Barbara G. Lane, *The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Painting* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); Kees van der Ploeg, "The Spatial Setting of Worship: Some Observations on the Relation Between Altarpieces and Churches," in *Images of Cult and Devotion: Function and Reception of Christian Images in Medieval and Post-Medieval Europe*, ed. Søren Kaspersen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2004), 149-59; and Caterina Limentani Virdis and Mari Pietrogiovanna, *Gothic and Renaissance Altarpieces*, trans. Daniel Wheeler (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002).

[3] For instance, Harrison, "Church Decoration," and Mercer, "Days of Creation." (See intro., nn. 6, 21.) Caroline Arscott also asserts that Burne-Jones seized the opportunity of church decoration only as a means to working in a public space and "the technical consecration of the location was not the crucial consideration, nor was the liturgical function." Arscott, "Fractured figures," 41.

The Ecclesiastical Context of Victorian Altar Decoration

Burne-Jones's primary artistic interests always lay in large-scale public projects and, in particular, ecclesiastical cycles. The commission for St. John's, Torquay, provoked Burne-Jones's frequently cited longing to "work only in public buildings and in choirs and places where they sing."[4] He confessed to Rooke in 1897 that he would much prefer to paint for architectural spaces, complaining, "I never could understand anything but a picture painted in the place it's intended to fill—never cared for a travelling picture" completed in a studio. To Rooke's query whether he tried to "imagine you are painting on a wall while you are doing your pictures," he affirmed, "That and all kinds of things I try and comfort my poor little old self with."[5] "I want big things to do and vast spaces," he lamented, "and for common people to see them and say Oh!—only Oh!"[6] He fervently wished, especially, for monumental ecclesiastical schemes. In the 1860s he fantasized about building a church with Ruskin:

> I wanted to talk for three hours with you—as to whether a divine barn like the Arena Chapel would not be after all better than our many-domed vision.—with a barrel roof that should hold our hierarchies and symbols and gods—and clear walls with windows only on one side—a clean space for our histories—and beasts and things below them—and a floor—O what a floor. And I am full of it—and it is my dream.[7]

Since he refused on principle to accept decorative projects for a Methodist chapel and St. Paul's Cathedral (whose architecture he found exceedingly ugly), the only commission to materialize on a comprehensive scale was St. Paul's Within-the-Walls, Rome. He was profoundly disappointed when he exhibited the ensuing *Tree of Life* design (1888) at the

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[4] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:13.
[5] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 3:412.
[6] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:13.
[7] Edward Burne-Jones to John Ruskin, [1862], MS MA 5160, Kenneth Lohf Collection, Pierpont Morgan Library.

New Gallery, but "no one even looked at it…They only saw that it wasn't oil-painted; and yet it said as much as anything I have ever done."[8] Large-scale projects were not forthcoming, but ecclesiology, at least, ensured Burne-Jones a plethora of stained-glass commissions from 1856, which quickly established his reputation as an ecclesiastical designer.

Fortuitously, his arrival on the art scene coincided with the advent of a second, more ritualistic phase of Anglo-Catholicism. Benjamin Webb's translation of Guillaume Durandus's *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* (*The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments*, 1843) and A. W. N. Pugin's *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume* (1844) promoted the use of medieval liturgical accessories from the 1840s, but ritual innovations spread slowly among parish churches and aroused deep suspicions of "Popery." During the late 1850s, however, a younger generation of "ritualist" architects and clergy propelled the growth of elaborate ceremonialism across Britain. From this point, adherence to some or all of the "six points of Ritual Observance"—altar candles, the celebrant (officiating priest) facing eastward (away from the congregation) during the Eucharist, a mixed chalice (using wine and water), a wafer instead of communion bread, vestments, and incense—distinguished Anglo-Catholic clergy and their churches. The Ecclesiological Society further advanced Ritualism the year Burne-Jones left Oxford by publishing a second volume of *Instrumenta Ecclesiastica* (1856), a catalog of designs for church furnishings, and by officially sanctioning John Mason Neale (1818-66) and Thomas Helmore's (1811-90) *Hymnal Noted*, a translation of Latin hymns from the Catholic Church's *Liber Usalis* (1851-54). An 1857 legal judgment granting license to use certain ritual accessories; the publication of John Purchas's (1823-72) *Directorium*

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[8] Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 34.

Anglicanum in 1858, a guide to adapting the medieval Sarum rite for Anglican use; and the completion of All Saints, Margaret Street, the Ecclesiological Society's "ideal church," in 1859 (fig. 13), accelerated the cause.

Burne-Jones's ecclesiastical arts are the product of this second, more ritualistic phase of Anglo-Catholicism, which necessitated widespread use of liturgical "externals." Consequently, the 1850s and 60s saw a rapid expansion of commissions for highly-wrought communion plate, altar cloths, banners, church furniture, vivid polychrome interiors, painted pulpits, brass eagle lecterns, murals, tiles, mosaics, stained glass, decorated chancel roofs, and all manner of medievalizing artistic accoutrements. In 1861 Ford Madox Brown, Burne-Jones, Charles Faulkner, P. P. Marshall, William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Philip Webb (1831-1915) founded the decorative arts firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company. Via ecclesiological "architects Street and Bodley the newly-formed company had at once work of this sort put in their hands," J. W. Mackail, Burne-Jones's son-in-law and Morris's biographer, wrote.[9] Through the firm and its re-incarnation from 1875 as Morris and Company, Burne-Jones's burgeoning ecclesiastical career found an even broader outlet. They proactively marketed their services to clergymen, and Mackail confirms that in the 1860s "Ritualism" resulted in "Commissions for church decoration in the form of wall-painting, embroideries, or hangings, altar-cloths, stained-glass windows, and floor-tiles," which "came in more and more steadily" for the new business.[10] As noted in Chapter One, Burne-Jones and Morris's earliest patrons were ecclesiological architects such as William Burges (1827-

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[9] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:146.

[10] Ibid., 1:149, 162. Their circular cited "stained glass, especially with reference to its harmony with Mural Decoration" as two of the Firm's five categories of craft, indicating a strong interest in a holistic approach to ecclesiastical design. Morris, *Letters to Family and Friends*, 386.

81), William Butterfield (1814-1900), Sir George Gilbert Scott, and J. P. Seddon. George Frederick Bodley, the "architectural high priest of the Tractarian movement," provided the firm with its first three major commissions, all for Anglo-Catholic churches, and was its most important patron in the 1860s.[11] The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's surviving influence among young, rising artists (such as Morris and Burne-Jones, we can assume) pleased George Edmund Street, who advocated the Ecclesiological Society's patronage of them. "We find their ranks recruited by almost every young man of talent and power who appears," he reported in 1858, urging his colleagues to help them develop expertise in ecclesiastical painting by commissioning their services.[12] Speaking approvingly of the Oxford Union murals (1857-59), Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Llandaff Triptych* (1858-61), and William Dyce's frescoes (1853-59) at All Saints, Margaret Street, he advised that the Pre-Raphaelites and their followers deserved "our hearty sympathy, and…our most energetic assistance."[13]

Ritualism's growing influence met with a severe backlash from Evangelicals and other opponents of Anglo-Catholicism, who viewed it doctrinally antithetical to the Thirty-Nine Articles and thereby a threat to the stability of the Anglican Church. Clergy's wearing of surplices sparked full-scale riots in 1845 and hundreds, possibly thousands, of articles and tracts decried the "Romanizing" implications of High Church ritual. Critics condemned external accessories as blasphemy, making "religion…a mere pageant—a mere-show" in which "Jesus Christ is no longer the one thing needful; for equally, if not more indispensable, are Altar Crosses and Crucifixes; Long Coats, and

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[11] The three commissions were for All Saints, Selsley, Gloustershire; St. Michael's and All Angels, Brighton; and All Saints, Dedworth.
[12] G. E. Street, "Future of Art," 234-37.
[13] Ibid., 239, 235.

Waistcoats which conceal the shirt front; Processions and Processional Crosses and Banners."[14] The established church responded officially in 1867 with the first Royal Commission on Ritual, and the resulting Public Worship Regulation Act of 1874 sought to regulate and squelch extreme Ritualism. Four clergymen even went to prison rather than obey its tenets, preferring jail to relinquishing their ceremonial.

As a result, by the 1860s the Ecclesiological Society and church decoration generally was strongly associated with this extreme form of Anglo-Catholicism. Painting, sculpture, mosaic, tile, and other ecclesiastical arts were so tinctured with "Romanism" that some perceived "the arts are continually protesting against the Thirty-Nine Articles."[15] One detractor saw "in the building of a noble church a declaration against justification," detected "in a portrait of St. Peter or St. John an insinuation against the Atonement," and "in the tessellated paving of the choir an aim at the deification of priests."[16] The kind of ecclesiastical decoration Burne-Jones and Morris produced thus constituted a subversive activity. The firm's willingness to link its emerging enterprise to such controversy substantiates the claim that its artists and designers saw themselves as part of the same cause.

The Eucharist and the Real Presence

Most of the advanced ceremonial and accessories Anglo-Catholics introduced directly or indirectly related to the Eucharist, which became the single-most crucial point of High Church worship, controversy, and doctrine in the second half of the century in

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[14] Adam Bede [pseud.], *The natural history of Puseyism, with a short account of the Sunday opera at St. Paul's, Brighton* (Brighton and London, 1859), 15.
[15] H. T. Braithwaite, "Art and the Church," *Builder* 16 (Mar. 1858): 243.
[16] Ibid.

Britain. In their view, the Eucharist embodied the heart of their faith since Christianity professed Jesus's sacrifice to be the means through which the believer was pardoned and saved. Regularly re-enacting that sacrifice, Anglo-Catholics argued, was therefore of the utmost importance in renewing one's faith. The majority of Victorian churches, however, emphasized preaching over ritual and celebrated Holy Communion only four times a year or less. Ecclesiological caricatures satirized the Protestant lapse in sacramental observance by depicting their disused and defiled altars (fig. 17). Anglo-Catholics wanted to restore what they saw as the Eucharist's historic pre-eminence as the principle act of Christian worship in the Church of England and promoted its practice every Sunday and on all Saints' days. Some advanced churches such as Burne-Jones's in Oxford, St. Thomas the Martyr, even implemented daily Mass. Instruction manuals such as Purchas's *Directorium Anglicanum* (1858) (fig. 5) emerged to prescribe the liturgical movements and accessories with which clergy and laity were to perform the Eucharist. This sacrament came to epitomize the fundamental disagreement between high and low Anglicanism in the nineteenth century. Even the name connoted theological principles; Evangelicals called it the "Lord's Supper" or "Communion," but Anglo-Catholics preferred the historic term "Eucharist" or, more controversially, the Roman Catholic word "Mass."

Underlying both the ritual and the sectarian opposition was the Anglo-Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It stopped short transubstantiation, the Roman Catholic belief that the wafer and wine literally turn into the flesh and blood of Jesus, but insisted that although there was no material change in the elements his person was nevertheless "really and objectively" present in them. They

argued their position using evidence from the catechism in the Book of Common Prayer, practices in the Early Christian Church, and writings by imminent Anglican divines. The doctrine led to ritual innovations such as physical bowing and genuflecting as signs of veneration toward the avowed living Christ, claims about the sanctity of the chancel, and the privileged nature of the clergy, who alone could invoke his spirit during the sacrament. The eastward-facing position during the consecration prayer was similar to that assumed during the Roman Catholic Elevation of the Host and aroused suspicions that the resulting obfuscation of the altar was meant to hide or imply a mysterious transformation of the elements.

Evangelicals and Dissenters decried the Real Presence as pure "Popery" and alleged it invited idolatry (also referred to as "adoration"), due to statements such as Keble's that "it follows, by direct inference, that the Person of Christ is to be adored in that Sacrament, as there present in a peculiar manner, by the presence of His Body and Blood."[17] Agitation also stemmed from the meaning of the Crucifixion and the character of Jesus derived from that event. Protestants insisted that his death on the Cross was a one-time, eternal oblation for the world's sin and consequently viewed Communion as a purely symbolic remembrance of that event. Accordingly, in Evangelical or Dissenting churches the inscription "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19, KJV) often appeared on plain, unassuming communion tables rather than the Anglo-Catholic "Take, eat, this is my body" (Matthew 26:26, KJV). Catholics considered Jesus's death a typological replacement of the lamb Jews ritually offered in the Old Testament and the Eucharist, a re-enactment of this sacrificial death. Protestants contended that the repeated, ritual killing of Jesus on the altar negated the power of the original Crucifixion,

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[17] John Keble, *On Eucharistical Adoration* (London,1857), quoted in Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, 38.

insinuating it was insufficient atonement for humanity's sins. Furthermore, they insisted, it cast Jesus as a weak, broken human "victim" instead of a triumphant divine redeemer. Protestants preferred the idea of a gloriously resurrected savior thus shown to be divine; Catholics focused on a suffering, sacrificial Jesus in his most fundamentally human moment. It was the latter Burne-Jones most frequently emphasized in his altarpieces. These were not trifling differences of opinion; the doctrine of the Real Presence threatened the very foundations of Anglicanism. Eucharistic sacrifice, adoration of the host, and the Real Presence of Christ were among the key Roman Catholic principles rejected during the Reformation in Britain, making their acceptance extremely treacherous to mainstream Anglicans.

The bitter public dispute began with Edward Bouverie Pusey's (1800-82) *Tract 81* on "The Doctrines of the Eucharistic Sacrifice" (1837) and an infamous sermon in 1843, "The Holy Eucharist: A Comfort to the Penitent," which resulted in his two-year suspension from Oxford University. It was in the 1850s, however, that the Real Presence took center stage, thanks to publications such as Pusey's *Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Doctrine of the English Church, with a Vindication of the Reception by the Wicked and of the Adoration of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Truly Present* (1857) and John Keble's (1792-1866) *On Eucharistical Adoration* (1857). The Real Presence further infiltrated public consciousness after two clergymen were persecuted between 1854 and 1859 on grounds of heresy for preaching the doctrine, events which had a ripple effect throughout the country and encouraged both the

persecution and adoption of the practice.[18] It continued to be the subject of virulent debate throughout the century, with members of both factions, ranging from random lay persons to the most eminent divines, publishing hundreds of articles and pamphlets on the topic. Frederick Denison Maurice's recognition in 1856 that his parishioners "read of debates, trials, legal judgments about it in the newspapers; it is mixed with all the frivolous talk of the day" evidences the extent to which the Real Presence pervaded popular culture.[19]

Knowledge of the Real Presence was unavoidable for Burne-Jones, especially as an aspiring clergyman. In addition to the *Tracts for the Times*, he read and admired Robert Isaac Wilberforce's defense of the doctrine, *The Holy Eucharist*, in 1853. Having heaped high praise on Pusey's 1853 sermon on justification, it seems likely he would have heard the preacher's inflammatory discourse, "The Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist," at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, the same year. He would at least have known the published version (1853), whose title page carried the inscription, "Christ is my Food," or its expansion as *The Doctrine of the Real Presence, As Contained in the Fathers, from the Death of S. John the Evangelist to the Fourth General Council* (1855).

The Real Presence transformed the altar from a mere communion "table" into the dwelling place of God and its environs, the chancel, into a tabernacle. Accordingly, one of the Ecclesiological Society's strongest agendas was to promote a properly reverential chancel and reclaim the altar as the focus of worship. As the "holy of holies," the chancel was the domain of ordained clergy and divided from the congregation by a screen

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[18] George Denison, Archdeacon of Taunton, was charged and acquitted during a series of trials between 1854 and 1858, and Alexander Penrose Forbes, Bishop of Brechin, was brought up on the charge of heresy in 1859.

[19] F. D. Maurice, *The Eucharist. Five Sermons* (London, 1857), 1.

(with or without a rood).[20] As the site of the Eucharist, the altar became the symbolic

battleground for Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics and the most contested ecclesiastical

space in Victorian Britain.[21] Even the word "altar" as opposed to "table" was full of

theological import. Reams of paper in the form of pamphlets, articles and books were

expended contesting the finer points of altar construction and adornment in both

ecclesiastical and popular literature of the period. Ecclesiologists preferred an altar made

of "substantial material placed lengthwise under the East window, and well furnished

with changes of hangings and with Sacred Vessels of proper shape."[22] Everyone from

architect to clergy to parishioner seemed concerned about the grave theological

implications of the altar. Even John Ruskin weighed in, condemning the lady's

"idolatrous toilet table" adorned with triptych and censer in John Everett Millais's

Mariana (1851), which the artist probably copied from his patron Thomas Combe's

domestic altar (fig. 18).

It is in this context that Burne-Jones's altarpieces need to be reconsidered.

Liturgical accessories and church ornament were not simply superficial flourishes but

signs of reverence directed toward the Real Presence of Christ. With the chancel now

designated as the sacred temple of God in Anglo-Catholic circles, it followed that priest,

worshipper, architecture, and ornament alike should assume an attitude of adoration. In

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[20] The priesthood and laity were physically and spiritually separated, the two spaces of the chancel and nave symbolizing the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant, respectively. Their separation by roodscreen and raised steps also mirrored the hierarchy of priesthood and congregation, a throwback to pre-Reformation doctrine which drew criticism from Evangelical Anglicans as elitist and unsympathetic toward the average worshipper.

[21] The Cambridge Camden Society's attempt to put a stone altar in the Round Church, Cambridge, in 1844-45 as part of their restoration efforts became a national scandal because of its allusion to primitive sacrificial slabs and the victimization of Christ in the Eucharist. The altar was declared illegal and left the society "publicly tarred with Popish intentions." Brandwood, "Mummeries," 74. See also Elliot Rose, "The Stone Table in the Round Church and the Crisis of the Cambridge Camden Society," *Victorian Studies* 10 (1966): 119-44 and White, *Cambridge Movement*, 131-44.

[22] *Ecclesiologist* 3 (1844): 161, quoted in White, *Cambridge Movement*, 99.

this paradigm the church, and particularly the space surrounding the altar, was to be

outfitted in splendor befitting its holiness. Anglo-Catholics considered physical

decorations the outward signifiers of internal devotion, as the Reverend William Gresley

(1801-76) explained to the members of St. Paul's, Brighton,

> As an ill-kept, slovenly church shows a want of religious feeling in the
> people, so a zeal for God's honour even in externals, a desire that all shall
> be done "decently and in order," the expenditure of time, money, and
> thought, in rendering the fabric of the Church beautiful, and the services
> reverential,--all this proves the presence of the desire at least to worship
> God in spirit and in truth.[23]

Accordingly, Anglo-Catholics adorned the chancel with tiles, mosaics, polychrome

architecture, stained glass, banners, and finely crafted furniture. At its fullest expression,

their altar ornamentation included six tall, thin tapered candles (known as "lights"),

flowers, brass altar crosses, embroidered altar frontals, highly wrought communion

patens and chalices, side curtains, and a painted or carved altarpiece or reredos.

Legislation governed the use of these accessories, and seemingly minor details such as

the presence, shape (tapered or thick), and precise number of lights (two, four, or six)

provoked debate and litigation from Anglo-Catholic opponents.[24] Altar crosses or

crucifixes anywhere near the altar were particularly suspicious for the connotations of

death and victimization they brought to the sacramental space of the Eucharist, as the

Bishop Henry Phillpotts (1778-1869) explained: "the material cross is particularly

unfitted to be placed in contact with the sacramental symbols. Instead of exciting the

mind to due contemplation of the triumphant issue of our Lord's sufferings, it tends to

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[23] William Gresley, *Sermons Preached at Brighton* (London, 1858), 15.
[24] The Church of England did not sanction flowers, for instance, until 1870. Altar crosses were illegal until
1857, and then allowable only if they were not fixed to the furniture. An 1855 ruling decreed altar lights
legal as long as they were employed merely "for lighting, and not ceremonial use." In 1890 Archbishop
Benson finally ruled their ceremonial purpose permissible, but portable lights (those carried in processions)
were declared illegal in 1898. Brandwood, "Mummeries," 85.

chain it down to the sufferings themselves."[25] While such debates might seem absurd by today's standards, they were grave matters for many Victorians: When the Reverend Arthur Douglas Wagner (1824-1902) introduced such "innovations" at St. Paul's, Brighton, critics accused him of trying "to unprotestantize the Church of England."[26]

Comparing the frontispieces from the first two editions (figs. 5 and 19) of Purchas's *Directorium Anglicanum* evidences the rapid proliferation and progression of altar adornments at mid-century. The 1858 "Holy Communion" became, by 1865, the "Holy Eucharist" with flamboyant vestments and an altar boasting eight lights rather than two, more lavishly embroidered altar cloth, six floral arrangements instead of two, and a carved reredos with a crucifix supplanting the altar cross and fabric curtain of 1858. While the celebrant faces eastward in both versions, in the later rendition he raises the Eucharistic cup over his head, where it visually aligns with the crucifix, creating an impression of Jesus rising from the chalice reminiscent of transubstantiation. It was precisely during this period that Burne-Jones launched his career as a designer of ecclesiastical wares.

Ritualism replicated the same sensory, aesthetic worship experience and atmosphere of devotion Burne-Jones witnessed during Catholic Mass at Beauvais, and he continued to reference its accessories and theological principles in his art. In an illustration he copied from a medieval manuscript (fig. 20), High Church clergy wear Eucharistic vestments and enact the sacrament before a raised altar adorned with altar cloth and crucifix reredos. Standing nearby is a brass eagle lectern, a common feature of

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[25] Quoted in ibid., 86.

[26] Brighton Protestant Defence Committee, *Report of the proceedings of the Committee…1851 to…1853, containing their memorial on the romanizing practices of the incumbent of St. Paul's, Brighton* (Brighton, 1854), 17.

high Victorian Anglican churches. In the 1890s he purchased Charles Rohault de Fleury's eight-volume *La Messe. Études Archaéologiques sur ses Monuments* (1883-89) to aid in his visual representation of the Holy Grail legend. Even at this late date he still loved Anglo/Catholic ritual, criticizing Robert Browning's funeral in 1889 at Westminster Abbey as "stupid, no candles, no incense, no copes, no nothing that was nice…I would have given something for a banner or two—and much I would have given if a chorister had come out of the triforium and rent the air with a trumpet."[27]

Burne-Jones's Eucharistic Imagery

Burne-Jones clearly understood the historical representation of the Real Presence and its visual vocabulary. A tracing attributed to him after an early German engraving explicitly illustrates the Catholic position on transubstantiation (fig. 21). In front of the instruments of his torture Jesus emerges, frontally, from a casket on an altar adorned with two lights and a missal, which lies open to a picture of the Crucifixion. His wound pours blood into the Eucharistic chalice as Saint Gregory, Saint Lawrence and another figure kneel in adoration. Additionally, Burne-Jones's preparatory study for *The Merciful Knight* (1863) (fig. 22) shows a crucified Jesus leaning down from above an altar to embrace the repentant knight. The design endorses his sacrificial nature and victimization during the Eucharist, and its essential function in Christian theology as a source of sacramental grace. Burne-Jones's sketch posits the altar as metaphorical bridge between sinner and salvation, the space where, according to the doctrine of the Real Presence, man literally comes face to face with God. Even without the altar, the final painting provoked allegations of "Papistical" meaning and was derisively called

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[27] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:203.

"morbid" and "perverted."[28] Notably, Burne-Jones never again painted a crucifix,

although he had a Sano di Pietro Crucifixion hanging in his own dining room.[29] He did

not shy away from this motif in stained glass, however, often employing this subject in

east chancel windows positioned over high altars. In 1860-61, for instance, he modified

his plan for a Jesse Tree window at Waltham Abbey (fig. 23) by replacing the Nativity at

the apex of the tree with the unorthodox iconography of a Crucifixion.

At Oxford Burne-Jones worshipped at St. Thomas the Martyr, where he would

have encountered its controversial Eucharist window (fig. 9) depicting Mass taking place

before a sacrificial lamb on the altar. He utilized a similar "Agnes Dei" motif in some of

his own stained-glass designs, underscoring Jesus's propitiatory role. Befitting the

college's recent theological conversion to Tractarianism, his quatrefoil *Worship of the

Lamb* window at St. Edmund Hall Chapel, Oxford (1865) (fig. 24) depicts a lamb with

nimbus, symbolizing Jesus as the atoning sacrifice, upon an altar surrounded by tall, thin

tapered candles while emblems of the evangelists, elders and a chorus of angels kneel in

adoration. The textual source, Revelations chapter five, is sometimes interpreted as

presenting a liturgy of Divine Presence, offering the believer a visualization of the

invisible action taking place during the sacrament.[30] The original verse describes the

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[28] *Illustrated London News*, quoted in Allen J. Frantzen, "Chivalry, Sacrifice, and The Great War: The Medieval Contexts of Edward Burne-Jones's 'The Merciful Knight'," in *Speaking Images. Essays in honour of V. A. Kolve*, ed. Robert F. Yeager and Charlotte C. Morse (Asheville, NC: Pegasus, 2001), 623. Most writers skim over the severe religious prejudice that colored this picture's reception. For many Protestants, the living Christ on a Crucifix rendered gruesomely in gray-greenish tones would have connoted Catholicism's morose fixation on Jesus's sacrifice rather than his triumph. Fitzgerald has noted the morbid tone of a "Christ…still in physical pain" and a knight "white as death." Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 85-87. (See also chap. 4, p. 302-3 and chap. 5, 392-93.)

[29] Arts Council of Great Britain, *Burne-Jones: The Paintings, Graphic, and Decorative Work of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, 1833-98* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975), 98.

[30] Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., *The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse* (Richmond: John Knox, 1960), 92-97 and Charles A. Geischen, "Sacramental Theology in the Book of Revelation," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2003): 149-74. The Anglo-Catholic theme was a clever and timely statement to make in the college chapel. For the first half of the nineteenth century St. Edmund Hall was strongly

lamb as enthroned but Burne-Jones's substitution of an altar strengthens the reference to

Eucharistic symbolism. Another meditation on a related passage of Revelations from

Burne-Jones's *Secret Book of Designs* presents Jesus standing in front of the Cross (fig.

25) juxtaposed with the Eucharistic chalice. Positioned at his feet it equates the

communion wine with his blood shed at the Crucifixion, while in the background, an

empty throne functions as a pseudo-altar awaiting his sacrifice, elevated by a step and

surrounded by the seven candlesticks of the Apocalypse from Revelations chapter one.

As Aymer Vallance pointed out, the image can alternately be read as Jesus humbly

stepping down from his heavenly throne to assume human form and voluntarily atone for

humanity's sins.[31] Burne-Jones's *Rivers of Paradise* east chancel window (1874-75) in

the Anglo-Catholic church of All Hallows, Allerton (fig. 26) features a Lamb of God

similar to that at St. Edmund Hall. Here, however, he omitted the altar, and the rivers to

take visual precedence over the animal, thereby averting accusations of Romanism. A.

Charles Sewter criticizes the three-dimensional illusion of this pictorial window as an

aberration in Burne-Jones's customary two-dimensional rendering of space in stained

glass, which, he maintains, is more fitting for an architectural environment. Burne-Jones

configured the Allerton design, however, in a manner that replicates sacramental action.

What Sewter detects as the "flow of movement from the foreground figures upwards and

inwards to the Lamb" mirrors the worshipper's approach to the altar, while the

"downwards and outwards flow along the lines of the rivers" conveys the Christian

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Evangelical, but Anglo-Catholics celebrated after the appointments of two successive Tractarian Principals in 1854 and 1861, and the Vice-Principleship of H. D. Liddon in 1859-62, who had been forced out of Cuddleston Theological College for his High Church views. Burne-Jones would have witnessed the transition taking place at St. Edmund Hall during his time at Oxford.

[31] Vallance related the drawing to a passage in Paul's letter to the Philippians, which characterizes Jesus as "emptying himself" of his heavenly glory. Aymer Vallance, *The Decorative Art of Sir Edward Burne-Jones*, Easter Art Annual, extra number of the *Art Journal* (London: H. Virtue, 1900), 14.

concept of God imparting grace to man through the Eucharist.[32] In situ, it illustrates

symbolically the event believed to be taking place below on the high altar. At both St.

Edmund's Hall and Allerton, Burne-Jones refrained from the overt Catholic motif of

blood pouring forth from the lamb into the chalice, a Renaissance convention epitomized

in Jan Van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* (fig. 27), perhaps the best known example of the

Adoration of the Lamb iconography. He did, however, explicitly picture the moment of

transubstantiation elsewhere, most notably in the Holy Grail tapestries, where the Holy

Spirit drops blood into the chalice during Mass (fig. 28).

Altarpieces in Victorian Britain

Research on altarpieces in Britain is scarce, partially due to the fact that

historically, they were not widely used. Iconoclasm, a residual effect of the Protestant

Reformation, persisted in Britain throughout the nineteenth century, exacerbated by the

suspicions of idolatry the Real Presence aroused. For centuries the Church of England

eschewed images in the church interior as a reaction to Roman Catholic excesses and

based on the Old Testament commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven

image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath,

or that is in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:4, KJV). Consequently, Victorian

Evangelicals and Dissenters preferred the wooden reredoses popular in the eighteenth

century, which featured framed panels of the Ten Commandments and Lord's Prayer but

no figurative images (fig. 29). Burne-Jones lampooned such decoration in his caricature

of the Evangelical Beresford Chapel (fig. 2).

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[32] Sewter, *Stained Glass*, 1:42. The four rivers were a common Byzantine motif and, in the Roman
Catholic Church, symbolize the dispensation of grace through baptism, further enhancing the window's ties
to sacramental theology.

Figural carved reredoses or stained-glass windows and, less often, chancel wall murals and painted tiles, offered more acceptable forms of altar decoration than traditional painted polyptychs.[33] Of these media, Morris wrote in 1861 that "what we [the firm] are most anxious to get at present is wall-decoration," and Burne-Jones did contribute to designs for two ecclesiastical murals.[34] He also drafted an unused Annunciation for tiles (1862), adapted for stained glass at Bodley's church of All Saints, Dedworth, and a four-subject tile mural for the chancel of Street's church of St. Peter's, Hinton Road, Bournemouth (1866).[35] For St. Peter's, as in his altarpieces, Burne-Jones chose four themes of the Eucharist and its typological precedents.[36] Some of his later, more pictorial stained-glass compositions, such as those spanning multiple lights or the three apse windows at Birmingham Cathedral (fig. 30), function particularly well as substitutes for a polyptych. Sewter argues that their pictorialism is unsympathetic to the

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[33] Caterina Limentani Virdis notes that historically, church windows "were neatly structured, imitating the pinnacles and enframements of painted panels," and "contained juxtaposable elements that endowed them with the appearance of a multipartite work." This led to "a reciprocal relationship" of architectural form "between the polyptych and stained-glass windows." Virdis, introduction to *Gothic and Renaissance Altarpieces*, 17. Murals acted as expanded triptychs, running the length of the chancel wall slightly above the altar, or flanking it on either side. Nineteenth-century medieval church restorations led to the discovery of numerous ancient wall paintings, providing a British precedent for the practice and sparking an antiquarian interest in painted church decoration. William Dyce's chancel frescos at All Saint's, Margaret Street (1853-59) further persuaded doubters of the medium's religious potential but their fate is indicative of why the medium was not employed more often: due to the climate they deteriorated rapidly and had to be replaced with replicas on panel in 1909. George Edmund Street also strongly advocated mural painting, imploring the Ecclesiological Society to learn from the Italian fresco painters and employ native artists to install murals in British churches. To make it more affordable, he recommended ecclesiastical murals be painted in piecemeal segments and adapted from traditional fresco to the distemper technique used in the Oxford Union murals. G. E. Street, "Future of Art," 236-37, 239.

[34] In 1861-62 Burne-Jones designed a small *Adoration of the Magi*, executed in paint by George Campfield, as a component of the east chancel wall of Bodley's church of St. Martin's-on-the-Hill, Scarborough. In December 1862, he designed angels for a mural at St. Martin's and All Angels, Lyndhurst, which Hungerford Pollen painted.

[35] The *Annunciation* cartoon is in the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery (64'31).

[36] The Bournemouth tiles deteriorated and were replaced in 1890 with mosaics. Two of the cartoons are in the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery (434'27 and 436'27). According to inscriptions on a preparatory study for the tiles in The Huntington Library, Botanical Gardens, and Art Collections (2000.5.5), the north chancel wall featured *The Marriage Feast at Cana*, on the left, and the *Last Supper*, on the right nearest the altar. Opposite, *The Supper at Emmaus* occupied the space next to the altar on the south wall, next to the *Feeding of the Five Thousand*. These directions indicate the tiles were probably not, as Harrison and Waters report, located "behind the altar." Harrison and Waters, *Burne-Jones*, 53.

architecture, exhibiting a heavy solidity of form instead of diffusing light and giving the

illusion of space.[37] However, what Sewter views as a design flaw is also a way of

making glass stand in for painted panels, functioning more like a giant triptych than a

translucent decorative window. Aymer Vallance noted the same effect in the facing *Last

Judgment* west window (fig. 31) in Birmingham Cathedral, concluding it "resembles a

rather deep-toned picture than, strictly regarded, a painted-glass window."[38]

In Victorian Britain, conventional painted polyptychs were a later development

and remained the least common form of altarpiece. Although "wall and glass decoration"

was "daily gaining ground," in 1852 art collector and High Church priest John Fuller

Russell (1813-84) pleaded for the Ecclesiological Society to promote ecclesiastical panel

painting "in the style of the 14th and 15th centuries" that it might make a similar revival.

To date, he bemoaned,

> We see not in our churches the stately screen or reredos (once so common
> in Italy,) with its pointed arches and numerous compartments, radiant
> with pictured representations of the events of sacred story, Madonnas,
> saints, and angels: we see not the triptych with its folding doors and
> delicate tracery, like those altar pictures still remaining in Flanders and
> Germany…Here and there, indeed, a picture (recently imported from
> abroad, or rescued from some receptacle of lumber where perhaps it had
> lain concealed for centuries,) may possibly be found in our chancels: but
> nowhere, I believe, has the ecclesiological movement in this country been
> marked by the reproduction of any panel paintings in the form of a
> reredos or triptych.[39]

Even Anglo-Catholics who made allowances for figurative carvings on wooden reredoses

often could not embrace painted imagery on the altar. As Russell explained, critics felt

that the greater realism of painted altarpieces "rather lower than heighten the tone of

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[37] Sewter, *Stained Glass*, 1:55.

[38] Vallance, *Decorative Art*, 9-10.

[39] Revd. John Fuller Russell, "Thoughts on the Revival of Panel Painting, in the Style of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, in Connection with Ecclesiastical Decoration. A Paper read at the Thirteenth Anniversary Meeting of the Ecclesiological…Society," *Ecclesiologist* 13, no. 91 (1852): 219.

devotion, and 'lead to the contemplation of our Lord's humiliation in a merely carnal sense, so as to encourage human affections instead of divine,' and foster a morbid sentimentalism."[40] In addition, positioned on or just behind the altar, painted representations of Jesus presented a more concrete illusion of his supposed corporeality and "presence" on the space of the altar. As publications such as *Picture Worship and Image Adoration, proved to the certain consequences of introducing pictures into churches…Romanish Churches…by a Clergyman of the Church of England* (Brighton, 1846) attest, altarpieces often assumed a Catholic connotation in liturgy and church decoration, and indicated an Anglo/Catholic devotional attitude toward the altar. Due to their historical association with Roman Catholicism and their perceived implications of idolatry and Eucharistic sacrifice, they remained highly unorthodox in Anglican churches. Questions about Anglican clergy's rights to introduce such decorations reached a climax in 1888-89 with litigation and public outrage over the installation of a new marble reredos over the high altar in St. Paul's Cathedral. Seen in this light, Burne-Jones's forays into altar and chancel decoration cannot be taken as merely a meaningless coincidence.

St. Paul's, Brighton

In 1860 Burne-Jones received his first altarpiece commission from the priest at St. Paul's, the most fashionable church in Brighton with one of the largest attendances on the south coast.[41] Architect Richard Cromwell Carpenter (1812-55) built the Gothic Revival

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[40] Ibid., 221.
[41] H. Hamilton Maughan, *Wagner of Brighton: The Centenary Book of St. Paul's Church, Brighton*, 2nd ed. (Loughlinstown, Ireland: Coelian, 1949), 15.

church in 1846-48 strictly according to the Ecclesiological Society's specifications.[42] In

1852, however, *The Ecclesiologist* regretted that its altar was still "lost from want of

furniture," and in 1854 complained about the unsatisfactory dossal that had been

introduced over the altar.[43] In 1860, in response, the perpetual curate, Arthur Douglas

Wagner, approached Bodley, also St. Paul's churchwarden and organist, about designing

a carved wooden reredos.[44] Following Street's advice to the Ecclesiological Society,

Bodley instead suggested a painted altarpiece by his friend Burne-Jones.[45] After a first

unsuccessful attempt (fig. 32), the second and final triptych (fig. 33) marked the

beginning of renewed artistic attention to St. Paul's chancel (fig. 34), which was

originally meant to house an unrealized fresco of the patron saint's life by William

Dyce.[46] Around 1863, Bodley added a traceried canopy and crucifix to the rood screen,

originally designed by Carpenter, and Daniel Bell painted a mural, *Christ in Majesty*, on

the chancel arch around 1865.[47] Complementing Burne-Jones's triptych, a horizontal

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[42] Carpenter died young but during his short career was one of the most stringent adherents to the Ecclesiological Society's architectural principles. St. Paul's elicited great praise from *The Ecclesiologist*, which in October 1848 called its design "decidedly one of remarkable beauty and correctness, and placed as it is in such a town as Brighton, cannot fail to do much good." Quoted in D. Robert Elleray, "St. Paul's: The Building," in *St. Paul's Brighton: 150 Years: A Celebration*, ed. Gordon O'Loughlin and Elleray (Worthing, UK: St. Paul's Parochial Church, 2000), 18.

[43] "S. Paul's, Brighton," *Ecclesiologist* 13, no. 88 (1852): 61; "Church Restorations—S. Paul's, Brighton," *Ecclesiologist* 15, no. 102 (1854): 216.

[44] St. Paul's placed high value on the ecclesiastical arts, a message preached repeatedly from its pulpit. At the consecration, the Lord Bishop of Chichester argued, "by employing…arts, which speak to the mind of decency, and order, and harmony, and comeliness, and beauty," one's love for God found an "outward expression." At St. Paul's, "no longer bare walls, and cold hearts" were to be the standard, "but all…the ornaments of skill and decorative art…in the honor of Him who is King and God of all." *A Course of Sermons, preached in St. Paul's Church, Brighton, during the week of its consecration* (Brighton and London, 1849), 8, 132.

[45] In December 1860, Burne-Jones and Morris contemplated asking Bodley, whom they knew through Street and the Medieval Society, to join their new decorative arts firm. It is unclear whether the invitation was ever extended, but the vast amount of work with which he supplied them made him "in effect the eighth partner." Parry, *William Morris*, 107.

[46] "S. Paul's Church, Brighton," *Ecclesiologist* 10, no. 75 (1849): 207.

[47] Bell was a pupil of Bodley's and, as Pevsner points out, his style owes much to Dyce. Ian Nairn and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Sussex*, vol. 28, *The Buildings of England* (London: Penguin, 1965), 435.

mural of Italianate kneeling, censing angels flanked the altar on the east chancel wall, which Bell most likely painted between 1860 and 1865 (fig. 35).[48]

There has been some confusion over precisely when Burne-Jones began the first version of the altarpiece, but it was certainly commissioned, and presumably already in progress, by June 11, 1860, when J. P. Seddon reported at the Ecclesiological Society's anniversary meeting on "other instances besides the Union Rooms, Oxford, in which certain Praeraffaellite artists had attempted works on a large scale; in particular, a reredos by Mr. Jones, for S. Paul's, Brighton."[49] This testifies to the close relationship between Burne-Jones and the ecclesiologists, who watched his emerging career with interest. Others have already noted that Wagner probably accepted Bodley's proposal based on Burne-Jones's growing reputation in Anglo-Catholic circles as an ecclesiastical designer, not a painter.[50] At this point, he had yet to exhibit outside the confines of the semiprivate Hogarth Club, whose membership comprised primarily other artists. His largest painting

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[48] The authorship, dating, and scope of the original murals are unclear. Peter Wise attributes them to Daniel Bell c.1865, while the English Heritage listed building description of 1971 gives a date of c.1860. Stylistically, they do resemble Bell's chancel arch and his saints on the rood-screen, and it seems most likely he painted them to complement Burne-Jones's altarpiece at the same time he executed the chancel mural c.1865. To further complicate matters, Wise claims the mural once "covered the whole wall," and English Heritage implies that it once extended to the north wall as well, but I can find no photographic or textual evidence for this. Peter Wise, *The Pre-Raphaelite Trail in Sussex* (Seaford, UK: S. B. Publications, 2003), 57; Listed building description, Brighton, St. Paul's Church, TQ3004SE, 577-1/39/965, 1971, National Monuments Record Office, Swindon. Elleray likewise reports that there are "traces of the original mural decoration" on both "the north and east walls" of the chancel, but no such decoration was visible on the north wall on my visit to the church in June 2005. Elleray, "St. Paul's: The Building," 20. Adding to the mystery is the fact that the angel murals as they now exist do not show up in any known photographs of the chancel in 1879-1945.

[49] "Ecclesiological Society. Twenty-first Anniversary Meeting," 251. Scholars have dated the triptych to both 1860 and 1861. Much of the confusion lies with the fact that he painted a second version of the triptych, which was definitely finished in 1861. There are two conflicting entries in Burne-Jones's personal work record, his "List of My Designs." He recorded these retrospectively in 1872, making it difficult for him to remember the date of the work. Of 1860, he writes, "In the summer I painted a triptych in oil which Bodley now has, but I think this was painted in the following year." He also records under 1861, "I painted Bodley's triptych…and another triptych now at St Paul's Church Brighton." Edward Burne-Jones, "List of My Designs," 1872-98, fols. 4-5, MS, Fitzwilliam Museum. Another list of works recorded in a sketchbook (Victoria and Albert Museum, E.1-1955) and Georgiana's *Memorials* (1:223-24) also date the first version to 1861. Given the *Ecclesiologist* announcement, however, it seems safe to conclude that he at least began the first triptych in 1860 and finished the second in 1861.

[50] C.S.N., lot 192 catalog entry, Sotheby's, *Victorian Pictures* (London, 3 November 1993).

to date and one whose public nature offered a chance for greater exposure, the Brighton

triptych was, in Georgiana's words, "by far the most important work he had done."[51]

For his subject Burne-Jones chose an Adoration of the Kings and Shepherds for

the central panel and a split Annunciation for the wings.[52] The latter are inscribed, "In

the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named

Nazareth to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David

and the Virgins name was Mary" (Luke 1:26-27, KJV). Morris posed for the foremost

king, Algernon Charles Swinburne for the red-headed shepherd, and Burne-Jones for the

other shepherd behind him. Either Jane Morris or Georgiana, or perhaps both, posed for

the Virgin Mary in the central panel.[53] As discussed below, this first version of the

triptych did not remain at St. Paul's, and when Bodley reacquired it in 1867 by way of a

circuitous and remarkable history, it had assumed the attribution of an "old Italian

picture."[54] Since Ronald Parkinson and others have thoroughly examined its clear debt to

Florentine and Venetian Renaissance painting, and its autobiographical implications are

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[51] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:224.

[52] The triptych Rossetti was concurrently painting for Llandaff Cathedral in 1858-61, commissioned by Seddon and also endorsed by the Ecclesiological Society, may have partially inspired *The Adoration of the Kings and Shepherds*. Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 63. Morris also served as the model for Rossetti's King David.

[53] H. C. Marillier recorded that Jane Morris sat for the Virgin, while Fortunée de Lisle reported it was Georgiana. H. C. Marillier, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London, 1899), 74; Lisle, *Burne-Jones*, 57. Georgiana does not mention sitting for Mary in her *Memorials*, however. As Ronald Parkinson points out, she would surely have done so if she was the model, and may not have wanted to emphasize the link between Morris's adulterous wife and the Virgin. Ronald Parkinson, "Two Early Altar-Pieces by Burne-Jones," *Apollo* n.s., 102 (1975): 320.

[54] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:224. In between, it passed through the unlucky hands of a man who died before it arrived, a man who shot himself, and a man who poisoned himself. Finally, a builder bought the picture together with a bundle of stair-rods for £7. By coincidence, he was working for Bodley, who recognized the picture and re-purchased it for £50.

best reserved for Chapter Five, this chapter will concentrate on the triptych's espousal of Anglo-Catholic Eucharistic theology.[55]

Incarnation Theology and the Real Presence

Given the notorious history surrounding St. Paul's, Burne-Jones would certainly have known of the church and its clergy's "Popish" practices when approached about the altarpiece in 1860. St. Paul's leadership was at the center of the Catholic revival in Brighton, itself a hotbed of Ritualism, and in the 1840s its congregation was "the sole representative, south of London, of the Tractarian Movement."[56] Wagner, a friend of Pusey and Newman, was a progressive Tractarian and ecclesiologist who embraced most forms of ceremonial. Around 1859 the Dean of Westminster described a service at St. Paul's as "very high…puts the best of the Abbey services in this line to shade."[57] Doctrinally, Wagner aroused outrage over his radically Romish beliefs in Purgatory and auricular confession.[58] The church was connected with nearly every leading Tractarian,

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[55] Parkinson, "Two Early Altar-Pieces," 321-23; Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 64; C.S.N. in Sotheby's, *Victorian Pictures*.

[56] Yates, *Oxford Movement*, 27, 32; Maughan, *Wagner of Brighton*, 22. St. Paul's served as the model for all but two of the churches that followed in Brighton, and most of the ones that came after were even more Romanizing in their practices. Wagner built the most Catholic of all Anglican churches in Brighton, the Church of the Annunciation, in 1864, which also boasts windows by Burne-Jones.

[57] Quoted in Michael Finnissy, "Music at St. Paul's," in O'Loughlin and Elleray, *St. Paul's Brighton: 150 Years*, 12.

[58] Wagner was one of the first clergymen to publish times for confessionals. Evangelicals maintained the Confessional was "that subtle device of Satan to lead men into the commission of sin and then into forgetfulness of it." Brighton Protestant Defence Committee, *St. Paul's, Brighton*, 17. They abhorred the necessity of priestly intervention for the remission of sins and felt confession by women to a priest threatened the patriarchal family unit. Tractarians argued for its legitimacy based on the "Visitation of the Sick" in the Book of Common Prayer. Wagner applied a policy of "all may, none must, some should" when it came to confession, but that was not enough to appease critics. John Hawes, *Ritual and Riot* (Lewes, UK: East Sussex County Library, 1995), 7. The issue reached national proportions during the 1865 murder trial of Constance Kent, when her confession to Wagner became crucial evidence. Interestingly, when building the cabinet that Burne-Jones painted with scenes from Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* (1857-59), Philip Webb utilized the same tall, ringed colonnettes featured on most confessionals, further linking the Firm's secular furniture with ecclesiastical models. V & A Museum, *Victorian Church Art*, 43.

many of whom, including Keble and Neale, preached from its pulpit, and John Purchas, the author of the *Directorium Anglicanum*, served as curate from 1861-66. Archdeacon (later Cardinal) Henry Edward Manning (1808-92), who infamously converted to Rome in 1851, gave the opening day sermon in 1848. Even Wagner's father, the influential vicar of Brighton, Rev. Henry Michell Wagner (1792-1870), worried about the "Popish" implications of his son's ministry and drolly preached one Sunday on Matthew 17:15: "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and sore vexed."[59]

Wagner's ritual innovations and unorthodox doctrine landed St. Paul's in the midst of repeated turmoil and national scandal. Numerous pamphlets and articles condemned its clergy's practice of "Puseyism." Violent riots erupted in the streets, where angry Protestants physically attacked Wagner and satirized his sung Mass and its theatrical atmosphere with placards reading, "Sunday Opera at St. Paul's."[60] The art and architecture at St. Paul's did not escape hostile criticism either. "Even some of the decorations of the Church seem to indicate an anti-Protestant spirit," the Protestant Defence Committee wrote in 1851.[61] The Protestant Association, a national organization, called for an injunction against "such persons as the Revd A. D. Wagner officiating in the Church of England."[62] They and other protesters pressured Parliament to establish a Select Committee on the Divine Service at St. Paul's. In 1867 Wagner was summoned to testify at the first Royal Commission on Ritual, the culmination of national anti-Catholic sentiment in the 1860s.[63]

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[59] Hawes, *Ritual and Riot*, 5.
[60] Bede, *Natural History of Puseyism*, 5.
[61] Brighton Protestant Defence Committee, *St. Paul's, Brighton*, 12.
[62] Quoted in Hawes, *Ritual and Riot*, 8.
[63] Maughan, *Wagner of Brighton*, 16.

The leadership of St. Paul's avowed that the restoration of a frequent and dignified Eucharist would be the church's distinguishing feature, in addition to auricular confession. During the consecration festivities, the Anglo-Catholic controversialist William James Early Bennett (1804-86) of St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, preached about his dream of all parishioners exiting the Brighton church "fresh from the Lord's Sacrifice, which continually commemorating, they will continually keep in mind…invigorated and refreshed, they will go forth, not men of a weekly preaching only, but men of a daily worship."[64] In addition to implementing a wafer, mixed chalice, bowing and genuflecting, flowers, and altar lights, Wagner increased Communion services to once daily and thrice on Sundays.[65] Eucharistic sacrifice was a common topic in the pulpit, where the Tractarian controversialist and volunteer assistant priest William Gresley explained communion as "the great sacrifice of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world."[66] Clergy preached the Real Presence, in particular, and taught communicants that during the Eucharist they come into "actual contact with the living God," through the "Body and Blood of Him who is our only Sacrifice, our only food."[67] "That solemn hour when Christ Himself is present in the holy Sacrament," Gresley instructed another Sunday, is an occasion when "we receive the inestimable benefit of His own most precious Body and Blood."[68] Another time, Gresley summarized Jesus's words at the Last Supper as "My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. He that eateth

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[64] *Course of Sermons*, 133.
[65] Rev. Stanley Gresham, *The Story of S. Paul's, Brighton* (c.1929), p. 36, ACC 7740/166, East Sussex Record Office. Under pressure, he ceased the practice of the wafer by 1854.
[66] Gresley, *Sermons Preached at Brighton*, 7. From 1851 Gresley served as a volunteer assistant preacher. His presence at St. Paul's and, in particular, his advocacy of auricular confession, incited hostility in the Brighton community. Thus, the Bishop of Chichester refused to license him as assistant curate at St. Paul's.
[67] *Course of Sermons*, 122.
[68] Gresley, *Sermons Preached at Brighton*, 276.

My Flesh and drinketh My Blood…shall live for ever," an interpretation that listeners would have recognized as highly Catholic in tone.[69]

In addition, St. Paul's clergy emphasized the mystery of the Incarnation, or "the Word made Flesh," a Christian tenet fundamental to the doctrine of the Real Presence. In this theological framework, the Virgin birth of Jesus gave material form to God. For Anglo-Catholics, this event thus paralleled the action on the altar, whereby Jesus metamorphosed into, or was at least present in, the elements. As Anthony Symondson summarizes, "from the Incarnation flowed the sacraments, God working in and through matter, reaching their fulfilment in the sacrament of the altar, the centre of Christian worship."[70] Also central to Incarnation dogma is a belief in the perfect, hypostatic union of Jesus's human and divine natures; Christian doctrine considers him at once both fully God and fully man. Burne-Jones particularly admired how William Holman Hunt captured Jesus's dual person in *The Light of the World*. Hunt, he wrote in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, impressively conveyed both,

> the Son of Man standing before us, in all the beauty and the sadness of our common humanity…but another look, and it is the Son of God, risen and glorified…so we are bowed down with awe before the Judge of quick and dead; yet are there signs…making the God whom we worship, and the Brother whom we love, one…the perfect God and Perfect Man.

Historically, Incarnation subjects such as Annunciations and Nativities served as central motifs of Roman Catholic altarpieces since they concretized the invisible mystery of transubstantiation believed to be taking place on the altar and articulated the Christian

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[69] Ibid., 278.

[70] Anthony Symondson, "Theology, worship and the late Victorian church," in *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*, ed. Chris Brooks and Andrew Saint (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1995), 208.

precept of Jesus's dual nature.[71] The moments of his greatest physicality—birth,

suffering, death—made Jesus's life seem undeniably human and reinforced the notion of

his body and blood's corporeal presence in the Eucharist. For the believer, God's descent

to the realm of man in Jesus also mirrors his or her own encounter with God at the altar.

Images of the Incarnation were thus intended to aid the beholder's experience of the

divine. As John W. Dixon explains, most ecclesiastical art is designed to help "bring the

deity into the presence of the worshipper."[72] With renewed interest in the Eucharist, and

particularly the Real Presence of Christ, the Incarnation once again became key imagery

in Victorian Britain. Since ecclesiologists rationalized that "pictorial embellishments"

and other ecclesiastical decoration should "be each and all symbolical and suggestive of

holy doctrines and divine mysteries," Anglo-Catholic ecclesiastical artists and architects

readily adopted Incarnation themes.[73]

Representing the idea of Jesus's dual nature by showing his supernatural

conception and humble birth, Burne-Jones's design articulates the doctrine of the

Incarnation, and by extension, Jesus's perceived corporeal presence at the altar. It was a

perfect subject for an Anglo-Catholic church and especially suited to St. Paul's, where

Manning sermonized on Jesus's coming "by the personal manifestation of His incarnate

Person, by the presence of His visible manhood" and Gresley preached the Incarnation as

"the most important thing that ever happened…what conceivable event throughout the

whole material universe is comparable in vastness and sublimity to this one fact of

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[71] Crucifixion subjects were also popular in Renaissance painting but not as widely adopted in Britain, where the Crucifix was tainted with strong Romish connotations.
[72] John W. Dixon, *Art and the Theological Imagination* (New York: Seabury, 1978), 74.
[73] Russell, "Revival of Panel Painting," 220.

revelation?"[74] At Christmas, the congregation at St. Paul's heard Gresley extol the

Nativity as the ultimate symbol of Jesus's Incarnation, imploring them to "dwell with

gratitude and devotion on the wondrous love of God in the Incarnation, or coming in the

Flesh, of the Son of God."[75] In Burne-Jones's rendering (fig. 32), the crimson swathe of

cloth the infant Jesus holds, as well as the overall reddish tone of the composition,

function as a reminder of his death and sacrificial nature, while the round shape in his left

hand recalls a communion wafer. The diaphanous rays of the Holy Spirit radiating

downward from above the Holy Family symbolize the transfusion of the divine into

human form. The angel Gabriel, in the left wing, announces Jesus's coming both to Mary

and to those present at the Eucharist, heralding his professed arrival in the elements of

wine and bread. Burne-Jones's juxtaposition of Incarnation imagery with the altar

visually endorsed the doctrine of the Real Presence.

Didactic Tool and Devotional Aid

Having established Jesus's presence in the Eucharist, the Brighton triptych

instructed worshippers on the meaning of the sacrament and the proper devotional

attitude with which to approach the altar. Burne-Jones recognized the important didactic

function of altarpieces, advising Mary Gladstone in 1896 on a memorial to her father in

Hawarden Church: "I can see [your brother] is thinking of a picture all the time—and for

that purpose an altar piece would certainly be better—a stained glass window cannot

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[74] Henry Edward Manning, *The Lost sheep: a sermon preached on the feast of St. Luke the Evangelist, at the opening of St. Paul's Church, Brighton* (Brighton and London, 1848), 11; Gresley, *Sermons Preached at Brighton*, 49, 308.
[75] Gresley, *Sermons Preached at Brighton*, 49.

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teach anything, it is at best a kind of splendid ornament."[76] Hence, after the first version

of the triptych was installed in St. Paul's "deep, dim, chancel" and he found "the

composition of the centre panel was too elaborate to tell its story clearly from a distance,"

he painted a second version (fig. 33).[77] He carried this lesson with him the rest of his life,

instructing Rooke in 1884 to make sure his mosaics in St. Paul's Within-the-Walls were

"VISIBLE, INTELLIGIBLE at a distance."[78] Absent the female attendants and

shepherds and reduced in number from eleven figures to six, the new *Adoration of the*

Magi (1861) exhibits a greater Venetian influence. The models, no longer identifiable,

now resemble Rossetti's stunners more than Fra Angelico's saints. On the frame Burne-

Jones added the biblical verse detailing the Magi's role in the Nativity: "Now when Jesus

was born in Bethlehem in the days of Herod the king behold there came wise men from

the East saying where is he that is born King of the Jews for we have seen his star in the

East and are come to worship him" (Matthew 2:1 KJV). Strengthening the allusion to

Mass, Burne-Jones showed Gabriel holding the chain of an incense thurible, which rests

on the ground.

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[76] Lisle March-Phillips and Bertram Christian, eds., *Some Hawarden Letters, 1878-1913, Written to Mrs. Drew (Miss Mary Gladstone) Before and After Her Marriage* (London: Nisbet, 1917), 271, quoted in Dorment, "Decoration of St. Paul's," 135.

[77] "S. Paul's, Brighton," *Ecclesiologist*, 61; G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:124. An absence of clerestory windows and deeply colored stained glass by A. W. N. Pugin gave the interior of St. Paul's a dimly lit atmosphere, and the lengthy chancel compounded the problem of visibility. The church remained dark even after the installation in the 1860s of a nave dormer window meant to illuminate the painting on the chancel arch. Wagner's biographer reported in 1849, "on a bright day, the church is rather dark, the site of the building, and the abundance of its stained glass, rendering a rather dim light inevitable." Maughan, *Wagner of Brighton*, 24. Burne-Jones gave the first version to Thomas Plint's estate to settle outstanding debts after the patron's unexpected death. Wildman and Christian (*Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 64, n. 4) state the church "spurned" the second triptych after its appearance in the 1975 Arts Council exhibition and exiled it to the Brighton Museum in 1977. However, I find no evidence for this sudden change of heart. Elleray reports that church could not afford insurance on the painting and lent it to the museum "for safety." In 1993 St. Paul's sold the triptych to pay for the restoration of their deteriorating tower, a commonplace practice among modern British churches, whose dwindling membership no longer provides enough income to repair their historic buildings. Elleray, "St. Paul's: The Building," 19-20.

[78] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:143.

Burne-Jones's changes demonstrate his sensitivity toward existing church decoration and heightened the altarpiece's didactic potential. A photograph from the late nineteenth century (fig. 38) reveals how his painting fit within the overall ornamental treatment of the altar at St. Paul's. As one scholar has already discerned, shifting the Virgin and Child to the left and raising the kings to a standing position ensured the figures would be less obscured by the altar cross.[79] According to Georgiana, her husband decided, "for clearness' sake, that the whole should be painted upon a gold background," but even so, the muddier tones, dark masses of garments, and diminished expanses of bright gold paint did not enhance the painting's visibility.[80] Burne-Jones retained a subtlety of color which, according to the first-hand experience of worshippers, only glowed in the late afternoon light, cleverly rewarding only the most patient observer or communicants nearing the altar with its full meaning and beauty.[81] Turning away from Burne-Jones's Holy Family to return to their pew, communicants would have faced Mary and Joseph on either side of the risen Jesus in the West window (fig. 36), which visually completed the life-story of Jesus. Eliminating the shepherds rather than the Magi further aided the narrative by accentuating Jesus's role as the King of Kings. In Christian tradition, he descended in a royal blood line from David and the other prominent rulers, who are pictured in the *Jesse Tree* east chancel window (fig. 37) above the altarpiece.

Furthermore, Burne-Jones's revised composition expanded the concept of the altar as a space of social equality into an essay on Christian humility. The kings and

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[79] C.S.N., in Sotheby's, *Victorian Pictures*.

[80] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:224.

[81] One parishioner reported, "our triptych is always difficult to see: it is best seen on a bright winter afternoon when it glows in the low rays of the setting sun." Gresham, *Story of S. Paul's*, 31. Only "on a bright day, and in certain lights," another related, "the painting seems to spring to life, revealing all its details and a glorious feast of colour." Otherwise, "the visitor is only aware of a sombre and indistinct painting which gives scarcely a hint of the rich and beautiful colour which it really possesses." Maughan, *Wagner of Brighton*, 26.

shepherds both worshiping the baby Jesus in the first triptych was a fitting motif for St.

Paul's, where similarly diverse social groups knelt together at communion.[82] "With no

inequality or distinction they kneel side by side together," Bennett expounded from the

pulpit, "and pray with the same voice."[83] Burne-Jones's original design was

appropriately unassuming, depicting rich and poor alike united in their service to God.

Several female attendants humbly waited on the Holy Family, and the Magi wore

unostentatious solid-colored robes.

Eliminating the shepherds might seem to negate this egalitarian perspective but in

fact, heightened the object's ability to inculcate a sense of humility in communicants.

Wagner instructed his congregation that the act of kneeling in adoration at the altar was a

fundamentally symbolic and physical act of humiliation before God.[84] The poor, rustic

shepherds in Burne-Jones's first triptych might not have felt out of place at Jesus's

manger, but according to Christian tradition, the Magi were of a wealthy, privileged

class. Thus their sacrifice and submission, symbolized by the foremost king's act of

removing his crown, was all the more astonishing. As Ruskin reminded Burne-Jones the

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[82] Situated in an impoverished fishing community, Wagner intended St. Paul's to be a mission to the working poor, an agenda reflected by Manning's opening day sermon on Luke 15:4 urging parishioners to seek out the "lost sheep" in the surrounding neighborhood. Paradoxically, its high-church practices attracted Brighton's fashionable elite and thus the congregation was "composed of a large body of worshippers of every variety and class of life." Gresley, *Sermons Preached at Brighton*, iii. Wagner took advantage of this situation to promote humility and egalitarianism in his church as a reflection of God's kingdom on earth. Worship at St. Paul's "was never designed to create a distinction which God has not created" between classes, he insisted, but was a place where "the noblest equality reigns." At its consecration he reminded listeners, "The poor widow in Brighton reads her Bible by the same gilded sunbeam, shining through the same chastened tracery, by which, the affluent scans the page of truth and soberness. There is only one name under heaven given among men, whereby rich and poor must be saved. All are…made strictly one in Christ Jesus. *Course of Sermons*, 157-58.
[83] Ibid., 132.
[84] All were invited to participate in the Eucharist, where "the rich have no better elements than the poor" and "the lowest caste, the veriest Lazarus, who has a sanctified heart, is as much bidden to partake of the feast at the Lord's table, as the noble, or the wealthiest man among us." The first sermon at St. Paul's consecration, by the Lord Bishop of Chichester, was titled, "Humility, the Handmaid and Guide of Faith and Love." Ibid., 157, 16-17.

following summer, since the shepherds "had everything to gain by coming, it was greater grace in the kings to leave their kingdoms and come."[85] The statement had a profound impact: he "was abashed and fell to thinking. So I am taking great pains over the kings, and have repented," he reported decades later when designing his *Adoration of the Magi* tapestry (1888-90). From this point forward, he identified with these humble worshippers rather than the shepherds. "There's always salvation for the humble minded, none for the ambitious," he warned Rooke in 1897.[86] Although he introduced minimal patterning on the kings' garments, they retain the muddy earth tones, and therefore the modest character, of the shepherds in the first version. The receptacles for their costly gifts are barely visible, blending inconspicuously into the background and downplaying any show of wealth. Wagner was likewise pleased to see "the noble more than once kneel on that bare stone step" in his church.[87] Mirroring this act of humiliation, as well as the grandiose presence of St. Paul's in a working-class district of Brighton, the rich kings visiting the lowly manger provided worshippers with a model of correct moral behavior during the Eucharist and in the community.

As D. Arasse observes, the advent of medieval polyptychs also ushered in a "new form of observance, spiritual and devotional, which the eye of the faithful kneeling before the image is invited to embrace for the sake of personal salvation."[88] Anglo-Catholics found such reverence lacking in most Victorian churches, seeing "many a crowded congregation…but few worshippers…scarce one here and there who bends the

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[85] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:176
[86] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 3:413.
[87] *Course of Sermons,* 157.
[88] D. Arasse, "Espace pictural et image religieuse: le point de vue de Masolino sur la perspective," in *La prospettiva rinascimentale: Codificazione e tragressione*, ed. M. Dalai Emiliani (Florence, 1980), 150, quoted in Virdis, *Gothic and Renaissance Altarpieces*, 10.

knee in prayer, or lifts up his voice in thanksgiving."[89] This renewed attention to

devotional practice found expression, for example, in popular "Steps to the Altar"

manuals, which served as instruments of personal piety, encouraging respect for the

holiness of the Eucharist through daily domestic prayers, instructions for confession and

repentance prior to the Sabbath, and advice on appropriate manners during the sacrament

itself.[90] Wagner cultivated a similar mindset in his congregation at St. Paul's and aimed

to create "unquestionably a singularly devotional church."[91]

Appropriately, Burne-Jones's picture conveys a visual lesson in adoration before

the altar, which only strengthens the Eucharistic allegory. As Barbara G. Lane has

demonstrated, the Adoration of the Magi subject was an especially prevalent mechanism

for connecting the Incarnation and Transubstantiation in early Netherlandish altarpieces,

in part because the gifts the Magi bore paralleled the offerings worshippers in the early

church brought to the altar.[92] In Gerard David's *Adoration of the Kings* (1515) (fig. 39),

for instance, the Magi's kneeling posture exactly replicated that of the communicant.[93]

The further implication, Lane discerns, is that "no table is necessary here, because Mary,

as the altar, holds the sacred body that is at once the object of the kings' worship and the

pictorial parallel of the substance of the Eucharist."[94] Accordingly, Mary and the

kneeling kings in Burne-Jones's first version, who humbly remove their crowns at the

feet of Jesus, encourage the worshipper to emulate their demure and reverent response.

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[89] Gresley, *Sermons Preached at Brighton*, 14.
[90] Although most Anglicans did not practice aural confession before taking part in the Eucharist as Catholics did, Anglo-Catholics wanted to at least inspire worshippers to confess their sins privately and approach the altar with dignity, seriousness, and awe.
[91] Maughan, *Wagner of Brighton*, 24.
[92] Lane, *Altar and the Altarpiece*, 60-68.
[93] Ibid. The painting was bequeathed to the gallery in 1880, so Burne-Jones would not necessarily have known it at the time he was designing the Brighton triptych.
[94] Ibid., 68.

St. Paul's clergy likewise taught that the proper attitude towards the Eucharist was one of "bending lowly on our knees."[95] For practical reasons the kings are no longer able to do so in Burne-Jones's second version, but they still bow their heads deferentially. In both versions Mary also lowers her head submissively, hands clasped in prayer, to venerate her son. The chancel fresco on the east wall (see fig. 35) reinforces this devotional attitude. Solemn angels approach the altar from either side, kneeling respectfully before the Real Presence of Christ as affirmed in the doctrine taught at St. Paul's. Swinging censers, they sanctify the altar with their imagined scented fumes, as does the angel Gabriel in Burne-Jones's final triptych.[96]

Gabriel's deferential stance also aligned the especial veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Mother of the Incarnate Word practiced at St. Paul's.[97] Protestants denounced this Romish habit as "Mariolatry," a charge that commonly extended to altar decoration as well. In 1849, for instance, the Bishop of Exeter decried a gilt-framed print of the Virgin Mary on the chapel altar at the Anglican Sisters of Mercy orphanage in Devonport as "highly Popish" and a threat to the welfare of the children in its care.[98]

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[95] Gresley, *Sermons Preached at Brighton*, 7.

[96] In addition to its purification purposes in Hebrew sacrificial rites, incense, for Christians, symbolized the prayers of the faithful rising upward to God, according to the scriptures in Revelation 8:3-4: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" and Psalm 141:2: "let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense." V & A Museum, *Victorian Church Art*, 37.

[97] In a departure from orthodox Anglicanism, St. Paul's congregation and clergy diligently observed the Virgin's Feast days and Festivals with sung Mass, and her "unique dignity and glory…as the *Theotokos*" ("Mother of God") was a frequent topic in Wagner's sermons. Maughan, *Wagner of Brighton*, 20. He added the Angelus to the liturgy (a devotional recitation incorporating the "Hail, Mary!") and in 1855 founded a sisterhood of nuns called the Community of the Blessed Virgin Mary, inspired by the Tractarian revival of religious orders. Elleray, "St. Paul's in the Community," in O'Loughlin and Elleray, *St. Paul's Brighton: 150 Years*, 4. Wagner gave each church subsequently founded in Brighton a replica of a Madonna icon believed to have been painted by St. Luke the Evangelist. Hawes, *Ritual and Riot*, 20.

[98] Henry Phillpotts, *Report of the Inquiry Instituted by the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Exeter, as Visitor of the Orphans' Home, Established by the Sisters of Mercy, at Morice Town, Devonport, into the Truth of Certain Statements Published in the "Devonport Telegraph,"* (Plymouth and London, 1849), 64,

Two years later, he censured an Annunciation mural in Cornwall because "the Angel is kneeling *to* the Virgin Mary…implying that the Blessed Virgin is an object of adoration," a charge which "the Virgin being also kneeling" could have satisfactorily remedied.[99] Attacks on images of the Virgin and Marian cults continued in the 1850s and 60s, particularly after the Vatican announced its doctrine of the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception in 1854.[100] While there are no documented protests against Burne-Jones's triptych, his depiction of Gabriel's reverence toward Mary would have added to the popular dissatisfaction with St. Paul's alleged "Popish" character. The altarpiece therefore functioned as an oblique nod to the cult of the Virgin, an incitement to Christian virtue, and a visual "steps to the altar" manual for preparing worshippers to approach the perceived living presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

St. Peter's, Vere Street, London

In 1882 Burne-Jones's friend, physician, and patron of religious work, Dr. Charles Bland Radcliffe (1822-89), commissioned him to paint a second altarpiece. Radcliffe intended it for St. Peter's, Vere Street, London, as a memorial by "a few loving disciples" to its most famous incumbent, Frederick Denison Maurice, who served from 1860 to 1869.[101] Burne-Jones must have welcomed the opportunity to pay tribute to Maurice, whom he greatly respected at Oxford.[102] Coincidentally, it was in January 1856 at Maurice's Working Men's College, dedicated to the training of artisan classes, where

quoted in Carol Marie Engelhardt, "Victorians and the Virgin Mary: Religion, National Identity, and the Woman Question in England, 1830-1880" (PhD diss., Indiana Univ., 1997), 4.

[99] [Henry Phillpotts], "The Bishop of Exeter on Mural Paintings in Churches," *Ecclesiologist* 13 (Feb. 1852): 17.

[100] For documentation on anti-Marian iconoclasm, see Engelhardt, "The Virgin Mary," 6.

[101] Quoted in Betty Baker, *St. Peter's Church: A History of the 1724 Chapel known as St. Peter's, Vere Street* (London: Institute for Contemporary Christianity, n.d.), 11.

[102] See chap. 1, pp. 83.

Burne-Jones first met Rossetti. He described it as a "little University" where drawing

was taught by day and in evenings, "men skilled in science or history gave lectures and

their services." At monthly evening meetings "for a modest payment, anyone could get

admittance, including tea," to hear "addresses on the condition of the College and the

advancement of the studies…delivered by the different professors." On one such

occasion Burne-Jones heard Maurice speak on "[Thomas Babington] Macaulay's new

volume [of the *History of England*], just out, blaming much the attack [*sic*] on George

Fox in a true Carlylese spirit, which was very pleasing."[103] He may also have known

Maurice through Little Holland House, where they were both frequent guests of Sara

Prinsep.[104]

St. Peter's was the only non-Anglo-Catholic church for which Burne-Jones

created an altarpiece, and it was probably only out of admiration for Maurice and

friendship with Radcliffe that he agreed to adorn a building so stylistically antithetical to

his own principles. Built by James Gibbs (1682-1754) in 1724 in the typical "preaching-

house" format, St. Peter's (fig. 40), originally known as the Oxford Chapel, features

classical architecture, galleries, rococo plasterwork, and a painted ceiling (fig. 41).[105]

Situated in Marylebone off Oxford Street, it initially attracted a fashionable and affluent

congregation in the early part of the century. Its doctrinal history is spotty and eclectic,

boasting at various times Evangelical, High Church, and Broad Church clergy. The

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[103] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:128-29.

[104] Harrison and Waters, *Burne-Jones*, 41.

[105] The church was known first as Oxford Chapel and later Marylebone Chapel, then restored in 1832 and re-christened St. Peter's. Its galleries and classical features were anathema to Burne-Jones's taste. Morris deprecatingly called such churches "the brown brick box with…feeble and trumpery attempts at ornament." Quoted in Baker, *St. Peter's Church*, 8-9.

incumbencies of Maurice and Thomas Teignmouth Shore (1841-1911) in the 1860s marked the height of liberal theology at St. Peter's.[106]

According to his account books, Burne-Jones began the oil on panel originally titled *Mary Magdalene at the Sepulchre* and now known as *The Morning of the Resurrection* (fig. 42) some time in 1882 and finished it in December of the same year. In a letter to Dr. Radcliffe on Christmas Day, Burne-Jones claimed to be exhausted from intense work on the picture and warned the panel "is quite wet—nothing must touch the face if possible for days—indeed, why should the face ever be touched?" He also worried "the weight of the panel is so great that in moving it hands had better protect it at the back for fear it should burst its nails."[107] According to *The Times*, it was installed at St. Peter's in early 1883.[108]

The textual source, John 20:11-16, is one of four different Gospel narratives of Easter morning. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Burne-Jones did not attempt to reconcile the various, incongruent accounts. He also rejected the more common *Noli me Tangere* subject, which typically downplayed Jesus's divinity by depicting him realistically as a dirty, laboring gardener.[109] In Burne-Jones's rendering, the penitent sinner Mary Magdalene has arrived alone at Jesus's tomb three days after his crucifixion to find it empty. Distraught, she

> stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped
> down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white
> sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of

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[106] Shore, a curate at St. Peter's in 1869-70, was a Broad-Churchman and sympathizer of Charles Kingsley.
[107] Edward Burne-Jones to Charles Bland Radcliffe, [Christmas 1882], Burne-Jones Papers, XIV, fol. 7, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[108] "The late F. D. Maurice," *Times*, Feb. 14, 1883.
[109] One source may be Giotto's *Noli me tangere* in the Lower Chapel of the Magdalene in San Francesco, Assisi, which also shows Mary Magdalene alone at the tomb with two angels seated on either end. Historically, most painters included only one angel in scenes of the sepulchre in spite of the scriptural basis for two, so in this respect Burne-Jones is more faithful to the text.

Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master (KJV).

The dark, gaping hole behind the tomb functions as the mouth of hell into which, Christian theology contends, Jesus descended after his crucifixion. It also simultaneously references the Nativity, which according to one tradition took place in "the interior of a cavern."[110] Burne-Jones's setting therefore sets up a typological relationship between Jesus's birth and death and foreshadows his re-birth after the Resurrection, a cornerstone of the Christian religion. Moreover, Mary's witnessing of the resurrected Jesus articulated a longing for a God actively engaged with the human world and the pervasive Victorian anxiety to find tangible proof of his existence. It was the only time Burne-Jones would paint an Easter scene or Mary Magdalene.

Mary's moment of profound grief at the sepulcher was a subject traditionally used to treat themes of loss and sorrow, making it an apposite memorial, and Burne-Jones rendered it in a manner suitable to Maurice's doctrine.[111] The monochromatic grayish-brown palette casts a deathly pallor over the scene and, together with the thick stylized

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[110] Anna Jameson, *Legends of the Madonna*, ed. Estelle M. Hurll, rev. ed. (1852; Boston, 1895), 244. Botticelli's *Mystic Nativity* (1500), purchased by the National Gallery in 1878, features a similar cave behind the holy family and could have inspired Burne-Jones, who especially admired Botticelli during this phase of his career.

[111] Maurice was a defiantly independent thinker with a liberal, inclusive theology, a strong belief in the need for reconciliation within Christianity, and distaste for sectarianism. A loyalty to the catholicity of the Christian Church and God's universal kingdom governed his theological outlook rather than any particular institution or denomination. He defined membership in Christ's kingdom by the same markers as the Anglo-Catholics—the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, and the traditional liturgy, creed, scripture, and ecclesiastical authority of the Anglican Church, but preferred to think of baptism as a symbolic gesture of the ongoing presence of Christ in humanity. He likewise refused to cede to Broad-Churchmanship, believing its application of Christianity to contemporary life watered down the faith and Anglican doctrine.

draperies recalling burial shrouds, imparts a sculptural quality reminiscent of a carved funeral monument. Nevertheless, Mary's story of redemption and the predominance of white, representative of hope in Christian symbolism, were appropriate for Maurice's optimistic view of the afterlife; his greatest notoriety came in 1853, when he refuted the doctrine of eternal punishment.[112] Jesus's appearance to Mary Magdalene in Burne-Jones's painting offers further comfort by suggesting that after the Resurrection, even death cannot part lovers and friends. Showing her without the traditional attributes of ointment jar, flowing hair, and kneeling posture, Burne-Jones transformed her from the sensuous "fallen woman" of Roman Catholicism into a dignified any-woman representing the Christian belief that Jesus's redemption is offered to all humanity, another egalitarian theme of Maurice's. A related theme appeared above the altarpiece in Burne-Jones's pictorial east chancel window from two years prior (fig. 43).[113] The story depicted, Jesus's ministry to another societal outcast, the undesirable Samarian woman at the well, asserted that his salvation transcended all racial, cultural and economic barriers. The inscription Burne-Jones included, "Whoever drinketh of this water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water I shall give, shall be in him a well of water springing

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[112] In 1853 Maurice made a controversial stand against the doctrine of eternal punishment in *Theological Essays* based on a theology of grace rather than original sin. In opposition to orthodox Christian theology, he denied that "eternal" meant "everlasting," and argued that the concept implied only a spiritual death on earth but not lasting consequences beyond this life. Leaving room for the possibility that some form of punishment existed for those who rejected Christ, he nevertheless concluded that impenitent sinners were not necessarily doomed to an eternity in hell. He preferred instead to believe in God's great mercy and the "abyss of love beyond the abyss of death." F. Maurice, ed., *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, 3rd ed. (London, 1884), 2:15, quoted in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter cited as *DNB*), s.v. "Maurice, (John) Frederick Denison" (by Bernard M. G. Reardon), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/ article/18384. His views caused widespread concern among Christian clergy, who considered Maurice's argument a dangerous repudiation of the fundamental Christian belief in the need for atonement through Christ and a possible instigator to moral laxity. Consequently, his appointment to St. Peter's caused a wave of protest (see chap. 1, pp. 83).
[113] Radcliffe also commissioned this window. In July 1883 Burne-Jones designed a south aisle window, *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem,* for St. Peter's, and in 1892 a version of his *Angeli Ministrantes* was installed in a north gallery window.

up into everlasting life" (John 4:14, KJV), further connoted the concept of baptismal regeneration and the common Christian metaphor of Jesus as the living water who grants eternal life. Since its first appearances on early Christian sarcophagi, this latter theme was particularly popular in memorial art. Burne-Jones's altarpiece thus carried through the theme of hope in Christ initiated in his window above.

In early 1886 Burne-Jones completed a second version (fig. 44), begun either concurrently or soon after the first.[114] He submitted it to the Grosvenor Gallery (no.96) in April accompanied by the inscription, "And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus" (John 20:14).[115] Significantly, the biblical verse Burne-Jones chose is not the usually cited moment of Mary's recognition in the *Noli me Tangere*, but that of her *un*recognition. She thus symbolically assumes the position of one hovering in a moment of hesitation between doubt and belief. In this version, the tomb is slightly more elaborate, the landscape less rugged and greener, and the angels wear sandals. He replaced the neutral palette with darker, richer tones of blue and violet, symbolic of penitence and the liturgical color for Advent and Lent. Once again, Burne-Jones dedicated his composition to the memory of a recently deceased friend, the twenty-four-year-old Laura Lyttleton [née Tennant] (1862-86), adding "one very little oblation which I made so obscure that no one has discovered it—it is on the left-hand corner of the Resurrection picture…the words 'In

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[114] Burne-Jones's "List of My Designs" contains two related entries for 1882. The first, with no month or day listed, states he "began a panel of Mary Magdalene at the Sepulchre." The second, added in pencil, records, "made in December an altar piece for the church in Vere Street" but it is not clear if this is a second work or a clarification of the first entry. In 1886, he recorded the completion of the second version: "at the beginning of the year I…finished 'The Morning of the Resurrection.'" E. Burne-Jones, "List of My Designs," fol. 29.

[115] He also exhibited it at the 1887 Royal Jubilee Exhibition in Manchester (no. 207).

Memoriam L. L. Easter 1886.'"[116] In addition to intimating his less optimistic view of

the afterlife (he was perpetually plagued with thoughts of his impending Day of

Judgment) the more somber cool tones of the second version reflect the greater tragedy

and injustice of Laura's untimely, "sorrowfullest ending." "Amethyst," notably,

symbolized "devotion" for Burne-Jones—in this instance, personal devotion to his lost

friend and Mary's devotion to Jesus.[117]

    In 1893 Burne-Jones added two wings representing the Annunciation (fig. 45) to

the Vere Street panel, although it is unclear to what extent studio assistants painted them.

These were also intended as a memorial, this time to Dr. Radcliffe, who died in 1889.[118]

Compositionally, they relate to Burne-Jones's design for the Annunciation window at St.

Margaret's, Rottingdean, from the same year (fig. 46). Unlike his posture of adoration in

the Brighton triptych, Gabriel, censer-less, now assumes a more appropriately Protestant

standing posture as he approaches the Virgin. Slightly taller than the central panel, the

wings are nearly square, an unusual shape for a triptych, and the conflation of

Annunciation and Resurrection is rare in the history of art.

    None of the major monographs or exhibition catalogs on Burne-Jones mention

Morning of the Resurrection despite the fact that during his lifetime, it was among his

most popular and widely-reproduced compositions.[119] In the nineteenth century it

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[116] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:166. A tablet of a peacock inscribed "Non est hic, sed surrexit" (He is not here, He is risen), created as another memorial to Laura, bears further witness to Burne-Jones's reliance upon Resurrection symbolism for remembering departed friends.

[117] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 121.

[118] The wings do not appear in Burne-Jones's work record or Georgiana's memoirs. On Feb. 25, 1893, *The New York Evening Post* reported that the two pictures, "which are but the separate parts of a single subject and composition," were "from the prolific brush of the same indefatigable artist" as the central panel. However, at their sale in 1973, it was suggested the wings were only "partly" the work of Burne-Jones. Sotheby's Belgravia, *Fine Victorian Paintings* (London, 27 Mar. 1973), lot 43.

[119] For instance, *Morning of the Resurrection* appeared on the title page of Julia Cartwright, *The Life and Work of Sir Edward Burne-Jones Bart.* (London, 1894); was reproduced in L. T. Meade, "The Painter of

received broad exposure via a dual public—an ecclesiastical one at St. Peter's and a

cultural one at art exhibitions. When the wings were added, the altarpiece was famous

enough to warrant transatlantic coverage in the *New York Evening Post*, which reported it

was available for viewing at St. Peter's by applying to "Messrs. Elliott, Boyton and &

Co., Vere Street."[120] Characteristic commentaries include L. T. Meade's in the 1894

Sunday Magazine, "The beautiful picture…shows once again that sense of religious and

imaginative wonder which runs more or less through all [Burne-Jones's] works," and the

Reverend Peter Taylor Forsyth's, "Oh, it is very beautiful. What joy to know [Christ],

what shame not to have known Him! Look in that brimming face, all sensibility, in those

eyes, like round worlds redeemed, and see what the Lord has done for her soul."[121] Aside

from contemporary art criticism, however, little documentation remains regarding the

triptych since the church is now redundant and its parish records scant. The wings were

removed prior to 1941 and in 1973 the church sold all three sections of the triptych at

auction.[122]

In addition to its relevance as a memorial to Maurice and his liberal theology,

Burne-Jones's painting functions on an additional, subversive level to express the

doctrine of the Real Presence. Although not specifically an Anglo-Catholic church, St.

Peter's clergy did welcome some ritual, and there is evidence that at least a few of its

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Eternal Youth: Sir Edward Burne-Jones," *Sunday Magazine* 23 (June 1894): 392; and discussed in
numerous nineteenth-century articles (see chap. 3). In 1899 *The Magazine of Art* complained when
Malcolm Bell did not reproduce the painting in his illustrated monograph on Burne-Jones, and Fortunée de
Lisle included the Vere Street triptych among the artist's most important works. "Recent Illustrated
Volumes," review of *Sir Edward Burne-Jones: A Record and Review*, by Malcolm Bell, *Magazine of Art*
(1899): 324; Lisle, *Burne-Jones*, 128.

[120] *New York Evening Post*, Feb. 25, 1893.

[121] Meade, "Painter of Eternal Youth," 394; Peter Taylor Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*: *Being Expository
Lectures on Rossetti, Burne Jones, Watts, Holman Hunt, & Wagner* (London, 1889), 102.

[122] Sotheby's Belgravia, *Fine Victorian Paintings* (London, 27 Mar. 1973), lots 42-43.

curates professed a "high" Eucharistic philosophy.[123] Maurice, however, preferred to see

the sacrament as a more positive reminder of Jesus's resurrection and the eternal life

which he believed followed, rather than as a remembrance of death.[124] Burne-Jones

adroitly and subtly inculcated an Anglo-Catholic view of the Eucharist into a composition

that nevertheless respected Maurice's position and would be acceptable to mainstream

Anglicans. Radcliffe, a "devout, if unorthodox Christian" who owned Burne-Jones's

Anglo/Catholic subjects, *The Mother of Healing* (1862) and *Annunciation ("Flower of*

God") (1869, second version), seems unlikely to have objected.[125]

Scenes of Jesus's deposition, entombment, and resurrection were common in

Catholic altarpieces because of their thematic and symbolic links to his sacrificial death.

The art historical tradition of visually equating the altar with the sepulchre was a well-

established one "eloquently identify[ing] the body of Christ with the Eucharist," as

Gabriele Finaldi explains.[126] Among its earliest manifestations was the medieval *Imago*

Pietatis, a form of devotional art representing Jesus standing or sitting in the tomb, facing

frontally toward the viewer and sometimes displaying his wounds (fig. 47).[127] Albrecht

Dürer expanded on this convention in his woodcut of 1511, *The Mass of St. Gregory* (fig.

48), a famous image similar to the German engraving Burne-Jones traced (fig. 21), and

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[123] William James Early Bennett, a defender of the Real Presence tried for heresy in 1870-72, served as assistant curate in 1828-30. Francis Pigou (1832-1916), a self-proclaimed "high church evangelical" who adopted the eastward position during the Eucharist and used cassocks, surplices, altar crosses, flowers, and candles, was a curate in 1859.

[124] F. D. Maurice, *Eucharist*, 20.

[125] In the spring of 1862, Burne-Jones gave Radcliffe a pencil drawing, *The Mother of Healing*, as a thank you for saving the life of his infant son, Philip. It depicts the Virgin seated on the foot of a sick child's bed, while Jesus, the "Child of Healing" stands on her lap in a crucifixion pose. In 1869 Burne-Jones gave Radcliffe a smaller version of *Annunciation "The Flower of God,"* a watercolor originally painted for the Dalziel Brothers (exhibited New Gallery, 1898-99, no. 55).

[126] Gabriele Finaldi, *The Image of Christ* (London: National Gallery, 2000), 133. See also Lane, *Altar and the Altarpiece*, 79-105.

[127] Burne-Jones created at least one window with this iconography, for All Saints, Selsley, Gloucestershire, in 1861.

one he would surely have known given his admiration of the artist. Saint Gregory and other worshippers kneel before Jesus, who rises from a tomb lying on an altar bearing the communion elements, lights, and a devotional icon. The deposition ladder extends diagonally from him to the communicant below, forming a metaphorical and physical bridge between savior and sinner. Peter Paul Rubens further developed the Eucharistic correspondence between tomb and altar in his *Deposition* (fig. 49). In situ, the altar below assumes the role of the missing tomb and repository of Jesus's body. It is as if Jesus is lowered from the Cross into this invisible grave situated outside of the frame. As Neil Macgregor and Erika Langmuir elucidate, in the Catholic Church "the altar *is* Christ's sepulchre" since it acts as the site where "the body sacrificed for others will be distributed as the eucharistic host."[128] Furthermore, as the *Art Journal* reported in 1886, in Roman Catholic churches "the altar…is generally, as is well known, a sarcophagus containing the ashes of a martyr or saint."[129]

In his altarpiece for St. Peter's, Vere Street, Burne-Jones adopted the Catholic tradition of the altar as tomb and site of Jesus's crucified body. In situ, the horizontal sepulcher, near the lower edge of the picture plane, is visually aligned with the Eucharistic table directly below. Jesus literally stands on the surface of the altar, his physical body occupying the space where the sacrament takes place. One commentator noted how in spite of his resurrected state Jesus "still wears his mortal garb," which adds to the physicality of his person.[130] The weightiness of his drapery, and his body detectable underneath, lend further credence to the impression of his corporeality. The

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[128] Neil Macgregor and Erika Langmuir, *Seeing Salvation: Images of Christ in Art* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2000), 185.
[129] "The Revival of Decorative Needlework," *Art Journal* (1886): 142.
[130] Lisle, *Burne-Jones*, 29

full and literal resurrection of Jesus's material flesh was integral to Anglo-Catholic

incarnation theology and the doctrine of the Real Presence. Theologically, a purely

spiritual resurrection implied a wholly divine Jesus, compromising his alleged hypostatic

nature and nullifying his professed ability to atone for the sins of humanity.[131] Christian

apologists therefore valued Mary Magdalene's reported eye-witness encounter of Jesus's

risen body as crucial evidence for their religion.[132] Although he bears a halo, Burne-

Jones's Jesus is not the ethereal vision of a heavenly savior resurrected in spirit only but

rather a tangible, earthly presence of a god seemingly as fully human as divine. Just as

Mary meets Jesus in the flesh at the tomb, in Anglo/Catholic doctrine the worshipper

actually meets him at the altar. The elongated, slab-like tomb also brings to mind the

long table of the last supper, reinforcing the Eucharistic allusion. The addition of the

Annunciation wings further underscored the Incarnation. As at Brighton, Burne-Jones

used the triptych to model proper Eucharistic behavior. Mary's motion of turning toward

her savior demonstrates the similar repentant action expected of the communicant. The

quieting gestures of the angels, who cover their mouths in reverence before the presence

of Jesus, further instruct believers in the proper attitude of devotion.[133]

There are subtle distinctions between Burne-Jones's composition and those of his

Catholic predecessors, however, which kept his altarpiece theologically congruent with

Protestant tenets and avoided offending mainstream viewers, as the Congregationalist

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[131] Anglo-Catholics supported this argument with Article IV of the Thirty-Nine Articles, which states, "Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of Man's nature." Jesus's words after his resurrection in Luke 24:39 were also frequently cited to support this view: "behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have."

[132] As the central miracle of Christianity, the Resurrection was also at the heart of the debates over the feasibility of biblical miracles aroused by German criticism and science. Mary Magdalene's purported encounter with the risen Jesus thus also provided key evidence in support of biblical miracles.

[133] Angels at the sepulcher are occasionally depicted pointing upward to the risen Christ ascending from the tomb, but the covering of the mouth is an unusual gesture iconographically.

theologian Peter Taylor Forsyth's seven gushing pages of praise for the painting in

Religion in Recent Art (1889) attest. Deposition and entombment scenes represent the

moments in the Christian Passion narrative when Jesus is not yet resurrected, or has risen

but not yet descended to hell and returned to earth. As such, his saving action is not yet

complete; in these pictures the narrative is left unfulfilled. The Vere Street painting,

however, illustrates the completion of the Passion narrative, according with

Protestantism's emphasis on Jesus as triumphant redeemer rather than the Anglo/Catholic

suffering victim. Yet, as Forsyth pointed out, Burne-Jones's "glorification of the

meekness of Christ" also avoids overblown "ecclesiastical pomp" and the Catholic

excesses of depicting him "upon a gilded throne, or…in a glare of cloud sailing in ecstasy

into the air."[134] Furthermore, it is not the medieval Magdalene pietà Burne-Jones

selected but the happier moment of her meeting with the risen Jesus. Facing Mary

Magdalene and already freed from the confines of his tomb, his sacrificial role is adeptly

highlighted spatially without the use of perceived grisly Catholic attributes such as scars,

a crown of thorns, the action of blood being poured into the chalice, or the morbidity of

his broken, crucified body. The ominous cave is a subtler, less gruesome reference to his

death. Burne-Jones's moderate, non-denominational treatment of the traditionally

Catholic subject of Mary Magdalene created an ecclesiastical object expressive of both

Protestant and Anglo-Catholic theology. Although he took into consideration Maurice's

legacy when designing the altarpiece, he still incorporated imagery indicative of the Real

Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

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[134] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 104-5.

St. John's, Torquay

St. John's, Torquay (fig. 50), the site of Burne-Jones's next painted ecclesiastical commission, was one of Britain's most advanced Anglo-Catholic churches and at the forefront of public debates over ritual. From its early years as Torquay Chapel (founded 1823) it had been strongly associated with High Churchism. Many prominent Tractarians preached from its pulpit, and from 1830-44 its diocese of Exeter boasted one of only two High Church bishops in England, Henry Phillpotts. The litigious, hot-tempered Bishop, infamous for his role in the Gorham Judgment, frequently worshipped at St. John's, where a string of Anglo-Catholic incumbents steadily advanced its ritual.[135] Phillpotts, a conservative High-Churchman, grew increasingly wary of the growing extremity of Anglo-Catholic dogma and ceremonial at St. John's, complaining in 1864, "the services have long excited grave suspicion in the minds of moderate men, and have provoked the bitter complaints of those who are most sensitive to every indication of Romanism."[136] In 1875 a visitor described the ceremonial as "the type…set by the Margaret Street 'use' of twenty years ago" but the "colored stoles" used at St. John's marked it as even more advanced than the ecclesiologists' model church.[137] The Reverend H. W. Hitchcock's appointment in 1881 brought a more Romanizing influence in the form of a biretta, incense, banners, vestments, the Asperges, six rather than two altar lights, an ornate silver chalice and paten, altar curtains, "a processional crucifix, a lavabo bowl, several branched candlesticks, an altar cross, and a holy water pail with sprinkler."[138] Under his leadership, St. John's became one of the two most advanced Anglo-Catholic churches in

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[135] For the Gorham Judgment, see chap. 1, p. 59.
[136] Quoted in Rev. R. J. Edmund Boggis, *History of St. John's, Torquay* (Torquay: Devonshire Press, 1930), 98.
[137] S. S. H., "A Sunday in Torquay" *Church Bells* (May 22, 1875): 291-92.
[138] Boggis, *History of St. John's*, 171-73.

west England. As the *Church Times* proclaimed in 1885, "at St. John's Torquay, the work is Catholic."[139] In 1886 the vicar responsible for commissioning Burne-Jones's paintings, Prebendary Basil Reginald Airy, assumed his thirty-eight-year incumbency.

A number of notorious events ensured Exeter diocese a national reputation, which Burne-Jones must have known. Public attention was particularly directed toward St. John's as Phillpotts's preferred house of worship and the instigator of some of his most infamous actions. Even before the Gorham Judgment in 1850, the Bishop's practices provoked broadly publicized Surplice Riots in 1844-45 by thousands of parishioners across the diocese, an event in which St. John's clergy played a pivotal role. The *Times* followed the riots with great interest, devoting thirty-one lead articles in two months to Phillpotts, his innovations, and St. John's.[140] One London correspondent even visited the church to report first-hand on the service responsible for inciting such turmoil.[141] On Easter 1847, Phillpotts took offence at the standing wooden cross decorated with flowers and two altar floral arrangements. He angrily attempted to sweep one of the glass vases aside during Communion, but it was tied down and, consequently, hung dangling off the side of the altar. Infuriated and embarassed, he charged the incumbent, "Flowerpot" Smith, with an illegal act and tried him in the Court of Enquiry, earning him and St. John's an international reputation as the subject of the first Ritual Prosecution in England. In 1865 the London press widely reported Phillpotts's censure of the carved *Crucifixion* reredos (fig. 51) in St. John's as idolatrous, and the event was "talked of everywhere."[142]

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[139] *Church Times*, Nov. 22, 1885, quoted in Boggis, *History of St. John's*, 180.
[140] Boggis, *History of St. John's*, 63.
[141] Ibid., 65.
[142] On the grounds that it was idolatrous and Romish, Bishop Phillpotts refused to license the newly finished chancel unless the offending object was temporarily covered with a sheet. An agreement was reached whereby two crucified thieves, a soldier, and four spears were sculpted in plaster and awkwardly amended to the reredos. On Jan. 11, 1865, *The Guardian* reported this "happy" compromise had the effect

Burne-Jones would surely have known Exeter's key role in the advancement of Anglo-Catholicism. As a youth the Gorham Controversy riled him, and he eagerly followed Tractarian controversies. Phillpotts served as Official Visitor to Burne-Jones's college at Oxford, which had formal ties to Exeter diocese. St. John's leadership was frequently drawn from the pool of clergymen trained at Exeter College, and it is highly possible that had he been ordained, Burne-Jones would have been drafted to its diocese. It is likely he absorbed some of the contentious history surrounding St. John's, which, as one of its vicars pointed out in 1930, "ecclesiastically…has been really famous…one of the most noted—ought we say, the most notorious?—of all the Churches in the land."[143]

Burne-Jones would also have known of St. John's through his friend and colleague, George Edmund Street, who re-built the original neoclassical church in 1863-84 by excavating a new, Gothic Revival structure from the abutting limestone cliff face and literally erecting it around the existing church.[144] Street modeled St. John's, considered one of his masterpieces, on All Saints, Margaret Street, where he worshipped, and the "beauty and originality" of his design elicited praise from *The Ecclesiologist*.[145] As the flowerpot incident confirms, the altar in St. John's, raised seven steps above the nave, received special aesthetic attention and clearly occupied the visual and theological focal point of worship. A photograph of the altar around the time Burne-Jones's

of making "the work a more exact representation of the actual facts of the Crucifixion" rather than a Catholic-style devotional object solely focused on Jesus as victim. The morning after Phillpotts died in 1869 an anonymous iconoclast knocked off one of the thieves' heads. The remaining alterations were removed and the reredos restored to its original design. Ibid., 274, 98, 100.

[143] Ibid., 274.

[144] The congregation had outgrown the original chapel, and its neoclassical architecture was incongruent with the Anglo-Catholic ritual and doctrine at St. John's. In 1864, Street tore down the east end of the existing chapel and temporarily attached a new, Gothic chancel. Worshippers continued to sit in the old nave watching Mass take place in the new chancel. Street constructed a new nave and side aisles around the existing structure so as not to disrupt services. Once complete in 1871, the entire neoclassical chapel was torn down inside St. John's and the rubble carried out.

[145] "New Churches," *Ecclesiologist* 24 (Apr. 1863): 127.

paintings were installed (fig. 52) reveals not six but eight lights, two candelabras, four

floral arrangements, an altar cross, curtains, and an embroidered frontal. The chancel's

east wall of colored marble inlaid with mosaics by Antonio Salviati and the controversial

Crucifix/ion reredos served as its backdrop.

The church leadership's general endorsement of the ecclesiastical arts is reflected

in Street's polychrome interior (fig. 53), which a visitor described as "one of [his]

happiest and most beautiful." He designed his ornate, airy iron and brass screen (1874)

with "gates…as lofty as if it were a real rood-screen" to give the seated congregation a

clear view of the chancel.[146] A copy of a Fra Filippo Lippi *Annunciation* was installed

over the Lady Chapel altar the same year as Burne-Jones's paintings.[147] In addition to

existing stained-glass windows in the clerestory and south aisle, Salviati inserted mosaics

of the life of Saint John the Evangelist in 1893-94 in the north aisle to give the effect of

light since the abutting cliff face made windows impossible in that space. In 1865, the

clergy commissioned Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, & Co. to fill the east chancel window,

for which Burne-Jones designed a *Church Triumphant in the Heavenly Jerusalem* (fig.

54). Executed in a soft palette of pastel yellows, mauves, cool blues and greens, it is

considered one of their finest works from the 1860s.[148] Twenty-five years later, Morris

and Company installed the opposite west window using the cartoons from Jesus College,

Cambridge, representing the Nine Choirs of Angels, rendered in deep, rich tones of red,

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[146] S. S. H., "A Sunday in Torquay," 291.

[147] "Torquay Churches. Views on our Picture page," *Torquay Times*, Oct. 16, 1925.

[148] The rose window above features *Our Lord in Glory* circled by eight small angels playing bells. A humorous story surrounds the image of Saint Peter: While having lunch with Burne-Jones at the Grange in Jan. 1889, Airy commented on the novelty of Peter having a beard but no moustache. The artist "rose up immediately at the table, took up his knife and held it up towards the sky, and said: 'I fear I have been guilty of many and many a sin in my life, but I swear—I swear that I have never committed so grave as one as to draw S. Peter with a Newgate frill!'" and decided it "must be Morris's fault in the burning." Basil Reginald Airy, "A History of St. John's, Torquay," unpublished album, 1919, St. John's, Torquay (hereafter cited as Airy, St. John's album).

pink, and blue (fig. 55).[149] Above, *The Good Samaritan* and *Visiting the Sick* flank

Christ in Majesty, a reused cartoon from the 1875 Easthampstead *Dies Domini* window.

The south and north chancel walls, which John Christian and Douglas E.

Schoenherr claim were intended for mosaics, were, according to Airy, "left faced with

rough stone, in the hope that some day paintings might be inserted."[150] This plan seems

to date from as early as 1865, when an engraving of the chancel shows hypothetical

designs for the space (fig. 56). A donor finally made this possible in 1888 by giving

£200 to fill one space on the condition that Airy raise £200 to fill the other. Quickly

securing the remaining funds, Airy solicited the advice of architect John Dando Sedding,

known for his expertise in altar decoration. Sedding, whose own altar designs Burne-

Jones influenced, "advised, if in any way possible, pictures by Burne-Jones."[151] He

offered to make the necessary overtures, which the artist met with enthusiasm and "at

once said that he would do something."[152] Burne-Jones dissuaded the church from

murals, convincing them canvases would "last hundreds of years longer than if painted on

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[149] Following Street's suggestion, the clergy at St. John's initially requested a *Last Judgment*. Morris, who came down to Torquay in person to discuss the plans, explained the high cost involved with new designs and generously offered to re-use the Jesus College cartoons instead for a reduced fee. Airy, St. John's album. One Victorian curate at St. John's felt the window "must help us a great deal in our worship in God's house" and "will add this year to the depth and earnestness of our devotion when we sing in the words…'Oh! the depths of joy Divine, thrilling through those Orders Nine." G. G. Gutteres, quoted in Basil Reginald Airy, *A Brief History of S. John's, Torquay* (Torquay: Andrew Iredale, 1902), 31.

[150] Airy, St. John's album. John Christian and Douglas E. Schoenherr claim that a plan emerged in the late 1880s to fill the two blank spaces on the north and south chancel walls with mosaic but the plan fell through because of a lack of funds. Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 207; Schoenherr, cat. no. A:16 in *The Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and His Circle from Canadian Collections*, ed. Katharine A. Lochnan, Schoenherr, and Carole Silver (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1993). The Sotheby's sale catalog repeats this assertion. Sotheby's, *Nineteenth Century European Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture* (London, 21 Nov. 1989), lot 30. However, as the incumbent responsible for commissioning the paintings, Airy would surely have left some indication of this failed scheme in either his published history of St. John's or his voluminous unpublished album, but no such account exists.

[151] Airy, St. John's album. Of Sedding's *Design for Decorated Altar in Electrotype or Beaten Metal*, Henry Wilson wrote, "in a decorative sense the design, in composition and the treatment of the trees, is evidently more or less suggested by Mr. Burne Jones's work." *Builder* 60 (1891), 298, quoted in John Dando Sedding, http://jdsedding.freehomepage .com/cgi-bin/framed/3010/frother.html.

[152] Airy, St. John's album.

the walls."[153] Their monumental scale (6' 9" x 10' 4" each) simulated the effect of

murals without the attendant conservation problems.[154] Burne-Jones told his friend F. S.

Ellis, "the price I did not wish to be known," suggesting he may have executed the

commission at a reduced rate, "half because I like to play with that subject and because

the architect is a friend of mine; and the chance of doing public work seldom comes to

me."[155] "It is true I can be lured to folly when I am asked to paint for a church," he

confessed.[156]

It was Burne-Jones who "said what the subjects should be," settling immediately

upon a king and a shepherd (fig. 57) for the north side, approaching a Nativity (fig. 58)

on the south wall.[157] Innovatively, he depicted only one king and one shepherd being

guided by angels and, in a seemingly unprecedented move, removed them from the object

of their adoration and placed them on a separate canvas.[158] A seated, reading Joseph and

three angels attend to the reclining Virgin, who cradles the infant Jesus. Scholars have

already commented on the Byzantine influence and the similarities to Burne-Jones's

Rome mosaics and the *Star of Bethlehem*, upon which he was simultaneously engaged.[159]

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[153] Ibid.

[154] Burne-Jones executed them "on specially prepared Canvas stretched on well-seasoned oak frames." They were then inserted into the chancel recesses ¾ inch away from the walls, twelve feet above the floor, in late December, 1888. Ibid.

[155] Edward Burne-Jones to F. S. Ellis, Jan. 16, 1889, Burne-Jones Papers, XXVI, fol. 125, Fitzwilliam Museum.

[156] Ibid., fol. 126.

[157] Airy, St. John's album. In 1989, in need of costly repairs, St. John's sold the paintings at Sotheby's, where Sir Andrew Lloyd-Webber bought them. They later passed into the Carnegie Museum of Art. Barrington Bramley made replicas of the pictures for St. John's, which now hang in situ.

[158] Louise Lippincott rightly asserts that there is no known precedent for placing the kings and shepherds on an entirely separate canvas from the Nativity itself. "Victorian Masterworks Come to Pittsburgh from Andrew Lloyd Webber," *Carnegie Magazine Online* 63, no. 11 (1997), http://www.carnegiemuseums.org/ cmag/bk_issue/1997/sepoct/feat1.html. The kings and shepherds sometimes appeared in different panels from the Holy Family in Renaissance polyptychs, although Burne-Jones's composition is more radical than such art historical sources. It is not altogether unusual in his oeuvre; designs in his *Flower Book* show each king approaching Bethlehem separately from different directions (see figs. 141a-b).

[159] Bell, *Sir Edward Burne-Jones*, 78; Schoenherr, *Earthly Paradise*, A:16.

The paintings also seem to be an amalgamation of early Christian relief sculpture, classical friezes, Botticelli, and Mantegna.[160] Although mostly overlooked in modern scholarship, during Burne-Jones's lifetime these paintings were admired in religious circles for their perceived ability to glorify God and aid in worship. Elbert F. Baldwin, for instance, wrote in 1894 that this "treatment of our great subject has never been surpassed," while another critic felt the paintings excited [check source] "reverential admiration and devotion" and stirred "mingled feelings of awe and delight."[161]

Christian and Schoenherr suggest the commission dates to 1887; however, Burne-Jones's and the church's records provide no evidence that he began the paintings before the summer of 1888.[162] His work record for 1888 states, "I designed and began two pictures for a church of a King & a shepherd, led by an angel in one picture—and the Nativity in the other….The pictures of the Nativity & the angels with the rich & poor men were for a Church at Torquay, and they were sent there in the middle of December."[163] In January 1889 Burne-Jones explained to Ellis, who had recently seen the works in Torquay, that he painted them during the past "summer and autumn."[164] The extent to which he executed the paintings himself, however, remains questionable due to conflicting evidence. The composition was clearly his own conception. With painstaking preparation he worked out the figure positions, drapery and accessories

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[160] The painting could have been influenced by Botticelli's *Mystic Nativity* (1500), purchased by the National Gallery in 1878. Burne-Jones was particularly fond of Botticelli at this time, and the two pictures share similarities in the hut-like structure, sandy-colored path winding through the foreground, and dense backdrop of evenly shaped, dark green trees.

[161] Elbert F. Baldwin, "The Nativity: As Interpreted by the English Pre-Raphaelites," *Outlook* 50 (Dec. 1894): 1045; notice from the *Torquay Directory*, quoted in Airy, *Brief History of S. John's*, 15.

[162] They base their conclusion on an inscription on a pastel study in the Walsall Museum and Art Gallery. The handwriting, however, is not Burne-Jones's and so is not a wholly reliable source for dating the study. Schoenherr, *Earthly Paradise*, A:16; Arts Council, *Burne-Jones*, 73.

[163] E. Burne-Jones, "List of My Designs," fols. 35-36.

[164] Edward Burne-Jones to F. S. Ellis, Jan. 16, 1889, Burne-Jones Papers, XXVI, fol. 125, Fitzwilliam Museum.

through numerous informal pencil sketches, thirteen highly finished chalk drawings, and three pastel studies.[165] Isolated figure drawings on tracing paper were squared for enlargement and studio assistants transferred them to canvas, a process the artist frequently followed.[166] According to Georgiana and their son, Philip, studio assistants largely executed the painting. "You will remember that they were *painted from* his designs," Georgiana reminded Airy in 1912, "but not by his own hand."[167] Philip corroborated this account, saying "much of the work on them was done by an assistant."[168] However, nothing in the church archives confirms this "agreement…made because it was impossible for him then to give the time."[169] Burne-Jones admitted to Ellis only, "Some help I had at first drawing them out from my designs and studies," but then claimed he "worked on them swiftly—painting two heads in a morning when I was lucky."[170] He admitted they were "little more than boldly coloured designs" into which he "put no labour or any execution that mattered" but insisted, "having once undertaken them I did my best."[171]

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[165] There is one pastel study for *The King and the Shepherd* in the Carnegie Museum of Art. Two for *The Nativity* exist, one in the Walsall Museum and Art Gallery and the other in the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester. The Whitworth owns another thirteen drawings related to the Torquay paintings.

[166] Burne-Jones's son, Phillip, provides a first-hand account of the process for large-scale paintings: "when the cartoon was completed, it would be traced by an assistant and transferred to the canvas….The design was then drawn in, usually by an assistant, in thin monochrome (burnt sienna, raw or burnt umber, or terre verte)….My father himself would start [painting] with the brighter portions in pure flake white, lumping it up, and patting it on and dragging it over, so as completely to cover the warp and woof of the canvas and form agreeable surfaces, which were allowed to get bone-dry before the final glazes were applied. Philip Burne-Jones, "Notes on some unfinished works of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Bt. By his son," *Magazine of Art* 24 (Feb. 1900): 160.

[167] G. Burne-Jones to Basil Reginald Airy, Mar. 21, 1912, in Airy, St. John's album. Schoenherr and Lippincott both conclude they were largely painted by another hand.

[168] P. Burne-Jones, "Notes on unfinished works," 160.

[169] G. Burne-Jones to Basil Reginald Airy, Mar. 21, 1912, in Airy, St. John's album.

[170] Edward Burne-Jones to F. S. Ellis, Jan. 16, 1889, Burne-Jones Papers, XXVI, fol. 125, Fitzwilliam Museum.

[171] Ibid.

Regardless, he appreciated and enjoyed the commission, telling Airy in 1889 that the paintings "gave me great pleasure to design," and he hoped to see them in situ someday.[172] One observer discerned an "instinctive feeling" gazing upon *The Nativity* "that the artist has had an earnest pleasure in setting forth his conception of the great marvel of the world."[173] Hoping to revisit the compositions again, he retained two preparatory pencil drawings, which Georgiana "look[ed] at almost daily."[174] It was nearly ten years later when he finally "return[ed] to his intention of carrying out these designs himself" as "oil pictures of considerable size."[175] At his death, however, "the large canvas [of the Nativity] remained with little more than the head of the Virgin and the Child in monochrome."[176]

Demonstrating again his sensitivity to the special constraints of working in ecclesiastical spaces, Burne-Jones created the works to harmonize with their intended location. He admitted to Ellis, "if you saw them close you would find them very rough" because "they are…not meant or designed for close inspection," being hung high above eye level on the chancel wall.[177] Hearing that his friend had seen the paintings in situ, he concernedly inquired whether the inscriptions were legible from below.[178] As Schoenherr observes, the motif of divine guidance, represented by the angel leading the

[172] Edward Burne-Jones to Basil Reginald Airy, Jan. 16, 1889, in Airy, St. John's album. Georgiana added her own sentiment thanking Airy for his kind words about the paintings, "may I say also what pleasure your appreciative and sympathetic letter has given us both? That is the *real* payment for any work of art." G. Burne-Jones to Basil Reginald Airy, Jan. 16, 1889, in Airy, St. John's album.
[173] Notice in *Torquay Directory*, quoted in Airy, *Brief History of S. John's*, 15.
[174] G. Burne-Jones to Basil Reginald Airy, Mar. 21, 1912, in Airy, St. John's album. These were shown at the Burlington Fine Arts Club exhibition of 1899 (nos. 105 and 133).
[175] Ibid.; P. Burne-Jones, "Notes on unfinished works," 160.
[176] G. Burne-Jones to Basil Reginald Airy, Mar. 21, 1912, in Airy, St. John's album. It is unclear, however, whether he began both subjects again or just the Nativity. Philip's account differs slightly from Georgiana's, saying "two huge canvases, with the figures traced out in monochrome, are all that remain." P. Burne-Jones, "Notes on unfinished works," 160.
[177] Edward Burne-Jones to F. S. Ellis, Jan. 16, 1889, Burne-Jones Papers, XXVI, fol. 125, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[178] Ibid.

king and shepherd, parallels that of the adjacent figure being led to the Heavenly

Jerusalem in the lower left panel of the east chancel window (fig. 59).[179] When the

paintings were installed and accidentally transposed, Burne-Jones insisted on their

immediate reversal since *The Nativity* was "designed for the South side—which I dimly

remember to be the side of honour."[180] His comment reveals his understanding of the

symbolism of ecclesiastical architecture and its theological implications. He included a

sketch to clarify his intentions (fig. 60) and subsequently Airy had the paintings switched.

Admitting he was "prepared for mischance" since it was "uncertain work to design for a

space one has never seen," Burne-Jones found Airy's approval and concern reassuring.[181]

The Nativity

Burne-Jones's *Nativity* is an unorthodox, Ango/Catholic statement enforcing

Jesus's humanity, the physicality of his incarnation, and his sacrificial nature. An

emphasis on the Eucharist and the Real Presence was a primary instigator of the public

opposition St. John's clergy encountered.[182] Anti-Romanists charged that their particular

celebration of the Eucharist implied a refutation of the Protestant Reformation. The ritual

at St. John's included "novel ceremonies…genuflexions and turnings to the Communion

Table" thought "consistent only with the Doctrines of an Altar and the presence of the

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[179] Schoenherr, *Earthly Paradise*, A:16. Two years later this theme was picked up again in the west window, where a Guardian Angel in the upper left light leads a tiny man by the hand.
[180] Edward Burne-Jones to Basil Reginald Airy, Jan. 16, 1889, in Airy, St. John's album.
[181] Ibid.
[182] In 1881, for instance, the incumbent C. E. R. Robinson cited biblical evidence from the pulpit to prove it is "*very, very* likely" that "God would connect spiritual life with an outward rite… because not only our inward spirit needs to be joined to Christ's Spirit, but our *bodies* need to be supernaturally joined to Christ's *Body*." *Verba Moerentis: Five Sermons preached in S. John's, Torquay* (Torquay, 1881), 81.

Host, as taught in the Romish Church."[183] From December 1889 clergy used the

Consecration bell, a Catholic practice marking the transformation of the host, and in

October 1892 they erected a banner of the Blessed Sacrament. The victimization of Jesus

was unmistakable thanks to the infamous crucifix reredos. Around 1880 the text, "God

was manifest in the Flesh," (1 Timothy 3:16) even appeared "over the altar."[184] The

Eucharistic doctrine followed at St. John's was as Roman as possible within the

parameters of the Anglican Church.

Portending the sacrifice represented by the Crucifixion reredos, Burne-Jones's

Nativity contributes to an overall program of Jesus as victim of the Anglo/Catholic

Eucharist. The somber earthy coloring and the Virgin's wistful expression create a

melancholy mood. Foreshadowing Jesus's death, the three angels prophetically bear

"symbols of the passion—crown of thorns, chalice and pot of spikenard" representing the

Crucifixion, Eucharist, and Resurrection, respectively.[185] Imbuing nativities with

intimations of Jesus's crucifixion was a common device in art of the medieval period,

when, as Louise Lippincott points out, survivors of the Black Death "found consolation

in this conception of the Virgin sorrowing in the knowledge of the suffering and death

that awaited her son."[186] Burne-Jones's contemporaries likewise remarked on the "sad

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[183] *Correspondence on…Innovations introduced in…St. John's Chapel, Torquay, between the Congregation…the Lord Bishop of Exeter, and the Rev. W. G. Parks Smith* (Torquay, 1845), 10.
[184] Rev. Robinson referenced this inscription in his sermon but it is unclear where the text appeared or how long it remained there. Robinson, *Verba Moerentis*, 79.
[185] Edward Burne-Jones to F. S. Ellis, Jan. 16, 1889, Burne-Jones Papers, XXVI, fol. 125, Fitzwilliam Museum. Boggis expanded on this interpretation, explaining the "sacred emblems" as "reminiscent of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and Easter Day." Boggis, *History of St. John's*, 207. While angels are often present in nativity scenes, there are fewer instances of heavenly messengers carrying the symbols of Jesus's death. One such example Burne-Jones possibly knew is Mantegna's *Agony in the Garden* (c.1460), in which the angels of the passion hover in the sky. The first version is in Tours, and the National Gallery purchased the second in 1894.
[186] Lippincott, "Victorian Masterworks."

sweet faces" of the angels and their expressions redolent of "mingled feelings of joy at the glorious event they witness, and prophetic sorrow for the sufferings they foresee."[187]

The most unusual feature of *The Nativity*, however, is its reclining Madonna, a motif which, as Burne-Jones's sketches and stained glass evidence, preoccupied him from his earliest days as an artist.[188] This tradition dated to early Christian sculpture and ivory carving, and was popularized through Byzantine and early Italian art. One *Ecclesiologist* contributor remarked in 1858 that all the medieval nativities he could remember "pourtray [*sic*] the Blessed Virgin as reclining on a low couch, whilst at her side is laid her Divine Son in the wooden manger."[189] Examples Burne-Jones knew include those in the façades of Notre Dame and Orvieto Cathedrals (fig. 61) and Giotto's Arena Chapel frescoes (fig. 62), which Lippincott notes also provided a precedent for his seated Joseph.[190] After the fourteenth century, however, a seated Madonna embracing her infant replaced the reclining Virgin. Since Jesus's birth was to have been "as pure and miraculous as his conception," Victorian art historian Anna Jameson (1794-1860) related, it gradually became "little less than heretical to portray Mary reclining on a couch as one exhausted by the pangs of childbirth."[191] The emphasis on her human suffering and pain was deemed inappropriate and offensive for the divine mother of God.

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[187] Bell, *Sir Edward Burne-Jones*, 78; Cartwright, *Life and Work*, 26; *Torquay Directory*, quoted in Airy, *Brief History of S. John's*, 16. Baldwin noted sadness as a prevalent feature among most Pre-Raphaelite Nativities. Baldwin, "The Nativity," 1045

[188] Sketches reveal that Burne-Jones contemplated a reclining Madonna for his 1862 *Nativity* painted for the Dalziel Brothers. Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery (591'27) and Tate Gallery (A01160). He turned to the reclining Virgin motif again in the 1890s for the Gladstone memorial window at Hawarden.

[189] J. Louis André to the Editor of the *Ecclesiologist*, Feb. 16, 1858, in "Notices and Answers to Correspondents," *Ecclesiologist* 19 (Apr. 1858): 137.

[190] Lippincott, "Victorian Masterworks." Burne-Jones visited Notre Dame in 1855 with Morris, Orvieto Cathedral in 1871, and the Arena Chapel in Padua in 1862. May Gaskell brought him engravings of Orvieto Cathedral in 1897, which "moved him so much that he avoided looking at them when he was tired." Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 280.

[191] Jameson, *Legends of the Madonna*, 245.

Even an *Ecclesiologist* reader admitted it connoted a "distressing weakness of the natural birth."[192]

In addition to this overall tone of misery and distress, Burne-Jones's Madonna and Child, lying prone on a rustic wattled palette covered with linens, conjure an even more ominous note. Lippincott insightfully detects that the Virgin's white gown, "reminiscent of a shroud," and "the child's shroudlike swaddling clothes and the carefully formed draperies" transform "the manger into a rustic bier."[193] The juxtaposition of a mother cradling her child with tender affection on a funeral pyre serves to connote his sacrificial nature and violent death. Burne-Jones further acknowledged this allusion to death when he utilized the reclining Madonna and Child grouping in an 1879 bronze relief memorial to George Howard's mother (fig. 63).

Burne-Jones's composition, however, is not merely a foreshadowing of the Crucifixion but also a specific endorsement of Jesus's victimization in the Eucharist. The rectangular platform recalls an altar draped in white altar cloth, while its straw stuffing symbolically references the communion elements and the Christian analogy of Jesus as the bread of life.[194] Ritualists used the predominant white color, repeated in the Virgin's robe, as the liturgical color for the sacrament of Holy Communion. As Pugin declared in *The Glossary of Ornament*, "all, who have written concerning the Eucharist" agree white "is the colour proper for the Eucharist, and for all Eucharistical Functions…preserving

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[192] André, "Notices and Answers," 137.
[193] Lippincott, "Victorian Masterworks."
[194] Julia Cartwright told *Magazine of Art* readers in 1883, "In the Fourteenth Century the sarcophagus-like trough gives place to a bundle of hay or other fodder; sometimes to a sheaf of wheat, symbolical of the Bread of Life." Julia Cartwright, "The Nativity in Art," *Magazine of Art* 6 (1883): 75. Burne-Jones repeatedly linked Jesus's body to the Eucharist through the symbolism of wheat, corn, or grain, for instance in the *Star of Bethlehem*, the *Tree of Life*, and *The Flower Book* roundels. When adapting the Torquay design for the Hawarden window, Burne-Jones emphasized the straw pallet to an even greater degree.

the distinction between the Roman and the Ambrosian Rite, which uses the color Red."[195]

Furthermore, Durandus clarified, "the white cloths wherewith the Altar is covered signify the Flesh of the Saviour, that is, His Humanity."[196] The portentous note of *The Nativity* is also obliquely present in the "casket" the magus holds. Not only "indicative of the treasures that shall be laid at the feet of Christ," by its shape it is also a tomb-like omen of his avowed sacrificial death.[197] With a birthing bed that doubles as funeral pyre and altar, a holy family enmeshed in burial shrouds of the Roman liturgical color of the Eucharist and evocative of Jesus's physical flesh, and painted with an atmosphere of somber mourning, Burne-Jones's *Nativity* functions as a visualization of the Anglo-Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence.

The inscription, Psalm 11:6 in the Clementine Vulgate, "Propter miseriam inopum et gemitum pauperis nunc exsurgam dicit Dominus," complements this meaning. Translated as Psalm 12:5 in the King James Version, it reads: "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD."[198] Burne-Jones "hoped his quotation was correct, but not having a copy of the Vulgate at hand, he had quoted the text from memory" and did make one minor error.[199] His use of the Latin

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[195] A. W. N. Pugin, *Glossary of ecclesiastical ornament and costume,* 2nd ed. (London, 1846), 245.

[196] Guillaume Durand, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments…the first book of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, trans. John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb (Leeds, 1843), 48.

[197] *Torquay Directory*, quoted in Airy, *Brief History of S. John's*, 14.

[198] The text is not a rare quotation from the fifth-century Gallican Vulgate, Saint Jerome's Latin translation of the Greek Bible, as Lippincott surmises. She claims that the Gallican Psalter was not used in Bibles after the seventeenth century, "because it had been determined not to be the work of the psalms' author, King David." Because of this she ascribes great novelty to Burne-Jones' usage of the verse. Lippincott, "Victorian Masterworks." With the exception of one word, however ("pauperis" appears in singular form instead of the plural, "pauperum"), it is an exact quotation of the Clementine Vulgate, the standard Bible of the Roman Catholic Church from 1592 until the 1960s. The church discontinued the use of Saint Jerome's Gallican Vulgate not because of dubious authorship of the Psalms, but because of numerous errors in the text that had accumulated over centuries of copying the Vulgate by hand.

[199] His nonchalance about quoting scripture from memory implies an impressive familiarity with the text and suggests this rote recitation of Bible verses was not a unique occurrence (see chap. 1, p. 45 and n. 406). Although Morris and Co. owned a Vulgate, Burne-Jones sought out his own copy in the 1870s. Edward

Vulgate of Rome over the English Protestant translation reinforced the link to Catholicism. The verse is not as rare as Lippincott contends, but the meaning she attributes to it is nevertheless relevant. She concludes that the prophecy of the Resurrection bringing relief to human suffering relates to social injustice and Burne-Jones's sorrow over the state of the world.[200] However, the inscription is also tied to the theme of Jesus's sacrificial death. The mournful tone of the painting creates a parallel between the suffering of God's people as described in the Psalm and that of Jesus. In Christian theology, Jesus's own agonizing trial allows him to sympathize with the plight of his believers on earth. Thus, Burne-Jones's characterization of Jesus as "victim" conveys a message that because of his own violent, painful sacrifice, he understands first-hand the misery of the world and is specially qualified to comfort the poor, needy, tormented and afflicted.

The King and the Shepherd

As Lippincott astutely observes, the arrangement of the pendants functions as "humanity approaching, and recognizing, the Divine."[201] Conceptually, the king and shepherd must traverse the sacramental space of the altar to reach the salvation embodied in the infant Jesus across the chancel. Spatially, however, the angels actually lead their

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Burne-Jones to F. S. Ellis, n.d. Burne-Jones Papers, XXVI, fol. 112, Fitzwilliam Museum. As demonstrated at St. John's, Torquay, he regularly used inscriptions from the Vulgate, for instance on the book of Psalms, Apocrypha, and prayer book bindings he designed for Frances Graham and May Gaskell (see chap. 4, n. 251) and his *Song of Solomon* drawings (c.1876).

[200] Lippincott relates the painting to contemporary riots by the urban poor in 1886-88, which brought their plight to the forefront of public awareness and inspired social and political reform movements. "Burne-Jones felt that these ancient descriptions of human misery and a sorrowful world also described his own time and place." Lippincott, "Victorian Masterworks."

[201] Lippincott points out the discrepancy from the biblical account, in which the Magi were led by a star not an angel. Lippincott, "Victorian Masterworks." However, as Suzanne Fagence Cooper observes, Burne-Jones frequently conflated the two, for instance in the *Star of Bethlehem* where an annunciating angel holds the glowing orb of a star. Cooper, *Pre-Raphaelite Art*, 158.

charges toward the east chancel wall—the site of the communion table. Burne-Jones's

conscious manipulation of light intensified and affirmed this effect. Always mindful of

the different parameters of easel paintings and architectural projects, he observed in 1897,

"But what difficulties the old painters must have had in the way of glaring cross-lights

from the different church windows as the day went round, and all kinds of things."[202]

Describing the proper positioning of the Torquay paintings to Airy after their mis-

installation, he explained, "I made the light in the poor-&-rich-man only coming from the

right hand as it would be on the north side."[203] Burne-Jones therefore designed his

composition to correlate with the large east chancel window, which illuminates the

picture (fig. 53). Moreover, he exploited this light for its emblematic purposes.

"Otherwise," he continued, "the king & shepherd would be leaving and not going to their

object of worship which contrasts the text."[204] Ecclesiological architects always oriented

the church on an east-west axis with the high altar at the eastern end, where the rising sun

emanating from the chancel window was meant to signify Jesus's role in Christian

tradition as the light of the world. Burne-Jones upheld this allegorical meaning in *The

Nativity*, where "the [painted] light comes…from the child."[205] In situ, then, the king and

shepherd are on a diagonal path moving toward this symbolic eastern light of Jesus,

streaming forth above the altar. "I think this is important," Burne-Jones stressed.[206]

Consequently, it is not his pictured birth the king and shepherd approach but his imagined

presence over the Eucharistic table. Emerging from a forest that one critic interpreted as

"the obscurity of error and the mental darkness prevalent in the world before the advent

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[202] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 3:411.
[203] Edward Burne-Jones to Basil Reginald Airy, Jan. 16, 1889, in Airy, St. John's album.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid.

of the Saviour," the king and shepherd's path leads them straight to the anticipated holy presence of Jesus.[207] In Burne-Jones's conception, the altar thus serves not only as a metaphorical bridge between sinner and salvation, but also the literal destination to which one must travel to meet the living Jesus.

As such, the painting invites viewers to take this action and follow in the footsteps of the king and shepherd. Their journey mirrors the Anglo/Catholic communicant's own "steps to the altar" and perceived encounter with Jesus. Their "mingled tenderness, anxious enquiry, and joyful confidence" were meant to inspire worshippers to similar attitudes of worship before the altar.[208] As in *Morning of the Resurrection*, the angels' quieting gestures instruct observers in what Anglo-Catholics believed was the proper manner of pious reverence with which to approach the communion table.[209] Burne-Jones clarified, "the angel who leads the shepherd is saying 'hush' to him," and, according to Airy, the artist described the other angel as "holding his fingers in a manner which betokens the sealing of his own lips, and demonstrates his own reverence."[210] As at Brighton, Burne-Jones's characterization of the king and shepherd as the "Rich and Poor brought to Our Lord," denotes St. John's altar as a space of social equality.[211]

[207] *Torquay Directory*, quoted in Airy, *Brief History of S. John's*, 14.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Malcolm Bell interpreted the sign as a "warning finger upon lips." Bell, *Sir Edward Burne-Jones*, 78. Another contemporary thought they implored "silence and faith…as though he [the angel] would say, 'Hush! and thou shalt behold.'" *Torquay Directory*, quoted in Airy, *Brief History of S. John's*, 14.
[210] Edward Burne-Jones to F. S. Ellis, Jan. 16, 1889, Burne-Jones Papers, XXVI, fol. 125, Fitzwilliam Museum; Airy, *Brief History of S. John's*, 14.
[211] Airy, St. John's album. Schoenherr suggests that Burne-Jones changed the royal blue color of the King's robe in the preparatory design to "heighten the parallel between the two figures" and thus their equality in the eyes of God. Schoenherr, *Earthly Paradise*, A:16. The isolation of king and shepherd on a separate canvas, Lippincott argues, heightens their importance and underscores the message of social equality that might be lost in a more crowded composition. Lippincott, "Victorian Masterworks."

Nineteenth-century viewers' interpretation of the figures as Gentile and Jew, symbolizing the availability of Jesus's redemption to all humanity, further reinforced this meaning.[212]

For St. John's parishioners the Latin inscription from Luke 2:15 (KJV), "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us," would have further called to mind the notion of Jesus's body as Eucharistic food.[213] In 1881 Reverend Robinson used the verse to preach on the *domus panis*, Saint Gregory's concept of Bethlehem as "the House of Bread," its literal translation from Hebrew. The journey to see the infant, Robinson asserted, was an allegory for the worshipper's participation in the Eucharist, which he maintained was a real consumption of Jesus's flesh. "When we 'go even unto Bethlehem" he explained, "we do something more than commemorate" his sacrifice—"we dwell in Him, and He in us."[214] Art historically, the use of wheat or grain in nativities referenced the *domus panis* and thereby signified the perceived sanctity of the space.[215] According to this tradition, Burne-Jones's Jesus lying on a palette of straw symbolized the bread of life, and traveling to "see this thing which the Lord hath made known to us," then, meant a literal approach to his purported Real Presence at the altar.

In a year when the the Bishop of Lincoln's high profile prosecution for ritualistic practices, controversy over a new reredos in St. Paul's Cathedral, the Papal Jubilee, and Queen Victoria's dispatch of the first British envoy to the Vatican since 1687 foregrounded sensitivities toward Romanism, Burne-Jones, remarkably, created pendants

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[212] Baldwin, "The Nativity," 1045; Boggis, *History of St. John's*, 207.
[213] Lippincott suggests the shepherd is pointing to the inscription above, although Boggis reads his gesture as a sign he "is about to ask a question." Lippincott, "Victorian Masterworks;" Boggis, *History of St. John's*, 207.
[214] Robinson, *Verba Moerentis*, 86-87.
[215] Lane, *Altar and the Altarpiece*, 53.

that distinctly endorse Eucharistic sacrifice and the doctrine of the Real Presence. In these works, he affirms the altar as the site of reconciliation and redemption, where the communicant encounters Jesus as victim, swaddled in his burial shroud. Such Romish iconography was apposite to the doctrine taught at St. John's, indicative of Burne-Jones's ongoing commitment to Anglo/Catholicism, and revealing of his attention to his ecclesiastical objects' theological contexts and physical environments.

Christ Church, Woburn Square, London

In the last years of his life Burne-Jones received a commission to create a reredos (fig. 64) in memory of Christina Rossetti (1830-94) for her place of worship, Christ Church, Woburn Square, London. From the 1840s Rossetti, who modeled for the Virgin in her brother's paintings *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1848-49) and *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* (1849-50), was a dedicated Anglo-Catholic. She devoted over half of her writings and the majority of her later career to sacred themes informed by Tractarian poetry and Anglo-Catholic theology. Her religious poems and essays were primarily devotional, such as *Annus Domini: A Prayer for Each Day of the Year, founded on a Text of Holy Scripture* (1874), *Called to be Saints: The Minor Festivals Devotionally Studied* (1881), and *The Face of the Deep: A Devotional Commentary on the Apocalypse* (1892). Contemporaries compared Christina's hymns such as "In the bleak midwinter" with Keble's influential, Romanist *Christian Year* (1827), which she owned and loved.[216] One of his last works, Burne-Jones's design of *Our Lord and the Four Evangelists* writing the Gospels not only related thematically to Christina's accomplishments as a Christian

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[216] "Summaries," *Church Eclectic: An Anglo-Catholic Magazine of Church Literature* 22, no. 11 (1895): 1050.

author, but was also his most overt statement about the relationship of Jesus's sacrifice to the Eucharistic elements.

From 1843 the Rossetti family attended "one of the first nineteenth-century Anglican churches to have flowers on its altar," Christ Church, Albany Street.[217] Prominent figures associated with this congregation include the Reverend William Dodsworth (1798-1861), who seceded to Rome in 1851; curate Benjamin Webb (1819-85, served 1847-49), a founding architect of the Ecclesiological Society; and, until he converted to Catholicism, the Pre-Raphaelite painter James Collinson (1825-81).[218] The Rossetti family also frequented St. Andrew's, Wells Street, famous for its advanced ritual and chanting of the Psalms.[219] Christina had additional ties to the prominent Anglo-Catholics Henry W. Burrows, Richard Frederick Littledale, and William James Early Bennett. After Bennett's extreme ceremonial innovations at St. Barnabas, Pimlico, provoked violent anti-ritual riots and forced his resignation in 1850, Christina and her mother helped administer Bennett's school in Somerset.[220] Her sister Maria joined the conventual order of All Saints Sisters of the Poor in 1873, founded at All Saints, Margaret Street, in 1851. From 1859 Christina volunteered as an honorary "Sister" at the St. Mary Magdalene Penitentiary for unwed mothers and prostitutes, where she wore a nun-like habit. Later on, she was heavily involved with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, which published many of her poems.

Christ Church, Woburn Square (fig. 65, now destroyed), near Christina's home, was her preferred place of worship from around 1875 until her death on December 29,

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[217] Grieve, "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," 294.
[218] Ibid. Rossetti was briefly engaged to Collinson.
[219] Millais also attended church here. Ibid.
[220] Ibid.

1894.[221] Designed in 1830 by the Swiss architect Lewis Vulliamy (1791-1871), the

church was built in 1831-32 as a chapel of ease to St. George's, Bloomsbury. Dating to

the period before ecclesiology, its exterior, an idiosyncratic pastiche of Gothic, was

incongruous with its square cross plan, whitewashed walls, and galleries. A nineteenth-

century photograph (fig. 66) reveals that in keeping with its congregation's penchant for

Anglo-Catholicism, some Gothic Revival elements were added such as a stained-glass

east window, brass eagle lectern, carved wooden screens and a painted chancel wall.[222]

This church occupied such a central role in Rossetti's life that *The Saturday Review*

declared, "it would not be easy, in the contemplation of a man of genius, to discover any

spot half so intimately connected with his existence as Christ Church, Woburn Square, is

with that of Christina Rossetti," curiously masculine language suggesting female

"genius" was still considered an anomaly.[223]

The idea for the reredos surfaced in 1895 not long after Rossetti's death. The

Reverend Glendinning Nash, with grandiose but unrealistic plans, approached Burne-

Jones about creating mosaic decorations. The artist, however, "told him mosaics were

expensive in execution and he'd much better have these little panels."[224] After settling on

an estimated price of £100 or £125, Burne-Jones reported on December 16 with

annoyance that the clergyman, "sorry subscriptions are not coming in as fast as he could

wish," had only collected £8.[225] "Ridiculous fool, what does he come wasting my time

for with that silly sum," he complained contemptuously. Apparently it took another two

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[221] E. G., "A Memorial to Christina Rossetti," *Saturday Review* 86 (Nov. 1898): 601; "Summaries," 1050.
[222] Although the National Monuments Record Office lists the photograph as c.1900, it clearly dates from before the installation of the Rossetti reredos.
[223] E. G., "Memorial to Christina Rossetti," 601.
[224] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:76-77.
[225] Ibid.

years for Nash to accumulate the necessary funds, leading Burne-Jones to inquire

doubtfully of his studio assistant Thomas Rooke, "you won't mind that reredos work we

were talking about, caving in?"[226]

From the beginning, Burne-Jones predetermined that Rooke, a religious painter in

his own right, would execute the reredos. He conceded to Nash straight away, "that I

couldn't afford the time to make him a gift of my work, but that I'd give him the design

and supervise its being done."[227] Presumably the artist agreed to this compromise due to

his friendship with the Rossetti family. Burne-Jones allegedly completed the existing

pencil and chalk compositional sketch, dated June 1897, in a "Half Hour" (fig. 67).[228]

Inscriptions along the bottom edge denote directions for colors, and on the reverse Rooke

recorded in 1921, "done in my presence, for memorial reredos to Christina Rossetti in

Woburn Square Church…and executed by me at that time."[229] Rooke filled in the

decorative patterning on the altar cloth and backdrop and added beards to Jesus and two

of the evangelists. Nash, however, reported that Burne-Jones painted it "in part," so the

precise extent of his involvement remains indefinite.[230]

The final reredos comprises five individual mahogany panels depicting Jesus and

the four evangelists, to whom Christian tradition attributes the authorship of the Gospels.

Before a long table draped in gilded, diapered cloth, Jesus, bearing the same cruciform

nimbus Burne-Jones used for the lamb in his Agnes Dei windows, stands with arms

crossed and eyes closed in a devotional posture of prayer. The Saints Matthew, Mark,

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[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Inscription on reverse of sketch. Edward Burne-Jones, *Design for a Memorial to Christina Rossetti*, 1897. Sold Christie's, London, 7 November 1997 (lot 37).
[229] Ibid.
[230] Rev. Prebendary Glendinning Nash, preface to *An Appreciation of the late Christina Georgina Rossetti by the Right Rev. B. F. Westcott* (London, 1899), 7.

Luke, and John, haloed but without their usual iconographic attributes, exhibit a similarly reverent demeanor with their bowed heads and downcast gazes directed toward the Eucharistic chalice. Poised with stylus in one hand and bound volumes in the other, each stands ready to dictate "the words which fall from the Master's lips," a theme that alludes to Christina herself as a divinely-inspired poet.[231] Pictured in the central panel on the table before Jesus are the communion elements in the form of bread on a paten and an engraved chalice. Gold, patterned drapery and green foliage, which the *Magazine of Art* interpreted as "the olive trees of Gethsemane" portending Jesus's death, serve as a backdrop.[232] Contemporary reviews of the reredos indicate Burne-Jones was best known for his religious paintings, a reputation further explored in Chapter Three. *The Saturday Review* described the altarpiece as "the more conventional manner of Burne-Jones," while the *Magazine of Art* felt its "originality of treatment, beauty of pose, richness in colour, and exceptional sweetness of devotional expression" demonstrate "the characteristic genius of the artist."[233]

The reredos was installed in late 1898 together with a marble memorial inlaid on the floor before the altar. Nash dedicated both on All Saints Day at a special ceremony, where Brooke Foss Westcott (1825-1901), the Bishop of Durham, paid tribute to Rossetti's literary accomplishments. The original architectural context of the altarpiece is difficult to discern since the church was severely damaged in the war, subsequently redecorated, and demolished in 1974.[234] A photograph from 1899 (fig. 68) reveals an

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[231] "The Christina Rossetti Memorial, Sir Edward Burne-Jones's Last Work," *Magazine of Art* 22 (Dec. 1899): 88.

[232] "Christina Rossetti Memorial," 88.

[233] E. G., "Memorial to Christina Rossetti," 601; Ibid.

[234] When the church was demolished in the 1970s the reredos was removed to the parish church of St. George's, Bloomsbury, after which its history becomes vague. In 1989 St. George's lent the unframed

ornately carved frame that Nash designed in a Gothic Perpendicular style to match the chancel dado behind originally encased the five vertical panels.[235] A diamond altar cross, which Christina's aunt gave to the church, was inserted in a triangular pediment above.[236] The earlier nineteenth-century interior photograph documents the original stained-glass east window depicting Moses and the Ten Commandments, which are written in mural form on either side of the window on the chancel wall. Their juxtaposition with the reredos created a fortuitous, perhaps intentional, coincidence since in Christian theology, the Gospel message the evangelists record represents a new covenant with God that replaces the old Mosaic laws portrayed above the altar.

The Eucharist and the Real Presence

Over the years, Burne-Jones's altarpieces inched toward an explicit rendering of the doctrine of the Real Presence, progressing from the Incarnation subject of the Brighton triptychs; to the resurrected Jesus standing on the altar of St. Peter's, Vere Street, but rendered in a suitably Protestant manner; to the overtones of death and sacrifice in the pendants at St. John's. At Christ Church, Woburn Square, Burne-Jones dismissed with Incarnation imagery altogether and finally painted Jesus as officiating priest of his own sacrament. Once again he took up a well-established Catholic tradition, promulgated by Augustine, of Jesus's concurrent roles as "priest and sacrifice" affirmed in the Fourth Lateran Council's decree on transubstantiation.

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panels indefinitely to All Saints, Margaret Street. This decision was made because of the Rossettis' involvement with the All Saints Sisters. Dr. Christopher C. G. Rawll, letter to author, Nov. 30, 2004.
[235] "Christina Rossetti Memorial," 88.
[236] "Summaries," 1050.

Medieval art often connected Jesus typologically with the Old Testament high priest Melchizedek, whose presentation of bread and wine to Abraham Christians interpet as foreshadowing the Last Supper. In the Renaissance, Barbara Lane chronicles, artists began representing Jesus simultaneously as priest and sacrifice, as in Dirk Bouts's *Holy Sacrament Altarpiece* (1464-68) (fig. 69).[237] Following precedents such as Bouts's, Burne-Jones presents an equally "nonhistorical ritualistic interpretation of the institution of the Eucharist" devoid of common dramatic details such as Jesus's revelation that one of his disciples would betray him.[238] Further distinguishing it from historical representations of the Last Supper, Bouts and Burne-Jones both show Jesus blessing the elements together, whereas in the biblical account he consecrates them separately. In the Rossetti reredos, Jesus seemingly administers the sacrament simultaneously to the evangelists and the communicants at the altar below. To implicate the worshipper further in this momentous event, Burne-Jones pushed the table to the forefront of the picture plane, creating an illusion that the scene is encroaching on the viewer's space. The paten, which projects beyond the edge of the narrow table, heightens this effect. William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919) recognized that Burne-Jones's design cast Jesus in the role of officiating priest, interpreting his sister's memorial as "Christ uttering the words of consecration of the eucharistic elements, and the four evangelists as recorders of the event."[239]

Significantly, Anglo/Catholics considered consecration to be the action imparting Jesus's objective presence into the elements. Hence, for the congregation at Christ

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[237] Lane, *Altar and the Altarpiece*, 107-36.
[238] Ibid., 112.
[239] William Michael Rossetti, "Memoir," in *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti*, ed. William Michael Rossetti (London: Macmillan, 1904), lix.

Church, the reredos marked the moment of his metamorphosis and corporeal

manifestation as the Eucharistic offering. Burne-Jones indicates Jesus's sacrificial nature

through his emaciated, ascetic appearance and, as at St. John's, the traditional instruments

of his Passion—the crown of thorns and spear. Their close proximity to the prominently

placed bread and wine makes their relationship to the Eucharist explicit, as does the long

table, reminiscent of the Last Supper and draped in ornamental altar cloth. Its elongated,

rectangular form also recalls the tomb in *Morning of the Resurrection*, adding another

layer of sacrificial meaning. The altar cross above, in the context of its controversial

Victorian usage as a marker of death, served as an additional reminder of Jesus's

oblation. His body, juxtaposed with the bread and wine and situated directly above the

high altar, was thus a profoundly explicit rendering of his Real Presence as propitiatory

sacrifice in the Eucharist, as Anglo-Catholics professed. Burne-Jones's initial design

(fig. 67) would have expressed this doctrine even more overtly. With the bread and paten

conspicuously absent, Jesus himself supplants the missing Eucharistic element.

Perhaps Rooke inserted the paten and bread to mitigate this controversial

meaning, especially since in 1898 tensions regarding the doctrine had escalated again

after the Archbishop of Canterbury made statements in favor of the Real Presence and

simultaneously outlawed incense and portable altar lights. These actions sparked a

resurgence of acrimonious debate over ritual and the Eucharist. John Kensit (1853-1902)

and his Protestant Truth Society, for instance, attempted to organize ritual riots in 1,000

British Anglo-Catholic churches. Even though by 1898 ecclesiastical painting and

altarpieces such as Burne-Jones's had gained wider acceptance within the Church of

England, Anglo-Catholic Eucharistic tenets could still incite furor. The instinctive

readiness with which he turned to the iconography of Jesus as Eucharistic sacrifice when drafting an altarpiece so hastily testifies to the degree he had internalized and clung to this theology.

The iconographic transformation apparent in Burne-Jones's four sets of altar and chancel paintings demonstrates that he did not distance himself from the Anglo-Catholicism of his youth but, to the contrary, grew bolder in asserting its theology. He had apparently gained somewhat of a reputation for controversial Eucharistic imagery by the end of his life. One member of Manchester College Chapel, Oxford, for example, angrily protested in 1895 against "the sensuous extravagances of [his] 'Adoration'" windows "that so absurdly kill the mother and her babe."[240] The last two commissions, for St. John's, Torquay, and Christ Church, Woburn Square, with their overt, morbid Eucharistic symbolism of sacrifice and death, support Richard Dorment's assertion of Burne-Jones's Roman Catholicism in the 1880s and 90s. His refusal to execute ecclesiastical projects for mainstream Protestant or Dissenting churches and the freedom he retained in creating his altarpieces substantiate the fact that they express something of his personal religious views. The commissions came to him independently of Morris's firm, and there is no evidence that any of the patrons had the slightest involvement with choosing the subject or dictating the style in which the artist rendered it.

Yet, all four of the commissions are, at the same time, intuitively and astutely apposite to their physical and theological ecclesiastical environments. The liturgical efficacy of Burne-Jones's altarpieces as devotional aids, didactic tools, and expressions

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[240] Jerubbaal [pseudo.], "Manchester College Chapel Windows," Mar., 1895, Harris Manchester College, Oxford, Archives.

of Eucharistic doctrine runs counter to the frequent presumption among modern scholars that he took a secular, indifferent, dismissive, or even subversive "anti-pietistic" approach to the Christianity illustrated in his church decoration.[241] His sensitivity to Christian themes and contexts led one contemporary critic to pronounce, "Truly religious in artistic feeling, his greatest powers have been bestowed upon schemes of decoration for ecclesiastical purposes."[242]

When solicited to create ecclesiastical paintings, Burne-Jones devised designs exhibiting an unmistakable Anglo-Catholic, and increasingly Roman Catholic, agenda, corroborating his lasting engagement with Christianity and his conception of art as an alternative form of priesthood. The message he "preached" in these altarpieces was the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The theological basis of this doctrine, the Incarnation—"God made flesh"—has, after all, often been tied to the act of artistic creation. As the Reverend Peter Taylor Forsyth explained in 1889, "The principle of art is the incarnation of God's eternal beauty; the principle of religion is the incarnation of God's eternal human heart. Neither can do the other's work, yet their work is complementary."[243] Burne-Jones, by rendering Jesus in concrete form, not only painted the Incarnation but also re-enacted it.

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[241] Harrison, "Church Decoration," 107.
[242] Arthur Fish, "Picturing the Angels," pt. 2, *Quiver* 32 (July 1897): 774-75.
[243] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 105.

Chapter 3: An Alternative Public: Burne-Jones's Reception as a Religious Painter

After infamously resigning from the Old Watercolor Society in 1870 following a controversy over *Phyllis and Demophoön*, Burne-Jones eschewed public exhibitions and instead quietly built a reputation among private patrons.[1] In 1877 he dramatically re-emerged onto the art scene at the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery, surprising audiences with a dazzling array of pictures. The Grosvenor quickly established him as a leader of the Aesthetic Movement among the elite. Yet Burne-Jones's public debut also brought approbation from religious audiences, who had long admired his ecclesiastical designs and found his paintings and drawings equally replete with spiritual significance. Of these two publics, however, modern scholars have only addressed the former. This chapter will redress this critical gap by reconstructing Burne-Jones's reception as a religious painter through analysis of primary texts including essays by clergymen, articles in Christian periodicals, and passages from secular journals attending to the spiritual meaning of his art.

Strikingly, seven ministers from a range of denominations tackled the subject of Burne-Jones's art: Amory Howe Bradford (1846-1911), an evangelical American Congregationalist; James Burns (1865-1948) of Stoke Newington Presbyterian Church; Robert Percival Downes (1842-1924), a Wesleyan preacher; Frederic William Farrar (1831-1903), Dean of Canterbury; Scotsman Peter Taylor Forsyth (1842-1921), "the

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[1] Critics condemned his *Phyllis and Demophoon* for its nudity and perceived indecency. Rather than remove the picture as requested, he resigned his membership. He exhibited only two pictures in the intervening years: the first version of *Love among the Ruins* (1870) and *The Hesperides* (1870-73), both at the Dudley Gallery in 1873.

greatest Congregational theologian of his day;"[2] the Anglo-Catholic incumbent of the

ritualistic Church of St. Barnabas, Pimlico, London, Alfred Gurney (1843-98); and Henry

Scott Holland (1847-1918), Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral. Three female authors

published on Burne-Jones's religious work, including the art historian Honor Brooke

(active 1893-1900) in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, the Christian Socialist novelist L.

T. [Elizabeth Thomasina] Meade (1854-1914) in the *Sunday Magazine*, and Una

Ashworth Taylor (1857-1922) in the *Edinburgh Review*, as did two artists, the British

painter Sir Wyke Bayliss (1835-1906) and the American Horace Townsend (1859-1922).

Additional articles in religious periodicals dealing with Burne-Jones range from those by

Elbert Francis Baldwin (1857-1947) on the Nativity in the American journal *Outlook*; to

art critic Arthur Fish's (active 1895-1923) essay on angel iconography in *The Quiver*; to

Alfred Thomas Story's (1842-1934) critique in the *Sunday Strand*; to A. Streeter's (active

1894-1900) review in the Catholic periodical *Month*.

By focusing on religious viewers' reception of Burne-Jones, this chapter

elucidates how such audiences re-created his art through their adaptation and

consumption. Thematically, their writings exhibit a concern with the presence or absence

of the artist's faith, corroborate his self-constructed artistic identity as priest or preacher,

and usually perceive his art as Anglo-Catholic in tone. Furthermore, the Christian public

utilized Burne-Jones's work as a devotional aid to facilitate encounters with God, a

didactic tool for teaching Bible stories, and even a platform from which to preach

"sermons on art." In the process, they added layers of meaning to his paintings by

approaching them as scriptural texts to be exegetically examined for spiritual lessons.

Remarkably, using this interpretative method they excavated religious meaning from

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[2] *DNB*, s.v. "Forsyth, Peter Taylor" (by John Huxtable), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37424.5.

some of his most "aesthetic" subjects, underscoring both the multivalency of his art and the blurry line between sacred and secular in the Victorian period.

An Alternative Public

Burne-Jones had the unusual advantage of reaching at least two distinct publics during his lifetime—the cult of aestheticism which grew up around the Grosvenor Gallery and religious viewers, who appreciated his art for its perceived sacred content. The latter, however, have been neglected in modern scholarship due to the heady role the Grosvenor played in Victorian art and culture, and in Burne-Jones's own success. From the day it opened its doors in 1877, the Grosvenor (fig. 70) was inextricably linked in public consciousness with his work. Sir Coutts and Lady Lindsay established the gallery as an alterative to the Royal Academy, and it gained a reputation as the citadel of new, innovative art. The Grosvenor's unconventional exhibition practices—sumptuous décor, uncrowded installations, and hanging all of an artist's submissions together—privileged the individuality and originality of the artistic "genius" and cultivated reverence for the art object. Promoting the "art for art's sake" agenda of Albert Moore, James McNeill Whistler, and others, it became the "palace of the aesthetes" and Burne-Jones one of its greatest stars. The Grosvenor remained his principal exhibition venue through 1888, when he shifted his allegiance from the nearly-bankrupt institution to the New Gallery.[3] Even after being elected an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1885 he showed only one picture there, in 1886, and resigned his membership in 1893.

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[3] The Grosvenor closed in 1890 due to Lindsay's poor business decisions and his separation from his wife, Blanche, whose fortune provided the financial backing for the venture.

Burne-Jones's commitment to showing religious paintings in the Grosvenor's supposedly secular shrine to the "worship of beauty" was both intentional and relatively extraordinary. Artists exhibited by invitation from Lindsay but were given full discretion in choosing their contributions. Walter Crane, Alphonse Legros, Thomas Rooke, Spencer Stanhope, and George Frederic Watts, as well as an array of lesser known artists, contributed a smattering of Old or New Testament subjects, individual saint figures, studies of ecclesiastical architecture, religious genre scenes, or Orientalist visions of the Holy Land. Nevertheless, their contributions of what could loosely be called religious objects numbered on average only a dozen out of the several hundred paintings and sculptures on display each summer at the Grosvenor. It is notable, for instance, that William Holman Hunt, England's quintessential Protestant painter, chose to send landscapes and fancy pictures of Arab women inspired by his eastern travels rather than his more overt Christian works researched in Palestine.[4] Burne-Jones's persistent display of scriptural subjects, allegories of Christian virtue, and other spiritual themes, therefore, remained, in the specific context of the Grosvenor, remarkable in its consistency.[5]

This juxtaposition of traditionally sacred subject matter with a secular gallery space seemingly confused traditional art critics, who largely ignored the religious connotations of Burne-Jones's content in favor of formalistic concerns. *The Builder* encapsulated popular sentiment when it complained of Burne-Jones's *Annunciation* (fig. 71), "we cannot understand the motive for painting it."[6] However, the Aesthetic

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[4] Holman Hunt contributed, for instance, *The After Glow in Egypt* (1854-63) and *Plains of Esdraelon* (1870-77) to the Grosvenor in 1877 and *The Bride of Bethlehem* (1884) in 1885.
[5] For example, at the inaugural exhibition six of his eight contributions comprised religious themes: *The Days of Creation* (1870-76, fig. 16), *A Sibyl* (1877), *Saint George* (1873-77), and the three Christian virtues of *Temperance* (1872-73), *Faith* (1872, fig. 84), and *Hope* (1871, fig. 15).
[6] *Builder* 37 (May 3, 1879): 481, quoted in Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 241.

Movement's erudite, sophisticated followers—who adopted aesthetic dress, renounced Christianity, and were lampooned in *Punch* cartoons—were neither the sole patrons of the Grosvenor nor the sole proprietors of Burne-Jones's reputation, which engravings and popular periodicals also helped build.[7]

As the Anglo-Catholic priest Alfred Gurney reminded readers of the Christian *Newbery House Magazine* in 1893, "there is…another point of view besides that of the art-critic." There is also the perspective of the religious man or woman who inquires into "the real significance of this painter's work…its leading drift and tendency…its deepest and truest inspiration…the ultimate secret of its commanding influence, having regard to broader and more fundamental issues."[8] Gurney and the other critics cited in this chapter corroborate Owen Chadwick's conclusion that "the Victorian public never accepted the doctrine of art for art's sake. To the end of the century most of them retained the doctrine of Ruskin that all art is praise."[9] Burne-Jones's audience was no exception. Among his "most enthusiastic devotees," Claude Phillips reported in 1885, "are those who profess to find in his works…poems symbolizing…the mysteries of faith."[10] Particularly after Burne-Jones's move to the New Gallery in 1888, an alternative critical discourse emerged focusing on the spirituality of both the artist and his art. After this point many contemporaries hailed him as one of the "great religious painters of the world" and in the

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[7] For the diversity of the gallery's publics, see Paula Gillett, "Art Audiences at the Grosvenor Gallery," in *The Grosvenor Gallery: A Palace of Art in Victorian England*, ed. Susan Casteras and Colleen Denney (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1996), 39-58. Gillett addresses the Sunday openings at the Grosvenor, which attracted a working class audience in addition to the gallery's usual aristocratic attendance. Sir Coutts Lindsay was at the forefront of the movement for Sunday openings in Britain and the National Sunday League praised his efforts to bring art exhibitions to the laboring class on their one leisure day.

[8] Rev. A[lfred] Gurney, "Burne-Jones Exhibition at the New Gallery: Christian Mysticism at the New Gallery," *Newbery House Magazine* 3 (Mar. 1893): 293.

[9] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 2:462.

[10] Claude Phillips, "Edward Burne Jones," *Magazine of Art* 8 (1885): 290.

"front rank of great religious artists" of the modern era.[11] Now, paintings such as the

1879 *Annunciation* were declared "among the greatest works of this century" and

Morning of the Resurrection (fig. 44), "that most lovely of modern religious pictures."[12]

Even his secular subjects were interpreted as repositories of Christian meaning.[13]

Contemporary portraits confirmed his pre-eminence as a religious painter. Burne-Jones's

son, Philip, painted his father at work on a canvas whose arched colonnade and

disembodied angel's wing suggest the portico of a quattrocento Annunciation (fig. 72).

Barbara Leighton's photograph from 1890 (fig. 73) creates a parallel between the painter

and the Magi offering gifts to the infant Jesus in the *Star of Bethlehem*, a theme explored

further in Chapter Five. Finally, as Chapter Four will demonstrate, Burne-Jones

encouraged his religious reputation by modeling himself as a modern-day "artist-monk."

     Yet, modern scholars generally acknowledge only one of Burne-Jones's publics—

that of the Aesthetic Movement circle, who are presented as worshippers of beauty at the

shrine of the Grosvenor Gallery. Using the examples of Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater,

Oscar Wilde, and others, Hilary Fraser has demonstrated that Christianity was complexly

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[11] Story, "Great Religious Painters," 32; Fish, "Picturing the Angels," 774.

[12] Meade, "Painter of Eternal Youth," 394; William T. Arnold, "The Manchester Exhibition," *Art Journal* 49 (1887): 251.

[13] Although it usually did not form the basis of their reviews, critics in the secular press also acknowledged Burne-Jones's role as a religious painter. William Sharp, for instance, described *The Days of Creation* as "the Word…made manifest in new beauty," while Claude Phillips admired Burne-Jones's quality of "devout simplicity and unconsciousness—nearer earth than that of the preceding age, but yet genuinely inspired." William Sharp, "Edward Burne-Jones," *Fortnightly Review* n.s., 64 (Aug. 1898): 305; Phillips, "Edward Burne Jones," 288. Believing "shapes of Scripture…fill his thoughts," Sidney Colvin, director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, characterized Burne-Jones's "picture-world" as one of "spiritual hunger and strain and pining." Sidney Colvin, "Pictures at Palace Green," *Magazine of Art* 7 (1884): 85. Even Oscar Wilde declared in *De Profundis*, "Wherever there is a romantic movement in Art, there somehow, and under some form, is Christ," including in a long list of examples, "the stained glass and tapestries and quattrocento work of Burne-Jones." Quoted in Lionel Lambourne, *The Aesthetic Movement* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 6. Julia Cartwright, in her posthumous tribute to the artist, concluded with the strongest statement by a secular critic of his work as a religious calling. Of all the roles an artist plays, she professed, "none assuredly is greater than the mission which he has received from heaven…to show how…human life may dimly reflect the beauty and mystery of God. This Burne-Jones has done for us. This has been the master-passion of his life." Julia Cartwright, "Review [Edward Burne-Jones]," *Quarterly Review* 188 (Oct. 1898): 359.

intertwined with Victorian aestheticism but contends its artists', poets', and writers' statements of faith were neither genuine nor central to their daily lives.[14] Consequently, she concludes, "culture replaced religion" as mid-century Romantic, Tractarian "awareness of the aesthetic aspects of theology and faith" gave way by the 1880s to a secular "worship of a religion of art."[15] Expanding on this framework, Colleen Denney has established that the Grosvenor Gallery served as aestheticism's "temple of art," where viewers congregated to worship a "religion of beauty." Mimicking the rituals of Christian practice, this secular religion, she argues, stood in opposition to the church just as the Grosvenor was an alternative to the Royal Academy. To "be a worshipper of beauty in this circle," she concludes, "one must renounce other religious stances." Her assessment that Burne-Jones's art offered "a type of [female] beauty which itself became a religion, one that was set apart very distinctly from a Christian faith, but rather was seen as a replacement for the kind of Christian passion we see in Holman Hunt's or Millais's works" is typical of the literature on Burne-Jones and aestheticism.[16]

The worship of beauty rhetoric, however, offers only a one-dimensional representation of the relationship between aesthetics and religion. Its paradigm of absolute secularization, of the *replacement* of religion by art rather than the perceived potential experience of religion *through* art, has resulted in too unilateral a view of Burne-Jones's reception. Aestheticism was crucial to Burne-Jones's success but its dominance in studies of late-Victorian art, together with a scholarly reluctance to examine issues of belief, excludes the viewpoint of the religious man or woman for whom Burne-Jones's work reportedly spoke of Christian truths, faith's beleaguered state

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[14] Fraser, *Beauty and Belief*, 175, 214.
[15] Ibid., 182.
[16] Denney, "Acts of Worship," 70.

in modern society, and the promise of eternal life. Only Richard Dorment has alluded to

Burne-Jones's religious audience, acknowledging that although "It would be too strong to

say that [his] contemporaries regarded him primarily as a religious painter, they did look

to him as an exemplar of the most spiritual, sacred form of art."[17]

Reception theorists have long established the importance of the viewer in

constructing an object's meaning. In addition, the study of religious visual culture,

although primarily dealing with everyday, prosaic artifacts, is particularly relevant in this

chapter for its emphasis on "use." David Morgan avows a significant role for the

reader/consumer in his definition of visual culture. One of the field's distinguishing

features, he elucidates in *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and*

Practice, is that it "regard[s] the image as part of a cultural system of production and

reception, in which original intention does not eclipse the use to which images are put by

those who are not their makers."[18] In this paradigm, the action and practice of belief are

equally as important as the creation of the object or its intended meaning. "What makes

an image 'religious'," Morgan contends, "is often not simply its subject matter or the

intentions of the person who created it but the *use* of the image as well as the context of

its deployment and interpretation."[19] Ivan Gaskell, James Clifton and others have

expanded this awareness of "use" into the realm of "highbrow" religious objects typically

displayed in museums such as Renaissance paintings or Buddhist altars.[20] As Gaskell has

attested in relation to museum artifacts, the multivalency of art objects means they "can

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[17] Dorment, "Decoration of St. Paul's," 132.

[18] Morgan, *Sacred Gaze*, 30.

[19] Ibid., 55.

[20] James Clifton, *The Body of Christ in the Art of Europe and New Spain, 1150-1800* (Munich: Prestel, 1997); Ivan Gaskell, "Sacred to Profane and Back Again" in *Art and its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, ed. Andrew McClellan (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 148-62; Jeffery Abt, chair, "Temples of Art? Museums and Religion," (session, College Art Association 94th Annual Conference, Boston, Feb. 24, 2006).

be viewed and used in various manners by various publics, some of which may be irreconcilable with one another, and none of which necessarily successfully claims exclusive legitimacy."[21] Sacred and secular, Sally M. Promey further demonstrates, are forever in flux, a "process of formation and reformation" whereby "one is always relative to the other…not just sacred or secular but how? and to what degree? and when? and for whom?"[22] Christian viewers put many of Burne-Jones's mythological and "aesthetic" paintings, for instance, although not conventionally "religious," to religious uses, thereby imbuing them with sacred efficacy. The examples of his contemporaries using his art to instruct, inspire, and meditate expose unexamined aspects of Victorian religious practice.

The Test of Burne-Jones's Faith

At the heart of religious writers' criticism was the issue of Burne-Jones's own faith. A few insisted the artist's work reflected an intentional statement of his personal religious views. *The Days of Creation* (fig. 16), in particular, elicited such responses. The six-part watercolor was the centerpiece of the artist's unveiling at the inaugural Grosvenor Gallery exhibition. Each of the approximately 40 x 14 inch panels depicts an angel symbolizing one day in the Genesis account of creation (1:1-31) and holding a crystalline globe containing a vision of that day's achievement. The first angel reappears behind the second, and the first two behind the third, and so on, so that by the final frame all six angels crowd the picture plane. A crouching angel with a zither in the foreground of the last panel symbolizes the seventh day of rest. A heavy gilt frame Burne-Jones designed, reminiscent of a Renaissance polyptych altarpiece, gave the work a distinctly

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[21] Gaskell, "Sacred to Profane," 148.
[22] Promey, *Painting Religion*, 7.

religious aura heightened by the reverential atmosphere of the Grosvenor. In *The Girls Own Paper*, Horace Townsend concluded that the painting deliberately disseminated a message about "the wondrous acts of the Almighty." He assumed that Burne-Jones, by including extra wings in the background of each panel, alluded to the angels who had yet to appear in the later days. This foreshadowing device, Townsend conjectured, was one by which "the painter means to convey" the omnipotence of God.[23] In 1893 the frame's Latin inscription (Daniel 2:20-22) led Alfred Gurney to similarly deduce in the Christian *Newbery House Magazine* that Burne-Jones had a religious "motive" in painting it and had dedicated his labor "to Him whose Name is blessed, whose works are the works of Wisdom and Fortitude, with whom is Light."[24]

Even when religious critics did not presume to know Burne-Jones's motivation, they nearly all maintained that the Christian content and meaning of his art served as evidence of his faith, which they believed empowered him to paint biblical subjects sensitively and in a manner attuned to the spiritual needs of modern audiences. This train of thought testifies to the lingering influence of mid-century "moral art history," which held that an artwork's quality depended upon the artist's piety and favored Italian "primitives" such as Fra Angelico or Giotto over High Renaissance painters supposedly tainted by humanism. In the 1894 *Sunday Magazine*, for instance, L. T. Meade discerned in Burne-Jones's art a "passion for spiritual beauty" and a "sense of religious and

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[23] Horace Townsend, "'The Days of Creation' by Edward Burne-Jones," *Girls Own Paper* 14 (1893): 456-59.

[24] Gurney, "Christian Mysticism," 294. The Latin inscription read: "SIT NOMEN DOMINI BENEDICTUM A SAECULO ET USQUE IN SAECULUM QUIA SAPIENTA ET FORTITUDO EIUS SUNT ET IPSE MUTAT TEMPORARA ET AETATES ET NOVIT IN TENEBRIS CONSTITUTA ET LUX CUM EO EST." The King James Version translation is: "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him."

imaginative wonder which runs more or less through all his works." This, she argued, "must find its true origin in the heart of the painter."[25] Of *The Days of Creation*, Townsend postulated, "unless the whole work from its primary conception to its ultimate close had been wrought with a wholly reverential and almost devotional spirit, the result would have inevitably been one that would have jarred upon our innermost feelings of sanctity and solemnity."[26]

This approach underpinned Arthur Fish's 1897 two-part article on artistic renderings of angels featured in *The Quiver: An Illustrated Magazine for Sunday and General Reading*. There is little documentation on Fish, who primarily wrote art criticism for the *Magazine of Art* and *Cassell's Family Magazine*. Additionally, however, he submitted articles to *Quiver* on the art historical representation of Jesus, the Ascension, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; "Pictorial Sermons" and "Parables in Marble;" the "Preacher" painter, W. P. Frith; and Frederick Goodall, "A Painter of Bible Stories." Originally founded in 1861 as a weekly magazine for the "Defence of Biblical Truth, and the Advancement of Religion in the Homes of the People," *The Quiver* focused on inspiring fiction stories and lavish Christmas editions.[27] In its pages, Fish attributed Burne-Jones's aptitude for religious painting to the inspiration of Italian "primitives," who he felt modeled the devout spirit necessary for great art. Ultimately, Fish believed "the most successful modern artists who have pictured the angelic form" were "those who have worked in the same simple spiritual manner."[28] Praising Burne-

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[25] Meade, "Painter of Eternal Youth," 392, 394.
[26] Townsend, "Days of Creation," 456-59.
[27] Prominent publisher and teetotaler John Cassell founded and edited *The Quiver* until his death in 1864. His mission was the education and self-improvement of the working classes, and a particular emphasis on religious publications marked his late career.
[28] Fish, "Picturing the Angels," 771.

Jones's humility, independence, and refusal to conform to popular taste or academic conventions, he singled out the "wonderful" angels in the *Adoration of the Magi* tapestry (1888-90) and the St. Paul's Within-the-Walls mosaics in Rome (1881-85) as most emblematic of his work.[29] He proclaimed Burne-Jones "truly religious in artistic feeling" and commended him for fulfilling the challenge of the "true ideal" Ruskin set forth in *Modern Painters*, which exists only when "all the paradises imagined by the religious painters—the choirs of glorified saints, angels, and spiritual powers" are "painted with the full belief in this possibility of their existence."[30] Significantly, this was the ideal Burne-Jones extolled in his 1856 review of Ruskin's volume in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, discussed in Chapter One.

The Reverend James Burns (1865-1948), author of *The Christ Face in Art* (1907) and minister of Stoke Newington Presbyterian Church, perpetuated this paradigm of moral art history and early Italian painting as late as 1908 in *Sermons in Art by the Great Masters*. Each of the eighteen chapters concentrates on one work by a nineteenth-century artist; the third is dedicated to Burne-Jones's *Star of Bethlehem* (fig. 74). Regarding this Nativity scene, he offered "one last suggestion" which "ought not to be missed"—the "revelation of the artist's own faith."[31] This, Burns speculated, is detectible in the hope-filled, symbolic springtime flowers bursting forth around the baby Jesus, a device which "does not come from the narrative, and it does not come from tradition, it comes from the artist's own heart." "By this beautiful symbol," Burns inferred, the artist "remind[s] us of what Christ has done for us." He lauded Burne-Jones as the most spiritually sincere contemporary painter, one whose "art, more than that of any other modern painter has in

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[29] Ibid., 774.
[30] Ibid., 772.
[31] James Burns, *Sermons in Art by the Great Masters* (London: Duckworth, 1908), 73-74.

it the spirit of things ecclesiastical."[32] Influenced by moral art history, authors such as

Burns, Fish, Meade, and Townsend all concluded, solely on the basis of Burne-Jones's

art, that he was a deeply religious man.

There were those who were less convinced, however. Renowned Scottish

Congregationalist theologian Peter Taylor Forsyth (1848-1921) could not discern whether

the artist approached *Morning of the Resurrection* (fig. 44) as a myth or in "the *role* of a

historical painter" who avowed the veracity of his subject. Contrary to his

contemporaries, in one of Forsyth's earliest publications, a series of "lay sermons"

entitled *Religion in Recent Art* (1889), he argued the point actually mattered very little.

In keeping with his early Broad Church principles and liberal theology, Forsyth

maintained anyone could benefit from the artist's "mythic" treatment, which could

enhance and "correct" even the narrowest outlooks of reactionary Christians who insisted

on reading the Bible as a literal, historical document. Forsyth thought that regardless of

Burne-Jones's personal views, he had breathed new life into Bible stories, "clothing them

with living flesh, and restoring by an imagination at once pious and true, the vital color"

lacking in conservative interpretations of scripture. In the end, the degree of the artist's

faith was irrelevant to this critic. Although viewers may "not accept his authority on a

matter of history," Forsyth contended, "we are glad to profit by his imaginative

reconstruction of the scene, and his vitalizing spirit." He made the unusual case, "if I

were informed that Mr. Burne Jones had no faith in the historic actuality of the event he

here depicts, that would not in the least affect my belief of it." Still, "his treatment does

quicken and enrich my appreciation of it." It is not art's place, but rather religion's, to

concern itself with the factuality of an event, Forsyth professed. Posing the question,

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[32] Ibid., 57-58.

"can this artist, or any other, help us to realize the circumstances, the emotions, the air and spirit of the hour?," he pronounced, "if what one wants in a Resurrection is "the unaffected and exquisite solemnity of the hour…I think that in no mean degree we here have it."[33] His conclusions regarding Burne-Jones were progressive but incongruent with the majority of contemporary religious literature and some secular art criticism, which still labored under the shadow of moral art history and detected in Burne-Jones's art evidence of Christian beliefs.

Art as a Religious Vocation

Some Christian writers, building on the religious motivations they perceived in Burne-Jones's work, endorsed his self-promulgated artist-priest identity by declaring his career a spiritual calling. The Reverend James Burns, for example, called attention to the fact that "Burne-Jones's first ambition, it will be remembered, was to become a preacher, not a painter." Consequently, although he eventually chose art over the pulpit, "the early ambition still clung to his life, and entered into, and influenced all his work," Burns concluded.[34] This type of analysis appeared mainly in religious literature, and such audiences considered him an instructive model of how any form of labor could be consecrated to God.

The American writer Elbert Francis Baldwin offered a similar characterization of Burne-Jones in 1894. Little is known about Baldwin but he primarily published articles on historical topics in *Harper's Weekly* and *The Outlook*, an American religious weekly Henry Ward Beecher founded as the *Christian Union*. Officially a non-denominational

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[33] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 99-101.
[34] Burns, *Sermons in Art*, 57.

magazine, it featured fiction stories, sermons, Sunday school lessons, articles on current

events, art, literature, and travel. In 1894 its editor was a Congregationalist minister,

Lyman Abbott. Baldwin's article addressed the Pre-Raphaelites' treatment of the

Nativity, including Burne-Jones's 1879 *Annunciation* (fig. 71), the preparatory study for

his *Nativity* window at Birmingham Cathedral (fig. 75), and his 1888 pendants from St.

John's, Torquay (figs. 57-58). He believed these had a profound influence, leaving

"behind such a conception of the Nativity as has done much to affect subsequent

delineations." Most significantly however, is Baldwin's assessment that Burne-Jones's

profession was a kind of priestly vocation. After remarking on the artist's early clerical

training and decision to forgo holy orders, Baldwin challenged, "yet who shall say that

his service has not been as religious and as potent in his present field?"[35]

In 1899 in *Good Words*, Sir Wyke Bayliss, President of the Society of British

Artists, presented a memorial to the life and work of Burne-Jones entitled "The Painter of

the Golden Age." Although Bayliss's religious affiliation is unclear, he exclusively

painted scenes of church and cathedral interiors, leading Whistler to dub him "the

Middlesex Michel Angelo."[36] In 1886 he edited *The Likeness of Christ: Being an inquiry

into the verisimilitude of the received likeness of our Blessed Lord* for the Society for

Promoting Christian Knowledge, and his *Rex Regum: A Painter's Study of the Likeness of

Christ* (1898) enjoyed widespread success. Bayliss's articles appeared frequently in

Good Words, an enormously popular periodical the Society for Purity in Literature

endorsed, and which provided light religious reading for Evangelical audiences. Its

editor, the Scottish minister and Royal Chaplain Norman Macleod, ensured its fiction,

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[35] Baldwin, "The Nativity," 1044.
[36] Quoted in "Sir Wyke Bayliss," Royal West of England Academy, http://www.rwa.org.uk/dec/bayliss.htm

travel essays, and art reviews embodied a consistent tone of moral edification. Bayliss

was sensitive to the religious element in Burne-Jones's work and even suggested a

likeness between the features of his friend and those of Jesus. He felt "a group of

subjects illustrating the Creation, and the Redemption of the world" best represented

Burne-Jones's oeuvre.[37] His religious works, Bayliss asserted, were to England what

Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel was to Italy and classical sculpture was to Greece.[38]

Ambitiously comparing Burne-Jones's *Tree of Life* from St. Paul's Within-the-Walls,

Rome (fig. 76) to Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* on the Sistine ceiling and the

fourteenth-century façade of Orvieto Cathedral, he concluded, "I know nothing more

lovely, more human, more divine than this."[39] Admitting, "I know not what his

theological opinions may have been—we never spoke on that subject," Bayliss

nevertheless was driven to inquire, based on works such as *The Days of Creation* (fig.

16), whether Burne-Jones "is…not himself one of the ministers of God?"[40]

The same year, the Wesleyan minister Robert Percival Downes offered a survey

of Burne-Jones in the weekly periodical *Great Thoughts from Master Minds*, where as

editor he contributed travel essays, biographical sketches, and articles on architecture,

history, literature, and poetry. He published a number of books on theology, such as

Man's Immortality Argued from Reason (1878), as well as on art, including a study of

Ruskin (1890). Under the heading "Patient Unwearying Toil," Downes explicated in his

eulogy to Burne-Jones, "there is a fore-ordained purpose in every touch" of his work, "a

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[37] Wyke Bayliss, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones: The Painter of the Golden Age," *Good Words* 40 (Mar. 1899): 193.
[38] Ibid., 196.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 191, 194.

motive for every experiment—a lofty ideal…to which he is never unfaithful."[41] This

ideal he defined as Burne-Jones's "ministry of Art," which purified the spirit through its

"beatific vision."[42] Morris and Burne-Jones, he maintained, "became witnesses to the

holiness of beauty in place of preachers of the beauty of holiness."[43] Heralding Burne-

Jones as "the greatest painter since Turner," his analysis is peppered with religious catch

phrases and Christian terminology that make it clear Downes considered Burne-Jones's

art the fruition of a religious calling.[44]

Henry Scott Holland, Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, published a selection of

essays on famous personages under the title *Personal Studies* in 1905. Following shortly

on the heels of Georgiana's *Memorials*, Holland quoted extensively from the memoir,

lifting those passages most revealing of the painter's beliefs. Holland's biography of

Burne-Jones is littered with religious terminology: his friendship with Morris was

"sacred" and "miraculous," their comradeship "blessed," and the site of their union,

Oxford, a "shrine."[45] Supported by Georgiana's accounts, Holland argued that for his

friend, the creation of beautiful objects was a socio-religious mission. He confessed

some readers might challenge, "In what sense was his work done for suffering and toiling

populations, such as he pitied and loved? And how was it the best thing that he could do

for them, and far more worth while than if he went out to preach reform in Victoria

Park?" Holland, himself an activist for social reform, retorted that Burne-Jones regarded

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[41] Downes, "Great Painter," 7.
[42] Ibid., 6.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 8.
[45] Henry Scott Holland, *Personal Studies* (London: Wells Gardner, Darton, 1905), 248.

his medieval-inspired Christian art as an offering and "his own task to give back, if possible, beauty to a world that had lost belief in it."[46]

Related to his priestly vocation, religious critics also repeatedly described Burne-Jones as a prophet or seer in the tradition of the divinely-inspired genius, who God chose to reveal his mysteries to the world. They upheld his idealist, escapist pictures as prophetic pronouncements of the declining state of society (religiously and otherwise) and, by implication, its need for redemption. In Alfred Gurney's case, he believed Burne-Jones to be an authentic, positive voice harkening man toward Christ. After finding Christian messages in nearly every one of the artist's pictures, whether religious or secular in subject, Gurney called him "a witnessing voice…of a true oracle that seems to make itself heard as we examine these pictures." "Its testimony," he concluded, was one proclaiming the Christian religion and a "consolation and an encouragement" to faith.[47] The Reverend Downes compared Burne-Jones's poetic canvases to Saint John's "visions of Patmos, which gild like a mystic gorgeous sunset the eventide of Revelation."[48] In *The Quiver*, Fish also averred the artist's prophetic potential to apprehend and articulate the invisible truths of heaven, unknowable to the rest of mankind. He chastised, "we have not trusted…enough, nor accepted…enough" their "real visions" of "glorified saints, angels, and spiritual powers" as "possible statements of most precious truths."[49] Like his predecessors, Amory Howe Bradford in 1902 described Burne-Jones in language akin to that of a seer, calling him "unsurpassed" in "clearness

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[46] Ibid., 262.
[47] Gurney, "Christian Mysticism," 302.
[48] Downes, "Great Painter," 8.
[49] Fish, "Picturing the Angels," 772.

and richness of spiritual vision."[50] Forsyth considered looking backward to ancient

legends, as Burne-Jones's art did, a useful way to mine truths applicable to contemporary

life. In doing so, he posited, "we are not so much reading in modern experience as

spelling out ancient though unconscious prophecy."[51] By "charm[ing] the eternal soul

from an ancient tale" of myth or scripture better than any of his contemporaries, "Mr.

Jones is not only a painter, but a seer."[52] The Reverend John Linton began his analysis of

Burne-Jones and the Pre-Raphaelites in *The Cross in Modern Art* (1916) by affirming,

"the true artist is a seer—a witness to the inner spiritual significance of common things

and common happenings—and the seer is nearly always an artist."[53] The reoccurring

tropes of seer, prophet and oracle, although atypical of Burne-Jones's critical reception,

significantly linked him with other "prophets" of the age such as Thomas Carlyle and G.

F. Watts.

The Religious Denomination of Burne-Jones's Art

Having confirmed Burne-Jones's religious sincerity and priestly/prophetic

identity, the next challenge for critics was to determine which denomination of

Christianity he represented. Although few writers explicitly vocalized their conclusions

on this matter, they pursued this agenda subtly through language or an emphasis on

certain theological themes evident in his paintings. Attempts to tie him to Evangelical or

Nonconformist Protestantism were rare, and more commonly, his perceived predilection

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[50] Amory H. Bradford, *Messages of the Masters: Spiritual Interpretations of Great Paintings* (New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1902), 13.
[51] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 66.
[52] Ibid., 67.
[53] John Linton, *The Cross in Modern Art: Descriptive Studies of Some Pre-Raphaelite Paintings.* (London: Duckworth, 1916), 6.

for mysticism and prolific incarnation imagery was seen to align him with the Anglo/Catholic spirit.

The Protestant Burne-Jones

More than one author attempted to establish Burne-Jones as a profoundly English Protestant, as opposed to an Anglo-Catholic, preferring to read his or her own theology into his art. L. T. Meade, for instance, compared the artist's "soul" to Edmund Spenser's, saying the two share "the same passion for spiritual beauty" and "go to the same source for their inspiration."[54] The daughter of a Protestant minister and inclined to Christian Socialist ideals, Meade's allusion to the Renaissance poet is a thinly disguised effort to establish Burne-Jones's Protestantism. Historically in Britain, Spenser's reputation was as a defender of the Church of England against the evils of Roman Catholicism. By comparing Burne-Jones to Spenser, Meade reinforced the painter's anti-Catholic and profoundly English character.

Since the interpretation of the Crucifixion was a nexus of disagreement between Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics, Burne-Jones's innovative *Tree of Life* design for St. Paul's Within-the-Walls, Rome (fig. 76) was more than once coerced into presenting a Protestant statement of the Cross. In contrast to what he alleged were the ascetic Christ type propagated by the "revolting Ribera" and the morbid extravagances of Catholic art, Frederic William Farrar, then Archdeacon and Canon of Westminster, found "pleasure" in turning to Burne-Jones's "chastened and restrained" design. For Farrar, an opponent of Anglo-Catholicism, it expressed the Evangelical concept of Jesus's "victory through suffering." Burne-Jones managed to show "the supreme type of that immortal love which

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[54] Meade, "Painter of Eternal Youth," 394.

fulfils the divine law of sacrifice" by accentuating Jesus's triumph rather than his grisly

death. In Farrar's construct, Burne-Jones transformed the potentially inflammatory

subject of the Crucifixion into a "perfect harmony of the Atonement," negotiating the fine

line between Protestantism and Catholicism without losing the significance of the event.[55]

As late as 1916, the Reverend John Linton reinforced this view in *The Cross in

Modern Art*. He upheld Burne-Jones, together with his colleagues the Pre-Raphaelites, as

one of the greatest modern artists for finally inventing a religious art for Britain that

could bridge the divide between Roman Catholicism and Evangelical Protestantism.

Believing his art and that of the Pre-Raphaelites was "in the profoundest sense religious

because they were religious men," Linton applauded what he considered their eschewal

of asceticism and elevation of "self-denial from the pale and lifeless realm of medieval

monasticism to the high and bracing levels of heroism and romance."[56] He selected

Burne-Jones's *Tree of Life* design as the perfect example of this new unification of pre-

Reformation and Protestant theology. Linton interpreted the motif as neither the Crucifix

of the Catholics "with its insistence on the physical aspect of Christ's death…and its

implicit assertion of the ascetic ideal," nor the "dark and repellent enigma" of Calvinist

Protestantism. Rather, he ascertained, the artist created a "new and inspiring vision of the

Cross," a triumphant, loving, vital one. Here "is not death, but life at its fullest,"

proclaimed Linton.[57]

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[55] Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ as Represented in Art* (London, 1894), 418.
[56] Linton, *Cross in Modern Art*, 5-6.
[57] Ibid., 6-7.

The Anglo-Catholic Burne-Jones

More commonly, however, religious viewers identified Burne-Jones's art as Anglo-Catholic. By employing High Church terminology to describe his paintings and drawing out their mysticism and Incarnation imagery, critics implicitly highlighted their potential Anglo-Catholic meanings. The Wesleyan minister R. P. Downes, for instance, described Burne-Jones's art as exhibiting an atmosphere of "music, incense, festival, and flowers" recalling High Church ritual.[58]

The language of Anglo-Catholicism also suffused Alfred Gurney's ten-page article in the *Newbery House Magazine*, one of the most pronounced affirmations of Burne-Jones's perceived religious identity. As "a monthly review for Churchmen and Churchwomen," *The Newbery House Magazine* addressed a theologically sophisticated audience that would have easily picked up his essay's doctrinal implications. Gurney, a friend of Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was incumbent of St. Barnabas's, Pimlico, a purpose-built Anglo-Catholic church and the site of scandalous "ritual riots" in 1850. His Romish leanings are evident in books such as *Our Catholic Inheritance in the Larger Hope* (1888); his poetry collections, *The Vision of the Eucharist, and Other Poems* (1882) and *Voices from the Holy Sepulchre and Other Poems* (1889); and his inclusion in the anthology *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse* (1917). Gurney's tribute to Burne-Jones makes extensive use of the vocabulary of Anglo-Catholic ritual. He describes secular subjects such as *Chant d'Amour* (fig. 77) with words such as "Acolyte," "vespers," and "Magnificat;" repeatedly refers to the Virgin Mary as "Our Lady;" and uses Saint Augustine's writings to explain *The Wheel of Fortune* (fig. 78). He

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[58] Downes, "Great Painter," 6.

transformed the women in *The Golden Stairs* (fig. 79) into "penitents" entering a "cloister," while the angels in *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid* (fig. 80), he concluded, must be singing the *Te Deum*, a Catholic hymn sung at Matins.[59]

Gurney's title, "Christian Mysticism at the New Gallery," references a wider trend among religious audiences to label Burne-Jones's art as "mystical" or redolent with spiritual "mystery." Such language implied a supernatural quality, an accent on the magical or fantastic, and, in late Victorian terms, a privileging of God's mysterious ways over an empirical worldview.[60] The "mystery of all things lies across their every endeavor," Elbert F. Baldwin declared of Burne-Jones's paintings in *The Outlook*, adding that they represented an affirmation of belief, with "the mystery of doubt…transfigured into the mystery of faith."[61] Honor Brooke noted the "mystic charm" of *Morning of the Resurrection* (fig. 44), while Meade pronounced in 1895, "in an age which is essentially without reverence or mystery, [Burne-Jones] stands aloof from the busy crowd, and paints canvas after canvas full of vague mysticism."[62] In 1901 Alfred Thomas Story wondered at "the mystery and solemnity" of *Morning of the Resurrection* and surmised the artist's proclivity for ideal, dream-like subjects was an intentional "attestation of the

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[59] Gurney, "Christian Mysticism," 295, 300-301.

[60] Burne-Jones's religious critics seemed sure that he stood firmly on the side of God rather than science, or that he at least felt a sense of wonder and awe at the mystery of divine action in the natural world. In contrast to the "scientific man," Gurney asserted, those such as Burne-Jones who possess "artistic intuition" and "spiritual intelligence" do not hesitate to affirm the ancient Bible stories as truth. He believed the artist, reacting against his empirical age, "welcomes" Genesis's account of Creation as "unquestionable truth." Ibid., 294. Story agreed, explaining Burne-Jones's mysticism as a reaction against empiricism. It was no coincidence, he argued, that his art emerged "at a time when the scientific spirit in its worst and most deadening form was everywhere rampant, depressing and degrading." In a statement countering evolution, Story argued, even "if we do bear the mystic marks of a low physical origin on the one hand, on the other there are equally mysterious and significant signs and hieroglyphs…telling of a hand and a power which reached down out of the dark, to lift the growing man up and bid him awake and inherit." What Burne-Jones's art expressed, he believed, is this stance that "all the *meaning* in the world did not come up from the brute" regardless of what science might claim. Story, "Great Religious Painters," 32.

[61] Baldwin, "The Nativity," 1045.

[62] Honor Brooke, "Burne-Jones and His Art," *English Illustrated Magazine* 10 (Jan. 1893): 235; L. T. Meade, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Bart.," *Strand* 10 (July 1895): 16.

mystery existing in the universe beyond the reach of mere intellect."[63] James Burns, who

applied Saint Augustine's writings to the *Star of Bethlehem* (fig. 74), also claimed that

"in its archaism, its sense of things solemn and austere, its craving for a mysterious and

unearthly beauty, its sensuous mysticism," Burne-Jones's art "breathes the spirit of the

Church."[64]

Exactly which denomination of the church Burns left unstated, but

contemporaries versed in the religious debates over High versus Evangelical Anglicanism

would have read the rhetoric of mysticism as Anglo-Catholic or, in a negative light, as

indicative of Roman Catholic "superstition." In a backlash against the increasingly

scientific age, Catholic Revivalists, particularly at the fin-de-siécle, accentuated the

mysterious quality of Christianity that they believed was experienced through sensory

external ritual, nature and the sacraments. The Catholic Church's veneration of saints'

miraculous acts or of the Virgin Mary was another form of mysticism particularly

egregious to mainstream Anglicans. Hence, Baldwin was careful to distinguish the

mysticism of the Pre-Raphaelites from that of Catholics by firmly stating that while their

art may express "the mystery of faith," they certainly "believed in no mystical

hysterics."[65]

Another ubiquitous Anglo/Catholic element in nineteenth-century Burne-Jones

criticism was a focus on his Incarnation imagery. As explained in Chapter Two, the

Incarnation and its visual representation in Annunciation or Nativity scenes received

greater emphasis in Catholic or High Anglican churches because of their link to Christ's

corporeal presence in the Eucharist. In *The Outlook*, Baldwin argued that Burne-Jones's

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[63] Story, "Great Religious Painters," 32-33.
[64] Burns, *Sermons in Art*, 65.
[65] Baldwin, "The Nativity," 1045.

art encapsulated this theology both explicitly and symbolically: "Believ[ing] that the spiritual world should assert its own authority in visible form" as God did when he purportedly descended to earth as man, Burne-Jones created pictures whereby the "spiritual world" was "genuine" and "ever immanent in the physical." Baldwin avowed that Burne-Jones, together with his Pre-Raphaelite colleagues such as Watts and Morris, re-enacted this event by giving concrete form to spiritual things, "emphasiz[ing] the world which is unseen but eternal."[66] Gurney echoed this sentiment in his interpretation of the artist's 1879 *Annunciation* (fig. 71), believing the picture's verticality suggested, "a ladder…building itself up to connect heaven and earth—a ladder upon which angels may ascend as well as descend, since the Son of Man is now at length so manifestly…with the children of men."[67]

Although Amory Howe Bradford was an Evangelical advocate for foreign missions and minister of First Congregational Church of Montclair, New Jersey, he emphasized "Incarnation and Sacrifice" in *Messages from the Masters.* He laid out these central Anglo-Catholic tenets as crucial themes in all the paintings discussed in his book.[68] In a chapter entitled "The Humanity of the Divine," he concentrated on Burne-Jones's *Nativity* for Birmingham Cathedral (fig. 75) because of what he perceived as its unusual emphasis on man instead of God and its powerful articulation of Incarnation theology. By Bradford's account, Burne-Jones de-emphasized the infant Jesus through an unusual spatial arrangement, which gives equal attention to the shepherds in the upper register. Instead of occupying his traditional place as the literal and symbolic center of the composition, Jesus, in Bradford's interpretation, exhibits "helplessness and

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Gurney, "Christian Mysticism," 296-97.
[68] Bradford, *Messages of the Masters*, 8.

insignificance" while the shepherds puzzle at the angelic messenger hovering above, oblivious to his presence. Bradford praised this innovation for elucidating "the sympathy of His humanity" over his more common role as the adored Divine Child. Bradford curiously described this Jesus as "any other little Jewish boy," a rendering he believed Burne-Jones intentionally calculated to draw attention to Jesus's complete empathy for human suffering since he grew and experienced life as any other child would. After all, Bradford reminded his readers, Jesus's "glory is in His similarity to others, not in His separation from them" and thus the Nativity "should always show one who is yet to be perfected through suffering."[69] Presumably, as an Evangelical, Bradford did not intend his emphasis on Jesus's humanity as an Anglo-Catholic statement. As a liberal theologian, however, who devoted his career to building unity within the Christian church, such denominational distinctions were inconsequential. Regardless, Bradford's observations do align with Burne-Jones's own beliefs, which, together with his biography, ecclesiastical decoration, and self-perpetuated monastic identity, reinforced the Anglo-Catholic reading.

Burne-Jones and Roman Catholicism

Critics occasionally alleged, however, that Burne-Jones's Catholic tendencies transgressed the acceptable boundaries of English Protestantism and edged too closely to Roman Catholicism. Despite Forsyth's praise in *Religion in Recent Art*, Burne-Jones ultimately fell short of the author's religious ideal due to his perceived Catholicism.[70] Of all the painters surveyed, Forsyth exalted Holman Hunt as the only true "Christian," as

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[69] Ibid., 18-20.
[70] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 169-70.

distinct from merely "religious," artist based on his seemingly stalwart Protestantism. By contrast, Burne-Jones "may be said to represent rather the Catholic side of the religion of Art." This Forsyth defined as "dominated by pain, weighed down by [the] sorrow" of the sacrificial "Crucifixion principle" as opposed to the triumphant Resurrection. Rather than seeing God revealed through Nature, "everywhere in the world around," Burne-Jones's "Christian feeling," Forsyth felt, was confined "to the personages and events of so-called sacred history."[71] In other words, for this critic, Burne-Jones's art suggested the morbid, historical faith of Rome rather than the optimistic, vital one of England that Hunt represented. Ultimately, Forsyth concluded, "if painting is to be the living art of a living age, it must share that belief of true Protestantism."[72] "History teaches," he reminded his readers, "that the most distinctively Christian art is art based on Protestant principles and the doctrine of the Resurrection. True art is not compatible with Romanism any more than true science."[73] Forsyth, however, was an exception; other religious critics rarely judged Burne-Jones's art as patently un-Protestant.

In fact, the one Roman Catholic writer to address Burne-Jones's art, A. Streeter, offered the harshest critique, faulting him for allegedly having inadequate faith. Streeter authored a study of Saint Wilfred, Archbishop of York (1897), and a monograph on Sandro Botticelli (1900), both of which the Catholic Truth Society published, and submitted articles on art and social issues exclusively to *The Month: A Catholic Magazine and Review*. Founded in 1864, *Month* offered fiction stories and general interest articles on science, art, and religion to Britain's Catholic populace. In 1899, Streeter contributed an essay highlighting Burne-Jones's Gothic spirit and his paintings'

[71] Ibid., 170-72.
[72] Ibid., 173.
[73] Ibid., 180.

visual equivalence to music (conspicuous elements of Anglo-Catholic worship and aestheticism, respectively). He argued that Burne-Jones's work conjured up the atmosphere of a Gothic cathedral with "the illimitable mystery of half-illumined gloom, and the calm of a hushed stillness" but was the most reluctant of any Christian writer to grant him the status of a "great religious painter."[74] Although Streeter admitted that Burne-Jones rendered his subjects in a beautiful, medieval, ascetic form, for him they did not seem to be matched by an equal sincerity of faith. Ultimately, Streeter concluded, Burne-Jones's paintings were "spiritual because they are so beautiful" as opposed to the early Italian pictures of Fra Angelico and others, which were "beautiful because they are so finely and subtly spiritual."[75] Ironically, this was exactly the criticism Protestants levied against Roman Catholics—that their worship was merely formalized ritual devoid of authentic religious feeling. Streeter's critique is evidence that contemporaries generally understood Burne-Jones's Catholicism as the Anglican, not Roman, variety. The overall mixed interpretation of his theological leanings, however, is an apt demonstration of the increasing complexity of nineteenth-century religion, which no longer fit easily within conventional denominational boundaries, and the futility in trying to define it as such.

Gateway to God and Devotional Aid

In addition to addressing Burne-Jones's beliefs and speculating on his Christian denomination, religious critics adapted his art to a variety of sacred purposes. In their work on American visual culture, David Morgan and Sally M. Promey define the

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[74] A. Streeter, "Thoughts on the Art of Edward Burne-Jones," *Month: A Catholic Magazine* 93 (Jan. 1899): 29.

[75] Ibid., 38.

principle ways that images operate within religious practice, two of which surface

particularly in the nineteenth-century rhetoric surrounding Burne-Jones's art. One of the

most significant is an image's avowed potential to "communicate between human and

divine realms in an economy of ritualized exchange," for instance by "invoking or

otherwise affecting natural or supernatural forces."[76] Another function, which Morgan

and Promey label "communion," can include a "contemplative" engagement with an

image producing experiences of "absorption," "ecstasy," or "transcendence."[77] Robert

Rosenblum has proven that nineteenth-century European scenes of communal piety or

ritual could simulate religious feeling.[78] Reverend Burns, for one, remarked on the power

of Jean-François Millet's *Angelus* (fig. 81) to invite spiritual reflection:

> As we look at it, and as we yield ourselves to its atmosphere and its deep
> suggestiveness, something of the calm in which the picture is steeped
> comes out from the canvas into our hearts; we are lifted far from the
> madding crowd, and set down in this quiet field at the evening hour, to
> listen to the sound of the angelus, and to be alone with our thoughts.[79]

According to Rosenblum, such "spectator Christianity," however, did not require viewers

to share the faith depicted, offering a non-didactic spiritual encounter equally accessible

and acceptable to religious and secular audiences. Burne-Jones's art, on the other hand,

elicited a similar multiplicity of responses but reportedly went beyond spectator

Christianity to actually strengthen belief in religious audiences not merely replicate an

illusion of spirituality devoid of dogma. Religious writers upheld both the devotional

quality of Burne-Jones's art and its potential as a catalyst to numinous experience.

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[76] Morgan and Promey, *Visual Culture*, 2-4.
[77] Ibid., 10.
[78] Robert Rosenblum, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 26-27, 57.
[79] Burns, *Sermons in Art*, 20.

As explained in Chapter Two, ecclesiologists and High Church Ritualists believed Gothic architecture and ornate ecclesiastical decoration could heighten one's perception of the divine in worship. In a parallel manner, religious art critics believed that paintings could engender encounters with God's presence in the gallery, at home, or in church. Beauty, Forsyth argued, gave art the power to conjure the divine: "the path of beauty is not *the* way," he professed, "but it is a way to God….We shall not go far in a true sense of the beauty of holiness without gaining a deeper sense of the holiness of beauty."[80] Religious audiences considered Burne-Jones to be an agent of God whose creations were instilled with the potency to facilitate experience of the divine, thereby fulfilling his role as the artist-priest or artist-prophet. Furthermore, some viewers suggested, by meditating on his images one could grow in one's knowledge and understanding of God. Arthur Fish, for example, theorized in *Quiver* that reflecting thoughtfully on Burne-Jones's work or that of other religious painters promoted moral and spiritual edification. "The more they are considered, not as works of art, but as real visions of real things…the more good will be got by dwelling upon them," he argued. "The contemplation of the scenes laid in Heaven by faithful religious masters" could result in "nothing but unmixed good" in the beholder.[81] By Fish's account, Burne-Jones's angels and those of his contemporaries were devices aiding one's Christian growth and understanding of God's creation.

Reverend Downes underscored the devotional character of Burne-Jones's art by repeatedly describing it as "uplifting," while its "charmed atmosphere of eternal youth" purportedly elevated viewers to a plane where they could "breathe a diviner air." He maintained that all of Burne-Jones's art illustrated a spiritual journey and Christian

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[80] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 107.
[81] Fish, "Picturing the Angels," 772.

ideals, and was capable of provoking encounters with God. By applying Wordsworth's

lines, "it seems the eternal soul is clothed in thee/With purer robes than those of flesh and

blood" to Burne-Jones's creations, Downes suggested their forms actually embodied the

divine.[82] Hence, works such as *The Days of Creation* (fig. 16) or *Arthur in Avalon*, he

contended, "lend to the thoughtful beholder a touch of supernatural apprehension, and the

light of the Eternal breaks in upon him in a sweet surprise."[83] In conclusion, Downes

applied a Eucharistic metaphor to describe the impact of Burne-Jones's art. His paintings

were "the jewelled cup" that quenched the yearning of those who "thirst…from the soul"

for a "drink divine." For those who were "thoughtful" enough to recognize it as such,

Burne-Jones's art functioned as a religious sacrament for connecting with God.[84]

Alfred Story repeated this assessment in the 1901 *Sunday Strand*, a Christian

monthly filled with articles for Sabbath reading and religious instruction. His prolific,

eclectic career encompassed frequent articles on travel, history, and science in edifying

periodicals such as *Cassell's Family Magazine*, *The Quiver*, and the *Sunday Strand*; art

criticism, including reports on "Religious Pictures in the Diploma Gallery" and "The

Religious Pictures of the Year;" monographs on John Linnell and William Blake;

numerous writings on phrenology; a history of the British Empire; a study of women in

the Talmud; various short stories; and poems including "The Christ in London." As part

of a series on "Great Religious Painters of the World," which also included Frank

Dicksee and J. M. Strudwick, Story affirmed Burne-Jones's preeminence as a religious

artist. Citing "lofty," "high" and "noble" paintings such as *The Days of Creation* (fig.

16), *Dies Domini* (fig. 82)*, Hope* (fig. 15), and *Morning of the Resurrection* (fig. 44),

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[82] Downes, "Great Painter," 6-7.
[83] Ibid., 8.
[84] Ibid.

Story argued, "in him, more than in almost any other of our time, did Ruskin's doctrine of art ennobled by being devoted to moral and spiritual ends find a true and wholly fitting exponent."[85] Story underscored the idea that Burne-Jones's paintings could bridge contact with the divine by maintaining that his fundamental "message or mission," consistent throughout his work in "a thousand various keys," was to tap into the "faculty of man's soul which allies him to, brings him in touch with, that which we call supernatural." Regardless of what form one's God assumed, he insisted, the "magic" of Burne-Jones's art was that it could help one perceive that higher being more tangibly. Story alleged that the artist intentionally promoted contemplation of God by revealing "how the human spirit reached up towards that hand beyond the clouds, to that voice from out the dark." For him, the paintings functioned as meditative devices "to start men thinking afresh of the power and majesty of the unseen." Since Story included "the beauty of sacrifice, and the might and eternity of love" among the thoughts Burne-Jones's art prompted, his "unseen" deity can be read as implicitly Christian.[86]

The reaction of Burne-Jones's religious audiences, who perceived his work as an impetus toward divine comprehension, corroborates Beverly Anne Joyce's hypothesis in "'Sighing After the Infinite:" Masculinity, Androgyny, and Femininity in the Art of Edward Burne-Jones." Joyce posits that the artist structured his canvases in such a way, using effeminate and androgynous figures and certain compositional devices, to dissolve the psychological distance between viewer and artwork, creating a momentary unification with the beauty represented. Using a dialectical framework, she argues Burne-Jones meant the paintings to engage the beholder in a Neoplatonic process of spiritual

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[85] Story, "Great Religious Painters," 39.
[86] Ibid., 33.

transcendence, transporting him or her beyond the physical world to a higher plane where he or she is united with divine love. Fernand Khnopff, for instance, described the effect of Burne-Jones's art as "bear[ing] up [viewers'] souls to the threshold of the Absolute, whence they send us messengers of hope and angels of peace."[87] Joyce does not explicitly relate her thesis to conventional notions of God or religion. However, it harmonizes with the accounts of the audiences recorded in this chapter, who experienced her construct of "divine love" specifically as Jesus.

Overall, the use of art as devotional device or catalyst for divine interaction in Victorian society was a common yet unexamined occurrence. Burne-Jones's devout patron William Graham, for example, acquired artwork for the purpose of religious contemplation. He aggressively sought and acquired Rossetti's *Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1848-49) weeks before his death and hung it "up in his room facing his bed, where he could see it as he lay there." Burne-Jones also sent him small paintings to adorn the walls of his sickroom. Art apparently offered comfort and peace to this "very religious" man who, as he gazed upon his paintings, contemplated "his own fitness to meet the God he worshipped." In a ritual akin to ancient Egyptian burial rites, Burne-Jones requested his pictures be interred with Graham as if to accompany him into the afterlife.[88] In the late 1890s James Tissot's *Life of Christ* watercolors (1886-96) drove crowds to religious ecstasy, and women circulated the exhibition on their knees in prayerful adoration as if the pictures were stations of the cross.[89] Some Victorians such as the Anglo-Catholic

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[87] Fernand Khnopff, "In Memoriam: Sir Edward Burne-Jones. A Tribute from Belgium," *Magazine of Art* 22 (1898): 522.

[88] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 81.

[89] Edith Cowes, "Tissot's Life of Christ," *Century Magazine* 51, no. 37 (1895-96): 300 and "To Buy Tissot's Paintings, Brooklyn Institute Secures Option on the Collection," *New York Times*, Jan. 7, 1900, quoted in Michael Wentworth, *James Tissot* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 187.

Pre-Raphaelite patron Thomas Combe erected triptychs or other paintings over private altars, where they served as devotional objects during personal worship.

There are myriad implications of this phenomenon for the accepted understanding of art and religion in the Victorian period, returning the discussion again to the dichotomy of art's two publics. On the one hand, for religious audiences art exhibitions were potentially numinous sites where art could enhance their relationship with God. Galleries were not merely secular temples where the worship of beauty supplanted Christianity but also, for the faithful, alternative churches providing spiritual nourishment and supernatural encounters. George Moore, a member of the secular camp, disparaged such reception practices in *Modern Painting* (1893), poking fun at the public's indiscriminate mania for any Christian-themed picture. His satirical description of the requirements for a successful exhibition of religious paintings verifies the confusion of piety and commercialism in such spaces:

> The gallery must be thrown into deep twilight with a vivid light from above falling full on the picture. There must be lines of chairs, arranged as if for a devout congregation; and if…one of the dignitaries of the Church can be induced to accept a little excursion into the perilous fields of art criticism, all will go well with the show.[90]

Moore's comments, although made in jest, expose an anxiety over the competing expectations of religious versus secular art audiences.

Didactic Tools

Victorian literature on Christian art repeatedly professed the edifying potential of religious images, influenced by moral art history's stance that art should serve a higher

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[90] Moore, *Modern Painting*, 179.

purpose. To cite just one example, Archdeacon Farrar in *The Life of Christ as Represented in Art* (1894) wrote that paintings of Jesus have "revealed to us many a lofty truth, and awakened in us many an ennobling emotion." In his view, religious art had "fixed our thoughts upon" him and "led us to draw nearer to Him, and live more closely with Him," even, at times, being "sufficient to fill a whole life with holy enthusiasm."[91] Periodicals aimed at religious instruction and moral improvement such as juvenile literature and Sunday periodicals—weekly journals meant for family consumption and domestic devotional practice—furthered this agenda by utilizing Burne-Jones's art as a didactic tool to teach Bible lessons. One can imagine parents reading such articles, which often employed scripture and dramatic prose, aloud on the Sabbath as a way to entice bored children into learning about their religion.

Horace Townsend published one such article in the *Girls Own Paper* on the occasion of Burne-Jones's retrospective at the New Gallery in the winter of 1892-93. Townsend, an American artist and author, seems to have acted as a correspondent from Britain to a range of American periodicals, primarily contributing articles on European decorative arts and domestic architecture. The *Girls Own Paper*, however, was a British penny weekly the Religious Tract Society founded in 1880, aimed at the moral refinement of young ladies as a counter to the lowbrow entertainment available in other juvenile magazines. In its pages, Townsend used Burne-Jones's *Days of Creation* (fig. 16) to reinforce biblical teachings about the creation of the world. Townsend revealed his didactic approach by instructing his readership, "Let me lean over your shoulder as you scan them and briefly tell you what I think you ought to see in them, and how you ought to look at them." The angels, he explained, illustrate that which is "so plainly

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[91] Farrar, *Life of Christ*, 479-80.

revealed…in the first chapter of God's Record, known to us as the Book of Genesis." He drove home the Bible lesson by quoting scripture as he systematically described each of the six panels, at times diverging into story-telling mode. In his explanation of the third day, for instance, he borrowed the Bible verse, "God said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind [Genesis 1:11].'" So, Townsend continued, "we see the actual earth and from it some graceful spring-suggesting trees put hopefully forth." He also occasionally invoked a heightened sense of drama. In the fifth angel, for instance, he sensed that "into her face seems to have crept a hint of some foreboding," echoed in the sixth angel, "as if conscious that behind the two physically perfect forms which stand therein were to be faintly descried that glittering, coiling abomination, the Serpent."[92] The paintings thus became a tool for children's religious education, supplemented by a theatrical narrative and biblical quotations.

L. T. Meade also geared her two-part review of Burne-Jones in the 1894 *Sunday Magazine* toward spiritual teaching. The Reverend Benjamin Waugh, a social reformer, Congregationalist minister, and author of religious children's stories, edited the interdenominational journal, which featured essays by biblical scholars and prominent clergy of the Anglican, Scottish Episcopal, and Free Scottish churches. Meade was one of the most popular writers of girls' fiction in the nineteenth century; her books and short stories number in the hundreds. Although her personal religious beliefs are undocumented, she was the daughter of a Protestant minister and her tales from the 1870s of Jesus's redemption of underprivileged urban children reflect the ideals of Christian Socialism. Such is the case with her reading of Burne-Jones's "symbolical subject," *Hope* (fig. 15). Meade emphasized the redemptive promise of Hope rather than her

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[92] Townsend, "Days of Creation," 456-59.

prison, and underscored the need for this particular virtue in modern society.[93]

Dismissing the issue of whether Hope will escape her confinement, Meade focused

instead on the "light that steals through the prison bars, the upward gaze of the face, the

attitude instinct with aspiration, that slender uplifted foot which even chains can scarcely

fetter to the ground," all of which encouragingly "point to heaven."[94] Her interpretation

accords with Burne-Jones's source, Mercury in Botticelli's *Primavera*, who reaches

upwards to touch the clouds, although the artist insisted Hope "isn't stretching her hand

into heaven…she is pulling heaven into her room by the force of her hoping."[95]

In her analysis of *Morning of the Resurrection* (fig. 44)*,* Meade demonstrated

religious critics' pattern of projecting emotion and a dramatic narrative into Burne-

Jones's art. Using numerous action verbs, she described the painting as a theatrical

production. She set the stage: "It is the morning and Christ, the newly risen Lord,

appears at the door of the sepulchre." Mary is "in despair" as she enters the tomb where

she encounters the angels, whose dialogue Meade related in the present tense. For her,

the climax comes when "suddenly…[Mary] speaks, the faces of the listening, watching

angels change; awe mingled with ecstasy steals over them" because "the place has indeed

become holy ground."[96] This is not criticism so much as story telling, with the seasoned

fiction writer breathing life into Burne-Jones's visual tales. The literary style effectively

engaged the non-art specialist and enlivened the religious message of the pictures for

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[93] Meade, "Painter of Eternal Youth," 396. Alexander Strahan, the publisher of *Good Words,* founded the *Sunday Magazine.* A "moderately evangelical Presbyterian," Strahan inclined toward Christian Socialism and wavered back and forth between the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Free Church. *DNB*, s.v. "Strahan, Alexander Stuart" (by Patricia Srebrnik), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40987. Waugh served as editor of the *Sunday Magazine* from 1874 to 1896. The magazine showcased high-quality woodcuts by artists such as the Dalziel Brothers and Charles Verlat, whose illustration, *Vox Dei,* depicting Christ with the Apostles, served as the frontispiece in 1894.
[94] Meade, "Painter of Eternal Youth," 396.
[95] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, n.d., MS Add 54218, vol. 2, fol. 269, British Library.
[96] Meade, "Painter of Eternal Youth," 394.

Meade's Christian family audience. It was an effective device for a Sunday periodical disguising spiritual education as an entertaining tale.

In the 1897 *Quiver*, Fish employed a different educational tactic by situating Burne-Jones's work and that of his Pre-Raphaelite colleagues within an art-historical account of angel iconography. Beginning with Genesis 3:24, Fish offered biblical evidence for angels' appearances and features including the visions of the prophets and St. John, and other scriptural accounts in the Psalms, the Gospels, Daniel and Isaiah.[97] He claimed that instead of fictional imaginings, artists' renditions of angels should be appreciated as prophetic "statements of most precious truths."[98]

Like Fish and Townsend, Gurney also seized the opportunity to transform Burne-Jones's pictures into teaching tools for the *Newbery House Magazine*'s more theologically astute audience by selecting certain scriptures to enhance their meaning. In the *Star of Bethlehem* (fig. 74), for instance, he thought the dense, woodland background demonstrated "the prophecy fulfilled" of Psalm 85:11, "Truth shall flourish out of the earth." Gurney also forged a link between Burne-Jones's 1863 *Annunciation* (fig. 83) and the Old Testament account of the burning bush, in which Moses took off his sandals when he realized he was standing in the presence of God. Similarly, Gurney posited, the Virgin's removal of her shoes "has an obvious meaning, and helps to tell the story." The place where she kneels is indeed "holy ground," he explained; "it is the humble bush of the desert, no lordly forest tree, that is here wondrously enkindled with fire from on high—enkindled and unconsumed." Finally, for Gurney, "Our Lady" in Burne-Jones's

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[97] Fish cited Psalm 104:4, Matthew 28:3, Mark 16:5, Luke 24:4, Daniel 8:15, Daniel 10:5, and Isaiah 6:2, concluding that the popular conception of angels stemmed not from scriptural accounts but from early Italian painting. Fish, "Picturing the Angels," pt. 1, *Quiver* 32 (Feb. 1897): 323-24.

[98] Ibid., 772.

1879 *Annunciation* (fig. 71), who "for all her brothers and sisters draws living water out of the wells of salvation," modeled the philanthropic role all viewers should assume in God's world—"a ministry in which all may share."[99]

Sermons on Art

Many late Victorian critics recognized the didactic similarities between art and preaching. In the 1892 *Homiletic Review*, for instance, Professor T. Harwood Pattison presented an analysis of how the construction of "a painting resembles a sermon." One "is put on the canvas, while the other is put on the art, the mind, the conscience," he explained, but "in each case a picture is made." Pattison even suggested that through sacred art, "the painter can preach to the preacher" in an unexpected role reversal.[100] As an extension of the pulpit, clergymen offered spoken and written sermons on Burne-Jones's art, or at least used it as a pretense for theological exposition.

To redress what he felt was inadequate attention being paid to the latent spiritual meaning of painting, Reverend Forsyth presented a series of "lay sermons" in lecture form, later published as *Religion in Recent Art* in 1889. He clarified art's instructive role as follows: "Art does not preach sermons, it only suggests them…the greatest Art is full of such lessons, and exists for the sake of these lessons."[101] Designed for an audience knowledgeable about yet estranged from Christianity, Forsyth's essays dealt with Burne-Jones, Holman Hunt, Rossetti, and Watts, as well as Richard Wagner's operas. The undertaking was important, he insisted, because for the average exhibition-goer, "who do[es] not claim to be considered artistic at all," the "truest" way of viewing pictures was

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[99] Gurney, "Christian Mysticism," 295-97.
[100] T. Harwood Pattison, "Sermon and Painting," *Homiletic Review* 24, no. 2 (1892): 106-13.
[101] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 114.

by tapping into their spiritual meaning.[102] Religion, Forsyth contended, was the most accessible and effective entry point into art for the average Victorian.

Forsyth used Burne-Jones's work to illustrate his argument that the imaginative spirit art fosters is the remedy needed to revive contemporary Christianity.[103] Religion, he asserted, was facing a crisis in which conservatism had provoked a backlash of agnosticism, manifest in recent critical writings from Germany and elsewhere debunking miracles as myth and the Bible as man-made legend. For Forsyth, reactionary Christianity was to blame for killing off the "spirit of imagination," which arose with vengeance "in a desperate revolt" and propelled religion to the other end of the spectrum, unbelief. The lesson, he warned, was that "you may drive the imagination out at the door but it will always re-enter by the window…and depend on it," he added, "the insulted spirit of imagination will find means to make you regret your mistake."[104] Thus for Forsyth, the missing ingredient needed to resurrect a broadminded yet devout Christian religion was the "imaginative spirit." This, he strikingly concluded, could be cultivated through art, which he believed had the power to transform "hard, inelastic, and unsympathetic" minds into a more compassionate and tolerant view of the world.[105] In his construct, art could therefore serve as a "defense" against the enemies to religion, breathe life into Christianity, and enable it to survive in a hostile modern society. In a paradoxical inversion of historical patronage patterns, Forsyth reasoned that art would help sustain the beleaguered Christian religion.

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[102] Ibid., vi-vii.
[103] Ibid., 60-62.
[104] One of the other regrettable outcomes of severing imagination from religion, Forsyth maintained, was the Aesthetic Movement's "religion of art." Art was "forced to invent a religion of its own, to the loss of many souls, and the peril of more." Ibid., 61.
[105] Ibid., ix.

The above ideas appear in a chapter allegedly about Burne-Jones, who for Forsyth

represented the kind of imagination he considered vital to rescuing Christianity from its

current condition. His art, which Forysth construed as fundamentally spiritual in nature,

dwelled in "a region of rarer spirit and more ethereal grace," for instance, than the

sensuous world of Rossetti. "In all his work," he argued, there is "delicate spirituality"

and "grace of sanctities intangible and inviolate." He believed there was no subject

"more congenial to Mr. Burne Jones's genius" than *Morning of the Resurrection* (fig. 44),

using it as a case study to discuss Burne-Jones's treatment of Christian themes.[106] Yet, it

was not the "Religion of Spiritual Faith" Forsyth attributed to Burne-Jones—that he

reserved for Holman Hunt—but rather the "Religion of Preternatural Imagination." By

this, Forsyth meant that Burne-Jones may see and express "holy things," but his art was

still grounded in the natural world and the souls of men, not in the super-natural. The

beauty he painted may be "unearthly in its exquisite excess," but for Forsyth "it is still

not pure heavenly in its spiritual strength."[107] As mentioned above, Burne-Jones's

perceived Catholicism explains why he ranked below Hunt in Forsyth's hierarchy of

painters.

In 1902 Amory Bradford published *Messages of the Masters: Spiritual*

Interpretations of Great Paintings, comprised in part of previous oral addresses, in which

he attempted to explain the sermons painted by those "great preachers" Burne-Jones,

Hunt, Raphael, Turner and others. His self-proclaimed aim was to "interpret the spiritual

meaning of the painters" or more subjectively, "to follow the suggestions of their

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[106] Ibid., 70-71.
[107] Ibid., 64.

work."[108] In his analysis of Burne-Jones's *Nativity* for Birmingham Cathedral (fig. 75),

Bradford used the angels to expound on contemporary religious attitudes. In detecting

their "eagerness to explore the mystery surrounding the Child," his interpretation took a

decidedly modern twist.[109] Their expressions of wonderment, confusion and curiosity

about the infant Jesus, he surmised, indicate that they have failed to understand the

divinity before them, just as he judged people in recent years had become so obsessed

with doctrinal debates and theological disagreements that they no longer recognized the

living God. Christ, Bradford felt, "should be a subject for inquiry and reverence rather

than for discussion and controversy."[110] Similarly, the shepherds, who turn their backs

on the infant Jesus to gaze up at angels, he found analogous to "the average man [who]

dwell[s] on things of least importance," missing the important event taking place before

his eyes.[111] Like the shepherds, who "were in awe of angels when they might have

looked into the face of Him who was to do more to lead the race toward the divine than

any…who have ever lived," Bradford chastised his contemporaries for having "taken

sides on theories of the supernatural, and forgotten that the Christ has no place in the

lives of any who do not go about doing good."[112] His sentiments are not far removed

from those of Burne-Jones, who also condemned the climate of religious contention and

its consequent neglect of social needs. Additionally, Bradford pointed out that in spite of

the shepherds' initial obliviousness to Jesus's divinity, they ultimately played a crucial

role in spreading the Gospel. "Thus weakness and ignorance," he rationalized, "were to

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[108] Bradford, *Messages of the Masters*, 7.
[109] Ibid., 20.
[110] Ibid., 21.
[111] Ibid., 23.
[112] Ibid., 24.

be used to fill the earth with light and love."[113] Bradford's lesson to his readers was that

God could employ even the most unlikely sinner to further his work on earth. For him,

Burne-Jones not only expressed the truths of Christianity but also articulated concerns

over its contemporary condition.

The Nativity and particularly Burne-Jones's *Star of Bethlehem* (fig. 74) also

formed the focus of *Sermons on Art* by the Reverend James Burns, who also authored

two didactic texts on art specifically for clergy: *Illustrations from Art for Pulpit and*

Platform (1912) and *Illustrations for Preachers and Teachers: taken from literature,*

poetry, and art (1925). Remarking upon the artist's talent for capturing complex

emotions in his figures' countenances, Burns interpreted the Virgin as tinged with

foreboding sadness and the Magi as caught in a moment of "hesitation" and

"bewilderment" at finding a small baby instead of the powerful king they expected.[114] In

spite of his pretense to art criticism, Burns took advantage of the opportunity to

sermonize on the following three points: First, he concluded that the scene expressed the

"soul's quest for God" in which the Magi symbolized the archetypal "pilgrims of the

Spiritual Way," a theme explored further in Chapter Five.[115] Secondly, he claimed the

subject taught its viewers that, like the kings who "saw the vision" and "reached the

goal," those who genuinely seek Christ will find him.[116] Thirdly, he entreated, one must

sacrifice oneself to God before any other offering will be acceptable. The kings not only

laid down their worldly possessions, Burns explained, but also bowed before Jesus to

show their personal submission.

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[113] Ibid., 27.
[114] Burns, *Sermons in Art*, 70.
[115] Ibid., 64-65.
[116] Ibid., 69.

Such "sermons on art," whether preached from the pulpit, published in book form, or disguised as morally elevating Sunday reading, all teased out something from Burne-Jones's art that could be used to promote and teach a range of theological agendas. Through their subjective methodologies, these writers reallocated his work from the rarefied domain of the Aesthetic Movement elite to the sphere of everyday life. No longer confined to the gallery's "temple of beauty," Burne-Jones's art was adapted by these authors for Christian edification in the domestic sphere and didactic preaching from the pulpit or page.

The Act of Interpretation: The Exegesis of Art

In reviewing the religious literature on Burne-Jones a pattern of reception emerges that enforces a third category in David Morgan and Sally Promey's paradigm of religious visual culture, "imagination." In such encounters, they explain, images have the power to "generate meaning, to stimulate associations," or, particularly in the case of Burne-Jones, to "suggest interpretive strategies for making sense of one's individual existence and communal life."[117] As Morgan clarifies, "what believers see is the image as an engaged signifier, not the aesthetic object or curiosity that the connoisseur, art collector, or tourist may see." He defines vision as "a complex assemblage of seeing what is there, seeing by virtue of habit what one expects to see there, seeing what one desires to be there, and seeing what one is told to see there." In other words, he elaborates, "viewers enter into a relation with the image in which they are expected to

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[117] Morgan and Promey, *Visual Culture*, 12.

participate imaginatively, contributing what the image itself may not provide but must presuppose if it is to touch the viewer."[118]

Religious viewers' use of Burne-Jones's art to teach Bible lessons or preach theological agendas is an inherently different form of reception from that of the mainstream media. In the former, the primary concern was with the moral edification and spiritual life of their readers, whereas professional art critics focused on the artist's style and technique. Christian writers were therefore largely unconcerned with properties of paint or the artist's skill. Rather, their interaction with Burne-Jones's art was highly subjective and based on its illustration of scripture or perceived congruence with their personal belief system. They modeled their interpretive strategy on current methodologies of biblical criticism in their own field.

Religious authors believed it was the prerogative—indeed, the duty—of the beholder to complete with his or her imagination the story the artist outlined on the canvas. Great artists only sketched the broad framework of meaning, such critics argued, leaving room for personal interpretation. Townsend, for instance, volunteered this justification for his exposition on *The Days of Creation* (fig. 16):

> Remember that no picture can be said to be truly great, or to possess the highest artistic value…which does not require us to use our own imagination to supplement…those hints of the painter's, that are all he is enabled to place upon the canvas, which does not in short demand from us almost as much as it gives us in return.[119]

Meade recounted an alleged conversation with Burne-Jones as legitimization for her liberal reading of the artist's work. "I cannot stand as an interpreter behind my pictures," Burne-Jones reputedly said. "They must speak their own story as they would have to do

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[118] Morgan, *Sacred Gaze*, 74-75.
[119] Townsend, "Days of Creation," 456.

if I were dead. To one mind they will tell one thing, to another they will seem to bear a totally different interpretation; for another, again, they will have no message." "In writing, therefore, of this painter," Meade justified, "I must stand by the pictures myself, and tell the stories as my eyes read them."[120] Such statements granted license for religious viewers to interpret the pictures at their discretion. Morgan cites the protagonist in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*, who evidences the prevalence of this approach during the nineteenth century. Standing before a religious painting in Rome, he describes the process of viewing: "let the canvas glow as it may, you must look with the eye of faith, or its highest excellence escapes you. There is always the necessity of helping out the painter's art with your own resources of sensibility and imagination."[121]

The Days of Creation offers a useful case study for this phenomenon since nearly all religious writers commented upon it as one of Burne-Jones's greatest achievements. As already witnessed in Townsend's essay in the *Girls Own Paper*, the contexts of evolution and scientific advancement made the six-part painting an especially appropriate vehicle for those who wanted to reassert God's authority as Creator and the divine origin of the universe. Meade, for instance, appended a Bible verse to the angels in *The Days of Creation*: "They all shall wax old as doth a garment, but Thou remainest, and Thy years shall not fail."[122] The selection, a loose recitation of Psalm 102:26-27, seems intended for Christians knowledgeable enough about scripture to decipher the latent meaning in her words. The verse immediately preceding, to which Meade surely meant to allude, Psalm 102:25 (KJV), reads, "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the

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[120] Meade, "Painter of Eternal Youth," 392.
[121] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun, or the Romance of Monte Beni*, in *The works of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (1860; New York: Caxton Society, 1922), 9:272, quoted in Morgan, *Sacred Gaze*, 75.
[122] Meade, "Painter of Eternal Youth," 473.

heavens are the work of thy hands." In this context, what at first seems simply a statement about the fleetingness of man's existence in comparison with the eternal power of God becomes, for the biblically educated, an avowal of Creationism. Alfred Gurney also suggested an alternate inscription, saying, "Romans i.20 would make a beautiful and most appropriate subscription."[123] With this verse, "for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse," he suggested that God, although invisible, can be known through the physical world. The scripture as Gurney applied it thus implies both a creationist reading and the Tractarian belief in the sacramentalism of nature. He also put forward an unusual appraisal of the action in the sixth panel, where "the Son of Man is clearly prefigured together with His Bride the Church." Expanding upon this biblical analogy of Jesus wedded to his followers Gurney surmised that the angel's song expressed "the rapture wherewith the holy nuptials of heaven and earth are inaugurated."[124] Since neither Jesus nor any symbolism of the Christian church appears in the painting aside from the figures of Adam and Eve, this is a curious explanation. For the Evangelical readers of *Good Words*, Wyke Bayliss proposed another biblical meaning. Like Meade, Bayliss saw the painting as speaking victoriously of God's never-ending presence in the world and the eternal life promised to Christian believers. For him, the progressive accumulation of angels and globes testified that "not only shall God's work endure, but His servants who do His pleasure shall endure also, and shall rejoice together with Him when the day comes."[125] In each of these examples, the writer not only added a new layer of meaning and/or a different textual source to the

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[123] Gurney, "Christian Mysticism," 294.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Bayliss, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," 194.

painting, but in doing so also effectively re-created it according to his or her own religious beliefs. The variety of Christian readings of *The Days of Creation* testifies to the very personal, idiosyncratic style of interpretation with which religious audiences approached Burne-Jones's spiritual subjects.

In *Religion in Recent Art*, Forsyth revealed an underlying reason for this method of reception. Driven by theological liberalism, his agenda was to promote greater creativity and broad-mindedness in scriptural exegesis rather than "that dull and dismal literalism which idolized instead of revering the Bible" and which, in his opinion, drove off Christianity's imaginative spirit.[126] Forsyth's essays were primarily a pretense to argue for greater freedom of interpretation in scripture. Drawing parallels between biblical exegesis and the analysis of pictures, he warned against both overly personalized subjectivism and confining one's thoughts too strictly to the artist's statements or the obvious visual elements of the composition. He admitted that a viewer should be sensitive to the artist's inspiration and "avoid and reprobate interpretations which are as alien to his intention as the chief baker's three baskets are to the doctrine of the Trinity." Laying on meanings not directly perceptible in the visual evidence, he alleged, did "violence to the text" by straying too far from its basic content. However, excessive literalness, such as Forsyth observed in the current conservative religious climate, was even more dangerous in his view. "Mere textualism" was worse "violence to the text…and the Bible has almost been ruined for the public by it." Similarly in art, he implored, one "must not be limited to the direct and conscious horizon of the artist" either, "even when the artist himself expounds."[127]

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[126] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 60.
[127] Ibid., vii-viii.

Forsyth made no pretense that the artists would endorse his admittedly personal interpretations. Yet, he defended this subjective approach arguing, "there is room and need for more *expository* criticism than we possess either in art or literature…Expository preaching is coming back into fashion and use, and it need not be confined to scriptural texts, nor to that order of Inspiration alone which marks the Bible." In order for art to reach its greatest "social power," he hypothesized, people must be "set…free from the paralyzing fear of going a jot beyond the direct and immediate consciousness of the artist at his work." Some happy medium must be reached whereby the public is "free to find in a picture any suggestion which is really and reasonably congruous with its central idea, whether deliberately meant by the painter or no," he felt, if art was ever to fulfill its highest function in society. Forsyth summarized his position on the interpretation of both art and scripture thus:

> I may have been thought fanciful in interpreting some of the pictures I have taken in hand. Well, I will not say I am right in every point of my explanation. In some points I feel the danger of forcing a meaning. But the artists do not want their students to be correct in every point; and what some of you distrust, perhaps, is not the interpretation of particular points, but this style of interpretation altogether. The greatest trouble of my life as a public teacher is to get English people to believe that there may be anything in holy texts beyond what the 'plain man' may be made to see at once.[128]

For Forsyth, at least, image and text were to be approached with the same generous and imaginative mindset.

This helps explain the highly individual pattern of art interpretation in religious literature, one focused on the spiritual import, latent emotion, and didactic possibilities of

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[128] Ibid., 115.

the picture rather than its quality or physical properties.[129] What may at first seem like tenuous meanings irrationally applied to pictures were, in fact, extensions of scholarly theological practice. Religious writers approached an art object with the same methodology they used to sermonize on a passage of the Bible. Their manner of seeing, digesting, and analyzing differed fundamentally from that of a professional art critic or secular viewer. For Christian audiences, the act of reading a painting was synonymous with the act of reading the Bible. Yet, this difference has gone unnoticed and unincorporated in scholarship on Burne-Jones or late Victorian religious art.

Melancholia

Using the interpretive framework of reading a painting as an exercise in religious exegesis, critics accentuated two particular facets of Burne-Jones's art: a profound melancholy and the artist's sanctification of secular subjects. Although Burne-Jones's melancholia has been widely acknowledged, its religious dimensions have yet to be examined. Many nineteenth-century critics, in fact, understood it as Burne-Jones's commentary on the modern spiritual climate. Some construed his mood of wistful longing as symbolic of religious doubt and a general fin-de-siècle malaise, while others detected in the melancholy an underlying message of hope and redemption.[130]

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[129] T. Harwood Pattison was an exception. He argued in the *Homiletic Review* that both a sermon and a painting should express only one distinct thought, easily discernible and incontrovertible, as in the moralizing paintings of Hogarth. Pattison feared the subjective interpretive strategies of his colleagues, warning, "the danger in the multitude of commentators is the danger in the multitude of connoisseurs. The preacher's one clear original idea is obscured and buried under a host of critical data." Pattison, "Sermon and Painting," 106.

[130] A number of critics both religious and secular considered Burne-Jones's melancholy as typical of the fin-de-siècle zeitgeist. Gurney began his *Newbery House Magazine* article, for instance, by noting how Burne-Jones's 1893 New Gallery exhibition "belongs to our much-discussed *fin de siècle*." Gurney, "Christian Mysticism," 293. For Streeter, Burne-Jones encapsulated the spirit of the age when he painted a

Honor Brooke stated in 1893 in the *English Illustrated Magazine* that melancholy was "the garment that Burne-Jones finds most fitting for his poetic thought; he has worn it so long, it is so essentially a part of his artistic nature, that *certes*, we should not know him without it." She translated his pessimism into a revelation of religious doubt. Remarking upon his "spirit…of subdued melancholy," she commented, "the questioning spirit of our own times seems to have passed into his work." This "sadness," she noticed, was "specially present in his sacred pictures," where it "fills the mind of the spectator, until thought itself begins to question, and to ask, Are these things so?"[131]

In "Burne-Jones: His Ethics and Art," Una Ashworth Taylor expanded on this discussion of the artist's perceived hovering "cloud of melancholy." "Is there any tinge on the faces of saint or angel or virgin of the joyousness of that early art of Christianity…the triumph of light over darkness, of joy over sadness?" she asked her readers. No, she asserted, "St. George…has no exultation in his victory. The angels at the Easter tomb…have no gladness in the resurrection of their King." Taylor compared the Virgin in the *Star of Bethlehem* (fig. 74) with "that sisterhood of Botticelli's wistful Madonnas," whose knowledge of their child's impending doom seems to trouble them. Regardless of the subject, Burne-Jones's paintings enforced for Taylor, "a sense of questioning without solution…of desire rather than fruition." To her, his world was one of "life portrayed as life expectant, joy held for ever in suspense, pleasure as a promise whose performance hangs in the precarious balance of untoward chance." However, Taylor concluded, this "anticipation rarely—one might almost say never—is allowed to assume the mask of hope." Recalling that historically, most religions considered

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"tone of wistful sadness" combined with a "looking backward" to a more ideal past. He characterized this retrospective attitude as "essentially modern." Streeter, "Thoughts on Burne-Jones," 35.

[131] Brooke, "Burne-Jones," 235-36.

melancholy a "forbidden sin," she quoted from the apocryphal book of Hermas the

Shepherd to remind her readers that the predominant "doctrine of sane mankind" has

been that "sadness…is the sister of doubting, and doubting is the daughter of evil." By

such criteria, she reckoned, Burne-Jones's melancholy and "gentle fatalism" took on a

meaning of unbelief.[132]

In *Month,* A. Streeter construed Burne-Jones's oeuvre even more pessimistically

as "all in a minor key" without any "indication anywhere of a song of joy, or a hymn of

praise, or a chorus of triumph."[133] If the artist was commenting on religion, Streeter

deduced, it was out of "regret that has lost the poignancy of active grief, any admixture of

hope, and all restlessness of struggle and suspense." Instead, Streeter continued, Burne-

Jones's melancholy "lingers only as the tranquil mournfulness of a beautiful dead

memory."[134] He could not discern hope or redemption anywhere. *Dies Domini* (fig. 82),

for instance, an image of Jesus sitting in judgment, represented for Streeter the

"mourning of the condemnation of sinners rather than rejoicing in the Beatific Vision of

the just."[135]

Forsyth agreed that Burne-Jones's melancholia articulated a position of faith

under attack by science and modernity but insisted a glimmer of hope could be detected.

"The shadow of great questions has fallen on" his women, Forsyth speculated, "and some

cloud is about their beautiful hearts. They are just awakening to some sense of what a

world we live in."[136] For him, their expressions reflected the state of modern religion:

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[132] [Una Ashworth Taylor], "Burne-Jones: His Ethics and Art," *Edinburgh Review* 189 (Jan. 1899): 36-40.
[133] Streeter, "Thoughts on Burne-Jones," 34.
[134] Ibid., 31.
[135] Ibid., 34.
[136] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 75.

> The soul which has won the power to see a huger universe has grown also in the power to feel its inadequacy. And so we have the nineteenth century weariness, amounting in cases to despair, pessimism, nihilism, and reckless revolt. It is this weariness that we see just shadowed on these lovely faces of Burne Jones's. It is pagan beauty suffused with modern, nay recent, melancholy.[137]

In Forsyth's construct, Burne-Jones's faces communicated "a time when the old creeds are dead and the new ones not of age; when the general faith is no more uncritical and strong, but anxious or paralysed amid the success of science and unexampled wealth."[138] He reassured his readers, however, "there are, of course, thousands who do not realize things in that way, and who still possess a vigorous working faith." Burne-Jones belonged to this category, Forsyth claimed, and insisted his art offered a message of hope and redemption to dwellers in the bleak landscape of modernity. Plagued by earthly woes, his protagonists, Forsyth surmised, have realized the appeal of heaven for "whatever be the fall, there is also the rise. The soul has begun to awake." With this "beauty wounded…and sensibility saddened," Burne-Jones's art thus testified to what Forsyth saw as humanity's need for God. It purportedly demonstrated that "beauty is not always the bringer of joy, and that another strength than its own is needful to sustain it, and preserve it from its latent sentence of decay."[139] In Forsyth's framework, Burne-Jones's viewers, recognizing their own fallen state and the earthly world's inability to satisfy, would then realize their need for salvation.

Others concurred with Forsyth's optimistic slant. "It is true," Baldwin admitted in *The Outlook*, "that pre-Raphaelitism brought into art a sadness, a perplexity, an awe, not before known." However, its effect, he upheld, was to inspire "an idealism, a reality of

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[137] Ibid., 77-78.
[138] Ibid., 78.
[139] Ibid., 76.

the unseen, a reverent mysticism" in its viewers. In Baldwin's opinion, a "brooding sense of the mystery of all things" pervaded all Burne-Jones's pictures, but by his brush "the mystery of doubt is transfigured into the mystery of faith."[140] L. T. Meade likewise discerned a hopeful note in his rendition of *Faith* (fig. 84), personified by a single female figure holding an oil lamp while standing triumphantly above the dragon of doubt, consumed by fire. Although she otherwise found Faith lacking "the grander side of her character, the Faith which conquers, even in the hour of failure, and is victorious in the moment of apparent defeat," Meade nevertheless read the lamp as a sign that Victorian religious belief was under attack but resolutely persisted, burning "with a clear, steady, although small flame." She excused the figure's sadness since the "sorrow which often lies at her heart" over mankind's imperfect faith (and presumably, contemporary religious doubt), rendered her "naturally more sober, her mien…graver."[141]

The negative connotation of Burne-Jones's melancholia as a spiritual sickness had its counterpart in the secular press's reading of his work as effeminate, unhealthy and pessimistic. Sidney Colvin recalled in the *Magazine of Art*, for instance, how critics decried his *Annunciation* at the 1879 Grosvenor Gallery (fig. 71) as "morbid, melancholy, lamentable, and not to be endured."[142] Wilfred Meynell, a few years later, denounced his "effeminacy," which "is distinctly unwholesome when it is associated, as in the present instance, with suggestions of a low moral tone and a very apparent pessimism."[143] Curiously, however, Burne-Jones's melancholia never led religious audiences to condemn him for immorality the way art critics did. Concentrating on his

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[140] Baldwin, "The Nativity," 1045.
[141] Meade, "Painter of Eternal Youth," 396.
[142] Colvin, "Pictures at Palace Green," 85.
[143] Wilfrid Meynell, "The Winter Exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery," *Magazine of Art* 4 (1881): 180.

spiritual message over formal concerns, reviews of his work in Christian journals and

"sermons on art" were generally positive. Even when religious viewers detected a note

of sadness, they usually interpreted it as an apt commentary on the modern spiritual

climate rather than a sign of decadence. Where art critics saw unhealthiness, religious

writers read the spiritual sickness of the age; where others perceived doubt and

pessimism, Christians detected hope; and where art publics saw only fictional myth and

legend, religious audiences discerned sacred truths.

Sanctification of the Secular

In his definition of religious visual culture, David Morgan contends, "what makes

an image 'religious' is often not simply its subject matter or the intentions of the person

who created it but the *use* of the image as well as the context of its deployment and

interpretation."[144] Perhaps the most common and remarkable thread throughout the

religious literature on Burne-Jones is a consistent assertion that his mythological,

classical, or medieval subjects resonated with as much Christian meaning as his biblical

paintings or stained-glass windows. Every writer cited in this chapter, interpreting the

pictures according to his or her own belief system, ventured a Christian reading of at least

one of his secular subjects or argued more broadly that all of his work was imbued with

religious value. The prevalence of religious interpretations of *Le Chant d'Amour* (fig.

77), *The Golden Stairs* (fig. 79), or *The Wheel of Fortune* (fig. 78), among others, reveals

the ambiguity of the definitions of "sacred" and "secular" during Burne-Jones's lifetime.

Art critics also occasionally blurred the line between the two, but usually understood

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[144] Morgan, *Sacred Gaze*, 55.

Burne-Jones conversely as secularizing Christian subjects. At times, he encouraged this confusion, for instance equating *Love's Wayfaring* with "the vision of the wheels in Ezekiel," quoting Piero della Francesca's *Baptism* in the bathing figures of *The Mill*, and designing his *Troy Triptych* in the form of a giant Renaissance altarpiece.[145] A conversation Thomas Rooke recorded indicates Burne-Jones was cognizant of the subjectivity with which religious audiences approached his art, as well as their proclivity for reading Christian meaning into secular themes. Of *Love among the Ruins* (fig. 85) he lightheartedly told Rooke in 1896, "a young lady asked me what was the subject and I said the Spirits of Just Men made perfect, and she didn't offer the least objection. And to another lady I said it was Christ and the Woman of Samaria at the Well, and she was equally satisfied."[146]

As Downes reminded readers of *Great Thoughts*, sacred and profane were two sides of the same coin. "Hard by the world of fantasy and silence" embodied in Burne-Jones's art, he contended, "lies the solemn, glorious world of Religion" just as "Hades…lies hard by the gate of Paradise." He proceeded to explain how all of Burne-Jones's figures, whether drawn from classical mythology, the Bible or poetry, could be read as characters in a great religious drama. Regardless of the subject matter at hand, all the protagonists are "*silent*" in an "atmosphere of eternity which has hushed and awed them." "*Listening*…for the voice of God," they are "*waiting*…for that perfect fruition which remains for them in the glory of the beatific vision." For Downes, Burne-Jones's men were souls on a religious pilgrimage, yearning for the spiritual fulfillment of eternal life. "Thus the minister of Christ" from Burne-Jones's Oxford years, he concluded,

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[145] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Apr. 18, 1895, MS Add 54218, vol. 1, fol. 85, British Library; Piero reference in Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 143.
[146] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 2:265.

"blends with the inspired artist," pervading "Greek legend or the poet's dream" with "Christian thought and spiritual aspiration."[147]

Forsyth found this sanctification of the secular particularly resonant in Burne-Jones's reinterpretation of myths. "He not only replaces…the ancient forms with ancient beauty," Forsyth declared, "but he invests them with an abiding spiritual significance." In his estimation, the artist translated legends of the past into the speech and "spiritual dialect" of the nineteenth century. Pursuant to Forsyth's agenda for a more liberal interpretation of the Bible, he insisted that by imbuing the secular with sacred meaning, Burne-Jones acted out the same imaginative process with which one should approach scripture, breathing new life into an old text and making it relevant for the modern age.[148]

After Burne-Jones's death, Wyke Bayliss offered the following in *Good Words* as a eulogy to the "Painter of the Golden Age:"

> The Golden age was with us while he stayed:
> For the Seven Angels knew him, and their wings
> Were stilled for him to paint; the Wizard Kings
> Showed him the Orient treasures, which they laid
> At the Infant's feet; the Courts of Love obeyed
> His incantations; every Myth which brings
> Light out of darkness seemed imaginings
> Of God, or things that God himself had made.[149]

Bayliss chose Christian themes such as the *Days of Creation* ("the Seven Angels"), the Adoration, and the Nativity ("the Wizard Kings" laying "Orient treasures" at "the Infant's feet") to best represent Burne-Jones's oeuvre. His tribute is full of religious overtones and even implies in its last lines that the artist's secular subjects reverberated with religious consequence. "Every Myth which brings light of out darkness," Bayliss

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[147] Downes, "Great Painter," 8.
[148] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 64-65.
[149] Bayliss, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," 189.

concluded, "seemed imaginings of God, or things that God himself had made" when rendered by his pencil.[150] This assessment by Bayliss, a professional artist, confirms that spiritual readings of Burne-Jones's secular works infiltrated even the general art public.

As late as 1916 Reverend Linton argued that the Pre-Raphaelites, including Burne-Jones, were "reverent" pioneers in a quest to unify aesthetics and ethics, Greek naturalism and "the Christian doctrine of self-denial," flesh and spirit, natural and supernatural, "inspired writ" and "profane history and romance," earth and the afterlife.[151] Believing nature to be another form of divine revelation imbued with sacramental significance, they came to an "essentially religious" synthesis of sacred and secular traditions, he purported. Their greatest achievement, in Linton's eyes, was forging this "real kinship between religion and the highest Art."[152] He asserted that all their pictures, whether taken from mythology or chivalric romance, were "as rich in meaning as a Christian parable…as sacred as if written in a canonical Gospel." In their world, "all humanity is divine because [Jesus] lived and died." Summarizing their accomplishments, Linton averred, "they have not secularized the highest things; but they have sanctified the lower."[153]

The Golden Stairs

Ironically, aestheticism's most salient characteristic, its absence of narrative, enabled religious viewers to fill the void with their own Christian meanings. *The Golden Stairs* (fig. 79), for instance, exhibited at the 1880 Grosvenor Gallery, is the painting art

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[150] Ibid.
[151] Linton, *Cross in Modern Art*, 4.
[152] Ibid., 6.
[153] Ibid., 9.

historians most often cite as the quintessential statement of Burne-Jones's involvement in the Aesthetic Movement. Its monochromatic, repetitive, winding parade of young women is frequently likened to music, much like Whistler's nocturnes. Yet, nineteenth-century critics commonly read a Christian meaning into *The Golden Stairs*, subverting any intended or perceived statement of aesthetic principles. By including doves on the roof as a possible allusion to the presence of the Holy Spirit, the artist even invited such interpretations. That viewers simultaneously read this archetype of aestheticism as a religious picture is testimony to the close relationship of sacred and secular in Burne-Jones's art.

As Alfred Story explained to the readers of the *Sunday Strand*, *The Golden Stairs* may lack an explicit subject, but it has "so delightful and suggestive a character that it deserves a story all to itself." This the author happily supplied, proposing "the artist had in his mind the conception of a fair heavenly host, a tuneful crowd of angels." Descending "from above," he wrote, they "heighten and sweeten the lives of men with strains of celestial music."[154] Other authors cast the maidens as nuns, inhabitants of heaven, or symbols of the Resurrection. In response to claims that the picture had "no symbolism," Meade protested, "it seems to me that this lovely vision is not without its meaning." Like Story, she considered the women otherworldly beings traveling "straight from heaven to earth." Furthermore, their hopeful "spring-time of youth" implied for Meade that other "time of resurrection and rejoicing," Easter.[155] Reverend Downes interpreted all of Burne-Jones's protagonists as loiterers at the gates of Heaven, listening for God and waiting to enter the celestial city. The women in *The Golden Stairs*, he

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[154] Story, "Great Religious Painters," 34.
[155] Meade, "Painter of Eternal Youth," 471.

proposed, are already on the other side, "wending their way from one part of the Palace Beautiful to another." "It is clear," he continued, "that the air of Paradise doth fan the house."[156] Alfred Gurney cast them as ascetic "penitents" in a medieval convent, conjuring up Anglo-Catholic monasticism. "Travers[ing] the cloister" of life, he conjectured, they process along the "penance-path" of the stairway. Turning, their leader "catches a far-off glimpse of the altar, lifts hands and hearts and voice" in joyful worship. Gurney optimistically envisioned the staircase as only a fraction of their destiny, "not a half circle, but a whole." Symbolically, although "we see only the descent," he assumed "an ascent is to follow" into the "sunshine."[157] Even general art critics characterized the women as "messengers of God…bringing harmony from the world above to the world below" or derivations of angels carved on the façades of Gothic cathedrals.[158]

Le Chant d'Amour

Le Chant d'Amour (fig. 77a), another of Burne-Jones's most "aesthetic" subjects, also evoked Christian impressions. The idyll of a lover serenaded by his beloved, who a sightless Cupid accompanies on the organ, is often cited for its poetic sensibility and exemplification of Walter Pater's dictum, "all art should aspire to the condition of music." In the third and final version of the composition (fig. 77b), the artist made the medieval church behind the central figure more pronounced by adding a buttress and protruding apse with tall, rounded windows from which a ray of light emanates. For

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[156] Downes, "Great Painter," 8.
[157] Gurney, "Christian Mysticism," 301.
[158] John Ernest Phythian, *Burne-Jones* (London: G. Richards, 1908), 144; Frederic George Stephens, "The Grosvenor Gallery," *Athenaeum* (May 8, 1880): 605. Inverting this reading, M. Phipps Jackson pointed out the compositional similarity between *The Golden Stairs* and the procession of satanic warriors in *The Fall of Lucifer*. M. Phipps Jackson, "The New Gallery," *Magazine of Art* 18 (June 1895): 286.

those who noticed the change, the ecclesiastical structure signaled the presence of a spiritual message embedded within the painting's decorative forms. It was this signifier, which mainstream art reviewers usually overlooked, that triggered religious writers' quest for sacred meaning in *Chant d'Amour*.

For Forsyth, the church served as the key to unlocking *Chant d'Amour*'s "main point"—that the highest form of love is one pure and holy, touched by God, and flowing out of religious faith. He maintained that Burne-Jones's painting was a poetic statement about this "ideal…spiritual nature of Love." In his interpretation, even the noblest kind of human love, which the unseeing Cupid symbolizes, cannot attain the most sacred state of affection without being "touched from heaven" and "uplifted by the finger of God." He contrasted the beautiful but blinded character of earthly Love with the wide-open eyes of the knight, who by seeing clearly is "sublimed to a higher mood" with "a vision and a conscience and a strain of the love divine." Distinguishing between their two sources of inspiration, Forsyth explained how the organ music sensual Love plays is insufficient, but "what flows from the singer and enchains the knight is something other and higher….a power nobler and clearer-eyed than the blind doting that mere passion feeds." In Forsyth's estimation, the source of this sacred love is God, and the knight has been "clothed…with the sacramental light of a life beyond life, and a grace that breathes at once of worship and reserve." To allay any skepticism that his interpretation was "the mere fancy of the spectator," Forsyth argued that Burne-Jones added the symbolic ray of light as a "direct indication" of the religious meaning. The shaft of light "stream[ing] through the windows of the hoary church to the rear" passed through the chancel, where, Forsyth inferred, it was "*consecrated to more than earthly significance*" before coming

to rest directly on the singer's instrument. Thus sanctified by its journey through this supposed holy dwelling place of Christ, the light, for Forsyth, transformed "the blind breath of even noble passion into the luminous inspiration of the heavenly love song, makes love a holy mystery, and the central figure 'a glorified new Memnon singing in the great God-light.'" A "virginal" mood, the "cloistral peace" of dawn pervading the "unearthly" scene, and an overall "apocalyptic spell of the heavenly city and a supernatural grace" compounded his proposed religious allegory of love made perfect through Jesus.[159] L. T. Meade also believed the sunlight radiating from the church expressed a purified "love idealized" and deduced Burne-Jones had treated his subject from both "a mythical and spiritual point of view."[160]

Picking up on another of aestheticism's main themes, Alfred Gurney acknowledged the picture was "full of music," but the tune he heard was a distinctively High Church harmony. The singer, he declared, "is in the attitude of prayer," and "even the Cupid who blows the organ resembles a christened acolyte." Invoking the same cloistral mood he detected in *The Golden Stairs*, Gurney pronounced, "surely it is the hour of vespers, and the song a Magnificat."[161] His reading transformed *Chant d'Amour* from a sensuous Arcadian idyll into an Anglo-Catholic hymn. Whether expostulating on heavenly versus earthly love or the sounds of divine worship, these writers undermined aestheticism by insisting upon *Chant d'Amour's* latent religious message.

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[159] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 87-88.
[160] Meade, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," 17-18.
[161] Gurney, "Christian Mysticism," 295.

The Wheel of Fortune

Even pictures with obvious subject matter such as the *Wheel of Fortune* (fig. 78) encouraged religious interpretations. With eyes closed, Burne-Jones's Amazonian personification of Fortune remorselessly and indiscriminately spins a wheel upon which rotate the fates of a slave, a king, and a poet. Most viewers perceived this bleak vision to be a pessimistic statement about an uncaring modern world left to natural selection and devoid of a loving God. For many it was easy to see this "unappeasable Great Power which turns its mighty wheel and cares for none," as Meade did, as "the very spirit of agnosticism, which leads in the end to blind despair."[162] Forsyth likewise conjectured, "what a curse life would be if down our streets there rolled ceaselessly no more than the wheel of this cold Topsyturvydom." With wistful regret he added, "this is the deity and the creed under which the vast mass of people live, and which have been enthroned by the scientific agnosticism of the day."[163]

However, some critics unearthed in the picture a more positive message about God's omnipotence. Alfred Gurney found reassurance in the wheel, applying Saint Augustine's analogy of a circle as "the nature of God…whose centre was everywhere, and its circumference nowhere." Severed at the top and bottom by the picture plane, the wheel, he reasoned, underscored how only God and those in heaven can see the full circle of life. Since religion teaches "we are not really the victims of fate that is blind and cruel," he argued, Fortune's presence was surely meant "only to assert, under that image, more clearly the law of Heaven's continual dealing with man." Gurney idealistically believed the king, in spite of his submissive position underneath the slave, was "royal-

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[162] Meade, "Painter of Eternal Youth," 397.
[163] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 85-86.

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hearted" enough to "rejoice, even at the cost of blinding pain, to become the stepping-stone whereby his fellow mounts higher." To back up his point, he quoted Luke 1:52, "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek."[164] Gurney managed to turn Fortune from a pessimistic dealer of fate into a positive reminder of what he perceived as God's benevolent agency on earth and a statement of Christian principles.

Honor Brooke presented another religious analysis of this picture in the *English Illustrated Magazine*. While admitting the painting was "one of the most depressing that [Burne-Jones] ever painted," she recommended her readers reconsider it in light of its iconographic tradition in church architecture, where it signified "the uncertainty of human prosperity" and stressed the inversion of rich and poor in God's kingdom. Although Brooke acknowledged that in this ecclesiastical context "there is a higher power behind it, which can, and does, over-rule the turns of fortune," she felt Burne-Jones's representation failed to provide similar reassurance.[165] The artist himself hinted at the picture's religious undertone when he complained to Lady Leighton that laboring on it had caused him great pain and joked that the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge should reward him for his "heroic" efforts.[166]

Other Paintings

Many of Burne-Jones's other pictures elicited occasional religious responses. Alfred Gurney, for instance, construed the bevy of young maidens in *The Mirror of Venus* (fig. 86) as a "Holy Womanhood" noticing a heavenly vision in their reflection,

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[164] Gurney, "Christian Mysticism," 300.
[165] Brooke, "Burne-Jones," 236-37.
[166] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:128.

"which we may hope to see some day." The mysterious, idyllic landscape recalled for

Gurney the biblical Promised Land, a "wilderness where day by day the manna may be

found sweet as honey." *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid* (fig. 80) he declared a

"painted parable" proclaiming the "the spiritual order" of God's kingdom, in which "the

strong serve the week, the rich serve the poor; man serves woman; the Church serves the

world; and there is One 'higher than the highest' who serves all." He read the king as

Jesus, the "Divine Servant" and "true Bridegroom of the heart," who humbly kneels

before his bride, "our sin-stricken and disinherited race," as the angels above sing *Te

Deum*. Gurney equated the image with Jesus "offering gold and frankincense and myrrh"

even as "his kiss carries with it the royal word *Ephphatha*, effectual for the

awakening…of all whom He visits."[167] The Reverend Forsyth cast the *Garden of the

Hesperides* (fig. 87) as a critique on the fallen state of religious belief in a modern-day

Eden. "Can a fruit-laden tree with a serpent in it," he asked, "suggest anything for

us…but the tree of knowledge, with its fair seduction and its lurking peril to the soul?"

The painting reminded him of how the "soul of the age," in "the increase of its

knowledge," has yet "increased its sorrow, and troubled, nay lost its faith." It also

forebode for him how, "we may dance about our tree of science, and revel in our material

sway but there is in our hearts a hunger, and a trouble in our face, which all our progress

cannot satisfy or soothe. For the soul is still unfed and its truths are still unsure."[168] In

addition, L. T. Meade felt that Burne-Jones painted *Love among the Ruins* (fig. 85) from

a "spiritual point of view," and the *Magazine of Art* found *Cupid's Hunting Fields* (fig.

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[167] Gurney, "Christian Mysticism," 300-301.
[168] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 81-82.

88) "wholly noble and wholly spiritual…and touched with the august and stainless chastity of great religious art." [169]

Pygmalion and the Image

Nowhere, however, was the perceived kinship between sacred and secular more pronounced than in discussions of Burne-Jones's *Pygmalion* series (fig. 89a-d). At the 1879 Grosvenor Gallery, his monumental *Annunciation* (fig. 71) hung, surprisingly, in the center of the four canvases of Pygmalion carving, desiring, and worshiping his statue-come-to-life. Sir Coutts Lindsay allowed artists to choose which works would be displayed in the exhibitions and was sympathetic and responsive to their concerns. Consequently, Burne-Jones must have approved, perhaps even suggested, the installation since there is no record of his objection to the arrangement. The juxtaposition, besides being aesthetically complementary, invited comparison between the two subjects. Both feature visitations from otherworldly beings who miraculously create life through supernatural force—Venus and the Immaculate Conception. In *The Godhead Fires* (fig. 89c), a flurry of doves equally symbolic of love and the Holy Spirit accompany Venus, who proffers the traditional olive branch of the Annunciation. In addition to the similar recoiling postures of Mary and the sculptor, the works share themes of divine intervention, redemption, and ideal love. Yet, most reviewers failed to notice the congruence, much less contemplate its significance. Those who did were primarily religious writers and present a compelling case study regarding the popular understanding of Burne-Jones's spiritualization of the secular.

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[169] Meade, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," 17; "*Cupid's Hunting Fields*. From the Picture by Edward Burne Jones," *Magazine of Art* 6 (1883): 512.

Forsyth began by "inviting" his reader "a little way into the moral suggestions developed in the series" and its inscriptions. "Everybody knows the legend, but it is not the legend that the painter paints," he boldly announced. Rather, he conjectured, "it is the idea—the moral truth of continence, the spiritual lesson of patience, and the practical value of faith over works" Burne-Jones expressed. The first panel, *The Heart Desires* (fig. 89a), embodied for Forsyth the fundamental state of man's spiritual yearning and his futile attempts to chisel his "undeveloped heart" into "his own high notions." As Pygmalion sculpts his clay, he elaborated, so man sculpts his soul. Although "he succeeds in getting a certain obedience, a certain fashion of living, all his tinkering, shaping, and regulation" fail, Forsyth argued, and he is left with a lifeless spirit. In *The Hand Refrains* (fig. 89b), he drew attention to what he identified as the sculptor's contemplative, even ascetic, practice: He stops to "think…examine himself." Like the modern man, "he has been too busy to succeed. His marble is the victim of overpressure; his meditative soul suffers from underfeeding." Forsyth warned, "If we were wise," we would follow Pygmalion's example and "abstain...practice a temperance, or a total abstinence" from the external, outward measures he alleged men employ in the fruitless pursuit of happiness. Like Pygmalion, Forsyth proposed, one will succeed "only by a treatment far more sympathetic and inward than that," which for him meant Christ. As Pygmalion paused in quiet contemplation, Forsyth imagined "the spirit of true love which had been scared away by bustle returns to whisper 'Be still, and know that I am God.'" The Congregationalist minister transformed the third canvas, *The Godhead Fires* (fig. 89c), into a Protestant statement of salvation by faith instead of works. In this paradigm, just as "Love completes what skill resigns," so "Faith quickens what work left dead."

For Forsyth, the rekindling of the spirit is Jesus's domain; man's actions can do nothing to bring about his redemption. In the final composition, *The Soul Attains* (fig. 89d), Pygmalion becomes not merely a lover but, the Reverend presumed, "a holy and humble man of heart" learning "by true love…reverence and so success." The missing ingredient, "the power of the living God, the touch of the Eternal Spirit, and the trust of the Almighty love," he concluded, descended only when the sculptor ceased his human toil and resigned himself to divine will.[170]

Forsyth extended the analogy to address the state of the world, arguing that a similar redemption of "divine love" is necessary for modern society as a whole. He deemed Burne-Jones's style of preternatural imagination to be one impetus moving mankind toward this redemption. Forsyth concluded that art may aid religion but "alone cannot, any more than science, answer the questions or still the longings it can raise in the heart." He believed that Burne-Jones expressed this position in the *Pygmalion* series by blatantly rejecting aestheticism's creed of "art as religion" and illustrating instead, "Art is amongst the agencies that redeem; but art is not, in the strict use of words or forces, the Redeemer."[171] Forsyth's allegory is confused at times, but his overarching message is that Pygmalion's failure reveals the limitations of imagination and art to redeem man's soul, a feat he declared could only be accomplished through Jesus.

In the *Newbery House Magazine*, Alfred Gurney offered a reading of the series closely related to Forsyth's but less explicit in its religious content. In the first frame, he narrated, the sculptor is "lost in meditation," caught in a "moment of hesitation and self-questioning." Gurney envisioned the cause of his unrest to be a "growing intensity of

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[170] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, 90-97.
[171] Ibid., 94-97.

spiritual desire" which his own attempts cannot quench, the theme of the second canvas

as he saw it. Alone, Pygmalion is "powerless to realise his ideal;" although he has

brought forth the form, it lacks the vitality of life. As his "hand refrains," the author

continued, he "recognises the limitations of his art; not unassisted can he satisfy the

heart's hunger." Given the context of this article in an ecclesiastical periodical, it can be

assumed that in Gurney's paradigm Pygmalion's spiritual "hunger" is for redemption and

eternal life, attainable only through divine intervention. After the "godhead fires" and

"slumbering life awakens in response," Pygmalion is shown in "the repose of a rapturous

satisfaction." For Gurney this is not sensuous desire, however, but "impassioned

purity…a love that is worship." Such "ideal" love is to be found, in his opinion, only in

"the one substantial and enduring reality."[172] The churchmen and churchwomen reading

the *Newbery House Magazine* would have intuitively deciphered that "ideal" as God.

Reverend Burns addressed *Pygmalion and the Image* more obliquely by using one

of its inscriptions, "The Soul Attains," to analyze the *Star of Bethlehem* (fig. 74). Under

that heading he asserted one of the "great lessons[s]" of the Magi is that for the religious

pilgrim yearning for God, "the quest…was not in vain." In the end, he predicted, "the

soul attains." Burns made the allusion to Pygmalion explicit by reminding his readers

that the lesson had already "been made the subject of one of the painter's most mystical

paintings." Although he felt both works proclaim, "Seek…and ye shall find; for he that

seeketh findeth," for him the importance of the Magi subject was to clarify what he

construed as the implicit meaning of *Pygmalion and the Image*: "*Christ* is the goal, that in

Him the seeker finds rest."[173]

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[172] Gurney, "Christian Mysticism," 297-99.
[173] Burns, *Sermons in Art*, 68-70.

The counterpoint to this Christianizing view of classical mythology is Una

Ashworth Taylor's interpretation in "Burne-Jones: His Ethics and Art." Taylor, a

novelist who also authored a critical study of Maurice Maeterlinck, a romance about the

"City of Sarras," and a family memoir, does not seem to have been particularly religious,

having been raised in a liberal family that held unorthodox, even agnostic, beliefs and

placed greater value in intellectual pursuits. In the *Edinburgh Review*, she argued that

Burne-Jones subverted Christianity by grafting its motifs and symbols onto pagan

subjects, a position underscoring the difference in interpretative strategies between

religious and secular writers. Like the religious authors, Taylor detected Christian

attributes in the composition, mood and theme of the *Pygmalion* series, for instance

comparing the sculptor's expression to "the ecstasy with which old Spanish painters

illuminated the features of praying ascetics" as he kneels before his creation with "eyes

that venerate and hands that worship." Taylor, however, maintained that the artist

intended no spiritual message when he adopted the outward symbols of Christianity. The

"red lilies and white" growing beside the wall she read as standing for "a womanhood

made perfect and complete by the love of man," not God. In all of Burne-Jones's love-

themed paintings, Taylor inferred, "the simple brevity of the old-world words of

Christanised marriage rites, 'With my body I thee worship,' the consecration of a sinless

and sanctified idolatry, is re-formulated." The painter, Taylor contended, transfigured the

sanctity of this male-female relationship "with undeviating exactitude" into "a secularised

Mariolatry" in which man worships woman with a profane, sensual love.[174]

Art critic and minister alike recognized the Christian symbolism in *Pygmalion* but each

interpreted it according to his or her own belief system, one turning the sacred into the

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[174] [Taylor], "Ethics and Art," 41-43.

profane, the other the profane into the sacred. Representative of Burne-Jones's two

publics, the first avowed a religion *of* art, substituting beauty for God; the second

professedly experienced religion *through* art, perceiving beauty as a means of grasping

the divine. Such contrasting viewpoints, religious or otherwise, must be incorporated

into the narrative of his life and work. Not only do they complicate the unilateral

perspective on his contemporary reception, but they also challenge the accepted account

of Victorian belief. The range of religious audiences' responses to Burne-Jones confirms

for the Victorian age what historians of visual culture have shown generally, that "the

sacred is just as often found in ordinary (*profane*) times and places as it is in

extraordinary, 'sanctified' times and places."[175] The examples of Burne-Jones's

contemporaries using his work to instruct, inspire, meditate, and encounter God at home

or in the gallery evidences both the persistence of belief and the increasingly individual

ways religion was being practiced, consumed, and expressed in late nineteenth-century

Britain.

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[175] S. Brent Plate, introduction to *Religion, art, and visual culture: A cross-cultural reader*, ed. Plate (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 9-10.

Chapter 4: *Laborare est Orare*: The Artist as Monk

Edward Burne-Jones encouraged his public reception as a religious painter by cultivating an identity as an artist-monk modeled on contemporary religious and artistic brotherhoods and such historical figures as Fra Angelico (c.1395-1455) and Saint Francis (c.1182-1226). He often affected the verbal "habit" of monasticism. "Monk as I am, and unlettered in the world's etiquette," he postured to Crom in 1854.[1] Writing to Ruskin years later he "wish[ed] I had lived with you always—and that we had been monks."[2] Henry James corroborated that Burne-Jones "had to have, as you say, his monkish side."[3] Fellow painter Walford Graham Robertson recorded his first impression of the artist as,

> like meeting the impish eyes of Puck beneath the cowl of a monk. Yet neither of these entities was a disguise; the monk was quite genuine, so was the elf, and in the uncertainty as to which of the two might turn up lay a strange fascination. And…each was equally to be relied upon. You might be making your confession to the monk and suddenly find yourself being absolved—or the reverse—by Puck, but it didn't matter. Puck was gently wise too and full of infinite understanding.[4]

As Robertson reveals, Burne-Jones self-consciously slipped in and out of his monastic "habit" in a manner paralleling the fluctuation of sacred and secular in the reception of his paintings.

Scholars such as April Bullock, Julie F. Codell, Paula Gillett, Juliet Hacking, and Andrew Stephenson have documented the increased self-consciousness of artistic identity in the Victorian age.[5] The bohemian, dandy, and "gentleman of the brush," for instance,

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[1] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Oct. 16, 1854, fol. 1, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.
[2] Edward Burne-Jones to John Ruskin, n.d., fol. 1, MS Save 1680, Yale Center for British Art.
[3] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 122.
[4] Robertson, *Time Was*, 76.
[5] April Bullock, "Victorian Bohemias: Class, gender, and the artist in the metropolis, 1840-1900" (PhD diss., Univ. of California, Santa Cruz, 1997); Julie F. Codell, *The Victorian Artist: Artists' Lifewritings in Britain, ca. 1870-1910* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003); Paula Gillett, *Worlds of Art: Painters*

all emerged as prevalent stereotypes in response to the burgeoning art market and changing class distinctions. In this discussion, the religious dimensions of artistic identity have received little critical analysis, with the notable exceptions of Herbert Sussman's exploration of masculinity and monasticism and Tim Barringer's treatment of Ford Madox Brown's prototype as the virtuous Christian laborer.[6] Due to his aggressive self-posturing as a heroic Protestant painter of the Holy Land, William Holman Hunt has received the most attention.[7] The artist-monk of Burne-Jones, however, is an additional trope of religio-artistic identity that conflated belief and artistic practice.

Monks upheld a creed of *laborare est orare*, or "work is prayer," in which the requisite activities of running an abbey—whether farming, gardening, bookbinding, illuminating manuscripts, or milking cows—constituted a sacred act when conducted with an appropriately spiritual mindset. In this paradigm, manual labor thus became an opportunity for all-day meditation, prayer, and communication with God. For the artist, such a framework united the mid-Victorian directive of diligent work as one's Christian duty and the divine inspiration commonly associated with artistic genius. As Barringer observes, *laborare est orare*, the monastic "return to an idea of work as a religious

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in Victorian Society (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1990); Juliet Hacking, *Princes of Victorian Bohemia* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2000); and Andrew Stephenson, "Refashioning modern masculinity: Whistler, aestheticism and national identity," in *English Art 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identity*, ed. David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2001), 133-49 and "Leighton and the shifting repertoires of 'masculine' artistic identity in the late Victorian period," in *Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity*, ed. Tim Barringer and Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1999), 221-46.

[6] Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995); Barringer, *Men at Work*, 21-81.

[7] For instance, Julie F. Codell, "The artist colonized: Holman Hunt's 'bio-history', masculinity, nationalism and the English school" in *Re-framing the Pre-Raphaelites*, ed. Ellen Harding (Aldershot, Hants, UK: Scolar, 1996), 211-29; Michaela Giebelhausen's *Painting the Bible*, in particular Chapter 4, "The making of William Holman Hunt as the painter of the Christ," 127-87; Carol Jacobi, *William Holman Hunt: Painter, Painting, Paint* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2006); George P. Landow, "William Holman Hunt's 'Oriental Mania' and his Uffizi *Self-Portrait*," *Art Bulletin* 64, no. 4 (1982): 646-55; Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities*, 158-66.

function," also formed the "very essence" of the expressive theory of work Burne-Jones absorbed from Ruskin and Carlyle.[8] Congruently, when describing the Arts and Crafts movement Morris and Burne-Jones inspired, Charles Robert Ashbee applied a comparable Catholic Apocryphal scripture (Ecclesiasticus 38:34): "But they shall maintain the fabric of the world; and in the handiwork of their craft is their prayer."[9] By utilizing his art as a forum for devotion, spiritual meditation, and public ministry, Burne-Jones thus enacted his monastic identity and consecrated the creative act as a form of religious practice.

As historians such as Callum G. Brown, Timothy Larsen, and Hugh McLeod have established, Victorian belief is better understood through the markers of religious discourse and individual, daily actions rather than church attendance or public rituals. McLeod, for example, suggests that religion be defined as, "how men have patterned their lives, investing particular times, places, relationships with symbolic significance; of how they have accepted obligations and submitted to taboo; of how they have endured suffering and given meaning to their daily routine."[10] Brown accordingly delineates a pattern of Victorian "discursive Christianity," which evidences how "Christianity…was adopted by individuals, whether churchgoers or not, in forming their own identities" through self-imposed morality, rituals, behavior, economic transactions, dress, and speech.[11] In this context, Burne-Jones's adoption of the monastic prototypes of asceticism, discipline, contemplative solitude, self-sacrifice, and *laborare est orare* demonstrates that his artistic vocation operated in the sphere of personal, daily life as

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[8] Barringer, *Men at Work*, 282.
[9] Charles Robert Ashbee, *Where the Great City stands. A study in the new civics* (London: Essex House, 1917), 12-13, quoted in V & A Museum, *Victorian Church Art*, 147.
[10] McLeod, "Recent Studies," 255.
[11] Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, 8.

religious expression. It also adheres to the paradigm of "lived religion" scholars such as David D. Hall and Colleen McDannell have developed, whereby belief is assessed through everyday behavior that often extends beyond the bounds of religious institutions. As McDannell elaborates, participation in "imagined" worlds of "dreams…visions, and fictional accounts" are equally informative signs of religious practice, and in this respect, Burne-Jones was also true to form.[12] Much of his monasticism took place in his mind: it was an elusive dream he consistently sought but never quite secured. Burne-Jones's artist-monk identity, presented through his visual and verbal self-presentation, work routine, physical spaces, and art-making, can thus be perceived as his personal mode of piety and belief—his " lived religion."

The Monastic Revival

A visit to Mount St. Bernard's Abbey in Charnwood Forest, Leicestershire (fig. 90), around 1850 laid the foundation for Burne-Jones's life-long infatuation with the cloistered life.[13] The monastery, which Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle founded in 1837, was the first in Britain since the Reformation dissolution of Roman Catholic monasteries and convents in 1538-41, a history of which Burne-Jones was well aware. Writing to Crom in 1853 he regretted that "Monastery and Abbey lands have never continued, in any one case of all through the length and breadth of this land, in any family for the three generations…with the link unbroken."[14] However, Catholic emancipation in 1829 led to their reinstatement. Coinciding with the medieval revival and the Oxford Movement, the

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[12] McDannell, *Religions of the United States in Practice*, 3.
[13] The date of this visit is unclear, but Georgiana indicates it was prior to 1851. G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:53.
[14] Ibid., 1:109.

novelty of these new Catholic orders sparked a popular obsession with monasticism more positive than in the late eighteenth century, when Gothic fiction such as Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) portrayed monks in a more deviant light. The prevalence of monastic discourse in the 1840s prompted Thomas Carlyle to remark, "we have heard so much of Monks; everywhere in real and fictitious History."[15] Religious orders populated all literary forms at the time including novels, plays, music, travel essays, and historical accounts.[16] Burne-Jones would have known Anna Jameson's *Legends of the Monastic Orders* (1850), for instance, which charted the historical visual representation of monks.[17] Tractarians attempted to replicate the religious life through quasi-monastic communities founded by John Henry Newman at Littlemore outside Oxford, Frederick William Faber at Elton, and John Mason Neale at East Grinstead; conventual sisterhoods; and Richard Hurrell Froude's "Project for Reviving Religion in Great Towns," a plan for colleges of unmarried priests inspiring to Burne-Jones.[18] Where monasteries flourished in the fictional realm, however, Tractarian experiments invited suspicion as trying to "Romanize" the Church of England.

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[15] Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London, 1843), 48, quoted in Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities*, 1.

[16] Some examples include Robert Browning, "Fra Lippo Lippi" (1855); the Camden Society's translation of the Saxon *Ancren riwle: A treatise on the rules and duties of monastic life* (London, 1853); Robert Curzon, *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant* (London, 1849); Samuel Phillips Day, *Monastic institutions; their origin, progress, nature and tendency* (London, 1855); Francis Aidan Gasquet, *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries* (1888); William Grainge, *Annals of a Yorkshire Abbey: A popular history…the excavations made and relics found…a survey & description of the ruins* (Harrogate, 1880); *Hymns and Tunes of Llanthony Monastery*, compiled by Father Ignatius (London, 1890); Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's play, *The Golden Legend* (1851), which takes place in an abbey; and Sir Walter Scott's novels *The Monastery: A Romance* (1820) and *The Abbot* (1820).

[17] Rossetti recommended Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art* (1848) to Burne-Jones as an iconographic reference and he would surely have known her other works as well. Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 148.

[18] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:78. Burne-Jones and Morris would have known about Newman's community (founded 1842) given its proximity to Oxford. Froude outlined his scheme in a letter to Newman, which Burne-Jones probably knew from the *Remains*, a volume of Froude's unpublished writings edited after his death by Newman and John Keble in 1838-39. In addition to piety, membership in sisterhoods must have been motivated by the practical concerns of unmarried women.

By observing a functional monastery, Burne-Jones participated in a popular leisure activity. In addition to its distinction as the first British monastery since the Reformation, Mount St. Bernard's Gothic revival architecture by A. W. N. Pugin (completed 1844) and location "in one of the most beautiful spots in the country, the surrounding country rugged yet picturesque, well-adapted for pic-nics, and within an easy distance of the towns of Leicester and Loughborough," destined it to be a prime tourist destination that notables such as art historian Alexis François Rio, Charles Dickens, and William Wordsworth frequented.[19] George Frederick Bodley reputedly kept a description of the Abbey on his bedside table.[20] Phillipps reported its popularity in 1842:

> It is perfectly astonishing what crowds of people come to see the Monastery from all parts of England. The other day *again* more than 300 visitors were counted, and no less than 50 carriages. The church is generally crowded, at the hours of Nones and Vespers, by persons who come through curiosity. All go away edified and delighted, with prejudices diminished, if not removed, not only in reference to Monasteries, but the Catholick [*sic*] Religion in general.[21]

As this last comment makes clear, monasteries were both intriguing and notorious places where the public simultaneously recoiled at the perceived morbid excesses of Roman Catholicism and marveled in fascination at the exotic "other" of the Catholic monk seemingly frozen in time, living a sequestered, disciplined life in a pseudo-medieval world. Protestants viewed their ascetic practices and celibacy, in particular, as a perversion of Christianity and threat to the paterfamilias. This was particularly the case with Mount St. Bernard, whose monks were the first Trappists in England, meaning they

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[19] [J. M. J. Fletcher], *A Visit to the Monastery of Mount St. Bernard, in Leicestershire; with a short Account of Monasticism.* (Loughborough, 1872), 11.
[20] Victoria M. Young, "A. W. N. Pugin's Mount Saint Bernard Abbey: The International Character of England's Nineteenth-Century Monastic Revival," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 1, no. 1 (2002), http://19thc-artworldwide.org/spring_02/articles/youn.html.
[21] Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle to Lord Shrewsbury, 11 Aug. 1842, quoted in Young, "Pugin."

followed a more austere and isolated version of the contemplative Cistercian order. At the opening of their church in 1837, the Catholic priest George Spencer marveled that "men, whose manner of life is so innocent and simple, nay more, so sublime and holy, so benevolent and charitable, should be objects of suspicion, of hatred, of severe condemnation."[22] For the public, repulsion lay close by attraction, but for Burne-Jones, always enticed by the sensibility of the Catholic Church, the experience of Mount St. Bernard's was wholly a positive one.

With their motto, *laborare est orare* ("work as prayer"), the Trappists at St. Bernard's epitomized the concept of vocation that would later inspire Burne-Jones's art career. The monks in John Rogers Herbert's *Laborare est Orare* (1862, fig. 91), his purported account of the abbey painted a decade after Burne-Jones's visit, exemplify this creed. According to Herbert, they are "gathering the harvest of 1861. The boys in the adjoining field are from the Reformatory [run by the monastery]." A long brick wall, enhanced by the inclined hill marking their ascent to the higher, sacred plane of the abbey, symbolize the monks' physical and spiritual separation from the secular world. A monk sharing grain with a peasant girl in the lower right corner demonstrates the gentle, charitable nature of monasticism. A self-portrait of Herbert at the lower edge of the painting, within the abbey walls, marks him as an insider of Roman Catholicism. In this agrarian idyll Herbert visually articulates the monastic principle of *laborare est orare*, whereby harvesting is not an end in itself but an opportunity for religious meditation and service to God.

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[22] Rev. George Spencer, *Sermon Preached at the opening of the Church of Our Lady of Mount St. Bernard* (Birmingham, 1837), 7, 19.

Inside Mount St. Bernard's, Burne-Jones's party would have first toured the museum, which housed an eclectic array of holy relics and curiosities. The chapel followed, whose atmosphere one contemporary characterized as exceeding "solemnity…men clad in monastic habiliments, holiness and devotion manifested in every line of their countenances, chanting with deep bass voices the praises of their Creator."[23] According to a nineteenth-century guidebook, visitors next passed through the cloisters, "where the monks walk and meditate, and where the rule of silence applies even to strangers."[24] There, guests could observe walls "ornamented with the Stations of the Cross; texts in old English character, from the Beatitudes and other parts of Holy Scripture; passages bearing upon the blessedness and privileges of religious retirement."[25] Finally, tourists viewed the refectory, chapter house, and rooms "used by the monks for their private devotions" before departing by way of the cemetery.[26]

To convey the quiet, contemplative mood found at Mount St. Bernard's, its guidebook borrowed verses from Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (1814), which also exemplify the contemporaneous trend of viewing the medieval past as the ideal antithesis to the ugliness of modern life:[27]

> What other yearning was the master tie
> Of the monastic brotherhood…
>   What but this,
> The universal instinct of repose,
> The longing for confirmed tranquility,
> Inward and outward; humble yet sublime—
> The life where hope and memory are as one;

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[23] [Fletcher], *Visit to the Monastery*, 18-19.

[24] Llewellynn Jewitt and Alexander P. J. Cruikshank, *Guide to the Abbey of Mt. S. Bernard, Charnwood Forest, and Some Account of the Monks who Live There*, 4th ed. (1884; Leicester, 1897), 17.

[25] Inscriptions included, "One thing have I asked of the lord, this will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life" and "This is my rest for ever and ever; here will I dwell for I have chosen it," among others. Ibid., 17.

[26] [Fletcher], *Visit to the Monastery*, 19-20.

[27] Jewitt and Cruikshank, *Guide to the Abbey*, 18.

> Earth quiet and unchanged; the human soul
> Consistent in self rule; and heaven revealed
> To meditation in that quietness!

Burne-Jones immediately felt an affinity for this simplified existence, and according to

Georgiana, "nothing can exaggerate the impression that the visit made upon his

mind….the thought of it accompanied him through his whole life. Friends, wife, and

children all knew the under-current of longing in his soul for the rest and peace which he

thought he had seen there that day."[28] Fondness for the monastery in Charnwood Forest

surfaced repeatedly in his letters and daily speech. "Why there?" he asked rhetorically in

1894, "I don't know, only that I saw it when I was little, and have hankered after it ever

since," thereby linking the cloistered life with a state of childlike innocence.[29] He

reminisced in 1895 about his youthful hopes "that one day I might be a monk in

Charnwood forest where I was friends with a monk and that was all that happened."[30] It

was a "dream which had walked step by step with him ever since," Georgiana explained,

"of some day leaving every one and everything and entering its doors and closing them

behind him."[31]

Oxford: The Order of Sir Galahad

Back in Birmingham, inspired by the Oxford Movement, his trip to Mount St.

Bernard's Abbey, and Newman's Catholic Oratory, Burne-Jones dreamed of forming "a

small conventual society of cleric and lay members," a combination mirroring Cistercian

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[28] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:53.
[29] Quoted in ibid., 2:285.
[30] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Apr. 24, 1895, MS Add 54218, vol. 1, fol. 100, British Library.
[31] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:53.

practices.[32] Upon reaching Oxford in 1853, his vision expanded to include Morris and

the Pembroke set, which called themselves "The Brotherhood" and sang Gregorian

chants at the Plain-Song Society and St. Thomas the Martyr. In May, he instructed

Crom, "remember! I have set my heart on our founding a Brotherhood….I have enlisted

one [Morris] in the project up here, heart & soul: you shall have a copy of the canons

some day."[33] Later in the year, he addressed Crom as "our trusty and beloved

brother…of the order of St. Philip Neri, Elect," from "Edouard Cardinal de

Birmingham," a reference linking their intended brotherhood with Newman's Oratory.

As one of Burne-Jones's colleagues expressed in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*,

the medieval, ecclesiastical air of the university encouraged daydreams about its pre-

Reformation history as an institution for

> poor monks, who have renounced the world, and chosen Oxford for their
> recess; living two or three together in bare comfortless rooms…pacing
> soberly in hood and cowl the 'studious walks and shades,' talking Latin at
> hall, or listening in silence to the reading of the Bible, spending most of
> their day in chapel services; for the rest making palimpsests, or
> illuminating manuscripts, or reading Aristotle and the Fathers. Thus did
> their still life pass away in prayer and study.[34]

Their monastery, however, was to be a missionary one, a brotherhood "working in the

heart of London" to serve the needs of the urban poor, not a reclusive, insular

enterprise.[35] Like the chivalric heroes of the Middle Ages, they dreamed of a "Crusade"

against materialism and social inequality, waging "Holy Warfare against the age, 'the

heartless coldness of the times.'"[36]

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[32] Ibid., 1:77.
[33] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, May 1, 1853, fol. 2, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.
[34] "Oxford," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 235.
[35] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:77.
[36] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Aug. 5, 1853, fol. 7, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.

Melding medieval romance with religious community, Burne-Jones urged Crom to "Learn Sir Galahad by heart—he is to be the patron of our order."[37] As the chaste, and only successful, knight of the Holy Grail Quest in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1485), Galahad embodied the monastic traits of spiritual purity, virginity, and stainless character. The close-knit bonds of the Round Table likewise served as a model for Burne-Jones's Oxford Brotherhood. The resemblance between monk and knight was one he countenanced even after their plans for a monastery dissolved, as his 1858 drawing, *Sir Galahad* (fig. 92) evidences. Like the monks in Herbert's painting, a wall physically and symbolically divides Galahad from the realm of earthly pleasures behind him. Riding past worldly temptation, he looks focusedly downward at the supernatural light guiding him, seemingly single-hearted in his commitment. In 1863, Burne-Jones again referenced the overlapping realms of knighthood and monasticism in *The Merciful Knight* (fig. 93), illustrating the tale of Saint Giovanni Gualberto from Kenelm Henry Digby's *Broad Stone of Honour* (1822, rev. 1829). Burne-Jones cherished Digby's treatise, which was a paean to the heroic knights, martyrs and monks of the medieval Catholic Church. The knight Gualberto, for example, pardoned his enemy on Good Friday and was rewarded by a miraculous encounter with Jesus, who reached down from a Crucifix to embrace him in a wayside shrine. Gualberto immediately founded a monastery and spent the remainder of his days pursuing the religious life. The artist intimates Gualberto's future by depicting him already shorn of his helmet and sword, laid down as a sacrifice before his God. He kneels in the position of one being knighted, but here, Jesus appears to be initiating him into a different type of brotherhood. As he literally embraces his new sacred commitment, his companion turns to ride away in the

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[37] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:77.

distance, indicating Gualberto has already left behind his former self. The wattle fence and the superfluous door further cloister him from the secular world.

In addition to Digby and *Le Morte Darthur*, other novels Burne-Jones read at Oxford underscored the monastic virtues of the medieval knight. Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853) features a self-sacrificing, chaste, and disciplined hero, Guy Morville, while Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's *Sintram and His Companions* (1814, translated from the French in 1820) recounted a romantic epic of spiritual and physical purification.[38] As Canon Henry Scott Holland observed, the Oxford Movement emphasized the quality of "personal discipline," which the questing knight and the Christian monk shared. In his 1901 introduction to an edition of *Lyra Apostolica* (1836), a collection of Tractarian poetry by Keble, Froude, Newman and others, Holland cited as evidence the following example by Froude:

> Wash thee and watch thine armour, as of old
> > The Champions vowed of Truth and Purity,
> Ere the bright mantle might their limbs enfold,
> > Or spear of theirs in knightly combat view.[39]

This type of knight, one "who would gird on his sword for this fray," Holland noted, "must have the spirit in him tempered by fire, and the body chastened by patient training." For the Tractarians, he concluded, "Chivalry is ascetic. The confidence of the young warrior is no loud boastfulness of the flesh. It springs out of austere self-subdual, out of watching, and fasting, and scourging. No undisciplined zeal can be tolerated in the cause that they have in hand: no loose and reckless courage will carry it through."[40]

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[38] For more on Fouqué and Yonge see chap. 5, pp. 391-92.
[39] Quoted in Holland, *Personal Studies*, 71-72.
[40] Ibid.

In this paradigm, one of the most important ascetic qualities was sexual purity. As already noted, on one hand monastic orders often elicited admiration for promulgating morality, self-discipline, and Christian virtues. On the other hand, however, celibate male communities simultaneously sparked condemnation over the ramifications of their aberrant sexual abstinence for traditional masculinity and the family unit. The issue of celibacy aroused contention within Burne-Jones's circle of "brothers" as well. He firmly advocated chastity but not all members agreed, and he "was exposed to all but personal violence" while debating the issue.[41] When Crom faced sexual temptation, Burne-Jones advised,

> You have as yet taken no vows, therefore you are as yet perfectly at liberty to decide your own fate. If your decision involve the happiness of another you know your course, follow nature….But self-denial and self-disappointment, though I do not urge it—is even better discipline to the soul than that. If we lose you from the cause of celibacy, you are no traitor—only do not be hasty.[42]

The matter of celibacy, easily upheld in the naïve, sexual isolation of university, also contributed to Burne-Jones's eventual resignation of their scheme upon reaching a more mature stage of life. Years later he confided to May Gaskell, "You see I am a monk with a craving for a life with a woman—and am doomed at the outset."[43]

Despite his ambivalence over Catholic conversion in fall 1854, Burne-Jones affirmed on October 16, "the monastery, Crom, stands a fairer chance than ever of being founded; I know that it will some day."[44] The "plan had gone far towards completion," he told his cousin Maria. "I had six who promised to join, and friends were not

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[41] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Aug. 5, 1853, fol. 8, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, 1892 or later, quoted in Dimbleby, *May and Amy*, 100.
[44] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Oct. 16, 1854, fol. 1, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.

wanting."[45] Their initial excitement dissipated, however, as they waited two years for

ordination, grappled with the German philosophy addressed in Chapter One, and

explored new literary and artistic interests. By the next year, "The delay broke up

everything," he reported dejectedly in October 1855. The group's disbanding, he

confessed, resulted from a gradual divergence in the various members' religious beliefs:

"not weariness in well doing….but something deeper had caused the change. So our little

brotherhood of six, so close once, and trusting…has quite left us."[46] Crom shed

additional light on the reasons for its dissolution: "our Monastery will come to nought

I'm afraid; Smith has changed his views to extreme latitudinarianism, Morris has become

questionable in doctrinal points, and Ted [Burne-Jones's nickname] is too Catholic to be

ordained."[47] Yet, even after committing to a painting career, Burne-Jones still clung to

the idea of monastic brotherhood, insisting it was "romantic and utopian, but entirely

meant, and not impracticable if persevered in."[48]

A Religio-Artistic Brotherhood

Subsequently, the brotherhood remained but morphed from a traditional

ecclesiastic model to one encompassing literature and art. They carried out their

"Crusade" instead through the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, which they initially

considered calling *The Brotherhood*.[49] "We have thoroughly set ourselves to work now,"

Burne-Jones reported at the end of 1855, and "banded ourselves into an exclusive

Brotherhood of seven," including Morris, Richard Watson Dixon, William Fulford,

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[45] Edward Burne-Jones to Maria Choyce, Oct. 1855, Burne-Jones Papers XV: 3, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[46] Ibid.
[47] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:109.
[48] Edward Burne-Jones to Maria Choyce, Oct. 1855, Burne-Jones Papers XV: 3, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[49] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:68.

Henry Macdonald and, from Cambridge, Wilfred Heeley and Vernon Lushington.[50] They remained as spirited as ever in their aims, with "such a deal to tell people, such a deal of scolding to administer, so many fights to wage and opposition to encounter that our spirits are quite rising with the emergency."[51] He likened the group to "the first crusaders" and believed they could "do a world of good, for we start from new principles and those of the strongest kind."[52] As outlined in Chapter One, the result was a magazine infused throughout with dominant themes of religious duty, divine calling, social reform, and the perceived priestly function of art. Vernon Lushington explicitly linked their mission with monasticism in the December issue, declaring, "the hand is a sacred gift: Laborare est orare; Work is Worship."[53]

Several contemporary models for this type of blended religio-artistic community existed, including the German Nazarenes of Peter Cornelius and Friedrich Overbeck, a self-defined "Brotherhood of St. Luke" leading a cloistered existence in Rome in 1890-19; Samuel Palmer and the Ancients in the 1820s; George Edmund Street's unrealized plans in 1848 for an artistic workshop living "under certain religious ordinances and…in strict accord with the lofty character of their work;" and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who, Herbert Sussman summarizes, hovered "on the boundary of the sacred and the secular, a band of unmarried, if not wholly celibate, males, joined together under obedience to a strict rule in manly, religiously charged labor devoted to the high calling of art."[54] Sussman ably demonstrates how the artist-monk identity related to tensions

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[50] Edward Burne-Jones to Maria Choyce, 1855, quoted in G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:121, 123.
[51] Ibid., 1:121.
[52] Ibid., 1:123-24. The motif of crusading is linked to knighthood and the Christian tradition of the believer as a soldier for Christ in chap. 5, p. 393.
[53] [Lushington], "Carlyle," 753 (see chap. 1, pp. 122-24).
[54] A. E. Street, *Memoir of G. E. Street*, 56, quoted in Jason Rosenfeld, "The Pre-Raphaelite 'otherhood' and group identity in Victorian Britain," in *Artistic Brotherhoods in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Laura

over Victorian masculinity but claims "historicist codings of the monk" approached monasticism "not as a devotional, but as a psycho-sexual practice."[55] However, this underestimates the import of the monastery's essential religious meaning for Burne-Jones and his circle.

As Laura Morowitz and William Vaughan elucidate, Victorian artistic brotherhoods sought to restore "art…to its noble purpose of serving God and heightening men's spiritual awareness."[56] These groups, they note, "often went hand in hand with the commitment to a renewed Christian art," whether in the painting of biblical subjects, engagement with church architecture, or, with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the visual reference to "a purer, more religious era" which "would sanctify their own works."[57] Significantly for the present study, they observe that nineteenth-century brotherhoods were "characterized less by style than by practice," and were "very much the product of that new view of the aesthetic as a form of spiritual exercise."[58] Journals such as *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, based in part on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's *The Germ*, for instance, were a discursive means of "draw[ing] attention to spiritual or philosophical links over more formal ones."[59] The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the group most frequently compared to Burne-Jones's, did contain a spiritual element, but as Sussman recognizes, their ties were foremost "the homosocial, chaste affective bonds between men."[60] Whereas they grew out of the Royal Academy Schools and were motivated by a desire to revolutionize art, Burne-Jones's brotherhood was an offshoot of

Morowitz and William Vaughan (Aldershot, Hants, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 70-71; Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities*, 111.
[55] Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities*, 3.
[56] Morowitz and Vaughan, introduction to *Artistic Brotherhoods*, 16.
[57] Ibid., 17.
[58] Ibid., 5, 16.
[59] Ibid., 6.
[60] Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities*, 111.

theological training and Christian Socialism with the goal of transforming society

through art.[61] Long after the bonds of communal brotherhood dissolved, he created

cloistral environments in which he produced intensely personal and spiritual work. Such

efforts suggest that for Burne-Jones, the monastery's religious purpose was as important

as the freedom it offered from normative bourgeois manhood.

Burne-Jones reported in January that "of course" he had been "established as

permanent artist to the Brotherhood," and during this time referred to himself repeatedly

in correspondence as "Brother Ted."[62] A previously unnoticed self-portrait from June

1856 (fig. 94) evinces his self-promulgated artist-monk identity and its fundamentally

Christian nature at this time. With long, wild hair evoking the trope of divine frenzy, he

stands before his easel, where a painting of the Madonna and Child is underway. The

haloes and frontal position on a plain background resemble a devotional icon, but

stylistically the image is indebted to Rossetti, Millais, and Ford Madox Brown. The

position of the artist's hand creates an illusion that he is not painting with his brush but

caressing the face of Jesus with his fingers, as if reaching out for a tangible encounter

with God. His distance from the canvas, however, suggests some hesitation toward the

divine. On the ground rest several unfinished canvases including a woman's portrait, a

charging or falling soldier on horseback, and a knight brandishing a sword. The last two

evoke the brotherhood's "crusade and Holy Warfare against the age," as well as Burne-

Jones's short story, "The Cousins," whose protagonist speaks of his spiritual epiphany as

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[61] Fulford and Dixon were eventually ordained, another indicator of the group's stronger religious purpose.
[62] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:122. His signature as "Brother Ted" appears in letters to Cormell Price on [Jan. 8, 1856]; May 18, 1856; and June 15, 1856, all MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art.

"the unsheathing of the sword for battle by the angel of my life."[63] The several spiky brushes tucked in his belt recall arrows and heighten the allusion to combat. Most significantly, his flowing robe-like garment brushing the floor recalls a Benedictine tunic, which is ankle-length and bound at the waist with a cloth or leather belt. There is no evidence that he wore such dress while painting, nor are the canvases depicted known works of art, indicating this is an idealistic vision of Burne-Jones as the quintessential artist-monk. Cloaked in his religious habit, he labors at what he envisioned as his sacred duty to paint God for man. Together with the monastic references, the Marian iconography indicates it is a specifically Anglo/Catholic ideology he emulates.

The collaborative, communal practice of art reached its peak the following year, 1857, when Burne-Jones and Morris joined in painting murals in the Oxford Union with Valentine Prinsep (1838-1904), Rossetti, Spencer Stanhope, and others. None of the other original members of the "Oxford Brotherhood" participated, however, indicating the group was already disbanding, pulled away by the natural developments of career and family. Realizing that such domestic responsibilities were encroaching on the dream of monastic community, Burne-Jones idealistically sought ways to unite the two. In 1858 he unsuccessfully hunted for a large house to share with Arthur Hughes (1832-1915), Ford Madox Brown, and their families in an artistic commune.[64] Speaking years later to Ruskin of this failed plan, he spoke of "Joan & Georgie & Margaret" among the "monks too" included in the scheme.[65] After he wed Georgiana in 1860, however, the Oxford

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[63] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Aug. 5, 1853, fol. 7, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art; "Cousins," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 21.

[64] 2 letters from Edward Burne-Jones to Ford Madox Brown, [1858], reprinted in Jane A. Munro, "'This Hateful Letter Writing': Selected Correspondence of Sir Edward Burne-Jones in the Huntington Library," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 55 (1992): 80.

[65] Edward Burne-Jones to John Ruskin, n.d., fol. 1, MS Save 1680, Yale Center for British Art.

Brotherhood did not survive long; it finally dissolved in April 1861 with the founding of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, and Co.[66]

Nevertheless, Burne-Jones hung onto a desire to fuse his familial life and monastic ideals. A painting from 1862 (fig. 95) depicts Georgiana as a nun idyllically secluded in a rose garden. Donning a simple habit-like tunic, she reads a prayer book while fingering the loop of her leather belt, similar to those conventual orders wore. The foliage circularly enwrapping Georgiana conveys a sense of her enclosure within the garden, a traditional allusion to the Virgin Mary's purity that reinforces the sitter's virtuous character and chaste beauty. The arched canvas recalls Renaissance devotional paintings, alluding equally to the piety of the sitter and the artist's reverence for her. Penelope Fitzgerald has noted the composition's similarity to Bernardino Luini's *Madonna of the Rose Hedge* (fig. 96), which the Burne-Joneses had seen on their recent trip to Italy.[67] The equation of Georgiana with Mary was perhaps a poignant one since their son, Philip, was born the previous year.

As Sussman ascertains, models of communal monasticism necessarily subsided with adulthood because "in the mid-nineteenth century…such formations violate the script for achieving bourgeois manhood."[68] As he matured, however, Burne-Jones, never ceased craving the spiritual, contemplative life of the cloister. In the 1870s he still yearned for an ideal monastic existence marked by poverty, rural seclusion, and childlike innocence, which would broadly encompass all those he cared for most. His words seem to foreshadow Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1891):

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[66] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:148.
[67] Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 84.
[68] Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities*, 143.

Don't you a little bit wish you lived in a little house—and it was all sweet and tiny…and were rather poor—only with pocket-money for books and toys—and no visitors—all friends living in the same street, and the street long and narrow and ending in the city wall, and the wall opening with a gate on to cornfields in the south, and the wild wood on the north—and no railways anywhere—all friends and all one's world tied up in the little city—and no news to come.[69]

Burne-Jones's initial plans for a religious brotherhood had failed, but rather than relinquish the dream he shifted the emphasis of his monastic identity from communal brotherhood to introspective solitude, spiritual contemplation, and withdrawal from the world, which reinforced his posture of melancholy genius.

Fra Angelico

Two monastic prototypes crucially shaped Burne-Jones's individual artist-monk identity as distinct from that of fraternal brotherhood—Fra Angelico and Saint Francis of Assisi. "Until I saw Rossetti's work and Fra Angelico's, I never supposed that I liked painting," he professed.[70] His love of Fra Angelico began in 1855, when Morris made him cover his eyes as he led him to the *Coronation of the Virgin* in the Louvre (fig. 97). Anna Jameson's account of this picture hints at how Burne-Jones might have felt, having been similarly enraptured with the Mass at Beauvais Cathedral on the same trip:

The spiritual beauty of the heads, the delicate tints of the coloring, an ineffable charm of mingled brightness and repose shed over the whole, give to this lovely picture an effect like that of a church hymn sung at some high festival by voices tuned in harmony—'blest voices uttering joy!'[71]

Before leaving Paris, Morris purchased engravings of the picture to take back to Oxford. Burne-Jones encountered Fra Angelico's work again in person on his trips to Italy in

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[69] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 122.
[70] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:137.
[71] Jameson, *Legends of the Madonna*, 78.

1859, 1862, 1871, and 1873. He loved an "Angelico Paradise" in the Uffizi and visited

the reliquaries Ruskin recommended at Santa Maria Novella. The critic described a Fra

Angelico Annunciation on one of these as "the most perfect type of its pure ideal,"

executed with "the most radiant consummation."[72] Burne-Jones also would have toured

the Florence Academy of Fine Arts, where numerous Fra Angelico paintings were on

display. In addition, he could have studied the artist's work in London from 1860, when

the National Gallery purchased Fra Angelico's predella from the high altarpiece of San

Domenico at Fiesole (1423-24). Burne-Jones would also have known the Arundel

Society's engravings (1849-69) after Fra Angelico's frescos in the Chapel of Nicholas V

at the Vatican (1447-49).

The discourse of moral art history, touched on in Chapter One and still prevalent

during the formative years of Burne-Jones's career, would have informed his encounters

with Fra Angelico. This paradigm extolled the Dominican friar's spiritual purity and

piety as responsible for the beauty of his painting. Vasari provided the basic elements of

his legend: a saintly monk, who eschewed material wealth and prayed before he painted,

kneeling in an ascetic, submissive stance as he worked. The Catholic art historian Alexis

François Rio claimed that, filled with ecstatic passion, "every time…[Fra Angelico]

painted Christ on the Cross, tears flowed as abundantly from his eyes as if he had assisted

on Calvary."[73] In G. Walter Thornbury's 1859 play based on Vasari, "The Last Hours of

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[72] John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (1846; Orpington, 1883), 169.
[73] Alexis François Rio, *Poetry of Christian Art*, trans. from the French (1836; London, 1854), 149.

the Painters," Fra Angelico instructed a pupil, "never to paint till he has received the Eucharist; how can a man paint religious pictures if he have an impure heart?"[74]

Rio's *Poetry of Christian Art* (published in French in 1836, translated 1854), the book Burne-Jones held so dear that he presented it to his wife on their wedding day, solidified Fra Angelico's reputation as a saintly Christian hero. Reminiscent of Sir Galahad, the Florentine's "compunction of the heart, its aspirations toward God" and experience of "ecstatic raptures, the foretaste of celestial bliss," for Rio, successfully imbued his paintings with holiness.[75] Rio believed the artist-monk was divinely inspired and used "painting…as a formulary to express the emotions of faith, hope, and charity."[76]

Ruskin likewise upheld Fra Angelico as "an inspired saint" and perpetuated the message that the painter's moral character determined that of his work.[77] In *Modern Painters* Volume II he declared the "most holy Dominican monk of Fiesole" the only artist to attain "the highest beauty," an accomplishment he attributed to the friar's "full outpouring of the sacred spirit."[78] Heartily encouraging detachment from the world as a means of cultivating this kind of spiritual purity, Ruskin's rhetoric bore the unmistakable ring of monasticism. As Codell explains, his ideal artist "naturally assumed a saintly asceticism."[79] The critic wrote, for instance, that artists felt "an exquisite complacency in Fasting" and took "infinite satisfaction in Emptiness" and the rejection of materialism.[80] By Volume III, Venetian painting supplanted Fra Angelico as Ruskin's ideal, although in

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[74] G. Walter Thornbury, "The Last Hours of the Painters," *Art Journal* 5 (1859): 186, quoted in Matthew Plampin, "From Rio to Romola: Morality and Didacticism in the English Appreciation of Early Italian Art 1836-1863" (PhD diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, London, 2001), 369.
[75] Rio, *Poetry of Christian Art*, 147.
[76] Although Rio acknowledges the artist's technical shortcomings, they are forgiven in light of his "divine pencil," "pious imagination," and "transcendental aim." Ibid., 147-48.
[77] John Ruskin to his father, July 10, 1845, quoted in Ruskin, *Works*, 4:xxxiv.
[78] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 2:132.
[79] Codell, *Artists' Lifewritings,* 87.
[80] Ruskin, *Works* 4:387, quoted in ibid.

reviewing this volume Burne-Jones still lauded "the *passionate* or *Angelican* ideal." He admired how Fra Angelico overlooked historical accuracy in favor of "love and veneration for his subject, arranging it in all devices of fair transparent colour and gold, setting it off with whatever, in his great simple heart, spoke of power and majesty," with the effect of "stand[ing] to this day unapproachable in its touching purity and solemnity."[81]

Rossetti retold Fra Angelico's legend in a drawing of c.1853 (fig. 98). Painting on his knees, the artist-monk is oblivious to the natural world outside his window and apparently conjures his vision of the Virgin and Child instead from his imagination. He gazes intently upon the canvas as a fellow brother fuels his inspiration by reading aloud from a presumably sacred text, exemplifying the studious contemplative life of the monastery. Rossetti's pendant, *Giorgione Painting* (fig. 99), represents the sensual "naturalist school," which rose up to challenge and eventually supercede in popularity the perceived piety of Fra Angelico's "mystical school" after mid-century.[82] Here, the Giorgione's composition derives not from the spiritual realm, but from the fleshly one. Gazing rapturously at his female model, he copies her likeness without even a glance back at the canvas. The three onlookers eagerly circling Giorgione invert the sacred reverence for Mary and Jesus pictured in *Fra Angelico Painting* by suggesting instead a worshipful adoration of the artist himself and the female beauty he paints. The physical resemblance between Rossetti and his subject suggests he identified with his Venetian predecessor over the Florentine friar. Robert Browning's poem "Fra Lippo Lippi" (1855) also heralded the cultural shift away from Fra Angelico, whose reputation further

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[81] [E. Burne-Jones], "Ruskin," 218 (see chap. 1, pp. 125-28).
[82] Plampin, "Rio to Romola," 57.

deteriorated with increased anti-Romanist sentiment over the century. Yet, Burne-Jones

clung to his example of artistic identity at various points throughout his life, perhaps as

an expression of his own Catholic sympathies.

"Because he once said he felt good, like Fra Angelico," Frances Horner reported,

her family took to calling Burne-Jones "Angelo," which he used as his signature in their

correspondence.[83] The comment reveals the artist's eagerness to imitate not only Fra

Angelico's monastic status but also his moral uprightness. He reputedly professed, "the

artist should follow his art with the passionate sincerity and unworldly devotion of a man

such as Fra Angelico."[84] Although he spoke of the painter as "intensely pious…in all his

work," he was not beyond making light of the analogy between himself and the monk. In

1896, while stooping to reach the flowers in the lower portion of *Arthur in Avalon*, he

joked, "you see I paint as Fra Angelico did, on my knees, but not for the same reason."[85]

At the end of his life, feeling his own painting was increasingly outdated, he compared

himself to Fra Angelico, who "must have been deeply grieved to see Ghirlandajo doing

his subjects very much in his manner but without any of his piety, for intensely pious he

was in all his work."[86] He may not have literally prayed "as Angelico was wont to pray"

before beginning a painting, but he considered it a spiritual exercise nonetheless,

claiming, "I, too, never paint a new picture till after infinite searching of the spirit."[87]

Burne-Jones occasionally signed letters, "Angelico," and notably, Georgiana felt Fra

Angelico's characterization of painting "as a long and religious exercise for his pencil"

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[83] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 108. This could also be a reference to Michelangelo, whom Burne-Jones also greatly admired in the 1870s, when he first befriended Frances.
[84] W. Sharp, "Edward Burne-Jones," *Fortnightly Review*, 304.
[85] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 2:218.
[86] Jan. 18, 1897, Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 130.
[87] W. Sharp, "Edward Burne-Jones," *Fortnightly Review*, 304.

best encapsulated her husband's approach to art.[88] The Dominican monk's example of art as a religious practice provided a fitting role model for Burne-Jones, who had given up Holy Orders to become a painter yet still longed for aspects of the monastic life. By aligning himself with the quattrocento artist-monk, he also adopted his predecessor's legacy of devoutness and artistic genius.

The similarities between the discourses surrounding Fra Angelico and Burne-Jones demonstrate that contemporaries recognized his artist-monk identity. Those who espoused moral art history dwelled on the Dominican friar's "sweet and smiling gentleness" that Vasari had outlined.[89] Ruskin, for instance, claimed a "purity of life, habitual elevation of thought, and natural sweetness," as well as a beautiful "childishness" typified Fra Angelico's art.[90] At least one contemporary spoke of Burne-Jones in similar terms: "Gentleness and sweetness of the most refined description seem the prominent characteristics of his nature, a childlike simplicity and kindliness, joined to the imagination of a poet."[91] Moreover, the rhetoric of naïve "primitivism" often used to describe Fra Angelico's early Italian style-surfaced also in criticism of the untrained Burne-Jones, albeit not necessarily in flattering terms: "his form is often crude, harsh, and angular….His brain has sped too fast for his hands….It is as though one had learned to run before learning to walk, and were ever toiling after the rudiments."[92]

Although Burne-Jones's use of Italian Renaissance sources has been widely examined, his specific debt to Fra Angelico has not. He thought the Florentine friar's

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[88] Caroline Dakers, "Yours affectionately, Angelo: The letters of Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) & Frances Horner (1858-1940)," *British Art Journal* 2, no. 3 (2001): 21, n. 2; G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:141.
[89] Giorgio Vasari, *The Life of Giovanni Angelico da Fiesole*, trans. Giovanni Aubrey Bezzi (London, 1850), 16.
[90] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 3, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen, 1882), 75.
[91] "A Visit to 'The Grange,'" *Scribner's Monthly* 4, no. 6 (1872): 748.
[92] Ibid., 749.

coloring was so brilliant that next to a painted "Heaven by him…jewels are as lumps of

coal." By comparison, he confessed, "the brightest I can do is like a fog."[93] He was

more successful in imitating the quattrocento painter's flatness, primitive style, and gold

backings, most notably in his altarpiece for St. Paul's, Brighton (fig. 32); Ronald

Parkinson has equated it with a Fra Angelico *Annunciation* in San Marco.[94] *The Mill*

(1870-82, fig. 100), one contemporary conjectured, "we might imagine…to be…from the

pencil of one of the contemporaries of Giotto or Fra Angelica."[95] In 1908, the Reverend

Burns compared Burne-Jones's *Star of Bethlehem* (fig. 74) to Fra Angelico's *Noli me*

Tangere (fig. 101) and his other frescoes in San Marco, "where all who love the holy in

art delight to wander."[96] Ruskin found his *King's Wedding* (fig. 102) analogous to Fra

Angelico's altarpiece predellas, and Robert de la Sizeranne equated the trumpets in *The*

Golden Stairs (fig. 79) with "sunbeams against the blue of Fra Angelico's skies."[97] In

1904, Fortunée de Lisle compared Burne-Jones's unification of "poetic and artistic

faculties" to "the religious and artistic in Fra Angelico."[98] Critics also frequently

acknowledged his broader kinship with quattrocento painting. Julia Cartwright, for

example, summarized in 1898, "With instinctive sympathy, he felt the strong bond that

united him with these old masters, who shared his refined sense of beauty and tender

spiritual feeling…He saw life as these men saw it and caught their spirit."[99]

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[93] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:65.
[94] Parkinson, "Two Early Altar-Pieces," 322-23.
[95] "The Grosvenor Gallery," *Building News* 42 (May 1882): 531.
[96] Burns, *Sermons in Art*, 73-74.
[97] Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 135; *Ruskin et la religion de la beauté* (Paris, 1897), quoted in Lisle, *Burne-Jones*, 122.
[98] Lisle, *Burne-Jones*, 164.
[99] Julia Cartwright, "Review," 357. Burne-Jones encouraged his quattrocento heritage, characterizing himself as a "fourth-rate Florentine painter" stranded "in a large commercial city" and facetiously asserting, "I was born in a little city of the Apennines, and my name was Eduardo della Francesca, but afterwards Buon Giorno." Quoted in Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 135; Horner, *Time Remembered*, 105. In 1878

Saint Francis of Assisi

Another formative influence on Burne-Jones's construction of monastic identity was Saint Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscan order. Speaking to the artist's conflation of ascetic piety and aesthetic beauty, Walford Graham Robertson remarked, "If a marriage could have been arranged between Brother Francis of Assisi and Mona Lisa…their off-spring might have been very like Edward Burne-Jones."[100] His nineteenth-century biographer Julia Cartwright also avowed, "Not Birmingham, but Assisi was his true birthplace, and Saint Francis his patron saint."[101]

On his third trip to Italy, in 1871, Burne-Jones copied scenes from the saint's life by Ghirlandaio and found Giotto's frescoes in Santa Croce, which include the *Life of Saint Francis* cycle, "full of the inspiration that I went to look for."[102] He advised a friend to "remember Giotto by" his "death of Francis" there.[103] He also admired Piero della Francesca's predella panel of the Stigmatization of Saint Francis in the *St. Anthony Polyptych* (1460-70) in the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia, and asked his friend

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the *Times* remarked that Burne-Jones was "a painter who can walk in the ways of the earlier Renaissance with so stately and assured a step." Quoted in Lisle, *Burne-Jones*, 111. Among others, Claude Phillips believed the artist intended to imitate the "manner…technique, and…subjects" of quattrocento painting, while Holman Hunt described his work "as the perfection of the modern quattrocentists' school of art." Phillips, "Edward Burne Jones," 287; Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, 2:387.

[100] Robertson, *Letters to Katie*, vi.

[101] Cartwright, "Review," 357. Contemporaries perpetuated additional aspects of Burne-Jones's saintly character. Ruskin described him in 1862 as "pure as an archangels [*sic*]," and Thomas Rooke aggrandized his master as "a demi God or kind of Divine Creature." *The Winnington Letters: John Ruskin's Correspondence with Margaret Alexis Bell and the Children at Winnington Hall*, ed. Van Akin Burd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969), 370, quoted in Dorment, "Decoration of St. Paul's," 138; Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:1. Algernon Charles Swinburne jokingly compared his friendship with Burne-Jones to the probable relationship between Saints Jerome and Augustine had they lived in the same era. The artist liked the analogy so much he retold it to numerous friends. *The Swinburne Letters*, vol. 6, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1962), 100, quoted in Case, "Annotated Letters," 45. Even his wife characterized his face as "that of a saint, and at times like one transfigured." G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:296.

[102] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:27.

[103] Ibid., 2:65.

Katie Lewis when she traveled there in 1898, "will you give it my love please & say I shall never forget it?"[104]

Renowned for his extreme vow of poverty and outreach to the poor, Saint Francis encapsulated the values driving Burne-Jones's hatred of modern materialism and sense of social mission. In particular, Saint Francis ministered to lepers, and in 1887 Burne-Jones painted him receiving the Stigmata (fig. 103) as a gift of appreciation for Father Damien, who worked with lepers on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. The Catholic missionary's humility and self-sacrifice impressed him, and fittingly, his image is one of ascetic piety rewarded by divine favor. Kneeling on the ground in a spartan, desert setting, an attenuated figure of Saint Francis beholds an equally elongated vision of Jesus enshrouded in seraphim-like wings, iconography stemming from the early Italian painting of Ghirlandaio, Piero, and Giotto's Arena Chapel frescoes. The saint responds with dignified calm and reverence, and Burne-Jones thus avoids the heightened emotion usually seen in Catholic representations of the subject. The preciousness of its materiality—a "small water-color touched with gold"—gives it the air of a devotional object.[105] As Richard Dorment perceives, this gracious gift "suggests a romantic longing by the artist to associate his own life and art with heroic or epic deeds," such as those of Father Damien and Saint Francis.[106] Accordingly, when exhibited in 1899, Cosmo

[104] Edward Burne-Jones to Katherine Elizabeth Lewis, Nov. 28, 1898, Dep.c.841, vol. 2, fol. 166, Lewis Family Papers, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. He described Piero's painting as "The strangest and most imaginative of all pictures here…the monk usually made asleep is here awake & his face is drawn with wonderful tenderness." Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 136-39.
[105] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:175.
[106] Dorment, "Decoration of St. Paul's," 141.

Monkhouse singled out this watercolor as one object that "bring[s] us very close to the man himself."[107]

Burne-Jones frequently praised the Franciscan founder, telling May, "Francis of Assisi was quite right" in his way of living.[108] He conveyed his love for Assisi, which he had visited in 1871, to Katie Lewis, but she disappointed him deeply by not stopping there. "Assisi you have missed and that is my shrine," he reproved.[109] Dorment notes how even the artist's speech occasionally mimicked that of the saint, who referred to animals and elements of nature in familial terms. A letter to Georgiana, who was traveling in Italy, reads, "Give my love to my brothers the MacDonalds and my sister the Sunlight and my mother the Blue."[110] A former Belgian barrister, who "for love of" Saint Francis gave up his "hateful" profession, took a vow of poverty and moved "to Assisi for love of the saint there," visited the artist yearly.[111] He reported that this man, a stranger when they met in 1890, "wanted to tell me of [his plans] because of my pictures," apparently discerning a shared sympathy between Burne-Jones and Saint Francis.[112] With approbation, and a bit of envy, he described the lawyer-turned-monk as "an able man [who] has done a good deal of work since."[113]

Burne-Jones was not alone in his high regard for Saint Francis, whose reputation among Protestants peaked in the later nineteenth century after Margaret Oliphant's book

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[107] Cosmo Monkhouse, introduction to Burlington Fine Arts Club, *Exhibition of Drawings and Studies by Sir Edward Burne-Jones* (London, 1899), xiv.

[108] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Feb. 2, 1893, MS Add 54217, vol. 1, fol. 28, British Library.

[109] Edward Burne-Jones to Katherine Elizabeth Lewis, Nov. 28, 1898, Dep.c.841, vol. 2, fol. 166, Lewis Family Papers, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

[110] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:327.

[111] Ibid., 2:210; Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, after Sept. 1893, MS Add 54217, vol. 1, fol. 173, British Library.

[112] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:210.

[113] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, after Sept. 1893, MS Add 54217, vol. 1, fol. 173, British Library.

St. Francis of Assisi appeared in 1870.[114] Dorment has identified the possibility of a loosely-bound artistic "brotherhood" of Saint Francis composed of Burne-Jones and the Anglo-Italian landscape painters Giovanni Costa (1826-1903) and George Howard (1843-1911). Writing to Howard soon after Burne-Jones's death in 1898, "Frate Giovanni" talked of their "secular Franciscan Brotherhood" fighting against materialism with "simplicity, love, work, and the striving after lofty ideals." He ended by expressing his "weeping for the irreparable loss of Frate Burne-Jones."[115]

Visual Representation

As Timothy Gregory Verdon acknowledges, historically, secular society has imagined "monks as sages and seers," and the abbey as a silent refuge "bright with God's wisdom for all."[116] Outwardly, Burne-Jones's physical appearance conjured this aura of monastic sagacity through his signature beard, which he began growing early in his art career. Especially in the 1870s, when he wore it extremely long and parted in the center, it seemingly denoted a reclusive, hermit-like existence. Contemporary portraits often emphasized the beard as a signifier of his mystical character. The most striking example is George Frederic Watts's 1870 portrait (fig. 104), where Burne-Jones's torso is hardly distinguishable from the inky blackness of the background. The effect is a floating, disembodied head with a supernatural feel. Aside from his prominent beard, set off by the dark surroundings, his eyes are the other strongly delineated feature. Their slightly off-center penetrative gaze draws in something unseen outside the canvas, implying the

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[114] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 2:468. Another popular biography followed in 1894 by Paul Sabatier.
[115] Olivia Rossetti Agresti, *Giovanni Costa: His Life, Work, and Times*, 2nd ed. (London: Gay and Bird, 1907), 270, quoted in Dorment, "Decoration of St. Paul's," 139.
[116] Timothy Gregory Verdon, introduction to *Monasticism and the Arts*, ed. Verdon with John Dally (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1984), 5.

artist is a seer or visionary with the special ability to discern truths—divine and otherwise—and convey this privileged, secret wisdom to others. Burne-Jones enacted the role of the sage with his younger female friends such as Frances Horner, to whom "he had grown so divinely spiritual and good and yet so human that I took everything to him."[117]

Unlike contemporaries such as James McNeill Whistler, Frederic Leighton (1830-96) or George Frederic Watts, who utilized self-portraits to shape their artistic identities, Burne-Jones never painted his own image. An introvert who shied away from the spotlight, he apparently preferred to keep his personal and public lives separate. "Bounds for himself & for others he always had," Rooke explained, "rigidly fixed, never transgressed, & fiercely guarded, but to the uninitiated quite unobservable."[118] He did, however, frequently embed humorous and often self-deprecating caricatures in his correspondence, and these consistently accentuate his professed ascetic character.

Whether sketching himself seated, at the easel, or with family, Burne-Jones always exaggerated his physical build as extremely tall and lean (figs. 105-6, 108-10). His face exhibits a sharp angularity in its inverted triangle shape (fig. 107), while his sunken eyes and pronounced skeletal features give him a gaunt, emaciated visage, usually accompanied by a naïve, befuddled expression. His appearance often acts as a foil to Morris's short, corpulent build (fig. 108), a comic comparison with which he loved to tease his friend. In one amusing family portrait, Burne-Jones's slender height contrasts with the squat Georgiana, who appears as a chorister or nun in a wide-sleeved robe (fig. 109). Once, he portrayed himself literally as a "Starving" pavement artist (fig. 110),

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[117] Frances Horner to Edith Lyttleton, n.d. [1898], quoted in Dakers, "Yours affectionately, Angelo," 16.
[118] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:6.

whose shabby attire, patched pants, and hunger suggest he suffered for his art and align him with the abstemious, self-sacrificing vows of the monastery. The designs inscribed on the ground resemble, in the center, a round object reminiscent of an artist's palette, and on the left, a loaf of bread and fish that reference his starvation but also conjure up biblical allusions. The physical execution of his caricatures is equally minimal, rendered economically with few stark, black lines and devoid of color or intricate detail. Moreover, his clothing is usually disheveled and wrinkled (fig. 111), invoking a naïve, monkish attitude toward the niceties of material life.

After his death, Burne-Jones's long sage-like beard, emaciated appearance, and perceived ascetic traits continued to be the three distinguishing signposts of his public identity. In a caricature from 1916, Max Beerbohm depicted "Topsy and Ned Jones Settled on the Settle" (fig. 112). The bare, wooden-floored room and broom imply a fastidiousness of character, and a frugal meal of bread and beer awaits on a hard, angular table. In striking contrast to the wild-haired, rotund Morris, who takes up the vast majority of space, the lean, effeminate Burne-Jones, dressed in the drab browns of the monastic habit, fingers his flowing, waist-length ginger beard. His diminutive frame is crammed into the corner of an uncomfortable wooden bench indicative of Morris and Company's hard furniture. Its painted decoration, all single female figures, speaks to the pair's love of beauty, but the crowning panel of an angel testifies to the religious element of their venture.

Monastic Seclusion: Withdrawal from the World

Julie F. Codell identifies the desire to withdraw from modern society's

materialism and industrialization to an isolated sanctuary as a defining feature of the

prelapsarian artist, a common trope in Victorian Britain.[119] It is equally, however, a

signature of monasticism, in which religious orders live apart from the secular realm.

After the dissolution of Burne-Jones's religio-artistic brotherhood, which was intended to

be *in the world*, working for social change in urban London, his attraction to monasticism

shifted to its promise of cloistral removal *from the world*, and he spoke frequently of his

desire to live a reclusive existence. He regretted, for instance, that the overpopulated city

did not "allow room for asceticism and seclusion, which are necessary conditions of

individual advancement" and spurned any engagement with modern life, making endless

(and likely spurious) claims such as, "I never see newspapers and know nothing later than

the civilization of Ravenna."[120] In later years he felt "quite & much out of the world…I

sometimes think that I belong to a prehistoric age--& have no part in now."[121] In 1895,

he proclaimed, "I shall try to live less in [the world]," and "live altogether out of it if

possible."[122] Burne-Jones's friend the former barrister and pilgrim to Assisi conveyed

the universality of this trend, telling the artist

> of many men, artists & poets in Paris who felt the like, & lived & desired
> to live in narrow & empty rooms and be out of the tumult & he told me
> some honourable names which I have shamefully forgotten, & then he
> told me how he was struck by the opposite instincts here, which seemed
> to him to corrode our life.[123]

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[119] Codell, *Artists' Lifewritings*, 79. Codell ably demonstrates how Burne-Jones fits the pattern of the prelapsarian artist. Although the connection has not been made previously, the prelapsarian traits she outlines overlap considerably with monasticism, for example in their shared unworldliness, contemplative disposition, seclusion, rejection of "social, commercial, and professional demands," and childlike innocence, which, in the monk, translates to purity and naïveté about fleshly or worldly matters.

[120] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:91; Edward Burne-Jones to Richard Watson Dixon, May 15, 1878, fol. 1, MS FRKF 872, Box 107, Frederick R. Koch Collection, Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[121] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, n.d., MS Add 54218, vol. 2, fol. 278, British Library.

[122] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:52.

[123] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, after Sept. 1893, MS Add 54217, vol. 1, fol. 173, British Library.

Accordingly, another prevalent feature of Burne-Jones's caricatures is a recoiling or shrinking posture, intimating a monkish desire to withdraw from the world and an introverted, retiring personality. He usually hunches over or rounds his shoulders (figs. 105-8, 111), as if wishing he could disappear. At times, he timidly recoils from his own art, for instance in fig. 113, where his crouching figure turns away from the canvas. In a sketch from c.1870 (fig. 114), Burne-Jones seems to pull back in fear as he pauses while painting his mistress, Maria Zambaco, who both entranced and terrified him with her volatile Greek temperament. Notably, the artist is not painting but momentarily absorbed in contemplation of her classical beauty. His posture, however, seems to indicate a simultaneous trepidation at her sexuality, a facetious pose of monk-like innocence in matters of the flesh. His most blatant expression of escapism is a series of five caricatures (fig. 115) in which the artist, in despair and frustration, throws his palette aside and attempts to climb inside the vision of ideal beauty on his canvas.

Two of Burne-Jones's caricatures articulate his craving for an insular studio by using his unfinished pictures as a symbolic wall dividing him from the outer world. A lighthearted sketch (fig. 116) shows the artist seated, head in hands, distressed over the rotund cleaning lady's invasion of his workspace. His frequent jesting about her fastidiousness veiled an anxiety about outside forces violating his sanctuary. In *Unpainted Masterpieces* (fig. 117), stacks of blank canvases press in claustrophobically on the painter's creative space but also offer a kind of refuge. Hunched over, he hides within them, avoiding the external pressures of professional demands and a saturated art market. As Herbert Sussman has demonstrated, mid-Victorian monastic discourse partly grew out of anxiety over the increasing commercialism of art, and Burne-Jones was no

exception.[124] Having relied almost solely on private patronage during a blissful period in the 1870s, he outwardly professed disdain for fame, celebrity, and institutions such as the Royal Academy and only reluctantly accepted a baronetcy in 1894. His self-construction as the artist-monk, imitating the Vasarian Fra Angelico who "avoided all worldly business," corroborates David Peters Corbett's and Lara Perry's assertion that "investigating identity allows us to see the moment when individual agents come up against, enter into or resist, the institutions within which their professional lives take place."[125]

Contemplative Solitude: The Monk as Melancholy Genius

The emptied space of monastic seclusion intentionally invites a contemplative life of prayer and spiritual meditation. Although monks exist within the group dynamic of a brotherhood, the vow of silence most religious orders take ensures a sense of solitude even in community. Burne-Jones craved the quiet, introspective aspect of monasticism, attesting he "love[d] this quiet—this solitude….I like solitude--& need it."[126] Never quite achieving the peaceful solace he desired, he envied George Frederic Watts, "for he rises before the rest of the world is awake & goes to bed when others begin their lives; & thus he has a silent world all to himself; & he lives on rice like an easterner in the midst of London he is a hermit, without differences he withdraws from the fever & turmoil & strife. I wish I could do it too."[127]

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[124] Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities*, 6.
[125] Vasari, *Life of Angelico*, 15; Corbett and Perry, introduction to *English Art 1860-1914*, 9.
[126] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Sept. 27, 1896, MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 294, British Library.
[127] Lewis, "Recollections of Edward Burne-Jones," fols. 22-23.

Significantly, for monks the purpose of isolation is to open their minds to the workings of the Holy Spirit. Correspondingly, the contemplative life was a key factor in Plato's concept of divine genius and, specifically, its manifestation as "mystical frenzy." During the Renaissance, Noel Brann demonstrates, solitude was considered a double-edged sword. In addition to being "a divinely inspired form of spiritual purification and perfection," such pensiveness was thought to induce melancholy and was thus deemed by some as "an unhealthy way of life."[128] For those who believed melancholy was a potential gateway to divine inspiration, however, a meditative state could positively heighten perceptions and arouse mystical ecstasies like those of the saints.[129] Once again, Fra Angelico provided an apt role model. His "quietude of life," contemporaries argued, "produce[d] the proper state of mind" necessary to attain the "religious ideal in art."[130]

By adopting the introspective reclusiveness of the monk, Burne-Jones reinforced his status as artistic genius. Its requisite despondency and an exasperatingly self-indulgent tone of frailty and sickliness surface often in his writings: "[M]ostly I abide in and see nothing and hear but very little of the great world," he reported, "And the lull is good for me, only there is no doubt at all that little by little I am growing a melancholy man."[131] As John Christian has noted, as early as 1853 he borrowed elements of Dürer's *Melencolia I* (1514), including an hour-glass, posture of "mournful dejection," and distant sea, for an allegorical self-portrait Georgiana described in the *Memorials*.[132] In a photograph from 1874 taken in his garden at The Grange (fig. 118), his London home

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[128] Brann, *Origin of Genius*, 11.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Fish, "Picturing the Angels," 771.
[131] Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, [Sept. 5, 1894?], Burne-Jones Papers, XXVIII, fol. 51, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[132] Christian, "Early German Sources," 64; G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:103.

from 1867, he again presents himself as the contemplative, melancholy genius by borrowing the pensive pose of Dürer's *Melencolia I* and Michelangelo in Raphael's *School of Athens*. With his head propped up by his hand on one knee and darkened eyes looking away from the camera's lens, he appears lost in thought. Another portrait from 1874 photographed in the medieval setting of Naworth Castle garden (fig. 119) arrests the artist in a moment of quiet reflection, eyes cast introspectively downward. The gate behind Burne-Jones suggests a division between two worlds, perhaps the public and private selves. Significantly, he is poised on its threshold and it is unclear exactly which side of the gate he occupies. Its prominent bars seem to imply a promise of protection from the external world and the potential to be "locked away" from society, but also a more ambivalent hint of imprisonment, intimating the seclusion necessary for artistic genius comes with a darker price, melancholy.

The Garden as Cloister

For Burne-Jones, the garden served as an important marker of both artistic genius and contemplative solitude. It offered a rarefied atmosphere akin to the cloister, which in turn theoretically opened a channel for divine inspiration. Like the peaceful confined haven of the abbey, the enclosed garden functioned as a pensive retreat. Accordingly, religious houses such as the one Burne-Jones visited at Charnwood usually occupy a similarly natural, rural setting.

Burne-Jones conceived of his garden at The Grange as an essential means of achieving a monastic life in the modern city. Georgiana described it as a second Eden,

> a beautiful garden of about three-quarters of an acre, with a fine old mulberry on its lawn, peaches against the walls, and apple-trees enough to

justify us in calling part of it an orchard…late-blooming monthly roses and a hedge of lavender, whose sweet scent and soft pink and grey colour are inseparably connected in memory with the place and time.[133]

One visitor noted its feeling of an ancient enclosure, commenting on the "moss-grown walls that shut in that smooth grass and venerable shrubbery…built long before any of us were thought of."[134] Burne-Jones emphasized the garden's role as a contemplative space: "The garden here looks so pretty," he told May Gaskell. "The little orchard end of it by the studio wall, so tranquil--& sunsets linger and looked sweet through the trees.—I scarcely ever go to town, that horror of London growing upon me fast, which at times overtakes me. I sit, remembering old times with you—old by now--& feel quite & much out of the world.[135] It was in this idyllic retreat that he and Morris chose to have their family portraits made in 1874 (fig. 120), and the visible wall implies they are contained and separated from the metropolis outside.

In numerous instances, Burne-Jones referenced the garden as a space of creative and spiritual meditation. In his 1862 portrait of Georgiana as a virtuous woman of the cloth in a rose bower (fig. 95), he made explicit the analogy between the garden and the cloister. The frontispiece to the Kelmscott *Chaucer* (fig. 121) likewise depicts the medieval poet composing his lines and absorbing inspiration in the haven of the *hortus conclusus*. Dressed in the monastic habit of belted tunic and long apron, Chaucer stands in for the artist-monk Burne-Jones, who, as Velma Bourgeois Richmond has established, projected autobiographical meaning into the Kelmscott *Chaucer* illustrations.[136] In a

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[133] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:307.
[134] "Visit to 'The Grange,'" 748.
[135] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, n.d., MS Add 54218, vol. 2, fol. 278, British Library.
[136] Velma Bourgeois Richmond, "Edward Burne-Jones's Chaucer Portraits in the Kelmscott *Chaucer*," *Chaucer Review* 40, no. 1 (2005): 1-38. The poet's robe resembles a monastic habit even more strongly in the last illustration of the volume, where it has wide, open sleeves.

caricature resembling *The Artist Attempting to Join the World of Art with Disastrous Results* (fig. 115), he covers a massive canvas with an ornately detailed, expansive garden (fig. 122). The path, juxtaposed with his head, gives the illusion that the artist might climb inside the imagined, naturalistic setting, which contrasts sharply with the artificiality of the Oriental rug and aristocratic portraits hanging on the walls. The hammock swinging between two trees signifies the promise of satisfying rest if only he could reach it.

In 1882 Burne-Jones built a second studio in his London garden to block the sight of the detested encroaching suburban development of Fulham (now "West Kensington") and to store unfinished work. Robert de la Sizeranne's visit to this secluded retreat evokes the conventual themes of quiet and solitude:

> Sir Edward Burne-Jones is in his studio. To reach it he has to cross a long garden, half meadow, half orchard, as green as the lawns of Meriaugis, as wooded as the forest of Brocéliande. It is completely shut in, so that no intruder can disturb him. The organ at the end of the hall is silent; the sketches hanging on the walls are in grey tones which do not distract the eye. Outside drops of fine rain, London rain, patter on the leaves one by one, like invisible fingers wandering over a silent keyboard.

He reportedly discovered the artist not painting but engaged in the meditative act of "reading…lost in thought," a characterization that reinforced the trope of the garden as a contemplative site.[137] In addition to a general prelapsarian attitude Codell notes, the journey through a secret garden to a sequestered space, the silenced organ, the absence of decoration and lack of color create an impression of an ascetic monk withdrawn from worldly luxury to a rarefied environment.[138] Sizeranne increased the sense of supernatural otherworldliness by his allusions to the magical lands of Arthurian legend.

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[137] Robert de La Sizeranne, *English Contemporary Art,* trans. H. M. Poynter (London, 1898), 207.
[138] Codell, *Artists' Lifewritings*, 82.

The garden's potential for monastic seclusion opened up new creative possibilities for a more personal and spiritual art. Although the outdoor studio is usually thought to be the place where Burne-Jones painted his largest public pictures, Walford Graham Robertson discerned that the "sombre stately paintings" produced in the house were more commercial and had "only shown me a side of the painter which I already knew and which he had given to the public." In the garden workspace, however, Robertson "found…other specimens of his work in a style quite new to me" such as private drawings made for his children.[139] In a letter of 1887, Burne-Jones affirmed that his garden served as a site of sacred inspiration: "in the first morning hours…the autumn sun shines upon it and makes it look divine, but…at twilight [it] is haunted, by spirits, not ghosts—wraith and spectre never entered this dear garden, nor ever a ghost I think, but a soft spirit there is I am sure."[140]

Work Routine

Burne-Jones created two caricatures depicting himself and Morris embedded within the ecclesiastical art form of stained glass, which express his conjoining of monasticism with his work practices (fig. 123). The comparison reveals their disparate yet complementary personalities: Burne-Jones as a reserved, emaciated ascetic embedded in the lead lines of his own designs, and Morris as robust and boisterous, breaking out of his frame. Morris heartily enjoys a goblet of wine, while only a spartan jug of liquid and a plate of bread nurtures Burne-Jones. Together the two call to mind the Eucharistic elements. Burne-Jones occupies a confined, barren space with only a tiny window high

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[139] Robertson, *Time Was*, 77. A furnace beneath the floor heated the garden studio. Angela Mackail Thirkell, *Three Houses* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1931), 26.
[140] Edward Burne-Jones to Margaret Burne-Jones, 1882, quoted in G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:177.

on the wall, equally suggestive of monastery and prison cells. The implication of

confinement perhaps speaks to his fatigue at making stained-glass cartoons which,

although they provided the bread and butter of his income, he often found tedious and

monotonous. Morris, on the other hand, is backed by an ornate, organically-patterned

wall contrasting with the geometric rigidity of Burne-Jones's austere surroundings.

Most germane to the present discussion, however, the caricatures speak to Burne-

Jones's imposition of monastic discipline and asceticism on his work routine. He

claimed to work better with constraints placed on him, such as when designing stained

glass for specific architectural spaces. Of mosaic's "severe limitations" he commented,

"I love to work in that fettered way, and am better in a prison than in the open air

always."[141] As John Christian and Stephen Wildman note, "he may have been a

sensualist in his imagery, but stylistically he was an ascetic, eagerly embracing

limitations like a monk finding freedom in a cell."[142] He once spoke to Rooke about his

admiration for Gothic as "the finest school of ornament, it has what is so essential—it has

made fetters for itself, knows the value of limits and boundaries. It transgresses them

sometimes and plays about in its fetters, but it always wears them and consciousness of

them is never lost."[143] Another time, he wrote, "Limitation is inspiring to the artist; to fit

a subject into a lunette or a predella or any other given space brings its own suggestions

& I have never minded having to work within such limits. It is the infinite that paralizes

[*sic*]."[144] Caroline Arscott perceptively observes that this "discipline of the decorative"

extends to his paintings as well, for instance in *Hope* (fig. 15), *The Beguiling of Merlin*

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[141] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:159.
[142] Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 149.
[143] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 4:450.
[144] Lewis, "Recollections of Edward Burne-Jones," fol. 6.

(c.1873), *The Wheel of Fortune* (fig. 78), or the paintings of Perseus rescuing Andromeda

(1884-85), where "the viewer is invited to empathize with figures who are trapped,

imprisoned or fettered."[145]

Burne-Jones also imposed discipline on his daily routine in emulation of the

rigors of abbey life, which attracted him from an early age. On a visit to Herefordshire in

1852 he described his attempt to replicate the strict rule he had witnessed at Mount St.

Bernard's Abbey, which begins at dawn and is punctuated by periods of solitary prayer,

spiritual meditation, reading, and worship:

> The morning sun is just up as I emerge from the blankets….So soon as
> bound in cloth I wander by the banks of the lovely river, or round the
> Castle Green, get into a romantic fit…then bolt indoors and bolt my
> breakfast. This is about the third hour of the day; the next two hours are
> spent in sweet converse or reading…and by this time it is Cathedral time,
> and for an hour I am in Paradise…From 12-3, I wander about the country,
> in the most romantic holes you can imagine, from 3-4 Cathedral, 4-8
> occupied, I am sorry to say, in eating and talking, dinner and tea. Then
> my reading hours commence, and I never think of going to bed before 1-2
> or 3, or even later.[146]

His signature, "Yours + CANTUAR," the Archbishop of Canterbury's title, signals the

religious focus of his routine. Reminiscing about this holiday decades later conjured for

Burne-Jones a vision in which "the chanting of Psalms never ended night or day for

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[145] Arscott, "Fractured figures," 43.

[146] Edward Burne-Jones to Cormell Price, Jan. 24, 1852, fols. 1-3, MS Save 1661, Yale Center for British Art. The Cistercians he witnessed at Charnwood begin their day in the earliest hours of the morning with the chanting of Psalms, silent prayer, and reading before breakfast. Lauds, a service of praise and request for God's blessing on the day, is held at dawn, followed by a full Mass. Daily work such as farming, bookbinding, and building projects commences after the tierce service, which prepares the monks for the spiritual nature of their day's labor. At mid-day is the short service of sext and lunch. Afternoon vespers follows another few hours of manual labor and is a service of thanksgiving for the day's work. After supper is another period of quiet contemplation including prayer and reading. The day ends with compline, a service devoted to the Virgin Mary sung and chanted in Latin in a dark, candlelit chapel.

hundreds of years...Night and day continual relays of monks sang, and you knew them whenever you passed by."[147]

As an artist, Burne-Jones was extraordinarily punctual and consistent, and his son described his daily ritual in sacred terms as "entirely consecrated to work."[148] Breakfast at 8 a.m. preceded a brief session of letter writing. He ascended to his studio, cup of tea in hand, by 9 a.m., where he toiled diligently with the "exception of half an hour for lunch" until dinnertime.[149] "And this was his day's work always…He could not endure the notion of spending a day without work, and he never spent such a day," his son recounted.[150] During daylight hours he labored at large-scale paintings for exhibition or patrons. Like the Cistercian monks' "season of quiet," however, which came "when the day is over, and the shades of evening are closing about," he found rest and relaxation after darkness fell in small-scale drawings and sketches, many of a spiritual nature.[151] His work record for 1885, for instance, documents that he "made in Evenings many designs for mosaic and other subjects in my big book."[152] This refers to his "Secret Book of Designs," a private artistic diary primarily containing ideas for the St. Paul's Within-the-Walls mosaics and other religious themes such as nativities, angels, monks, peacocks, and the Holy Grail Quest. He also devoted evening hours to making stained-glass cartoons in what Georgiana portrayed as a mystical, Neoplatonic trance: "without hesitation, so quickly that it seemed as if they must have been already on the paper and

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[147] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 141.
[148] Philip Burne-Jones, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Bt., by His Son," *Bibby's Annual* 3, no. 12 (1917): 31.
[149] P. Burne-Jones, "Notes on unfinished works," 161.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Quoted in Jewitt and Cruikshank, *Guide to the Abbey*, 73.
[152] E. Burne-Jones, "List of My Designs," fol. 33.

his hand were only removing a veil."[153] His favorite thing to do after retiring at 10 p.m.

was to "lie on the sofa with little light in the room and think."[154]

Often he related his routine to Christian rituals. An early game of draughts was

like "beginning the day as with prayer." "Only it must be a *very* quick game," he

lightheartedly advised Rooke, "as morning prayers are not seldom read with

supererogatory rapidity—gabble gabble gosh, amen."[155] Another morning in 1898 he

proclaimed, "we'll have our Litany and then carry our work downstairs." Rooke asked

whether a prayer bell would signal their start to the workday, to which Burne-Jones

replied, "Haven't yet instituted a prayer-bell, but I'll call you when this letter is

written."[156] At times a form of Lauds consecrating the day's work followed the

metaphorical prayer bell. "O what made me that Wednesday morning sing all morning

through," he asked May in 1893. "I chanted Latin verses and filled myself with

exaltation & delight" he told her, a practice that "began on Wednesday afternoon, & has

lasted day by day ever since."[157]

Religious orders, particularly those that followed a stricter observance such as the

Trappists Burne-Jones observed at Mount St. Bernard's, believed such patterns of

discipline, together with physical hardship, self-denial, and sacrifice, were beneficial

tools for cultivating moral rectitude and spiritual maturity. Vasari, accordingly, praised

Fra Angelico's "scrupulous subjection to duty" and alleged he "worked continually in his

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[153] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:6.
[154] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Sept. 27, 1896, MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 295, British Library.
[155] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 4:517.
[156] Ibid., 4:518.
[157] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Mar. 18, 1893, MS Add 54217, vol. 1, fol. 53, British Library.

Art."[158] Burne-Jones adopted this vocabulary of asceticism, incessant labor and its higher

purpose in describing his artistic practice. He quipped, "everyday I do some work, but

dare say it is only good for moral exercise" and likened the act of putting his materials

away at the end of the day to "repentance."[159] Presenting himself as a dedicated,

laborious artist-monk whose "hand and mind were never idle," he "thank[ed] the Lord in

heaven" for giving him "a savage passion for work."[160] His granddaughter, Angela

Thirkell, elaborated on his obsessive attitude: "My grandfather rarely sought any further

relaxation than a change of work. When the light was no longer good enough to work in

oils he would take up a pencil, or if he had finished with his pencil he would draw in

coloured chalks or water-colour."[161]

Monks considered their asceticism a re-enactment of the physical suffering early

Christians endured, and Burne-Jones's rhetoric of work also frequently invoked tropes of

bodily pain and martyrdom. One of his articles in the 1856 *Oxford and Cambridge*

Magazine declared that thanks to Ruskin and "Angelico…kneeling and weeping as he

paints," aspiring artists now "know well that this art of painting is connected with man's

suffering."[162] When Rooke asked him in 1896 if it was "misery" to hold a photographic

study in one hand while painting with the other, he replied, "oh, my brethren, when we

consider what real misery is—when I'm uncomfortable I always think of M[ichael].

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[158] Vasari, *Life of Angelico*, 15.
[159] Edward Burne-Jones to Elizabeth Lady Lewis, [1896 or 97], Dep.c.832, vol. 2, fol. 138, Lewis Family Papers, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford; Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 4:491.
[160] Thirkell, *Three Houses*, 85; G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:6.
[161] Thirkell, *Three Houses*, 85.
[162] [Edward Burne-Jones], "Ruskin and the Quarterly," *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* 1, no. 6 (1856): 359. The article is anonymous but Mackail and John Christian attribute it to Burne-Jones, possibly with contributions by Morris. See John Christian, "'A Serious Talk': Ruskin's Place in Burne-Jones's Artistic Development," in Parris, *Pre-Raphaelite Papers*, 188, n. 17.

A[ngelo]. painting the roof of the Sistine Chapel."[163] After a stint on his tall ladder painting *The Sleep of Arthur in Avalon* (1881-98), he found it "an extraordinary pleasure…to sit down after standing for a time on those steps. It's more than a physical contentment, it's a perfectly voluptuous delight. It's extraordinary how—if we minimise our wants and take things hardly—what very little physical pleasure will serve our turn."[164] Notably, this signifier of sacrificial labor served as the setting for one of his most well-known photographic portraits (fig. 73). When painting the *Wheel of Fortune*, he lightheartedly alluded to a religious dimension of his suffering: "If it were written down how hard I have worked on her in the middle of pain, or more correctly with pain in the middle of me," he moaned, "it would be an anecdote conducive to heroism and is at the service of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge."[165]

Self-denial came in the form of masochistic self-criticism prohibiting any satisfaction in his art. Burne-Jones was wary of "indulging" himself by being "pleased with any part of a picture."[166] Spending a day "chiefly undoing work that wasn't good enough" he described as "a process of discipline better for the soul than the body."[167] In 1872 he told a visiting reporter about his habit of beginning many large paintings before others were finished, resulting in a studio full of half-finished works that took years to complete. He made this admission, the reporter observed, with "the air of a naughty child expecting punishment after confession."[168] Burne-Jones even subjected family and friends to his disciplinary tactics. In sharp contrast to the neat, domesticated studios of

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[163] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 2:209.
[164] Ibid., 2:210.
[165] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:128.
[166] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 2:157.
[167] Edward Burne-Jones to Elizabeth, Lady Lewis, 1889, Dep.c.832, vol. 2, f. 83, Lewis Family Papers, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.
[168] "Visit to 'The Grange,'" 750.

gentlemanly artists such as Leighton or Millais, which were arranged with visits from

wealthy patrons in mind and photographed for contemporary journals, his disheveled

workspace (fig. 124) posed a trial to guests. According to Rooke, they first had to

recognize their "imperfections" then prove themselves by navigating the "mazes of

perilously poised objects….Pictures, studies, books & other works, framed or

unframed…piled into unfathomable stacks, until there was barely room to pass through,

perfectly safe as long as they were untouched—but woe betide the too rapidly whiffed

skirt, or imperfectly measured footsteps that ventured by them."[169]

Physical Environments

As the lavish, often exotically-decorated mansions of Lawrence Alma-Tadema

(1836-1912), Leighton, Millais, and other painters attested, domestic environments were

important markers of artistic identity in the late Victorian period.[170] Unlike his

contemporaries who used ostentatious homes to assert their newfound genteel status,

however, Burne-Jones recreated, as far as possible, the ascetic, contemplative, spiritual

world of the monastery in his living quarters and mimicked Fra Angelico, who reputedly

believed, "true riches consist entirely in being content with little."[171] He denounced

material luxury and the popular ornate furnishings of Victorian society: "In an age of

sofas and cushions," he explained, Newman "taught me to be indifferent to comfort… in

an age of materialism he taught me to venture all on the unseen."[172] His experience at

Mount St. Bernard's Abbey left him enamored with the physical environs of monasteries.

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[169] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:7.
[170] See for instance Caroline Dakers, *The Holland Park Circle: Artists and Victorian Society* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1999) and Gillett, *Worlds of Art*.
[171] Vasari, *Life of Angelico*, 15.
[172] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 120.

Writing to Frances Horner in Constantinople in 1895, he demanded she "must stay at Athos Mount—must," an unrealistic expectation since it was, and still is, closed to women. "In and out of the crannies and sea heights are seven-and-twenty fenced monasteries," he told her, "and they hold the secret of a thousand things dear to us about which I will tell you one time—soon. I daresay all the monasteries are very beautiful, and old isn't the word for them" he gushed.[173]

The Grange

As its garden evidenced, Burne-Jones's London home in North End Road, Fulham (fig. 125), functioned as an hermitic retreat from industrialization, the market, and society, "far west of all [London's] bustling commerce, and of all the glitter of its fashionable world."[174] Georgiana emphasized the organic, natural character of the place as it stood in 1868, writing, "there were still large elms growing in the roadway of North End, and wild roses could be gathered in a turning out of it."[175] Until the 1890s the estate backed onto nothing but fields and, "As soon as we were out of the house we might have been in the country," Angela recalled.[176] It seemed frozen in time: "No buses went down North End Lane," which was lined with "early eighteenth-century houses, each in its own garden of elms and cedars and mulberries."[177] Inside, Walford Graham Robertson's impression was "of unusual quiet…the house seemed to hold its breath lest a sound should disturb the worker."[178] Like a Gothic abbey, "shadows haunt the garden-walks

[173] Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, 1895, quoted in Horner, *Time Remembered*, 131.
[174] "Visit to 'The Grange,'" 748.
[175] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:3.
[176] Thirkell, *Three Houses*, 26.
[177] Ibid., 22.
[178] Robertson, *Time Was*, 73.

and the long rambling passages of the Grange," another visitor noted in 1872.[179]

Furnishings were "simple to austerity," Frances reported. In the drawing-room, for instance, "almost the only ornaments were pale casts…it was less a lady's bower than a student's study" (fig. 126).[180]

A number of Christian-themed artworks complemented the domestic asceticism and consecrated Burne-Jones's lived environment as a quasi-religious space. His eight-foot gilt plaster relief peacock memorial to Laura Lyttleton (1886, fig. 127), which he described as a symbol of the Resurrection, greeted visitors in the entrance hall.[181] At the foot of the staircase leading to his studio (fig. 128), the immense pastel cartoon of *Angeli Ministrantes* (fig. 129), which depicts the pilgrim angels imagined to lead humankind through the spiritual journey life, lent an air of benediction to his daily ascent into the space of artistic practice. A series of Dürer engravings Ruskin gave Burne-Jones in 1865, including *Melencolia I*, *St. Hubert*, *Adam and Eve*, and "the great designs of the Apocalypse, glorious to behold," hung in the drawing-room (see fig. 126).[182] Four studies for the Rome mosaics including a group of archangels, *The Annunciation*, *The Tree of Life* (see fig. 76) and an unused *Nativity* adorned the dining room walls (fig. 130). Alongside them also hung the *Nativity* and *Entombment* designs (see fig. 63) for Charles and Mary Howard's bronze memorials at Lanercost Priory and a Sano di Pietro

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[179] "Visit to 'The Grange,'" 748.
[180] Robertson, *Time Was*, 74.
[181] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:166. Although the peacock was a popular motif of the Aesthetic Movement, Burne-Jones defined it also in terms of its Christian connotation of eternal life, a "symbol of the Resurrection, standing upon a laurel-tree." It is inscribed with a Bible verse, Matthew 28:6: "Non est hic, sed surrexit [He is not here, he is risen]." His appreciation for the animal's religious symbolism surfaced more humorously in a conversation with Rooke: Upon being informed that an admirer had sent a peacock over for his dinner, Burne-Jones insisted it be sent away saying, "the wicked things, as if I should eat a peacock! I'd as soon eat the archangel Gabriel." Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:96.
[182] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:287.

Crucifixion painting.[183] "Always opposite the foot of his bed" hung a portrait of Father

Damien framed with his hand-written blessing, "May the Lord inspire you with holy

thoughts and bless with all His Holy Graces" and a sprig of fern he sent from Hawaii.

Damien gave this object and its prayer to Burne-Jones as thanks for the watercolor of

Saint Francis, and the artist vowed to "treasure the brief words all my life."[184] In its

severity, seclusion, cloistered garden, and religious artwork, The Grange embodied as

many attributes of monastic life as one could find in urban London.

Rottingdean as a Monastic Retreat

In 1880, tired from the fame and publicity the Grosvenor Gallery brought, Burne-

Jones yearned for a respite from the busy metropolis:

> I get no time to myself—not five minutes—and I am growing angry….if I
> was alone, I would be off to some peaceful place, out of the reach of men
> and women, and pick my life together and do some work yet…and want
> to be off…..and more and more my heart is pining for that monastery in
> Charnwood Forest.[185]

Taking a cue from Fra Angelico, who, according to Vasari, "used frequently to say that

he who practised the art of painting had need of quiet," Burne-Jones purchased Prospect

House in Rottingdean (fig. 131), a seaside enclave near Brighton.[186] The family took

extended annual holidays there as well as occasional shorter visits throughout the year.

Time seemed to stand still in the sleepy seaside village nestled in the east Sussex downs,

where, Penelope Fitzgerald describes, "Milk came from the farm in pails…and there were

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[183] The di Pietro painting appears in Rooke's *The Dining-Room at The Grange*, 1898, watercolor, private collection.
[184] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:175.
[185] Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, 1894, quoted in ibid., 2:285.
[186] Quoted in Fish, "Picturing the Angels," 327.

cornfields right up to the back window."[187] The place "lay peacefully within its grey

garden walls, the sails of the windmill were turning slowly in the sun," Georgiana

professed.[188] Her husband added that the air had "the smell of a thousand grasses."[189]

Although he later railed against the railway's intrusion on Rottingdean, it was a relatively

secluded site consisting at the close of the century of "little more than its High

Street….Its population did not exceed eight hundred, and a Parish Council administered

its simple affairs."[190] Rottingdean served as a quasi-monastic retreat where Burne-Jones

cultivated the contemplative, religious solitude he had pined for since his visit to the

Charnwood Forest abbey.

References to Christian buildings and rituals suffuse Burne-Jones's and his

family's descriptions of Rottingdean, demarcating it as a site of spiritual renewal. On the

approach to Prospect House one journeyed past the "Star of the Sea" convent, the

Vicarage, and Rottingdean's most prominent feature, the "little grey church" of St.

Margaret's, which sat directly opposite and in perfect view of the house (fig. 132). The

church symbolized refuge and endurance, having survived since Saxon times and

legendarily serving as a haven for villagers when French pirates invaded in the fourteenth

century. Angela recalled, "we always had a feeling that the little church was part of

family life, because the East end was made glorious by seven of my grandfather's

stained-glass windows."[191] The three-light window over the altar (fig. 133) he gave to

commemorate his daughter Margaret's wedding there in 1893. The bells chimed "for

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[187] Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 180.

[188] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:110.

[189] Quoted in Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 196.

[190] S. M. Moens, *Rottingdean: The Story of a Village*, ed. H. E. Blyth (Brighton: John Beal & Son, 1952), 13.

[191] Thirkell, *Three Houses*, 124-25.

eight o'clock service every morning" even though the priest no longer held daily worship.[192] "Never was any except two on Sunday" but the "morning summons," Burne-Jones reported, was "done out of respect, & from a good feeling."[193] The family, at least the women, observed the Sabbath at St. Margaret's, in part to spare the feelings of the "most charming" vicar, Arthur Thomas.[194] They nearly always celebrated Christmas at Rottingdean, where the children received Prayer Books in their stockings and the women and children attended Mass. A visit from the village mummers, who performed a play about Saint George in the drawing-room, followed on Boxing Day.

After acquiring the adjacent property in 1889, Burne-Jones joined the two dwellings together and christened it "North End House." The gardens in-between harbored a sheltered walkway "supported on plain wood pillars set in a low brick wall" with a red tile roof, known as "the Cloisters." Two people could converse in the large chairs beneath or, as Angela noted, "turn them back to back and read or meditate, undisturbed by the sight of each other."[195]

The interior décor courted asceticism with "white washed walls and scant furniture," which Burne-Jones characterized as "my idea of furnishing a little house."[196] Angela's memoirs confirm its domestic austerity. A shed in the orchard housed wooden chairs and a table created as props for the Holy Grail Tapestries. "Some had round backs and some were square and there was little to choose between them for sheer discomfort," she remembered. Their size made them "suited to no known body" and the hard,

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[192] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Aug. 29, 1893, MS Add 54217, vol. 1, fol. 146, British Library.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Thirkell, *Three Houses*, 86.
[196] Quoted in Dimbleby, *May and Amy*, 143.

straight-backed seats evoked the monastic principle whereby physical discomfort reminds one that the soul is more important than flesh.   "If that is how Arthur's court was furnished," Angela concluded, "it is quite enough to explain the eagerness of the knights to leave their seats and follow the quest of the Holy Grail and one can only conclude that the Siege Perilous was even more uncomfortable and ill-adapted to the human frame.[197]

As at The Grange, the interior featured abundant Christian iconography. A tapestry of Saint Catherine served as a curtain between the dining room and hall, and "pictures of the archangels, Gabriel with the lily, Raphael who cares for children, Uriel, Azrael, Chemuel" stared down from above the drawing-room sofas.[198] Burne-Jones's studies for his Holy Grail Tapestries also adorned the room with scenes from the "sacred land" of *Le Morte Darthur*, which surfaced again at the top of the stairs.[199] In a juxtaposition of domesticity and Christian virtue, his stained-glass windows of the *Quest for the Sangreal* (fig. 134), discussed further in Chapter Five, occupied a prosaic location on the landing over the housemaid's sink. Angela recognized in this arrangement her grandfather's "splendid disregard of external values," which were akin to the monastic vows of humility and anti-materialism.[200] Most significantly, he hung engravings from Sabine Baring-Gould's *Lives of the Saints* (1872-82) "over the mantelpiece" in the private space of his bedroom.[201] Each featured a different saint or scene from Jesus's life, thereby replicating the "white-washed walls…hung with a few pictures of Saints and

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[197] Thirkell, *Three Houses*, 92-93.
[198] Ibid., 117.
[199] Ibid., 115-16; Edward Burne-Jones to Canon Melville, Jan. 1895, quoted in Dimbleby, *May and Amy*, 144.
[200] Thirkell, *Three Houses*, 136.
[201] Ibid., 135.

Martyrs" in the dormitory cells at Mount St. Bernard's Abbey.[202] "St. Meinrad" (fig.

135) from the January volume, for example, was a fitting visual model of contemplative

monastic life. Like Burne-Jones in rural Rottingdean, Saint Meinrad sits in a natural

landscape as he studies an illuminated manuscript outside a country shrine.

Burne-Jones reinforced the monastic feel of North End House by whitewashing

the walls for the specific purpose of painting murals, several of which featured religious

iconography. Angela's account is the only surviving evidence of the designs: "When I

woke up in the morning," she recollected, "the first thing I saw was an angel, pulling

away the curtain of darkness to let the daylight in. It was painted on the whitewashed

wall at the foot of my bed in our little attic night-nursery."[203] In the day nursery Burne-

Jones painted "a peacock, perched on a tree, with its long tail hanging down," recalling

Laura Lyttleton's Resurrection memorial.[204] Given his imitation of Fra Angelico's artist-

monk persona and quattrocento style, it seems possible he had in mind the Florentine's

San Marco frescoes when painting his own quasi-monastic dormitory.[205] The scenes

from the lives of Jesus and the Virgin Mary in the monks' cells functioned as a

meditative device meant to inspire private devotion, prayer and religious contemplation.

Furthermore, the half-length saints over the ground-floor cloister windows in San Marco

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[202] "Out of the World," *All the Year Round*, May 21, 1859, quoted in Jewitt and Cruikshank, *Guide to the Abbey*, 78.

[203] The angel mural survived intact for twenty-five years but the next owner of the house, the artist William Nicholson, removed it and gave the fragments to Frances Horner. She had it mended and framed, and hung it in her home in Somerset. Thirkell, *Three Houses*, 71-72.

[204] Ibid., 72.

[205] There are no specific accounts of Burne-Jones visiting San Marco on his four visits to Italy, but since it was one of the top tourist destinations and Fra Angelico's frescoes were widely disseminated through prints and discussed in art historical literature, he certainly would not have missed it. Baedeker's listed it among the chief attractions in Florence. Karl Baedeker, *Italy. Handbook for Travellers. First Part: Northern Italy*, 4th ed. (Leipsic, 1877), 327. The Arundel Society published a print after Fra Angelico's Crucifixion fresco, which Jameson assumed "likely to be in the hands of many." Jameson, *Monastic Orders*, xxix. Rio also praised San Marco's "magnificent" examples of Fra Angelico's work and used an engraving of the *Coronation of the Virgin* from the monastery for his frontispiece. Rio, *Poetry of Christian Art*, 149. In *Modern Painters* (2:169), Ruskin especially admired one of Fra Angelico's Annunciations in San Marco.

resembled Burne-Jones's bedroom décor of Baring-Gould engravings. He strengthened

the allusion by referring to his murals as frescoes, although technically they were

probably not since the medium was notoriously hard to execute successfully in the

English climate, particularly in a damp seaside location. While he may not have

faithfully replicated the subject matter of San Marco, his whitewashed walls covered with

angels and peacocks added to the impression of Rottingdean as a spiritual haven.

Burne-Jones further cultivated a spirit of religious meditation at Rottingdean by

reading Anglo/Catholic literature there. From the first year he occupied the house, he

kept three special texts near his bedside, where he could turn to them during

contemplative moments or "read them now and then when sleep won't come."[206] The

first, *Mores Catholici* (1831-42), was a moral handbook for Roman Catholics by Kenelm

Henry Digby, the author of his beloved *Broad Stone of Honour*, another text kept "close

to his hand, and often dipped into in wakeful nights or early mornings."[207] The second,

Religio Medici (1643), constituted Sir Thomas Browne's confession of faith, a blend of

esoteric learning and Christianity which drew Burne-Jones's praise for its wisdom,

"grand pomp" and arguments in support of life after death.[208] Finally, Baring-Gould's

fifteen-volume *Lives of the Saints* highlighted the anecdotal and miraculous events in the

saints' biographies.[209] These texts were a private indulgence, "reserved for himself and

[he] never liked any one to read [them] to him," Georgiana related.[210] Their personal

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[206] Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, [1891?], Burne-Jones Papers, XXVII, fol. 26, Fitzwilliam Museum.

[207] Ibid.; G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:56.

[208] Like Browne, Burne-Jones disapproved of the idea that man "is at the end of his nature—or that there is no further state to come," believing such claims to be the "heaviest stone that melancholy can throw at a man." G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:239.

[209] Baring-Gould's text also served as a reference for Burne-Jones's stained-glass designs. Morris and Company's copy is in the William Morris Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

[210] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:56.

meaning resided in the way "his youth lay enclosed in them," but also surely in their spiritual content, which reinforced the cloistral character of Rottingdean. They also spoke to Burne-Jones's persistent Catholic sympathies, perhaps the explanation for why he "shouldn't like it known" how much he loved them.[211]

Rottingdean's hermitic "absolute solitude," rolling hills, gray church, and crashing waves encouraged a contemplative state, which, true to the trope of artistic genius, occasionally turned to melancholy.[212] In 1896 at Rottingdean, Burne-Jones dwelled on Millais's death and its poignant reminder of time's passage. "I feel heavy & sad today," he reflected, "there is a big sea on, blown up by the silent wind, such as I love--& I feel quiet and at rest for a few hours…I do feel sad about that death—it has sharpened memory so suddenly, & my youth comes back to me."[213]

More often, however, the seaside retreat exuded the recuperative powers of a monastery. In 1883 he wrote, "here some half dozen times a year do I come to rest me for three or four days, for the blaze is going out of me…now I get tired and am glad of peace and a bit of silence—that is why I am here."[214] He "pine[d] for rest and quiet" and toyed with the idea of moving there permanently, where "it is rest sometimes and London is so ugly."[215] His birthday there in 1887 constituted "a serene little time and I loved it…so I have basked and been at peace."[216] He particularly sought out Rottingdean during periods of illness and emotional distress, claiming "the air revives me always there

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[211] Ibid.; Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, [1891?], Burne-Jones Papers, XXVII, fol. 26, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[212] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, July 23, 1896, MS Add 54218, vol. 2, fol. 193, British Library.
[213] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Aug. 14, 1896, MS Add 54218, vol. 2, fol. 200, British Library.
[214] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:133.
[215] Ibid., 2:199.
[216] Ibid., 2:177.

and on the windy hillocks I get strength always…it has…mended me many a time."[217]

The artist, Elizabeth Lewis recounted, "said it set him up more quickly than everything at all times, that health flowed in at once."[218] Angela remembered the supernatural quality of "the Brighton air which to him was magically restoring."[219] This vocabulary of emotional transformation and healing indicates Rottingdean was a numinous site similar to the quiet, spiritually nourishing life of the abbey. Fittingly, the village church was the site of his final rest; he requested his ashes be interred at St. Margaret's.

The Scriptorium: Art as Religious Practice

The medieval scriptorium and its illuminated manuscripts provided a model for Burne-Jones's own illustrative practice. Two book projects, in particular, shed light on how his artist-monk identity manifested itself in his artistic production. *The Flower Book* (1882-98), created in the contemplative solitude of his Rottingdean pseudo-abbey, functioned as a private, spiritual meditation, while the Kelmscott *Chaucer* illustrations (1892-95), designed during sacred moments in a quasi-religious ritual, epitomized his application of the monkish adage *laborare est orare*.

Like Rottingdean itself, illuminated manuscripts provided Burne-Jones with an additional gateway transporting him from the detested "railways, telegraphs, telephones or other hideousness" of the industrial city to medieval monastic repose.[220] As "little worlds all to themselves," they conjured for him that elusive effect of climbing into his

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[217] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Mar. 27, 1895, MS Add 54218, vol. 1, fol. 42, British Library. He retreated there, for instance, after a difficult conversation with his son in July 1894, as well as during many of his influenza attacks. G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:235.
[218] Lewis, "Recollections of Edward Burne-Jones," fol. 6.
[219] Thirkell, *Three Houses*, 57.
[220] Lewis, "Recollections of Edward Burne-Jones," fol. 11.

canvas, of complete removal from the modern world to a more rarefied, spiritual realm.[221]

His earliest residences in London were in Bloomsbury close by the British Museum,

whose "ancient painted manuscripts" brought "keen enjoyment" and turned an ordinary

day into an idyllic "month in the south to me."[222] "Many a time I have gone to the British

Museum to get away from this obstreperous world," he told Frances Horner, "and in a

book have found what I wanted without fail—so that really, when the word treasure is

said, I think of a fat little thing that opens to a hundred visions."[223] "To this day," he

explained at the end of his life, "if I want a change happier, brighter, more in tune with

my heart's desire than any other, I go to the British Museum and send for a book that

took a lifetime to make, and then forget the world and live in that book for days."[224]

"There in that dingy room," he told Elizabeth Lewis, "before half an hour had passed—I

was in an ancient monastery seven hundred years ago & came back brightened &

refreshed as I hardly thought ever to be again."[225]

Burne-Jones's and Morris's life-long passion for medieval "painted books" began

at Oxford's Bodleian Library, where they spent hours pouring over the *Douce

Apocalypse* and other manuscripts as university students.[226]   Using ornamental Latin

script, Burne-Jones created his own chart of "Saint's Days and Festivals: Roman and

English" in one of his student notebooks and imitated the flourish and colored ink of

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[221] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 117.
[222] Lewis, "Recollections of Edward Burne-Jones," fol. 11. After brief stints at Sloane Terrace, Chelsea, and Upper Gordon Street, Marylebone, in 1856-65 he lived at 17 Red Lion Square, 24 Russell Place, and 62 Great Russell Street.
[223] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 117-18.
[224] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:279.
[225] Edward Burne-Jones to Elizabeth, Lady Lewis, [Oct. 1891], Dep.c.832, vol. 3, fol. 161, Lewis Family Papers, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.
[226] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:104.

medieval manuscripts in his letters from this period.[227] Later in life, the bibliophiles went

often to the dealer Quaritch's to admire the illuminated manuscripts for sale. Morris used

his greater financial means to accumulate an impressive library including such priceless

volumes as the Huntingfield Psalter, Windmill Psalter, and Tiptoft Missal. Burne-Jones

pondered their production, history, and the importance of their stylistic innovations for

sculpture and painting. He "thought much about the subject" of illuminated manuscripts

"and of the men who had made the books," Georgiana affirmed.[228] "I wish…that we had

been monks," he wrote to Ruskin in 1887, "painting books and always being let off

divine service because of our skill in said painting."[229] Their enthusiasm was typical of

the monastic revival, which stimulated a fascination with the history of bookbinding and

illumination.[230] Scholars lauded medieval monasteries as the chief repositories of

learning, whose libraries conserved Europe's intellectual capital, a legacy the reinstituted

Catholic orders in Britain continued. Anglo-Catholics even popularized a genre of "Do-

it-yourself illumination."[231]

     Henry Wadsworth Longfellow made explicit the recognized congruence between

the monk's scriptorium and artist's studio in his verse play *The Golden Legend* (1851). A

fictional thirteenth-century Italian Friar, Pacificus, reinforces the stainless character

necessary for producing religious art. Before ornamenting the letters of Jesus's name, he

stops to wash his pen, "Pure from blemish and blot must it be/When it writes that word of

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[227] E. Burne-Jones, "Notebook," 1070(4), fol. 200.
[228] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:280.
[229] Edward Burne-Jones to John Ruskin, n.d., fols. 1-2, MS Save 1680, Yale Center for British Art.
[230] Numerous publications addressed the history of the scriptorium, for example, F. Somner Merryweather, *Bibliomania in the middle ages, or, Sketches of bookworms—collectors—Bible students—scribes—and illuminators…illustrating the history of the monastic libraries of Great Britain* (London, 1849) and M. Digby Wyatt, *The history, theory, and practice of illuminating* (London, 1861).
[231] John Christian, "William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and Illuminated Manuscripts," in *Important British Art*, (London: Christie, Manson, and Woods, 27 Nov. 2002), 43.

mystery!" He pauses to reflect on his day's work as not merely a copyist but also a

consummate artist:

> There, now, is an initial letter!
> Saint Ulric himself never made a better!
> Finished down to the leaf and the snail,
> Down to the eyes on the peacock's tail!
> And now, as I turn the volume over,
> And see what lies between cover and cover,
> What treasures of art these pages hold,
> All ablaze with crimson and gold.

Longfellow's artist-monk, who finds inspiration in both nature and female beauty,

considers his painting sacrificial labor done in the name of God:

> Yes, I might almost say to the Lord,
> Here is a copy of thy Word,
> Written out with much toil and pain;
> Take it, O Lord, and let it be
> As something I have done for thee!

Around the same time, the Pre-Raphaelites incorporated ornamented manuscripts into

their paintings. Significantly, the work on Rossetti's easel when Burne-Jones first visited

his studio was *Fra Pace* (1856, fig. 136). Kneeling in the manner of Fra Angelico,

Rossetti's monk illuminates a manuscript, the light streaming in an open window

suggesting a divine source of inspiration. As John Christian has noted, the watercolor

also bears resemblance to Dürer's *St. Jerome in his Study*.[232]

In 1870, Burne-Jones reiterated the inherent tie between religious painters and the

scriptorium in his cartoon of the quintessential artist-monk, Fra Angelico (fig. 137). The

subject was fitting for the Tractarian church of St. Saviour's, Leeds, where Pusey had

planned to found a monastic community of priests. Bearing an expression of infinite

sadness in the tradition of Christ as the Man of Sorrows, Fra Angelico once again evokes

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[232] Christian, "Early German Sources," 59.

the trope of contemplative melancholy. Notably, Burne-Jones depicted him not in his primary role of painter but as an illuminator of manuscripts. The small book Fra Angelico holds perhaps references his famed fifteenth-century missal at San Marco. Burne-Jones inscribed himself onto the page, however, by inserting into the pictured volume his own imagined composition of angels on a staircase, a heavenly reincarnation of *The Golden Stairs* (fig. 79).

The Flower Book

At his quasi-monastery in Rottingdean, surrounded by a landscape infused with perceived holiness, Burne-Jones overwhelmingly turned to religious subject matter in private, introspective works of art.[233] He worked most frequently on a small scale in pencil, charcoal, and watercolor because a studio could not be built with light suitable for oil painting, and large canvases were difficult to transport from London. However, these delicate media were also more conducive to the creative spontaneity and introspection contemplative solitude engendered. For Burne-Jones, the most inspiring feature of North End House was St. Margaret's across the village green from his house: "Opposite the window is a holy Church and at the back of it a holy Down, both most bonny to look at," he remarked, "and so I look almost all the time."[234] This was the view from the wide bay window in his bedroom/studio until 1889 and from the subsequent studio next door after he attached Prospect House to the adjoining property. The "little line opposite my window where the church tower meets the down" he found "so quiet & full of peace that

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[233] Among the religious objects he worked on in Rottingdean were stained-glass cartoons, studies for the Torquay *Nativity* (fig. 58), illustrations to Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* (1892), a version of *Hope* (fig. 15), and *The Prioress's Tale* (c.1865-98).
[234] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:123.

it affects me in a moment with its heavenly influence."[235] This symbol of safety, healing

and renewal was an always present reminder of Christianity and Georgiana reported,

"The 'little grey church on the windy hill'…occur[ed] continually in his ephemeral

drawings."[236] The building, however, does not physically appear in any known surviving

artworks. Rather, it seems to have been the religious import of the church, his ever-

present muse, which infused his art practice at Rottingdean.

Its presence is felt most strongly in *The Flower Book*, a series of watercolors

begun in 1882, nearly all of which were painted at North End House. Despite the title,

Burne-Jones never intended to publish or exhibit the small thirty-eight round designs in

watercolor, bodycolor and gold. They were an entirely private exercise.[237] The painted

volumes of ancient abbeys provided a departure point for his miniature scenes, which are

circumscribed within thick lines like the illuminated capital letters in medieval

manuscripts. The theme derived from popular Victorian picture books on the "language

of flowers," but his designs are not illustrations of conventional horticultural

nomenclature. Instead, he discriminatingly selected obscure, poetic, or vernacular flower

names as a starting point for creative exposition.[238] "It is not enough to illustrate them,"

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[235] Edward Burne-Jones to Elizabeth, Lady Lewis, n.d., Dep.c.832, vol. 1, fol. 66, Lewis Family Papers, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

[236] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:123-24.

[237] He did, however, consent to their being exhibited in his 1892-93 retrospective at the New Gallery. Georgiana bequeathed *The Flower Book* to the British Museum at her husband's request and in deference to "the joy Sir Edward had from its Illuminated M.S.S." Her correspondence regarding the gift indicates the watercolors were, and always had been, bound together in a single volume: She wished it to "be kept in its present form—the margins being wide enough…many old painted books remained safely without being separated. I should greatly prefer its being kept in its present form, or at all events in *a* book form—indeed I cannot imagine at present that I could consent to its being mounted in separate sheets. I *much* wish it to remain as it is." Georgiana Burne-Jones to Charles Fairfax Murray, Nov. 16, 1901, English MS 1278, no. 16, Charles Fairfax Murray Papers, John Rylands University Library, Manchester.

[238] These were often provided by friends such as Eleanor Leighton (Lady Leighton Warren), who sent him suggestions from the countryside. Thirkell, *Three Houses*, 110. He preferred "Ladder of Heaven," for instance, over "lily of the valley," and "Golden Cup" over "marsh marigold." He was exceedingly

he explained, with an air of divination: "I want to add to them or wring their secret from them."[239] Detached from commercial constraints, *The Flower Book* allowed Burne-Jones's imagination free reign. The result was a free-flowing diary executed, as Gabriele Uerschelen notes, with a lack of finish indicative of speed and spontaneity.[240] Georgiana concurred that the designs were "so intimately characteristic of the painter that I have sometimes thought this book contains a fuller expression of himself than exists elsewhere in his work."[241] Moreover, like Rottingdean itself, *The Flower Book* had a restorative effect. Using it as a meditative device, Burne-Jones found tranquility and "rest from more laborious work."[242] Georgiana confirmed its role as a therapeutic ritual, professing it to be "the most soothing work he ever did."[243]

Significantly, the visual vocabulary Burne-Jones employed to express his private ruminations in these watercolors resonated with Christian symbolism, apparently inspired by the little gray church across the green. After describing St. Margaret's and its view from her husband's studio window, Georgiana relates how "many a picture in the Flower-book bears witness to the way in which the surrounding landscape sank into his soul."[244] Accordingly, fully half of the roundels depict biblical subjects, angels, heavenly beings, or references to an afterlife. Other names considered but unrealized include "God's candle," "Good angels," and "Gethsemane."[245] The roundels are windows onto Burne-

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selective, claiming, "it is not one in ten that I can use." Quoted in Gabriele Uerscheln, *Edward Burne-Jones: The Flower Book* (Cologne: Taschen, 1999), 10-11.

[239] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:119-20.

[240] Uerscheln, *The Flower Book*, 13.

[241] Georgiana Burne-Jones, introduction to Edward Burne-Jones, *The Flower Book: Reproductions of Thirty Eight Water-colour Designs by Edward Burne-Jones* (London: Fine Art Society, 1905), n.p. After her husband's death, Georgiana published the designs as a limited edition book.

[242] Ibid.

[243] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:118.

[244] Ibid., 2:123-24.

[245] Edward Burne-Jones, Sketchbook, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, E.8-1955.

Jones's cosmology, suggestive of the globes in the *Days of Creation* and what Uerscheln calls his fascination with the "sphere as symbols of the cosmos."[246]

The prevalent themes in *The Flower Book*'s essentially Christian theology are divine creation, evil incarnate, redemption through Jesus, God's beneficence, and a yearning for eternal life. In "Golden Gate," "Morning Glories," and "Scattered Starwort" (fig. 138), Burne-Jones romantically conceptualized natural processes such as the rising sun, clouds, and stars as the work of celestial beings. Such images seemingly side against Darwin (who, significantly, published on botany) in favor of a concept of the physical world as God's handiwork.[247] Conversely, a pensive Satan (fig. 139a) sits enthroned before the fires of hell, evocative of melancholy genius in his pose. His purported evil bears fruit in "Adder's Tongue" (fig. 139b), where the serpent in the Garden of Eden takes female form in a mirror image of Eve, representing woman as temptress and foreshadowing her future temptation of Adam.

Redemption appears, however, in two Annunciations (fig. 140): "White Garden," set in a virginal bower of white lilies, and "Flower of God," set in a wheat or corn field alluding to Jesus's role in Christian tradition as the bread of life. The latter's title links it to Burne-Jones's *Annunciation ("Flower of God")* (fig. 83) and the grain relates it to the *Tree of Life* (fig. 76), demonstrating how ideas in *The Flower Book* interwove with other works in his oeuvre. In the "Star of Bethlehem" (fig. 141a), the Magi journey from disparate ends of the globe toward the Nativity in "Traveller's Joy" (fig. 141b), symbolizing the Christian belief in Jesus's unification of the world. In "Arbor Tristis"

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[246] Uerscheln, *The Flower Book*, 13.
[247] Uerscheln understands "Golden Gate" to represent an isolated moment in the Creation narrative with angels "bringing the sun to earth," but it could also represent the daily cycle of the sun's rising and setting. Ibid., 34.

(fig. 141c), the only non-figurative roundel, a dead tree represents the Crucifixion. By

echoing the rectangular building blocks of the city behind, the tree intimates

contemporary London's spiritual barrenness and casts it as a gloomy, modern Jerusalem

awaiting salvation. Burne-Jones repeated this motif in the central register of the *Last

Judgment* window at Birmingham Cathedral (fig. 31), where it serves to forewarn the

grim consequences a dissolute society will eventually face.

       Yet, Burne-Jones's vision in *The Flower Book* is an overwhelmingly hopeful one

focused on heaven and the idea of a benevolent God. The rainbow in "Ladder of

Heaven" (fig. 142a) alludes to the biblical story of the Deluge and the promise God

makes to Noah that he will never again destroy the earth. In Christian theology, Jesus

represents a similar covenant in the New Testament when he guarantees his followers

eternal life. Burne-Jones apparently interpreted this image in such a light, believing its

winged figure symbolized souls of "Christians like you and me," who ascend upwards

and "shall…never go down the other side."[248] Through the biblical reference in its title,

"Jacob's Ladder" (fig. 142b) also treats the theme of God's reassurance of future

blessings. According to the story in Genesis 28:11-17, Jacob dreams of a ladder reaching

into heaven, and from the top of it God guarantees his lifelong protection and guidance.

The nineteenth century further understood Jacob's ladder as a typological precedent for

Jesus, who, in Christian theology, similarly bridges sinner and salvation.[249] The

perspective of the ladder extending upwards from the viewer or the artist reinforces the

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[248] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:119.
[249] Uerscheln claims that the angels had been "banished to earth to do penance" for their "curiosity" about mankind. In her view, their ascension indicates they are now "redeemed" and are "returning to the heavenly sphere." Uerscheln, *The Flower Book*, 22. This reading, however, bears no resemblance to the biblical text referenced in the title. George Landow notes the typological symbolism of Jacob's ladder in *William Holman Hunt*, 131.

perceived personal relationship between him and God and hints that he, too, will someday ascend to heaven, suggested by the glowing gold and orange light at the top. Another covenantal theme, "Fire Tree" (fig. 142c), illustrates the tale of Moses and the burning bush from the book of Exodus in which God declared his intention to rescue the Jews from slavery in Egypt and deliver them to the Promised Land. Burne-Jones shows Moses in the act of removing his sandals after he realizes that he is standing in the presence of God. The celestial sphere also temporarily converges with the earthly one in "Golden Greeting" (fig. 143a), allowing lovers like those in Dante's *La Vita Nuova* and Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel" to embrace across time and space. The vision encapsulated Burne-Jones's desire for ideal and eternal love: "I wish Golden Greeting were quite true—just as I did it I wish it might really be. Nothing else will ever be what I want but that."[250] In "Welcome to the House" (fig. 143b) a soul reaches the gate of heaven as an angel embraces her.

Such images speak to a yearning for a tangible God who descends to earth and interacts with humanity. Moreover, the worlds of *The Flower Book* are demarcated with curvilinear, organic forms and figures that seem to grow out of the landscape, indicating the concept of God's omniscience in nature. Intimate and religious, *The Flower Book* suggests that heaven, God's benevolence, and the pursuit of salvation held special meaning and comfort for the artist. Like the monks in a scriptorium he dedicated his quiet hours at North End House to illuminating this volume with Christian iconography, preciously highlighted with gold paint. Conjoining art-making with meditation in a quasi-monastic studio surrounded by angels, saints and religious texts, Burne-Jones utilized the watercolors, in part, as a kind of sacred devotional practice. Inspired by the

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[250] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:177.

little gray church outside his studio window, their circular form acted as a privileged

peephole onto the secluded, cloistral world of spiritual optimism and renewal Burne-

Jones cultivated in his contemplative Rottingdean retreat.

The Kelmscott *Chaucer*

Burne-Jones's interest in ancient "painted books," most of which were psalters,

missals, and Bibles, partly derived from their intrinsic religious content and purpose. His

decorated vellum bindings for the Apocrypha, book of Psalms*,* and Book of Common

Prayer, which he gifted to close friends, for instance, reflected the sacred appeal

illustrated manuscripts held for him.[251] Historians of the scriptorium, after all, reminded

Victorian readers that "from the earliest Christian times there was held to be a sacred

character about books, and…a close connection between them and the Church."

Bibliotheca, the Latin word for library, this particular author added, "was first used to

signify the Holy Bible itself and the place where it was kept."[252] Burne-Jones referred to

illuminated manuscripts as "books of heaven" that offered a rare "glimpse of what a

heavenly life would be—of sustained extacy [*sic*] at visible beauty," second only, in his

opinion, to the atmosphere inside Merton College Chapel.[253]

Burne-Jones and Morris often compared the illuminated page to a church interior,

and William S. Peterson has elaborated on this especial "identification of the Gothic

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[251] He gave Frances Horner an Apocrypha (1879, 13 x 10 in.) and a Book of Common Prayer (1880, 9 x 5 ½ in.). Both are printed books with vellum bindings decorated in pen and ink, private collections. To May Gaskell, he presented a book of Psalms and an Apocrypha (both early 1890s, gouache and gold paint on vellum, 10 ½ by 7 in., private collections).

[252] F. Aidan Gasquet, *Some Notes on Mediaeval Monastic Libraries* (Yeovil, 1891), 2-3.

[253] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Easter [1895], MS Add 54218, vol. 1, fol. 69; Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Oct. 26, 1894, MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 326. Both British Library.

cathedral with the Gothic book."[254] The act of book illustration was akin to ecclesiastical

decoration, he observes, with the medieval church recreated through the "architectural"

structure of the Kelmscott books.[255] The vocabulary Burne-Jones and Morris used in

conjunction with illumination repeatedly underscored this physical analogy. Morris's

first glimpse of a medieval manuscript was like entering Canterbury Cathedral as a child

"and thinking that the gates of heaven had been open to me."[256] Burne-Jones likened

Morris's Huntingfield Psalter to Ely Cathedral and another manuscript in his collection to

Winchester Cathedral, marveling, "So he's got both Ely Cathedral and Winchester in his

own very house."[257] He also offered the evocative descriptor of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*

as a "pocket cathedral," in which his craftsman role was "that of the carver of the images

at Amiens," while Morris was "the Architect and Magister Lapicida."[258] Appropriately,

their last outing together in 1896 was to see illuminated manuscripts at the Society of

Antiquaries, an excursion Burne-Jones described as a "pious pilgrimage."[259]

Accordingly, Burne-Jones cultivated an aura of holiness around the production of

his own book illustrations. From 1872, Morris walked over to The Grange every week

for legendary Sunday breakfasts followed by several hours of artistic collaboration. This

creative ritual replaced traditional church-going but was no less sacred in its communion,

embodying a synthesis of devotion and beauty. These sessions were still a time for rest

and renewal, much like a worship service, with the artist explaining, "Sunday morning

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[254] William S. Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris's Typographical Adventure* (New York: Clarendon, 1991), 45.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries: Being a personal narrative of events, 1888-1914* (London, 1919-20), quoted in ibid., 45.
[257] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:23.
[258] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:278.
[259] Ibid., 2:279.

refreshes me always."[260] Congruent with the way a monastic schedule overlaid other parts of his work routine, he reserved the activity of book illustration almost solely for these Sabbath meetings.

It was during such Sunday sessions that Burne-Jones created his eighty-seven woodcut designs for the Kelmscott *Chaucer* (1896, see fig. 121) "only on Sunday with very little exception," between 1892 and 1895.[261] He refused to illustrate the poet's bawdier tales, preferring "to pretend Chaucer didn't do them….pictures to them would have spoiled the book."[262] He sacrificed every Sunday for two and a half years to their production but, finding freedom in "fetters" as always, he took pleasure in the severity of discipline it required:

> I am beside myself with delight over it. I am making the designs as much to fit the ornament and the printing as they are made to fit the little pictures—and I love to be snugly cased in the borders and buttressed up by the vast initials—and once or twice when I have no letter under me, I feel tottery and weak; if you drag me out of my encasings it will be like tearing a statue out of its niche and putting it into museum.[263]

Making the analogy again between the illustrated page and cathedral architecture, his comments reveal his desire for "encasement" within an ecclesiastical environment.

The monastic allusion surfaces visually in his woodcut design *An A. B. C. of Geoffrey Chaucer* (fig. 144), which operates on one level as a figurative portrait of the artist living out the adage of *laborare est orare*. The poem is a translation of the *Pelerinage de la vie humaine*, a medieval prayer to the Virgin Mary, but Chaucer's use of courtly verse imparts an added sensual quality suggesting an earthly love of beauty and

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[260] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, n.d., MS Add 54218, vol. 2, fol. 278, British Library.
[261] Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, Aug. 29, 1895, quoted in G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:259.
[262] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:86.
[263] Edward Burne-Jones to Charles Eliot Norton, Dec. 1894, quoted in Harrison and Waters, *Burne-Jones*, 164.

mirroring Burne-Jones's frequent blending of sacred and secular. In this illustration, the partially-finished scroll signals that Chaucer has been interrupted in his work by the mystical apparition of Madonna and Child flanked by lilies. The poet kneels on his prayer rug to venerate this miraculous vision, which can be read as both the inspiration for his work and the reward for his pious, diligent toil. Chaucer's room is dormitory, scriptorium, and place of worship all in one, in the manner of Dominican monasteries such as Fra Angelico's. Next to his writing table, a massive volume perched on a low prayer-desk appears to be a religious text or Bible, indicating that work and devotional practice take place side by side.

The box-like composition parallel to the picture plane generates a sense of first-person engagement by creating an illusion that the viewer is standing in Chaucer's room. Burne-Jones felt an intense connection with the poet, and occasionally spoke as if he had entered his world. "[F]or the book I am putting myself wholly aside," he wrote, "and trying to see things as he saw them; not once have I invaded his kingdom with one hostile thought."[264] In 1894, he invited May Gaskell (rather suggestively) to "now come & stand by me while I draw the final scene….don't leave me—we shall be in Chaucer[']s bedroom—but very discreetly."[265] Based on the project's intensely personal meaning and the poet's physical attributes, Velma Bourgeois Richmond has already suggested that the artist's thirty-one representations of Chaucer in the Kelmscott volume are self-portraits. Historically, for instance, artistic renderings of Chaucer emphasized his plumpness, but Burne-Jones depicted him in "visionary ethereal slenderness" comparable to his own tall,

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[264] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:260.
[265] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, July 23, 1894, MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 256, British Library.

spare frame in his self-caricatures.[266] The melding of work and prayer in *An A. B. C. of Geoffrey Chaucer* can therefore be read as Burne-Jones's vision of religio-artistic practice. The creative act as religious devotion, taking place within a confined, solitary, ascetic environment, conjures a vision of the medieval monkish artist equally emblematic of Chaucer and Burne-Jones.

Throughout his life, Burne-Jones pined for the silence, spirituality, and sanctuary of the abbey and adopted its patterns of discipline, contemplative solitude, self-sacrifice, austerity, and industrious labor. Although he never took holy orders, he continued to enact monastic codes through his speech, visual representation, daily routine, domestic environments, and artistic practices such as book illustration. These combined to construct his identity as an artist-monk, which appropriated the spiritual purity and divine inspiration of Fra Angelico and Saint Francis. His assumption of the monastic "habit" conflated the religious and secular into an art practice imbued with sacred meaning and modeled on the creed of *laborare est orare*. The intimacy, Christian iconography, and means of production of his private work, in particular, testify to Burne-Jones's daily creative activities as exercises in devotion and spiritual meditation carried out in the peaceful solace of a pseudo-monastic refuge. Consequently, his art practice can be considered his form of lived religion, one whose monasticism gave expression to longstanding Catholic sympathies. Furthermore, Burne-Jones's adoption of a monastic framework for both his artistic identity and creative production fulfills the pattern of discursive Christianity Callum G. Brown outlines and signals his lasting, if unorthodox, religiosity.

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[266] Richmond, "Chaucer Portraits," 5-7.

As Timothy Gregory Verdon notes in his study on monasticism and the arts, the abbey serves as a place for individual spiritual development—a "quiet place where...the work can be perfected—a kind of atelier of the soul," a statement equally applicable to the production of art. The *Rule* of Saint Benedict recognized this correspondence, as Verdon points out, by comparing "the cloister to an artist's workshop, conceiving the whole life of monks as a creative process."[267] In this paradigm, Burne-Jones's developing and perfecting of his art within a monastic framework serves as an analogy for his personal course of spiritual maturity. Thus, the monastic model echoes Burne-Jones's conception of life as a pilgrimage toward salvation, explored in Chapter Five.

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[267] Verdon, *Monasticism and the Arts*, 2.

Chapter 5: "Symbolical Wanderings": The Artist as Pilgrim

On the occasion of Burne-Jones's memorial exhibition in 1898-99, critic Una Taylor summarized the common thread in his work as,

> Perpetually 'man goeth forth.' Life is a quest, a search, a pilgrimage. Psyche adorned, passes us by with her nuptial train.…Perseus…goes, by Athene's command, on his long adventure….The grey-clad Pilgrim of Love traverses the rocky thorn thickets of waste and lonely lands, the Knights of the Graal solicit the hard-won vision, the prince enters the Briar Wood. All these bring before us, with a recurrence we can scarcely suppose unintentional, one persistent idea.[1]

The Reverend R. P. Downes reiterated, "as for the men depicted by Burne-Jones, with them life is a quest, a search, a pilgrimage." He contended, however, that their pilgrimages were specifically religious in nature, executed by men "touched by God," who answered the call of "strange voices sounding from afar."[2] Such comments typify the widespread Victorian fixation on pilgrimage, both in its physical manifestation of modern-day journeys to Christian shrines and in metaphorical forms, for instance hymns invoking God's assistance on the road of life or renewed interest in texts such as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The construct of life as a spiritual pilgrimage pervaded all varieties of Victorian Christianity since it closely related to the Christian concept of sanctification. According to this doctrine, the individual acts out his or her beliefs in the world, undergoes refinement and purification through trials and temptations, and receives entrance to heaven as a reward for his or her spiritual growth. This principle was central to Burne-Jones's theology and perspective on religion as lived out in daily existence, leading him to believe "the highest things" should be "secret and remote," demanding

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[1] [Taylor], "Ethics and Art," 37.
[2] Downes, "Great Painter," 8.

tenacious, sustained devotion. If people "wanted to look they should go a hard journey to see," he insisted.[3]

This chapter will examine Burne-Jones's visual and verbal self-representation as a pilgrim. He exemplified his fixation on life as a spiritual journey and progression toward eternal life through images of pilgrims, the Holy Grail Quest and the three Magi, which he often imbued with autobiographical significance.[4] By consistently emphasizing the element of travel in such works and arresting the protagonists' action before the moments of their arrival, he underscored the ongoing nature of their pilgrimage. Hovering at the perceived threshold of salvation, they exist in a liminal space where heaven and earth seem to briefly overlap. Along with the angels who often accompany them, this liminality expresses a desire for tangible experience, and perhaps evidence, of God. Corroborating Fortunée de Lisle's observation that Burne-Jones's "life, like those of the heroes he loved to paint and in whose familiar company he lived, [was] a spiritual pilgrimage; his quest, like theirs, the vision of the ideal," this chapter demonstrates that religious pilgrimage was a guiding framework for his life and artistic practice, which in his view, functioned as a means for attaining salvation.[5]

Physical Pilgrimage

In January 1854 Edward Burne-Jones wrote to his father about his "pilgrimage" along the Thames River from Oxford to the ruins of the twelfth-century Godstow Abbey

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[3] Quoted in Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 256.
[4] Burne-Jones executed many secular pilgrimage themes as well such as *Cupid and Psyche*, Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose, The Hill of Venus*, and *The Perseus Series*, but he never spoke of them autobiographically as he did the Grail knights or the three Magi, strengthening the argument that he conceived of himself specifically as a religious pilgrim. Notably, Fortuneé de Lisle pointed out that his *Hill of Venus* designs reveal an artist "more impressed with the mystical side,--the pilgrimage to Rome, the Pope, and the miracle," than the pagan mythology. Lisle, *Burne-Jones*, 90-91.
[5] Ibid., 168.

(fig. 145).[6] It was a ritual he repeated every term at university and one that has assumed

legendary status in his biography. The convent church was the burial place of "Fair

Rosamund," Henry II's mistress, who was interred beneath the high altar after his Queen,

Eleanor of Aquitaine, reputedly poisoned her. Returning from this shrine "in a delirium

of joy" and with sensibilities heightened by the experience, a colorful vision of an

elaborate medieval pageant overcame him:

> In my mind pictures of the old days, the abbey, and long processions of
> the faithful, banners of the cross, copes and crosiers, gay knights and
> ladies by the river bank, hawking-parties and all the pageantry of the
> golden age—it made me feel so wild and mad I had to throw stones into
> the water to break the dream. I never remember having such an
> unutterable ecstasy, it was quite painful with intensity, as if my forehead
> would burst. I get frightened of indulging now in dreams, so vivid that
> they seem recollections rather than imaginations.[7]

In general, this incident is interpreted as a marker of the "intensity of [his] relationship

with the medieval world."[8] More relevant for the discussion at hand, however, is the

account's as yet unrecognized Catholic overtone and theme of religious pilgrimage.

Burne-Jones's account of Godstow was perfectly in keeping with a contemporary revival

in religious pilgrimage and a growing consciousness about its history, practice, and

modern reincarnations.

Physical pilgrimages were a distinctly Anglo/Catholic phenomenon in Victorian

Britain. Initially a Roman Catholic practice venerating saints and the Virgin Mary,

pilgrimage declined dramatically in Britain after the Reformation. Catholic emancipation

in 1829 and Tractarianism aided its revival in the early nineteenth century, but it

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[6] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:97.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Cooper, *Pre-Raphaelite Art*, 39.

remained tinctured with perceived Romanist connotations.[9] When commissioning

stained glass for St. Mungo's Cathedral, Glasgow, in the 1860s, its committee prohibited

any "Roman Catholic" symbols such as "pilgrims' staves" and "escallop shells."[10] John

Frederick Lewis, renowned for his Orientalist subjects, painted a different exotic "other"

in 1854—peasant "Roman Pilgrims" kneeling in awe and adoration before an unseen

shrine in a church overflowing with painted Madonnas (fig. 146).

Consequently, Burne-Jones's devotional journey and its subsequent vision reveal

as much about his fondness for Catholicism as his love of the Middle Ages. The central

motif, the "long processions of the faithful," is reminiscent of a crowded pilgrimage road.

Against the backdrop of a Catholic monastery, participants bear "banners of the cross"

resembling the liturgical banners carried during Catholic Mass, which the most ritualistic

Victorian Anglo-Catholic churches also adopted. The figures in his dreamscape don

copes, the cape-like ceremonial vestments of monks and ecclesiastics, and carry crosiers,

the pastoral staffs of Catholic bishops. Both attributes aroused much fury within the

Anglican Church at this time as supposed signifiers of "Papist" Ritualism. Furthermore,

this vision is granted to Burne-Jones after departing the Godstow shrine, similar to the

mystical revelations reputedly bestowed upon Christian devotees as rewards for their

pilgrimage. His hallucination is so tangible, so "vivid," he is almost convinced it is a

memory of concrete events rather than mere illusion. His heightened senses and

emotions drive him to an extreme mental state of being "wild and mad." This

"unutterable ecstasy" in his narrative, with its associated physiological and psychological

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[9] John Adair, *The Pilgrims' Way: Shrines and Saints in Britain and Ireland* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 15. It was also, as Victor and Edith Turner have pointed out, a reaction against the empirical, post-Darwinian climate. Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1978), 18.
[10] Quoted in V & A Museum, *Victorian Church Art*, 64.

symptoms, recalls the ecstasies of the saints. His feeling of temporary paralysis ("I had

to throw stones into the water to break the dream") replicates their legendary moments of

divine rapture, in which the body is reportedly involuntarily immobilized and mystical

union broken once movement resumes. Monastic asceticism is also detectible in the

vision's physical discomfort, which was "painful with intensity, as if my forehead would

burst." This last phrase also recalls Sin springing forth from Satan in Milton's *Paradise*

Lost at the moment of his rebellion against God, suggesting Burne-Jones intuited that his

Catholic vision transgressed religious norms.[11]

A quick survey of articles and books published in nineteenth-century Britain

reveals physical pilgrimage was common cultural currency throughout the period. A

wide array of periodicals from the *Art Journal* and *Magazine of Art*, to *Blackwood's*

Edinburgh Magazine and the *Quarterly Review*, to *Month: A Catholic Magazine* and the

Sunday Magazine carried features on pilgrimage. Historical essays recounted journeys of

various saints, the history of medieval pilgrimage, and the most popular British and

European shrines.[12] A few notices related recent archaeological discoveries of pilgrim

badges, including some found locally in the Thames, or addressed their emblematic

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[11] It is also worth noting that his vision plays off tropes of classical mythology: his throbbing forehead "as if [it] would burst" evokes Zeus's birthing of Athena, symbolic of wisdom, while the dream's disruption by throwing stones in the water recalls Narcissus. Coincidentally, in 1872 a visitor to Burne-Jones's studio noted the number of unfinished canvases and asked, "How long must the world wait for those forty pictures, and for that other forty that are ready to spring at any moment, like full-armed Minerva, from the artist's brain?" "Visit to 'The Grange,'" 750.

[12] A few representative examples include "Pilgrimage of Flagellants," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 72 (1852): 596ff.; "History of Pilgrimages," *Irish Quarterly Review* 7 (1857-58): 338ff.; Rev. Edward L. Cutts, "The Pilgrims of the Middle Ages," *Art Journal* 99 n.s., 7 (1861): 308-11, 321-24; H. M. Dexter, "Recent Discoveries concerning Pilgrims," *Congregational Quarterly* 4 (1862): 58ff.; "Pilgrims and Shrines in the Middle Ages," *Cornhill Magazine* 17 (1868): 681ff.; "Pre-Reformation Pilgrimages in England," *Cornhill Magazine* 20 (1869): 81ff.; "Early English Pilgrimages," *Leisure Hour* 22 (1873): 805ff., 822ff.; C. Barrère, "Pilgrimages and Catholicism in France," *Fraser's Magazine* 88 n.s., 8 (1873): 608ff.; and William Connor Sydney, "Old Pilgrims and Pilgrimages," *Gentleman's Magazine* (1897): 479ff.

meanings.[13] The *Congregational Quarterly* addressed this "Revival Spirit" of pilgrimage

in 1860, and in 1893 L. P. Powell still felt it necessary to analyze the recent "Renaissance

of Pilgrimage."[14] Burne-Jones shared in this infatuation with the history of Christian

pilgrimage. His friend Joseph Jacobs remembered, "it was mainly the mediaeval

travelers that attracted his notice, like Marco Polo and the early pilgrims."[15]

Guides, maps, accounts, and testimonials of "modern day" pilgrimages to Rome,

Santiago de Compostela, and various European abbeys were commonplace in Victorian

Britain.[16] Scholars of orientalism have extensively documented the nineteenth-century

craze for visiting religious sites in the Holy Land, which artists and the general public

shared. At home, many Britons continued ritual journeys to renowned pilgrimage sites

such as Canterbury (the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket) or Walsingham, a site of several

purported miracles by the Virgin Mary. Occasionally, they still made the journey

barefoot, in the medieval tradition. Ireland, with its Roman Catholic heritage, saw the

greatest resurgence in pilgrimage, which reached all-time highs.[17] A new shrine was

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[13] T. Hugo, "Pilgrims' Signs found in the Thames," *Archaeologia* 28 (1840): 128ff.; J. E. Tennent, "The Pilgrim's Shell," *St. James's Magazine* 3 (1861-62): 161ff.; and J. Charles Wall, "Pilgrims' Signs," *Illustrated Archaeologist* 1 (1893-94): 237-45.

[14] J. S. Clark, "Revival Spirit of Pilgrims," *Congregational Quarterly* 2 (1860): 404ff.; L. P. Powell, "Renaissance of Historical Pilgrimage," *Review of Reviews* 8 (1893): 411ff.

[15] Jacobs, "Recollections of Burne-Jones," 127.

[16] For instance, "A Pilgrimage to Rome," *English Review* 12 (1849): 322ff.; "Pilgrimage to the Abbey of La Trappe," *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* n.s., 23 (1856): 89ff.; "Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela," *Fraser's Magazine* 70 (1864): 234ff.; "Pilgrimages to English Shrines," *Quarterly Review* 133 (1872): 1ff.; "Pilgrimage to the Sanctuaries of St. Francis of Assisi," *Belgravia: a London Magazine* 18 (1872): 206ff.; "Modern Catholic Pilgrimages," *Dublin Review* 73 n.s., 21 (1873): 273ff.; E. Walford, "Pilgrimage to Glastonbury," *Gentleman's Magazine* (1879): 616ff.; "English Pilgrimage to Lourdes," *Month: A Catholic Magazine* 49 (1883): 11ff.; "St. Cuthbert, Pilgrimage to his Island in 1887," *Cornhill Magazine* 58 n.s., 11 (1888): 122ff.; E. Walford, "A Pilgrimage to Newstead Abbey," *Gentleman's Magazine* (1889): 243ff.; William Connor Sydney, "A pilgrimage to a famous abbey," *Gentleman's Magazine* (1894): 553-68.

[17] Pilgrims to Lough Derg (also known as Saint Patrick's Purgatory) in 1800-24, for instance, averaged 10,000 annually, twice that of the seventeenth century, and peaked in 1846 with 30,000 in one year. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 256-59. Publications such as Philip Dixon Hardy's *Holy Wells of Ireland, containing an Authentic Account of Those Various Places of Pilgrimage and Penance Which are Still Annually Visited by Thousands of the Roman Catholic Peasantry* (London, 1836) also testify to the massive numbers who still participated in traditional pilgrimages in the nineteenth century.

even established in 1879 at Knock following reports of a miraculous appearance of the Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, and Saint John the Evangelist. Rather than pilgrim badges, these modern-day pilgrims returned with souvenirs such as rosaries, crucifixes, or certificates of their visits.

Burne-Jones's travels through England and France can be read in this context of modern-day physical pilgrimage. His primary destinations were always churches and cathedrals, including many of the most popular pilgrimage sites in Britain. On a trip to see Wilfred Heeley in Cambridge in the summer of 1855, he and Morris "went before any other place to see the little round Church" of the Holy Sepulchre, which they probably knew because of its controversial role in the ecclesiology movement.[18] Built as a wayfarers' chapel in the twelfth century, it was patterned after Constantine's church at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, where the round floor plan allowed pilgrims to walk around Jesus's tomb. On the same trip they visited Ely Cathedral (containing Saint Etheldreda's shrine), whose heavily restored interior disappointed them. Hereford Cathedral, which played an influential role in Burne-Jones's Anglo-Catholic convictions and decision to take holy orders, was also the shrine of Saints Ethelbert and Thomas Cantilupe and a well-known pilgrimage site. Closer to home in Oxford, the university church of St. Mary's, where he heard Pusey's sermons, housed relics believed to be Saint Edmund's comb, Saint Stephen's bones, Saint Bartholomew's skin, and Saint Andrew's rib, popular with pilgrims for their reputed healing powers. With his predilection for Anglo-Catholicism, Burne-Jones would surely have taken notice of these shrines, their pilgrimage histories, and archaeological artifacts. Morris also brought back a version of

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[18] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:111. For the Round Church, see chap. 2, n. 21.

pilgrim souvenirs—rubbings of medieval monumental brasses—from his excursions to rural English churches.

In July and August 1855, Burne-Jones, Morris, and William Fulford undertook an extended trip to see Gothic cathedrals and churches in France. While their primary goal was cultural tourism, they notably imbued their journey and its retelling with multiple characteristics of religious pilgrimage. The friends departed England from Folkestone, Kent, which lies at the eastern end of the ancient Pilgrim's Way route. Georgiana, in fact, describes them as "pilgrims" on this journey, which they "intended to be a walking one."[19] Supposedly this was for financial reasons, but spending three weeks on foot was an arduous task replicating the ascetic practices of medieval pilgrimage. Pilgrims often walked with bare feet, engaged in fasting or the recitation of creeds and prayers, and wore sack-cloth and ashes. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, Burne-Jones cultivated asceticism in his persona as an artist-monk, and religious pilgrimage was a logical extension of this identity. Even after Morris's shoes (at one point exchanged for carpet slippers) gave out in Beauvais, they traveled whenever possible by "a queer little contrivance with one horse" rather than surrender to the modern railway.[20] Furthermore, Georgiana's language describing the trip emphasizes its discipline: Fulford maintained an "attitude of vigilance to mark his own sensations" by prolifically writing letters home, and they "worked hard at sight-seeing" in Paris.[21] Most of the nine cathedrals and twenty-four churches they visited in Abbeville, Amiens, Beauvais, Boulogne, Caudebec-en-Caux, Chartres, Clermont, Dreux, Evreux, Le Havre, Louviers, Paris, and Rouen were

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[19] Ibid., 1:112-13.
[20] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:74.
[21] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:113-14.

major pilgrimage sites in the Middle Ages.[22] They also participated in religious rituals on

their pilgrimage, such as High Mass and vespers in Beauvais Cathedral. They were

"disappointed" to only be able to hear vespers in Rouen Cathedral on Saturday and

Sunday, having hoped to attend "every afternoon."[23]

Like Geoffrey Chaucer's sojourners in *The Canterbury Tales*, Morris, Burne-

Jones and Fulford replicated the communal, associative format of Catholic medieval

pilgrimage.[24] At Cambridge they talked of "old French chronicles" with Heeley and read

from Tennyson's poems in the Church of St. Sepulchre; in France they continued this

oral camaraderie by reciting Keats. Morris even declared the French landscape a perfect

"background to Chaucer's Palamon and Arcite," a play based on "The Knight's Tale."[25]

This early experience of physical pilgrimage and its Chaucerian flavor resurfaced over

the years in Burne-Jones's treatment of the *Canterbury Tales*. The text held special

meaning for his and Morris's friendship, perhaps reminding them of their own brief stint

as pilgrims in France. To commemorate Morris's wedding in 1859, Burne-Jones gave

him a wardrobe he had decorated with scenes from "The Prioress's Tale," a subject he

continued to peg away at in paint for more than thirty years. Finally, there were the

eighty-seven illustrations for *The Canterbury Tales* and other poems in the Kelmscott

Press's *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (figs. 121, 144). This monumental undertaking

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[22] Abbeville remains a popular site for venerating Saint Vulfram, although his relics were moved to Rouen in 1062. Amiens Cathedral contains the alleged head of John the Baptist and a famous labyrinth embedded in the floor, a visual symbol of life's spiritual journey and meditative device. Pilgrims followed the path toward the center (representative of God's eye) by walking on their knees. In medieval times, Beauvais Cathedral hosted the Feast of Asses to commemorate the Flight out of Egypt. Caudebec's church of Notre Dame and Clermont, the starting point for the first Crusade, were also medieval pilgrimage sites. Pilgrims still sought out Boulogne's supposedly miraculous "Virgin of the Sea" statue in the nineteenth century. Chartres Cathedral boasts a labyrinth, a tunic said to be the Virgin Mary's, and a head believed to be Saint Anne's. Evreux houses the 13th-century shrine of Saint Taurin, and Saint Chappelle purportedly contains the Crown of Thorns and part of the True Cross.

[23] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:77.

[24] Edith and Victor Turner address the communal nature of pilgrimage in *Image and Pilgrimage*, 13, 37.

[25] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:76.

summed up their lifelong friendship and was the culmination of their artistic collaboration.

The vocabulary of pilgrimage was so prevalent in the nineteenth century that it became vernacular for secular as well as sacred tourist ventures. Between 1849 and 1852 the *Art Journal* carried a series of eight articles by Anna Maria Hall outlining suggested "Pilgrimages to English Shrines," foreshadowing Burne-Jones's own visit to Godstow shortly thereafter.[26] Hall's destinations are an amalgam of Christian and literary history such as ruined abbeys; the Church of St. Andrew Undershaft, London; the German grave of a modern English "saint," the poet, writer and theologian Grace Aguilar; Thomas Chatterton's birthplace; and the dwelling of author Thomas Day.[27] Art also at times provided a motivation for secular pilgrimage. Sir Henry Layard, for instance, agreed with *The Times* that if George Frederic Watts's Lincoln Inn fresco (1859) had "been anywhere else but in England, it would have become to us 'an object of reverent pilgrimage.'"[28] Burne-Jones adopted this colloquial language of pilgrimage to describe Merton College Chapel and the Cloisters of New College, his and Morris's "chief shrines" in Oxford.[29] He characterized their last outing together, to the Society of Antiquaries in 1896 to examine illuminated manuscripts, as a "little pious pilgrimage."[30] The object of his veneration at Godstow was another such blend of sacred and secular. Fair Rosamund's tomb was not a conventional Christian shrine; nevertheless, Burne-

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[26] Anna Maria Hall, "Pilgrimages to English Shrines," *Art Journal* 1 (1849): 21ff., 120ff.; 2 (1850): 21ff., 349ff.; 3 (1851): 133ff., 287ff.; 4 (1852): 84ff., 307ff.

[27] The reference to Chatterton is indicative of the romantic fascination with the tragic poet, which flourished around this time. Henry Wallis painted his *Death of Chatterton* (Tate Gallery, London), for example, in 1856.

[28] Mary S. Watts, *George Frederic Watts: The Annals of an Artist's Life* (London: Macmillan, 1902), 1:182.

[29] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:75.

[30] Ibid., 2:279.

Jones, in the throes of Tractarian enthusiasm, conceived of his excursion in the framework of Catholic pilgrimage. His journeys to French cathedrals, Godstow Abbey, and "shrines" in Oxford, are early indicators of how he constructed his life narrative in part on a matrix of religious, and specifically Anglo/Catholic, pilgrimage.

Metaphorical Pilgrimage

When Burne-Jones relinquished the idea of entering the clergy he exchanged his self-identification with the physical pilgrim and corporate pilgrimage for a metaphorical, individual form of pilgrimage that he fused with his artistic pursuits. Physical pilgrimage offered an allegory for life in which the soul overcomes trials and suffering as it strives toward a state of perfection and seeks divine favor. Its motivations, namely devotion, penance, or cures for corporeal and spiritual ailments, are also applicable to his conception of life as a religious quest. Pilgrimage essentially functions as an outward display of piety akin to acting out one's beliefs in daily life. The imagined end goal, whether saintly relic or eternal life, is thought to offer supernatural healing to the believer. Both forms of pilgrimage theoretically provide forgiveness and reconciliation with God. It was this metaphorical framework of pilgrimage, expressed through Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,* the Holy Grail, and the three Magi, which took precedence in Burne-Jones's construction of self once his vocational ambitions shifted from the clerical to the artistic.

Metaphorical pilgrimage reflects the idea of Christian sanctification, a doctrinal concept that maintains the believer undergoes a lifelong process of being made holy through self-discipline and God's refining influence. In this theological framework,

justification (in Christian theology, the moment when God grants a person salvation), whether through baptism or conversion experience, theoretically marks only the beginning point of one's spiritual life. Although various denominations contested sanctification's precise definition, the Victorian Anglican Church generally believed it to mean an internal development, facilitated by the supposed transforming agency of the Holy Spirit, whereby the Christian's faith is strengthened and his or her character refined to become more like Jesus's. This paradigm purports that sanctification occurs through one's daily striving to follow Christian principles. In Anglo/Catholic churches, participation in the sacrament of the Eucharist is also thought to aid this process. Generally, nineteenth-century Evangelicals were more concerned with the moment of justification and conversion, whereas Anglo-Catholics focused on sanctification. Among British Protestants, attention to sanctification is more prevalent among denominations which do not hold to a doctrine of predestination, since theoretically, sanctification requires the Christian to demonstrate and implement his or her beliefs to retain salvation.

In 1848 Burne-Jones stated his appreciation for the tenet of sanctification after undertaking an ambitious research project on the doctrinal differences among the various sects of Christianity. Part of his study focused on a comparison between Arminianism, the theology behind Protestant denominations such as Methodism and Anglicanism, and Calvinism, upheld by Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and some Baptists.[31] Arminianism, while consistent in many ways with Calvinist doctrine, diverges on the issues of predestination and salvation. Arminianism theorizes that salvation is earned by belief alone and is available to all, not preordained for an "elect" group as Calvinism

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[31] Arminianism is the name given to the doctrine of the followers of Jacobus Arminian, a Dutch theologian and preacher of the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Arminianism reached its strongest conclusion in Methodism and the views of John Wesley.

contends. Arminian theology maintains that salvation is not obtainable through humankind's own efforts or works, but only through God's benevolence. However, in this presumed relationship one has free will to accept or reject God's offer of salvation. Consequently, Arminianism suggests that salvation, once found, can be lost and is conditional upon the individual's remaining loyal to Jesus. The implication of this key difference is that life is characterized by the continual renewal of and perseverance in one's beliefs. According to this framework, it is not a single moment of justification that determines one's future in the afterlife, but an on-going process of Christian living and spiritual development. In this age-old debate Burne-Jones sided with Arminianism, clearly stating his preference for its "doctrine of human depravity, salvation by Christ, justification by faith, and sanctification by the Holy Ghost." To him, Arminianism was a "decidedly superior" solution over Calvinism because it professes salvation to be available to all but nevertheless requires the Christian to behave a certain way, to "persevere in the faith of Christ" in order to achieve eternal life.[32] These early theological leanings foreshadow Burne-Jones's life-long interests in lived religion, ongoing inner purification, and the soul's pilgrimage toward salvation.

They were also typical of his age. As Owen Chadwick summarizes, Christians in Britain after the 1860s entertained an overwhelming "Arminian sense of working out their own salvation." They most frequently "saw themselves as on the way" to salvation, "less often as in possession," he concludes. The general feeling was that life was constantly in flux and even "their religion was *in via*."[33] Chadwick points out, for example, the proliferation of popular hymns invoking God's assistance on the journey of

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[32] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:20-26.
[33] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 2:466-67.

life such as John Henry Newman's *Lead, kingly light* (1833), Henry F. Lyte's *Abide with me* (1847), John Mason Neale's *O happy band of pilgrims* (1862), and Sabine Baring-Gould's *Through the night of dark and sorrow onward goes the pilgrim band* (1867), all of which reflected a self-awareness of being "pilgrim[s] struggling through the valley of the shadow of death."[34] Chadwick points out that one result of this marked "feeling of struggle and pilgrimage" was the other "inseparable quality of medieval piety, the contemplation of heaven."[35] In this, Burne-Jones also participated, speculating heaven to be "the place in which we can have what we like and it will be both good for us and pleasing to God at the same time as it is to ourselves."[36] Dreaming of the divine music that would resound there, he cried, "Oh, I hope there will be trumpets in heaven!"[37]

In accordance with the biblical command to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12, KJV)," which Arminian Protestants put forward as one basis for the principle of sanctification, Burne-Jones's musing about heaven went hand in hand with his anxiety over a final reckoning. His dread of the idea of a Day of Judgment made him acutely aware of how his actions in this life might be perceived in the next. Such sentiments aligned him with those pilgrims who made their physical journeys out of penance to be released from future punishment in purgatory. In Burne-Jones's 1856 story "The Cousins," the protagonist's repentance occurs after he encounters a painting of himself as Dante standing before a "vision of the city of hell," which is "iron-walled and turreted, and garrisoned with a multitude that stood above the

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 468.
[36] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:348.
[37] Ibid.

gates; but the background of the city was fire."[38] Penelope Fitzgerald elucidates how the

concept of divine judgment, "which had never been far from Ned's mind since

childhood," increasingly troubled him as he aged.[39] He believed he would be

accountable after death for explaining his earthly deeds, assuming in 1897, "the only two

questions that will be asked at the Last Judgment" are "why didn't you, and why did

you?"[40] In response to Rooke's assertion that God "fights by means of us," Burne-Jones

worried in 1896, "He hasn't had much out of me I'm afraid—I don't know what he'll say

to me about it. He isn't likely to allow that liking nice pictures counts for much."[41]

Another time the same year, he related his fears of falling short:

> I don't know what on earth I should turn up well in, and get good marks
> for. I shouldn't like to stand on my amiability, nor for my consideration
> for my family, nor for making the most of my worldly position for their
> benefit. That wouldn't be much.[42]

Occasionally his sense of inadequacy led to resistance at the thought of being judged.

"I've no wish to appear before the throne—to stand in the presence of my Maker," he

announced in 1896, "I'm quite content to remain just as I am, I should like to go on

painting pictures for ever and ever."[43] On the other hand, he lamented one gloomy day a

few months later, "I hate this world, want it to end. Wish the Day of Judgment would

come."[44] More lightheartedly, the proposal of a retrospective exhibition distressed him

since he "felt as if it was a little hard on me to have two Days of Judgement."[45] Whatever

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[38] [E. Burne-Jones], "Cousins," 24-25.
[39] Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 243.
[40] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 4:465.
[41] Ibid., 2:148.
[42] Ibid., 2:216.
[43] Ibid., 1:118.
[44] Ibid., 4:544.
[45] Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, 243.

the mood, an awareness of what he believed would be divine consequences for his earthly behavior apparently perpetually plagued him.

As pilgrimage grew in popularity, its vocabulary gained common currency as a descriptor of an individual's spiritual development. Biographers often applied its rhetoric to the lives of prominent public figures, using titles such as "Newman's Pilgrimage" or "The Pilgrimage of William Ewart Gladstone."[46] Among the proliferation of poems, novels and essays the pilgrimage revival spawned was Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18), which offered an antitype of the traditional religious pilgrim in the form of the melancholy, restless, vice-riddled Byronic hero. A number of Burne-Jones's favorite classical or medieval texts also contained themes of allegorical pilgrimage including Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1308-21)*,* Virgil's *Aeneid* (29-19 B.C.), and Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499).[47]

It was John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678, 1684), however, which provided the most common framework for the idea of the soul's spiritual pilgrimage through life. Its protagonist, Christian, finds himself burdened by sin and trapped in the "Slough of Despond." Along the path from the "City of Destruction" to the "Celestial City" of salvation, Christian overcomes many temptations luring him from the straight and narrow path, including Mr. Worldly Wiseman in the town of Morality, the vices of Vanity Fair, and the seduction of By-Path Meadow. Aided by characters such as Help and Evangelist, and accompanied by Faithful and Hopeful, he conquers tribulations such as the Hill of Difficulty, the Doubting Castle and the Valley of the Shadow of Death. At the Place of

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[46] "Newman's Pilgrimage," *Dublin University Magazine* 27 (1846): 405; "The Pilgrimage of William Ewart Gladstone," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 127 (1880): 124.
[47] Burne-Jones's copy of *The Divine Comedy* is in the Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. He also owned a copy of the *Hypnerotomachia* and reproductions of Botticelli's illustrations to Dante.

Deliverance (Calvary) he finally deposits his metaphorical burden into Jesus's tomb, and the Shining Ones (angels), who represent Christian baptism, welcome him into the Celestial City.

Bunyan's Nonconformist theology (he was Baptist, and thus outside the Church of England) was evident throughout the evangelizing, allegorical novel. As Chadwick relates, *Pilgrim's Progress* began the century as "the classical book of English Calvinism," the theology of Presbyterian and other Nonconformist denominations.[48] Bunyan's pilgrimage model of the individual detached from society and traditional familial relationships, wandering among the spiritual wilderness of earthly life, offered post-Reformation England a Protestant counterpoint to the communal, associative activity of medieval Catholic pilgrimage. Chadwick reports that the Oxford Movement so disliked the book's theology, "Archdeacon Froude would not have a copy in the house and John Mason Neale committed the solecism of publishing a corrected version."[49]

As a child, Burne-Jones's father refused to allow *Pilgrim's Progress* in their home because, the artist reported, "it wasn't the thing to have a book that was written by a dissenter."[50] Perhaps out of that instinctive attraction all children have to forbidden things, he furtively began reading *Pilgrim's Progress* while staying with a friend. Not far into the story, however, he gave up upon reaching the phrase, "Mister Christian," which he "couldn't bear."[51] Like his father, Burne-Jones found its Calvinist principles distasteful. During his 1848 research into the doctrinal differences among Christian sects, he concluded that Calvinism "seems totally repugnant to the alleged attributes of

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[48] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 2:467.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 3:294.
[51] Ibid.

God," and "a more blasphemous tenet one can hardly imagine."[52] His criticism of

Methodism, "there's not a spark of originality" in its "wretched followers," provides

further insight into his aversion to Bunyan, whose blatant moralizing offended him.[53]

Georgiana records, "the names in the story jarred upon him so much that he would not

read it. Such names as 'Mr. Envy' and 'Mr. Despondency' he said he could not

tolerate."[54] In 1894 he compared it to Chaucer's translation of Guillaume de Lorris's

Roman de la Rose (early 1360s), explaining the latter and its pilgrimage of love as a

"kind of Pilgrims progress" except "only here is the goal & not heaven." "At least not

Bunyan's heaven," he continued, "don't want his heaven I don't" but "bless him all the

same."[55] He followed this with a statement about his intense distaste for Elizabethan

England, presumably due to its post-Reformation Protestantism. Interestingly, Methodist

hymn writers especially embraced Bunyan's prototype of individual spiritual pilgrimage,

which would therefore have been very familiar to Georgiana, the daughter of a Methodist

preacher.[56]

Ironically, in spite of Bunyan's Nonconformist faith, *Pilgrim's Progress* became

the epitome of mainstream Protestantism—both within the Church of England and among

Dissenters—in Victorian England. As Chadwick observes, the book lost its Calvinist

connotations as the century wore on and by the 1870s the general populace embraced its

"penetrating ethical power and beauty" and expression of spiritual pilgrimage.[57]

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[52] Edward Burne-Jones to Maria Choyce, Oct. 8, 1848, quoted in G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:25.
[53] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:36.
[54] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:17.
[55] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, July 23, 1894, MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 256, British Library.
[56] Deborah Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1985), 29, quoted in Stephanie Stidham Rogers, "American Protestant Pilgrimage: Nineteenth-Century Impressions of Palestine," *Koinonia* 15, no.1 (2003): 63.
[57] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 2:467.

Illustrated reprints of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, such as the one the Dalziel Brothers published (fig. 147), proliferated, and it was the most popular religious book after the Bible and the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. Literary critics continued to rehash the text and its themes in contemporary journals. As Barry Qualls has shown, it also provided the template for novelists and writers as diverse as Charlotte Brontë, Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot. "Lacking Bunyan's assurance," Qualls explains, Victorian "readers and writers held all the more tenaciously to his language. They were determined to shape the facts of this world into a religious topography, making a path towards the Celestial City."[58]

George Frederic Watts's childhood offers a typical example of the clout *Pilgrim's Progress* wielded in the Victorian home. According to his wife, his family was of the "narrowest side of the Evangelical school" within the Anglican Church. Sundays carried an "element of Puritanical austerity" when pleasure reading was "absolutely forbidden" and "all books except Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and the Bible and Prayer Book were put away."[59] Even William Morris, certainly no lover of Evangelical Protestantism, listed *Pilgrim's Progress* among his favorite books in 1886.[60] Likewise, there is some indication Burne-Jones knew the text more intimately than he admitted, reportedly telling William Sharp *Pilgrim's Progress* was among the books that "sustained" him in childhood.[61]

Something in the book resonated strongly enough for Burne-Jones to produce a pen and ink drawing of *The Land of Beulah* (fig. 148) in July 1881, which demonstrates

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[58] Barry V. Qualls, *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), 12.
[59] Watts, *George Frederic Watts*, 1:16.
[60] Morris, *Letters to Family and Friends*, 244-47.
[61] W. Sharp, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," *Atlantic Monthly*, 377.

the recurring themes in his pilgrim, Holy Grail, and Magi subjects. In spite of his public

refutations of *Pilgrim's Progress*, Georgiana could only attribute the drawing's creation

to "the mysterious way that works of genius exhale into the air, the poetry of this one

reached him and made its due impression."[62] It was a personal endeavor, a gift-drawing

for ten-year-old Gertrude Lewis, the daughter of his friend and solicitor George Lewis.

The inscription, "In this land the shining ones commonly walked because it was upon the

borders of heaven," identifies the landscape as the country on the perimeter of Bunyan's

Celestial City. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan narrates,

> Now I saw in my dream, that by this time the Pilgrims were got over the
> Enchanted ground, and entering into the Country of *Beulah*, whose air
> was very sweet and pleasant, the Way lying directly through it, they
> solaced themselves there for a season. Yea, here they heard continually
> the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth,
> and heard the voice of the turle in the land. In this country the Sun
> shineth night and day.[63]

In Burne-Jones's illustration, Christian, identifiable by his pilgrim's staff, shell, and

pilgrim's hat, enters the idyllic country in the lower left corner, led by Hopeful.

Stretching ahead of them along the path are the souls of other pilgrims, making their way

ever closer to their heavenly destination, watched by the "shining ones" symbolic of

Christian baptism.

In multiple ways, Burne-Jones's selection of this particular scene, as well as his

treatment of it, speaks to an anxious longing for concrete evidence of the divine. This

image and the others discussed below articulate a vision of a tangible deity who descends

to earth and walks among mankind. Wishing for proof of God's existence, Burne-Jones

told a friend, "I don't mind whence I come if I could only be sure I was standing before

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[62] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:17.
[63] John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), pt. 1, chap. 11.

the Lord of lords."[64] One way in which he addressed this desire was through the figure of

a guardian angel or other divine power such as Hopeful, who palpably aids the pilgrim on

his or her spiritual journey. Guardian angels carried immense personal significance for

the artist, and he chose this particular motif to express his love for his daughter, Margaret.

In 1876 he designed a small image of an angel leaning down out of heaven to lead her by

the hand through mountainous terrain, presumably symbolizing the challenges one must

navigate in life (fig. 149). In 1893 he returned to the iconography again in the stained-

glass windows at St. Margaret's, Rottingdean, which he gave to commemorate her

wedding (fig. 150). In his two lower lights for the east window of St. John's, Torquay

(1865), angels lead a man and a woman toward the Heavenly Jerusalem (fig. 59) just as

Hopeful guides Bunyan's Christian toward the Celestial City. Burne-Jones made explicit

the link between guardian angels and pilgrimage in *Angeli Ministrantes* (fig. 129), first

conceived in 1878 as a stained-glass cartoon for Salisbury Cathedral. In the window and

in its later reincarnation as a tapestry, the angels bear a staff, pilgrim's hat, and cockle-

shell emblems on their cloaks and caps. These attributes of the religious pilgrim signify

their identity as wandering, "ministering" angels who travel the earth assisting Christian

men and women. The artist himself referred to them as "2 pilgrim angels" and pointed

out the "stony landscape" in which they stand, suggestive of the difficulties of earthly

life. The pilgrim angel appeared again in the "Hierarchy of Angels" windows for Jesus

College Chapel, Cambridge, where one light includes an angel with a pilgrim's staff and

gourd (fig. 151). He leads a tiny man by the hand, while two other small human figures

cling to his neck, cradled beneath the protection of his wing. The vicar of St. John's,

Torquay, where Morris and Company reused the Jesus College designs in the west

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[64] Jacobs, "Recollections of Burne-Jones," 130.

window in 1890, interpreted the subject of this light as an "apocryphal account in the book of Tobit of the Angel Raphael leading the young Tobias in his journey to Ecbatana."[65]

Beulah is also an ambiguous region where heaven and earth temporarily overlap, bridging the spiritual and material worlds and providing the pilgrim with visual evidence of his or her religious beliefs. It is typical of Burne-Jones to choose Bunyan's borderland rather than the Celestial City itself. Here, Christian remains in the world but can still know and intermingle with otherworldly beings, the Shining Ones who "commonly walked" just outside the gates of heaven. Spaces such as that in *Land of Beulah*, where the human and divine commingle, are repetitious features of his work and serve to convey the notion of God's nearness. The momentary overlapping of heaven and earth also mirrors physical pilgrimage, in which the devotee professedly briefly experienced God through mystical apparitions or by interacting with the destination relic.

Additionally, in *Land of Beulah* Burne-Jones chose the moment of heavy expectation when Christian and Hopeful "were in sight of the City they were going to" but had not yet reached it.[66] Rather, they hover on the threshold of their destination. In his pilgrim images, he nearly always shows the protagonists in this moment just before the fulfillment of their goal. Contemporaries noted Burne-Jones's proclivity for the pilgrim's voyage or trials along the way rather than his or her final achievement. In 1899 Una Taylor described his pilgrims as,

> enforce[ing] upon us a sense of questioning without solution; of endeavour rather than of achievement; of aspiration rather than of fulfillment; of desire rather than of fruition. It is life portrayed as life expectant, joy held

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[65] Airy, *Brief History of S. John's*, 29.
[66] Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, pt. 1, chap. 11.

for ever in suspense, pleasure as a promise whose performance hangs in the precarious balance of untoward chance.[67]

Downes seconded this opinion, concluding, "even when the image represented is that of a final climax, we cannot believe that we are at the end of the story. Wistful desire still haunts the countenance and a sigh for that which is yet unattained seems to break from the severed lips and the onward-reaching soul."[68] In every case, Burne-Jones's pilgrims exist in a liminal state.

Liminality, as defined by the ethnographer Arnold van Gennep and expanded upon by Victor and Edith Turner, is the middle component, the "betwixt and between," of the tripartite process known as a rite of passage.[69] This framework and the Turners' work on corporate physical pilgrimage is not wholly applicable to Burne-Jones's metaphorical construct of spiritual pilgrimage, but their definition of the process is still useful for understanding his art's liminal character. They describe liminality as the state when the subject has been separated from his or her prior way of life and its accompanying structures of authority and power. In this "no-place and no-time," old social structures have been dismantled and the subjects theoretically exist in a more ideal communal state of comradeship outside normative political and economic systems.[70] This corporate aspect of liminality, while not relevant to the paradigm of metaphorical pilgrimage, does accord with Burne-Jones's proclivity for monasticism, whose reclusive religious orders the Turners identify as dwelling on the boundaries of society in a liminal existence.[71]

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[67] [Taylor], "Ethics and Art," 37-38.

[68] Downes, "Great Painter," 8.

[69] The Turners categorize pilgrimage as a liminoid, rather than liminal, phenomenon based on the fact that physical pilgrimage is not mandatory like a traditional rite of passage ritual. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 34-35. However, the term liminal seems more appropriate for metaphorical pilgrimage since in Christian theology the spiritual journey is not optional.

[70] Ibid., 249-50.

[71] Ibid., 250.

Detached from traditional social, economic, and familial structures, monks live within but set apart from the world, not yet having reached their final state of transformation. Burne-Jones's desire for monastic withdrawal from modern life and the marketplace, then, is an expression of this straining toward liminality and, consequently, pilgrimage can be interpreted as another facet of his artist-monk identity. The final phase of the rite of passage occurs when the subject is reinstated, "inwardly transformed and outwardly changed, in a new place in society."[72]

While the Turners' rite of passage framework cannot be precisely mapped onto metaphorical pilgrimage, it is nevertheless helpful in comprehending the spiritual pilgrim's tri-partite process. In a Christian context, the pilgrim begins his or her journey at the moment of justification, or the rejection of sinful ways of life. He or she is then thought to journey through the liminal existence of spiritual life according to Jesus's reported directive to his disciples to be "in the world but not of it." The process of sanctification hypothetically sets the religious pilgrim apart from the conventions of secular society as he supposedly moves toward fuller unification with the divine. In the final stage of salvation, which in this paradigm the Christian pilgrim only attains in the afterlife, he or she is believed to be instated into heaven and joined with God.

Burne-Jones's pilgrims, knights, Magi, and shepherds, however, never quite reach the final stage of this tri-partite process. They are always on the threshold, separated from their former state of existence but not yet fully consummated in their goal of eternal life. The questing knights, pilgrims, and Magi, which often served as symbolic self-portraits of the artist, all exist in a liminal state, reflecting his own desire for detachment

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[72] Ibid., 249. The archetypal rite of passage does mirror Burne-Jones's life pattern as he moved away from his religious brotherhood at Oxford to the more solitary life of an established artist.

from society. One of the most important effects of focusing on liminal spaces, however, is that it isolates the process and the limbo of being in a constant state of pilgrimage. Christian is frozen as a perpetual pilgrim in *The Land of Beulah*, encouraging the viewer to empathize with his journey rather than its conclusion. In this way, Burne-Jones's art presents an idea of life as a perpetual quest toward religious salvation. In 1856 he wrote as much in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, arguing in his review of *The Newcomes*, "this much may we surely take for granted, that this life of ours is not altogether *yesterday* nor yet *to-morrow*, but is chiefly and above all a continual *to-day*, whose true expression is present action, present virtue."[73] His fixation on the process of pilgrimage, both verbally and visually, expresses a belief that it is the course and the practice of the spiritual life that matters. Dwelling in this paradise region between heaven and earth, this life and the next, the action of pilgrimage is frozen in suspense, the goal in sight but not yet reached. It was a pattern he repeated throughout all of his pilgrimage imagery.

Although Christian's outcome may not be depicted in *The Land of Beulah*, as Burne-Jones renders the scene it is nonetheless assured. The action may be suspended, but he gives no sense of unresolved ambiguity regarding the protagonists' success in their pilgrimage. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Beulah's specific location is "beyond the valley of the *Shadow of Death*, and also out of the reach of *Giant Despair*." In addition, from Beulah one could not "so much as see *Doubting-Castle*." Bunyan's Beulah was a land of unwavering belief, where "the contract between the Bride and the Bridegroom [a biblical reference to Jesus and the Christian church] was re-newed." As Bunyan conceptualized it, Beulah was a kind of religious utopia where God's forgiveness freely flowed, the

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[73] [E. Burne-Jones], "Newcomes," 52-53.

pilgrims enjoyed all the "corn and wine" (the Eucharistic elements) they desired, and

"they met with abundance of what they had sought in all their Pilgrimage." Abiding in

this land, Bunyan's pilgrims hear voices from the Celestial City calling to them, "Behold

thy Salvation cometh!"[74] Burne-Jones situated the road to heaven prominently in the

center of the composition, where it leads to the visible gate of the Celestial City in the

distance. Neither the path to salvation nor the entryway to heaven is obscured from view.

His affinity for the arrested narrative was apparently not intended to cast doubt on the

outcome of the quest, but rather to accentuate the journey and its perceived process of

spiritual refinement. In his *Flower Book* roundel, "The Ladder of Heaven" (fig. 142a), a

figure trudges determinedly upward along a rainbow, his gossamer wings having replaced

Christian's heavy sin-laden knapsack. When asked about the meaning of this picture

Burne-Jones replied, "I shouldn't like to be cross-questioned about the person going up

the rainbow. Pagans, like Mallock, may call it Iris, but Christians like you and me will

have it to be a soul, and it shall go up to the top of the rainbow and never go down the

other side."[75] Like Christian, Burne-Jones insisted his religious pilgrims would reach

their destinations.

The Quest for the Holy Grail

In spite of Burne-Jones's brush with *Pilgrim's Progress*, it was not Bunyan but

the Holy Grail Quest that provided the primary prototype for his pilgrimage model. His

source for the legend was Sir Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century text *Le Morte Darthur*

(1485), discovered in a Birmingham bookshop at the end of the summer in 1855.

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[74] Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, pt. 1, chap. 11.
[75] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:119.

Malory's version of the Grail Quest functions as an acknowledged allegory of the Christian life in which one's beliefs and virtue are refined through a series of trials and temptations. The end goal of the Quest is the Grail, the Eucharistic cup, which symbolizes salvation and professedly offers the reward of eternal life for those who find it. In Malory's tale, only knights who ward off doubt and pursue the Grail with piety and a sincere desire for spiritual transformation may attain it; their degree of virtue and religious sincerity determine their success or failure. Malory explained that "evil faith and poor belief" are to blame for Gawain's, Lancelot's, and the others' failed attempts. Percival and Bors advance to Sarras, the city of the Spirit, but only Galahad is permitted to partake in the Grail Mass. Malory presented their tests and tournaments along the way as opportunities to overcome temptation or battle with the choice of sin. Recognizing the Quest's allegorical meaning while painting frescoes of the subject in the Queen's Robing Room at Westminster (1848-63), William Dyce described it as "little else than a tolerably intelligible religious allegory, strongly tinctured with the monastic ideas of the 13th century."[76] Another time he avowed, "I need hardly add that the whole story of the 'Quest of the Sangreal' is beyond any doubt a religious allegory–a sort of 'Pilgrim's Progress' of the middle ages."[77]

The Holy Grail Quest mimes physical pilgrimage as well. In the story, the knights journey to find the ultimate holy relic, the cup allegedly used at the Last Supper containing Jesus's blood. Accordingy to legend, it was entrusted to Joseph of Arimathea,

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[76] William Dyce to Charles Eastlake, 23 Nov. 1848, Dyce Papers, Aberdeen Art Gallery, quoted in Christine Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail: Arthurian Legend in British Art 1840-1920* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1999), 27.

[77] William Dyce to Charles Eastlake, 20 July 1848, Dyce Papers, Aberdeen Art Gallery, quoted in Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 26. Poulson contends that Dyce was "attempt[ing] to anticipate and deflect criticism" of its Catholicism "by likening the story to one of the most famous of all Protestant works of literature." Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 39.

who carried it to Glastonbury. The end goal they seek—redemption and the assurance of Christian salvation—is the same as that physical pilgrims pursue. For the knights it comes in the form of the chalice, a supernatural apparition that momentarily conflates the heavenly and earthly realms. A similar desire to touch and be united with the divine through the holy relic and its healing powers motivates real-life pilgrims. Like *The Land of Beulah*, the Grail Quest articulates a desire for tangible spiritual experience and the beholding of holy mysteries. As Suzanne Fagance Cooper acknowledges, the Grail allowed Burne-Jones, "yet again to imagine the overlapping of heavenly and earthly things, as Sir Galahad comes face to face with God in the form of the 'Sangreal,'" much like shrines purportedly bridge the divide between the believer and God.[78]

In addition to medieval romances, Burne-Jones derived his model of the questing Christian knight from Victorian chivalric literature. As Christine Poulson points out, "the idea of life as a continual moral struggle, a battle against the temptations of one's lower nature and of worldly pleasures" prevailed throughout fiction writing of the early- and mid-Victorian period.[79] Albrecht Dürer's *The Knight, Death, and the Devil* (1513), for instance, inspired Friedrich La Motte Fouqué's *Sintram and His Companions* (1814, translated from the French in 1820), a favorite of Burne-Jones's at Oxford. Sintram's story functions as a moral allegory in which, like his visual counterpart, sin and temptation tests him, but he emerges triumphant with a purified heart and more virtuous character. Similarly, Charlotte Yonge's best-selling novel, *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853), casts its protagonist as a "contemporary Sir Galahad" who grows increasingly to

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[78] Cooper, *Pre-Raphaelite Art*, 80.
[79] Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 118.

resemble the spiritually pure knight as he conquers his own real-life doubts and trials.[80]

Embodying "more than in any other" their "religious ideals and social enthusiasms,"

Mackail reported, *The Heir of Redclyffe* "was adopted by [Morris and Burne-Jones] as a

pattern for actual life."[81] The heroes of these novels provided additional models of the

Christian knight on a journey of spiritual refinement.

For Burne-Jones the most influential nineteenth-century text on the Christian

meaning of knighthood, however, was Kenelm Henry Digby's *Broad Stone of Honour*,

first published in 1822. Named after Digby's favorite castle, Ehrenbreitstein in Germany,

the five-volume epic carried the subtitle, "The True Sense and Practice of Chivalry."

Digby characterized its four books, each titled after famous Christian heroes and martyrs,

as the "symbolical wanderings of the ancient knights."[82] His subjects, who served as

heroic models of morality and chivalry for the modern gentleman, are a mixture of

medieval knights, saints, and monks. Digby's agenda was to advocate Christian morality

and defend Roman Catholicism, to which he converted in 1825.[83] Consequently, when

Burne-Jones illustrated a scene from *Broad Stone* in 1863, *The Merciful Knight* (fig. 93),

critics decried it as "Papistical."[84] The two frontispieces in his personal copy of *Broad*

Stone reflect its pre-Reformation spirit: one features a procession of robed priests

carrying banners into a Gothic church, and the other, an armored knight on horseback in

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[80] Ibid., 76

[81] Mackail, *Life of William Morris*, 1:41.

[82] *Godefridus*, named for the French medieval crusader Godfrey of Boullion; *Tancredus*, named for the medieval crusader and King of Sicily, Tancred; *Morus*, named for the Catholic martyr Sir Thomas More; and two volumes titled *Orlandus* after Roland, Charlemagne's chief paladin and hero of the epic French poem, *The Song of Roland.*

[83] Digby revised and expanded *Broad Stone* to reflect his newly adopted doctrine and republished it in 1826-29.

[84] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 1:119. (See also chap. 2, pp. 159-60; chap. 4, pp. 302-3.) The criticism of Burne-Jones's *Merciful Knight* testifies to the public awareness of chivalry, knighthood, and medievalism's Anglo/Catholic connotations.

front of the ruins of a Gothic cathedral.[85] The first half of *Orlandus* is the most worn

volume among the artist's set and the one in which he inscribed his name, indicating it

was the one most "often dipped into in wakeful nights or early mornings."[86] This book

continues Digby's "Review of the heroic Character in the Middle Ages," and stresses

how "All its Virtues proceeded from Religion." Chivalry, it maintains, was "consistent

with Piety" and "not reconcilable with any Departure from the Duties of a Christian."

Among other issues, it addressed humility, kindness to the poor, "Religious Heroism,"

the principle of Christian loyalty, "heroic Friendship," and the "habits of Endurance"

required for knighthood such as "Temperance, Privation, Labour, Obedience,

Suffering."[87]

Knighthood also, as Poulson explains, ties into the Christian tradition of the

believer as a "soldier for Christ."[88] Such rhetoric, fully realized in the Salvation Army,

for example, spanned both Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical discourse in the nineteenth

century. The Tractarian Sabine Baring-Gould, wrote his famous hymn *Onward Christian

Soldiers* in 1865, and Owen Chadwick concurs, "all the great military hymns sprang out

of the sixties and the seventies."[89] Burne-Jones's desire to launch a "Crusade and Holy

Warfare against the age" at Oxford aligned him with this imagery of the valiant Christian

knight.[90]

As explained in Chapter Four, the ascetic, medieval knight of Victorian fiction

also grew out of the Anglo-Catholic movement. Cardinal Newman had such great love

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[85] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:56. His copy is from an edition of 500 published in 1877 and is in the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. The bindings are imprinted with gold images of figures worshiping at the foot of a Crucifix.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Digby addresses these themes in chaps. 1-2, 7, 10, and 14.
[88] Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 118.
[89] Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, 2:466.
[90] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:82.

for *Sintram*, for instance, that "in his younger days, [he] was so much overcome by it that he hurried out into the garden to read it alone, and returned with tears of emotion on his face."[91] Similarly, it was *The Heir of Redclyffe's* "High Church, High Tory" flavor, Poulson argues, that largely appealed to Burne-Jones and Morris.[92] Like physical pilgrimage, the perceived stigma of Roman Catholicism strongly tinctured the Holy Grail legend. The link between Catholicism and the Holy Grail quest was firmly established in the Reformation period, when it became so tainted with Papist connotations that it did not reemerge in British art and literature until the nineteenth-century Catholic Revival.[93] The two most prominent Victorian public manifestations of the legend, however, William Dyce's Queen's Robing Room frescoes and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1859-85), continued to excise or downplay the Eucharistic and ascetic elements of the tale.[94] "On due consideration," the Anglo-Catholic Dyce explained, "it seemed to me wise to keep out of sight the particular adventures of the St. Greal which, regarded either as Arthurian myths or as Christian allegories, appeared to me to involve matters of religious and antiquarian controversy, which had better be avoided."[95]

In spite of the legend's suspected Roman Catholic overtones, most Burne-Jones scholars ignore the religious significance of his Grail imagery. Debra Mancoff, who has

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[91] Charlotte Yonge, introduction to Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, *Sintram and His Companions* (London, 1896), xviii.

[92] Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 76.

[93] Believing "idle Monkes, or wanton Chanons" wrote *Le Morte Darthur* in "our forefathers tyme, when Papistrie, as a standyng poole, couered and ouerflowed all England," Queen Elizabeth I's tutor and Protestant reformer, Roger Ascham, blamed them for the "open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye" so predominant in the tale. Roger Asham, *The Scholemaster* (London, 1570), 27; Asham, *Toxaphilus, The Schole of Shootinge* (London, 1545), quoted in Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 9. Fellow Elizabethan and Puritan author Nathaniel Baxter similarly scorned "vile & blasphemous, or at least of profane and friuolous bookes, suche as that infamous legend of K. Arthur...with the vile and stinking story of the Sangreall." Quoted in Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 36.

[94] See Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, chaps. 1-2.

[95] William Dyce to Charles Eastlake, 23 Nov. 1848, Dyce Papers, Aberdeen Art Gallery, quoted in Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 36.

published the most extensively his Arthurian subjects, completely overlooks the Grail's

religious implications in spite of her otherwise insightful readings of his imagery.[96] She

focuses mainly on nationalism and attributes the legend's moral appeal in the nineteenth

century to a vague "ethical medievalism," ignoring the Christian principles that lay

behind its chivalric code.[97] Christine Poulson, the only scholar to comprehensively

address the religious meaning of the Grail in Victorian art, demonstrates that Burne-

Jones's Anglo/Catholicism inspired his early Holy Grail subjects.[98] She offers the only

thorough assessment of how his love of Arthurian legend tied into his involvement with

the Oxford Movement, clerical aims, and monastic intentions, but she abandons this line

of inquiry after his 1855 discovery of Malory. By the fin-de-siécle, she sees his treatment

of the Quest in terms of occultism, feminine sexuality, and the conflict between sacred

and profane love, with the Grail angel taking precedence over the knights.[99] She

questions whether his late Arthurian works could intimate "a return of some kind to the

religious faith that had sustained the young Burne-Jones," but does not pursue this

suggestion.[100]

 Yet, there is no evidence that the religious meaning of the Grail Quest lost its

potency for Burne-Jones once he became an artist and in fact, a substantial amount to the

contrary. Though the legend may have taken on an additional role of escapist fantasy as

he grew disillusioned with modern society, its Anglo/Catholic and monastic roots

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[96] Debra N. Mancoff, *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art* (New York: Garland, 1990); "Because my heart is pure-Sir Edward Burne-Jones and Tennyson's 'Sir Galahad,'" *Avalon to Camelot* 11, no. 1 (1983): 24-26; "Epitaph in Avalon: Edward Burne-Jones's last picture," in Watson, *Collecting the Pre-Raphaelites*, 163-73; and *The Return of King Arthur: The Legend through Victorian Eyes* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1995).
[97] Mancoff, *Arthurian Revival*, 242.
[98] Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 78.
[99] Christine Poulson, *Morris, Burne-Jones & the Quest for the Holy Grail. The Kelmscott Lecture 1998.* (London: William Morris Society, 2001), 14-22.
[100] Poulson, *Kelmscott Lecture*, 12.

continued to inform his identification with the tale. In 1892 he wistfully dreamed of "the

perpetual choirs" at Glastonbury, whose "chanting of the Psalms never ended night or

day for hundreds of years."[101]   He imagined that "night and day continual relays of

monks sang" at Caer Caradoc, an ancient hillside in Shropshire where the legendary

Celtic chieftain Caractacus, whom some believe to be the historical inspiration for King

Arthur, allegedly led the Britons' last stand against the Romans in the first century

A.D.[102] As late as 1895 Burne-Jones was still "pining for more San Graal" and longing

for a "sacred evening when we can dine and talk of that most holy subject."[103] Wagner

offended him by "spoil[ing] the ancient piety" of the legend in *Parsifal*.[104] When Rooke

visited decaying frescos depicting "Lancelot's Vision" in an abandoned French chapel in

July 1897, Burne-Jones asked him to bring back drawings of "one of the paintings—

you'll be able to say which—you know what pictures I like. I always like God and I like

a lady and I like a knight."[105] Throughout his life he continued to feel that *Le Morte

Darthur* was "such a sacred land to me."[106] It is also striking that he never embraced

Tennyson's Protestant-ized *Idylls*. Aside from Tennyson's 1842 *Poems*, he always

preferred Malory's staunchly Catholic tale.[107] "All of Tennyson that's really Tennyson

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[101] Edward Burne-Jones to Frances Horner, Dec. 19, 1892, quoted in Horner, *Time Remembered*, 141.
[102] Ibid.
[103] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:270.
[104] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, July 23, 1896, MS Add 54218, vol. 2, fol. 194, British Library.
[105] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 4:438.
[106] Edward Burne-Jones to Canon Melville, Jan. 1895, quoted in Dimbleby, *May and Amy*, 144.
[107] Tennyson's later *Idylls of the King* recast the Grail Quest as a futile and self-indulgent endeavor. Like the criticisms levied at Victorian ecclesiastics, who allegedly squabbled about theological matters while neglecting their flock, the knights are chastised for running after an elusive and unobtainable goal. Instead, Tennyson praised Arthur for staying behind to govern his land, a message endorsing a Christian Socialist ethic of religion at work in the urban environment rather than Anglo-Catholic preoccupation with doctrine and ritual. Poulson observes, "the elements that Tennyson discarded, in particular, Galahad's celibacy and total dedication to a spiritual ideal," were those Burne-Jones cherished most in his earlier "Sir Galahad" poem. Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 74.

can go into a very small book," he told Rooke. "It would almost be well for a poet to die young, unless he left off being a poet."[108]

Iconographically, his Grail pictures continued to reference Roman Catholic symbolism. Unlike Dyce, who had been falsely accused of being a Roman Catholic and, as Poulson contends, "would have been very wary of providing further grounds for anyone to suspect him of Romanist tendencies," Burne-Jones did not shy away from the Catholic implications of Malory's tale. When designing the Holy Grail tapestries for Stanmore Hall in 1890-91, he was "anxious to have the best book on the iconographic history of the Mass" and quickly ordered a copy of the "colossal work of Rohault de Fleury" on a friend's recommendation.[109] Fleury's expensive eight-volume magnum opus contained 680 illustrations showing how early Christian art represented and interpreted the Mass and its ritual elements. This research is most evident in the final panel of *The Attainment* (fig. 152), where a rush of wind above the altar, intimating the Holy Spirit's presence, deposits blood in the Eucharistic chalice and makes explicit the concept of transubstantiation. A finished watercolor study (fig. 153) attests that originally, Burne-Jones intended the blood to be even more prominent. Rather than raining down in droplets as in the final tapestry, it descends in a steady stream, which fills the cup and almost overflows. As if to emphasize this further, Burne-Jones wished he could "violate heraldry" and give Galahad the emblem of the Grail on his shield rather than the red cross traditionally ascribed to him.[110]   Initially, he planned a scene of "The Death of Galahad amid the Host in the City of Sarras," which would have made the

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[108] Lago, *Burne-Jones Talking*, 82.
[109] Jacobs, "Recollections of Burne-Jones," 129. Charles Rohault de Fleury, *La Messe. Études Archaéologiques sur ses Monuments*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1883-89).
[110] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:211.

Eucharistic reference even more pronounced. His comment that seeing the Grail was equal to "seeing the face of God" supports this transubstantiation interpretation and recalls the Grail Mass in *Le Morte Darthur*, when Galahad, Percival and Bors witness Jesus's visage being "smote…into the bread."[111] In Burne-Jones's *Attainment* Galahad kneels, not simply in "wonder" and "reverence" as Mancoff observes, but specifically in the posture communicants assume when receiving the host.[112] His location just outside of the chapel replicates ecclesiological ideals of High Church architecture and ritual, whereby the chancel is said to be the holy dwelling place of Christ and is elevated by several steps from the space of the worshipper. The angels are also, as Poulson points out, "dressed in ornate chasubles and stoles" reminiscent of Anglo-Catholic ceremonial. Some contemporaries discerned Christian undertones in Burne-Jones's Grail subjects. Una Taylor, for instance, included his "quest of the Graal" works in the category of "legends of religion," along with the "conversion of Theophilus," the Annunciation, and the Adoration of the Magi.[113]

Burne-Jones as the Questing Knight

Burne-Jones projected himself into Malory's story, specifically identifying with the Grail knights' spiritual aims, professed sinful natures and failed ambitions. He repeatedly used its language and iconography to cast himself as the questing knight, journeying forth on a pilgrimage toward salvation. Georgiana described the special meaning *Le Morte Darthur* held for her husband as his "own birthright upon which he

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[111] Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur* (1485; Ware, Herts, UK: Wordsworth Editions, 1996), bk. 17, chap. 20.
[112] Mancoff, *Arthurian Revival*, 241; Mancoff, *Burne-Jones*, 97.
[113] [Taylor], "Ethics and Art," 28.

entered." Malory's tale "became literally a part of himself. Its strength and beauty, its mystical religion and noble chivalry of action, the world of lost history and romance in the names of people and places."[114] "Nothing was ever like *Morte d'Arthur*," Burne-Jones wrote to Frances Horner. "I don't mean any book, or any one poem," he explained, but "something that can never be written…and can never go out of the heart."[115] He emoted to May Gaskell, "Lord! How that San Graal story is ever in my mind and thoughts continually. Was ever anything in the world as beautiful as that is beautiful?"[116] Another time he exclaimed, "Oh, my dear! I should have lived then, the world was so after my heart."[117] Although Burne-Jones scholars such as Poulson and Mancoff have already established this autobiographical pattern, they have not factored in the religious implications of his identification with the Knights of the Round Table. Mancoff argues, "the quest and its mysterious goal had a deep personal meaning that went beyond the rewards of redemption" for the artist, but interprets it strictly in secular terms as symbolic of his desire for ideal beauty and nostalgia for the past.[118] She insightfully notes, "his vision of the search betrayed no loss of faith or even a wavering doubt," but maintains that this speaks only to his artistic integrity rather than entertaining the idea that a vision of resolute belief might express something of his own views.[119]

The legend's spiritual elements and meaning resonated particularly deeply with Burne-Jones. He described the autumn he painted his Nativity subject *The Star of*

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[114] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:116.
[115] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 112.
[116] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:333.
[117] Edward Burne-Jones to unknown recipient, [1897], Burne-Jones Papers, XXVII, fol. 73, Fitzwilliam Museum.
[118] Mancoff, "'Too beautiful not to be true': Edward Burne-Jones," in *Pre-Raphaelite and Other Masters: The Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003), 71.
[119] Mancoff, *Arthurian Revival*, 238.

Bethlehem as one spent "living mostly in the suburbs of Sarras."[120] After seeing

Wagner's *Parsifal*, he implied that he had actually visited the chapel of the San Grael.

Praising the music (but not the overall opera), he wrote that Wagner "made sounds that

are really and truly (I assure you, and I ought to know) the very sounds to be heard in the

Sangraal chapel. I recognised them in a minute, and knew he had done it

accurately…truly it was the house of that heavenly choir."[121] He also identified

specifically with the Quest's pilgrimage meaning. In Georgiana's words, the Holy Grail

legend was, for her husband, "an explanation of life."[122] After receiving his baronetcy in

1894, he chose as a motto for his coat of arms, *Sequar et attingam*, meaning "I will

follow and attain."[123] Some colleagues also characterized him as one of the Grail

knights. Wyke Bayliss, for instance, praised Burne-Jones using the trope of

Arthurianism, noting the autobiographical nature of such works. "I know nothing quite

equal to the fineness of his chivalry as a man," he commended. "In painting the love, and

courage, and truth, of knight errantry, he painted his own character into his pictures."[124]

Sir Galahad

The main protagonists of the Grail Quest appear as religious pilgrims in a number

of Burne-Jones's works, beginning in 1858 with an intricate pen and ink drawing of Sir

Galahad (fig. 92) in pursuit of the Grail, riding past earthly temptations and bearing a

lantern glowing with a supernatural star, perhaps indicating divine guidance.[125] A

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[120] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:209.

[121] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 113.

[122] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:333.

[123] Ibid., 2:241.

[124] Bayliss, "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," 191.

[125] All scholars except Malcolm Warner read the object in Galahad's hands as the Grail. Close inspection of the drawing, however, does not bear out this interpretation. Also, the scene depicted is Galahad's

prominent fan-shaped ornament on his right shoulder recalls the traditional cockle-shell

emblem of the pilgrim. Stylistically, the design is indebted to Rossetti, and the backdrop

of sensual pleasures and embracing couples evidences his influence on Burne-Jones in

the 1850s. *Sir Galahad* also typifies his production during these early years when, still

grappling with the difficult medium of painting and financially strapped, he concentrated

on detailed pen and ink designs. Thematically, *Sir Galahad* evokes the 1842 poem of the

same name by Tennyson, whom he met at Little Holland House while working on the

drawing. He followed the poet laureate's lead in emphasizing the knight's chastity, using

a wall to indicate spatially his physical and symbolical separation from the worldly

delights in the background. Galahad literally rides on the margins of society, co-existing

in a parallel, liminal plane of rectitude, recalling his spiritual ascent toward purification in

Tennyson's poem "Sir Galahad": "I leave the plain, I climb the height" (line 57).

Tennyson's narrative structure mirrors the stages of metaphorical religious

pilgrimage. The poem begins with an initial combat scene then builds in intensity as

Galahad strives onward toward his goal of salvation. With "faith and prayer" (line 23) he

bypasses worldly temptations and worships at a wayside shrine. Granted a vision of the

Grail and its attendant angels, he journeys onward, trusting in the mysterious force he

ascertains is guiding his helmsman-less ship. As he climbs from the earthly plain to a

higher one, his difficulties increase and the poem gathers in intensity. Without shelter, he

passes through "dreaming towns" in winter and treks through "whistling storms" and

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rejection of worldly pleasures after the tournament that occurs at the beginning of Tennyson's "Sir
Galahad" poem; he has not yet attained the Grail and so he cannot be carrying it. Warner interprets the
glowing object as a lantern akin to that carried by Jesus in William Holman Hunt's *Light of the World* (fig.
11), which seems more in keeping with the text. *A Private Passion: 19th-Century Paintings and Drawings
from the Grenville L. Winthrop Collection, Harvard University*, ed. Stephan Wolohojian, with Anna
Tahinci (New York : Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003), 360.

"waste fens and windy fields" (lines 51, 59-60). "Yearn[ing] to breathe the airs of heaven," he sustains himself by musing on its "joys that will not cease" (63-65). Like Christian's knapsack of sin released at Calvary, Galahad dreams of an angel who will touch the heavy "mortal armor that I wear," turning it "to finest air" (70-72). Finally the clouds break, organ music fills the air, and angels proclaim his proximity to the prize. The poem crescendos in a flurry of religious ecstasy as he nears the Grail and his final reward of eternal life. Like Burne-Jones, though, Tennyson does not reveal Galahad's final attainment of the prize, leaving him memorialized as the perpetual pilgrim forever engaged in his quest.

Two other drawings from the same year, similar in theme and execution, demonstrate Burne-Jones was certainly thinking of Christian pilgrimage. In *The Knight's Farewell* (fig. 154) a seated courtier stares intently downward, silently reading, neither a participant nor an observer of the tearful departure. His unusual presence functions as a signifier of the larger narrative framework. The book in his lap is titled, "Roman du Quete du Sangrail," indicating the adventure about to begin is that of the Grail Quest, and on his pilgrim's hat he displays a cockle-shell, the emblem Christian pilgrims traditionally wore. In the compositional center a banner depicting the Virgin Mary and a dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit in Christian iconography, underscores the religious nature of the voyage. In *Going to the Battle* (fig. 155), completed the same year, the knights depart on their quest as three young maidens look on. The knight gazing back at them also dons a cockle-shell badge on his chest. These small details have gone unnoticed in Burne-Jones scholarship but link the themes of medievalism, knighthood and the Holy Grail with that of religious pilgrimage.

It was Galahad, the pure knight on his single-minded spiritual quest, with whom Burne-Jones identified most strongly at this time. His drawing of 1858 (fig. 92) functions on one level as a symbolic self-portrait of the artist, who in the idealism of youth found his altar-ego in the chaste knight of the Grail Quest. As Poulson points out, the drawing's small size (15.6 x 19.2 cm.) and intensely worked surface implicates it as "a precious and private object."[126] After beginning the drawing in June, Burne-Jones took it with him on a vacation to Summertown. Afterwards, he wrote about his trouble finishing it since, "every stroke in it reminds one of some dear little word or incident that happened as the pen was marking."[127] As explained in the previous chapter, Galahad was the intended patron saint and role model for his planned monastic brotherhood at Oxford. As Poulson contends, Tennyson's version of the knight, the only one Burne-Jones knew for most of his time at university, was a fitting symbol for the group's pledged celibacy and religious fervor.[128] Piety and virginity were Galahad's overwhelming characteristics, captured in Tennyson's lines (17-20):

> But all my heart is drawn above,
>   My knees are bowed in crypt and shrine:
> I never felt the kiss of love,
>   Nor maiden's hand in mine.

As already noted in Chapter Four, the self-discipline, asceticism, and chastity of chivalry further linked medieval knighthood with monasticism.

After Burne-Jones moved to London, he continued to see Galahad as an embodiment of his artistic mission, which endeavored to enact religious belief and philanthropic duty through the practice of painting. The 1858 drawing encapsulates his

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[126] Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 92.
[127] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 1:181-82.
[128] Poulson, *Quest for the Grail* 61.

spirit of idealistic ambition as he embarked upon this new vocation. Mancoff argues

Galahad appealed to the artist as a model of one who "did not question the course he

traveled and never doubted the worthiness of his goal." He "saw in his quest an inspiring

model for his own destiny as an artist," she contends.[129] Poulson articulates how

Tennyson's poem celebrated Galahad's similar "whole-hearted commitment to the Grail

and his decision to cut himself off from society and from human relationships." She

points out that "first-person narration,…introspection,…self-analysis and ecstatic

exclamations," characterized this literary instance of "single-mindedness."[130] Although

she does not apply these traits to Burne-Jones, they are equally valid descriptors of his

drawing, in which the knight's steadfastness and high-minded aims mirrored the artist's

own sentiments during this period.

Although Galahad's "innocent belief led to the revelation of spiritual mysteries,"

Mancoff concludes that Burne-Jones sought only a secular "ideal of beauty" rather than

any religious goal.[131] Tennyson's lines (23-24), however, reveal the secret of Galahad's

resolve: "So keep I fair through faith and prayer/A virgin heart in work and will." In the

poem, it is Galahad's belief in God and his religious practice that sustain him.

Furthermore, these elements of "faith and prayer" connect to his vocation and action in

the world—his "work and will." In this respect, Tennyson's verse offers a variation on

the monastic adage *laborare est orare*. Like the monks upon whom Burne-Jones partly

modeled his artistic identity, Galahad integrates his daily ritual of worship and prayer

with his chivalric duties, tournaments, and battles. His performance as a knight is a

Christian profession, an appealing idea to Burne-Jones, who had shifted his vocational

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[129] Mancoff, *Burne-Jones*, 95.
[130] Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 61.
[131] Mancoff, *Burne-Jones*, 95.

aspirations but still felt a sense of religious duty. The Galahad of Tennyson's poem

offered a model of how one could pursue, apply, and live out one's belief in the secular

world.

The 1880s

In the 1880s Burne-Jones returned to the Grail theme, this time in a manner that

emphasized the knights' moral progression and their journey. The four-light stained-

glass window designed for his home in Rottingdean, *Quest for the Sangreal* (fig. 134),

was his first treatment of the story in serial form. He shows Gawain, Lancelot, and

Galahad in individual lights, while the final panel illustrates the inscription, "how the

sangreal abideth in a far country which is sarras the city of the spirit." As in the 1858

drawing, Galahad is in transit to his destination and has not yet found that for which he

searches. Yet, unlike the panels of Lancelot and Gawain, a burgeoning stream surging

over the border of Galahad's territory into Sarras connects the last two lights visually.

Through this linkage the artist foreshadows the chaste knight's attainment of his goal,

leaving the conclusion of the story unrepresented but not uncertain. For the first time, he

also introduced the Grail angel, who acts as Galahad's divine guide.[132]

In the Rottingdean window Burne-Jones excised the more exciting moments of

Malory's tale, such as the tournaments and adventures, and distilled each knight's story

into one image emblematic of his moral character. Each light bears an inscription

explaining its protagonist's fate. Lancelot could not see the Grail "because his eyes were

blinded by such love as dwelleth in kings' houses;" Gawain sleeps by the Grail chapel,

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[132] In Malory's tale the chalice seems to move on its own, and Tennyson's "The Holy Grail" in the *Idylls of the King* has been widely credited as introducing the Grail angel into the legend. From this point forward, she became increasingly common in Victorian representations of the Quest, particularly at the fin-de-siécle.

"blinded by thoughts of the deeds of kings;" but Galahad "sought the sangreal and found it because his heart was single so he followed it to sarras the city of the spirit." By isolating the knights' respective failures and successes in this manner, Burne-Jones privileges, like Malory, their virtue over their deeds or actions and portrays the quest as an inner spiritual transformation. Signifying the pitfalls and challenges along the path to salvation, the window presents a moralistic, though not forcefully didactic, message. In Malory's version, the knights' piety and purity matter above all. In spite of the artist's sympathy for the failed knights, these windows stay true to Malory in granting such importance to the ramifications of sin versus moral uprightness. Occupying a surprising place over the housemaid's sink on a stairwell landing, the window acted as a daily reminder of life's significance as a religious pilgrimage. Like the borderland of Beulah and the Grail angel, it also seemingly brought the divine into the realm of everyday human experience.

The Rottingdean stained glass provided the template for all of Burne-Jones's subsequent Grail-themed objects. Its compositional elements, for instance, reappear in two private albums begun around the same time as the window. In *The Flower Book*, two watercolor roundels depict knights of the Quest. In one (fig. 156a), a knight slumbers, oblivious to the Grail passing by. In the other (fig. 156b), Galahad follows the angel of the Sangreal toward Sarras. The same themes recur in his *Secret Book of Designs*, begun in 1885 (British Museum). It was a playground for his imagination and, unlike his other sketchbooks, he never showed it to visitors. Subjects from Arthurian legend fill its pages, and, as Mancoff points out, the overwhelming motif is "the questing knight, in search of

an undefined reward."[133] From this point forward Burne-Jones continually underscored the legend's metaphorical meaning of spiritual pilgrimage by focusing on the journey and its attendant process of inward transformation rather than the goal itself.

The Holy Grail Tapestries

Nowhere is the motif of spiritual pilgrimage more evident than in the series of Holy Grail tapestries Burne-Jones designed in 1890-91 for Stanmore Hall, which Morris and Company wove. Of the five narrative subjects the first two, *The Summons* (fig. 157) and *The Arming and Departure of the Knights* (fig. 158), set the scene. The knights, ladies, horses and battle gear rendered in flattened, almost two-dimensional space are reminiscent of the fifteenth-century International Style, which often melded religious subjects with themes of chivalric combat, kings, and courtiers. Burne-Jones's middle two panels follow the pattern of the Rottingdean windows and focus on the failures of Gawain and Lancelot (figs. 159-60). The series culminates in *The Attainment* (fig. 152), a long horizontal tapestry of Galahad participating in the Grail Mass at Sarras while Percival and Bors look on, accompanied by three Grail Angels with the instruments of Jesus's Passion. As in the Rottingdean window, an inscription accompanies each panel except *The Attainment*.[134] A vertical tapestry of a ship (fig. 161) and several verdures of

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[133] Mancoff, *Arthurian Revival*, 238.

[134] Morris composed the inscriptions in Malory's style as follows: *The Summons*: "how king arthur sat in his hall at high tide of pentecost and how the whole round table was there assembled when there entered to them a damsel and called upon the knights to take upon them the quest of the sangreal whereof was great stir and wonder amongst them of the round table both the king and his knights." *The Arming and Departure*: "how after that the damsel had bidden the knights of the round table to seek the sangreal they departed on the quest whatever might befall but of those that departed these are the chiefest, sir gawaine, sir lancelot of the lake, sir hector de marys, sir bors de gamys, sir perceval and sir galahad." *The Failure of Sir Gawaine*: "how sir gawaine and sir uwaine went their ways to seek the sangreal but might no wise attain to the sight of it but were brought to shame because of the evil life they led aforetime." *The Failure of Sir Lancelot*: "of the quest of lancelot of the lake and how he rode the world round and came to a chapel

heraldic shields and deer (fig. 162) complete the decorative scheme. No explanation for the deer in the Stanmore tapestries has yet been offered, but historically, they occur in Arthurian imagery as an allusion to Jesus as the Divine Stag.[135] This iconographic tradition derives from the legend of Saint Hubert, who reputedly saw a Crucifix miraculously appear in a deer's antlers while he hunted on Good Friday. Interpreting this vision as the answer to his longstanding search for salvation, he converted to Christianity. Thus, in Arthurian legend the Divine Stag, like the Grail, serves as a guide to lost souls on life's quest and symbolizes the object all men presumably seek.

The tapestry designs continued to inspire Burne-Jones for the remainder of his life, providing the basis for other works including a painting of Sir Galahad at the chapel (1894, location unknown), *The Dream of Sir Launcelot at the Chapel of the Holy Grail* (1896, fig. 163), and the illustrations to his friend Sebastian Evans's *High History of the Holy Graal* (1898). The title page (fig. 164), repeated in both volumes, is an emblematic representation of the Grail on the high altar of the chapel with Jesus's blood dropping into the vessel from above. Burne-Jones's other two frontispieces for the *High History* (fig. 165) feature Galahad pursuing the Grail and two angels passing the chalice.

As he did in the Rottingdean window, *Flower Book*, and *Secret Book of Designs*, Burne-Jones accentuated the process of the Quest over its final conclusion. In the tapestries, however, he did this by manipulating actual and pictorial space to implicate the viewer as a participant in the Quest, seemingly undertaking the same pilgrimage as the knights. Morris suggested *The Summons* (fig. 157), "the Lady coming in and announcing the Quest or Search for the Sancgreal," hang next to the main door leading

wherein was the sangreal but because of his sins he might not enter but fell asleep before the holy things and was put to shame in unseemly wise."
[135] John Matthews, *The Grail: Quest for the Eternal* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), 54.

into the room.[136] This arrangement situated the viewer, upon entering, in a parallel

posture to the knights, turned toward the annunciating Grail maiden. As Donato Esposito

has pointed out, the tapestries' figures, particularly in the second panel, *The Arming and

Departure of the Knights* (fig. 158), are pushed forward in the picture plane, in effect

"inviting the viewer to empathise more closely" with them.[137] *The Arming and

Departure* also initiates the theme of travel, which the ship motif (fig. 161) carries

through. In Malory's tale, a warning emblazoned on the vessel, which transports

Galahad, Percival and Bors to the city of the spirit, proclaims, "Thou man, which shall

enter into this ship, beware thou be in steadfast belief, for I am Faith, and therefore

beware how thou enterest, for an thou fail I shall not help thee."[138] In addition to this

symbol of faith, in the Stanmore tapestries Burne-Jones also used the ship to indicate "the

scene has shifted, and we have passed from out of Britain and are in the land of Sarras,

the land of the soul."[139] In part developed from medieval manuscripts, the emblem

further highlighted the knights' journey and reinforced the theme of pilgrimage.[140] In the

final scene of *The Attainment* (fig. 152), contemporary audiences could have projected

themselves into the role of Galahad, who kneels before the chapel of the San Grael in the

familiar posture of the Eucharist practiced in Anglo/Catholic churches. Finally, the cycle

came full circle and climaxed at the same door by which the visitor had entered the

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[136] A. B. Bence-Jones, "The Stanmore Tapestry: Some notes on the Sanc Graal Arras, worked by William Morris, J. H. Dearle and others, for Stanmore Hall," comp. for W. K. D'Arcy, [1893-95], MSL/1938/3525, p. 3, Special Collections, National Art Library, London.

[137] Donato Esposito, "Burne-Jones and the Design of the Holy Grail Tapestry Series," *Review of the Pre-Raphaelite Society* 6, nos. 2-3 (1998): 20.

[138] Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, bk. 17, chap. 2.

[139] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, [before Sept. 13, 1894?], MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 277, British Library.

[140] Wildman and Christian note that drawings after similar ships from medieval manuscripts appear in Burne-Jones's *Secret Book of Designs* (British Museum) and a sketchbook in the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery. Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 150.

dining room (fig. 166). Morris and Company specially cut the tapestry to fit over the doorframe, which was strategically situated directly beneath the chapel. As they exited, viewers thus conceptually traversed the threshold between earth and heaven via this portal beneath the altar.

Poulson correctly observes that Lancelot is the central figure in the Stanmore tapestries, but his figure denotes more than the sins of adultery and pride. In Malory's tale Lancelot exemplifies the Christian doctrine of sanctification, a process akin to metaphorical pilgrimage. Malory portrayed Galahad as almost unearthly in his perfect sinless state, serving as a Christ-type predestined to find the Grail and be reconciled with God in order to restore the kingdom of Camelot. Although this "pure knight" purportedly offers an ideal model of faith and virtue, Lancelot, on the other hand, functions in the story as the flawed and more relatable every-man. The archetypal fallen man in need of redemption, he is the true hero of Malory's tale. While the outcome of Galahad's journey is assured, Lancelot continually struggles to overcome trials and temptations and is repeatedly forced to choose between the correct (or righteous) path and the one that leads astray toward sin. Although in Malory's conception Lancelot is already a Christian believer and thereby justified, he undergoes a perpetual process of spiritual refinement in which he repents, backslides, and strives forward with ever greater determination. In *Le Morte Darthur* he regularly seeks counsel from hermit-priests along the way, confesses his sins aurally, participates in Mass at every opportunity, and earnestly attempts to turn from his sinful ways. Yet, he continues to fall back into old patterns and it requires several failed tests of virtue before he begins to recognize his flaws and correct his behavior. Unlike Gawain, however, Malory's Lancelot is repentant, and although pride

and adultery ultimately prevent him from fully achieving the Grail, he is granted a vision of the Grail Mass (and its revelation of the mystery of transubstantiation) from afar. For Malory, he is the "best" of "any sinful man of the world."[141] In his alleged sincerity and desire to live up to Christian principles, he models the refinement aimed at in sanctification. It is this inner transformation of Lancelot which forms the core of Malory's Quest and Burne-Jones's tapestries.

In planning the project, Morris recognized Lancelot's significance, explaining, "Launcelot is the central figure in the story of the *Morte d'Arthur*."[142] In a letter to May Gaskell, Burne-Jones referred to the scene (fig. 160) as "The Rebuking of Lancelot," a title that more positively emphasizes, like Malory, the correction of the knight's character rather than his irreconcilable failure.[143] The slumbering knight reclines against a water cistern reminiscent of a baptismal font, suggesting that should Lancelot awake from his paralysis of sin, redemption is still available. His second version of this composition, the painting of 1896 (fig. 163), is no longer titled Lancelot's "failure" but rather *The Dream of Sir Launcelot at the Chapel of the Holy Grail*, a subtle change more sympathetic to the knight. Quite literally, the door to his ultimate redemption is left ajar in the painting, if only he would awake. The angel stands in the entryway as light from inside streams forth, whereas in the tapestry, the portal is closed tightly with only cracks of light seeping through. Furthermore, instead of gesturing for Lancelot to leave, the Grail angel now looks down compassionately at the sleeping knight. She seems to take pity on him rather than reprimand him. Additionally, at the Arts & Crafts Society in 1893 Burne-Jones

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[141] Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, bk. 13, chap. 5.
[142] William Morris, "Memorandum about the designs for tapestries for the dining room at Mr. D'Arcy's House at Stanmore," MS, [1891]. Reprinted in Bence-Jones, "Stanmore Tapestry," 4.
[143] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Sept. 13, 1894, MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 280, British Library.

exhibited the tapestry studies under the titles *The Quest of Lancelot* and *The Quest of Gawain*, putting them on equal footing with Galahad.[144] Lancelot may have fallen prey to profane love in *Le Morte Darthur*, but his fate is salvageable in Burne-Jones's conception of the Quest, reinforcing his role in Malory's tale as the repentant knight exemplary of Christian sanctification.

In 1857 Burne-Jones posed as the sleeping Sir Lancelot in Rossetti's mural for the Oxford Union (fig. 167). He maintained a special kinship throughout his life with this flawed "everyman," whose pride and adultery famously barred him from achieving the Quest, but who, according to Malory, gained the most in terms of spiritual growth. In reusing Rossetti's composition for his Stanmore tapestry design, Burne-Jones returned nostalgically to those happy days of collaboration with his mentor and imbued the work with autobiographical resonance. The fallen hero may have accumulated additional meanings for the artist by this point, too, perhaps embodying his own sense of foiled ambitions and regret over his extra-marital affair with Maria Zambaco.[145] Revisiting the composition in 1896 for the uncommissioned painting *The Dream of Sir Launcelot at the Chapel of the Holy Grail* (fig. 163) evoked great angst, expressed through his physical struggle with the canvas:

> What a canvas! It's been so harsh, like cast iron almost—such a struggle with it from first to last the whole way through. Never mind, it's conquered at last. I should think even fire wouldn't burn it, and nothing would ever get the paint away from it. It must hold to that like grim death. Those transverse ribs are so ugly. When the threads of a canvas shew

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[144] Bence-Jones, "Stanmore Tapestry," 91.

[145] His comment in 1893 that during his affair with Maria, "I was being turned into a hawthorn bush in the forest of Broceliande," explicitly posits this relationship in Arthurian terms and suggests an autobiographical meaning to his painting *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1873-74). Notably, she modeled for the figure of Nimuë. Quoted in Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 171.

straight up and down or straight across, I love it—but the diagonal ones are hateful and it's been such a trouble to me to get rid of them.[146]

This comment seems almost to cast the painting's creation as a form of repentance and penance. Burne-Jones encouraged the autobiographical connection between himself and Lancelot, joking to May Gaskell in 1894 about how a studio assistant once "said 'Yes Sir Lancelot, I mean Sir Edward'…but nobody will believe it when I tell it but I have said it so often I do really think it's true."[147]

The most significant indicator of pilgrimage in the Grail tapestries, as in all Burne-Jones's Grail imagery, however, is the fact that his narrative ends before the actual conclusion of Malory's story. In *Le Morte Darthur* the Quest terminates when Galahad, after taking part in the Grail Mass, is overcome with spiritual fervor and asks to cross over and live with God forever. His wish is granted, he enters heaven and never returns to Camelot. The artist, however, refrains from showing Galahad's moment of ecstasy or his apotheosis. The tapestry scheme originally called for a more majestic final scene of "the City of Sarras designed with all the necessary splendour….there will be many figures, the space lending itself to a great display of the richness of tapestry design."[148] To this end, Burne-Jones planned "The Death of Galahad amid the Host in the City of Sarras." Ultimately, however, he rejected it in favor of the more restrained and expectant image of Galahad at the chapel. This change gives credence to the fact that he wanted to emphasize the theme of the process of spiritual pilgrimage over its ultimate outcome and leave his knight dwelling forever on the brink of his ascent into heaven.

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[146] Rooke, "Notes of Conversations," 2:185.
[147] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, Nov. 1, 1894, MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 333, British Library.
[148] Bence-Jones, "Stanmore Tapestry," 5.

In the final design of *The Attainment*, the pure knight hovers perpetually on the threshold of his deliverance, frozen in the liminal space between earth and heaven. Like his representation of Bunyan's Christian, Galahad in the Rottingdean window is approaching Sarras but has not yet arrived. Similarly, in the Stanmore tapestry he kneels and waits to receive the host in a moment of suspenseful anticipation. Like the Magi of the Nativity, Galahad removes his helmet and places it on the ground, symbolizing the submission of earthly chivalry to the spiritual chivalry of Christianity, a central theme of Malory's Quest. Following the construct of the archetypal rite of passage, Galahad's as-yet-unfulfilled quest situates him as the eternal pilgrim. He is fully detached from the former life of the round table but hovers in a liminal state, not yet having achieved his transition into heaven. This uncompleted narrative isolates the process of salvation from its final reward and heightens its relevance to the idea of Christian sanctification. This pattern, followed in all of Burne-Jones's Grail works, does not imply, as Mancoff suggests, that he "believed…recognition of the sacred and beautiful was more important than any subsequent reward."[149] What it does articulate, however, is that for the artist, the process of spiritual transformation, the pilgrimage of life, was the more pressing concern. Galahad also behaves similarly to a Christian pilgrim. Upon nearing his destination he kneels in a manner reminiscent of the tradition of medieval devotees, who approached holy shrines by walking on their knees. His participation in the Grail Mass also recalls the climactic moment of physical pilgrimage, when the believer supposedly momentarily joins with God via the holy relic and allegedly receives a blessing or healing.

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[149] Mancoff, "Too beautiful," 71.

This open-endedness of Burne-Jones's narrative offers a more positive interpretation than Poulson proposes. She argues the tapestries acted as a "focus for meditation on love, desire, disillusion, failure, and the longing for immortality," and express a sombre sense of "lost youth, lost innocence, and lost hope."[150] Establishing a dichotomous framework of youthful purity and chastity (embodied in Tennyson's *Sir Galahad* and Burne-Jones's 1858 drawing) as opposed to adult worldliness and sexual transgressions (expressed in Malory and the Grail tapestries), she concludes all of the artist's late Grail works are primarily about this conflict between sacred and profane love.[151] However, the unconsummated moments of redemption eternally on offer in Burne-Jones's tapestry designs imply a more optimistic meaning. In his paradigm, Lancelot's salvation is still undecided, and the fact that Galahad has found the Grail but has not yet undergone his ecstasy suggests the end is yet to come. The book has not closed for those observing and, through their spatial connection to the tapestries, participating vicariously in the Quest. Whether its single incidents express ideas of sacred or profane love, reading Burne-Jones's Grail imagery as a process rather than a static event opens up a meta-narrative in which he acknowledges a progression of spiritual development and the opportunity for sanctification, not just an isolated moment in the continuum of morality.

Eventually Burne-Jones was able to purchase his own copy of Malory's *Morte Darthur*. In painting the binding of this beloved object (fig. 168), he chose a version of *The Summons* for one side and a knight chasing the Grail for the other (c.1895). This iconic image of the knight always pursuing but not yet capturing the Grail, first suggested

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[150] Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 246, 103.
[151] Ibid., 99-103.

in the Rottingdean window and repeated in numerous variations and media, became

Burne-Jones's signature Grail motif. Its unconsummated promise of salvation summed

up his idea of life as an ongoing pilgrimage in which the individual perpetually strives

toward eternal life.

Contemporaries accordingly recognized Galahad as the embodiment of Burne-

Jones's ideals. In 1894 Julia Cartwright concluded, "the Graal still beckons him onward,

and like Galahad of old, he follows where it leads."[152] After his death she extended the

analogy, characterizing his "mission" as one "received from heaven," which reminded his

viewers of the "world that is out of sight" and showed "how the troubled waves of human

life may dimly reflect the beauty and mystery of God." This has been "the gleam which

he has followed along earth's dark and perilous ways," she wrote. Continuing the Holy

Grail simile, she added,

> Like the Knights of Arthur's Table Round, he has gone forth on a divine
> quest, and his feet have never faltered in the search after truth and beauty.
> For this his name will be remembered among the world's great artists, for
> this, like his own Sir Galahad, he will be crowned kind—'far in the
> spiritual city.'[153]

William Sharp claimed the artist had framed his artistic goal in terms of the Holy Grail

Quest. "Like Sir Galahad," Burne-Jones reputedly explained, a great painter "must be so

continent of his faith that he will not barter the least portion of it in order to win a

worthless approval." Furthermore, he must be "so single-hearted that…there can be for

him only one Sanc Grael, beauty; and only one quest, the lifelong, insistent effort to

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[152] Cartwright, *Life and Work*, 32.
[153] Cartwright, "Review," 359.

discern and to interpret in beauty, that Loveliness, that Beauty, which is at once his

inspiration, his dream, his despair, and his eternal hope."[154]

The Sleep of Arthur in Avalon

Burne-Jones's final painting, *The Sleep of Arthur in Avalon* (fig. 169),

summarized a life spent dreaming of heaven and modeled on the spiritual ideals of the

Grail Quest. As Cartwright reported in 1898, "the painter himself always spoke of this as

his last great work, into which all the memories of his youth, all his old love for the

legend of Arthur, together with the wisdom and knowledge of riper years, were to be

gathered up."[155] What began as a commission for George Howard in 1881 grew into an

enormous canvas over 9 x 21 feet that required the rental of a third studio. It literally

took on a life of its own, both physically and symbolically. Of its birth the artist

professed, "I do so believe in getting in the bones of a picture properly first, then putting

on the flesh and afterwards the skin, and then another skin; last of all combing its hair and

sending it forth to the world."[156] As Mancoff points out, he demonstrated his obsessive

attachment to *Avalon* by "his eccentric habit of referring to the picture as a location, as

well as a symbol for his ambitions."[157] In letters he occasionally used "Avalon" as the

return address or wrote that he was "at Avalon–not yet in Avalon" when he was engaged

in painting the picture.[158] He longed "to reach Avalon," especially after the death of

Morris in 1896, whom Burne-Jones equated with King Arthur.[159] When reminiscing

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[154] Quoted in W. Sharp, "Edward Burne-Jones," *Fortnightly Review*, 302.
[155] Cartwright, "Review," 354.
[156] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:323.
[157] Mancoff, "Too beautiful," 248.
[158] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:340.
[159] Ibid.

about his lost friend, he despaired, "how long must I wait for Avalon—oh Lord!"[160] As

Mancoff concludes, for the artist "Avalon signified an amalgam of a place, a picture, and

a state of mind."[161] His use of life-size figures further intimates his wish to step inside

the canvas and dwell within the world of Arthur and his knights. Hence, Poulson argues

the diminutive reposing Arthur seems less like the robust, imposing Morris than the artist

himself and possibly expresses his yearning for respite from the earthly life he sensed

was drawing to a close.[162]

Avalon also embodied Burne-Jones's fixation on the journey or process, both in

art and life.   He obsessed over every detail, reworking the canvas and composition an

infinite number of times. In this repetitive, compulsive behavior, Mancoff asserts, he

"mirrored the efforts of Arthur in his legend, striving for the ideal of his imagination,

while acknowledging that to remain an ideal, it must always elude the grasp."[163] She

contends that he never intended to finish the picture, a claim Georgiana backed up.[164]

Like the religious pilgrim pursuing sanctification, the unfinished work in progress *was*

the goal. This palimpsestic practice of creation, revision, and improvement was an

exercise epitomizing the process of self-transformation and his view that life's

significance lay in the journey. Painting *Avalon* reminded Burne-Jones of "that beautiful

saying, 'What hath the Lord required of thee, O man, but to do justly and to walk humbly

with thy God?'"[165] Whether painting *Avalon* or working toward a perceived goal of

eternal life, it was the active pursuit of the spiritual quest and the soul's refinement along

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[160] Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary Gaskell, July 12, 1897, MS Add 54217, vol. 2, fol. 230, British Library.
[161] Mancoff, "Too beautiful," 248.
[162] Poulson, *Quest for the Grail*, 104.
[163] Mancoff, *Arthurian Legend*, 248.
[164] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:297.
[165] Ibid.

the way that mattered to Burne-Jones. Such images functioned as symbolic self-portraits of the artist as a questing knight on the spiritual pilgrimage of life, undergoing the process of sanctification and working toward his own vision of salvation.

The Three Magi

As Debra Mancoff rightly asserts, it was the biblical account of the shepherds and kings traveling to adore the infant Jesus that "cast the matrix for all pilgrimages, including Galahad's quest."[166] The Bible lacks many details about these visitors to the Nativity, and their centrality in the Christmas story was a later development. In Christian tradition, angels announced Jesus's birth in Bethlehem to a group of shepherds, who were watching their sheep during the night. They appear briefly in Luke 2:8-20, which claims, "with haste" they set out to "see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." After finding the Holy Family they legendarily returned to their own lands to spread the news of Jesus's birth. The only biblical mention of the Magi occurs in the Gospel of Matthew (2:1-12), which posits them as an unspecified number of "wise men from the east," who followed a mysterious star to Jesus's manger. Upon reaching him they reportedly "rejoiced with exceeding great joy," prostrated themselves in worship, and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Medieval legend transformed them from philosophers or astrologers into kings and reduced their number to three: Gaspar, the aged Caucasian king of Tarsus; Melchior, the middle-aged king of Arabia; and Balthazar, a youthful dark-skinned Nubian or Ethiopian king. Together, they stood for the various ages of man as well as the three known continents,

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[166] Mancoff, *Burne-Jones*, 97.

Europe, Asia, and Africa submitting to Christianity. According to tradition, the pagan wise men and the Hebrew shepherds symbolized Jesus's redemptive potential for both Gentile and Jew. Being three in number, the Kings of Cologne (named for their relics' final resting place in Cologne Cathedral) cast a further shadow of religious significance onto Burne-Jones's triumvirate of Galahad, Percival and Bors at the chapel of the San Grael.

Christianity considers the Magi, because of their supposed arduous and prolonged journey of devotion, the first pilgrims. Their reputed travels through foreign lands to an unknown destination, allegedly guided only by a divine force, function as a model for both physical and metaphorical Christian pilgrimage. In his "sermon" on Burne-Jones's art, the Reverend Burns reminded readers that the Magi were universally understood by "another and a more beautiful name," that of "Seekers after God." "They are pilgrims of the Spiritual Way," he explained; "they are Companions of the Spiritual Quest." In their perceived willingness to "forsake all to seek the Highest," they modeled Christian virtues and the construct of sanctification. Like the knights of the Grail Quest, the Magi's expedition symbolized for Burns, "the Soul's Quest for God." He found its meaning universal and eternal, with "Magi walking the desert way and the city streets" of turn-of-the-century Britain. "In every age, in every clime, under many different names," he asserted, "men have pursued, men still pursue, the quest."[167] While their story did appeal to Burne-Jones "as a testament to the power of belief," as Mancoff asserts, it more importantly provided a template for viewing life as an inner pilgrimage toward salvation.[168]

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[167] Burns, *Sermons in Art*, 64-65.
[168] Mancoff, *Burne-Jones*, 97.

Burne-Jones's personal affiliation with the Magi began around 1860 with the triptych he painted for St. Paul's, Brighton (fig. 32). His original conception, *The Adoration of the Shepherds and Kings*, was a portrait of his artistic circle as Christian pilgrims. William Morris posed as an unusually youthful Gaspar kneeling in reverence before the Holy Family. The crown he holds is gold entwined with laurel, a Christian symbol of the believer's "victory" in Jesus. He exchanges an intense gaze with Mary, who Burne-Jones painted from Morris's wife, Jane. Their intimate grouping, with Joseph's blurry visage relegated to the background, replicates Morris's real-life family; they were expecting their first child, born January 17, 1861. The infant Jesus hands the kneeling magus a dark, round object, which could be a pilgrim's badge or a wafer. In the upper right corner, Burne-Jones included himself and Algernon Charles Swinburne as the attending shepherds. By inserting himself in this manner, he followed in the tradition of Renaissance donor portraits, whereby patrons paid to have themselves represented as faithful devotees. John Christian and Stephen Wildman also note the resemblance between the kings in profile against a gold background and donor portraits in early Italian painting.[169] *The Broad Stone of Honour*, in which Digby describes the gold backings of early Italian paintings as "a kind of offering" given "out of overflowing piety" by its donor, could also have inspired the gilding.[170] Burne-Jones's donor-style self-portrait as a Nativity shepherd positions him as a religious pilgrim proffering his own sacrifice of art.

In the foreground another kneeling pilgrim, Melchior, innovatively dons a suit of armor. Historically, he occasionally appears in the attire of a courtier but there is no

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[169] Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 63.

[170] Kenelm Henry Digby, *The Broad Stone of Honour: Or, the true sense and practice of chivalry, The Fourth Book*, *Orlandus*, 2nd ed. (1826; London, 1829), 1:342.

established tradition of depicting him in armor. By departing from iconographical convention, Burne-Jones cast the magus in the guise of a medieval knight. As Christian and Wildman have noted, he reused a nearly identical suit of armor for the figure of Saint Giovanni Gualberto in *The Merciful Knight* (fig. 93), and even their poses are similar.[171] He continued to depict Melchior as a medieval knight for the rest of his life in all of his painted Adorations. This strategy further cemented the link Burne-Jones apprehended between the wise men of the Nativity and the knights of the Grail Quest and confirms that for him, the knight was also a holy pilgrim.

The second version of the altarpiece, modified to be more legible from the pews, reduced the design to only an *Adoration of the Kings* (fig. 33). Forced to remove figures from his first crowded composition, he chose to retain the kings over the shepherds. As explained in Chapter Two, the choice of the kings was appropriate for the role St. Paul's played in the Brighton community and emphasized the Christian virtue of humility. Significantly, however, Burne-Jones also selected the grouping more representative of religious pilgrimage. They were not only thought to have traveled greater distances to see Jesus but also, according to legend, returned to their homelands and gave up their riches in order to become itinerant preachers of the Gospel. Shifting the kings to a standing posture was a practical decision allowing the kings' heads to be visible over the altar cross and candles, but this compositional change also alters the meaning of the scene. The subject is no longer the kings bowing in worship but the unfulfilled moment of their approach. The mood has shifted from one of consummation to one of expectancy; they have not yet knelt and Jesus has not yet extended his purported offer of salvation. A youthful Gaspar is caught in the act of removing his crown. Arrested in the

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[171] Wildman and Christian, *Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, 93.

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moment of their devotion, like Galahad the Magi hover on the brink of redemption in a liminal state. Significantly, Ronald Parkinson has pointed out the similarity between the standing kings and the figures of Percival, Bors, and Galahad in Rossetti's *Attainment of the Sanc Grael* design for the Oxford Union (fig. 170).[172] The focus on their standing, walking posture emphasizes their voyage and role as religious pilgrims. The theme of the traveling kings, inaugurated in his second version of the Brighton triptych, was one Burne-Jones used almost exclusively from this point forward in his Nativities, a decision that emphasized the idea of pilgrimage. It suggests that for the artist, undertaking the spiritual quest, or living out one's beliefs, was more important than the formal act of worship. According to this painted interpretation of the Nativity, it was in life's journey that salvation was found.

The traveling kings reemerged the following year in a *Nativity* designed for the Dalziel Brothers (1862) (fig. 171). A year later this became the central panel of a triptych, which I believe may have been intended as a devotional object for a home altar.[173] The shepherds in their fields appear in the upper left corner, while the Magi process toward Bethlehem on the right. Such iconography was unusual in the history of Renaissance and Baroque art, which traditionally featured the kings and shepherds kneeling before the Holy Family, or at least already arrived at the stable in Bethlehem.

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[172] Parkinson, "Two Early Altar-Pieces," 321.

[173] The dating, documentation, and circumstances of the triptych's commission are conflicting and fragmented. Its intimate scale and small background details are clearly intended for close viewing. Although the central *Nativity* panel predates a related engraving published in Margaret Gatty's *Parables from Nature* (1865), there is no evidence the Dalziels commissioned it for this purpose. The wings, which feature an *Annunciation and Visitation* on the left, and *Flight into Egypt* on the right, are not related to any engravings and seem to have been added later, in 1863. I believe the Dalziels probably requested the *Nativity* in the second half of 1862, after Burne-Jones's trip to Italy and around the same time they commissioned the *Annunciation ("Flower of God")* (see fig. 83). The similar size, complementary subjects and color schemes (red in one, blue in the other) of the two paintings suggest that initially, they may have been conceived as pendants before Burne-Jones added the wings to the *Nativity*.

Instead, Burne-Jones depicted Gaspar, an armored Melchior, and a turbaned Balthazar in front of a ship with a billowing sail. This motif and the expansive sea behind it signify the kings' passage from foreign lands and the imagined distance of their pilgrimage. An unusual iconographic choice for a Nativity, the ship further links the Magi with the Holy Grail Quest since it appeared again as the prominent travel motif in the Stanmore tapestries (fig. 161).[174]

Twenty years later, when Burne-Jones next painted the three Magi, around the same time he resumed his Grail subjects, he again focused on the theme of pilgrimage. In *The Flower Book*, two roundels follow the kings on their quest, but their counterparts, the shepherds, do not appear in the album at all. In *Traveller's Joy* (fig. 141b), the title itself stresses the kings' transient identity. The artist showed the Magi from behind as they pause along the path that leads to the Nativity below. Still wearing their crowns, they have not yet reached their destination but are arrested in their moment of recognition. The mountainous terrain indicates the difficulties they have faced along the way. Burne-Jones's unusual perspective turned the roundel into a peep-hole through which the viewer voyeuristically intrudes upon the Magi's quest. Situated on their path, the viewer's close proximity to the pilgrims increases his or her identification with them. *Star of Bethlehem* (fig. 141a) picks up the narrative from the other side, granting the viewer a frontal glimpse of the Magi as they approach the manger. From the perspective of the Holy Family in the valley, the viewer is in a position to watch the arrival of the kings from three converging paths, a reference to the three regions of the earth the Kings of Cologne

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[174] Anna Jameson traced the ship iconography to a legend "mentioned by Arnobius the Younger," in which "Herod found that the three Kings had escaped from him 'in ships of Tarsus,'" and "in his wrath he burned all the vessels in the port." She interpreted the ship as a sign of the kings' homeward journey rather than their arrival and a foreshadowing of their future as itinerant preachers. *Legends of the Madonna*, 261.

were believed to represent. They each bear a pilgrim's staff and an angel carrying a star leads them. This embodied light repeats Burne-Jones's familiar theme of divine guidance theoretically accompanying man on his pilgrimage through life, as seen in *The Land of Beulah* and the Grail angel.

The Nativity's relationship to pilgrimage is realized more fully in the chancel paintings for St. John's, Torquay, discussed in Chapter Two (figs. 57-58). By separating the king and shepherd from their object of devotion, the Madonna and Child, Burne-Jones emphasized their pilgrim identity. The merging roads they walk along heighten the sense of travel and recall the disparate routes of the Magi in *Travellers' Joy*, while their forward-leaning posture conveys a sense of movement. Like Burne-Jones's other metaphorical pilgrims, guardian angels escort the shepherd and king, whose beard identifies him as Gaspar. The clasping of the angels' hands with those of their human charges articulates the idea of a God who draws near to man and guides him in his earthly wanderings. The angels in *The Nativity* prefigure the similar grouping of three angels in the Grail tapestry; in both cases they bear instruments of Jesus's passion.

As he had in his previous pilgrimage imagery, Burne-Jones conceived of these Magi in a liminal state of pregnant anticipation, perpetually striving toward salvation. The inscription, "Let us go now even unto Bethlehem" (Luke 2:15), reinforces this interpretation by detailing the shepherds' moment of departure. The artist felt strongly about the fact that the pilgrims were approaching, and had not yet reached, their destination. When the church accidentally reversed the paintings, he insisted to the incumbent that their positions should be switched, "otherwise the king & shepherd would

be leaving and not going to their object of worship."[175] As mentioned above, the

pilgrimage theme was present as well in Burne-Jones's designs for the side lights of the

east window (fig. 59), situated directly beside the paintings, and in the west window at

the opposite end of the nave (figs. 55, 151). By taking the unusual step of detaching the

worshippers from their object of worship, he stressed their role as the first Christian

pilgrims, approaching Jesus across the space of the altar.

The Star of Bethlehem

At the time Burne-Jones painted the Torquay pictures, he was working

concurrently on *The Star of Bethlehem* (1887-90) (fig. 74). In 1892 Malcolm Bell

pointed out the complementary nature of the two projects, which share the theme of the

Nativity as well as richly adorned kings, a hooded Joseph, and a stillness suggestive of

silent reverence.[176] Originally conceived in 1886 as an *Adoration of the Magi* tapestry

for the chapel at Exeter College, Oxford, his alma mater, the design recalls the Brighton

Adoration from his earliest years as an artist. Again, he depicted the kings at the end of

their pilgrimage, their standing posture giving the sense they have just walked into the

scene. The bleak landscape in the background, contrasted with the abundant vegetation

springing up around the family grouping, hints at the difficulty of the kings' journey. As

in Burne-Jones's other works, a supernatural force has directed them. The angel

hovering in the center holds the star that, as Burns put it, legendarily "guided the pilgrims

on their perilous way."[177] Another contemporary, the clergyman H. D. Rawnsley,

poetically described the tapestry's star as "Faith's light for Souls that onward still

[175] Edward Burne-Jones to Basil Reginald Airy, Jan. 16, 1889, in Airy, St. John's album.
[176] Bell, *Sir Edward Burne-Jones*, 78.
[177] Burns, *Sermons in Art*, 63.

aspire."[178] Having removed their crowns, the kings begin to present their gifts but have not yet reached the moment of the story when they bow submissively before Jesus.

The infant Jesus, who at once shrinks back toward his mother while gazing encouragingly at the Magi, heightens the air of suspense. In Burne-Jones's rendering, Jesus has not yet accepted their offerings and their salvation is thus not yet assured. As Burns pointed out, it is an epiphanic moment "of disenchantment and illumination," when the travelers do not find the palace of a royal king they expected but the humble stable of a tiny baby. In this instant he imagines them to be "struggling with their fears; bewilderment, wonder, disenchantment, even disappointment," but, he continues, "that strange moment of spiritual illumination, which comes to all the earnest seekers after God, when darkness gives way to light, and when in mysterious ways, and by weak and lowly things, God reveals Himself to our souls," quickly follows.[179] Once more, Burne-Jones envisioned his kings as pilgrims on the threshold of their redemption, occupying the liminal space between their old and new lives as well as the earthly and heavenly realms.

Burns also recognized the *Star of Bethlehem* as a pilgrimage subject, both in the literal and metaphorical sense. In his "sermon" on Burne-Jones's art he concluded, "the whole picture speaks to us of the mysterious quest of the soul for God." The artist, he declared, has managed to "bring us face to face" with the most "essential" and "undeniable" aspect of the Magi, "that they were seekers after God." For him, the picture evoked "the deepest hunger of the human heart—its need for God." For the soul of man, which, Burns avowed, "cries out for God," Burne-Jones purportedly demonstrated, "there

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[178] H. D. Rawnsley, "The Star of Prayer," June 5, 1890, MS, Exeter College Library, University of Oxford.
[179] Burns, *Sermons in Art*, 70.

are ever stars shining in the sky, calling them to leave all and to follow, and promising to lead them to One Who will give them rest." Burns argued that Burne-Jones's kings remind the viewer, "man's high dignity is not in crowns or coronets, not in shining armour or earth's delights, but in his quest and craving for the Highest." Discerning a strong undercurrent of hope in the painting, he asserted that the Magi "were not disobedient to the heavenly vision, they 'followed the gleam,' and they were not disappointed." Like Galahad, "they attained, they saw the vision, they reached the goal. And we too, if we leave all, and follow the gleam, shall attain all."[180]

Just as Burns made explicit the link between the "gleam" of the Grail and the infant Jesus, Burne-Jones likewise established several connections between the Magi and the Holy Grail Quest in the *Star of Bethlehem*. As in his previous nativities, the magus and knight are brought together into a figure of the religious pilgrim. Melchior dons the armored helmet, chain mail, and sword of knighthood. In 1891 the chapel keeper at Exeter College wrote an article describing Melchior as "a devout Crusader in chain armour."[181] The recurring ship motif, appearing this time on the robe of Balthazar (fig. 172), also enforces the link between the Nativity and the Holy Grail. As in the Stanmore tapestries, it signifies the voyage of the kings and the great distance of their journey. In *Star of Bethlehem*, however, its sail bears the emblem of a golden sun and fruit tree. In the Christian context of the Nativity, this image alludes to Adam and Eve's temptation in the Garden of Eden. Symbolically, then, it serves here to betoken Jesus's professed redemption of humanity's sin. Finally, Burne-Jones verbally linked the *Star of Bethlehem* to the Grail Quest. In 1890 he described the act of painting it as "a very happy

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[180] Ibid., 64, 68.
[181] T. E. Bossom, "The New Tapestry at Exeter College, Oxford," Feb. 1891, MS, Exeter College Library, University of Oxford.

month of autumn, living mostly in suburbs of Sarras…the land of the soul," indicating that for him, the realm of the Magi and that of the Grail knights was one and the same.[182]

By employing this first-person narrative, Burne-Jones imbued yet another pilgrim subject with autobiographical meaning. He identified especially with the European magus, Gaspar, who ages in Burne-Jones's oeuvre along with the artist, taking on a white beard similar to his own. In 1884 the fifty-one-year-old painter teased the much younger Frances Horner, "if you like old men (and you can't, no you can't, and you are right) you will like Gaspar, and if you like soldiers (and you do, ah, you do) you will like Melchior."[183] Barbara Leighton's well-known 1890 photograph of Burne-Jones reinforced the self-portrait element (fig. 73). Perched on the moveable stairs required to reach the upper quadrants of such an enormous watercolor, the painter appears as if visually inserted into his composition like a character in the great religious drama. The position of his head on the same vertical axis as the central wise man, as well as his comparable elderly appearance and gray beard, align him visually and symbolically with the eldest magus. The nearly life-size figures in *The Star of Bethlehem* amplify the sense that the artist is part of the holy scene behind him. The photograph's composition gives the impression that, like a pilgrim on his way to a shrine or the kings in *The Star of Bethlehem*, Burne-Jones is bringing an offering to the infant Jesus. The way the photograph froze his movement in mid-step and positioned his bended knee just at the level of the grassy earth, it creates an illusion that he has been arrested in the act of genuflecting. Although it is unknown what role Burne-Jones played in the photograph's conception, he was complicit in its creation and allowed it to be widely circulated during

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[182] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:209.
[183] Horner, *Time Remembered*, 111-12.

his lifetime. The image formalized his assocation with the Christian pilgrim, which he also countenanced through speech and artistic representation. Equated with Gaspar, Burne-Jones has been seemingly metamorphosed into a pilgrim laying his labors in devotion and sacrifice before the Holy Family.

In addition to playing the artist-monk, he also wore the persona of the artist-pilgrim, who, like Launcelot, took "upon me the adventures of holy things."[184] By projecting himself orally and visually into the narratives of Bunyan, Malory and the Nativity, Burne-Jones repeatedly cast himself in the guise of the pilgrim. The autobiographical references in his pictures indicate that at times, he identified personally with Bunyan's Christian, the archetypal pilgrim; Galahad, the chaste knight, as an ideal embodiment of religious vocation; the flawed knight Lancelot, the repentant sinner who undergoes a lifelong spiritual transformation and strives to live a virtuous Christian life; the poor but pious shepherd adoring the infant Jesus; and Gaspar, the wealthy elderly magus who legendarily traveled great distances to offer sacrifices to God. Such images share the theme of the soul's quest for the divine and functioned as symbolic self-portraits of the artist on a pilgrimage toward salvation.

Burne-Jones's pilgrims, Grail knights and Magi share an emphasis on physical travel, its attendant process of spiritual refinement, and liminal space. Suspended on the edge of salvation, his protagonists are eternally frozen in their act of pilgrimage, thereby exemplifying the Christian tenet of sanctification. In his visual framework, they are always journeying, never arriving. He portrays them as existing on the margins, removed from their former selves but not yet in possession of the eternal reward they seek. Burne-Jones consistently identified with this practice of inner transformation and the spiritual

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[184] Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, bk. 13, chap. 6.

trials of the quest but refrained from revealing the consummation of the tale. In his construct, it is in the journey of life that one's salvation is attained or lost. Consequently, how one enacts religious principles and values in lived, daily experience is what matters in this paradigm. For Burne-Jones, it was specifically his daily artistic practice that he believed provided the path to his spiritual goal.

The Star of Bethlehem not only encapsulated Burne-Jones's view of life as a spiritual pilgrimage, but an anecdote related to its creation also indicates that he perhaps conceived of art-making as a form of religious devotion. Of the tedious process involved in executing the painting, he remarked in 1890, "a tiring thing it is, physically, to do, up my steps and down, and from right to left. I have journeyed as many miles already as ever the kings travelled."[185] In this evocative statement, he equated the physical labor of painting with the act of Christian pilgrimage. When combined with his allegorical self-portraits as pilgrim, questing knight and magus, it suggests that for Burne-Jones, artistic practice served as his "symbolical wandering," leading, he hoped, to redemption. Never quite relinquishing his earliest vision of painting as an alternate religious vocation, throughout his life he continued to adhere in various ways—discernible in part through these pilgrimage subjects—to the idea that by creating beautiful objects, he would not only improve the world around him but also, by extension, earn divine favor.

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[185] G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, 2:209.

Conclusion

Most studies of Victorian art have clung to the problematic theory of secularization and neglected to keep pace with revisionist research emerging from the disciplines of cultural anthropology, history, religious studies, sociology, and visual culture. Callum Brown could easily be describing the majority of Burne-Jones's twentieth- and twenty-first-century chroniclers when he faults "scholars from a wide variety of backgrounds" for "falsely conflat[ing] our secularisation with what they think was the secularisation of the nineteenth century. They have failed to perceive the robustness of popular religiosity during industrialisation and urban growth between the 1750s and the 1950s."[1] The unfortunate result in art historical investigations of the late Victorian period is a distorted perspective that shortchanges the art object by eradicating an entire facet of its meaning and forcing it into a flawed modernist paradigm. In this dissertation, I have attempted to break this cycle by examining the ways religion not only survived, but was integral to the life and vocation of an eminent Victorian artist whose beliefs, until now, have been marginalized or overlooked because they do not fit within the expected conventional stories of sweeping theological movements, denominational divisions, endemic doubt, or lost faith. This benefits the field in two ways—it demonstrates how sustained attention to issues of religion can open up heretofore unrecognized meanings, functions, and lives of artworks, and it reveals how the objects themselves can attest to the nature of Victorian belief.

As demonstrated above, Burne-Jones's artworks held a plethora of religious meanings and served a variety of perceived sacred purposes. By excavating documentary

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[1] Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, 195.

and contextual material on his four commissions for altar and chancel paintings at St. Paul's, Brighton; St. Peter's, Vere Street, London; St. John's, Torquay; and Christ Church, Woburn Square, London, it becomes clear that he continued to engage with and promote Anglo/Catholic theology throughout his career. Over the century, his Incarnation iconography intensified to include increasingly explicit references to Jesus's violent death and purported sacrificial nature, endorsing an Anglo/Catholic message about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Moreover, my analysis has reclaimed the essential but often forgotten didactic and devotional functions of these objects, which modeled Christian virtues and attitudes of piety thought proper for the worshipper.

Burne-Jones's paintings fulfilled additional religious roles within the public forum of the gallery and the domestic sphere. Previously overlooked primary texts by clergymen and other religious critics have unearthed a second, alternative public for his art separate from the Grosvenor Gallery's aesthetic elite, one which utilized his objects as devotional aids, alleged catalysts to divine communion, tools for teaching Bible lessons, and platforms from which to preach "sermons on art." Their interpretive strategy treated paintings as scriptural texts to be exegetically dissected, effectively re-creating them and adding new layers of meaning. The Anglo-Catholic priest Alfred Gurney and the Christian Socialist novelist L. T. Meade, for instance, appended new scripture verses to *The Days of Creation*, while Gurney and Congregationalist minister Peter Taylor Forsyth explained *Pygmalion and the Image* as an expression of Christian redemption or the soul's quest for God. Other critics exploited Burne-Jones's "aesthetic" subjects such as the *Golden Stairs* as blank slates upon which to inscribe religious narratives, underscoring the multivalency of his art and the fluid definitions of sacred and secular in

the Victorian age. Burne-Jones's religious reception also raises questions about whether there might not have been a stronger undercurrent of religious painting at the so-called secular "temple of art" of the Grosvenor Gallery than has been previously recognized.

Art objects also played a key part in cultivating Burne-Jones's artist-monk identity, which I have reconstructed through his speech, visual representation, work routine, and physical environments. Portraits endorsed his perceived role as a visionary sage, while self-caricatures affected a posture of asceticism, self-discipline, and withdrawal from the world. Fra Angelico's legacy surfaced often, for instance in the previously unnoticed 1856 self-portrait of Burne-Jones in a pseudo-monastic habit painting a Madonna and Child. The Kelmscott *Chaucer* frontispiece and photographs of the artist in the garden posited the *hortus conclusus* as a spiritual cloister, where contemplative solitude could engender divine inspiration, and linked Burne-Jones to the trope of melancholy genius. Paintings, prints, and stained-glass cartoons of religious subjects demarcated his lived environments as quasi-sacred spaces, where art-making often acted as a form of spiritual meditation, as in the delicate watercolor diary of *The Flower Book*, or as an alternative Sabbath observance, for instance in the Kelmscott *Chaucer*'s production. The monkish adage *laborare est orare* provided a template for Burne-Jones's conception of art as religious practice, summarized visually in the autobiographical *An A. B. C. of Chaucer*, where the spaces of creativity, domesticity, and the scriptorium coalesce, work and prayer exist side by side, and the artist is seemingly both inspired by God and rewarded with divine favor for his efforts.

Finally, I have shown how Burne-Jones's renderings of pilgrims, the Grail knights, and the three Magi functioned as symbolic self-portraits of the artist in pursuit of

religious salvation. Whether it is Christian, Bunyan's archetypal pilgrim hovering on the borderland of heaven in *The Land of Beulah*; the chaste Sir Galahad of his 1858 drawing; the fallen but repentant everyman, Sir Lancelot, asleep at the Grail Chapel; an iconic knight chasing the Grail in *The Flower Book* and on the bookbinding of his personal copy of *Le Morte Darthur*; or the aged Gaspar of *The Star of Bethlehem*, who, according to tradition, traveled great distances to lay a sacrifice at the feet of Jesus, Burne-Jones consistently expressed a view of life as a spiritual quest. By emphasizing themes of travel and arresting his protagonists in liminal moments on the thresholds of their destinations, he transformed them into perpetual pilgrims exemplifying the doctrine of Christian sanctification. He repeatedly projected himself verbally and visually into these narratives, and by manipulating actual and pictorial space in the Holy Grail tapestries, implicated the viewer in the journey as well.

The fact that the spheres of personal piety and visual art overlap repeatedly throughout this dissertation evinces a wider phenomenon yet to be explored in the Victorian period. Although Americanists such as David Morgan and Sally Promey have forged groundbreaking investigations of this country's religious visual culture, similar projects have yet to be carried out on nineteenth-century Britain. The various artistic artifacts of Victorian devotional practices, for example, merit further investigation, including private chapels, which saw a resurgence in the nineteenth century; triptychs and other decoration for home and missionary altars; the circulation and usage of prints after biblical paintings; the ways consumers hung and displayed religious art in domestic spaces; and pictorial Bibles. Illustrated devotional literature is likewise a rich field to be mined, encompassing "Steps to the Altar" manuals, handbooks for domestic family

worship, Sabbath periodicals, and personal psalters, prayer books, and Apocrypha such as those Burne-Jones decorated for his female friends. His reliance on Christian iconography as a language of personal expression in artworks gifted to friends is also a topic only touched on here but deserving of further analysis. Getting away from the avant-garde elite and focusing on more mainstream, understudied painters such as Edward Armitage, Gustave Doré, or Joseph Noel Paton could also provide insight into popular religion in Britain, as could the religious aspects of popular entertainments such as panoramas and theatrical performances. Finally, greater, sustained attention to the rich and varied output of British religious painting post-1860 (after the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood)—and the fundamental question of how to delineate the "religious" during this period—is absolutely essential. One thing is clear: if any fruitful discussion is to take place, historians of Victorian art must be attuned to the theoretical discussions taking place outside of their discipline and incorporate strategies of lived religion, practice, and visual culture.

By thinking about religion as something that happens beyond simply the orthodox confines of corporate worship or denominational creed as behaviors and discursive patterns occupying the spaces of vocation, identity, creativity, and the everyday, it becomes clear that Burne-Jones's art served as his form of lived religion. It may not have been practiced or observed in the most obvious manner (church attendance), or adhere strictly to a traditional doctrine (Catholicism or Anglicanism), or respect the expected parameters of Victorian sectarianism (Tractarian, Evangelical, Dissenting, Broad Church, or Christian Socialist, for instance), or been appreciated by his most prominent audience (the Aesthetic Movement). Nevertheless, inspired by a sense of divine calling, a

conviction about Christianity's social responsibility, and a belief in the redemptive power of beauty, Burne-Jones realized a priestly role from the easel instead of the pulpit. From the beginning of his career in 1856, he conceptualized art as a religious vocation whereby he could improve the world around him and, in the process, hopefully secure divine favor in the afterlife.

The degree to which this spiritual hypothesis drove his personal and professional decisions may have ebbed and flowed over his lifetime, but as his various religio-artistic identities show, it was never far from the surface. At numerous points throughout the century, Burne-Jones enacted his spiritual convictions through multiple overlapping, and at times contradictory, personas that cast his artistic practice as a quasi-sacred activity, such as the priest, who mediates God for man; the pilgrim, who undergoes a spiritual journey toward eternal reward; or the monk, for whom labor serves as a devotional exercise. This dissertation thus supplements the existing literature on Victorian artistic identity by presenting new revelations about its potential religious dimensions. Burne-Jones's example indicates there was a wide range of identities available to later Victorian artists that were informed by religious concepts or modeled on Christian prototypes. Furthermore, his example aids the understanding of how belief and religious discourse contributed more broadly to one's conscious construction of a personal and professional self during the period.

Burne-Jones's idea of art as a religious practice; audiences' utilization of his objects for biblical teaching, devotion, and perceived communion with God; his mapping of monastic traits onto his identity and artistic production; and his self-awareness of being a pilgrim on the spiritual journey of life, striving toward a salvation secured

through art-making, have significance far beyond the scope of his specific example.

Such occurrences provide compelling testimony that Christianity was not necessarily

disappearing in Victorian Britain but was being performed, implemented, and adapted in

new, unorthodox ways. In helping to dismantle the paradigm of secularization theory and

its mischaracterized relationship to modernity, his example contributes as much to the

history of Victorian religion as to the history of art, thereby fulfilling Forsyth's

prediction, "The great spiritual products of an age or a civilization reflect something

much more than their artist or even their art."[2]

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[2] Forsyth, *Religion in Recent Art*, vii.

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