

Visions of the End in Interwar British Art

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Abstract

The cessation of hostilities to the Great War with the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918 brought the largest and most devastating war hitherto known to an end. It was meant to be the “War to End War”, yet a little over twenty years later in 1939 it was eclipsed by the devastation of the Second World War. The shadow of war loomed over the intervening years, which were marked by pronounced speculation on where human society was going; for every prophet of doom anticipating collapse into degradation, animosity, and self-annihilation there was a contrasting viewpoint awaiting the move towards a better new world. Further, these assessments often overlapped. This thesis examines the impact of apocalyptic ideas within British art in the interwar years. It looks at painting, drawings, prints, and sculpture, addressing the use and development of apocalyptic concepts during the period 1918-1939, and explicitly relates contemporary anxieties and apocalyptic evocations with Christian apocalyptic narratives. Interwar British society at large identified with Christian traditions, either as products of a Christian education and state, or through belief. The Apocalypse is central to Christian hope. The project surveys this underappreciated aspect of the period in order to recognize the influence of Judeo-Christian apocalyptic traditions. The apocalyptic orientation, both in its religious and secular forms, has been recognised as a manifestation arising from anxiety in the contemporary context. This thesis reveals a British permutation of a general (European) trend.

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I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction: Prelude to a Disaster

The British interwar has been recognised as a period characterised by shock, fear, and anxiety.¹ It opened with the signing of the armistice on 11 November 1918, and the concretisation of peace with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, and concluded with the British declaration of war upon Germany and the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe in 1939. Thus, the historiographical nomenclature identifies the period through its relationship to war. The Great War had cast a harsh light upon the culture in the Western nations that had allowed the carnage to happen and compelled a re-examination on where this 'civilisation' was heading. Some hoped that the War could be a spur for renewal, and it inspired a sense of purpose and possibility. For others it signified an inevitable decline. Although such ideas had resonated in the years surrounding the interwar, there was, as the historian George C. Clark noted in 1932, a pronounced interest and gloomy prognosis on where civilisation was heading:

It is a fact so familiar that we seldom remember how very strange it is that the commonest phrases we hear used about civilization at the present time all relate to the possibility, or even the prospect, of its being destroyed.²

There was the belief in Britain during these years that Britain and the Empire—which reached its territorial zenith in the 1920s—was the hub of the Western World. It had greatly contributed in the first place to constructing this civilisation that was now being diagnosed as in crisis. Britain received and disseminated ideas across the world, and in most regards, what mattered in the British context was important internationally.³ The conception of a civilisation is inextricable from its visual and material culture. Contemporary British artists and writers—many of whom had served during the Great War—helped shape the idea and memory of recent lived experience through their images and words. Their responses made manifest the harrowing truths of the conflict. Artists such as William Orpen would record and reinforce in paint the sense of transition from a peaceful Edwardian splendour to a bitter and brutal new world of mechanical slaughter from which no artist could simply just return.

This thesis addresses interwar British art and visual culture, and its specific relationship with contemporary anxieties on societies' orientation via a particular form of civilisational discourse; that of apocalypse and eschatology. Apocalyptic themes and motifs have preoccupied artists of many different schools and periods throughout history. The apocalyptic world view is activated by a sense of crisis; this thesis intends to address the relationship between the visual arts and apocalyptic

¹ Schweitzer, *Decay*, 1: 1-3; Toynbee, *Breakdowns*, 4:313-320; Woolf, "1936," 9-21; Overy, *Morbid Age*: 2-5.

² Clark, "Instability," 645.

³ Overy, *Morbid Age*, 7.

thought and imagination during the British interwar. The traditional narrative of Western art between the two World Wars has foregrounded the continental European avant-garde. British art has largely been portrayed as a period of retreat except for a small number of canonical artists in the 1930s centred on an abstract or surreal idiom who can be situated within European modernism.⁴ Scholarship owes a significant debt to Charles Harrison's *English Art and Modernism 1900–1939* (1981), in elevating modernist artists such as Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, Paul Nash, and the English paradigm of modernism, Ben Nicholson, in the canon of British art. Otherwise British art in this timeframe has until recently received little attention compared to contemporary French, German, Italian, Russian and American art.⁵ Accordingly a number of different *approaches* to art in Britain have received relatively little acknowledgment. The religious element in art in the twentieth century is a particular aspect that has largely remained unaddressed or been pushed aside in secular art-historical scholarship.

Generally, the influence or adherence to religious traditions in society during the interwar has been identified with the secularisation thesis—or the assumption of a linear, inevitable link between modernization and religious decline. Yet as the historian David Nash attests, the secularisation thesis has had a detrimental impact on the study of religious history.⁶ The art-historical study of modern art and religion has been similarly afflicted, with a secular narrative emphasised. Christianity continued to exert a strong influence during the interwar years.⁷ Interwar British society at large identified with Christian traditions, either as products of a Christian education and state, or through belief. This identity, and the promises of the faith are bound up within the apocalyptic arc, most notably as prophesied in the book of Revelation.

Understanding Apocalypse

The word apocalypse has today, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, come to mean broadly the end of the world—at least as we know it—yet the modern secular concept is profoundly shaped by religion. The word's etymology indicates the more accurate meaning as a common noun; an unveiling or revelation.⁸ The most apparent disclosure associated with the concept is the last book of the Christian New Testament attributed to John of Patmos: the book of Revelation. It was, like many New Testament texts, translated from Koine Greek. The title of the

⁴ Hildyard and Mellers, "Cultural and Social Setting," 26.

⁵ A brief survey of recent exhibitions is telling, with major national and international exhibitions including; "Chaos and Classicism: Art in France, Italy, and Germany, 1918-1936," Guggenheim Museum, 2010; "America after the Fall: Painting in the 1930s," Royal Academy, 2017; "Revolution: Russian Art 1917–1932," Royal Academy, 2017; "Post Zang Tumb Tuuum. Art Life Politics: Italia 1918–1943," Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2018. Exhibitions of British art have been national or regional in scope.

⁶ Nash, "Secularization's Failure," 302.

⁷ Nash, *Blasphemy*, 218-219; Brown, *Religion and Society*, 25,

⁸ Apocalypse comes from the Ancient Greek apo- "from" + kalyptein "to cover, conceal".

book is taken from its prophetic nature and opening words, which in its original Greek was “apokálypsis” (ἀποκάλυψις). This gives the book its synonymous title “The Apocalypse”. Apocalyptic thought is native to Christianity. Although Judaism and Islam have distinct apocalyptic textual traditions, they have also tended to forbid figurative images, leaving Western culture with a tradition of apocalyptic visual art that historically was Christian in orientation. As in the Jewish apocalypses that preceded it, Saint John’s vision of the ultimate resolution of creation in the last book of the Christian Bible professes to reveal esoteric knowledge—particularly regarding the heavenly world and the ultimate destiny of ours. It is central to Christian hope and yet is also an embarrassment to its greatest critics. While the role of the Apocalypse has greatly diminished since the heyday of imminent apocalyptic expectation in the early church, in the early twentieth-century the word apocalypse still possessed its principal relationship with theology, however the secular addendum to the meaning of apocalypse was becoming increasingly evident.

Britain’s predominantly Christian culture was exposed to a distinct canon of apocalypses and related texts; these share a number of recurring themes, subjects and motifs, and pertain to elements of crisis, judgment, and salvation. The book of Revelation remained the paradigm of apocalyptic thought. John J. Collins argues that apocalyptic texts share “some degree of resemblance to the Book of Revelation.”⁹ While Revelation is the foremost apocalypse in Western Christianity, it was largely constructed in reference to other religious texts and parallels other biblical apocalypses. These include, in particular, the Hebrew Bible texts of the major prophets Ezekiel and Daniel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah (with nearly 300 references to the Hebrew texts have been recognised), and the New Testament’s Olivet discourse (‘Little Apocalypse’). These narratives take the guise of prophecy or revelation, and frequently address subjects of time and history, the struggle of good and evil, destruction and redemption, judgment, death, and resurrection. Through association they meditate on concepts related to one’s freedom to affect change, authority, epochal transition, and eschatological ideas of heaven and hell. Eschatology—*the last things*—is “concerned with the end of the world or history in the manner of the historical apocalypses, but also with the fate of the dead.”¹⁰

These themes are not exclusive to apocalypses—they are largely the key themes of Judeo-Christian faith. In apocalyptic texts they are articulated via mysterious, complex and symbolically rich dreams and prophecy, often using allusive and obscure imagery that encourages a number of readings and interpretations. They frequently parallel with preceding biblical narratives, such as the Deluge in Genesis, the fall of powerful civilisations such as Sodom, and the Crucifixion, which are

⁹ Collins, “Apocalyptic Literature?,” 1.

¹⁰ *ibid*, 5.

cited to indicate future events.¹¹ Revelation, as prefigured by the major prophets, tells of the resolution of all creation. First there will be a period of great tribulation and turmoil, when war (Armageddon), plague, famine (in the guise of the Four Horsemen) will ravage the world before the Second Coming (Parousia) and the reign of Christ on Earth for a millennium. The period will culminate in the final battle—Gog and Magog—where Satan will be destroyed. The resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgment follow, after which creation will be renewed in the New Heaven and New Earth at the end of time.

For Christians, the Bible is a guide to salvation and how to obtain eternal life. Thus, the idea of salvation is key to Christian apocalyptic belief, with salvation made possible through the incarnation and Crucifixion of Jesus.¹² On a personal level, the Crucifixion indicates the suffering of the individual, however it more broadly signifies the supernatural victory over evil and death, and ultimately belongs to a larger Christian narrative of “the struggle against evil that is concluded with a monumental final battle”.¹³ Christian belief promises that humans can be saved from eternal punishment through Jesus’ death and resurrection; by living a Christian life, they can instead enter Heaven and be in the presence of God.¹⁴ The early Church and even Jesus’ disciples were firmly in the belief that Christ would return to make his final judgment shortly after he had ascended into Heaven; they believed that they were in the end-times. The Crucifixion and ascension of Christ was therefore the beginning of the end; however, the end-times became a vague expanse of time when those early apocalyptic hopes proved inaccurate and this sense of apocalyptic imminence dissipated. Nevertheless, since the early Church the Crucifixion has been seen as heralding the transition from the era of the old covenant to the new era, which is also the end-times, or “last days”.¹⁵ In this thesis I take the position that addressing the biblical Apocalypse without also considering the Crucifixion (and vice-versa) is erroneousness.

Of course, the Crucifixion would be meaningless without the resurrection; Jesus’ resurrection is the starting point for all Christian thought on life after death. At the heart of the Christian worship is the Eucharist. The acclamation in the rite declares, “Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.” This call pulls “into vivid focus how thoroughly and profoundly eschatological” the Christian faith is.¹⁶ The apocalyptic hope of eternal life is embedded in the belief in Christ’s resurrection. According to 1 Corinthians 15:14: “And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” Christ’s resurrection is the “first fruits of those who have

¹¹ Matthew 24:37-44; Luke 17:26-36; Revelation 11:8. The Deluge occurs in Genesis 6-9. Sodom is first referenced in Genesis 19 and recurs throughout the Bible; the last reference is in Revelation 11:7-8.

¹² Romans 6:23.

¹³ Jenkins, 17.

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:9.

¹⁵ Acts 2:17

¹⁶ Walls, Introduction, 3.

fallen asleep”:¹⁷ it is not an antetype, rather it *is* the beginning of the Apocalypse’s resurrection cycle. As the second Adam, Jesus is an example of a human who has been transformed and delivered from sin (that resulted from the first Adam), while Jesus’ resurrection (as the “first fruits”) heralds the resurrections of Revelation 20:4-6 and 20:12-13. Jesus is cast as the “agent of eschatological salvation”.¹⁸ This is strenuously asserted in 1 Corinthians 15:22: “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” According to 1 Corinthians 15:26, “The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death [emphasis added].” In the apocalyptic arc the general resurrection will only follow once death has been subdued. Accordingly, both the Crucifixion and resurrection will feature heavily in this thesis. I take the position that apocalyptic themes resonate in artworks ostensibly about Crucifixion and resurrection and argue that the particular power and popularity of these subjects in the particular timeframe owes much to their apocalyptic and eschatological character.

Scholars have not always meant the same thing when using the word apocalypse and its variations. The language and literature identified with it contains many deviations, and can be subject to different emphases.¹⁹ The word ‘apocalyptic’ has frequently been used both as an adjective and noun, whilst ‘apocalyptic’ and ‘eschatology’ have also been used synonymously.²⁰ The biblical scholar Paul Hanson advocated a tripartite structure, distinguishing between “apocalypse” as a literary genre, “apocalypticism” as a social ideology, and “apocalyptic eschatology” as a set of ideals and motifs.²¹ Hanson’s model will be adhered to in the following, while ‘apocalyptic’ will only be used as an adjective. The biblical scholar John J. Collins contributed a definition and morphology of the apocalypse literary genre in *Semeia* (1979) which has served as the standard:

Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world.²²

The theologian Alister E. McGrath broadly surveys further attributes of apocalyptic literature:

Apocalyptic writings generally focus on the expectation of God’s imminent intervention in the affairs of the world, in which God’s people will be delivered and their enemies destroyed, with the present world—order being overthrown and replaced with a restored creation.²³

The biblical scholar and theologian Richard Bauchmann identifies three formal features of the apocalypse genre; first it involves a discernment of the contemporary setting, secondly it makes a

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:20.

¹⁸ Rowland, “Eschatology,” 58.

¹⁹ Schmithals, *Apocalyptic Movement*, 23.

²⁰ For example, in Kermode, *Sense of an Ending*.

²¹ Hanson, “Apocalypticism,” 29-30.

²² Collins, “Introduction,” 9.

²³ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 465.

prediction concerning the change necessary for the realisation of God's Kingdom, and thirdly, makes a demand for one's response to herald its arrival.²⁴

The Revival in Apocalyptic Thinking in the Early Twentieth-Century

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw apocalyptic ideas increase in prominence; the Apocalypse provided a language of dramatic imagery that was accordingly familiar throughout interwar society. As Philip Jenkins has claimed,

From the late nineteenth century these [Apocalyptic] ideas experienced a worldwide vogue, as believers tried to make sense of the sweeping changes witnessed around them—the collapse of old social assumptions, the rise of gigantic cities and mass society, and the spread of seemingly miraculous technology.²⁵

The concept of an apocalypse was part of the intellectual and aesthetic currency of the age—inspiring what one might refer to as a heightened state of *apocalyptic awareness*—and as will see throughout this thesis, such ideas were appropriately manifest in the artistic practice of a diverse range of artists working in Britain. The cultural historian Paul Boyer claims the appeal of apocalyptic belief is as, “a way of ordering experience. It gives a grand overarching shape to history, and thus ultimate meaning to the lives of the individuals caught up in history's stream.”²⁶ Apocalypse—religious or secular—heralds radical and disruptive change in the world; apocalyptic ideas and motifs receive greatest attention from communities undergoing a sense of crisis. They make sense in times of crisis; when in a period of great difficulty, the threat is perceived as real and imminent. The causes for the contemporary perception of a world losing its bearings, such as war, social upheaval, and modernity, were legion, and accordingly triggered discontent with traditional social and political structures. This latent apocalyptic awareness was activated by the Great War.

At the heart of apocalyptic thinking are ideas of a radical break, discontinuity, hope, and renewal. Many met the prospect of a war not with horror, but with what can be considered an apocalyptic hope for a transformation of society; war was thought a means for achieving a new world, however, the reality was far from their idealised visions and proved apocalyptic in a very different sense. The Great War quickly eclipsed all previous wars in the unfathomable scale and horror. With nothing in lived experience to draw upon, it was styled in eschatological and apocalyptic terms, and recurrently called ‘Armageddon’. The *Observer* reported in 1914:

Thought cannot measure the dimensions of what is occurring and language cannot express. We can only remember... the dread visions of the Apocalypse...

²⁴ Bauchmann, *Theology of Revelation*, 148-9.

²⁵ Jenkins, *Great and Holy War*, 137.

²⁶ Boyer, *When Time Shall Be*, xi.

Nearer than all our poor literal words come these ancient parables and prophecies [sic] to express the realities that even now [are] happening around us, and the stupendous catastrophes that must smite the world...²⁷

Accordingly, the Crucifixion became an important image associated with the war that conveyed the idea of sacrifice, profound change in the world, and the apocalyptic concept of resurrection. It is therefore also an event with apocalyptic impact; the Crucifixion sees God dramatically and shockingly intervening and radically disrupting the world, ultimately creating a new reality. The effect of the theme was to give meaning and justification to the conflict, while conveying the sense of historical break.

The Apocalypse as a specific frame of reference legitimated the War and gave the perception of significance both individually and collectively. Apocalypse, Armageddon and divine struggle offered a common point of reference for otherwise incomparable events. It made unfamiliar things familiar, and obliquely identified the current situation as epochal. This conceptual framework provided purpose to the War for non-believers too; the present moment is discerned as profoundly significant, thus inspiring a form of popular apocalypticism. Entente powers alleged 'civilisation' was at stake, while both sides portrayed the War as a divine struggle. The Clergy supported the War from the pulpit and in print.²⁸ The Archbishop of Canterbury evoked Christ's death by calling for "self-sacrifice and self-surrender" and invoked the Crusades.²⁹ Kaiser Wilhelm II asserted God was with Germany.³⁰ According to German propaganda, the War was "Glaubenskrieg", or a war of beliefs. Religion-as-weapon extended to Ottoman Sultan Mehmed V's attempts to inspire jihad in British territories in the Middle East. What started out about the sanctity of one's own inverted into the ungodliness of the other.

The increasingly secular usage and meaning of apocalypse and Armageddon in a Christian-educated culture allowed for complex allusions to Revelation. The cultural products of the War were inevitably coloured by the ostensibly secular media discourse, while images of no-man's land became images of the biblical wasteland and God's judgment, creating a cyclical narrative. In August 1914 the *Guardian* reported on "some zealous Biblical students" who were "debating the claims of the present war to be the Armageddon of the Apocalypse..." The reporter continued "[as] a generic name rather than specific name... the present war is an Armageddon which will probably round off and end one complete period of European history."³¹ The media rhetoric was directly related to censorship and propaganda; apocalypse offered a way to describe events indirectly when censorship risked silencing them, while the language of apocalypse could also be used as a way of distancing the

²⁷ "The War of Wars, Europe's Armageddon," 6.

²⁸ Wilkinson, *Church of England*, 12, 32-33.

²⁹ "Sacred Cause," 10.

³⁰ "Kaisers manifesto," 4.

³¹ M. "Free Churches," 10.

public from the reality. The British War Propaganda Bureau was secretly established in 1914 with a broad remit of clandestine publishing.³² One employed author, H. G. Wells, idealised the conflict as “The war that will end war”.³³ In a series of newspaper articles subsequently assembled as *The War That Will End War* he argued:

This is already the vastest war in history. It is a war not of nations, but of mankind. It is a war to exorcise a world-madness and end an age... For this is now a war for peace. It aims straight at disarmament. It aims at a settlement that shall stop this sort of thing for ever. Every soldier who fights against Germany now is a crusader against war. This, the greatest of all wars, is not just another war—it is the last war!³⁴

Jacques Derrida argued that whoever adopts the apocalyptic tone “comes to signify to, if not tell, you something. What? The truth”. This tone is rhetorical; it is the language declaring the “end is beginning”.³⁵ Apocalypticism meanwhile is the worldview shared by apocalyptic texts that the end of the world is imminent. Apocalyptic metaphors are poetic *fictions* that address a gap in language or ideas; they provide a reference point when others are too unstable or unsuitable. An apocalyptic allusion identifies with apocalyptic narratives without any assessment of whether it is or is not an apocalypse. The tone that suggests that the end is near “always cites or echoes in a certain way John’s Apocalypse.”³⁶ Wells adopts the apocalyptic tone to elucidate the conflict, presenting it as an apocalyptically decisive battle and eschatological climax whereby victory will initiate a millenarian era. This secular interpretation conflated and validated the British perspective as articulated in the sermons of numerous moderate churchmen. It was reported that the Anglican Bishop of Lichfield John A. Kempthorne was calling for renewed efforts “to bring about the true kingdom of God on earth.” He argued, “It is such a kingdom we are fighting for in this war, and not a kingdom upon earth such as Germany was striving for.”³⁷ This optimism was not necessarily sustainable; Wells offered a new, tempered forecast in 1916 stating there was “no clear prospect yet of an enduring universal peace at the end of this war.”³⁸

The War was widely—and hastily—greeted as epochal; the anticipated post-war world would break with the past. The rhetoric structured the human experience of war in terms of temporality, while the apocalyptic language articulated the sense of cataclysmic and profound ending. Subsequent historiography on the War has largely taken one of two positions on the effect of the conflict: either the conflict changed everything or there was a strong element of continuity with the preceding years. Neither position proves adequate. Certainly, post-war changes were

³² 1162 pamphlets are recorded in “Schedule of Wellington House Literature,” last entry dated 26/11/1918. Commercial publishers were used to obfuscate state involvement.

³³ Well, “War That Will End War,” *Daily News and Leader*, 4.

³⁴ Wells, *War That Will End War*, 9-11.

³⁵ Derrida, “Apocalyptic Tone,” 53.

³⁶ *ibid*, 54.

³⁷ “Church and The War,” 19.

³⁸ Wells, *What is Coming?*, 10.

fermenting in the period before the War, however in many cases they were accelerated by the conflict. In 1912 Neville S. Talbot claimed:

...progress has been at grips with a doubt deeper than itself as to man's place in the universe. For the infection of a kind of cosmic nervousness has become widespread... The skies have darkened and men's minds have become more sombre... In some a sense of the mere scale and range if the world in size and time has prompted a philosophy of relativity wherein nothing is absolutely true or right at any passing moment.... Somehow or other the rose colour has faded out of Victorian spectacles.³⁹

The War would for many be confirmation of these fears. According to the Dean of St. Paul's, W. R. Inge, writing in 1922, the threats to "the life of our civilisation.... [were] already beginning to loom darkly before the eyes of the late Victorians."⁴⁰ Inge insinuated that the War ended one of the "twin peaks in which English civilisation culminated"—the Victorian age.⁴¹ Victorian values and certainties had largely continued up to the War; the grim reality of the conflict was contrasted with a Victorian golden age, and a halcyon Edwardian era. The Bishop of Durham Handley C. G. Moule used an apocalyptic tone in 1916 claiming "The World-War is shaking every nation... Such is the universal upheaval, so are old landmarks altered, that the time before the War, though not a twelvemonth away from us as yet, looks like another era, remote and different."⁴² Moule creates an apocalyptic allusion by imbuing an apocalyptic tone with a Christian context.

The narrative of the War as an eschatological climax and epochal event has proved resilient in historiography and the popular imagination. Even the designation of the Great War suggests "a temporal watershed, a departure from the conditions of warfare as they had known before."⁴³ Fundamental ideas about the world were transformed; geopolitically it saw the collapse of four major Imperial powers—the German, Austria-Hungarian, Russian, and the Ottoman Empires—and with them passed old national certainties and adversaries. The conception of the War as the culmination and end of one (more innocent) era was reciprocated in the post-war narrative of a 'Lost Generation' of young men, who had gone off to war and never came home again. In Britain it was often associated with the affluent classes; public school boys and Oxbridge alumni full of optimism and promise, destined to be future leaders and allegedly the nation's 'best and brightest'.⁴⁴ Meanwhile distinct artistic talents including 35 members and students of the Royal Academy of Arts, and the vorticists T. E. Hulme and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska were killed in the War. The Great War activated nascent apocalyptic ideas; as this thesis demonstrates, the theme of

³⁹ Talbot, "Modern Situation," 7, 9.

⁴⁰ Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, 207.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Moule, *Christus Consolator*, 3.

⁴³ Goebel, *Medieval Memory*, 1.

⁴⁴ Winter, *Great War*, 65-99.

apocalypse—in both its religious and secular permutations—continued to resonate and impact upon visual art and culture in Britain throughout the interwar.

This thesis identifies and surveys religious and secular formulations of the theme of apocalypse in interwar British art, identifying a hitherto unidentified permutation in Britain of a broader European cultural trend engaging with apocalyptic concepts. While the focus of this thesis is on the British context, there will be times when I signal to wider European artists, artworks, and events. My intention in doing this is to avoid the distorting effects of an exclusively national approach. By studying these twentieth century interpretations within a wider national, and at times international context, it is possible to show how a number of artists were engaged with a broader cultural trend between the two World Wars. Apocalypse in early twentieth-century art has been associated with art in Germany, with the Russian émigré Wassily Kandinsky and the Der Blaue Reiter group, and practitioners such as Ludwig Meidner, Franz Marc, Otto Dix, and Max Beckmann being prominent figures.⁴⁵ Prior to 1914 Meidner, who had been interested in biblical prophecies, drew upon social upheavals and political tensions in his images of chaos and catastrophe. Kandinsky had likewise been intensely interested in the Apocalypse; his paintings identified these themes and motifs via titles such as *Last Judgment*, *Riders of the Apocalypse*, *Deluge*, or *All Saints' Day* that derive either from Revelation, or the general apocalyptic visionary tradition.⁴⁶ Both Dix and Beckmann addressed the theme of the apocalypse in a metaphorical way during and after the Great War, while Ernst Ludwig Kirchner—in a period of physical and psychological crisis in 1917—turned to depict the apocalypse in a literal way, making eleven drawings of the Apocalypse on the back of cigarette boxes. Kirchner selected key events such as the *Seven Angels with Vials*, the *Twenty-four Elders before the Throne* and the *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*; notably he omitted the positive climax of the Apocalypse: the creation of a New Jerusalem.⁴⁷ This revival in the apocalyptic mode correlated with the anxieties arising from the historical context; whether or not the practitioners believed in an apocalypse, the apocalyptic tradition was a tool to look beyond the world as it was, and convey a profound sense of dissatisfaction. I argue that British artists similarly found relevance in apocalyptic themes, subjects and motifs, albeit often in novel formulations; this variation was at times understated, perhaps suggesting something of what has been considered the quintessential British character, while in other instances it was firmly rooted in canonical literary works of Bunyan and Milton for example, and the 'visionary' contributions from the likes of William Blake to the British apocalyptic tradition of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. Approaching the concept of apocalypse in the interwar requires a reconciliation of ostensibly secular and traditional religious

⁴⁵ Smith, *Modernism's History*, 112; Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 146-177.

⁴⁶ Heller, "Kandinsky and Tradition," 19.

⁴⁷ Gaehtgens and Foerschner. "Kirchner's Drawings," 92-3, 97-8.

art. Canonical artworks by eminent figures including Stanley Spencer and C. R. W. Nevinson are provided with significant new interpretations and placed in relation to an extensive quantity of unfamiliar material that results in a significant reconfiguration of British artistic practice in the period. The addressed artworks indicate the diversity and range of activities working with these ideas in British art, be it significant locally, nationally, or internationally. The apocalyptic mindset was evident in resolved and unresolved artworks in painting, drawing, sculpture, mural, print and book arts, and shared by both academic artists and the avant-garde. Most of the artworks were exhibited at solo or group shows; however, a smaller number were commissioned or intended for an ecclesiastical setting, while a number were not exhibited immediately at the time of their making. Thus, the extent of British artists engaging with the concepts is uncovered in its totality.

Art and Religion in Interwar Britain

There has recently been increased critical recognition of British practitioners active during the interwar—in part resulting from the Great War’s centenary—with a number of exhibitions and publications addressing their work. There remains a paucity of publications devoted to interwar British art. Broad overviews from Charles Harrison, such as his aforementioned *English Art and Modernism*, and David Peters Corbett (*Modernity of English Art, 1914–30*, 1997) have identified many pertinent themes in the interwar years, although both have an eye towards what has been considered the problem of modernism in Britain. Harrison’s focus is restricted to English modernist art within International modernism, providing a narrative that shuns the wider artistic context of Britain. Corbett meanwhile insists that the English ‘return to order’ be taken seriously, pointing out that “modernity can be registered in cultural forms that are not modernist”.⁴⁸ The shared emphasis of both Harrison and Corbett on *England* neglects the pluralism of British identity and practice. To some extent this was addressed in Frances Spalding’s *British Art Since 1900* (1986) which emphasised the importance of British traditions and “the essentially provincial nature” of twentieth-century British art.⁴⁹ Spalding’s concept of British art is still predominantly English. Recent exhibitions have recognised the variety of practitioners in the period. A positive trend has been towards asserting the merit of female practitioners in the period, with Hepworth, along with Vanessa Bell, Evelyn Dunbar, and Winifred Knights amongst others all receiving retrospective exhibitions and new publications. Pallant House has established itself as a major venue for early twentieth-century art, with shows on other eminent artists such as Edward Burra (2011) and David Bomberg (2017) that situated the artists and their world within the socio-historical context of their

⁴⁸ Corbett, *Modernity of English Art*, 14.

⁴⁹ Spalding, *British Art Since 1900*, 9.

time. Simon Martin curated two important shows identifying British art with contemporary events. The first on the response of British artists to the Spanish Civil War ('Conflict and Conscience,' 2014), revealed how the conflict galvanised artists throughout the country and rejected the notion of an insular British artworld. Simon Martin's recent exhibition on classicism in British art in the early twentieth-century ('Mythic Method,' 2017) identified a trend in the British permutation of the return to order that re-engaged with tradition and myth as a way of dealing with contemporary uncertainty and anxiety. Simon Martin's recent exhibition on classicism in British art in the early twentieth-century ('Mythic Method,' 2017) identified a trend in the British permutation of the return to order that re-engaged tradition and myth as a way of dealing with contemporary uncertainty and anxiety. The exhibition took T. S. Eliot's "the mythical method" as a starting point; Eliot's term described the turn toward classicism in literature after 1918. It was according to Eliot a means to give order and structure to the contemporary context following the events of the Great War.⁵⁰ According to Eliot, it was "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history".⁵¹ The method reconstitutes the purpose of apocalyptic literature in secular terms, and provides some insight into the cultural currency of these themes and ideas. Patrick Elliot curated the exhibition 'True to Life: British Realism in the 1920s and 1930s' at Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (2017) which further challenged the view of modern art as a succession of avant-garde movements and styles by focusing upon the often-denigrated area of British realism between the wars.

A particular focus has been the immediate period around the Great War. David Boyd-Haycock's *A Crisis of Brilliance* (2009) and the subsequent 2013 exhibition at Dulwich Picture Gallery argued that the War defined a generation of Slade-trained artists including Stanley Spencer; Paul Nash; Mark Gertler; C. R. W. Nevinson; Dora Carrington; and David Bomberg. Sacha Llewellyn's exhibition 'Winifred Knights' (2016) at Dulwich Picture Gallery brought renewed attention to the artist and her response to the War. Ayla Lepine has contributed to increased interest in the intersection of art and theology and offered a model with an edited Tate *In Focus* research publication situating Knights art with contemporary theological issues in light of the War. The conflict has proved something of a catalyst for situating British art alongside broader European trends. Tate Britain's 'Truth and Memory' exhibition (curated by Emma Chambers, 2018) placed British art of the War and interwar in dialogue with contemporary French and German art, and followed on from Richard Cork's major *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* (1994) which had attended to the impact of the War on European and American artists. Sue Malvern's

⁵⁰ Eliot, "Order, and Myth," 483.

⁵¹ *ibid*, 480, 483.

Modern Art, Britain, and the Great War (2004) addressed British modern art in the War, challenging the theses of Harrison and Cork by asserting that the Official War Artists scheme in Britain provided artists with an unprecedented opportunity to create art. However, Malvern and Cork both foreground modernism and the avant-garde in their studies. Within the last decade Paul Gough's *A Terrible Beauty* (2010), and James Fox's *British Art and the First World War, 1914–1924* (2015) have followed Corbett's lead, acknowledging the range of visual languages responding to warfare and modernity. Malvern, Gough, and Fox all refer to a *British* art during the War, suggesting that in some sense it helped construct a shared British identity. The term British art as used in this thesis was born out of the complex identities of the artists themselves rather than any sense of a national school. It is intended to identify artists who were either born in the British Isles or who were active in Britain at the period. In some cases, this has broadened out to incorporate artists from the white-settler colonies which remained very much within the influence of the British Isles.

Art in Britain during the Second World War has been of consistent interest to scholars. Brian Foss's *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945* (2007) examined the role of art when faced by existential threat, while Kathleen Palmer's *Women War Artists* (2011) and the associated exhibition (Imperial War Museum, 2011-2) highlighted the role of female artists with particular attention to the war of 1939-1945. Monica Bohm-Duchen's *Art and the Second World War* (2013) provided a global account of the art of the Second World War, situating British responses alongside those from North American, other European, and East Asian contexts. A small number of canonical male practitioners closely associated with modernism have loomed large in scholarship; within the past 5 years Henry Moore, Paul Nash, and John Piper have been the subject of new exhibitions that addressed aspects of their wartime output.⁵² The art from the period *between* these two major conflicts has been overshadowed; it is the ambition of this thesis to delve into this period while highlighting continuities.

The focus on war has inspired the use of 'apocalypse', 'apocalyptic' and related terms in scholarship, however the terms have been applied casually and generically to suggest there is some semblance to the Apocalypse. It is most often used in the sense of common parlance meaning absolute destruction.⁵³ Beyond this there has been little attempt to specify or identify the sense in which an artwork is being described as apocalyptic. The terms concept has not been subject to any sustained scholarship. The secular manifestation of apocalyptic ideas has been identified in passing, particularly with regard to C. R. W. Nevinson's practice.⁵⁴ Religious apocalyptic themes and motifs

⁵² Exhibitions have included *Henry Moore Drawing: The Art of Seeing* (2019, with book by Sebastiano Barassi), *Paul Nash* (Tate Britain, 2016), and *John Piper* (Tate Liverpool, 2017).

⁵³ See, for example, Cork, "Machine Age, Apocalypse and Pastoral".

⁵⁴ See, for example, Walsh, "Tumult in the Clouds," 86; Walsh, *Hanging a Rebel*, 221; Ingleby ed., "Apocalypse," 178-181.

have received even less attention. Artists' vogueish tendency towards depictions of religious subjects in modern dress during the interwar have been characterised as a generic trend updating biblical iconography. Any potential religious or theological ramifications have been considered absent. Monographs on artists for whom religious beliefs were inextricable from their practice have fared better with the analysis of the religious content and scope of their work. Stanley Spencer, David Jones, and Cecil Collins have all intermittently received some close attention, although for each the religious apocalyptic dimension has been dealt with cursorily. Recent major exhibitions on Spencer at Somerset House and the Hepworth Gallery offered an iconographic link to the Apocalypse; however, the theology remained unaddressed.⁵⁵ Jones's oeuvre has received most attention from literary scholars, indicating a relative lack of art-historical engagement of his profoundly religious conception of art and history.

The role of religion and apocalyptic concepts in the interwar years has been addressed most readily outside of art-historical scholarship. Philip Jenkins's *The Great and Holy War* (2014) identified the use and abuse of religion in the rhetoric of belligerent nations during the Great War. Meanwhile research into the Great War and memory culture has significantly contributed towards the recognition of apocalyptic iconography in the interwar years. Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) and Jay Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (1995) have both indicated how the Apocalypse contributed to the post-war cultural landscape, while George L. Mosse's *Fallen Soldiers* (1990) scrutinised languages of remembrance following the War, whereby Christian iconography was used to console, give reason to death, and justify the conflict.

The poet Hubert Nicholson wrote in his memoirs, "The twenties were post-war, the thirties were pre-war".⁵⁶ In this view the interwar years were demarcated by the memory of one conflict and the anticipation of another. When familiar biblical narratives were addressed by artists as viable subjects in the interwar years, there was a cacophony of social, political and cultural factors that would consciously or unconsciously inform their interpretation and depiction. The upheaval and trauma of the War was, as Nicholson suggested, an unavoidable presence from the personal level to the global. At the same time there were shifts in the religion and theology that had underpinned British society, which were in part a response to the War. Mark D. Chapman, writing on the eschatological Jesus in Edwardian England, commented that,

theological ideas, while not necessarily direct products of their social and historical context, gain academic and ecclesial currency in response to broader social, political and intellectual movements... It is surely implausible to suggest that it was simply accidental that an

⁵⁵ 'Stanley Spencer: Heaven in the Hell of War,' Somerset House, 2013, later moving to Pallant House, 2014; 'Stanley Spencer: Of Angels and Dirt,' Hepworth, 2016.

⁵⁶ Nicholson, *Half My Days*, 100.

eschatological picture of Jesus... should have gained currency in a society... (which) had reached breaking point.⁵⁷

In the late nineteenth century, theology had largely shared in the wider optimism on notions of progress and the orientation of Christian society. The War accelerated nascent changes, and inspired sober reflections on theodicy, human suffering, and the nature of good and evil—ideas that strike at the heart of the biblical apocalypse. This thesis draws upon the contemporary theological contexts to situate the featured artworks. On the one hand this roots the image in the biblical narrative, while on the other reveals where artists are interrogating it or displacing emphasis to what might have previously considered peripheral concerns. The media culture of the interwar years provided networks of dissemination for every viewpoint. Sermons and speeches were widely available in publications. Secular books, newspapers, and pamphlets reproduced important declarations of the time including those by religious leaders, while the religious press was buoyant. Exponents of prophecy could be found within the range of Christian newspapers. One such example, the weekly *Christian Herald and The Signs of Our Times* (merged c.1876), edited by the Anglican Reverend Michael Paget Baxter, along with the *Prophetic News* and *The Signal* which were both also overseen by Baxter, enthusiastically anticipated apocalyptic realisation. At its peak in 1900, the *Christian Herald and The Signs of Our Times* had the largest circulation of any religious publication in the world. Apocalyptic discourse was not confined to a fringe minority while art brought into focus changing ideas in theology.

This thesis is intentionally non-denominational and responds to the diversity of religion and people's faith during the interwar. The Great War had a profound impact on religion, belief, and superstition in Britain. The declining overall church attendance in the twentieth century appears to correlate with secularisation, yet it is necessary to note that other religions, and alternative beliefs and practices actually flourished in early twentieth-century Britain. The Anglican Assistant Chaplain-General to the Fifth Army Neville S. Talbot anecdotally observed that at the frontlines during the War Christian religion had given way to a growing "natural religion".⁵⁸ When confronted by death on such a scale, some retreated into belief, some found within childhood or cultural systems of belief an apt metaphor that resonated with the times, while others retreated into tradition to fend off existential despair. Others reconceived their outlook in reference to alternate practices and beliefs, constructing synthesised outlooks that owed much to both inherited cultural precedents and alternate philosophies. The dynamics of belief are multifaceted. New religious identities such as Christian Science and Theosophy are as important to this study as revivals (and declines) in Protestant and Catholic Churches. The subjective revaluation and reinterpretation of belief is a

⁵⁷ Chapman, *Coming Crisis*, 13.

⁵⁸ Talbot, *Religion at the Front*, 11.

religious conversion process. It can see the transition from one religion to another, to atheism or agnosticism, and the strengthening and diminishing of faith. Many soldiers from the predominantly Christian British army adapted concepts into Trench religion and Spiritualism, establishing personal codes more appropriate to the lived experience of the War. On the one hand mainstream Christianity was in period of confusion, while on the other as Calum G. Brown has noted, there was a growth in the statistical indicators of religiosity in Britain.⁵⁹ Religious belief was varied in the interwar. It was regionally, and nationally specific. Ireland had a passionate Roman Catholic–Anglican dichotomy, whilst Scotland was largely Presbyterian. The majority of English churchgoers were Anglican, and whilst Anglicanism was the established church in Wales until 1918, Welsh Protestant dissenters, often with an evangelical tone, outnumbered them.⁶⁰ Britain had a thriving and highly active non-conformist community in contrast to those of mainland Europe, which peaked in the late nineteenth century. They largely shared an emphasis on evangelicalism based on the eighteenth century Evangelical revival.⁶¹ Characteristics of evangelical belief included “devotion to the Bible” and the “Christ as the fulcrum of their theology and the core of their spirituality”.⁶² The role of eschatology and apocalypse was further pronounced; Methodist, Baptist and Congregationalist beliefs have especial interest in the fate of the un-evangelised, whilst a number of sects maintained definite millenarian expectations.

This thesis identifies a substantial gap in current art-historical scholarship. It critically qualifies the standard secular canon and narrative of modern British art, and the general neglect of religion in existing art-historical literature. British art demonstrated the continued relevance of religion and religious themes during the period. The Apocalypse was a thriving and surprisingly mainstream concept in the period, and far from one that had been abandoned in early twentieth-century society and culture. Indeed, the concept would complement the modernist ambition of artworks being made out of the belief of art's ability to affect change in the world. The theological focus provides a new angle on the means by which British artists innovated during the period, while particular attention to the Apocalypse reveals the ways in which artists were engaging with art-historical precedents, religion, and contemporary issues. It exposes a diverse artistic context in communication and correspondence, be it geographically or historically, and one that was far from insular or isolated. This project has involved the unearthing of largely forgotten works due to the resistance shown towards this area of study in the literature. Over the course it has been discovered

⁵⁹ Brown, *Religion and Society*, 138.

⁶⁰ *ibid*, 18-19.

⁶¹ Bebbington, “Growth of Voluntary Religion,” 57.

⁶² *ibid*.

that this area is extensive, with more works continuing to emerge. As such, this can only be a starting point.

In order to achieve these ambitions, it seems more suitable to structure this thesis around themes rather than chronology. The thesis is therefore divided thematically into five chapters that largely follow the sequence of the biblical narratives and Saint John the Divine's apocalyptic vision in the book of Revelation. Chapter One and Two tackle the iconography of the **Crucifixion** of Jesus, with the respective focus upon the **post-war** and **pre-war** dichotomy of the 1920s and the 1930s. The Crucifixion precedes Saint John's vision in Christian history; however, it is a critical event in apocalyptic thinking that signifies mankind's redemption and liberation from the burden of sin, yet also man's capacity for cruelty. Indeed, apocalyptic salvation is dependent on the redemptive power of Christ's death upon the cross. The crucifixion fundamentally signifies Christian eschatological hope, yet also eschatological transition. In the first chapter I address the Crucifixion role as one of the most important motifs in the culture of remembrance both during and after the Great War, before turning attention to images of the Crucifixion by David Jones, Stanley Spencer, William Orpen, and William Roberts. Here I identify that each artist used the Crucifixion as a subject to articulate their own responses to the War, and argue that each artist accordingly draws upon the apocalyptic content that is latent within the Crucifixion in order to make sense of the recent lived experience. In the second chapter I turn attention to the Crucifixion and existential anxiety during the pre-war period and argue that a new and more ominous significance was realised in the subject. The Crucifixion without the spiritual dimension becomes simple murder; for Francis Bacon, C. R. W. Nevinson, and Michael Rothenstein the Crucifixion thus becomes an appropriate device to interrogate contemporary experience.

This is followed in Chapter Three by the interlinked issues of **resurrection** and **judgment** after death. I continue to identify the biblical narrative of Christ's first advent with the apocalyptic drama, here identifying the resurrection of Jesus with the promise of resurrection at the last day, or eschaton. Christians believe that on the third day Jesus was resurrected, having descended into Hell and brought salvation to all of the righteous who had died since the Fall; the harrowing of Hell thus anticipates the Last Judgment. The narrative of Jesus' resurrection prefigures and exemplifies the promised eschatological resurrection, which, in Revelation, precedes judgment by Christ. With this in mind I turn attention to the role of resurrection in the culture of remembrance, arguing the hope of resurrection offered consolation in light of the casualties of the War, before proposing that the relevance of eschatological fate and judgment was pulled into sharp focus by artists trying to make sense of the earthly trials of the Great War. Though paintings by Stanley Spencer, Glyn Philpot, and Ethel Walker I address images of resurrection that seek to extend the human ontology, be it beyond

death or otherwise, and demonstrate that the subject of resurrection was vital in the interwar period. The chapter concludes with a study on Charles Sims's 'Spiritual' series of paintings. I take as a point of departure the existing scholarship on the series and argue that the series responds to a Judeo-Christian context, and specifically the eschatological journey of the soul.

Chapters Four and Five address two complementary constituents of apocalyptic belief—the **end of the world as we know it**, and the **creation of a new world**, or **apocalypse** and **millennium**.

The fourth chapter, *Witness to the End: Apocalypse and the End of the World as we Know it*, addresses the sustained legacy of the Great War's apocalyptic literary and visual rhetoric into the post-war years, with particular attention to the retrospective culture of remembrance. I address how art and visual culture engaged with the religious and secular rhetoric of the war as an epochal break that catastrophically changed the world. I then turn to look at how the prospective fear of a new war—and what it would entail—nurtured secular apocalyptic imagery in the 1930s. I focus on C. R. W. Nevinson's so-called problem paintings, which engaged with the contemporary political situation; I reveal that he was at the forefront of wider fears and the belief that a coming second Great War would end civilisation. Throughout the chapter I will bring attention to how the Apocalypse and its secular permutation was a subject activated by the contemporary context and made vivid by recent experiences.

Transitioning from the discussion on the end of the world in the previous chapter, the fifth chapter addresses the **millennium** and the **ultimate paradise** which is said to follow a great period of transition and change, namely an apocalypse event. Chapter Five addresses visual art and the impact of utopian projects—political, secular or religious—that sought to reinvigorate society. I argue that ideas of apocalyptic hope as well as apocalyptic devastation flourished in the context. I begin by addressing the sustained popularity of an example of Christian millenarian imagery; William Holman Hunt's *Light of the World*. After establishing continuity with precedents, I then turn to the hope of the Kingdom of God during and after the Great War with the League of Nations, and in particular focussing on the close relationship of artists and the Zionist movement. I then address art and the visual culture's engagement with other political expressions of the Kingdom of God such as the British Empire and contemporary political movements. The chapter concludes with studies on the immanent worldview; here I argue that the artists Mark Lancelot Symons and Stanley Spencer both used their art to claim that the Kingdom is already present here on Earth if we could see it. I finally turn to the Neo-Romantic movement, arguing that the artists associated with it sought an already enchanted world while they simultaneously mourned its passing; a tension which is at the heart of millenarian belief. This thesis therefore ends with a chapter on paradise—the final event of *the* Apocalypse—and the *apocalyptic* outbreak of the Second World War.

Chapter One

Crucified by War: Crucifixion in 1914-1930

On the tenth of May 1915, *The Times* reported unverified claims that German soldiers had crucified a Canadian officer. The story was published after 287 days of war and had apparently been sourced from Canadian soldiers arriving at the Versailles base hospital. The anonymous author elaborated on the scene: “he had been pinned to a wall by bayonets thrust through his hands and feet, another bayonet had then been driven through his throat, and, finally, he was riddled with bullets.”¹ It was immortalised in Francis Derwent Wood’s *Canada’s Golgotha* (1918) (fig. 1). One year earlier on the sixth of May 1914, the *Guardian* reported on continuing ethnic atrocities in Albania.² The article alleged that 200 Muslim Albanians had been crucified alive in the Orthodox Church in Kodra, with the church subsequently set alight. The brutality of these reported acts was not lost on the correspondent, who emotively wrote of the “wretched victims half-burnt.”³ Field Punishment No. 1—a method of punishing British soldiers in active service—was introduced with The Army Act 1881. The punishment involved shackling the offender in irons when available—with rope otherwise substituted. They were then attached to a fixed object (fig. 2). This placed soldiers under immense physical strain. Field Punishment No. 1 was designed to humiliate. By 1916 the punishment was notorious in the national press and was reported as a reprimand for exceptionally light indiscretions.⁴ It contorted the victim’s body and inherited the idiomatic name ‘Crucifixion’. The apparent cruelty was met with criticism in both Parliament and the media.⁵ A reporter in the *Guardian* claimed that “Its existence is a relic of Barbarism.”⁶

Implications of the Crucifixion

These three instances highlight crucifixion as a contemporary punishment; it was employed in a social context that principally recognised it as an abstract event from Christian scripture. Each report indicates the emotional response that the related practice elicited in the first decades of the twentieth century; it was recognised as a vulgar display of power, and a brutal act of callousness. Such occurrences contributed to the punishment’s resonance in the popular consciousness during the Great War. In this and the subsequent chapter I study a range of Christian Crucifixion images; the chapters are divided between the post-war 1920s, and the pre-war 1930s respectively. I argue these images engage with both the eschatological issue of death and convey the eschatological tone of

¹ “Torture of a Canadian Officer,” 7.

² “Crucifixion and Burning,” 16.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ “Field Punishments,” 4.

⁵ “House of Commons,” 12.

⁶ “Field Punishments,” 4.

apocalypse. I will first address the theological implications of the Crucifixion in Christianity and identify its significance within the religious and cultural context. I then introduce the artists and their images, and identify the how these depictions indicate an apocalyptic concern.

Crucified God

Crucifixion has a profound status in Christian culture as the alleged means by which humanity executes Jesus of Nazareth. As part of Western cultural heritage, the ubiquitous icon of the cross does not ostensibly require scrutiny. It is a very strong visual image due to its efficient and well-defined form, and it signifies general concepts of the orthodox *Christian* Jesus—suffering and sacrifice, hope and inspiration.⁷ It is also necessary to distinguish between *the* cross upon which Jesus' was crucified, and *a* generic cross. The former denotes the particular biblical narrative, with the depiction of a suffering Christ, while the latter foregrounds the spiritual concepts and the ultimate promises of the Christian faith. The concept of the cross is significantly more complex than may initially seem. Central to Christian faith is the *atonement*; that is the doctrine of salvation, or soteriology, whereby Christ's death on the cross reconciles humanity to God—humanity having been alienated following original sin. The Crucifixion's meaning in Christian theology, however, is complex and "in any age, the cross resists exhaustive interpretation".⁸ As Kathryn B. Rush notes, "Jesus' death revealed to the faithful that they could return to God, and the eschatological home" of Revelation 21:9-22:5.⁹ The Crucifixion can be explained as both sacrificial and a necessity for humanity's redemption in accordance with Paul's letter to the Corinthians, which elucidates, "Christ died for our sins".¹⁰ It is the means by which salvation is realised, and Jesus' messianic status is confirmed.¹¹ Furthermore, the cross is inseparable from Christian theodicy in the Western Church. It helps explain the tension of good and bad in the world, it reveals God's beneficence and omnipotence, yet it also confirms one's free will. It indicates that whilst one has the capacity for sin, one can also be redeemed—and this culminates in the eschatological hope of resurrection and eternal life in Heaven.

The chronology of the salvation denotes an important temporal aspect and indicates a further eschatological dimension. The Liberal Protestant W. H. Moberly concluded in a 1912 essay titled "The Atonement":

⁷ Murphy-O'Connor, "Crucifixion in the Pauline letters," 21.

⁸ Dreyer, Introduction, 8.

⁹ Rush, *Sacred Journey*, 164.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:3. All references are from the King James Bible.

¹¹ "Christ" is translated from Greek into English as "messiah"—ergo *Christianity* is the *messianic* faith.

No doubt, it is impossible to reach a complete understanding of the process of salvation as an intelligible whole in terms of Before and After. Different stages are separated in Time which can only be understood fully as parts of a single whole.¹²

Salvation has past, present and future elements; something *has* happened (the change instigated by the Crucifixion), *is* happening (being one's actions in the present, and the constant salvation offered by the Crucifixion), and *will* happen (resurrection and judgment). Albert Schweitzer observed, "The coming of the Kingdom of God with power is dependent upon the atonement which Jesus performs. That is substantially the secret of the Passion."¹³ Soteriology concludes with the apocalyptic end-time, as is instantly recognisable in the Memorial Acclamation of the Eucharist; "Christ has died, Christ has Risen, Christ will come again". His return is, as Frank Kermode would advocate, the tock to the tick of Jesus' ministry and salvation.¹⁴ The designation of the past and future elements helps to give form and boundary to the Christian conceptualisation—the "kairos"—of human life. The boundaries are the promises of the first incarnation, and the 'future hope' and the second coming.

The narrative of the Crucifixion shares themes with the apocalyptic arc: it is evident in the sense of eschatological culmination, the dead's resurrection, earthly (earthquake) and celestial phenomena (the darkening skies), the triumph of good over evil (atonement), and the narrative's ultimate trajectory towards the ascension to Heaven.¹⁵ The Gospels reveal the Crucifixion as a transition from one phase of human existence to another.¹⁶ It signifies epochal transition, and heralds a new order. The temple curtain (or veil) torn in two is taken to symbolise the end of the old covenant.¹⁷ According to Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, Christ signified a change in order and a new covenant, with Paul speaking of Christ as the *unveiling*.¹⁸ Saint Augustine of Hippo argued that the veiled truth of the Old Testament is made clear—*unveiled*—by the New.¹⁹ The moon and the sun signified the Old and New Testaments respectively.²⁰ The ambiguous darkened sky of Matthew 27:45 and Luke 23:44 is historically represented via the iconography of the sun and the moon—sequential light that follows darkness—and indicates that the Crucifixion *unveils*, and clarifies. The use of these symbols within the iconographic tradition identifies the concept of temporal transition and redemptive change. The cross can be used to indicate fateful contemporary change and thus signal an apocalyptic sensibility.

¹² Moberly, "Atonement," 330.

¹³ Schweitzer, *Kingdom of God*, 83.

¹⁴ Kermode, *Sense of an Ending*, 44-46. Kermode later describes the tick and tock as Genesis and The Apocalypse; that is Revelation, rather than an apocalypse. (192).

¹⁵ Matthew 27:45, 52, 54.

¹⁶ Dreyer, Introduction, 5; see also Galatians 3:25; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

¹⁷ Matthew 27:51; Gurtner, *The Torn Veil*, 133-4. Origen and other Patristic writers refer to the torn curtain as symbolising the disclosure of mysteries that had previously been hidden (literally an *unveiling*).

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 3:13-18; Old Covenant refers to Mosaic Law instituted on Mt Sinai in Exodus. New Covenant refers to the new spiritual law of Jesus established at his crucifixion.

¹⁹ Augustine 'Questions,' 2:73; Augustine, *Instructing Beginner*, 4, 8.

²⁰ Schiller, *Iconography*, 2:109.

Soteriology

How salvation is achieved has significant ramifications on what the meaning of the cross actually *is*, and calls into question Jesus' status as human and/or divine being. It is necessary to identify the different interpretations and indicate the importance of corresponding discussions within fin de siècle culture to recognise some degree of the contemporary variation in the icon and illustrate the significance of the images addressed in this chapter.

There have been disagreements on the meaning of the cross and how and what it achieved since the earliest days of the church. Christian belief in salvation is not expressed by "any official formulation".²¹ There are consequently many disputes in scholarship on the doctrine of salvation; even the widely used term "atonement" is disputed, as it is a loaded term suggesting the atonement of sin.²² Alister E. McGrath identifies four principal themes or images in Christian scholarship: the cross as sacrifice, as victory (often identified with the ransom theory or *Christus Victor*), as forgiveness (i.e. the satisfaction theory or *Vicarious Atonement*) and as a demonstration of God's love (as a moral exemplar or *exemplarist*; it is often associated with Liberal Protestant theology).²³ Further, they are not mutually exclusive. As C. S. Lewis later suggested, "many different theories have been held as to how it works; what all Christians are agreed on is that *it does work* [emphasis added]."²⁴

Debate on the matter was common in English language theology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century.²⁵ Delayed challenges from Enlightenment thought began to exert influence and affect teaching in the shape of Liberal Theology and Christian Modernism. Corresponding theological books with popular appeal, such as *Lux Mundi* (1889), frequently addressed aspects of soteriology.²⁶ The moderate nature of Anglicanism meanwhile resulted in a diverse range of publications. The historic Christ and the question over the incarnation as a human and/or divine being were increasingly important to these discussions. Such Christological debates had fundamental implications for soteriology. Liberal Theology constructed a picture of a human Jesus with the supernatural narratives increasingly reconciled as metaphorical. This enabled the protestant majority of the British Army to indicate and recognise the humanity of Jesus via the

²¹ "Atonement," in *Oxford Dictionary of the Church*, 125.

²² Rea, "Philosophy and Christian Theology."

²³ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 330-348.

²⁴ Lewis, *Mere Christianity: Book II*, 53-4.

²⁵ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 330.

²⁶ The Catholic Modernist 'manifesto' *Lux Mundi* manifesto' included an essay entitled "The Atonement" by Arthur Temple Lyttelton. Other notable English language texts included the Protestant theologian Auguste Sabatier's *The Doctrine of The Atonement and its Historical Evolution* (translated 1904), Catholic Jean Rivièrè's *The Doctrine of The Atonement: A Historical Essay* (translated 1909) and the Wesleyan Methodist W. F. Lofthouse's *Ethics and Atonement* (1906). Liberal interpretations included Hastings Rashdall's exemplarist understanding in *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* (1919), and Moberly's aforementioned essay in *Foundations* (1912) advocating vicarious penitence, which conforms to the 'love' theme, and proposes that Christ vicariously repented for all. Yet other Anglicans challenged a single view; Streeter's volume was answered by the Anglo-Catholic Ronald Knox's *Some Loose Stones* (1913).

idiomatic naming of Field Punishment No.1. A countering movement stressed Jesus as radical and divine. Exponents from this 'eschatological school' (identified by B. H. Streeter as a response to cultural crisis in an essay in *Foundations* titled "The Historic Christ") often stressed the divine otherness of Christ, accepted the resurrection as historic event, and recognised Jesus' teachings as those of a first century Jewish apocalyptic prophet.

Implications were intensely debated; denominational differences did not necessarily identify one with a specific belief. Soteriology and Christ's divinity caused polemics of national interest with the 1921 Modern Churchmen's Conference, Girton College, Cambridge, where a number of theologians assembled showing "Modernism in its most vigorous form".²⁷ Its theme of 'Christ and the Creeds' elicited papers from eminent Anglicans including Hastings Rashdall and Henry Major, Principal of Ripon Clergy College, Oxford. The Catholic newspaper the *Tablet* reported that Major's views summed up the entire conference:

He said that Christ claimed to be the Son of God only 'in a moral sense, in the sense in which all human beings were sons of God'... The canon goes on to point out that not only the Virgin Birth of Our Lord, but also his Resurrection is rejected.²⁸

The article resolutely upheld Catholic doctrine and the miraculous aspects of Christ's life. The controversy resonated in Anglican circles also. The Anglo-Catholic Peter Green observed that denials of Christ's divinity were nothing new.²⁹ Forty-one Anglican representatives presented a petition at the Convocation of Canterbury in 1922 claiming heresy at the Girton Conference; orthodox interpretations of Christ remained widely held. Yet in the weeks following the conference, the *Daily Mail* reported anecdotally that it was Christ's *humanity* that most resonated with War veterans.³⁰ The rejection or diminishing of Jesus' divinity or resurrection reduces his death's meaning to a specifically moral event; the Crucifixion's unique importance is therefore fundamentally challenged. The eschatological potential of the cross ends at death, while the promise of resurrection is denied. The ambiguity over the meaning of the cross—and the increased debate over it—created a context in which novel formulations could easily take hold.

Cultural use of the Crucifixion

Christian concepts were concurrently challenged by rationalism, the apparent failure of progressive thought, Liberal (moral) Theology, and the War itself, resulting in different permutations and expressions of Jesus and the cross. Jay Winter has argued that traditional themes, images, and narratives continued to be important to society and culture both during, and after the War. The

²⁷ Moorman, *History of the Church*, 423.

²⁸ "Notes," *Tablet*, 10-11.

²⁹ "Divinity of Christ," 11.

³⁰ "What think ye of Christ," 3.

Christian reference was “infinitely malleable and easily identifiable.”³¹ It served to reassure and console: “the rudiments of hope, of aesthetic redemption of the suffering of war, of resurrection, of transcendence are never far from the commemorative art of religious inspiration.”³² Philip Jenkins concurs;

Golgotha and Gethsemane offered a vision of unimaginable suffering, they also betokened resurrection and supernatural victory over the forces of evil and death. And ultimately they belonged to a broader Christian narrative in which the struggle against evil concluded with a monumental final battle, ushered in by sign and wonders.³³

Rethinking Jesus fundamentally allowed a new anthropocentric figure to be constructed that was more sympathetic to lived experience than the abstract dogma had been. Between 1914 and 1918, Jesus and the Crucifixion were widely used motifs. As Peter Harrington observes, “No religious concept stirred the imagination more than sacrifice; it was the universal watchword of the moment, and it figured in countless sermons, essays, and official proclamations.”³⁴ Christianity validated both pro and anti-war stances. Religion was a principal justification for pacifism but could equally be used to encourage recruitment. The poet laureate Robert Bridges declared in *The Times*, “it is primarily a holy war, it is manifestly a war declared between Christ and the Devil.”³⁵ The Liberal MP W. Llewelyn Williams supported the assessment in a letter two days later.³⁶ In the early weeks of the War, Williams had campaigned for British neutrality, but he came to modify his position in light of developments. Williams’s letter connected Britain with the holy warrior of Christ, alluding to Revelation 19:11-21. The Anglican Church appealed to the figure of Christ and encouraged men to sign-up by suggesting Jesus’ self-sacrifice as a model for the nation.³⁷

Sacha Llewellyn contends that many artists articulated “their experience of war with individual allegorical images intended to broaden meaning beyond the particular event to a wider context... [These] disguise hidden and sometimes controversial meanings.”³⁸ Frank Brangwyn’s allegorical *Mater Dolorosa Belgica* (1915) (fig. 3) is a Pietà adjusted to the situation afflicting Belgium in 1914–15. The title ‘Our Lady of Sorrows’ ostensibly focuses on the intense suffering of the Virgin during the passion of Jesus, yet here Brangwyn associates her pain with the suffering of Belgium. The civilians caught up in the conflict are paired with Christian suffering, and, as Harrington identifies, ideas of divine intervention.³⁹ Yet the image also resonates with an exemplarist interpretation of Christ’s Crucifixion; the model of good or innocence (Belgium) is contrasted with

³¹ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 90-93; 91.

³² *ibid.* 93.

³³ Jenkins, *Great and Holy War*, 17.

³⁴ Harrington, “Religious and Spiritual Themes,” 147.

³⁵ Bridges, “Holy War,” 9.

³⁶ Williams, “Holy War,” 4.

³⁷ “Sacred Cause,” 10.

³⁸ Llewellyn, Introduction, 18.

³⁹ Harrington, “Religious and Spiritual Themes,” 151.

the weapons of (German) evil. The exemplarist interpretation had particular potency; the cross and the passion narrative was a means to cast judgment on belligerence, while the War could be recognised as a new crucifixion. Charles Gore offered a prayer of reconciliation in 1914 disclosing his hope while identifying the War with the Crucifixion of Jesus: “they and we may establish a new order... following in all things the standard of the Son of Man, whom we have denied, and put to shame, and crucified afresh upon the Calvary of our battle ground.”⁴⁰ Meanwhile according to Neville S. Talbot, writing with regard to the War in 1918, “The light which shines from the Cross is a terrible light because it shows men what they have done. They have crucified God.”⁴¹ Thus, exemplarist readings could be used to make the allegation that humankind was, in its present behaviour, failing to achieve the ideal moral standard.

The War took on a sense of purpose through the “parallel between the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifices of 1914–18”.⁴² British War poetry used religious sacrificial themes extensively. Charles Hamilton Sorley’s “All the hills and vales along” (1914) used springtime imagery to recall the Easter story, and Christ’s sacrifice: “Earth that blossomed and was glad/ ‘Neath the cross that Christ had”. The soldier is identified with Christ, as the Earth “Shall rejoice and blossom too/When the bullet reaches you.” The icon of Christ and the cross was common. Lucy Whitmell’s “Christ in Flanders” (1915) and J. S. Arkwright’s “The Supreme Sacrifice” (1917) were among the most popular poems of the War and made extensive use of the imagery. The identification of the suffering soldier with Christ became increasingly apparent.⁴³ Meanwhile, though such poetic devices a soldier’s grave marked by a cross could be reconfigured into the soldier’s own Calvary. Siegfried Sassoon Herbert Read and William Arthur Dunkerley (under the pseudonym John Oxenham) all made the connection, thereby foregrounding the idea of Jesus-as-human.

Visual artists likewise used the Crucifixion narrative, taking interest in the suffering of a human Christ. Gilbert Spencer’s *The Crucifixion* (1915) (fig. 4) imagines Jesus—who closely resembles Gilbert’s father—being crucified by five young men who have a notable resemblance to the Spencer brothers.⁴⁴ Gilbert Spencer appears to use the sacrifice interpretation to be empathise with the pain caused to his father by the brothers going to war.⁴⁵ Jacob Epstein’s *Risen Christ* (1917–1919) (fig. 5) rejected the ‘true likeness’ of Jesus, developing his interpretation through studies made of Bernard Van Dieran on his sick bed. Finding him “so spiritual, worn with suffering... I immediately recognised... the Christ... its pitying eyes, and... great intellectual strength.”⁴⁶ The sculpture’s

⁴⁰ Gore, *War and The Church*, 39.

⁴¹ Talbot, *Religion Behind the Front*, 62.

⁴² Vance, *Death So Noble*, 36.

⁴³ Hibberd, *Winter of the World*, 43.

⁴⁴ Aside from the youngest Gilbert; Stanley, Percy, William, Horace, and Sydney

⁴⁵ Pople, *Spencer*, 59.

⁴⁶ Epstein, *Let There Be Sculpture*, 121.

outstretched arm displays the nail holes in his right palm while the index finger of the left signposts the wound. Epstein later explained his sculpture of Christ: “[it] still stands for what I intended it to be. It stands and accuses the world for its grossness, inhumanity, cruelty, and beastliness, for the World War and for the new wars in Abyssinia, China, Spain, and now our new Great War.”⁴⁷ Richard Cork argued, “There is nothing triumphal about this resurrection... He scarcely seems to have recovered from his own martyrdom.”⁴⁸ Cork suggests that Epstein’s experiences in the Great War as a conscripted soldier, resultant breakdown, and the death of Epstein’s ardent supporter T. E. Hulme in 1917, likely having informed the representation.⁴⁹ Irrespective of Epstein’s own Orthodox Jewish background he recognises universal human suffering within the Christian subject. Epstein identifies Christ’s humanity rather than a humanised Christ, giving new life to imagery.⁵⁰

The Apocalyptic Sensibility in Images of The Crucifixion by David Jones, Stanley Spencer, William Orpen and William Roberts 1919–1921

The use of Christ’s Crucifixion as a response to contemporary circumstances continued in the immediate post-war period. Jay Winter argued that the visual language of war memorials varies considerably according to artistic tradition, religious identity, political orientation, and financial resources.⁵¹ Catherine Moriarty recognised the Christian iconography’s continuing importance in British War memorials, where it provided consolation to the bereaved in a period of intense “grief and confusion”.⁵² Throughout the belligerent European nations the War’s memory was inseparable from Crucifixion iconography. The emphasis in response to war suggests the sequence of redemption following cataclysm and serves as a cultural allusion to the apocalyptic cycle whereby restoration to God follows destruction; it indicates divine justification behind the turmoil. The post-war memorial culture continued to place the Crucifixion of Christ front and center, and encouraged parallels between soldiers and Christ. Church memorial windows used the sacrificial iconography to commemorate the deceased from a local community. Wilhelmina Geddes’s 1922 memorial window (fig. 6) at Saint Peter’s, Wallsend-Under-Tyne, depicts the Crucifixion with a smaller Deposition beneath the crucifixus across a five-light window; there is no imagery of the War. The ecclesiastical context endorses the subtext that Christ, depicted with strong outstretched arms, is the archetype for (human) suffering and sacrifice, and that one’s suffering should be met with similar strength. Saint Twynnell’s War Memorial, Pembrokeshire, (fig. 7) used a generic design. Christ’s arms are in a

⁴⁷ *ibid*, 122.

⁴⁸ Cork, *Epstein*, 41-42.

⁴⁹ *ibid*.

⁵⁰ Hayman, “Art is Interreligious Dialogue,” 12.

⁵¹ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 85.

⁵² Moriarty, “War Memorials,” 63.

V-shape denoting the strain from gravity pulling down his body from the cross. The depiction elicits pathos which carries over to the men to whom the memorial is dedicated. Among the most widely disseminated images of Crucifixion during the War was James Clark's painting *Duty*, otherwise known as *The Great Sacrifice* (1914) (fig. 8), which was reproduced as a souvenir photogravure in the *Graphic's* 1914 Christmas issue, and from 1915 sold copies in various of sizes. Advertisements described the print: "At the foot of the Cross... sleeping his last sleep, lies a gallant young soldier sacrificed on the altar of duty to country".⁵³ His death—from a bullet to the head—is euphemistically his "last sleep". The composition suggests that Christ is an invisible yet comforting presence beside every soldier. James Fox argues that it is "a flagrant idealization of death".⁵⁴ It was accordingly adapted for memorial windows. At Saint Mary Magdalene, Windmill Hill, Enfield, it was adapted for the two-light memorial window *The Dying Soldier* (1919) (fig. 9). A three-light variant of *The Great Sacrifice* attributed to Clark himself for the Church of Saint Margaret, Mid Glamorgan (fig. 10). The iconography explicitly connects the suffering of contemporary soldiers and the story of Christ's Crucifixion, while the composition's ecclesiastical context and translation into stained glass gives authority to the sentimental theology, effectively becoming a new sermon in glass.

This section of the chapter will focus on four artists of different religious orientations who each made sketches that used the Crucifixion as a framework for recognising and comprehending the universal trauma of the War: the Catholic David Jones's *Study of soldiers playing dice at the foot of the Cross* (c.1919–1921), the post-Methodist Stanley Spencer's *The Crucifixion* (1921), and the Anglican William Orpen's untitled sketch inscribed '*I dreamt—and lo, the figures over the clock had changed—and I remembered the war*' (1919).⁵⁵ The chapter concludes with a Crucifixion painting exhibited as a resolved artwork by William Roberts—an artist with no religious affiliation—titled *The Scarlet Robe*.

The sketches by Jones, Spencer, and Orpen were ostensibly unfulfilled ideas; none was pursued to a resolved artwork. Resultantly, these sketches are incongruous footnotes in each artist's oeuvre. Roberts's painting is likewise an outlier; being a religious subject from a secular artist. What specifically marks these artworks out as distinct is how they relate to each individual's circumstances during the Great War. These introduce a means for each to articulate their war, yet they are also not conventional Crucifixions. The depictions abstract the Crucifixion from the passion narrative, as with many contemporaneous artistic usages of the Crucifixion, yet they also reject any identification of the soldier—or any human—with Christ on the cross. This figure of otherness is situated in a composition referencing the War and requires an alternative approach. It indicates that

⁵³ Advertisement for The *Graphic* Christmas Number, *The Graphic*, 28 Nov. 1914.

⁵⁴ Fox, *British Art*, 123.

⁵⁵ Upstone "Sudden Growing Up," 37. Upstone gives the alternative title *Christ Appearing at the Peace Conference*.

these images of Jesus transcend iconographic tradition, devotional image, or metaphor. I argue that Jones, Spencer, Orpen, and Roberts, as educated individuals engaged with contemporary culture, and well versed in Christian faith, art, and iconographic tradition, were thinking through the implications, and nuances of the Crucifixion. Each artist is composing a visual theology in their respective sketch; these are concerned with contemporary circumstance, history, and temporal transition by designating beginnings and ends, and thus have an apocalyptic sensibility. The Crucifixion does not have to be appreciated as an apocalyptic event, and can be subject to different emphases, it does however closely parallel the apocalyptic drama. These artworks coax out the apocalyptic content.

As will be evident, these artworks are consciously situated in the historical context of their production. They are also profoundly anachronistic, responding to preceding artworks, and signify divine narratives that also possess a complex temporality. They reprise an orthodox subject of art—a Crucifixion. Jesus' execution has a chronological placement and a secure historical anchorage, apparently occurring circa 30 CE. According to conventional Christian belief, the Crucifixion is also a transitional, aionic event—it brings about the change of ages. This is the change from the old covenant to the era of Christianity. The Crucifixion is also kairotic—it is the ultimate and perfect moment, whereby sin is destroyed.⁵⁶ This is not bound by chronos. The Crucifixion further evades the quantitative chromatic rationalism of chronological, or Cartesian time. Established Christian belief claims the cross and Crucifixion to always be present and continues to affect change. The Crucifixion is also a kairos that enters and re-enters into chronos. Therefore, while it occurred chronologically circa 30 CE, in the kairotic sense of time the Crucifixion is ever-present in the here and now.

As the Crucifixion is kairotic, and not bound by chronos, then an artwork of the Crucifixion always points as much to the moment of the artwork's creation as it does to any other of these times—chronological or kairotic. It designates that present moment as a re-presentation (as opposed to representation) of the kairos. Why then might one decide that the subject is of validity at that moment? To suggest that making artworks of the Crucifixion as a method of re-engaging with a tradition, whilst certainly a likely factor, is reductive; recognising it as a means of identifying and manifesting the important temporal concepts that are uniquely pertinent to the historical moment reveals the complexities inherent in these artworks.

I do not align these artists with a particular interpretation. Rather, I argue that they were aware of core concepts of the Crucifixion, such as death, redemption, transition, punishment and persecution. Like the Apocalypse, the Crucifixion is a fundamentally optimistic narrative sullied by

⁵⁶ Romans 6:6.

violence and devastation. Such ideas underpin these artworks. This original methodology prioritises the theological aspects over iconographical tradition to provide a more sensitive understanding of the function and purpose of religious imagery within early twentieth-century culture. It is possible to appreciate that these artists were considerably more involved in contemporary affairs than is recognised. This chapter contributes to apocalypse studies by recognizing that the Crucifixion has historically served as an apocalyptically potent narrative. It also indicates a problem in scholarship whereby the Crucifixion has been reductively sentimentalised as shorthand for love and compassion. This following discussion will initially focus on the three respective sketches in turn, before attention is turned towards William Roberts's painting. I will address the interrelated aspects of the cross, executioners, and anachronism. To this end I indicate the apocalyptic sensibilities in these formally dissimilar images of the Crucifixion, arguing that it is possible to reconsider these four artworks and recognise their *perception* of epochal change.

David Jones

David Jones made the sketch *Study of Soldiers Playing Dice at the Foot of the Cross* (also known as *Crucifixion*) (fig. 11) following his demobilisation; he had enlisted as infantry in the Royal Welch Fusiliers during the Great War. Jones returned to study at Westminster School of Art from 1919 to 1921, and formally converted from his Protestant heritage to Roman Catholicism in 1921. The squared-up, highly attentive sketch of Jesus' Crucifixion at Calvary displaces the focal point to the Quaternion playing dice in the foreground at the base of the foremost cross.⁵⁷ Beside them is a jar of soured wine used to quench the thirst of those sentenced to death.⁵⁸ A fifth soldier leans against the simplex holding a spear, possibly representing Longinus and the Holy Lance. Above this figure is a crucified person represented by legs bound above the ankles, with nails inserted laterally. Two further crucifixions conform to the biblical narrative describing the execution of three men. Jesus is apparently on the second cross from the foreground, located to the composition's far left; Gospel accounts specify that the crosses were arranged with one "on either side" and "Jesus in the midst".⁵⁹ At its base a woman with a bob haircut holds someone who has fallen to their knees, indicating both the group of women present at the Crucifixion, and the swoon of the Virgin. The superscription prepared by Pilate, and the lowered tau forms the recognised *crux immissa* (intersecting cross). The nails through the roof of the foot and the open palm/wrist indicate the venerated wounds. The third victim to Jesus' left is crucified upon the T-shaped *crux commissa* traditionally used to differentiate the two thieves from Jesus. His head hangs forward. A rope falls

⁵⁷ Matthew 27:35-36; John 19:24, 29-30.

⁵⁸ John 19:29; Matthew 27:34; Mark 15:23.

⁵⁹ Luke 23:33; John 19:18.

from the patibulum and his left wrist, reinforcing gravity's punishing influence. The sketch recalls the iconographic tradition when Gestas, the unrepentant thief traditionally to Jesus' left, was represented in anguish and torment; thus, Dismas is upon the foremost cross.

Jones's tight, controlled lines provide an illustrative quality. The squaring implies some ambition to work it up into a larger image, and suggests that Jones recognised merit in the work—an interpretation supported by the sketch's survival of Jones's 1925 cull of work, and the later reprisal of the imagery of the British infantryman from the Great War at the Crucifixion in the monologue 'boast' of Dai Greatcoat from *In Parenthesis*.⁶⁰ Greatcoat identifies himself as a type of universal soldier who was present in the great battles and conflicts of Western myth, legend, and history, and claims he "served Longinus" under the cross.⁶¹ Jones destroyed considerable early work, finding it artistically and religiously embarrassing.⁶² The sketch is given form by a simplified colour palette of red, blue and white. The crosses are the dominant vertices that provide depth and space to the composition; the gatherings in-between lead one's eye through the asymmetrical composition via the implied receding diagonals.

Jesus is surrounded by crosses at right-angles to both his left and right; thus, the two thieves look towards each other. The arrangement recalls Mantegna's *The Crucifixion* (1457–1459) (fig. 12) from the San Zeno Altarpiece [see Appendix 1].⁶³ Jones's sketch has further visual similarities to Mantegna's work that are not necessarily results of the iconographic tradition. Both use the 'plateau' composition as found in fourteenth century depictions. Like Mantegna, Jones depicts intricate groups of figures in their own mini-dramas, while soldiers play dice at the foot of the cross. In both one's eye is drawn from the foreground scene and into a landscape composed of a hill with a road leading away from the architectonically similar walled city of Jerusalem. Jones's construction lines reveal a keen awareness of perspective, which is further emphasised by the ground level point of view. Though not as competent, Jones's technical exercise follows Mantegna's easy use of perspective and illusionistic effects.

The sketch conveys Gospel harmony (synthesising the Gospels into a single narrative) indicating a high regard for scripture; this literalness hints at why Jones avoided parallels between soldiers and Jesus.⁶⁴ Instead, they are identified with the executioners. The low, obtuse viewpoint places the viewer within the narrative at eye-level with the soldiers, presenting the Crucifixion "from the matter of fact perspective of an infantryman with a job to do."⁶⁵ That Jesus is not more clearly identified is significant. Jones shifts the viewer's attention away from Christ, who is relegated to one-

⁶⁰ Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 79-84.

⁶¹ *ibid.* 83.

⁶² Alldritt, *Writer and Artist*, 61; Miles, *Backgrounds*, 34.

⁶³ Hills, "Pierced Hermaphrodite," 426.

⁶⁴ *ibid.* 425.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* 426.

side of the composition. The effect reinforces the viewer's association with the executioners who were ignorant of Jesus' identity. We (initially) fail to recognise him and share in soldiers' ignorance. The ease of overlooking Christ would be later reprised by Jones in the poem "A, a, a, DOMINE DEUS" writing that Jesus is easily missed "at the turn of civilisation".⁶⁶ The soteriological necessity of the Crucifixion implies that agency is compromised. As in Luke 23:34 the soldiers "know not what they do." Consequently, duty—known and unknown—bound the soldiers to carry it out. The Crucifixion and the soldiers are correspondingly instrumentalised.⁶⁷ It is thus deducible that Jones's Christ retains a supernatural quality, signifying salvation in death.

The use of modern dress in biblical paintings has a long art-historical precedent. Modern dress contemporises the subject and demonstrates its continued artistic vitality; the present and the narrative can be looked at anew while moral lessons can be rediscovered for today. The soldier at the foot of the cross was a popular motif during the War and remained so into the post-war. Percy Hague Jowett's altarpiece triptych design *England* (c.1918) (fig. 13) situates an image of the Crucifixion in the central panel; a soldier in profile looks towards the cross in the left panel, while in the right stands a haloed medieval knight with head lowered in reverence and holding the hilt of a sword pointing towards the ground. They stand against a devastated landscape, however there are signs of renewal within it. The fighting has stopped; the damage is profound, yet new life is emerging. Theologically it suggests the sacrifice, *Christus Victor*, and exemplarist interpretations of salvation; accordingly, the soldier who embodies England is also identified with them. He is the moral standard who is sacrificed and through death has triumphed over subjecting powers. In this image the cross retrospectively looks to the War, while resurrection is the prospective promise. Jones's image contrasts as it is the soldiers rather than the Crucifixion that have changed temporal location. Jones's Roman guards are prochronistic; they wear contemporary British soldiers' Brodie helmets—a motif reprised in *Jesus Mocked* (fig. 14a-b)—while their poses featured in concurrent trench sketches (fig. 15). The anachronistic soldiers were preceded by wartime allegorical figures in a chivalric idiom for the *Graphic* and in seasonal greetings cards (fig. 16-7); these shared much with contemporary propaganda, while foreshadowing Jones's later trope of the epic soldier throughout history. His complex temporalities suggest an apocalyptic tone whereby history is marked by repeated lurches and transitions. Guy Davenport affirms Jones's conception of the Crucifixion in later writings as anachronic and repeating: "both an event in time, upon which all perspectives converge and an event throughout time: the purpose of the evolution of the world was to raise the hill of Golgotha, grow the wood for the cross, form the iron for the nails and develop the primate

⁶⁶ Jones, "A, a, a Domine Deus," 9.

⁶⁷ Jones, *Epoch and Artist*, 261.

species for god to be born a member of.”⁶⁸ The anthropologist Nicholas J. Saunders identified that the French wayside calvaries that lined the roads travelled by British soldiers incorporate a “complex interplay of the imagery of the cross, at once Christian, pagan, prehistoric and modern” achieved via the appropriation of pre-Christian megaliths or an association with traditional folktales.⁶⁹ These likely reinforced his sense of being involved in this longer history unified by the cross.⁷⁰ Scripture points to the timelessness of the Crucifixion; Jones later dubbed the cross the “Axile [*sic*] Tree” in *The Anathemata*.⁷¹ It is an epochal fulcrum, but not bound by a specific history or time. Jones’s memory transposes into allegory to codify and understand the War indirectly. He adopts an apocalyptic device to make sense of the subjective experience.

These British soldiers share the Roman guard’s historic responsibility and therefore bear responsibility for the Crucifixion; sin is inextricable from the concept of war, and every sin is responsible for Jesus’ Crucifixion.⁷² The soldiers instigate the transition heralded by the Crucifixion. The connection goes further. The composition’s oblique view of the crosses approximates the experience of approaching French wayside calvaries (fig. 18). Several British artists had incorporated them into their war works—often in various states of destruction as in Eric Kennington’s *The Kensingtons at Laventie* (1915) (fig. 19), and Colin Gill’s *Heavy Artillery* (1919) (fig. 20), while the foregrounded cross in Charles Sims’s *Sacrifice* (1918) (fig. 21) is highly suggestive of a calvary. Jones was one of the longer serving soldiers (January 1915–January 1919, totaling 117 weeks at the front); he was likely aware of the British Army’s use of Field Punishment no. 1, and the rumored crucifixions carried out by German soldiers, which created surrogate Christs, and reestablished crucifixion in the present-day. Thus, Jones and his comrades—like the historic soldiers at Calvary—lived each day in the shadow of a cross, of one form or another.

As noted, the sketch appears unresolved; no further work was apparently developed from it. Squaring up indicates the ambition to develop it further, as does his apparent recognition of merit. The realistic depiction came from the period when Jones was increasingly flirting with Catholicism. The Crucifixions Jones produced soon after at Ditchling (fig. 22-3) showed an increased awareness and reference to Catholic iconography in the use of a halo or Latin text, while his greater attentiveness to iconographic variation is evident in the triclavian depiction of the Crucifixion in *Sanctus Christus de Capel-y-ffin* (1925). This sketch contrasts with a vulnerable naked Christ and an emphasis upon the executioners’ responsibility—and foregrounds man’s role and guilt in his death—which lends itself to an exemplarist interpretation of salvation. Indeed, Jones’s image focuses on the

⁶⁸ Davenport, “In Love,” 74.

⁶⁹ Saunders, “Crucifix,” 9.

⁷⁰ Hills, “Pierced Hermaphrodite,” 425.

⁷¹ 1 Peter 4:6; John 1:29; Jones, *Anathemata*, 243. “Axile Tree” conflates the symbolism of the tree and Yggdrasil of Norse myth with Jones’s interpretation of the cross as an axis for all human culture; it is the fixed point around which human culture turns.

⁷² *Catechism*, 598.

moral character of the people at the crucifixion rather than the Catholic sensibility of the suffering Christ; perhaps it carries the fading influence of Jones's Protestant heritage which became increasingly alien to him while at Westminster School of Art. Inevitably the sketch would be incongruous, but also epochal: Jones was on the threshold of conversion, on the verge of abandoning the illustrative style, and yet to take influence from Eric Gill. The disordered temporality also resonated with attitudes after the War: medieval revivalism and guild socialism looked to history and tradition in an attempt to fashion a new present. Jones used anachronism to articulate a greater truth about the War, yet he also shared a preoccupation with his romanticised notion of "the genuine tradition of the Island of Britain."⁷³

The sketch draws parallels between the War and the Crucifixion. The War was often characterised as epochal change. Likewise, Christian soteriology indicates the Passion—and its central event of Crucifixion—as a transitional event; the period before and after are critically different. Jones's apocalyptic imagination became explicit in his later writings; his *In Parenthesis* was published in 1937. A frontispiece and tailpiece of a British soldier, and a slain ram respectively enclosed the poem in the first edition (fig. 24-5). The fictionalised poem mirrors Jones's war service. The two artworks are a fragment Jones's initial ambition for *In Parenthesis* as a series of artworks, or prints with short text accompaniments.⁷⁴ They are literally the parentheses to the poem, and, as I have argued elsewhere, the two images are apocalyptic in conception.⁷⁵ He was active in a circle of fellow Catholic intellectuals who were preoccupied with metahistories in the 1920s and '30s. Together they anticipated a fated decline of the West that they christened 'The Break'.⁷⁶ Looking back in 1942, Jones claimed that Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* seemed to encapsulate many of his thoughts over the past two decades.⁷⁷ Decline and collapse pervades much of Jones's later work; *In Parenthesis* uses the Apocalypse to depict the Great War as a moment of transition, and "the locus of a definitive civilizational break."⁷⁸

By conflating the War and cross, and designating the recent past as an epochal fulcrum, we see Jones's conception resonate in these earlier sketches too. The sketch points to contemporary anxieties regarding the veteran ontology; they had returned having witnessed events far beyond comprehension, and often suffered a post-war malaise; high unemployment, rising cost of living, severe housing shortages and union activity all contributed to the veterans' sense of alienation. Jones's soldiers, out of time, out of sync, and doing the necessary dirty work at the Crucifixion, become an abstraction of contemporary problems.

⁷³ Jones, Preface, x.

⁷⁴ Miles, *Backgrounds*, 80.

⁷⁵ Bromwell, "Apocalyptic Paratext," 61-71.

⁷⁶ Henderson-Staudt, "Decline," 445; Robichaud, "Meaning of History," 68-85; Jones, *Anathemata*, 15-16.

⁷⁷ Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 115.

⁷⁸ Henderson-Staudt, "Decline," 447; Tønning, Introduction, 10.

Stanley Spencer

Stanley Spencer likewise suffered this malaise. He had served as a medical orderly, soldier and War Artist; however, he struggled to reconcile the experiences with his artwork. *The Crucifixion* is one of the few works he made referencing the War after his resignation as a War Artist in 1919. It was apparently sketched for a War memorial in Steep;⁷⁹ however, the commission fell through without any resolved paintings. *The Crucifixion* (fig. 26) was the profoundly religious artist's first painting of the subject.⁸⁰ It was made only in 1921—when Spencer was around the age of 28—during something of a transitional period when he was interrogating the dynamics of his faith, and the influences from Anglicanism, Catholicism and Wesleyan Methodism. As an artist he also began developing more expansive paintings and schemes. The paper support has been extended in several places.

Ostensibly the painting conforms to many precedents for depicting the Crucifixion. From the raised viewpoint one surveys the field. A Roman centurion leaves; he holds a spear in one hand, Jesus' garments in the other, having apparently been victorious in the lots.⁸¹ The broadly symmetrical composition places the thieves to the left and right, where they are both crucified upon a crux commissa. Their gaze converges on Jesus in the central ravine, focusing attention on Jesus and his executioners. Three soldiers theatrically hammer nails into the crux immissa, as Mary slides down the ravine towards its base, apparently overcome in the artistic tradition of the swooning Virgin.⁸² A group of priests and soldiers recline to the Jesus' left, unaware of the significance of the transpiring events. At the front is the centurion with the sponge soaked in soured wine suggesting the convention of depicting the lance-bearer and the sponge bearer either side of the cross. He turns to face Christ. This passive gathering is a sharp contrast to the violence and dynamism of the soldiers administering the executions.⁸³ Jesus is being nailed, while the thieves Dismas and Gestas (who are indistinguishable aside from iconographic tradition) are both tied, thereby distinguishing Christ in accordance with traditions of depicting the Crucifixion. With Mary, Longinus (or Saint Longinus), and a less violent crucifixion all being located to Christ's right, it is apparent that the painting has conforms to the traditional moral distinction between the left and right sides.

⁷⁹ Carline, *Spencer at War*, 130.

⁸⁰ Two further paintings of the subject—in modern dress—were made in 1934 and 1958.

⁸¹ John 19:23-24.

⁸² Stanley Spencer, Biographical writings, c.1950–3, Tate Archive 733.10.154

⁸³ The violence of the executioners was later reprised in Spencer's *The Crucifixion* (1958), where the wear brewer's caps in reference to Aldenham Brewers school that the painting was commissioned for. According to Spencer, "I have given the men who are nailing Christ to the Cross—and making sure they do a good job of it—brewers' caps because it is your governors, and you, who are still nailing Christ to the Cross" (Pople, *Spencer*, 492). Spencer identifies both the importance of doing one's work well along with the anachronistic intersection of Calvary and modern daily life.

Duncan Robinson identified that the setting is in contrast to Spencer's associated 'Life of Christ' paintings in the early 1920s.⁸⁴ There are further differences. His work is frequently anachronic, transposing biblical narratives into contemporary settings; yet here Spencer moved the landscape in time to match the narrative in an example of anapopism. This is a small but significant change to Jones's conception. Spencer identified this Calvary as the Vardar hills, Macedonia, where he fought during the War.⁸⁵ The landscape has moved both in time and space to become the site of Crucifixion and is consequently conflated with the cross. This turns Macedonia into Calvary, and indicates his sense of *an end*, yet also *a beginning* originating from the War. Spencer vividly recalled the sensation of the geography but did not immediately associate it with Calvary. He wrote that these hills inspired "a feeling of the... ultimate redemption of everything, that everything was becoming more and more perfect... though some of my worst experiences were ahead of me... I felt hopeful."⁸⁶ His intention to use it "with some great human happening" indicates a soteriological mode.⁸⁷ Spencer has identified his hope in war with Christian culture's *greatest* "human happening"—Christ's Crucifixion. Spencer sought renewal post-war, and this appears to inform many of the subject choices for his contemporary paintings.

A significant proportion of Spencer's post-war subjects were taken from the Gospel Passion narratives, and later the general resurrection of the Apocalypse. These are narratives indicative of transition, and have overt themes of love, compassion, hope, and redemption that are obviously alluring to a veteran. The use of allegories to make sense of the War provides a degree of distance from the events. Like Jones, Spencer was deeply affected, and trauma had influenced his resignation as a War Artist. His paintings that are unequivocally about the War are notable, as they take no interest in violence. Yet here, Spencer has emphasised the violence of Jesus' Crucifixion—albeit violence that is detached from Spencer's own experience. Like Jones, Spencer recognised the passion as instrumental; it was Christ's "job" to carry the cross, thus it was his job to bring salvation.⁸⁸ The violence of the Crucifixion and his attentiveness to the executioners over the executed was common throughout his subsequent paintings of the Crucifixion and deposition.⁸⁹ Spencer did not shy away from violence and acknowledges that while suffering is universal and unavoidable, it is balanced by the hope of renewal and redemption as promised in the resurrection.

Spencer had painted *Travoy's Arriving with Wounded at a Dressing-Station at Smol, Macedonia, September 1916* (1919) (fig. 27) during his War Artist commission. It depicts surgery taking place in an illuminated operating theatre at a dressing station from an elevated viewpoint.

⁸⁴ Robinson, Spencer, 29.

⁸⁵ Spencer, Tate Archive 733.10.154.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Stanley Spencer to Mr Smart, 20 May 1938, Tate Archive 8917.2.7.

⁸⁹ Devonshire Jones ed., "Catalogue," 56.

Outside four travois pulled by mules wait loaded with wounded soldiers. Spencer said it was not “a scene of horror but of redemption from it”. He later continued, “I was right in making it a happy picture as the early painters were right in making the Crucifixion a happy painting.”⁹⁰ While the veracity of Spencer’s art-historical claim is arguable, his comparison puts the *Travoys* and *Crucifixion* paintings in dialogue. The War is not equivalent to the Crucifixion itself—thereby negating the conflation of Christ and the soldier casualties—rather it is a depreciated state *before* redemption. Surgery indicates injury, while the Crucifixion indicates fallenness, yet both point towards salvation.

The Crucifixion addresses a number of themes pertinent to the artist however, as noted, it was not developed further after the Steep commission failed.⁹¹ Spencer’s biographer Kenneth Pople observed that the cavalcade of crosses shows “the panoramic intent of the design.”⁹² The extended painting was to include the walls of Jerusalem, and the apocalyptic imagery of the Temple with its curtain torn,⁹³ and the resurrection of the “holy people”;⁹⁴ however, this ambitious scale hints at why the sketch was never explicitly repurposed.

With the War often characterised as a divine struggle, the devout soldier was always living within the context of the cross. *The Crucifixion* designates Calvary as a battlefield—both of human forces at war and divine forces over sin.⁹⁵ Spencer’s painting of the Crucifixion is fused with apocalyptic themes of war, salvation, destruction and redemption; however, it is hope that is triumphant. Given Spencer’s emphasis on concepts such as redemption, reconciliation and salvation in his personal theology, the identification of the Crucifixion with hope is highly appropriate; it indicates that the sense of loss resulting from the War will be followed with redemption. The curator and art historian Robert Upstone writes, “Spencer... [casts] the sufferings of war as sacrificial but ultimately redemptive.”⁹⁶ As we will see in Chapter Two, Spencer finally achieved the association of war and redemption themes in a war memorial situation with the *Resurrection of the Soldiers*. The relevance of the Crucifixion to Spencer after the War can only be appreciated in reference to his conception of the general resurrection, which he understood it as a moment of reconciliation. Christian soteriology tells that the Crucifixion cannot be separated from eschatology, and apocalypse; likewise, Spencer’s *The Crucifixion* cannot be separated from his *Resurrection* paintings and Millenarian conception of the Last Day. They are bound together thematically in this concern for restoration, and redemption, becoming a fundamental call for renewal.

⁹⁰ Harries and Harries, *War Artists*, 111.

⁹¹ Bell, Spencer R.A., 80.

⁹² Pople, *Spencer*, 204.

⁹³ Mark 15:38; Matthew 27:50; Luke 23:45.

⁹⁴ Matthew 27:52-53.

⁹⁵ The association of the cross and the battlefield dates from Constantine, and resulted in the chi-rho, which itself was adopted as a military standard (Labaram) used under Constantine.

⁹⁶ Upstone, “Aftermath. The Crucifixion,” 114.

William Orpen

Unlike Jones and Spencer, William Orpen was a staunch Anglican. In 1927 he was among a number of leading society figures questioned by the *Spectator* on the most important book to their career. Orpen cited the Bible as number one.⁹⁷ Orpen was employed in the Army Service Corps during the War before receiving a War Artist commission in 1917. He was duly employed as the official British artist of the Paris Peace Conference (18 January 1919–21 January 1920), and commissioned to paint three canvases of the assembled delegates. He superficially met the obligations in his first two paintings from 1919: *The Signing of Peace in the Hall of Mirrors, Versailles, 28th June 1919* and *A Peace Conference at the Quai d'Orsay* (fig. 28-29). The third, *To the Unknown British Soldier in France* was first exhibited in 1923 and proved controversial, with Orpen having overtly rebelled from the commission (fig. 30).⁹⁸ The Imperial War Museum did not accept the painting until amendments were made in 1928 (fig. 31), after which the compositional similarity to Tommaso Laureti's *Triumph of Christian Religion* (1513–1521) (fig. 32) was clear. Orpen made the sketch inscribed, "*I dreamt—and lo, the figures over the clock had changed—and I remembered the war*" (fig. 33) to accompany a letter to a friend dated 28 February 1919, which served to express his concerns regarding the Conference.⁹⁹ Scholarship has not previously recognised the extent that it shares its composition with Orpen's concurrent *A Peace Conference*. However, there are several differences in this sketch that serve to criticise proceedings.¹⁰⁰ This sketch is of a specific type identified by the literary and art critic Bruce Arnold, who claims a distinction between Orpen's drawings that are comments about his life and those "considered premeditated works of art". The former were often given away, whilst the latter were not.¹⁰¹ As part of an illustrated letter, this sketch can be identified as a commentary. The merit of these has been generically acknowledged as "evidence of his genius as a rather bitter caricaturist."¹⁰²

This sketch has never received prolonged study. Indeed, his satirical sketches have remained a largely overlooked side to his practice. The composition is highly symmetrical in the tradition of paintings of the Crucifixion. Set in the Clock Room (Salon de l'Horloge) of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Quai d'Orsay, Paris, delegates are seated at a table having enjoyed a large meal with copious wine. Eucharistic elements of food and wine have been subverted to indicate

⁹⁷ "Books That Have Helped Well-Known People," 1042.

⁹⁸ Konody and Dark, *Artist and Man*, 101; Arnold, *Orpen*, 380; Costing him his £2000 fee. The commission was to culminate in a group portrait for the third canvas. Orpen had commenced the work but with the subversive inclusion of the deceased ace pilot Arthur Rhys Davies alongside the delegates. At some point following the service for the Unknown Soldier, November 1921, Orpen painted over the composition and produced a painting that suggested the culmination of war was the coffin. The reworked painting was rejected, and the commission was officially unfulfilled.

⁹⁹ Arnold, *Orpen*, 433.

¹⁰⁰ It is difficult to work out a chronology for the sketch and painting, and whether work on the painting predates this sketch. The painting was first exhibited in late 1919, several months after this sketch.

¹⁰¹ Arnold, *Orpen*, 433.

¹⁰² Konody and Dark, *William Orpen*, 59.

gluttony, and in this instance there is no wine to quench the Christ's thirst. An empty bottle has been knocked over; no one has cared to pick it up. The clock indicates that midnight approaches. Several delegates are falling asleep and there's no outward sign of stress from the task of 'making' peace. The painting *A Peace Conference* can be used to identify the central three caricatures, from left to right: President Woodrow Wilson, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, and British Prime Minister David Lloyd George. The intertext implies that Robert Lansing and Arthur Bonar Law are either side; however, the sketch only bears the slightest resemblance. They are possibly other members of the delegation—particularly Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Emanuele Orlando—or purposefully nonspecific. Above the mantel kneel two British Soldiers reflecting one another in full uniform and kit either side of the suffering Christ. Orpen's inscription is at the base of the composition. The differences to the painting prove important. While the view towards the fireplace in the Clock Room is the same, a more eclectic delegation surrounds the table in the painting. They pose towards the viewer with few exceptions. The timepiece behind them is indecipherable; however, the delegates' composure suggests that, if there is any chronological narrative between the two images, the painted scene transpired earlier in the evening. It is important to observe further details from *A Peace Conference*: two bronze putti sit above the clock—a piece by Victor Paillard—on opposite sides. They accentuate the statue in the alcove by holding the Imperial orb and scepter. An imposing classically inspired female figure stands with her right arm raised and body weighted towards to her leading right leg. The strong posture denotes triumph and pride. The statue was identified as Victory by the Imperial War museum.¹⁰³ It is actually a marble personification of France from 1857, by the Italian Joseph Michel-Ange Pollet.¹⁰⁴ Orpen's work became increasingly symbolic and allegorical throughout his service as a War Artist. His use of such devices had matured by the Paris Peace Conference.

The artist C. R. W. Nevinson observed that Orpen's work was "often tainted with bitterness and mockery" and that the "mental conflict" resulting from the War stayed with Orpen until death.¹⁰⁵ Orpen's sketch combines a critique *with* the legacy of the War, and discerns the contemporary setting by drawing upon Orpen's personal experience of both the War and the Conference. The delegates' degraded status denotes Orpen's frustration and contempt for the politicians, or "frocks", their inappropriate behavior, and their claim of sole responsibility for the peace.¹⁰⁶ Theodore Galerien identified Orpen as a "philosopher" who saw that the politicians were "puppets... painted accordingly" in *Hall of Mirrors*.¹⁰⁷ Orpen uses the architectural setting to diminish

¹⁰³ "A Peace Conference at the Quai d'Orsay," *Imperial War Museum*.

¹⁰⁴ "The Clock Room" *A tour of the Quai d'Orsay*.

¹⁰⁵ Nevinson, "William Orpen," 448, 459.

¹⁰⁶ Orpen, *An Onlooker*, 119-120. Orpen named them "Frocks" in reference to the frock-coats worn by several politicians at the Quai d'Orsay and Versailles. The attire indicated how out of touch they were with the circumstances before them.

¹⁰⁷ Galerien, "Renaissance of the Tate," 187.

the delegates' stature in *A Peace Conference*, whilst the Crucifixion over-shadows the delegates in the sketch.¹⁰⁸ They represent at least three of the so-called 'Big Four' who collectively dictated the peace terms. Orpen was contemptuous of them and had witnessed their arguments over war spoils.¹⁰⁹ The discord almost brought the Conference to collapse prior to the Fontainebleau Memorandum (25 March 1919). The statesmen's greed and irresponsibility is conveyed via the food and drink. They are oblivious to consequences, having fallen into an undignified, drunken state at the foot of the cross. Again, clear parallels are made with Luke 23:34. The delegates—like the soldiers casting lots—are too preoccupied with personal profit to grasp the bigger issues. The statue of France morphing into the Crucifixion of Jesus takes pointed meaning. Orpen took specific issue with Clemenceau and his pursuit of French interests.¹¹⁰ Orpen identifies France specifically, but the allies generally, in this condemnation, and implies the depreciated national honor of those present. Orpen is not however condemning everyone. This is evident in the transformation of the putti into British soldiers. Orpen believed the politicians disregarded the plight of the common soldier.¹¹¹ They subordinately kneel and are identified with the divine authority ignored by the politicians. Orpen made parallels between soldiers and divinity in his war memoir *An Onlooker in France*. A poem in the memoir, entitled "'Beaumont-Hamel'—A Memory of the Somme (Spring 1917)" describes a corpse using language associated with the angelic:

And the sun has made him Holy and Pure—
 He and his garments are bleached white and clean.
 A daffodil is by his head, and his curly; golden
 Hair is moving in the slight breeze.
 He, the man who died in "No Man's Land," doing
 Some great act of bravery for his comrades and
 Country—
 Here he lies, Pure and Holy, his face upward turned;
 No earth between him and his Maker.
 I have no right to be so near.¹¹²

The identification of the soldier accentuates holiness and purity, even if it is just as a poetic device. Orpen had empathised with the camaraderie of soldiery. He held military persons in high regard, from the average British infantryman, to the highest authorities of Field-Marshal Lord Haig and

¹⁰⁸ Upstone, "Love and Beauty," 43.

¹⁰⁹ Orpen, *An Onlooker*, 119-120.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.* 100.

¹¹¹ *ibid.* 101, 120.

¹¹² *ibid.* 23-24.

General Sir John Davidson, who Orpen conceived as “representatives of the dead and the living of the British Army.”¹¹³ Consequently Orpen's criticism is reserved for the political classes.

Orpen makes use of an *imagined* dream scenario, allegory, anachronism and anastrophe. Unlike those of Jones and Spencer, the cross has moved in time to the present-day, thus indicating its momentous significance, and spatially relocated to the Clock Room. Orpen updates the iconographic tradition's concern in temporality. I propose that the situation in the Clock Room is no coincidence. Clocks first and foremost designate begins, endings, and spans of time. The face of the clock reads approximately ten minutes to twelve—it is the threshold of a new day, but a period of darkness will come first. Like the symbol of the sun, things will be clarified, and there is the hope of new light. This contrasts with the illegible clock of the painting, where it is as though the hands of the timepiece are missing. This symbolic allusion denotes humanity's powerlessness and inability to avert self-annihilation, as apparently confirmed by the War and the Conference. Orpen's exploration of temporality goes further: he synthesises his memory of the wartime soldiers, and Christ's Crucifixion from supposedly two millennia prior, with the contemporary setting of the Paris Peace Conference. This is contextualised in a dream which casts Orpen as prophetic seer within the drawing's fiction. Anachronism ties the present into the past, with the allegory explicating the War and the delegate's actions. Replacing France with Christ relocates the Crucifixion event to a contemporary setting. This indicates important Christian soteriological ideas, as Jesus died for *all* our sins, and sin crucifies him eternally.¹¹⁴ Jesus has returned—though it's not the *Parousia*—he is still subversive, and politicians crucify him again. In the sketch it appears that the delegates have sacrificed others for personal gain. This attribution likens them to Judas. Thus, it is a coded criticism and a harsh condemnation. Orpen's views were tempered according to the commissioned painting; however, this illustration doesn't share those restrictions. It has been acknowledged, “Orpen rarely talked seriously. He was never a man who wore his heart on his sleeve.”¹¹⁵ Yet as Nevinson—perhaps projecting his own fears—attested, “towards the end of his life, the human tragedy of our modern civilisation and its seeming failure clouded his outlook”.¹¹⁶ His biographers Konody and Dark claim that the “real Orpen is to be found” in these critical images of the Conference.¹¹⁷ The War and Peace Conference inspired a dramatic change; the veiled cynicism was eclipsed, or *unveiled*, by remonstrance in *The Unknown Soldier* and the critical position he adopted in his memoir. His protests were unfamiliar aside from private correspondence.¹¹⁸ The sketch bridges these phases and foreshadows his later dissent.

¹¹³ *ibid.* 119-120.

¹¹⁴ Hebrews 6:6.

¹¹⁵ Konody and Dark, *William Orpen*, 98.

¹¹⁶ Nevinson, “William Orpen,” 447.

¹¹⁷ Konody and Dark, *William Orpen*, 97.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* 104.

I propose that parallels between the sketch, the painting, and *The Unknown Soldier* can also be recognised. As for Jones and Spencer, the sketch foreshadows a later work within the artist's oeuvre.¹¹⁹ The role imagination and anachronism takes in the composition *The Unknown Soldier* distinguishes it significantly from the preceding commissioned works, which were accurate and to life.¹²⁰ Orpen edited *The Outline of Art* (1930), where *The Unknown Soldier* was described as possessing a "scrupulous fidelity to reality and high powers of imagination."¹²¹ This fails to acknowledge that the imaginative aspects are apparently derivative of this sketch, while the soldiers originate in his war painting *Blown Up, Mad* (1917) (fig. 34). Politicians are unceremoniously depicted throughout the commission. *The Unknown Soldier* again elevates the soldiers' status by pairing them with the religious imagery. The comforting subtext of the cross bathed in light at the end of the tunnel behind the casket is that the deceased is with God. The two soldiers are mirrored either side of the central signs of death—the cross and the funerary casket—whilst the putti are restored from *A Peace Conference*.

Orpen's image of the Crucifixion reveals anxieties regarding the peace. The satirist is by their very nature involved in a form of judgment. This alleges to *unveil* a greater truth by a certain process of distortion and codification. Thus, the satire and apocalypse genres share distinct traits. Orpen's interpretation is predominantly exemplarist; Christ represents the moral standard that has not been met. The artist also satirically subverts the Christus Victor concept of soteriology to suggest the sense of triumphalism in the victors and defeat for the divine. Orpen's sketch argues that the delegates from the leading nations are conducting affairs in their own interest and to the great detriment of both the soldiers and the defeated nations. The Treaty of Versailles was controversial: the death of Christ in the present suggests the repetition of past mistakes. This sketch and its apocalyptic tone served to articulate a sense of anguish. It was an outlet for Orpen's frustration, and contributed to its subsequent, careful articulation.

An Apocalyptic Sensibility

The narrative of the Crucifixion possesses apocalyptic connotations and denotations, while the image of the Crucifixion can serve as rhetoric of crisis. Furthermore, images from the passion, particularly the death and resurrection, can serve an apocalyptic sensibility. Although sacrifice is key to the Christian doctrine of salvation, there are other possible meanings to an image of the Crucifixion. It is reductive to see contemporary Crucifixions as conflating the death of soldiers with

¹¹⁹ For Spencer, the work anticipated the later *Crucifixions*, the Macedonian setting, and the large schemes, whilst Jones later used the concept of anachronistic soldier at the foot of the cross in *In Parenthesis* and elsewhere.

¹²⁰ Arnold, *Orpen*, 376.

¹²¹ ed. Orpen, *Outline*, 621.

the sacrifice of Christ. As is evident in these particular sketches, the attention focused upon the executioners shows another approach, where the foremost concerns are with the negative themes of the narrative, as manifest in death, betrayal, and the lamenting of the world's need of redemption. In doing this these studies discern the contemporary moment, and paraphrase important biblical passages such as 1 Corinthians 2:8: "The rulers of this age crucified the Lord of Glory." This provides a type of judgment and indicates a markedly political character. Each artwork is indebted to Western iconographic precedents. Anachronism has often been a feature of images of the Crucifixion. Such instances—including the depiction of equestrians using stirrups at Calvary—can be an admission of insufficient historical knowledge. However, anachronism can serve another purpose as is evident in votive portraits with anachronistic dress at Calvary. This treatment indicated the portrait subject's virtuousness by identifying them with the mourners present at the cross. The anachronism and anachronism used in Jones's, Spencer's, and Orpen's sketches serves to discern something of the contemporary world specifically related to the recent war.

Jones, Spencer and Orpen made use of certain apocalyptic patterns in these sketches that follow the three-stage apocalyptic arc of destruction, judgment, and regeneration. Therefore, these Crucifixions are apocalyptic, insofar they indicate a crisis situation arrived at via the Great War— itself frequently articulated as a struggle between forces of absolute good and evil. They detect some aspect of the current order and indicate the transition of historical epoch, yet hold the hope of a better world, denoted by the critical image from Christian soteriology. As in apocalyptic texts, there is a personal perception of crisis. These artists are responding to their experiences to articulate an alleged universal truth, which in this instance reflects on the post-war and is expressed via the cross, which encapsulates the universal. It suggests that they are unveiling a greater truth about the present time. A Crucifixion-in-the-present proposes that the present situation is akin to that which crucified Christ—so indicating there are great wrongs in the world—yet it is also a call-to-action arguing for radical change in the present order. This gives meaning to the lived situation which has been perceived as a moment of great distress. There is further nuance when one considers whether it is Christ's suffering, or the execution process, that is being associated with the present. The identification with Christ suggests the suffering and/or sacrifice of the present time. Furthermore, it *humanises* Jesus. The identification with the crucifixion-act, however, suggests the events of the present period are akin to the circumstances of the first century, thus Jesus retains his divine otherness. By conflating the cross with now and explicitly emphasizing the executioners each of the artists makes a subversive image. Christ's death is not triumphant; in each he suffers.

These three images are of the incarnation. Unlike Gilbert Spencer or Jacob Epstein's depictions, the three sketches do not attempt to accentuate the humanity of Christ; rather these

depictions place the emphasis upon executioners, and so do not outwardly challenge Christ's dual status as both human and divine being (hypostatic union). These three artists use the Crucifixion motif—that is a supernatural or mythic image—and so indicate the movement to a new age and forecast a new era (assuming that one can navigate the present). The cause is attributed to circumstances beyond individual human agency. For Spencer it is redemptive, Orpen's sketch suggests it is repeating, whilst for Jones it was increasingly an age of destruction. Formal traits of the apocalypse genre are evident. The studies are composite images due their use of time, combining past and present, memory and imagination. Apocalypse tells of a period of spiritual turmoil—evident in the biographies of Jones and Spencer—and is laden with the hope and desire for an ultimate paradise, which was indispensable to Spencer's post-war art. Orpen, on the other hand, uses the prophetic trait of the dream to profess a greater truth about the lived-in world.

While the Crucifixion is a religious image, it can however function for, and be indicative of a more general form of secular apocalypticism. Circumstances of biography, and the use of iconography, signal that these artworks are the response to a specific sense of intensified anxiety. Thus, an apocalyptic tone is identifiable. History has reached an eschatological culmination—though it is not necessarily divinely instructed, nor the literal, cataclysmic, end of the world.

Finishing the Job—William Roberts's *The Scarlet Robe*

In the post-war decade William Roberts began painting a range of Judeo-Christian subject paintings. The secular artist had painted biblical narratives whilst a student at the Slade, when the Slade Sketch Club frequently set subjects taken from religious and classical texts (fig. 35). Roberts claimed in 1957 that "Christian mythology" was a major source for his work.¹²² His use of Christian subjects is largely isolated to the particular period between 1922 and 1926. The Welsh author Rhys Davies recalled that Roberts's intense interest meant that he "seldom stopped reading a pocket New Testament" when they were both on a tour of Germany in 1927.¹²³ Roberts's interest in Christian subjects appears to have ceased by 1928. His biographer Andrew Gibbon Williams claims that Roberts's interest was in Old Testament imagery and attributes it to the influence of Jewish connections.¹²⁴ However this is a statistically unsustainable argument while Rhys Davies offered a contrasting account.¹²⁵ Roberts produced at least six distinct works from the New Testament, and

¹²² William Roberts, "Reply to My Biographer."

¹²³ Roberts illustrated the jacket for Davies's novel *The Withered Root* (1927). The plot concerns repressed identities in the strict non-conformist communities of the South Wales Valleys. Davies, *Print of a Hare's Foot*, 159.

¹²⁴ Williams, *English Cubist*, 71.

¹²⁵ Roberts made two distinct crucifixion compositions (three sketches titled *The Crucifixion*, and *The Scarlet Robe*), a *Deposition from the Cross* (1926), an image of *Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple* (c. 1925), a sketch of *St. Christopher* carrying Christ (1923), and a painting of the prodigal son (*The Prodigal Sets Out*, 1927-8). In contrast there are the three images from the Hebrew text, of the Fall in *The Garden of Eden* (c. 1926), *The Tower of Babel* (c. 1922), and *Susanna and the Elders* (1926).

only half that number from the Hebrew text. Further, I contend that Roberts was not as Williams suggested simply trying “his hand at the traditional repertoire of Old Master subjects... re-invigorated at this time by an emerging vogue for re-working the paintings of the Renaissance in modern dress”.¹²⁶ This catchall usage of the Renaissance serves to discredit Roberts’s religious subject paintings as derivative, and overlooks the theological ramifications of a modern dress interpretation of a biblical narrative which identifies the contemporary moment as anachronistic and sharing in the kairotic biblical instance. The themes that Roberts depicted indicate another concern that challenges the assumptions of Williams’s position. They can be identified with three central themes with an apocalyptic sensibility: judgment (both divine and terrestrial), loss, and redemption. The themes coalesce in *The Crucifixion* (also known as *The Scarlet Robe*) (fig. 36) first exhibited in 1923.

Roberts was a contemporary of Spencer, C. R. W. Nevinson, and David Bomberg amongst others at the Slade (1910–13). He took great interest in avant-garde art trends, and aligned with the vorticist movement alongside Epstein, Bomberg and, briefly, Nevinson. Vorticism was a literary and artistic movement launched by Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound. It took influence from the continental abstract art movements, consecrating an angular, urban, machine aesthetic inspired by both cubist fragmentation and futurist dynamism. According to Richard Cork, vorticism spurned the “French preference for domestic studio motifs... [and the] Italian’s rapturous worship of mechanical imagery with a more detached, classical approach.”¹²⁷ At the age of 19, Roberts was one of eleven signatories of the vorticist manifesto published in their journal *BLAST: Review Of The Great English Vortex*, in July 1914. According to P. G. Konody, Roberts and his fellow exhibitors at the first vorticist exhibition at the Doré Galleries appeared to be of “absolute oneness of purpose and similarity of method... they have definite aims and mutual understanding.”¹²⁸ Vorticism was itself a secularised apocalyptic movement; it was advocating *revelation* through art, and an *end* to the preceding age. According to Lewis, “There is one truth, ourselves...” and that “Everything absent, remote, requiring projection in the veiled weakness of the mind, is sentimental.” Vorticism imposed a new sense of ending, yet also enacted the notion of ending encoded in the things that it ends: Pound and Lewis had argued the vorticist movement represented the “End of the Christian Era” in an advert for *Blast* on the back of the issue of the *Egoist* journal for April 1, 1914.¹²⁹ Elsewhere Pound identified the ambitions of modernism with his pithy epithet “Make it new”, which paraphrases the paradisaical declaration of Revelation 21:5, “And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things

¹²⁶ Williams, *English Cubist*, 71.

¹²⁷ Cork, *Vorticism and Its Allies*, 22.

¹²⁸ Konody, “The Vorticists at the Dore Galleries,” 9.

¹²⁹ Pound would later suggest that the new era had been realised when Mussolini came to power in 1922. This became year zero in Pound’s *Guide to Kulchur* (1938).

new”.¹³⁰ According to the *Observer’s* reviewer of the first issue of BLAST, the visual and textual language used was “obscure” and made its *revelations* “unintelligible.” There was a “desire to mystify.”¹³¹ It adhered to an apocalyptic tone.

After the War Roberts’s work took a more representational direction, which Richard Cork attributed to “his grueling experiences at the Front”.¹³² By 1923 Roberts had resolved the defining characteristics of his practice for the rest of his life.¹³³ He focused upon groupings of people and shifted away from the imagery of the human-cum-robot. A clear element of cynical humour and irony is apparent.¹³⁴ Around this time Roberts produced at least three sketches for a Crucifixion. Roberts also completed a separate, larger painting of the subject. The overt vorticist aesthetic indicates that the sketches predate the painting, with the canvas attesting to his increasing preference for representational work. In 1923 Roberts was granted his first solo exhibition, ‘Paintings and Drawings by William Roberts’, at the Chenil Galleries, London, where he exhibited a sketch under the title *Study for a Crucifixion* (fig. 37-8), and the painting with the title *The Scarlet Robe*. Roberts recalled that the painting was done in anticipation for entry into the Prix de Rome, although the year he had ambitions for was unspecified. Augustus John purchased *The Scarlet Robe* anonymously following the exhibition.

The Scarlet Robe exhibits the continued influence of cubism and futurism. The foreground is chaotic; to the left of the three crosses three soldiers violently force onlookers to retreat. At the gathering’s left a soldier pushes two onlookers, one atop the other’s shoulders in an attempt to get a better look. The central soldier is in mid-swing with a truncheon. His targets anticipate the blow and shield their faces. To the right of the crowd the third soldier holds a spear. His left elbow appears to have knocked back a man whose torso contorts in reaction. A rhythm of horizontal lines dissects his stomach. Jesus’ cross is located in the centre of the composition, above the quaternion casting lots. The titular scarlet robe, endowed by Pontius Pilate’s soldiers in order to mock Jesus, is to their right. Before Jesus’ cross is a woman who has fallen to her knees.¹³⁵ Her arms are aloft in a pleading gesture. A man attempts to comfort her, suggesting the Beloved Apostle, John. Diagonally behind the cross stands a man in a long garment concentrating on the cross. His attention is unwavering and is not distracted by the violence.

It is a violent image of the Crucifixion in subject and form. The sky and landscape of hills, city and trees behind are a succession of volatile angles. Jerusalem’s walls sporadically intersect the canvas in the mid-ground, receding towards the city itself. This erratic form is a counterpoint to the

¹³⁰ North, *Novelty*, 166.

¹³¹ “Art & Artists: ‘Blast,’” 8.

¹³² *ibid.*

¹³³ Alley, “Roberts, William Patrick.”

¹³⁴ Konody, “Art and Artists: Roberts’s Robots,” 4.

¹³⁵ Matthew 27:28.

hills and sky yet clement compared to the foreground's cacophony of shapes. The highly geometric arrangement of limbs and abstracted shapes is disorientating. The soldiers to the left of the composition are shown in acts of brutality. In amongst all this, Jesus appears serene, though even he is affected by the angular rhythms. His protruding ribcage and indrawn stomach indicates the physical stress of Crucifixion, yet his peaceful face suggests his transcendence beyond corporeal experience. The event's tragedy is not conveyed through Christ's suffering—though that obviously is a factor—but through man's treatment of man.

The two crosses to the right of the canvas are T-shaped *cruces commissae*. Roberts's unusual arrangement of crosses renders the identity of the good and bad thieves unclear initially. Closer scrutiny reveals their identities. The nearest cross is located on a lower plane of the composition. His body is awkwardly posed, his legs cross at his ankles, and his knees jut outwards. His head has rolled onto his left shoulder, while his mouth is open in apparent agony. This is the unrepentant thief. The cross that is located above him in the composition is level with Jesus. The figure upon this cross mirrors Jesus' posture: their heads and knees lean towards the right of the canvas, while their arms bow. Roberts's post-war paintings of grouped people are typically characterised by the highly individualised personality he gives each figure, as is evident throughout *The Scarlet Robe*. In this instance, however, one figure directly copies another. This is the penitent thief; his following of Christ is conveyed visually.

Roberts's painting anachronistically mixes the historic and present. Williams described it as "a cubist interpretation of a Renaissance costume piece".¹³⁶ Jesus and Dismas gesture to a figure on the right of the composition dressed in khaki, with his arms behind his back, and his chin raised. He is an anomaly. His authoritative stance and austere observation evokes the military figures in Roberts's war sketches (fig. 39-41). His clothes resemble a soldier's garb, with his blue-grey hat similar to a wartime French calot cap. In April 1918 Roberts received an Official War Artist commission. His war works are attentive to uniforms including the small differences in soldiers' headgear. Sue Malvern identified Roberts's work as among the "most acerbic and cynical" that resulted from these schemes.¹³⁷ Malvern continues, "In Roberts's drawing the apocalyptic madness is unrelenting."¹³⁸ Malvern uses the adjective in a secular sense. His drawings use the seemingly chaotic aesthetic to indicate the apparent chaos of war. Yet with both the visual style and the War there is a particular rationale guiding proceedings—Roberts's approach reveals this aspect of the War via a conceptually compatible aesthetic. The military reference in *The Scarlet Robe* offers the subtext that the bellicose nature of society and the role of Military authority was the same then as it

¹³⁶ Williams, *English Cubist*, 49.

¹³⁷ Malvern, *Modern Art*, 122.

¹³⁸ *ibid*, 124.

is now. Roberts used the modern dress of ordinary civilians in *Deposition from the Cross* (c.1926) (fig. 42), where it is a counterpoint to the imagery of *The Scarlet Robe* and reveals the potential good also in people. It is a redemptive image in comparison.

The Scarlet Robe embodies the themes of loss, redemption, and judgment. Loss is apparent in the eschatological narrative, and the mother mourning her son's death. She begs for his life, while he is a victim of the cacophony below. The redemption theme is tied into soteriology, and the self-sacrifice to redeem the greater good. The penitent thief is given significant status and a symbol of redemptive salvation. Judgment meanwhile is apparent in the soldiers who violently oppress a voyeuristic audience. The biblical narrative indicates the judgment of earthly powers. The terrestrial judgment of Pontius Pilate condemned Jesus and is indicated in the titular scarlet robe. Roberts's Crucifixion painting had potential to be highly controversial to his Jewish contemporaries. Yet Roberts's painting is not alleging Jewish deicide given that the principal emphasis is placed upon the Roman soldiers and the robe from Pilate—the gathered people beneath Christ are also represented as victims to earthly powers.

Roberts's post-war religious paintings show a marked interest in similar themes. His painting *Religion* from 1913–14 had depicted assorted world religions, yet a decade later he was explicitly concerned by Judeo-Christian narratives. The sketch *The Tower of Babel* (1922) (fig. 43) references a narrative of divine judgment and signifies the beginning of cacophony. The deuterocanonical narrative of Susanna and the Elders (fig. 44), from the book of Daniel is a prologue in the early Greek manuscripts, or an epilogue to the apocalyptic culmination of Daniel 12 in the Vulgate Bible. The narrative is at length concerned with abiding in and rejecting God's law, the abuse of power, and punishment for the wicked. It tells of two elders accosting Susanna and attempting to blackmail her. She refuses and a court case follows, with Daniel, under the behest of divine authority, revealing the truth through cross-examination of the elders. Its context within the biblical book also gives the eschatological message that in due course God rights all wrongs. New Testament subjects taken up in paintings such as *Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple* (1925) (fig. 45) reiterate the judgment theme and take particular interest in violence. An almost placid Jesus beats away the men who cower and hold their arms up in defence. Loss and redemption are pertinent to the prodigal son narrative (fig. 46). Meanwhile *The Garden of Eden* (c.1926) (fig. 47) depicts the story of fallen humanity. The exile from paradise sets up the quest for redemption that is ultimately completed by the atonement. *The Times's* anonymous critic (likely Charles Marriott) described the depiction of Adam and Eve about to indulge in carnal pleasures as “even touching in its observation of fallen

humanity. The disapproving deer is a comment of genius.”¹³⁹ The antlered deer is a symbol of spiritual authority; Roberts’s painting signifies divine judgment.

Roberts was a notoriously uncompromising and especially independent practitioner. He only ever formed a close working relationship with David Bomberg—and that was only while they both identified with the vorticists. It is unlikely that Roberts made paintings on these themes over five years as potboilers, or in imitation. I propose that Roberts’s work was manifesting something more intimate. His religious subject paintings do not denigrate religion. The depicted themes and violence are not dissimilar to the cynicism and satire apparent elsewhere in his work. Satire is a means to criticise. Likewise, religion can codify a precise criticism. Roberts’s references appeal to transcendental morality, and therefore serve to highlight issues with the present world order. The Crucifixion served a similar purpose for the Jewish artist Archibald Ziegler in his *Allegory for Social Strife* (c.1920s) (fig. 48), a radical reworking of a Crucifixion that relies upon the Christian intertext yet shifts the punishment’s time, place, and victim. Zeigler’s allegorical scene is of the working classes as victims of the establishment in the post-war society. The artists painted himself upon the cross. Beneath in the blessed position to his right are workers with raised fists, while to his left are establishment figures, dressed in formal attire and guarded by a soldier. Behind the horseback mounted riders charging at crowds of working men evokes the 1926 General Strike.¹⁴⁰ A contemporary sketch inscribed *Hell* (fig. 49) has been interpreted as a study for *Allegory*; however the similarity is in the depiction of formally dressed men.¹⁴¹ Three gigantic figures in frock coats and top hats straddle terraced housing—the workers are literally beneath their feet. They use poles to torment the streets and houses below. At the composition’s lower right the flames of Hell consume the terraces. Ziegler’s image equates the exploitation of workers in a capitalism system with absolute and eternal torment of Hell.

The War deeply affected Roberts. The vorticist movement was nearing exhaustion when the second and last issue of BLAST was published in July 1915; many had enlisted, or like Henri Gaudier-Brzeska were already war fatalities. Roberts enrolled with the Royal Field Artillery as a gunner in 1916, serving on the Western Front. His memoir *4.5 Howitzer Gunner Royal Field Artillery 1916–1918: Memories of the War to End War 1914–1918* (1974) is one of the few sources for his wartime experiences. The ironic subtitle is followed by a largely deadpan text that is momentarily revealing, such as in his letters to Sarah Kramer (ten of which were printed as an appendix) that reveal no appetite for war. Roberts was employed in both the British and Canadian War Memorial schemes, with the respective commissions culminating in *A Shell Dump, France* (1918) (fig. 50) and *The First*

¹³⁹ "Art Exhibitions," Jun 18, 1929, 14.

¹⁴⁰ Llewellyn, Liss et al. "Catalogue," 235.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

German Gas Attack at Ypres, 1915 (1918) (fig. 51). According to Richard Cork the latter work is a “masterpiece that makes his condemnation of war’s horror dramatically clear. Many of his pictures of the 1920s likewise contain acerbic and even grotesque elements.”¹⁴²

Roberts’s dark, often ironic letters to Sarah Kramer record his misery at war. His letter dated November 28th declares, “I am thankful the [November] weather has been more like spring, than winter, or else we would have been absolutely too cheerful.”¹⁴³ Elsewhere he admits to being a gloomy person generally, and would fatalistically sign his letters off with “Goodbye.” Another letter reads:

I believe I possess the average amount of hope and patience, but this existence beats me... I am feeling very bitter against life altogether just at present. But there is one thing I curse above all others in this world, and that's 'open warfare'. I could strafe it, as 'Fritz' never did strafe Ypres, and if you saw that place you would understand the full extent of my hate.¹⁴⁴

Roberts shows his hatred for modern warfare when he returned to the subject in the 1970s, with the hopelessly bleak *On the Wire* (1972) (fig. 52) inspired by George Coppard’s *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai* (1969). Roberts’s punning title suggests that surviving the War was down to pure chance. Williams observes that Roberts’s war writings and letters are exceptionally aware to the visual spectacle, and how it corresponded with the aesthetic pursued by the “erstwhile cubist.”¹⁴⁵ Roberts was equating visual violence and chaos with war.

The Scarlet Robe is comparable to such war sketches. The cacophony and violence of the War transposes onto the cacophony and violence of his Crucifixion painting. The rhetorical use of religious narratives to discern and order lived experience also codifies a criticism. Although the religious narratives used by Roberts are not directly derivative of apocalypse, they are closely aligned with the dramatic narrative. The accumulative effect is to indicate an apocalyptic sensibility.

In summary: images not overtly of the incarnation and originating from a secular artist still can serve as rhetoric of crisis. Spencer, Jones and Orpen emphasised the executioner’s role. Roberts continues this approach: the original title refers to the mocking of Jesus, while the painting brings attention to the activity of the soldiers. Roberts pushes this further by recognizing the bloodthirsty, voyeuristic audience as executioners of a different sort. They evoke the rabble who condemned Jesus for Barabbas.¹⁴⁶ Roberts’s Judeo-Christian subjects conform to aspects from the three-stage arc to the Apocalypse of destruction, judgment and regeneration, revealing a clear apocalyptic sensibility.

¹⁴² Cork. "Roberts, William."

¹⁴³ Roberts, *Memories of the War*, 43.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, 45.

¹⁴⁵ Williams, *English Cubist*, 36.

¹⁴⁶ John 18:40.

Roberts veils a criticism of society within a religious allegory. This safeguards the artist from accountability given that the criticism is inferred rather than explicitly stated. The focus of his criticism is humans' innate bellicosity. Roberts points out the deficiencies in certain human behaviours by his use of the theme of judgment and the violence he depicted, while loss and redemption are themes that resonate within all warfare. The latter theme also indicates that his sense of frustration had not degraded into self-indulgent despair; like Spencer, Roberts's remained hopeful that one could overcome the effects of the War.

The circumstances of biography and the iconography used signal that the artworks are a response to a sense of increased and specific anxiety. The Crucifixion, the tower of Babel, and the context of Susanna in the book of Daniel all indicate a sense of eschatological culmination. They are narratives in close proximity to epochal change, with the moral tale of Susanna (which follows the apocalyptic text of Daniel) in particular indicating how particular judgment and ultimate fate is in the hands of divine authority. These instances of Judeo-Christian subjects show secular, apocalyptic modernism reconciling with Christian tradition, as Roberts took interest in narratives with apocalyptic sensibilities. Augustus John described "the gifted William Roberts" as "the only incurable cubist in London."¹⁴⁷ Roberts unified religion and cubism to discern the modern world. His largely pessimistic outlook and black humour neatly triangulates with his cynical satires; the violence of *The Scarlet Robe* is a satirical reflection of society.

The Great War was recurrently understood in apocalyptic terms. It was frequently framed as eschatological, most infamously in H. G. Wells's *War to End War*, which Robert's war memoir alluded to in its subtitle *Memories of the War to End War*. This framing conceives of the post-war as a new era. Such epochal declarations of an end and a beginning help to give one meaning within them. A change in era is always the end of the world as we know it. Jones, Spencer, Orpen and Roberts have indicated this through eschatological imagery. The effect is the same as the biblical apocalypses, which use end of the world language for events in history. In recognizing the Crucifixion's apocalyptic implications, a more distinct form of apocalyptic sensibility is identified within Modern British art.

Via the motif, and the explicit emphasis on the role of the executioner, a problem is diagnosed yet anxieties are codified. These artworks use the common theme of the execution—itsself signifying an epochal change—to correspond to both historic changes in society and each artist's life. They cast figures as ignorant to the significant events occurring around them; in contrast religious references serve to *unveil*; it is a way of ordering, understanding, and conveying experience at a time when they were each enduring profound transformation and transition. This contributes to the

¹⁴⁷ John, *Augustus John*, 408.

unresolved status of the works by Jones, Spencer and Orpen—each sketch resulted from the personal period of transition as they explored ways to reconceive and articulate their confused state of existence. In doing so, a crisis in the conscious was paired with a perceived crisis in history.

The post-war saw conversion processes in each artist. Jones converted to Catholicism. Spencer reconceived his faith, while Orpen's faith was more pronounced. Roberts's work meanwhile makes apparent another process of conversion, as the secular artist found meaning within religious content. The historian of religion Marc Baer recognises a *process* of conversion as:

A decision or experience followed by a gradually unfolding dynamic process through which an individual embarks on religious transformation. This can entail an intensification of belief... or exchanging the beliefs and practices... for those of another religious tradition.¹⁴⁸

These four artists looked to religion to help explain and comprehend the present; it offered something to explain the inexplicable, and suggests that no matter the hardships, hope remains in the end. Each artist's use of the Crucifixion motif to address their respective experiences serves to both criticise and reassure, thereby reinforcing the *sense* of change. Orpen and Jones dwelt upon destructive aspects, whilst Spencer engaged with ideas of hope after tribulation.

Post-war society constructed the idea of the Great War as a historical caesura; this was most notably perpetuated in Paul Fussell's *The First World War and Modern Memory*. Yet as Jay Winter has argued, this was something of an illusion.¹⁴⁹ The construct did, however, serve a vital social function, and gave significance and meaning to the causalities and trauma of War. The stretched meaning of the apparently conventional iconography of the Crucifixion reinforces the constructed narrative. The images studied in this chapter further reconfigured time and space using memory and anachronism. In doing so they create nonlinear temporalities that matched a sense of disarray in the popular consciousness, as Victorian belief in progress—seemingly at end in the Edwardian era—was now categorically refuted.

¹⁴⁸ Baer, *Conversion and Conquest*, 13.

¹⁴⁹ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 3-5.

Chapter Two

“My God, My God, Why Hast Thee Forsaken Me?”:

Crucifixion in the 1930s

While the cross could be used in the post-war years to indicate and inspire the recovery from the personal and collective trauma of war, another dimension arose in the iconography during the 1930s when it was employed amidst a growing sense of uncertainty, be it intellectual or empirical. The post-war desire to re-engage with tradition or orientate recent experience within divine schema can be contrasted with a sense of foreboding change as the post-war became the pre-war. Therefore, whilst the Crucifixion signifies the future hope, it can also indicate more ominous airs and a heightened state of anxiety. In this chapter I address three examples of crucifixion in paintings from the 1930s that extend and challenge the iconography. Francis Bacon, C. R. W. Nevinson and Michael Rothenstein all made paintings in the 1930s putting the Crucifixion centre stage. Not one was a practising Christian. Francis Bacon was born to English protestant parents. Nevinson’s father and mother were Christian socialists. Rothenstein’s heritage was Judaism. This chapter will chart the dissimilar circumstances surrounding each artists’ painting and identify a shared tone indicating change and upheaval in the images of Crucifixion.

Francis Bacon: Carcass on the Cross

Francis Bacon’s *Crucifixion* (fig. 53) was first exhibited in April 1933 at the Mayor Gallery, London. It is one of Bacon’s few works to have survived from before the Second World War and his later self-editing of early works. The composition centres on a solitary white figure delineated with economic strokes upon a black ground. Upon the skeletal figure is a white shadow of indefinite origin. There is no obvious parallel to Christian narratives. Two curved lines rise to form arms, whilst a third line rises in the centre to the same height. In the centre is a head no larger than either hand. A muddy horizontal band spans the space behind the head from one hand to the other, indicating the patibulum of a cross. A second block of muted colour beneath suggests an underside or shadow. The figure’s extended neck forms a central axis. Four extended vertical strokes halfway down the figure divide; two form rigid legs, which stand upon two roughly formed feet which overlap a horizontal rectangle. Beneath this another rectangular shape stands vertically, indicating the stipes; thus, the figure stands against—or hangs upon—a cross. Further lines suggest a cubist fragmentation of form. A third line extends from the shadow to the feet, before skewing to the composition’s lower left; given the subject it suggests blood flowing down and away from a wound. One other vertical line extends before acutely skewing to the left, possibly indicating a leg and knee.

To the right are three white diagonal lines with slight curvature suggesting a rib cage. White lines intersect the canvas in the top and bottom right, and across from the left. These provide a sense of space and structure to the void, situating—and isolating—the figure in an ambiguous room-like space. The monochromatic palette, fine line, and white shadows are all highly evocative of x-ray plates and photographic negatives.

Crucifixion is perhaps the most recognised of Bacon's early paintings. It was one of several painted at this time, hinting at the subject's importance right from the start of his mature career. A second painting formerly titled *Crucifixion* (c. 1933) (fig. 54) roughly depicted three white figures behind pairs of vertical bars. The left and central figures stand in vague cruciform poses; the third to the composition's right is shorter at about half the size of the others. The abstract scene obfuscates the subject. Indeed as Martin Harrison has revealed, Bacon alleged that it was inspired by Picasso's "*La Danse* and is not a crucifixion".¹ Nevertheless Harrison points out "notwithstanding his refutation, the subject is equally, in effect, three crucifixions."² A third, *Crucifixion with Skull* (fig. 55), shows a figure cruciform in shape, with taught raised arms and legs continuing beyond the canvas edge. The head protrudes on a broad neck. The figure divides vertically; the right half is a tonally flat vivid red, suggesting that it was informed by Picasso's *The Three Dancers* (1925);³ its left is ashen with bodily contours. The background is divided horizontally; a black region spans the lower half and a yellow area above. To the right is a skull in profile; Calvary is translated as 'the place of the skull'. The skull's addition provides a specific link with the devotional iconographic tradition. The painting preceded the approach of Michael Sadler who commissioned a portrait from Bacon of an x-ray of a skull. Bacon was not pleased by the idea and amended his composition to incorporate it.⁴ Another painting, *Wound for a Crucifixion*, and an image of Christ bound in cloth were painted around this time. Both were apparently destroyed.⁵

Bacon began painting seriously in the early 1930s. Picasso's early influence has widely been recognised, with the 1927 exhibition of Picasso's 'Dinard' paintings at Paul Rosenberg's Paris gallery apparently proving a formative experience according to Bacon's own narrative account of his career.⁶ John Rothenstein claimed, "The Picasso exhibition evidently had a crucial effect".⁷ Formal similarities include elongated limbs and the reduced size of the head. Picasso, like Bacon, took interest in the expressive potential of distortion, especially when applied to the human form. Further, Picasso had painted the *Crucifixion* repeatedly throughout his career. Similarities have been

¹ Harrison, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 2:122.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.* 2:124.

⁴ Davis and Yard, *Francis Bacon*, 21; Norton, "Bacon's Beginnings," 24. Allden's diary recorded; "Francis is rather sniffy about doing the commissioned one! So like him, with his supreme contempt for filthy lucre!"

⁵ Russell, *Francis Bacon*, 17; Alley and Rothenstein, *Bacon*, 28.

⁶ Stephens, "Bacon and Picasso," 150-1; Baldassari, *Bacon - Picasso*, 31.

⁷ Rothenstein, *Modern Painters III*, 152; Brighton, *Francis Bacon*, 17.

drawn between Bacon's image and Picasso's paintings of 1932, when Picasso created a number of works after Matthias Grünewald's *The Crucifixion* (c.1510-1515) from the Isenheim altarpiece.⁸ Picasso's works had been illustrated in the inaugural issue of *Minotaure*, published in May 1933. The shared use of skeletal forms by Bacon and Picasso is particularly noteworthy, with both artists using abstract forms connoting death to replace or overlap with the traditional cadaver. A body has some trace of life, whereas bones take the viewer to death itself and inverts the Christian symbolism of the Crucifixion. Indeed, Bacon alleged that it was in Picasso's work that he came to identify "the brutality of fact."⁹ Other early influences for Bacon had included photography, and photographic reproductions. These were part of a general interest in abstract otherworldly imagery on the threshold of perception. The Danish-American artist Thomas Wilfred had developed and built his first Clavilux in 1919. The device treated light as a medium and produced ethereal dynamic imagery (fig. 56); P. G. Konody proclaimed his "firm conviction that the Clavilux has a great future".¹⁰ The advent of x-ray radiographs in the 1890s by Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen provided further imagery evocative of death. Röntgen made the first x-rays of the human body using his spouse Anna Bertha Ludwig as subject. Upon seeing the resultant image, she allegedly said "I have seen my death."¹¹ Bacon had taken influence from Röntgen's examples of the human being transformed in modernity, prior to his use of contemporary political events as a source and subject following the Second World War. His distortion of the figure re-engages with the fundamental human ontology as just meat. This challenges Christianity's central hope of a future transcendental existence made possible by the Crucifixion. Bacon unveils the human as bestial and mortal.

Bacon was vehemently atheistic and deeply engaged with Nietzschean philosophy, absorbing it indirectly via Picasso (Bacon alleged Picasso more than any artist was nearer "to what I feel about the psyche of our time"¹² while T. J. Clark posited, "Is not Picasso Nietzsche's painter?"¹³), and reading him directly. Bacon's artwork has been seen as endorsing atheistic nihilism. I argue that the titles of Bacon's works support an atheistic reading. The title of the painting *Crucifixion* avoids the use of the definite article "the" that typically designates the biblical narrative. Bacon continued this in his later paintings of the subject or used the indefinite article as in the title *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*. These are executions in the absence of God—thus are devoid of a transcendental character.

Bacon studies have tended to emphasise the artist's own account; yet he self-mythologised masterfully. Nicholas Chare observed that Bacon studies have largely been constrained by the

⁸ Sylvester, *Looking Back*, 18-19.

⁹ *ibid*, 244.

¹⁰ Konody, "Clavilux," 356.

¹¹ Jorgensen, *Strange Glow*, 26.

¹² Beechy and Stephens, *Picasso and Modern British Art*,

¹³ Clark, *Picasso and Truth*, 52.

“dogmatic adherence to what he [Bacon] has said about them. The artist’s oeuvre has too often been viewed as a reflection of his biography of which the famous interviews with David Sylvester form a part.”¹⁴ Van Alphen also observed “critics tend to quote Bacon’s statements as true, authoritative accounts of his works... and point out how Bacon’s views are substantiated in the works.”¹⁵ This emphasises the artist’s intention and provided a canonical explanation for his Christianity-inspired subjects. Gilles Deleuze emphasises the artist’s voice, writing in the authors preface to *The Logic of Sensation*:

[Bacon] traffics in the violence of a depicted scene: spectacles of horror, crucifixions, prostheses and mutilations, monsters. But these are overly facile detours, detours that the artist himself judges severely and condemns in his work.¹⁶

Friedhelm Mennekes argued “Francis Bacon’s clear intention in the artistic treatment of the Crucifixion always aims at a formal study of the figure on the cross.”¹⁷ In 1966 Bacon explained his interpretation to David Sylvester:

I haven’t found another subject so far that has been as helpful for covering certain areas of human feeling and behavior. Perhaps it is only because so many people have worked on this particular theme that it has created his armature—I can’t think of a better way of saying it—on which one can operate all types of level of feeling.¹⁸

Bacon proposes a crucifixion as a post-Christian subject. Yet irrespective of intention, Bacon’s subject remains inseparable from religious associations. Much like Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, Bacon appropriates and re-presents key themes and motifs from Christianity, thus establishing the religion as the painting’s foundation and highlighting the cultural debt to Christianity. Rina Arya identifies that, “In spite of his professed atheism, Francis Bacon’s oeuvre is marked by a continued, even obsessive, preoccupation with the sacred.”¹⁹ Arya points out that Bacon’s usage is more “multifaceted” than the artist admitted, and his work on the subjects “appealed to the repositories of significance”.²⁰ Arya recognises the importance of Cimabue’s *Crucifix* (1287–8) and the aforementioned *Crucifixion* from Grünewald’s Isenheim Altarpiece for Bacon.²¹ Both are images of explicit suffering, and depict the physical trauma of being crucified. In both cases Jesus is as a carcass.

James Norton recently identified further complexities in Bacon’s relationship with religious art in his study on Eric Allden’s diaries. Allden, a devout Roman Catholic, was a friend and housemate of Bacon who came to disapprove of Bacon’s increasing ‘immorality’ in the late 1920s

¹⁴ Chare, *After Francis Bacon*, 9.

¹⁵ *ibid*, 23.

¹⁶ Deleuze, *Logic of Sensation*, x.

¹⁷ Mennekes, “Dynamic Reality,” 41. Own translation.

¹⁸ Sylvester, *Interviews*, 44.

¹⁹ Arya, “Embodiment as Sacrament,” 313.

²⁰ *ibid*. 317.

²¹ *ibid*. 313-4.

and early 1930s. Allden's diaries record details that suggest Bacon's engagement was more nuanced. An entry from 1929 records that Bacon wanted to show him pictures in the Tate Gallery:

He pointed out two pictures by Stanley Spencer, one of 'Christ bearing the Cross', the other, a large canvas of 'the Resurrection'. Both are most strange in conception²²

Allden also recorded his views of *Crucifixion* after seeing it exhibited in 1933:

There I saw Francis' picture which Sir Michael Sadler has bought. It is called "Crucifixion" and has a quite remarkable quality. It suggests a spidery emaciated cruciform shape, with a bent figure clasping it, white on greyish black. It is far & away the most significant picture there and marks an enormous advance in his work²³

Bacon's interest in Spencer suggests that he did not oppose religious art in principle (with Spencer's work in particular free of any suffering) and recognised the continued association of the subject with the religious narratives. Further, Rina Arya has argued that the Australian artist Roy de Maistre was a stylistically and thematically influential figure in Bacon's early career.²⁴ In the early 1930s de Maistre was assisting with Bacon's transition from design to painting, and providing guidance with painting technique; he was also exploring his Christian faith in his own art and tackling Crucifixion imagery. Bacon was likely receptive to the content of De Maistre's imagery, although not out of theological conviction.²⁵ De Maistre's own painting, *The Crucifixion*, which was begun in 1932 and finished in 1945 (fig. 57), paves the way for Bacon's imagery, focusing upon the "sentience of the flesh" and the role of bodily suffering.²⁶

Rembrandt's *Slaughtered Ox* (1655) (fig. 58) and Chaïm Soutine's paintings of hanging carcasses, such as *Carcass of Beef* (1925) (fig. 59), have also been identified other possible influences for Bacon's images of crucified carcasses.²⁷ Rembrandt's painting had inspired Soutine, and Soutine's work was widely known in Paris when Bacon was there in 1927. Though Bacon would have likely denied any Christian connection, the carcass on the cross has a theological precedent in the Olivet Discourse and interpretations of Matthew 24:28, "For where so ever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Church patriarchs including Chrysostom, Jerome, Irenaeus, and later figures such as Saint Thomas Aquinas have understood the specified body as Christ's, crucified and slain, while the eagles indicate the true servants—variously identified as saints and angels—who will travel with haste to meet him at his coming.²⁸ Haydock's Catholic Bible, the most popular Catholic Bible of the nineteenth century, offered this commentary.²⁹ Bacon had an explicit relationship with

²² Norton, "Bacon's Beginnings," 23-4.

²³ *ibid*, 24.

²⁴ Arya, "Influence of Roy de Maistre," 607-622.

²⁵ *ibid*, 615.

²⁶ *ibid*, 616.

²⁷ "Fragments of a Portrait."

"Fragments of a Portrait."

Matthew"; Chrysostom, "Homily 24 on First Corinthians"; Jerome, "Letter XV. to Pope Damasus", 1; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV:14, 1; Aquinas, "*Summa Theologica*, III, question 75," article 1, objection 4.

²⁹ Haydock, *Commentary*, 1301.

Catholicism—as seen his screaming Pope paintings—though it is not necessary to ascertain whether Bacon was familiar with this conception. The carcass upon the cross iconography has a clear theological precedent.

Deleuze argued that Bacon’s distortions have implications for Western art and the Christian figurative tradition.³⁰ Deleuze proposes that the Western Christian figurative tradition disassociated the figure from essence, and instead linked it to the event, or the accident, thus allowing the artist to “be indifferent to the religious subject he is asked to represent.”³¹ Deleuze argues that Bacon’s figures are isolated from any narrative context. In this first *Crucifixion*, the shadowy corporeality has an almost metaphysical quality. It falls from the bones. Deleuze emphasises that meat (*viande*) is not flesh (*chair*), identifying that:

Meat is not dead flesh [*chair*]; it retains all the sufferings and assumes all the colors of living flesh... Bacon does not say, ‘Pity the beasts,’ but rather that every man who suffers is a piece of meat. Meat is a common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility.³²

Meat is a universal attribute of human and animal. Deleuze and Guattari emphasise that flesh is unable to support the invisible forces of becoming.³³ Meat, however, is. Further, Deleuze argues that Bacon depicts the violence of *sensation* instead of *representational* violence.³⁴ Deleuze cites Bacon’s interviews with David Sylvester; “The violence of paint has nothing to do with the violence of war.”³⁵ The violence depicted is not representative of a terrible act occurring, thus Deleuze concludes that Bacon’s art is “a kind of declaration of faith in life”.³⁶ Deleuze’s understanding of sensation proposes that Bacon’s work presents forces that are invisible. Bacon makes visible the “body without organs”,³⁷ which rejects the imposition of pre-determined socio-political organization. Deleuze’s reading emphasises that Bacon’s art is pointing towards a state with the utopian, transcendental empiricism of becoming.

Deleuze’s reading is indebted to Bacon’s interviews and Bacon’s rejection of the religious dimension. It does not account for the theological becoming that is integral to the *Crucifixion*. This creates a tension in the work. Christianity is a faith of becoming—one does not *become* until the final eschatological order is established. The *Crucifixion* inaugurates the new dispensation in which this becoming is to be pursued. Christian life strives for the promised future that cannot be realised in this life. Thus, Bacon also indicates a second, theological philosophy of becoming via his paintings of crucifixion.

³⁰ Deleuze, *Logic of Sensation*, 124.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.* 23.

³³ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 179.

³⁴ Deleuze, *Logic of Sensation*, 39.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.* 61.

³⁷ *ibid.* 45-6.

Nietzschean philosophy contributes another angle to Bacon's painting. Nietzsche's complex concept of sacrifice and its relationship with slave morality as developed in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), and *The Antichrist* (1895) is of particular relevance. Bacon's painting alludes to Jesus' Crucifixion, which Nietzsche understood as the great sacrificial act carried out to atone for humanity's guilt.³⁸ Nietzsche argued "Christianity is a faith of sacrifice; sacrifice of all freedom, pride, self-confidence, and enslavement, self-mockery and self-mutilation."³⁹ Christian soteriology holds that what comes after death is of more value than the here and now. According to Nietzsche, worldly existence is denied "in favour of a state of existence after death."⁴⁰ Sacrifice is not an end in itself and is something to be overcome. Bacon's decision to use the indefinite article, and present the body after immolation as meat—and nothing more—attempts a caesura in the sacrificial tradition. It proposes that the sacrifice is insignificant—the crucifixion still exists after God; however, the resultant corpse will be no different from the meat in a butcher's window. We were not made in *imago dei*; we are no different from the slaughtered animal.

This revises the Crucifixion to express a sense of existential anxiety. Yet this sense is also pertinent to Jesus' Crucifixion. Jesus is isolated upon the cross—and alone atones for the sins of the world. A sense of abandonment follows: the synoptic gospels claim, "Jesus cried with a loud voice... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"⁴¹ The exclamation can be taken two ways: Jesus is either quoting the opening lines of Psalm 22, and thus the exclamation is devotional, or he is in a natural (human) moment of doubt in the face of death. The ambiguity addresses a fundamental human fear and allows one to emphasise and project their insecurities onto the death of Jesus. Despite Bacon's claims, his representations do not deviate far from scripture.

Nietzsche attacked Christianity's apocalyptic orientation and eschatological promise of a millennium and the Kingdom of God.⁴² He quotes from Saint Paul to highlight the religion's denial of earthly existence: "If Christ did not rise from the dead, then all our faith is in vain!"⁴³ Nietzsche's *The Antichrist* presents a model of a world in which powers are uprooted and replaced with a secular Kingdom of noble morality. The result is an apocalyptic reversal and a secular millennium.⁴⁴ *Crucifixion* points to this apocalyptic reversal. Thomas Altizer argues

If the death of God is symbolic centre of a uniquely modern world, the crucifixion is the symbolic centre of a uniquely Christian world. Each is an apocalyptic event, and not an apocalyptic event

³⁸ Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ*, §41.

³⁹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §46.

⁴⁰ Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ*, §41

⁴¹ Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

⁴² Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ*, §34

⁴³ *ibid* §41, citing 1 Corinthians 15:14-15.

⁴⁴ Altizer, "*Nietzsche and Apocalypse*," 1.

but *the* apocalyptic event, or that event which is the advent of a new world only insofar as it is the ending of the old world.⁴⁵

Bacon uses religious and secular motifs in this painting denoting apocalyptic transitions. Although the tension does not resolve, a dramatic change is implicated.

Nietzsche's challenge to progressive narratives of history offered a plausible explanation for the apparent decline of the west in the interwar as identified in Oswald Spengler's and Arnold Toynbee's metanarratives of history. Bacon's Nietzschean *Crucifixion* was painted in this context where God could be reconsidered and found no longer to be the source of meaning, nor served as the moral compass. God was still evident however as Bacon's painting shows, though for his professed intentions, it was only in the negative. The following year C. R. W. Nevinson painted a *Crucifixion* amidst the forces of war in a terrible vision of the west's decline.

C. R. W. Nevinson: the Cult of Sacrifice

Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson's *Sacrifice: A Symbolic Picture Suggested by the Religion of Race and the Cult of Human Sacrifice* (1933) (fig. 60)—now known as *The Unending Cult of Human Sacrifice*—was first exhibited in 1933. It is—along with *The Twentieth Century* (1932-35) (fig. 61)—among his most striking problem paintings of the 1930s.⁴⁶ The focal point is the crucified Christ positioned marginally to the right of the composition and raised above the horizontal axis. The head of the crux immissa leans to the left. The cross is an almost industrial construction silhouetted against a bright light source from which crepuscular rays emanate. Christ's body hangs, a halo surrounds his head that falls into his chest. His torso protrudes from the stipes. His arms have been pulled taut as a result of his body weight being supported by the anchoring nails in his hands. Jesus' torso is almost indistinguishable from the structure of the cross due to the cast of the shadow. His stomach is sunken, and hips are taut against the stipes, however both thighs lift away. His knees are bent, acutely pulling his lower leg back so that his foot stands against the stipes. It is implicit that his feet are held in place by the nails inserted through the arch of his foot. The cross is ostensibly separated from the biblical narrative: it stands amidst armies and implements of warfare. The *mater dolorosa* occupies the lower left of the painting and is stood aside upright bayonets that recede into the distance. Three corpses are suspended above them. Artillery guns, with their barrels raised, ascend from the lower left of the composition to the right. A flag with Saint George's Cross sits in the lower right. Above are two figures (possibly Peter and Paul) designated as sacred by halos. To the left a procession of ecclesiastical men—apparently Catholic—stand bowing their heads towards the cross.

⁴⁵ Altizer, *Contemporary Jesus*, xxiv-xxv.

⁴⁶ Malvern, "Nevinson's 'Bad Boy' Modernisms," 184, 188. These problem paintings are addressed further in Chapter Three: Part One.

The composition's landscape features a central valley that has military forces receding to the left and right. Modern weapons of war—airplanes, howitzers, and bayonets—are juxtaposed with chariots and armored knights on horseback. The left flank features a hillside of crosses that evoke the Great War's cemeteries, while national and heraldic flags intersect the canvas, dissolving into a fire billowing smoke towards the composition's upper left region. Red Coats march beneath the cloud, whilst modern soldiers dressed in modern khaki Service Dress emerge in two distinct lines through the smoke. These lines diverge, with the lower dissolving into shadow-like figures who transform into the distinct silhouettes of Roman centurions and standard bearers. Banks of soldiers from throughout history recede diagonally across the canvas towards the top right until a black cloud obscures them.

Sacrifice combines religious imagery with modern warfare—the latter being a major preoccupation of Nevinson's at the time. In 1935 *The Daily Mirror* asked "famous people" to give their forecasts on the future, justifying that "At a time when everybody is reading about the great events that have made history in the past twenty-five years it is natural to ask: **What will the next twenty-five years bring?**"⁴⁷ Nevinson stressed "I would prefer to say what I hope will happen rather than what I think will happen", suggesting the British Empire's governance be moved to Canada to defuse European competition and tensions, and "get clear of these ghastly inter-racial feuds, fanned by hatred and jealousy." He warns society is "heading for paganism, with a total disregard for all the most sacred tenets of Christianity." A troubling prognosis was reciprocated by the philanthropist and political activist Lady Lucy Houston, who suggested England could be "blotted out and become an annexe [*sic*] of Russia if things continue".

His agenda with Christian iconography is unclear. He professed to be an atheist but displayed a susceptibility to religion at various points throughout his life. While a Slade student he told Dora Carrington that he sometimes wished he was a "simple little Christian".⁴⁸ He later claimed that many friends believed he would become a religious.⁴⁹ Nevinson's familiarity with Nietzschean concepts offers a means to comprehend the image. Referring to his Slade friends he claimed Nietzsche was "a philosopher who influenced many of us".⁵⁰ Nevinson had largely rejected the Nietzschean element by 1934, while his futurist sympathies to a cult of violence were discarded during the Great War. Indeed, the critical reception of his problem paintings acknowledged the pacifist tone. However, some opposition to Christian belief still appears to have lingered. Nietzsche identified Christianity as a religion of sacrifice as it requires one to renounce earthly existence. The

⁴⁷ "What Will the Next 25 Years Bring?" 8. Bold in the article.

⁴⁸ Boyd-Haycock, *Crisis of Brilliance*, 103.

⁴⁹ Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice*, 15.

⁵⁰ Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice*, 57. Nevinson attributes his Slade friend John Curry's murder-suicide of Dolly Henry, to the influence of Nietzsche.

initial title used for the exhibited work presents two elements: the *Religion of Race* and the *Cult of Human Sacrifice*. The former alludes to atheist eugenics and racially motivated contemporary political movements that had an almost religious devotion. Nazism had recently ascended to power in Germany in July 1932 and used race to articulate nationalism. Nietzsche's superman was received in Britain as a religious figure. The social Darwinist Georges Chatterton-Hill wrote that the Super-Man "constitutes a religion. Nietzsche placed before us an ideal of transcendent beauty... [that is] a religion requiring the sacrifice of the individual in the interests of the race, and having the welfare of the race as aim."⁵¹ During and after the War the rhetoric and cult of sacrifice and the fallen soldier developed. Mosse argued that it was central to the "myth of the war experience, which looked back upon the war as a meaningful and even sacred event."⁵² The myth was by its very nature in denial or rejection of the horrific reality, and rendered the possibility of future conflicts more palatable. The 'unending cult' evokes Nietzschean ideas of eternal recurrence, as the aggrandised status of sacrifice is a consistent value throughout Western human history, be it in religion, or in secular war. The 'unending cult' recognises the virtuous sacrificial identity; sacrifice connotes death but does not alter the aggrandised status it receives and therefore indicates debasement of the self. For it to be unending, it cannot change; thus, Nevinson also indicates his sense of resignation.

It is well established that Nevinson's practice through to the end of the Great War was divisive; he emerged from it as one of Britain's leading artists. In 1920 Charles Lewis Hind wrote in a catalogue introduction to an exhibition of Nevinson's recent work that he was "at the age of thirty one... among the most discussed, most successful, most promising, most admired and most hated British artists."⁵³ The War had provided the emotional inspiration he lacked after it, and his reputation settled as a 'popular' painter. His artwork rarely inspired such passionate responses again. John Rothenstein claimed that for "almost thirty years the decline continued".⁵⁴ While Nevinson continued to sell throughout the 1920s, the art market in London was significantly challenged by the slump in the market in 1929–1930.⁵⁵ Nevinson had been among the modern British artists identified by R. H. Wilenski as a good investment in a 1929 article "BUY modern Pictures and Make MONEY".⁵⁶ However as the market slowed over the following years Nevinson's involvement in media work proved valuable, ensuring a steady income in an uncertain economy.

Nevinson's war reputation helped establish him as a cultural commentator. From 1929 he was increasingly involved in journalism and media work; his writing was published in the *Daily Mail*, *Mirror*, *Daily Express*, and *New Statesman* and elsewhere. Julian Freeman described Nevinson's

⁵¹ Chatterton-Hill, *Heredity of Selection*, 514-5.

⁵² Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 7, 19.

⁵³ Hind, "An Appreciation," unpaginated.

⁵⁴ Rothenstein, *Modern Painters II*, 55.

⁵⁵ Stephenson, "Strategies of Situation," 30.

⁵⁶ Wilenski, "BUY modern Pictures," C. R. W. Nevinson Album of Press Cuttings, Tate Archive.

writings as “strident, maverick diatribes, aimed at society at large, and at the establishment in all its forms... the variety, salacity, and often uncompromising savagery of his egocentric articles remains enormously entertaining.”⁵⁷ His obituary in the *Guardian* concluded, “He was a witty man, often in bad health, and much at the mercy of his moods, and reckless in statement, so his writings cannot be accepted as a correct account of what he set out to describe.”⁵⁸ Yet as Michael J. K. Walsh observed, when controlled, his essays were widely respected.⁵⁹

Analogous commentary on current affairs were combined with his artwork in the problem paintings of the 1930s. Their exhibition sparked strong responses in the popular and specialist press. Frank Rutter claimed in 1934 that Nevinson’s problem paintings had “strong and sincere feeling, but... not yet acquired a corresponding clarity and nobility of utterance.”⁶⁰ R. R. Tatlock wrote in the *Telegraph*, “‘Sacrifice,’ with its elaborate sub-title leaves us cold because it requires of us a mental effort inconsistent with the spontaneous enjoyment of art.”⁶¹ The use of fragmentation and overlapping images—evident in *Sacrifice*—was described as kaleidoscopic or reminiscent of cinematic montage.⁶² The reception contextualising the artworks with popular modern media rather than fine art tradition is significant; Nevinson distilled the cubist and futurist aesthetic that informed his works of the 1910s into a format that was comprehensible to a larger audience.⁶³ Likewise, the title’s sardonic elucidation render the difficult subjects accessible. In secondary literature the limited attention received by these prophetic warnings has been largely negative. Sue Malvern contributed a largely hostile reading of these works, citing Rutter’s particular criticisms of the 1934 exhibition before contributing the opinion that “Nevinson’s political paintings offered the spectator no visual gratification.”⁶⁴ Malvern asserts they are melodramatic, superficial and with questionable aesthetic merit.⁶⁵ John Rothenstein declared the problem paintings “embarrassing fantasies.”⁶⁶

Nevinson’s problem paintings do not appear to have been principally intended for market consumption. Sue Malvern argued that they are largely composite and formulaic works that combine marching troops with bayonets and artillery.⁶⁷ This can be extended to include the emphasis upon a monumental figure, with planes above a city backdrop, and the compositional framing of the pictorial space with, for example, drapery or clouds. A number refer to subjects in Nevinson’s Great War paintings, such as artillery in *A Howitzer Gun in Elevation* (1917) (fig. 62) and

⁵⁷ Freeman, “Nevinson, Christopher Richard Wynne.”

⁵⁸ “Mr. C. R. W. Nevinson,” 3.

⁵⁹ Walsh, *Hanging a Rebel*, 264.

⁶⁰ Rutter, “Nevinson’s New Paintings,” 9.

⁶¹ Tatlock, “Mr C. R. W. Nevinson’s Paintings,” 10.

⁶² “Problem Pictures at Art Show,” 16; D. C. F., “C. R. W. Nevinson’s Paintings,” 17; Malvern, “Nevinson’s Modernisms,” 184, 187.

⁶³ Malvern, “Nevinson’s Modernisms,” 184.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, 184, 188.

⁶⁵ *ibid*, 186.

⁶⁶ Rothenstein, *Painters Volume II*, 56.

⁶⁷ Malvern, “Nevinson’s Modernisms,” 184.

the bayonets which were depicted in prints, and paintings. The graphic potential of the poster was realised in a number of posters, including *War: Pictures by Nevinson* (1918) (fig. 63). Nevinson adopts modern media and graphic influences for a clear rhetorical purpose. Thus, the attempt to seek visual gratification from these artworks is to profoundly misunderstand them; they serve a different purpose as Jeremiads. Sacvan Bercovitch contends that a Jeremiad calls for a people take action and change their ways to prevent foretold disaster.⁶⁸ Nevinson, discerning the contemporary situation in 1936, justified hastily writing his autobiography *Paint and Prejudice* (1937) since he believed soon no one would be around to read it.⁶⁹ He maintained, "I will live to see the destruction of Europe." In his autobiography Nevinson claimed, "I am glad I have not been responsible for bringing any human life into this world".⁷⁰ His only child, Anthony, had died shortly after birth in 1919. By the 1930s, Nevinson's physical and mental health was in decline. He rejected the art and theory games as prescribed by the Tate, the National Gallery, Royal Academy, or by people like Roger Fry, Clive Bell, and his old Slade Professor Henry Tonks. Nevinson effectively identified performing to a middle-class intelligentsia among the "Things I Hate", an article published in the *Daily Sketch* that listed:

- 1 The anti-English English intellectual.
- 2 The pot-bound old Royal Academician.
- 3 The prig; the snob; the didactic.
- 4 The middle-aged adolescent.
- 5 The namby-pamby aesthete.
- 6 The ugly-ugly modern art.
- 7 The pretty-pretty commercial art.⁷¹

Assessing these works as bad art in a conventional sense—as Sue Malvern has—links technical ability with aesthetic merit; Nevinson's particular relationship with technical ability is not taken account of. In 1919 he rejected his Slade schooling, 'art games' and any one style for his subsequent artwork in the catalogue to his so called 'Peace show'; "I wish to be thoroughly disassociated from every 'new' or 'advanced' movement ; every form or 'ist,' 'ism,' 'post,' 'neo,' 'academic' or unacademic.' Also I refuse to use the same technical method to express such contradictory forms as a rock or a woman."⁷² Subject therefore informs Nevinson's method of delivery. The problem paintings are a warning; they are painted thus to convey this.

David Boyd-Haycock and Michael J. K. Walsh have shown that while the reliability of Nevinson's memoirs is dubious, they prove useful when considered alongside his private correspondence and his father Henry's diaries.⁷³ An anxious outlook and persecution complex is

⁶⁸ Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, xiv, 4.

⁶⁹ Johnson, "Visions of an artist," *Star* Jul 2, 1936, in Malvern, "Nevinson's Modernisms," 182.

⁷⁰ Malvern, "Nevinson's Modernisms," 186

⁷¹ "Things I Hate," 8.

⁷² Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice*, 167.

⁷³ Boyd-Haycock, *Crisis of Brilliance*, 323; Walsh, *Cult of Violence*, 1-2.

present. Nevinson's mother, Margaret, highlighted his sensitive disposition as a child recalling how William Holman Hunt's *Isabella and the Pot of Basil* (1868) (fig. 64) upset him and caused him to ask to leave the gallery.⁷⁴ Nevinson's memoirs detail a change in personality at a young age, recalling "I had some sort of break down owing to being publicly flogged".⁷⁵ Whatever anxieties developed accordingly manifested in abandonment issues at boarding school; there he was subjected to mental and physical bullying, and possible sexual abuse before his father intervened.⁷⁶ Educational environments continued to be difficult; at the Slade Henry Tonks scorned him and his ability. Nevinson's reckless behaviour contributed to his rejection. He alienated the vorticists and Wyndham Lewis by aligning with Marinetti's futurists in 1914 and claiming the vorticists' as signatories of British futurism. Meanwhile fellow Slade students nicknamed Nevinson "Bucknigger" in reference to his physiognomy.⁷⁷ In later life "Chelsea Artists" goaded him using anti-Semitic slurs.⁷⁸ The teasing from contemporaries and rejection from establishment figures reinforced a sense of being an outsider. His belligerence suggests hyperarousal resulting from a persecution complex. There is a vulnerability and desperation in the front of his public bombast. Malvern reads Nevinson's persona as being the "performance of a wounded masculinity."⁷⁹ This, however, fails to give due recognition to this highly sensitive character. I contend that Nevinson's persona was in fact the *performance of masculinity*, created by an individual who was actually emotionally vulnerable. Nevinson acknowledged he wore "a grinning mask. Originally I adopted it as a form of defence."⁸⁰ The *Spectator*, reviewing his memoir summed up his personality, "His tragedy is that of a born revolutionary afflicted with a morbidly sensitive temperament."⁸¹ It is important to recognise this aspect: his political works are more complex than the morbid enthusiasm Malvern attributes to them. As in religious apocalypticism, a sense of persecution—albeit here on a personal level— isolation, and detachment to the modern world inspired Nevinson to identify a profound significance in contemporary events.

Nevinson uses the iconography of the Crucifixion to foretell a period of violent change or transition, which is central to the secular apocalypse. Without the supernatural element secular apocalypses contemporise evil while the destructive source becomes familiar. In this instance Nevinson identifies specifically the *religion of race* and the *cult of sacrifice* as causation. Nevinson's iconography is emblematic of a Western obsession with sacrifice as indicated by the aggrandised

⁷⁴ Nevinson, *Life's Fitfull Fever*, 117-8.

⁷⁵ Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice*, 6.

⁷⁶ *ibid*, 10-13; H. W. Nevinson diaries, entry dated 10 Oct. 1903. Henry Woodd Nevinson Dairies, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

⁷⁷ Walsh, *Cult of Violence*, 14.

⁷⁸ C. R. W. Nevinson to Sewell Stokes, dated 1942. Wool House Autographic.

⁷⁹ Malvern, "Nevinson's Modernisms," 188.

⁸⁰ Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice*, 266.

⁸¹ Bramwell, "Spilt Ink," 1113.

traditions of war and Christianity. He had seen his generation devastated by the Great War and told to sacrifice themselves for King and country; once again war was looming.

Michael Rothenstein: Judaism and the Cross

William Michael Rothenstein (who went by his middle name to distinguish him from his father) presented the biblical narrative in *The Crucifixion* (1937?) (fig. 65) as an event in modern society. It was exhibited at the Mathiesen Gallery in 1938 at Rothenstein's second solo exhibition along with a number of other Judeo-Christian subject paintings.⁸² Ellis Roberts presented it to the Tate in 1939, a year after the appointment of Michael's brother John as director of the Tate. The composition largely divides horizontally: the upper half is dominated a blue sky and the three crosses, whilst the lower is crowded with minor dramas. The figures' loose proportions, and pastel colours give the work an uncanny, dream-like aesthetic. The titulus I.N.R.I. identifies Jesus centrally. His head falls towards his chest, his short hair drops to the left, and his closed eyes depicted with efficient thin lines indicate his torment. The upturned mouth reinforces his anguish. Jesus' shoulders rise up behind him. His arms are elongated but rigid and rise up to the patibulum. The central structure of the crux immissa is rotated towards the viewer so only part of the patibulum is depicted. A nail is inserted through the open palm of Jesus' right hand; his left extends beyond the canvas. By following the patibulum and the diagonal braces either side the stipes it is apparent that the nail piercing his left hand is secured into the brace. Jesus' ribs pattern his naked chest above his sunken stomach and waist. Trousers hang from his hips—the fastening at the front has come undone—whilst the waistline to the figure's right has folded over due to the weight of the still attached blue braces. The right leg parallels the stipes while the left leg is pulled away slightly by another figure, before bending at the knee to return to meet the right leg at ankle height. His plantar are against the stipes and held in place by the nails inserted through the dorsal. It is bloodless.

To the left of the composition—and to Jesus' right—is the penitent thief. Dismas is crucified upon a crux immissa facing Jesus' cross. At the intersection of the patibulum and stipes is the titulus "HE WAS A THIEF". A nail pierces his open right hand; his left hand is not affixed and reaches towards the sky with palmar open. His gently foreshortened head suggests that it has fallen back. The receding hairline at the temples, and his attire of white shirt and green waistcoat suggests he is senior to the others. A tie—now undone—is unceremoniously around his shoulders. His braces fall beside his legs. Nails have been inserted through the roof of his feet.

⁸² Other included *The Crucifixion* (1937), *Descent from the Cross* (1937), *The Last Supper* (1937), *The Deluge* (1938), *The Last Judgment* (1938), and *Journey to the Promised Land* (1938). Locations all unknown.

To the composition's right—and Jesus' left—Gestas is crucified on the third cross that has been erected incompetently and contrasts to Jesus' proficiently constructed braced cross. The intersection of the patibulum and stipes is haphazardly flecked with nails. Rope holds the patibulum, which is askew towards the top right of the canvas while discoloured corroded patches on the stipes reinforce his crucifixion's slapdash manner. Gestas's physical presence contrasts with Dismas and Jesus; he is gagged, and looks off the canvas to the right, apparently averting his eyes from Christ. A cowlick of hair implies youthfulness. His right arm is bound straddling the patibulum, while his left arm is tied above the elbow. His torso is naked; the block solidity of the form and tonal similarity of his body suggest lean strength. Two dark shadows across his stomach suggest a slight layer of fat. Jesus' body contrasts; he is painted with ashen colours, while white highlights and blue-grey shadows indicate emaciated undulations. Gestas's shoulders jut from the stipes. His legs angle away from the cross at the waist, however at the knees they bend back at a near right angle. His feet are flat against the cross, with nails inserted through either foot. He wears trousers torn open at the knee and halfway up each foreleg exposing the skin beneath. The figure's dynamic combination of sharp angles communicates a distinct sense of anguish.

In the composition's lower half two men stand, one before the other, to the composition's left; they have apparently been involved in the executions. The foremost holds a ladder that crosses the canvas from the lower centre to upper left. A third man in the lower right takes—or possibly doffs—the hat from his head. Around his left shoulder is a coil of rope, whilst in his right hand is a bag from which a saw blade projects, suggesting that he is a labourer who has possibly just made the cross for the unrepentant thief—is the doffed hat in recognition of the thief? Their physically active roles are denoted by the bound puttee on their shins. Two figures are beneath Jesus' cross—a man before a woman. The male—possibly the beloved disciple—kneels onto his right knee away from the cross. He wears white chinos, brown brogues and a blue jacket. A pink tie falls forward over his left knee, which is tucked up towards his chest. His right arm reaches down, and he looks intently at a vase with spartan foliage in his hand while his foreshortened left arm reaches towards the foot of the cross. The female figure—Mary—stands beside the cross, to Jesus' right. Her left arm reaches inside his lower right leg and holds it tightly. Her head raises to look at him. A blue shawl partially obscures her right arm, her forearm is clothed in pink, while in her right hand is white knotted cloth.

The Crucifixion has received little scholarly attention. It has been speculated that the modern dress was “perhaps under the influence of Stanley Spencer”.⁸³ Like Spencer, the Crucifixion is moved to a contemporary context, here Hyde Park. According to contemporary critics the

⁸³ Spencer was a Rothenstein family friend—Michael Rothenstein holidayed with Spencer and Daphne Charlton during the early 1940s; Michael Rothenstein, interviewed by Mel Gooding, *British Library National Life Stories: Artists' Lives*, Jul 23, 1990, C466/02/05, 8. Chamot, Farr and Butlin, *Modern British Paintings*, II:568.

anachronistic content and anotopic alterations provide “an immediacy of appeal”. Further, “if sincerity were an artist’s only qualification he would rank high”.⁸⁴ Rothenstein also exhibited images of general judgment in *The Deluge* and *Last Judgment* (both lost); the latter was described as a “rather inept borrowing from Stanley Spencer.”⁸⁵ Rothenstein’s first solo exhibition in October 1935 exhibited works with titles including *Procession to Calvary*, *March to Martyrdom*, and *Martyrdom at Hampstead* (all lost). Of particular note was a Crucifixion in “modern clothes... in which one can see the men on the crosses, the central figure is wearing trousers and braces”.⁸⁶ The description applies to the Tate *Crucifixion*; therefore, I propose a tentative re-dating to 1934–1935.

Rothenstein subsequently rejected his pre-war paintings, which are incongruous to his later artwork. He dismissed *The Crucifixion* in 1960 as “an ex-student effort”.⁸⁷ The claim remains ambiguous—perhaps referring to age, intellectual maturity, or how representative it is of his artwork. Rothenstein was in his late twenties at the time of its painting, suggesting a certain maturity as a practitioner; it however contrasts to his post-1945 prints and relief works. Rothenstein would be contemptuous of the Matthiesen exhibition in an interview with his close friend, the critic Mel Gooding, scorning the artworks as “very rudimentary... [and] glad to have forgotten all about them”.⁸⁸ The 1989 exhibition ‘Michael Rothenstein: The Retrospective’ included a single artwork with a religious subject—a drawing of *The Expulsion* (1925) when Rothenstein was aged 17. The 1930s were entirely absent with the decade having been largely omitted from Rothenstein’s biographical narrative and artistic catalogue.

The decade proves biographically important. From the mid-twenties to about 1940 Rothenstein was afflicted with myxedema (hypothyroidism), characterised by profound “melancholia” and “fear”.⁸⁹ Gooding asked how the political situation in the thirties affected Rothenstein, who replied that he had not given attention to politics due to sickness. Yet Gooding observed elsewhere that Rothenstein *was* aware of and engaged with contemporary events, and from before 1939 was collecting and storing newspaper photographs that he later used in photo-silkscreens prints in the 1960s.⁹⁰ There is little doubt that Rothenstein was moved by developments in continental politics. His 1940 painting *Spanish Refugees* combined the influence of Goya with Robert Capa’s photographic journalism to address the Spanish Civil War.⁹¹ Rothenstein’s religious subjects largely coincided with his illness. Certainly medical psychiatry has recognised the appeal of

⁸⁴ “Our London Correspondent,” Nov 9, 1938, 10.

⁸⁵ “Art Exhibitions,” Nov 10, 1938, 8.

⁸⁶ “Stately Homes—Yorkshire Attracts the Artists,” 12.

⁸⁷ Chamot, Farr and Butlin, *Modern British Paintings*. II:568.

⁸⁸ Rothenstein, *Artists’ Lives*, 14.

⁸⁹ *ibid*, 10, 8.

⁹⁰ Gooding, *Michael Rothenstein*, 15.

⁹¹ Simon Martin, *Conscience and Conflict: British Artists and the Spanish Civil War* (Farnham: Lund Humphries, 2014), 132.

religion to people at times of health difficulties.⁹² There is scant information about Rothenstien's religious beliefs or sympathies; however, Marc Baer's definition helps identify a partial process of conversion, namely that the artist took a new religious reference to construct an identity via his artwork that was aligned with a specific religious orientation.⁹³

Though Rothenstein's religious orientation remains unclear, his family identified with various religious traditions. He claimed, however, that "there was no Jewish religion existing in my family."⁹⁴ His father, William Rothenstein was born in Bradford, the son of German-Jewish migrants. According to Samuel Shaw, "What Jewish teaching he had as a child seems to have been scant—what little there was came from his mother; his father, an enlightened Liberal, leaned towards Unitarianism."⁹⁵ His father was a convert, yet he did not appear to have been baptised.⁹⁶ William Rothenstein kept his Jewish identity discreet until seemingly re-connecting with Jewish issues around 1903 when he started to paint Jewish subjects, and became involved with the Jewish Education Aid Society.⁹⁷ Shaw claims it was an attempt to "re-establish himself... as a Jewish painter."⁹⁸ However the relationship with Judaism was tenuous. William Rothenstein married Alice Knebworth in 1901, and their children were raised outside the faith.⁹⁹ John Rothenstein converted to Roman Catholicism in 1926. He recalled his father's "reluctance to make due allowance for... religion to inspire great works of art."¹⁰⁰ He continues by quoting his father:

The notion that these were great religious artists because all painters and sculptors believed in the stories they were hired to illustrate, is a fallacy... such... subjects... allowed the artist to paint the streets and buildings of the towns which they lived in...¹⁰¹

John Rothenstein also recalled his father's own reorientation towards Catholicism in his later years.¹⁰² Michael, the youngest, was subject to religious influences as William Rothenstein reflected in 1932, "The Michael Fields hoped that one at least of our children would belong to the true church. They took a fancy to our youngest child, who was born this year (1908), about whose precarious spiritual state they wrote a sonnet...Had they lived they would have taken comfort from the fact that one of my sons became a Roman Catholic; but not he to whom they dedicated the poem."¹⁰³ Michael Rothenstein was born of a Judeo-Christian culture.

⁹² Koenig, King, and Carson, *Religion and Health*, 298-301.

⁹³ Baer, *Conversion and Conquest*, 13.

⁹⁴ Rothenstein, *Artists' Lives*, 7.

⁹⁵ Shaw, "Equivocal Positions," 213.

⁹⁶ Gross, "Jewishness in English Painting," 277-8.

⁹⁷ Shaw, "Equivocal Positions," 210, 213.

⁹⁸ *ibid*, 214.

⁹⁹ Alice Knebworth's sister Grace married William Orpen in 1901.

¹⁰⁰ Rothenstein, *Modern Painters I*, 109.

¹⁰¹ *ibid*.

¹⁰² *ibid*, 110.

¹⁰³ Michael Field was the pseudonym that Katharine Harris Bradley and Edith Emma Cooper collaboratively published poetry and fiction. Rothenstein, *Men and Memories Volume 2*, 127.

A closely related painting by Michael Rothenstein titled *Evening Crucifixion* (fig. 66) likely dates from the 1930s. The work uses the modern-dress aesthetic, displacing the emphasis onto the crowds to the extent that only the crucified individuals' lower body is depicted. Rothenstein breaks with the narrative; the effect is to question the complicity and responsibility of modern society. It is not, as William Rothenstein would assert, simply a modern-dress subject painting.

Michael Rothenstein's religious paintings emphasised the subjects of the passion, the Deluge, apocalypse and the narrative journey to the promised land from the book of Numbers. This indicates a preoccupation with specific themes—ultimate promise, earthly and temporal change, and destruction. Irrespective of whether he believed in the faith, any subject—religious or secular—was available, he selected anxious biblical themes. This interest in the context of the late 1930s is important. The Tate contextualised *Crucifixion* thus:

From the late 1930s onwards, for a number of contemporary artists, the theme of the Crucifixion increased in significance as a metaphor for human cruelty. It was fully exploited in the aftermath of the Holocaust by artists such as Francis Bacon and Graham Sutherland.¹⁰⁴

This perhaps attributes too much significance to Rothenstein's painting; his was a more general interest in Christian subjects at this time. However, his painting contributed to the trend and was pertinent to the contemporary context. The Jewish artist Marc Chagall's *White Crucifixion* (1938) (fig. 67), depicted the crucified Christ in a modern context. His Christ is a Jewish martyr who indicates the persecution of European Jewish populations in the 1930s. Jacob Epstein returned to the subject of Christ and Jewish suffering in the intensifying anti-semitic period prior to the Second World War's outbreak. He produced *Ecce Homo* (1935) (fig. 68), a stone figure of Christ wearing the crown of thorns and with hands bound behind his body, and *Consummatum Est* (1936–7) (fig. 69) which depicts the dead Christ recumbent in the tomb. Both titles come from the Latin Vulgate Bible and address the suffering of Jesus as a human; the former is attributed to Pontius Pilate on presenting the scourged Jesus, while the latter comes from Jesus' fatalistic words from the cross. British newspaper headlines were clearly marking out the persecution of Jewish populations throughout Europe in 1937–8. In Britain right wing antisemitism became organised with Oswald Mosely's British Union of Fascists. One month before the opening of Rothenstein's 1938 exhibition, Kristallnacht occurred in Germany. The implications for an artist with Jewish ancestry were clear.

Blood is a curious omission in the painting. Theologically the lack of Christ's blood is problematic; Christ "washed us from our sins in his own blood".¹⁰⁵ Rothenstein recalled that as a child he was a "craven coward when it came to any kind of blood, or any kind of accident."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ 'Gallery label,' Tate, September 2004. <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/rothenstein-the-crucifixion-n05046>

¹⁰⁵ Revelation 1:5.

¹⁰⁶ Rothenstein, *Artists' Lives*, 4.

However, he would draw toy soldiers fighting, which was a means to go beyond their inanimation, and realise the potential within their form and pose. Blood was unreservedly depicted:

nothing gave me greater pleasure than drawing the chaps with chopped off heads spouting blood! And as a result, the red can... was always the first one to be used up in the box. But one had such... pleasure.¹⁰⁷

An attraction to violence, both actual and implicit, is evident in later works.¹⁰⁸ How then do we make sense of *The Crucifixion*, given the artist's readiness to engage with both blood and violence, while the precedent set by the theology and the iconographic tradition pays such significant attention to blood? Much has been said about blood and violence—less on violence without blood. Walter Benjamin contrasts the bloodiness of “mythical violence” with bloodless “divine violence”.¹⁰⁹ The sacrifice of the living satisfies mythical violence, whereas the sacrifice of the living in order to save the living satisfies divine violence. The living have not been respected in the instances where blood is exacted. Benjamin offers a means to study Rothenstein's painting. The Crucifixion to begin with is an act of mythical violence. It is a punishment inflicted by a Roman court on a man for apparent treason against the sovereign power of Rome. In this case it “demands sacrifice” and anticipates blood.¹¹⁰ However, the resurrection breaks the rule of myth and negates the punishment ordered by mythic forms of law. As a result, it is immediate violence.¹¹¹ The Crucifixion is also revolutionary violence: theologically, it brings a new historical epoch—and points towards the eschatologically toned “coming age”—in which our relation to law and structures of authority are significantly changed.¹¹²

Thus, the painting has a political character for a Jewish audience. The Crucifixion indicates the punishment of the Jewish people by an authoritarian ‘mythic’ power, but it indicates a revolutionary event whereby the ‘mythic’ is destroyed and overcome by the oppressed. The Crucifixion brings a new dispensation, be it a Christian event, or a secular revolution against the oppressors. Rothenstein presents the Crucifixion as ostensibly an act of mythic violence, however the lack of blood indicates that the violent act is against worldly authorities.

In summary: the concept and heritage of the Crucifixion served as a means for both Christian and non-Christian to pursue some semblance of meaning to lived experience and bring a critical eye to the contemporary context. Increasingly, the theological ideas of salvation and redemption were muddled, as artists sought out the violence and brutality in their depictions during the 1930s. Yet even in these secularised permutations, the Crucifixion remained a powerful means to reflect upon

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.* 3.

¹⁰⁹ Benjamin, “*Critique of Violence*,” 297.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ *ibid.* 295.

¹¹² *ibid.* 300.

the nature of sin, individual responsibility, and collective guilt. By 1939, and the outbreak of the Second World War, the Crucifixion had shifted from a largely retrospective mode to take on a wider meaning for many artists. In 1939 Gladys Hynes painted *Crucifixion* (1939) (fig. 70), depicting an elevated view of a military aircraft flying over a pastoral landscape. A vast pilot lies along the length of the plane, with arms extended across the wings as though upon a *crux commissa*. Hynes was born to an Irish Catholic family, yet her image of an individual crucifixion generalises to highlight collective guilt. The aircraft signifies the new type of warfare that was anticipated throughout the pre-war years, while the landscape below is a pained reminder of the rural idyll that, according to contemporary propaganda, was being defended. Rather than one death to atone for all sin, Hynes presents the sin of a new war as a crucifixion for all those who will be sent to fight.

The close association of the Crucifixion with the Great War had the effect of making the biblical narrative as a metaphor for the contemporary circumstances a familiar notion; this metaphorical usage continued in the 1930s when, as I have identified in this chapter, it could be used to criticise militarism, address existential anxiety, or persecution. Yet an apocalyptic idea of the cross continued to resonate within these too; the suffering human at the heart of the crucifixion is caught up in a radically changing world. The subject of the Crucifixion connotes a certain traditional outlook, and therefore its creative reinvention reveals the changing world and the passing of things.

The power of the Crucifixion for Christians is dependent on what comes *after*; that is, Christ's rising from the dead, the reconciliation of God and mankind, and the new prospect of the beatific vision. In the next chapter I accordingly address the resurrection and the associated issue of eschatological judgment, observing how these apocalyptic themes found new life in the interwar years.

Chapter Three
From First Fruits to the White Throne:
Of Resurrection and Judgment

Stanley Spencer's debut solo show opened in February 1927 at the Goupil Gallery, London. Of the eighty-six works exhibited, one entitled *The Resurrection* (1924–26) (fig. 71), stood out and garnered significant recognition. Now known as *Resurrection, Cookham*, the painting was heralded in the *Guardian* as “one of the very few important religious pictures produced in England.”¹ *The Times's* critic concurred, declaring the depiction of “the general resurrection as exemplified in an English country churchyard, thus combining local character with universal meaning” as probably “the most important picture painted by any English artist during the present century.”² It was first exhibited eight years and three months after the signing of the armistice. Spencer produced three major resurrection paintings during the interwar: *Resurrection, Cookham*, *Resurrection of the Soldiers*, and *Parents Resurrecting*. He was not alone in his attentiveness to resurrection and after-life narratives following the Great War. Resurrection is a concept that extends the human ontology, not only promising a second life following death, but extending the possibilities for one's life in the present.

This chapter addresses the pertinence of resurrection—and by association eschatological judgment—in the Great War and immediate post-war period. The symbolic opposite to the iconography of death is that of resurrection and rebirth.³ The prospect of life after death serves as consolation to the grieving and offers the hope that all does not end when one dies. However, the two are not mutually exclusive and one aspect can be emphasised in an image ostensibly about the other. I will then turn attention to Stanley Spencer's resurrection paintings addressing the general resurrection, and in three specific paintings of Christ's resurrection; William Johnstone's *Golgotha* (1927–8); Glyn Warren Philpot's *Resurgam* (1929); and Ethel Walker's *Angels of the Resurrection* (1934). The chapter concludes with a study on Charles Sims's *Spiritual* paintings produced towards the end of his life. Sims's series of paintings address the journey of the soul in death and engage with the prospect of eschatological judgment. Each artist engages with the contemporary situation by referring to the prospect of existence beyond death.

Personal consolation is found in the optimistic narrative of resurrection. The Jewish artist David Bomberg painted *Vision of Ezekiel* (fig. 72) shortly after the sudden death of his mother in 1912. The painting depicts the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the Valley of the Dry Bones, wherein

¹ “Resurrection Picture by Mr. Stanley Spencer,” 4.

² “Art Exhibitions,” Feb 28, 1927, 17.

³ De Pascale, *Death and Resurrection*, 7.

Ezekiel is endowed with an apocalyptic vision of the resurrection of the Israeli people in exile prior to their return to the land of Israel.⁴ In Bomberg's painting apparently skeletal figures are dynamically posed, apparently emerging from a central platform, while "brilliant colours emphasise the exultation associated with resurrection."⁵ Bomberg had turned towards an apocalyptic vision of resurrection from Jewish scripture, however it would be the Christian narrative of the resurrection of Jesus that consoled many during the Great War.

A cross—as opposed to *the* cross, the Crucifixion, or a crucifix, which all emphasise Jesus' death by crucifixion—is free of the *corpus*; thus, the promise of resurrection comes to the fore while the redemptive dimension recedes. Resurrection iconography had initially been limited during the war; it was most apparent in the imagery of hastily improvised crosses signposting graves (fig. 73-4). In George Clausen's *Youth Mourning* (1915) (fig. 75) a wooden cross stands amid the murky and desolate landscape.⁶ Before it a young, naked, and therefore vulnerable female crouches grief-stricken. Outwardly it is an image of death and sorrow. The pain of loss in the immediate period is undiminished, yet the cross promises renewal and eternal life. Edmund J. Sullivan's book of satirical propaganda *The Kaiser's Garland* (1915) emphasised death—and German guilt—with his illustrations of graves demarcated by simple crosses (fig. 76). A Calvary dominates the horizon in *Red Niagara* (fig. 77) while an intricate melange of graves surrounds it. While principally indicating death and Christian sacrifice, resurrection is embedded in the symbolism. As Mosse argued, the intimate connection between the fallen soldier and Christ is written large on the iconography of the War.⁷ A cross announces the sacrifice of the deceased, their transcendence beyond the possibility of a final death, and the nation's renewal. Hal Hurst's *The Hero* (1915) (fig. 78) is an exception to the resurrection iconography. It presents a spectral Christ taking the angel of death's mantle, wandering the battlefields to collect the limp bodies. The soldier's death is more hopeful: Jesus waits to return him as "one of his own".⁸

Memorial iconography increasingly stressed the concept of resurrection over the heroic or sacrificial tone of the cross and Crucifixion as the War became distant with time. In November 1919 a three light stained-glass memorial designed by the Irish artist Wilhelmina Geddes was unveiled at the Anglican Church of Saint Bartholomew in Ottawa (fig. 79).⁹ The window depicts Heaven welcoming a slain soldier. In the left window he approaches "newly risen from the dead" guided by the Archangels Raphael and Gabriel.¹⁰ Behind stands an Angel of Death while above is an Angel of

⁴ Ezekiel 37.

⁵ "Exhibition label."

⁶ Clausen originally depicted multiple crosses; the composition was amended after exhibition.

⁷ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 75.

⁸ Harrington, "Religious and Spiritual Themes," 150.

⁹ Brown, "Ottawa Window," 181-188.

¹⁰ Bowe, *Wilhelmina Geddes*, 116.

Peace. In the central and right windows, beneath the Archangel Michael and Saint George, are soldier saints come to welcome the soldier. Behind are the Knights of King Arthur with the Holy Grail; the deceased has ascended into the pantheon of national heroes, living on as an almost mythic hero.

Perhaps the most arresting adaption of James Clarke's *The Great Sacrifice* emphasised resurrection rather than Crucifixion. *Christ in The Ruins* (fig. 80) was dedicated on Armistice Day 1928 at Carmichael Presbyterian Church in Regina, Canada.¹¹ The soldier derives from the painting; he is at the resurrected Jesus' feet rather than the foot of the cross. Vance observed that the soldier's "hand covers the wound on Christ's foot, affirming the link between his own suffering and that of the Saviour."¹² Christ displays the Stigmata in this desolate landscape; the ruined Cloth Hall in Ypres and the Market Square of Loos loom behind, while overhead two military aircraft fly. According to the *General Annual Report of the British Army 1913–1919* some 540,000 British soldiers died between 4 August 1914 and 30 September 1919.¹³ The notion of soldiers' eternal life—literally or figuratively—resonated more than their sacrifice with the distance of time. Stanley Spencer's subsequent resurrection painting, *Resurrection of the Soldiers* (1929) (fig. 81), directly addressed the deceased combatants. The War and the Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918–19 had together killed near one million British people. Many of the bereaved turned attention to what came after. The American writer Winifred Kirkland reflected that people had "thought more about death within the last four years than in a whole lifetime before".¹⁴ Kirkland continues, "Not for a century has the interest in the great themes of death, immortality, and the life everlasting been so widespread... The war has made a new heaven, let us trust it may aid in making a new earth."¹⁵ Influenza contributed further a death toll of around 230,000 in Britain alone, with a quarter of the British population affected.¹⁶ Between fifty and one hundred million people died worldwide from the outbreak.¹⁷ In comparison, Britain and Ireland's population was approximately forty—three million in 1918.¹⁸

Jesus' resurrection is where all Christian thought about life after death starts. Christian belief has continually imagined the resurrection in two stages: the first is the resurrection of Jesus, marked by the festival of Easter, while the second, the general resurrection, occurs at the eschaton.¹⁹ Jesus' resurrection is inseparable from the resurrection promised to the faithful; it is characterised in similar terms, namely death, resurrection and redemption, and the final completion of God's

¹¹ Vance, "Sacrifice in Stained Glass," 22.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ British Army, *General Annual Report*, 62-70.

¹⁴ Kirkland, *New Death*, 4.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 21.

¹⁶ Johnson, *Influenza Pandemic*, 73.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 78-81.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 80-81.

¹⁹ Davis, "Eschatology and Resurrection," 387.

purpose. Brian Daley furthers this, claiming “Early Christian theology developed in a climate of strong, although fluid eschatological expectation.”²⁰ Eschatology is for the Christian “the final stage of Christology” and “there is, or least can be, an eschatological dimension to every aspect of Christian faith.”²¹ Christian hope is therefore concerned with eschatology and dependent upon Christ’s resurrection: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins”.²² The two stages of resurrection are inextricable.

Christian resurrection signifies triumphant victory, and is interlinked with the concept of divine judgment. The earliest Christian apologist Aristides attributed the moral Christian life to their anticipation of their resurrection and judgment.²³ As with resurrection, there are two stages to divine judgment; death is immediately followed by particular judgment, while the general judgment follows resurrection. Particular judgment is followed by entry into Heaven, Hell, or Catholic theology’s intermediate cleansing state of Purgatory. The general judgment—the *last* judgment—unites soul and body before receiving collective judgment at the eschaton. Thus, judgment demarcates resurrection. In 1921 the Parliamentary War Memorial was installed.²⁴ *The Recording Angel* (fig. 82) was designed by the Australian Bertram Mackennal. Eight stone panels record the names of Members of Parliament, Peers, Senior Staff, and their sons who died during the Great War.²⁵ The winged figure of the Recording Angel from the Abrahamic faiths stands centrally. According to Abrahamic theology, the Recording Angel chronicles every person’s deeds so that they might be judged.²⁶ The memorial insinuates the divine ruling— their death makes them sacred.

The Great War’s death tolls were frequently referred to using resurrection narratives. The Dean of Canterbury’s sermon on 2 Corinthians 4:16, Easter 1915, proclaimed that the “great message of the resurrection (is) particularly opportune and welcome” in the War context. The Dean continued, “we seem to have gone back... to the days before the flood”²⁷ and yet:

It is revealed to us in the Book of the Revelation of St. John that, at the consummation of all things, after scenes of carnage which are at least equal in their horror to the dreadful spectacle now before our eyes, a new heaven and a new earth will be created, by Him Who sits upon the throne making all things new. Even so far as the present world is concerned, the sufferings and sacrifices involved in great wars have doubtless won for future generations the greatest blessings of true Christian civilization, liberty, order, peace, and justice.²⁸

Apocalyptic narratives are used to make sense of the spectacle whilst the promise of resurrection, and a New Heaven and Earth offer hope.

²⁰ Daley, “Eschatology in the Early Church Fathers,” 91.

²¹ *ibid*, 92.

²² 1 Corinthians 15:17.

²³ Aristides, *Apology*, 48-51.

²⁴ “Notes,” *Builder*, 760.

²⁵ The memorial was originally composed of just two panels; six additional panels were added and unveiled in 1922.

²⁶ Malachi 3:16; Revelation 20:12.

²⁷ Wace, “Things Seen,” 30.

²⁸ *ibid*, 35-36.

Alleged supernatural occurrences during the War advanced the belief that loved ones lived on. These were often complementary (or at least not in opposition) to Christian belief. The War provided ample opportunities for Spiritualist practitioners and mediums professing they could contact the deceased. Celebrity exponents such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge both lost sons in the War. They gave Spiritualism credibility in a nation wrestling with grief. Conan Doyle was among those who identified the eighteenth-century millenarian Emanuel Swedenborg as the father of spiritualism.²⁹ His *History of Spiritualism* (1926) dismissed Swedenborg's Christian theology, yet upheld Swedenborg's confidence in psychic phenomena. According to Conan Doyle, Christianity needed to accommodate Spiritualism's eschatological revelations, or it would perish.³⁰ Lodge, a distinguished physicist, alleged that his son Raymond, who had died in 1915, had attempted to contact him from beyond death. Lodge documented and published the case narrative as *Raymond, or Life and Death* (1916). Lodge proposed that Christ's resurrection referred to his ethereal body's visibility following death.³¹ Church leaders addressed the close proximity of Spiritualism and Christianity. Charles Gore, Bishop of Oxford, was asked to preach a sermon on the subject of "intercourse with the dead" in 1917.³² Gore acquiesced claiming "the matter is of so much importance that I could not decline, though I feel some reluctance again to broach the subject in the church."³³ He concludes that one should "have nothing to do with the attempt to seek consolation about the dead from converse, real or imaginary..."³⁴ During the Boer War and Great War Evelyn de Morgan used art as a way to articulate her fears and anxieties, combining an anti-war philosophy with her Spiritualist beliefs. Paintings such as *S.O.S.* (1914–16) (fig. 83) and *An Angel Piping To The Souls In Hell* (1916) (fig. 84) emphasise the soul's fate, and the ultimate struggle between good and evil at the very moment when the War was being framed in the terms of divine struggle.

The dead's reanimation became a popular motif in supernatural war stories. The French Lieutenant Jacques Péricard claimed to have been surrounded by Germans when a wounded comrade let out the exclamation "Debout les Morts!". Several wounded French soldiers responded and helped repel the German threat. A mythic tone developed; the story evolved to claim the dead had joined the fight. It was published by Maurice Barrès in *L'Echo de Paris*, November 18, 1915; the mythologised version spread throughout France and along the Western Front becoming one of the most well-known wartime French trench stories. The *Guardian* claimed in November 1915 that it "is already among the classic stories of war".³⁵ The returning dead became a cinematic spectacle in the

²⁹ Doyle, *History of Spiritualism*, 2.

³⁰ Doyle, *New Revelation*, 54.

³¹ Lodge, *My Philosophy*, 310-311.

³² Gore, "Intercourse with the dead," 134.

³³ *ibid*, 135.

³⁴ *ibid*, 149.

³⁵ "Debout Les Morts!" 13.

Abel Gance's film *J'accuse!* (1919), released in Britain in 1920, which told the story of a love triangle amidst the War. The film's anti-war ethos culminates with the dead rising from their graves (fig. 85-86) and return home to accusingly ask whether it had been worth it. Gance had started filming in 1918 using real battlefields and soldiers of whom many would later die; the resultant film literally resurrects the dead. These resurrection narratives provided comfort by suggesting death is not the end, while also casting damnation by highlighting the scale and consequences of earthly violence.

The post-war culture of memorialisation was indebted to the way the War had been framed between 1914-1918; this had resulted in a collective memory that prioritised Christian hope. Jay Winter argues "In the aftermath of war, there is a tendency for those who create representations of the conflict to wear the mantle of consolation."³⁶ The dead were recurrently remembered in terms of Christian resurrection and often in terms paraphrasing Isaiah 26:19—"the dead men shall live/the dead live on". In Britain the decision was taken that bodies would not be re-patriated, and cemeteries would be constructed in the former conflict zone. The European nations marked the graves with crosses in the military cemeteries they each constructed. British cemeteries followed a design that explicitly linked the dead with Christian sacrifice and resurrection via a chapel, central Cross of Sacrifice (fig. 87) and Stone of Remembrance (fig. 88), and pious inscriptions. The Imperial War Graves Commission appointed three principal architects: Edwin Lutyens, Reginald Blomfield and Herbert Baker. A fourth, Charles Holden, was promoted in 1921. The Cross, with inset sword, was designed by Blomfield. It was allowed to be indeterminate in meaning by the Imperial War Graves Commission, suggesting either sacrifice in War, or hope in resurrection.³⁷ The Stone was conceived as a pantheistic symbol by its architect Lutyens. It would be commonly identified with reference to Christianity as 'the altar'. It bore an inscription proposed by Rudyard Kipling that alludes to the eternally heroic dead, "THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE", taken from the apocryphal biblical text Ecclesiasticus 44:14. Unidentified soldiers were buried with headstones engraved with a cross and the inscription "A British Soldier of the Great War Known Unto God" (fig. 89). One such soldier was elevated in a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; each belligerent nation ultimately acquired such a tomb, with the British and French pioneering the idea. On Armistice Day 1920 the service for the Unknown Soldier in Britain was held in Westminster Abbey. In France there was a concurrent service for another Unknown Soldier. Lutyens's Cenotaph had been unveiled earlier in the day before the Westminster service, while the reading that followed the 23rd Psalm called upon apocalyptic hope and was taken from Revelation 7:9-10, 14-17.³⁸ The passages describe the passing of tribulation (analogous to the War) with the elect residing beyond all human needs alongside God.

³⁶ Winter, *Remembering War*, 238.

³⁷ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 83.

³⁸ Westminster Abbey, *Order of Service*, 8.

The obvious, comforting subtext is that through their death the War's dead are beyond suffering—they have transcended death and judgment. The Cenotaph's lack of a body—Cenotaph etymologically means *empty tomb*—alludes to the empty tomb following Christ's resurrection. Blomfield's *Menin Gate*, Ypres, (fig. 90) records almost 55,000 casualties of the British Empire with no known graves. The Australian artist Will Longstaff attended the Memorial's opening on 24 July 1927. He claimed he had a vision while walking around Ypres afterwards in which he saw the dead rise from the earth around him. The experience was recorded in *Menin Gate at Midnight* (1927) (fig. 91). Ghostly figures rise from a corn field flecked with red poppies before the Menin Gate on the horizon that is in bold contrast to the sky and surrounding buildings.³⁹ Blomfield's memorial is topped with sculptures of Lions, symbolic of Ypres and Britain's Empire, and a sarcophagus by William Reid Dick that is a symbolic provision for the missing dead. As Stefan Zweig wrote in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, "this gate was built as a common headstone".⁴⁰ The perpetually empty tombs deepen the association between the soldiers and Christ, who both gave up their life and left no known bodily trace of their earthly presence; the soldier was made sacred by their sacrifice, thus their tomb is appropriately empty eternally.

Bodily resurrection indicates the theological concern over the cadaver's physical integrity, and the risen body's physical characteristics. The Catholic Church's doctrine of the resurrected body had historically prevented cremation. The War dealt a blow to the sacral concept of the body. If a body was not fragmented at death, then it was likely post-mortem. Frederick Varley was commissioned as an Official War Artist in 1918. A deeply cynical image of the Western Front and bodily obliteration is present in *For What?* (1918) and *Some Day the People Will Return* (1918–1919) (fig. 92-3). In the former, gravediggers prepare holes in a devastated landscape for the cadavers stacked on a nearby cart. The white crosses denote the innumerable dead and the hope of resurrection. The latter work puts that hope under pressure in its depiction of a war-ravaged cemetery. A central gravestone decorated with a cross is surrounded by blown open caskets and mutilated cadavers. The destruction subsumes even the dead of generations past. In April 1919 Varley wrote a letter to his friend and fellow artist Arthur Lismer:

I was in Ypres the other day... you follow up a plank road and then cut off over a festering ground, walking on the tips of shell holes which are filled with dark and unholy water. You pass over swamps on rotting duckboards, past bleached bones of horses with their harness still on, past violated rude crosses sticking up from the filth and the stink of decay is flung over all... The story of War is told in the thousand and one things that mingle with the earth—equipment, bits of clothing almost unrecognizable, an old boot stuck up from a mound of filth, a remnant of sock inside, and inside that—well, I slightly released the boot, it came away in my hand and the bones sifted out of the sodden rag like fine sand. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.⁴¹

³⁹ Australian War Memorial, 'Menin Gate at midnight.'

⁴⁰ Zweig, "Berliner Tageblatt," Commonwealth War Graves Commission archives.

⁴¹ Davis, *Logic of Ecstasy*, 31.

With exhibited at the 1919 Canadian War Memorials Exhibition, Burlington House, Varley provided elucidation: "Some day the people will return to their village which is not; they will look for their little church which is not; and they will go to the pounded and churned and poisoned, that was once fertile and rich with golden grain and good things for the welfare of the race."⁴² The graveyard's purpose is annulled. While working on the painting Varley had apprehended that he was pagan, while "Christianity's as dead as the graveyard I'm painting."⁴³

Machine guns, such as the Lewis gun, capable of firing up to 600 rounds per minute could decimate a target. Artillery was perhaps the Great War's most important weapon.⁴⁴ British Commander Sir Henry Rawlinson reportedly assured his corps commanders that "nothing could exist at the conclusion of the bombardment in the area covered by it".⁴⁵ It has been described as a war that "subsumed bodies."⁴⁶ Death was not inevitable, and advances in medical techniques saved many lives. More than 41,000 men had lost at least one limb in the War.⁴⁷ Henry Tonks recorded the severe facial disfigurements of men and women in studies that were integral to the advancements in prosthetics and plastic surgery resulting from the War. The sculptor Kathleen Scott, a former student of Tonks at the Slade, meanwhile crafted prosthetics. She recorded in her diary that she felt "terribly like God, the creator."⁴⁸ Tonks and Scott were part of a mission to restore or reconstitute the damaged body, however not for eschatological resurrection but the judgment of society.

The Apocalypse of Stanley

Another former student of Henry Tonks, Stanley Spencer, began painting the reconstituted body at the general resurrection in earnest after the Great War. The aforementioned *Resurrection, Cookham* (fig. 71) was his earliest work on the theme to gain significant critical acclaim. It depicts bodily resurrection in the Berkshire village of Cookham, specifically in the Holy Trinity Church's graveyard. The dead emerge and reacquaint themselves with the world. From the porch the figures of God and Jesus welcome them back. An overall sense of calmness pervades the figures, who are at odds with gothic setting and the burning red sky in the painting's upper left region which bathes the churchyard in an ominous glow. Central to Spencer's conception was John Donne's description of churchyards as a "holy suburb of heaven."⁴⁹ The resurrection and related events at the eschaton such as the reunion of families became the prominent theme in Spencer's subsequent career.

⁴² *ibid*, 30.

⁴³ *ibid*, 31.

⁴⁴ Terraine, *White Heat*, 95.

⁴⁵ Edmonds, *Military operations*, 5:288.

⁴⁶ Wilson, "Burial of the Dead," 23.

⁴⁷ Nicholson, *Great Silence*, 58.

⁴⁸ quoted in Biernoff, *Portraits of Violence*, 20.

⁴⁹ Cashbook of Stanley Spencer, dated December 1937. TGA 733.3.1; Sketchbook 'Book 3', undated, TGA 733.3.81.

His interest in apocalyptic eschatology and resurrection predate the War. An almost morbid fascination with death is evident in a letter to John Raverat in 1911:

I rose from the dead last night, it happened like this. I was walking about in the churchyard when I suddenly flopped down among the grave mounds. I wedged myself tightly between these mounds—feet to the east & died. I rose from the dead soon after because of the wet grass. But I did it in a very stately manner.⁵⁰

Early opportunities to engage with the concept artistically were presented almost simultaneously by the Slade Sketch Club; amongst those set while Spencer was a student was 'The Last Day'.⁵¹ Spencer's first known *Resurrection* picture was painted over with *The Apple Gatherers* (fig. 94) in 1913. His early flirtations with the theme eventually coalesced in 1915, when he painted his most theologically conservative interpretation of the subject: the diptych *The Resurrection of the Good and the Bad* (fig. 95a-b). The dead rise from graves. It is inferred that they are about to receive divine judgment as anticipated in Revelation 20:11-15. A clear distinction is made between the near equal numbers of good and bad divided in the left and right panels respectively. Spencer took glee in the depiction:

I have begun to do the picture of the good and bad people coming out of their graves, and I am giving the bad ones a nasty time. I made the earth on their backs a lot thicker... As to the one in the bottom right-hand corner, he can't escape. I have got him set. I feel like God when I look at him peeping out of that nasty gash in the ground.⁵²

By 1915 three of the seven Spencer brothers—Horace, Percy and Sydney—were already at war. The youngest brothers, Stanley and Gilbert, were also caught up in the nationalistic fervor. As they both made preparations to go to war, Gilbert painted the *Crucifixion* (fig. 4), while Stanley painted the general resurrection. Images of death, resurrection and judgment were among their respective last responses in civilian life, perhaps in anticipation of a dire fate. Spencer's painting conforms to moral binaries of good and bad; however, a growing uneasiness with the concept of divine judgment became obvious after his service and marks *The Resurrection of the Good and the Bad* as an incongruity. The War had an "unsettling effect".⁵³

Stanley Spencer was 24 when he enrolled in July 1915. Spencer was limited to auxiliary roles—being only 5 feet 2 inches tall—and became a medical orderly in Bristol where he tended to the disfigured, wounded, and dying soldiers. He transferred to the RAMC field Ambulance in 1916, before volunteering as a soldier in the Salonika campaign. Spencer was recognised as one of the most promising artists of his generation prior to the War; in the conflict's final months, in April 1918, he received an Official War Artist commission. He painted one work, *Travoy's Arriving with Wounded*

⁵⁰ Spencer, *Letters and Writings*, 34.

⁵¹ Gough, *Journey to Burghclere*, 16.

⁵² Stanley Spencer to Sydney Spencer, July 1915, in Spencer, *Looking to Heaven*, 151.

⁵³ Bell, Spencer R.A., 53.

at a Dressing-Station at Smol, at Smol, Macedonia, September 1916 (1919) (fig. 27), before quitting in early 1919, alleging that he wasn't inspired and shouldn't be forced to do it.⁵⁴

Spencer was raised practicing both Anglicanism and Wesleyan Methodism. It resulted in a distinctly idiosyncratic synthesis.⁵⁵ Continued exposure to theological philosophy as a Slade student and his war experiences amplified the subjectivity of his beliefs.⁵⁶ By 1919 Spencer was seeking an appropriate and sympathetic interpretation of his creed. He was "not entirely in love with Christianity" and a fear of Hell troubled his mind.⁵⁷ He reflected: "I had buried so many people and so many dead bodies that I felt that death could not be the end of everything."⁵⁸

In Gilbert Spencer's opinion Cookham was left relatively unscathed by the War.⁵⁹ Yet as for other towns and villages throughout the country any fatality had a profound impact. Stanley Spencer received news of his brother Sydney's death on returning home to Cookham from fighting. The village would become the location for the return of the dead in his paintings. Spencer produced a number of sketches of the resurrection (fig. 96-7) circa 1920-3. Motifs such as the enthroned Christ were later utilised in *Resurrection, Cookham*, while the colour-coded good and bad either side the throne recalls the division in *Resurrection of the Good and the Bad*. The resurrection event in Spencer's post-war depictions shifts away from the intimacy of the diptych into a universal event on a grander scale. The increase suggests a new familiarity with a terrible magnitude of death made possible by modern war.⁶⁰ A little-known sketch that straddles *The Crucifixion* and *Resurrection, Cookham* transforms the ravines of Macedonia into the location for resurrection (fig. 98).⁶¹ Spencer associated his war experience with *both* the Crucifixion and resurrection, making use of conventional wartime symbols that proved malleable to reimagination and adaption to suit his particular circumstances.⁶²

The graves flanking a central avenue evokes Italian quattrocento representations of the Last Judgment, such as Fra Angelico's *Last Judgment* (fig. 99), and the ordered cemeteries being established across the former battlefields (fig. 100). Previously people of rank and status would be buried in a civilian cemetery or remembered as a name upon a military memorial apart from those of lower rank. Changes in the British army in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as the abolition of purchased commissions, the introduction of regiments aligned with regional territories, and the large volunteer contingent in the Great War contributed to a less rigidly

⁵⁴ Carline, *Spencer at War*, 112.

⁵⁵ Pople, *Spencer*, 25.

⁵⁶ *ibid*, 25, 112-113.

⁵⁷ Rothenstein, *Spencer, The Man*, 21.

⁵⁸ Carline, *Spencer at War*, 66.

⁵⁹ Spencer, *Spencer by his Brother*, 151.

⁶⁰ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 3.

⁶¹ Christies, *Modern Paintings*, 120-121.

⁶² Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 145, 171.

hierarchical military. The cemeteries developed after the War elevated the status of *all* the dead as heroes whose shared sacrifice protected the nation. Earthly transgressions were nullified; their death granted a transcendent status.⁶³

The general resurrection is morally neutral since it precedes the Last Judgment. Spencer's images indicate a convoluted relationship with judgment. His painting also known as *Resurrection, Cookham* (1920–21) (fig. 101) shows the resurrected synchronously pulling themselves up from the earth using their headstones. The uniformity eradicates any sense of moral division and contrasts starkly with the painting of 1915. A compromise was reached in the major painting *Resurrection, Cookham*, where judgment is initially apparent in the fan-shaped composition that points outwards; it focuses elements towards Christ in the porch which intersects the horizontal axis defined by the church and enthroned figures in white. The composition is tiered recalling the Last Judgment's iconography; resurrection occurs in the lower regions, while in the upper tier a central Christ in Majesty sits in judgment flanked by prophets.⁶⁴ Meanwhile in the foreground figures struggle forth from a tomb, but are hindered by someone pulling their hair—this alone is punishment for the sinners. The distinction between good and bad has diminished while punishment, although more pronounced than the 1920–21 painting, has comparably lessened. The good outnumber the bad—who are all relegated to a single tomb—and share the same canvas. The glee previously articulated is not apparent; this shifting tone was realised when Spencer contemplated the moral divisions in 1937:

I love the revelation and all it says, but when I did the first bigish picture paintings of the Resurrection of the good and bad... the punishment of the bad was to be no more than their coming out of the graves was not so easy as in the case of the good.⁶⁵

The exuberance was replaced by an increasingly sober reservation that underplays the role of judgment.

The moral distinction was absent from the altar painting *Resurrection of the Soldiers* at the Oratory of All Souls, Burghclere (Sandham Memorial Chapel). Spencer insisted on the ecclesiastical context; the chapel was erected specifically for Spencer's final and most monumental response to the War. Eighteen paintings made between 1926–1932 divide over the south and north walls; they culminate in the altar painting which unifies and gives meaning to the assorted experiences depicted in the scheme, which had begun to be developed just months after *The Crucifixion*, and similarly used the Macedonian setting. He finished 14 years after the War's cessation; there is no imagery of fighting.

⁶³ See, for example, Moule, *Christus Consolator*, 52.

⁶⁴ Revelation. 20:11–15.

⁶⁵ Stanley Spencer, *Red Cash Book*, 1937, Tate 733.3.1.

The altar painting is a macabre vision of Christ administering the Resurrection. Spencer's brother-in-law Richard Carline proposed that the risen soldiers present their crosses; "...their last worldly impediments... just in the same way as they would hand in their equipment on demobilisation."⁶⁶ The soldiers are evidently the main focus and emerge from the Macedonian battlefields where Spencer had served, leading Mary Chamot to use the alternate title "Resurrection on the Macedonian Front" in 1937.⁶⁷ Gilbert Spencer suggests the soldiers are conscious of their deaths; nested between two mules a soldier reads his own name on the cross.⁶⁸ The resurrection is not a denial of death but the triumph over it. In the composition's lower left soldiers reconcile with a shake of hands beside the pile of wooden crosses. Each symbolises the Crucifixion and the promise of resurrection. The soldiers' uniforms bear neither national insignia nor rank. All the dead receive equal honour as in the Great War's cemeteries. Spencer's sketches for the north wall went through numerous permutations; the cross motif frequently reoccurs (fig. 102). The rhythm in the white crosses intensifies the image and denotes the War's horrific death tallies; the irregular arrangement denotes the makeshift graves established amidst the fighting on the eastern Mediterranean Front (fig. 103) and marked by wooden crosses that bleached with time. The improvised crosses had a particular significance, and in some instances gained almost holy relic-like status in Britain following the armistice. The dead were exhumed and relocated to the nascent military cemeteries (fig. 104), as recorded in John Lavery's *The Cemetery, Etaples* (1919) (fig. 105). The crosses were eventually removed and made available to the bereaved families. A number of those claimed were given to parish churches; nine were re-interred to the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, in Deddington, Oxfordshire (fig. 106). In other instances, crosses would be burnt, and the ashes scattered upon the graves.⁶⁹ British and Imperial cemeteries replaced the crosses with headstones with a cambered top, while French and German cemeteries retained the cross—French crosses coloured white, and German black (fig. 107-8). If Spencer's painting uses a code particular to a side in the War, his ambition transcends this. The soldiers, for all their divisions on the battlefield, are united in death and at the resurrection. Earthly difference is erased—union and reconciliation before Christ is paramount, and a pacifist tone emerges. As Winter claims, the painting is "Resurrection as Armistice".⁷⁰ It is in stark contrast to the jingoism that took Spencer to war. According to Spencer it was personally redemptive: "By this means I recover my lost self."⁷¹

Spencer ostensibly achieved closure to his war with the scheme, while also resolving the struggle with judgment in his artwork. The composition also recalls the Last Judgment's iconographic

⁶⁶ Carline, "New Mural Paintings," 316-321.

⁶⁷ Chamot, *Modern Painting*, 12.

⁶⁸ Spencer, *Spencer by his Brother*, 146.

⁶⁹ "Memorial to Fallen Journalists," 11.

⁷⁰ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 169.

⁷¹ Rapport, *Distortion and Love*, 21.

tradition; it divides into distinct horizontal tiers with Christ positioned centrally in the upper region while bodily resurrection transpires in the lower region where the soldiers are largely located. The adherence to iconographic precedents continues in the orientation around Christ's nuclear figure. The soldiers are beatific figures without wounds or traces of their death. They navigate towards Jesus, who is made a focal point via the use of linear perspective receding towards him. Two mules are aware to Christ; they turn their heads and lead the viewer to Christ.⁷² Jesus is a quiet protagonist within proceedings; his presence is moderated owing to perspective, scale, and in relative size to the figures around him. Jesus' spiritual authority is present but not domineering.⁷³ Judgment is only present as the product of iconographic intertext. This correlates with the changes in Spencer's evolving faith. By the late 1920s his religious beliefs had detached from the authority of organised religion and were manifesting as a distinct, idiosyncratic philosophy. The mules the soldiers' served with have also resurrected in recognition of their service. Spencer apparently made just one other image of animals undergoing bodily resurrection: a sketch dated to circa 1933 (fig. 109). These tease Spencer's unfulfilled—and heretical—theology of bestial resurrection.

The chapel's dedication as the Oratory of All Souls accentuates the resurrection theme; All Souls denotes all who have died. The painting is located over the Altar and encompasses the entire wall, suggesting Spencer's Italianate influences. This positioning confronts the viewer upon entering the chapel and given increased impact via the use of *trompe l'oeil*; the life size figures in the lower painting and the altar within the chapel space give the illusion that the soldiers are at the altar. They encroach upon the viewer's space as though the resurrection is occurring here and now. Spencer's emphasis is manifest in the painting's location above the traditional focus of worship; consequently, all prayers are towards the ultimate resurrection. Due to size and the use of perspective, one is compelled into looking *up* the canvas towards Christ. To study the painting, one has to stand before the altar and look upwards placing the viewer in a reverential stance. The gesture evokes the act of worship—raising one's head towards a heaven, a deity or in this case Christ. The loaded phenomenology reinforces the painting's emotive potential.

Spencer's fluctuating beliefs, and religious revisions marked his conversion process. His religious identity developed in response to different stimuli: the circumstances of war and the wider cultural dialogues on faith. His early faith synthesised Anglicanism and Wesleyan Methodism, while in 1915 Desmond Chute introduced Spencer to Saint Augustine of Hippo's writings. Accordingly, aspects of Catholicism and St. Augustine's compassionate philosophy informed Spencer's dogma; however, Chute and Eric Gill's attempts to proselytise him to Catholicism failed. The experiences of

⁷² Spencer, *Spencer by his Brother*, 147.

⁷³ Gough, *Journey to Burghclere*, 169.

death and war caused a profound period of religious reflection.⁷⁴ Meanwhile the Carline family exposed Spencer to non-Abrahamic religious practices. The result was a unique faith based on Christianity yet assimilating distinct tones of Eastern faiths.⁷⁵ Spencer's exposure to other faith traditions motivated an interrogation of his own faith which proved fundamental in developing *Resurrection, Cookham* and in due course, *Resurrection of the Soldiers*.

Four years later Spencer painted his next resurrection. *Parents Resurrecting* (1933) (fig. 110) offers a different emphasis by focusing on the domestic reconciliations in the universal context of the general resurrection. The location is again Cookham churchyard. Two gatherings of figures divided by a white spiked chain dominate the foreground. Three youths are returning from bathing and stopped to watch the unfolding scene from one side of the fence. On the other four fathers in Victorian garb have resurrected; three resurrected women—mothers—embrace the men's legs "in an ecstasy of joy."⁷⁶ They evoke Mary Magdalene's attempt to cling to the resurrected Christ.⁷⁷ An older man places an arm around another man's shoulders and evokes soldiery comradeship. There is otherwise no clear depiction of Christ. The shallow pictorial space is parallel to the picture plane; the lack of an upper register is unusual within the iconographic tradition of the subject, and contrasts with the two prior paintings. The chain divides the world of the living from the "holy and sacred" dead.⁷⁸ The children's own trajectory—having been submerged yet now arisen—parallels the resurrected peoples. The young boy to the right is awkwardly placed staring into the resurrected man's behind; perhaps it's an oversight on Spencer's part, or possibly the boy cannot actually see the man and therefore the two worlds have not fully merged. Spencer's father died in 1928, perhaps informing the painting's subject.

The three post-war resurrection paintings are largely tender treatments reflecting on loss and recovery. The 1927 and 1933 paintings are of organized *religious* graveyard sites, while the 1929 painting depicts an impromptu collection of graves typical of the War; all indicate cemeteries. Michel Foucault designated cemeteries as "highly heterotopic" places.⁷⁹ Heterotopias are real social spaces with a physical location that are peripheral and "outside of all places".⁸⁰ They "encourage people to evaluate ideas beyond social norms."⁸¹ A cemetery is for removing bodies from the normal condition of the living; in Christian tradition they hold the cadaver until bodily resurrection. The eighteenth and nineteenth century movement of cemeteries out of cities and the discontinuation of burials in city churchyards distanced death; smaller communities continued to use local churchyards.

⁷⁴ Rothenstein, *Spencer, The Man*, 45.

⁷⁵ Stanley Spencer, "1 John 4:8," 50.

⁷⁶ Johnstone, "Spencer: Parents Resurrecting," 156.

⁷⁷ John 20:17.

⁷⁸ Spencer, 1947, quoted in Johnstone, "Spencer: Parents Resurrecting," 156.

⁷⁹ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 26.

⁸⁰ *ibid*, 24.

⁸¹ Clements, "Highgate Cemetery Heterotopia," 470.

Spencer paints the familiar churchyard from his home-village, alluding to an idealised non-urban lifestyle where life is not detached from the rhythms of the seasons and the processes of death, and indicates a genuineness that is otherwise perceived as lacking. In England, the fallen were associated with a pastoral idyll. The British Museum's Director Sir Frederic Kenyon was appointed an advisor to the Imperial War Graves Commission in 1917 and encouraged horticultural references to the English churchyard in British cemeteries.⁸² These alluded to a preindustrial "ideal which guaranteed immutability."⁸³ The resurrection associates with an English timelessness, that stands in contrast to the urban and mechanical apocalypse of industrialisation.

Spencer's resurrection is not necessarily an end-time event, as is evident in the converging worlds of the living and the dead in *Parents Resurrecting*. He was familiar with both the metaphysical poet and clergyman John Donne and Augustine; each distinguished *two* resurrections. *Resurrection, Cookham* was profoundly shaped by Donne.⁸⁴ He proposed that the particular resurrection is the rising of a soul after bodily death, while the general resurrection is when body and soul reunify in an overture to judgment. Spencer conceived the general resurrection as "the final perfecting of all things".⁸⁵ He suggests that everyone in *Resurrection, Cookham* "is rising into a world which is just the kind of world he or she wanted."⁸⁶ Thus Spencer rejects the relationship between judgment and general resurrection. He recognises spiritual resurrection as independent to mortality; it could therefore sequentially precede the last day. Thus, spiritual transcendence can be an earthly event achieved by awakening to the divine within all things. Spencer wrote,

No one is in any hurry in this painting. Here and there things slowly move off but in the main they resurrect to such a state of joy that they are content... to remain where they have resurrected. In this life we experience a kind of resurrection when we arrive at a state of awareness, a state of being in love, and at such times we like to do again what we have done many times in the past, because now we do it again in Heaven.⁸⁷

This resurrection elevates the seemingly mundane; the idea had resulted from the War which impressed on Spencer how the profane could be made sacred. The importance of Augustine in achieving this is widely recognised.⁸⁸ While a medical orderly Spencer became familiar with Augustine's realisation that every task is an act of worship. Spencer appreciated the divine, and found spiritual nourishment, in the most banal or grisly tasks (fig. 111-2). Augustine differentiated between a spiritual and bodily resurrection.⁸⁹ The former refers to those who live but are spiritually dead; it is the first resurrection that precedes the millennium upon Earth. They will be spared

⁸² Kenyon, *War Graves*, 12.

⁸³ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 84.

⁸⁴ Bell, *Spencer R.A.*, 92.

⁸⁵ Spencer, *Letters and Writings*, 126.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Carline, *Spencer at War*, 172.

⁸⁸ Gough, *Journey to Burghclere*, 49; Bell, *Spencer R.A.* 12; MacCarthy, *English Vision*, 19.

⁸⁹ Augustine, *City of God*, XX:VI.

“second death”—and only they will receive the final, bodily resurrection. Spencer’s theological references—Donne and Augustine—both distinguished between bodily and spiritual resurrections. Spencer accepts this distinction while rejecting judgment.

Spencer’s *modus operandi* in the 1930s became this pursuit of spiritual resurrection. His iconography shifted following the Burghclere scheme’s completion in 1932; by 1934 a clear emphasis on love and spiritual resurrection emerged. Spencer suggested, “In this life we experience a kind of resurrection when we arrive at a state of awareness, a state of being in love”.⁹⁰ He offered no differentiation between universal and sexual love, finding that love in all its forms and religion both stirred the same responses within him. *Resurrection, Cookham* incorporated a sexual element coinciding with the loss of his virginity with Hilda Carline.⁹¹ The central seated Jesus Christ developed from sketches of her; Spencer recognised this Christ as a sexual partner. It also suggests *Maestà* iconography with Hilda in the holy maternal role, and the Christ child in her left arm; Hilda mothered their first child Shirin in 1925. Spencer was also familiar with the works of the metaphysical poet Richard Crashaw and appears to share Crashaw’s conception that saw something profoundly sexual in the sacred Virgin. This complex and elusive imagery indicates an artist engaging and exploring their work’s symbolic potential while also challenging conservative faith and extending the iconographic tradition of representing the sacred.

This transformative power of the resurrection was shared with D. H. Lawrence, who claimed he “was brought up on the Bible, and seem to have it in my bones.”⁹² Lawrence had painted Jesus’ resurrection (fig. 113) (1927) while writing an unorthodox reworking of Christ’s resurrection: the short novel *The Escaped Cock (or The Man Who Died)*. He claimed that “...like any other nonconformist child I had the Bible poured every day into my helpless consciousness... [it] became an influence which affected all the processes of emotion and thought.”⁹³ Lawrence had nearly died in February 1925. His recovery was greeted as a resurrection, and the concept became increasingly important. According to Freida Lawrence “it was like a living miracle” as he “assumed the radiance of new life”.⁹⁴ Near this time he scribed the essay “Resurrection”, followed shortly by the novel and painting.⁹⁵ The latter referenced his recent health, the resurrected Christ’s face being Lawrence’s own.⁹⁶ He described the painting as “Jesus stepping up, rather grey in the face, from the tomb, with his old ma helping him up from behind, and Mary Magdalen easing him up towards her bosom in front.”⁹⁷ Resurrection had been a theme for Lawrence since 1915, when he read *Christian*

⁹⁰ Pople, *Spencer*, 227-8.

⁹¹ *ibid*, 244.

⁹² Lawrence, “Introduction,” 225.

⁹³ Lawrence, “Apocalypse,” 59.

⁹⁴ Lawrence, *Not I But the Wind*, 144.

⁹⁵ Lawrence, *Phoenix*, 737-39.

⁹⁶ Sagar, *Art of D. H. Lawrence*, 215.

⁹⁷ “Notes on the Pictures,” 68.

Symbolism by Katherine Jenner while drafting *The Rainbow*. It provided Lawrence with “a new respect for the whole framework of Christian symbolism.”⁹⁸ His reading (and misreading) of Jenner inspired his fascination with the symbol of the phoenix—a symbol that frequently appeared both within and upon the covers of subsequent books. Along with the phoenix’s connection to Christ’s death and resurrection, Lawrence fixated on Christ’s phrase “you must be born again” which he repeated in various forms throughout his subsequent writings.⁹⁹ Resurrection became the sense of liberated awareness.¹⁰⁰ Through *The Rainbow* Lawrence realised Christianity needed to adapt and address the changes of modern culture in the same way that art and literature had to. His female characters’ spiritual and sensual awakenings highlighted the shortcomings and unsustainability of the old model of Christianity. Thus, Christianity itself had to be born again. Throughout the 1920s Lawrence developed an understanding that resurrection is to make things new—art, culture, society, Christianity—based on “the image of our inward state to-day”.¹⁰¹

Spencer’s developing philosophy was best articulated in an essay on 1 John 4:8 in the book *Sermons by Artists* (1934). Here Spencer identified that, “The Love of God includes all our instincts and desires.”¹⁰² Love equates to understanding; “The intellect and imagination move continually towards the closer and more accurate identification of their objects. Love, even in its lowest or most secular form does the same thing in another manner.”¹⁰³ Secular life divorces “one’s feeling and emotions and desires” from God; it castigates these as “mental disease or a disgusting obsession”. The guilt associated with these feelings hinders one’s ability to appreciate them.¹⁰⁴ Spencer offers a breakthrough, heralding beliefs and practices outside Protestantism, and proposes that, “when Roman Catholics, Mohammedans, or Buddhists, are indulging in whole orgies of experiences... one is nearly blinded with the magnificence of the result”.¹⁰⁵

Spencer looked to alternative faiths in formulating his idiosyncratic beliefs; however, John Donne also offered Spencer a precedent. Donne’s *Songs and Sonnets* celebrates consummated sexual love as sacramental, drawing analogies between sexual love and religious experience. Donne implies that “erotic desire is the only means we have for apprehending our relation with God.”¹⁰⁶ Spencer conceived love as the ultimate state. It could achieve the seeming impossible:

During the war, when I contemplated the horror of my life and the lives of those with me, I felt that the only way to end the ghastly experience would be if everyone suddenly decided to

⁹⁸ Wright, *Lawrence and the Bible*, 86.

⁹⁹ John 3:7.

¹⁰⁰ “Notes on the Pictures,” 68.

¹⁰¹ Lawrence, “Resurrection of the Body,” 922.

¹⁰² Spencer, “1 John 4:8,” 47.

¹⁰³ *ibid*, 48.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, 49.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, 50.

¹⁰⁶ Guibbory, *Returning to John Donne*, 143.

indulge in every degree and form of sexual love, carnal love, bestiality, anything you like to call it.¹⁰⁷

Spencer insinuates that love can bring universal peace and is in opposition to the divisions of war.

The bipartite resurrection and influence of love in Spencer's outlook manifested in his rhetoric, and the identification of his role theologically. According to Spencer, artists have a unique capacity

It is a kind of redemption that the artist really seeks: redemption from ugliness, meaningless. (...) [N]othing is real until its physical & its spiritual revelations are both apparent (...). The only thing in this world that has the power to reveal and make real this second and more wonderful realness is love (...). [I]t is like the Resurrection happening every moment of one's life.¹⁰⁸

In a letter to Chute he alleged that "[W]hat an artist does comes from the stem of Jesse".¹⁰⁹ Spencer suggests that he is unique among artists, believing he had a profound status and message:

[I am] a new kind of Adam, and joy is the means by which I name things; that is, define my wishes through knowing as a part of God.¹¹⁰

Elsewhere Spencer identifies with Moses, claiming that he sees burning bushes wherever he looks.¹¹¹ Art had no special significance to Spencer in itself; rather art was "the only thing that revealed Heaven."¹¹² Thus Spencer identifies prophetic purpose to his artwork, with resurrection—a concept underlying and unifying his practice—central to his theology; it gives meaning to the world, while his art communicates the significance found within all things. Spencer consciously intended to represent divine immanence, which he conceived through his theology of resurrection.¹¹³

A subtitle for *Resurrection, Cookham* was never used but proves insightful: "An Allegory of the Saving of the Black and White Races: the Instinctive and the Intellectual". It reveals how contemporary discussions on ethnicity affected Spencer's understanding of the painting.¹¹⁴ The canvas predominantly represents a white society, yet a native African community emerges from a patch of sunbaked earth to Christ's right. The subtitle's racial dichotomy is distorted by contemporary stereotypes; it is the 'instinctive' black and the 'intellectual' white. Spencer elevated the instinctive; it was a way to represent his nascent sexual awakening. Therefore, the label of "the instinctive" is not intended as derogatory. The "prophets" and "thinkers" beside the church are the *intellectuals*; their white robes designate canonical figures of profound significance, and the enthroned elders in white of Revelation 4:4. The combination of both the intellectual and instinctive in Cookham beside God suggests that salvation comes from a synthesis; a holy union of the instinct

¹⁰⁷ Robinson, *Visions*, 53; Collis, *Spencer*, 138-9.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Carline, Extracts from lectures by Stanley Spencer, c.1920s, TGA 825.22.

¹⁰⁹ Spencer, *Your Loving Friend*, 126.

¹¹⁰ Gormley, "Sacred and the Profane," 23.

¹¹¹ Spencer, "1 John 4:8," 50; Exodus 3:1-4:17.

¹¹² *ibid*, 51.

¹¹³ Rapport, *Distortion and Love*, 245.

¹¹⁴ Causey, "Art of His Time," 26.

and the intellect that will—like Spencer’s concept of good and bad—rupture any crude dichotomy. However, his humanist concept is articulated using period colonial stereotypes. Arguably the shared missionary undertones of colonialism, civilisation and Spencer’s painting are apparent. Ostensibly it is Anglocentric; here in this Berkshire village that people from across the world receive salvation. Yet Cookham is also a universal place, with no particular significance beyond that which Spencer identifies in it for himself.

Spencer had a missionary zeal and follows the archetype of the apocalyptic seer: he desired only to paint and communicate this revelation of the divine message, professing visions that unveil knowledge about resurrection and divine presence. He was so compelled to depict the resurrected state that when his attention returned to the subject, he described himself as being “back to the bottle again”.¹¹⁵ Throughout his resurrection paintings the body is restored, while the increased emphasis on love and sex in the later paintings indicates his belief that the Kingdom of God can be built on Earth. Whilst Spencer’s religion and artworks are highly subjective, they are universal in orientation. They propose that all creation will find harmony and union, arriving at a conception of apocatastasis; that is the teaching that all creation—good and evil—will share the grace of salvation. The spiritual resurrection brings Heaven to Earth—the bodily resurrection will restore all creation. Spencer’s resurrections develop a philosophy in light of the War that calls for peace and absolute reconciliation. They are paintings of becoming, yet also moments to come.¹¹⁶ Humankind need not wait for a postponed resurrected ontology, rather, it has the key to this already within. Spencer reveals that the millennium can be reached through the spiritual transcendence of love. I will now turn attention to Scottish artist William Johnstone, who shared in Spencer’s optimism when it comes to the potential of the resurrection.

William Johnstone: “There will always be a rebirth”¹¹⁷

William Johnstone painted *Golgotha* (fig. 114) as a response to the War. He started the painting after returning to his hometown, Selkirk, in 1927 following an eighteen-month period in Paris. It was first exhibited in 1978.

The predominantly monochrome brown composition frames a central disc above the horizontal axis with an array of static angular and undulating forms. Lines and contours overlap and give a sense of space and an insubstantial quality to a nocturnal, ethereal landscape. A pallid blue hue suggests moonlight. It highlights and contrasts with the earthy browns of various rocky outcrops. Johnstone’s painting shares Spencer’s explicit interest in the gravesite; the disc evokes the

¹¹⁵ Rothenstein, *Modern Painters II*, 119.

¹¹⁶ Rapport, *Distortion and Love*, 86.

¹¹⁷ Tate, *Illustrated Catalogue*, 146.

stone seal to Jesus' sepulchre recorded in the gospels.¹¹⁸ The tomb is closed, and pregnant with the promise of resurrection. The composition's dreamlike abstract space suggests cubism and surrealism, yet as Hall notes, Johnstone's art at this time can be linked to the surrealist movement in only the most general sense.¹¹⁹ Johnstone gained extensive exposure to modernism while in Paris, studying drawing and attending André Lhote's painting classes. Johnstone also incorporated a deeper examination of psychology and existentialism, arguing every artwork is deeply psychological: "painting was only a personal striving to relieve oneself of inner complexities".¹²⁰ In Scotland Johnstone started painting "imaginative, surrealist paintings more true, perhaps, to my Celtic background."¹²¹ He continued:

[I] was trying to express a feeling of continual change, the idea of death harbouring life, of all things being a continuum, evolving, self-renewing. Nothing is static or permanent and we were living through a period of great upheaval. Some people even thought there was an element of prophesy in these paintings.¹²²

Johnstone interpreted this landscape as uncovering a side of his psychological disposition. The cave-like imagery indicates the sealed sepulchre and alludes to the *Harrowing of Hell*. The Apostles' Creed and Athanasian Creed announce that during Christ's entombment his soul descended into Hades to win salvation for those tainted by original sin from the time before his earthly ministry. The iconographic theme—which in the Renaissance was depicted with a cave-like place—is recognised with the church's teaching on eschatology and "The World Beyond".¹²³ Johnstone alludes to an often neglected moment in Christian soteriology—the tomb's stillness for three days. The period that is so close to death is shrouded in sadness and doubt, however one knows that resurrection and renewal is pending. The War equates to the Crucifixion, while the post-war years are the three-day entombment in the Sepulchre; resurrection and renewal is forthcoming.

The title uses the Aramaic name for the hill of Jesus' Crucifixion, which is otherwise known as the Latin "Calvary". It indicates the sight of Jesus' death, meanwhile the painted subject signifies resurrection. Christian tradition identifies Jesus' tomb in close geographical proximity with the Crucifixion site; the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, built in the fourth century claims to encompass both locations. According to John 19:41 "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid." The cycle of death and life owes much to Johnstone's association between landscape and religion, nature and

¹¹⁸ Mark 15:46; John 11:38; Matthew 27:60; Luke 24:2.

¹¹⁹ Hall, *William Johnstone*, 31.

¹²⁰ Johnstone, *Points in Time*, 112.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, 322.

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 153.

regeneration which resulted from his farming upbringing and time working his father's land during the War:

Faced every year with the sowing of seed and harvesting of crops, with the birth of lambs and calves, and the inevitable death, I learned that whatever tragedy happens there will always be a rebirth, a regeneration; I sensed the primeval eternity of the land that was here long before I was born and would continue long after I was dead. The land itself taught me a deep faith.¹²⁴

By the late 1920s the scarred Western Front landscape had largely vanished beneath the sight of "fields in harvest."¹²⁵ Henry Williamson's *The Wet Flanders Plain* (1929) recorded his visits to the former battlefields in 1925 and 1927.¹²⁶ He contrasted the former destroyed landscape, "shapeless as the ingredients of a Christmas pudding," with the "flatness of green fields, no trees anywhere, clusters of red tiled, red-brick farms...[of] the Salient today".¹²⁷ The regenerating battlefields masked the sites of death. The "wilderness has blossomed."¹²⁸ During Williamson's trips he had uncovered a German grave—apparently made by a local ploughman—revealing fragments of skull and bone, marked by a cross of poplar sticks that had taken root. He recognised parallels with Christian idea of death, rebirth, and the tree as a symbol of Jesus Crucifixion; the cross over the skull in this Flanders field echoes the symbolism of Calvary. It is "a gesture that had a precedent nearly two thousand years ago."¹²⁹ After the Great War the emphasis upon nature was widespread across Europe. Mosse has argued that in the memory of the War,

the close identification of man and nature, more often than not, turned thoughts of destruction into the hope of resurrection: symbols of death and destruction were at the same time symbols of hope... Nature symbolised the genuine, sadness, and resurrection—but always, at the same time an immortality that could be shared by the soldier and that legitimized wartime sacrifice.¹³⁰

Johnstone idealises eternal nature and indicates that life and death are located within what Mosse referred to as "the cosmic rhythms of nature."¹³¹ The War experience is transcended through the regenerative powers of the natural world, which were closely associated with the Christian eschatological hope of resurrection.

Johnstone identified *Golgotha* and his paintings from the late 1920s with his own experience of the recent war, writing in his autobiography that they

represented a feeling of disillusion after the war which had, of course, made a deep impression on me. This tremendous, unnecessary slaughter of human beings dug into me, and to paint pretty pictures revolted me. I felt that the carnage was certainly not at an end, that it was

¹²⁴ Tate, *Illustrated Catalogue*, 146.

¹²⁵ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 113.

¹²⁶ Dedicated to C. R. W. Nevinson. Dutton published the first edition with a book jacket by Nevinson.

¹²⁷ Williamson, *Wet Flanders Plain*, 95.

¹²⁸ *ibid*, 124.

¹²⁹ *ibid*, 125.

¹³⁰ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 108-109.

¹³¹ *ibid*, 114.

continuous and only a matter of time before the next holocaust began. This undercurrent influenced all my work at the time.¹³²

Johnstone was called up to serve in late 1918, having been reserved for three years. On departure Johnstone informed his father that should he return, he would take up art; he never went to the front.¹³³ While Johnstone's military life was brief, he asserted, "the whole long horror of the war was deeply bitten into my being."¹³⁴ He specified that *Golgotha, A Point In Time* (fig. 115), and *Valley* (c. late 1920s, location unknown) "grew out of my horror of the disease of war, of the anticipation of future tragedy—they were never intended for drawing rooms."¹³⁵ *A Point in Time* uses coloured lighting and subtle chiaroscuro around bulbous shapes to suggest the cavernous spaces of a traumatic psychical landscape; Johnstone only recognised the painting's anti-war message following its completion.¹³⁶

The War's influence was delayed; there was the temporal distance of nine years between the armistice in 1918 and *Golgotha*. Spencer's Burghclere Chapel also saw a significant delay between the war experience and the artworks. Spencer drafted the scheme in 1921 and received financial backing in 1924; however, the altar painting of resurrection developed belatedly in the late 1920s after Spencer had already commenced work on the scheme. The resurrection was pertinent in the War's collective remembrance. Its use comes following a delay, suggesting a degree of personal reservation in confronting the conflict. For both Spencer and Johnstone, the War did not end with armistice; it continued to loom over the coming decade. The delay allowed both artists to gain emotional distance from the conflict, before reconstructing the memory in terms already established in the wider socio-political sphere.

According to Johnstone, *Point in Time* was

an anti-war picture, stemming from thoughts of the poisonous results of the disease of war. Then, following the same theme, I began 'Golgotha'. This was, perhaps, a less active and more reflective picture. It conveyed a symbol of light, of resurrection growing out of death: of light after darkness: of rebirth, of hopefulness; perhaps a hope of immortality crept into it.¹³⁷

Johnstone's rhetoric suggests an eschatological hope of a renewal following death and destruction. Whilst the messianic figure is absent, the unopened tomb of Christ is analogous to the seed from which the "fruits" will ultimately grow.¹³⁸

¹³² Johnstone, *Points in Time*, 115.

¹³³ *ibid*, 49-50.

¹³⁴ Tate, *Illustrated Catalogue*, 146.

¹³⁵ *ibid*, 116.

¹³⁶ Neild, "A Point in Time", Edinburgh: Sidhartha Films, 1973.

¹³⁷ *ibid*, 147.

¹³⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:20.

Glyn Philpot: I shall rise again

While Johnstone's painting had omitted figures and focused upon the tomb instead, Glyn Philpot's *Resurgam* (1929) (fig. 116) primarily focuses on personal pain, suffering, and ultimate triumph. The resurrected Christ stands sinuously in a chest tomb. His body hangs limp suggesting pathos while his head is weighted towards his left shoulder. Short tight curls of hair adorn his head. Linen strips loosely bind his near naked body in accordance with John 19:40. The fabric holds his chin and wraps his neck, while dark eyes stare without purpose. His arms abduct from his torso with an awkward jerk at the elbows. The figure's weighting is ambiguous seeming to hang in space; the legs twist awkwardly away from the hips in a relaxed pose, yet the poise is almost balletic. Directly behind Christ's head is the sun which endows a halo of light. The cloudscape forms an arrow shape; James Huntington-Whiteley claims it "points in the direction of the Ascension as well as suggesting the roof of the lowly shed in which Jesus was born."¹³⁹ Christ has no obvious Stigmata; his skin is inviolable. A blossoming bush to the figure's right underlines the message of rebirth. It intersects Christ at his torso, on top of his right hand, and towards his right hip, suggesting that where there was death, there now is life. A guard from the watch of soldiers sent by Pilate lies upon his side before the tomb in the foreground.¹⁴⁰ He is in a state of somnolence; his head turns to look over his right shoulder, while his left hand covers his eyes. His clothing's dark tones contrast with the pastels predominantly used elsewhere in the painting. The chest tomb is too small to hold Jesus' body horizontally, suggesting that Christ was buried in a contorted position. The lid has been slid aside; it leans against the tomb's left edge and off the left side of the canvas. The tomb overlooks a valley rich with groves. Five hills contour the landscape, whilst an expanse of water can be glimpsed beyond.

Resurgam was first exhibited at The First Exhibition of the Guild of Catholic Artists and Craftsmen, 1930. The Guild formed in 1929 with Philpot as president, and Cardinal Francis Bourne as patron. Philpot was raised a Baptist and converted to Catholicism in 1905—thereby combining an evangelical emphasis on scripture with a later emphasis upon sacrament. The British writer Gerald Heard was a friend of Philpot; in 1945 Heard authored a short biography of Philpot recording their relationship.¹⁴¹ Heard had initially modelled for Philpot, and they found common ground in theological discussion; "very soon one was able to discuss that other great interest of his life—religion."¹⁴² However, their friendship had ended by the mid 1930s, having strained under differences in opinion including religion: "Not so much on theology as on the issues from which

¹³⁹ "Catalogue," *Images of Christ*, 52.

¹⁴⁰ Matthew 27:66.

¹⁴¹ Delaney, "Heard's Memoir," 86-90.

¹⁴² *ibid*, 87.

theology rises and the acute problem of actual conduct”.¹⁴³ The importance of religion, and theology translates into Philpot’s paintings. *The Threefold Epiphany* (1929) (fig. 117) was painted for the Guild of Catholic Artists and Craftsmen also, and described in the theological journal *Blackfriars* as “an encyclopedic history of art”; the Observer’s critic claimed Philpot had “ransacked the whole history of art for his motives” due to the painting’s combination of three New Testament narratives: centrally are the three Magi on horseback, flanked by the Marriage at Cana and John the Baptist at the river Jordan.¹⁴⁴ The combination references an antiphon sung prior to Magnificat at the Second Vespers on the feast of the Epiphany, which describes the three miracles occurring on this date.¹⁴⁵ Inscribed in Latin on cartouches below the painting are the words taken from the antiphon; “today the star led the Magi to the manger; today the wine was made out of water; today the Christ was willing to be baptised in the Jordan so that we could be saved.” Thus, Philpot’s religious paintings are more than subject paintings and are theologically aware.

Philpot’s presents Christ’s resurrected body as renewed and idealised—the scars and suffering have disappeared. According to John 20:24-29, Jesus’ will bear them again when Thomas touches his wounds. At this moment from the narrative’s chronology, Philpot decided to paint the perfect immortal being rather than the mortal man, and through this alludes to the hypostatic union.

The two states in one was personal for Philpot; he had struggled to reconcile his homosexuality with his faith. Philpot’s Christ is noticeably adolescent; his hair boyish, while his body is almost androgynous. Huntingdon-Whiteley suggests that Christ rises “taking on a new bodily state... closer to the adolescent Jesus than the dead Christ.”¹⁴⁶ Delaney recognises Philpot’s homosexuality in the painting; he proposes that in “this homoerotic interpretation the religious and the sexual meet and combine... The erotic element, previously on the fringes of his work now emerges in one of the most sacred images in Christian art”.¹⁴⁷ Both Huntingdon-Whiteley and Delaney allude to the queerness of Christ, with Delaney suggesting that Philpot recognised “nothing inappropriate in it... [or was] unaware of its ambiguity” given the context of its first exhibition.¹⁴⁸ The theologian Elizabeth Stuart argues that resurrection is inherently queer; “Death is not in dualistic relationship to life any more than male is to female; in fact both death and life are deconstructed in the blaze of resurrection”.¹⁴⁹ Philpot paints the Christian breakdown of the dichotomy of life and death, while deconstructing the male and female duality. The relationship between Christ and the

¹⁴³ *ibid*, 89.

¹⁴⁴ Sedgwick, “Academy,” 14.

¹⁴⁵ Delaney, *Life and Art*, 84.

¹⁴⁶ “Catalogue,” *Images of Christ*, 52.

¹⁴⁷ Delaney, *Life and Art*, 90.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid*, 90.

¹⁴⁹ Stuart, “Queering Death,” 62.

guard furthers this queer reading. The two had been lying beside one another moments earlier in a transgressive erasure of boundaries. At a narrative level, the soldier served under the Roman Governor who had sentenced Jesus—Pontius Pilate—yet he has lain down beside the hitherto deceased Jesus. His hand covers his eyes from the dazzling spectacle yet looks over his shoulder like a lover emerging from a slumber. The homoerotic charge of his painting subverts Catholic iconography. In doing so Philpot achieves a reconciliation of homosexuality with the religious image that he otherwise struggled to achieve within his own life.

Philpot's title translates as "I shall rise again". The Latin "Resurgam" would often be inscribed upon gravestones, reminding and expressing Christian faith in eschatological resurrection. Philpot's thus combines resurrection's two stages; his painting of Jesus' resurrection is paired with a title denoting the promise of resurrection for all humanity. Leo Steinberg argued that resurrection and 'rising' also connote male sexual functions and penile erection, resulting in a rich iconographic tradition in Germanic art.¹⁵⁰ Christ's genitalia proved his humanity and mortality, and therefore had a theological purpose. Philpot's painting stands in dialogue with the tradition via the future perfect tense in his title, emphasising a future related to eschatological resurrection and his homosexual acceptance, and therefore promises a reconciliation of homosexual desire and his Catholicism. Philpot uses the apocalyptic promise to advance a proto-queer theology.

Ethel Walker: Angels and Resurrection

Philpot's emphasis upon the resurrected body contrasts with the emphasis on an angelic presence in Ethel Walker's *Angels of the Resurrection* (fig. 118), first exhibited in 1934 with the New English Art Club. Jesus and Mary Magdalene are in profile in the central foreground. He stands erect; his left arm extends behind him while his right arm inflects towards the Magdalene who kneels before him on the left. She elevates her head to Jesus and wears the blue typically associated with the Virgin. Her hands cup in prayer. Their dynamic evokes John 20:17: "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not". Directly behind are the eponymous two winged-angels; they cross their legs while leaning their torsos in opposite directions and face on the viewer. Their arms are aloft in a beatific heralding of Christ's resurrection. Receding to the composition's right are three figures assembled beside a chest tomb. The foremost leans in and places both hands upon it; behind him a bearded man in blue stands engaging with, a third who is turning away from the tomb. These three suggest the beloved disciple Peter's attendance to the tomb in John 20:1-10. Poplar trees rise along the midground leading to a hillock on the composition's left. Further hills contour the horizon.

¹⁵⁰ Steinberg, *Sexuality of Christ*, 3, 315-7.

The painting shares much with Walker's 'decorative' schemes. These largely allegorical paintings presented a vision of an idealised golden age where classically-inspired figures resided within serene landscapes.¹⁵¹ The format developed in the 1910s and early 1920s, and coincided with an interest in theosophy, the philosophy of religion, and Emmanuel Swedenborg's mysticism.¹⁵² The Theosophist Society co-founder, Helena Blavatsky, proposed that the golden age was a period of "primeval purity, simplicity and general happiness," and was followed by Silver, Bronze, and Iron ages.¹⁵³ This golden age corresponds to Hebrew scripture's Eden—a nostalgic, idyllic existence to be eschatologically reprised.¹⁵⁴ Blavatsky further distinguished between Jesus and Christ; the former a person, the latter an "abstract ideal of the personal divinity indwelling in man."¹⁵⁵ Christ—from the Greek 'Christos'—is therefore an ontological condition, not a being, with the resurrection a metaphor for an enlightened condition. Blavatsky identifies the *Christos* as an eschatological state;

It is said that after the Kalki-Avatar ("He who is expected" on the White Horse, in the Apocalypse) the Golden Age will begin and every man will become his own guru (spiritual teacher or "Shepherd") because the divine Logos, whatever name it may be given [Whether it be Krishna, Buddha, Sosiosh, Horus or Christos, it is a universal principle; the "God-Men" are of all periods and innumerable.] will reign in each regenerated mortal.¹⁵⁶

Physical resurrection is dismissed while spiritual elevation is endorsed. Walker's painting synthesises the theosophical philosophy with the narrative, depicting Jesus the man elevated and enlightened. Blavatsky's conception is largely faithful to New Testament scripture; Jesus' resurrection is among the first fruits and that one can also realise this 'resurrected' ontology. As human civilisation slowly moves towards this awakened state, it slowly moves towards the new golden age—or the scriptural Kingdom of God. Walker's painting links this age and future promise with the promise held in Jesus' resurrection.

Frederick Varley's *Liberation* (1936–1937) (fig. 119), is a theosophically influenced depiction of Christ leaving the tomb. Varley was raised in the Congregationalist Church in Sheffield. However, from a young age he explored alternative religious philosophies. By the time *Liberation* was painted he was developing a concept of God via theosophical texts, and reconceiving tenets of his Christian heritage; by the time of this painting he had come to doubt Christ's divinity, "so instead of the Resurrection I call it the liberation."¹⁵⁷ Christ steps forward from the tomb and through light radiating from the wound in his right hand. Jesus' vaporous left leg, and Varley's handling of contrasting colours and rapid brush strokes suggests the threshold of human perception and the

¹⁵¹ Rothenstein, *Modern Painters I*, 67-8.

¹⁵² McConkey, *New English*, 136-7; Pearce, *Ethel Walker*, 11; "Obituary," 8; Grace English, unpublished typed manuscript, 24. Tate archive, TGA 716.81.

¹⁵³ Blavatsky, *Theosophical Glossary*, 129.

¹⁵⁴ Revelation 22:1-3.

¹⁵⁵ Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled Vol. 2: Theology*, 574.

¹⁵⁶ Blavatsky, "Notes," 8:374.

¹⁵⁷ Davis, *Logic of Ecstasy*, 35.

moment of metamorphosis when the insubstantive becomes embodied.¹⁵⁸ Varley's symbolism remains routed in Christian iconography even if this did not wholly reconcile with his idiosyncratic understanding of resurrection. As for D. H. Lawrence, resurrection becomes a rebirth in how one conceives their very existence.

Though Walker and Philpot are ostensibly attentive to Jesus' resurrection, the title indicates Walker's primary concern is with the spiritual narrative, and thus places her image in dialogue with Varley's and Lawrence's images. Walker's title shifts emphasis from Jesus and identifies resurrection with the spiritual accomplices—angels are non-human spirits—while Jesus is mere recipient and just one of theosophy's many enlightened beings. A contemporary half-size sketch *Christ appearing to Mary Magdalen* (fig. 120) is titled according to John 20:17, specifying the interaction between the two. It is however unclear whether this is Walker's own and appears incongruous to the larger work's title.

Walker's painting uses the biblical narrative to suggest that personal enlightenment—resurrection—will lead to a new golden age. Walker, like Glyn Philpot and Stanley Spencer, realises in resurrection her paradisiacal hopes.

The resurrection iconography had largely subsided by the late 1930s; there is a notable outlier. In 1938 Spencer painted *Poppies* (fig. 121), a work readily grouped with Spencer's domestic and floral studies. Yet its connection to both Spencer's war paintings and resurrection paintings cannot be overlooked. The poppy was popularised during the War in the Canadian doctor Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae's propagandist poem "In Flanders Field" (1915) which reconfigured the poppy's symbolic associations of sleep, death and resurrection. The red poppies blooming in the conflict zones became a symbol of resurrection and renewal in the post-war culture of remembrance. In *Resurrection, Cookham* Spencer's flora—including poppies, chrysanthemums, and ivy—was used to symbolically signify death and resurrection.¹⁵⁹ The poppy's significance in the remembrance culture would have been recognised by Spencer in 1938, when total war looked possible again. By evoking the Great War's casualties, the painting shifts attention to the likely consequences of another war.

Although Christian resurrection corresponds with the Crucifixion, it is arguably the subject of resurrection that is represented with greater diversity. The cross has a distinct iconographic tradition and clear theology, while the resurrection narratives—though equally significant—are more variable, with significant contrast in apocalyptic narratives of resurrection and the gospel accounts

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Upstone, "Aftermath. The Resurrection Cookham," 125.

of Jesus' resurrection. The works by Spencer, Philpot, and Walker were all high-profile publicly exhibited works that situate in a wider public discourse on resurrection. Johnstone's painting *Golgotha* contrasts as a personal response that was not exhibited until late in the artist's life, and yet also uses the resurrection theme that was integral to the War's remembrance. Christian resurrection seeped into public and personal memories of the conflict, thereby framing the War with the language of apocalypse.

Resurrection challenges the understood, familiar boundaries of mortality. The instances of resurrection are frequently not described in detail scripture, rather they are often just announced. As a result, artists have the opportunity to fill in the blanks when depicting the narratives and add in their own particular emphasis. Spencer and Johnstone used the imagery to declare that loved ones will not be forgotten; they declare the triumph *over* death and reassure the viewer that judgment is not going to happen and found renewal the pertinent theme following the Great War. These four paintings conceive resurrection as a progressive concept that offers hope against an undesirable contemporary context; they diagnose, yet also advocate a subjective, better world. The resurrection—Jesus', or the general resurrection—refers to a kairotic event that is chronologically either in the past or future, and yet these artists proposed it is critical in the present—*now* is also the resurrection. The incarnation is the intercession of the eternal Christ into secular time; his resurrection is both the unburdening of human mortality and reinstatement from the fallen condition. For Stanley Spencer the apocalyptic resurrection begins now, but it is also something to come. For Johnstone, Jesus' resurrection is a promise that reoccurs throughout history—everything will heal following devastation, death, and corruption. Nature's rejuvenation anticipates bodily resurrection. Philpot contemplates identity in the resurrection; he suggests a progressive trajectory whereby the contrasting aspects of one's self are reconciled. The resurrection for Walker also addresses identity; it regards the spiritual enlightenment and elevation of a being.

Resurrection is conditional; there are prerequisites to the resurrected ontology. Johnstone's sepulchre alone points to the intermediate state and the soul's journey before resurrection. I will now turn attention to one artist, Charles Sims, for whom the nature of this eschatological journey became the ultimate subject towards the end of his life.

Death is Not the End: Charles Sim's Last Paintings

On 7 May 1928, the Royal Academy of Art opened its annual summer exhibition. Once again, the curation was both conscious and respectful of traditional practices and methods, and endorsed the conservative reputation of Academy and the summer exhibition. The critic and artist Walter Bayes began his review, "The Academy is no fervent courtier of fresh movements in Art—this year

less than ever".¹⁶⁰ Yet amongst the exhibited artworks were six enigmatic canvases by the late Charles Sims, who had committed suicide twenty-four days before the exhibition's opening. Sims had been a central figure in the academy; he had been Keeper of the Royal Academy Schools and thus responsible for guiding future generations of artists in the traditional methods of drawing and composition. These six canvases (fig. 122-7) were apparently a radical departure in his practice, and among the most outré hitherto exhibited at the Academy. The works remain an incongruity; modernist in style and obscure in content, they address themes including redemption, damnation, rejection, and torment. Yet as Corbett noted, the series has a clear narrative element, while the modernist tendencies are descriptive rather than integral to the compositions.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless the submission provoked controversy; Frank Dicksee, President of the Academy, alleged they were manifestations of mental illness and should not be displayed on moral grounds, while critics including Bayes defended the paintings and asserted that they were amongst the exhibition's finest works, with the dead artist having, ironically, breathed new life into the staid institution.

From 1894 Sims exhibited at the Academy; he was established by 1914 as a painter of society portraits, landscapes, and neo-classical arcadian fantasies such as *Childhood* (1897) (fig. 128), *The Fountain* (fig. 129) and *The Little Faun* (fig. 130). The outbreak of the Great War crushed this seeming serenity. Sims relocated to London to seek work, while his eldest son was killed in a freak accident on board HMS Bulwark; this has been understood as the beginning of the artist's withdrawal from the cruel world.¹⁶² The Christian iconography that had hitherto been used sparingly took a greater emphasis. He indicated an increasing interest in Italian quattrocento painting with the series *Seven Sacraments of The Holy Church* (fig. 131a-g), which was criticised for being non-denominational; the iconography and number of sacraments being irreconcilable. He also made parallels between the Christ's sacrifice and the ordinary soldier's death in *Greater Love Hath No Man* (1916) with its title from John 15:13; it was reproduced on bereavement cards (fig. 132). Sims was appointed a War Artist in 1917–18, and he successfully represented the anxiety and devastation of the front. The events he witnessed irrevocably disturbed him, yet the achievement of his war works, such as *The Old German Front Line, Arras, 1916* (fig. 133), resulted in a commission from the Canadian War Memorial. The resultant painting, *Sacrifice* (fig. 21), sees Jesus looking down from the cross on the devastation of war, and witnesses everything from dying soldiers to displaced families and non-combatants. Sims leaves it up to the viewer to determine whether this is a roadside calvary, or Jesus' Crucifixion made present to witness the War. After 1918 Sims attempted return to normality and previously successful themes in, for example, '... *And the Fairies Ran Away with Their*

¹⁶⁰ Bayes, "Royal Academy," 557.

¹⁶¹ Corbett, *Modernity of English Art*, 207-8.

¹⁶² Coulbourne, "Critical Survey," 69.

Clothes' (1919) (fig. 134), that suggested both nostalgia for the pre-war 'golden days' and coincided with a general post-war interest in the supernatural and the symbolism of the English rural landscape. Sims' return was fleeting.

He was appointed Keeper of the Royal Academy Schools in 1920. He was marked by his apparent involvement in the artistic establishment, however he was at odds with its values and received criticism for allowing experimentation; Sims was "tired of bright young men and their brilliant way of saying nothing".¹⁶³ Sims retired in 1926 to focus on these works that occupied the rest of his life. According to Corbett "The series was explicitly conceived as the realisation of the ambitions to modernity and assessment of the War which Sims had begun after 1918."¹⁶⁴ Stylistically it breaks with his preceding work. Against semi-abstract backgrounds is the androgynous soul seemingly lost amidst transcendental beings. Glowing reds and vibrant oranges contrast with ominous grey forms to evoke a netherworld of fire and smoke. Modernist stylings describe the territory beyond death. All use tempera on canvas, finished with a small volume of oil paint. Sims identified that tempera was best used for subjects "which do not profit by a resemblance to nature—the very reverent or the frivolous."¹⁶⁵ The former is apt to the series.

The series frequently addresses relations with a divine transcendent being. In *Here I am*, the androgynous embodied soul arises in the larger figure's open hands; its tapered, angular fingers evoke modernist distortion of form, while the smaller figure recalls the innocent characters from his earlier works. The Cleveland Museum of Art described the painting after acquiring it in 1929:

The soul flies into space, drawn by a restless power, "while underneath are the everlasting arms." Are not the hand, in their infinite tenderness, a symbol of the world which prepares the soul, perhaps the soul, perhaps unknowingly, for the eternal hereafter?¹⁶⁶

Behold, I Have Graven Thee on the Palm of My Hand depicts an androgynous figure leaping dynamically towards the transcendent being. In *My Pain Beneath Your Sheltering Hand* a smaller figure reaches towards a haloed larger being who's left hand is raised in a pacifying gesture. Conversely *Man's Last Pretence of Consummation in Indifference* is anguished—the smaller figure deliberately rejects their benefactor; the dramatic gesture is undercut by the obvious concern clouding their face. The *Guardian* described *I am the Abyss and I am Light* as the most "cryptic of the series".¹⁶⁷ A figure to right of the canvas curls in a near foetal position. A single eye is enveloped by flame-like shapes that rise into the composition's contrasting upper right. The final work, *The Rebel Powers that thee Array*, depicts a central figure alluding to Crucifixion—especially as depicted in the early sketches for *Sacrifice* (fig. 135)—while smaller beings savage his torso.

¹⁶³ Holmes, "Bright Memory," 233.

¹⁶⁴ Corbett, *Modernity of English Art*, 207.

¹⁶⁵ Sims and Sims, *Picture Making*, 41.

¹⁶⁶ W. M. M. "Lo, Here Am I," 53.

¹⁶⁷ "Purchasers For The Sims Pictures," 18.

According to Harold Speed, Sims's last paintings exposed

the most poignant expression of the anguish he was suffering... Technically these pictures are very interesting, as an attempt at abstract form and colour expression, used legitimately to express an abstract state of mind... All the clashing lines and jagged edges and violent colours that startle one in these pictures are not a mere meaningless whim, but a vivid expression of a tortured state of mind... There upon canvas was his poor tortured spirit laid bare.¹⁶⁸

The viewer identifies with the androgynous embodied soul. Hannah Holmes argued they were an "attempt to create another idyll... the souls escape from the failing body", and that they are not associated with Christianity.¹⁶⁹ Likewise both the Tate Gallery, and Alan Sims emphasise an allegorical reading.¹⁷⁰ The ambiguous titles received little attention; Herbert Furst admitted in 1928 "Whence these quotations come I do not know" while Bayes referred to "obscure literary subject matter".¹⁷¹ Neither identified a source; all have a specific intertext with none obscure. *Man's Last Pretence Of Consummation In Indifference* misquotes the final two lines of Humbert Wolfe's poem "The Uncommon Woman II" from the widely acclaimed 1927 collection *Requiem*: "where even lone lays by man's last pretence/of consummation in difference."¹⁷² Wolfe, a Christian convert from Judaism, was at his most popular during the 1920s. Conceptually the collection explores the Pauline inversion of who life's winners and losers are, proposing "weakness and folly lie the strength and wisdom of God".¹⁷³ Wolfe's collection maintains a religious ardour in response to what he had sensed as contemporary society's loss of faith and constitutes as "a solemn confessional of souls faced by the dire exigency of death."¹⁷⁴ Sims's own inversion accordingly emphasises apathy. *The Rebel Powers that thee Array* quotes Shakespeare's "Sonnet 146", which opens, "Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth, [...] these rebel powers that thee array?" The profoundly religious sonnet concerns the soul's ultimate fate, asking why one is preoccupied with their fleeting bodily appearance over the eternal soul.¹⁷⁵ It concludes by appealing to the soul—Sims's smaller figures—to feed upon death, which in turn feeds on the body—Sims's crucified figure—for afterwards the soul can enjoy eternal life. *My Pain Beneath Your Sheltering Hand* alludes to the anthropomorphising of God such as in Isaiah 40:10, and Psalm 91:4 where it is reminded that God's wings offer protection. Sims qualifies this with "My pain", suggesting that while pain is inevitable, God's protection is always there. The three other titles have more explicit biblical references. *I am the Abyss and I am Light* suggests the "absolute power of God over all creation", seemingly paraphrasing

¹⁶⁸ Speed, "Charles Sims, R.A.," 63-4.

¹⁶⁹ Holmes, "Bright Memory," 233.

¹⁷⁰ Chamot, Farr and Butlin, *Modern British Paintings*, II:644; Sims and Sims, *Picture Making*, 129-130.

¹⁷¹ Furst, "Art News," (1928): 46; Bayes, "Royal Academy," 557.

¹⁷² Wolfe, "Uncommon Woman II," 110.

¹⁷³ Bagguley, *Harlequin*, 247.

¹⁷⁴ Wells, "Humbert Wolfe," 511-512.

¹⁷⁵ Huttar, "Sonnet 146," 355.

Revelation 1:8; “I am the alpha and the omega; the Beginning and the End”.¹⁷⁶ *Here I am* comes from A. E. Housman’s poem “XXXII” from *A Shropshire Lad*:

*From far, from eve and morning
And yon twelve-winded sky,
The stuff of life to knit me
Blew hither: here am I.*¹⁷⁷

The poem declares that life lasts “for a breath”. Housman, faced by this insignificance and insubstantiality, attempts to put existence into a cosmic perspective. Sim’s title is also the translation of the Hebrew “Hineni” as used in response to a direct call from God.¹⁷⁸ Sims alludes to the cosmic and the divine call. The last, *Behold, I have graven thee on the palm of my hand*, cites the King James translation of Isaiah 49:16. The passage suggests that the thought of God’s creation is constantly present with him as if indelibly marked upon his hands.

The six canvases are a small fragment of Sim’s corresponding imagery. Northumbria University archives contain early sepia and pencil studies that indicate the predominantly Christian orientation and eschatological tone of the series. Sims’s early sketches address gatherings of people and prayer (fig. 136-7); they are of a ‘visionary’ orientation and evoke William Blake’s compositions through the shallow pictorial space and esoteric personal imagery. The *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* furthered the comparison:

William Blake... takes his place today, unquestioned, among the great artists of all ages, because... his idea carries into the realm of abstract truth. In our time, Charles Sims... His genius, stripped of all superficial things, emerged in six mystical paintings, which are truly his last will and testament. They are his cry of pain, his *de profundis*.¹⁷⁹

A Crucifixion (fig. 138) depicts Christ with a crown of thorns; at the apex is a mandorla and dove symbolising the Holy Spirit. The later sketch *Crowds of Small Souls in Flames* (1926–8) (fig. 139) emphasises the eschatological—purgatorial—fires; *Saints and Sinners* (1926–8) (fig. 140) depicts the seated deity with face obscured by a convex arc of cobalt, while two smaller souls—representing saints and sinners—sit opposite either side of him and shelter beneath his arms; both return to God in the end. These peripheral sketches are less ambiguous; they clarify the ideas underpinning the series and place it within a recognisable theological and philosophical context. According to Corbett the series concerns “the redemption of the sufferings of modernity through religious experience and consolation... [while] deistic themes of suffering, compassion, expiation, and comfort are still

¹⁷⁶ Chamot, Farr and Butlin, *Modern British Paintings*, II:644.

¹⁷⁷ Housman, “XXXII,” 32.

¹⁷⁸ Genesis 22, 31, 46; Exodus 3:4.

¹⁷⁹ W. M. M. “Lo, Here Am I,” 52-3.

the centre of Sims's attention."¹⁸⁰ These other images extend the major themes of the series to Christian theology, the eschatological journey, and judgment.

Sims was raised an Anglican, yet his artwork suggests identification with Catholicism. A small number of works in which the process is first evident focused on eschatological idylls. *The Kingdom of Heaven* (1899) (fig. 141), depicts children emerge from a blaze of white in a scene reminiscent of early springtime, while *In Elysium* (1900) (fig. 142) again references a state of paradise beyond earthly existence. *Wood Beyond the World* (1913) (fig. 143) complements with an idyllic scene celebrating the springtide; the central Madonna and Child signify Catholic iconographic precedents while the title comes from William Morris's 1894 fantasy novel. *Seven Sacraments* reveals a deepening engagement with Catholic practices; the number of sacraments being two more than recognised in Anglicanism.

There are implications for the *Spiritual* series, which suggests the Catholic concern for the soul. The series shows Sims turning his attention away from worldly concerns towards existence following death and alludes to the purgatorial state and particular judgment. These depart from iconographic precedents of the soul's eschatological journey towards paradise; the soul, having departed the body, is purged of actual sin in a cleansing fire. Sims's notebooks contain extensive notes exploring theodicy, faith, and the nature of the divine. These identify key aspects of the series: "Deity. Angels. Mercy. Pity. Love. Receive Soul at Last. Cubist shapes of chaos".¹⁸¹ Elsewhere he writes,

God cannot be progressive. Progress must be from a start, and there can be no start for eternal things. What He is, He must always have been. But we cannot conceive Him except in terms of Space-Time. That is to say we cannot conceive Him at all.

Whence faith; faith that this will some day be clear to our mind... God has left these for a task, a rise above suffering, and pain as a spur to sympathy.¹⁸²

Charles Sims abhorred bodily suffering and disfigurement, having been lame as a child.¹⁸³ According to Alan Sims, "His quarrel with the apparent world was not for what it did to immortal souls, but for what it did to mortal bodies".¹⁸⁴ He witnessed the earthly punishment and torment during the War; in the following years his attention turned away from mortal existence to the soul's fate after death. The *Spirituals* look beyond the body. They address existential anxieties, yet also hope; even in the darkest moments God is there. Sim's untimely death at his own hands does not easily reconcile with this, except perhaps in that he was overwhelmed by the struggle. Or perhaps in another way he was simply declaring, "Here I am Lord, *Heneni*."

¹⁸⁰ Corbett, *Modernity of English Art*, 208.

¹⁸¹ Sketchbook c.1926-8, Sims Archive, Northumbria University Archives.

¹⁸² Sims and Sims, *Picture Making*, 94.

¹⁸³ *ibid*, 93.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*.

Judgment, and the fate of the soul in death, is particularly noteworthy in interwar British art by its near absence; while the traditional iconography of the Last Judgment was certainly reconfigured, the actual depiction of divine punishment was rarely present. Indeed, how could an artist imagine there be any such thing after the Great War? Charles Sims's series at least attempted to confront the seeming impossibility of being *beyond* death; his attempt to comprehend the trauma of the Great War extended beyond earthly existence into a celestial plane. Sims's paintings assert that earthly actions have consequences on the ultimate fate of the soul. In this chapter it has been made apparent that the depictions of resurrection and judgment were marked by a particular intimacy rather than divine or eschatological drama. The effect is to take us beyond the present moment and brings attention to personal hope and the potential for eschatological reunion. Even Stanley Spencer's large-scale paintings are about the personal, with the resurrected peoples' reacquaintance with the world, and the things they held dear to them in life. The intimate interpretation of these concepts suggests the historical context in which pain and grief were near universal; it focuses on the personal experience and offers the consolation that all is not lost. The unfathomable scale of the Great War was followed by a personal resurrection. Recovery indicates trauma; in the next chapter I address this profound sense of an historical caesura that resulted from the Great War, and how the understanding and imagination of a future war was shaped by the memory of the conflict of 1914-18.

Chapter Four

Witness to the End:

Apocalypse and the End of the World as we Know it

May God forgive me for the destruction of His earth—the vision I had might have saved it¹⁸⁵

In 1934 C. R. W. Nevinson co-authored a novel that imagined a forthcoming cataclysm that would end the world as it had hitherto been known; the narrative described the fall of cities and social disintegration—with unheeded warnings from an enlightened few prophesying the terrible events. This chapter addresses the apocalyptic concept of absolute destruction, and the subsequent creation of a new world. The communications scholar Barry Brummett asserts that the “apocalyptic” is firstly composed of the *apocalypse* and supplanted by the *millennium*—that is, the destruction of the old, and its replacement with the new.¹⁸⁶ In this chapter I will first address the *retrospective* sense of an ending in the British interwar that had been activated by the Great War itself. With this in mind I argue that the post-war culture of remembrance perpetuated wartime narratives of apocalypse and an eschatological break with the past. I will then identify the contemporary resonance of the Apocalypse that was evident in the print and publishing culture of the 1920s and early 1930s, before shifting to focus upon Cecil Collins’s apocalyptic reading of modernity. The chapter will turn towards the *prospective* fear of a new Great War that develops during the 1930s, and in particular the potential of aerial bombardment. Towards the end of the decade artists and intellectuals rallied to the Spanish Civil War; I address how their interventions often perpetuated dichotomised narratives of good and evil and the sense that a wider European conflict was inevitable.

1914: The end of the world as we know it

Nevinson had witnessed one secular apocalypse, during which he had made his career; on 4 August 1914 Britain and its dominions declared war upon Germany. In the War’s early weeks Ethel Walker started the painting *Zone of Hate: Decoration*, when industrialised and mechanised warfare’s full horror had yet to be fully understood.¹⁸⁷ Walker was not present at the front lines, and could not anticipate what was coming; that did not prevent her from painting a condemnation of the very concept of war. Walker’s close friend, the painter Grace English identified within the painting “her

¹⁸⁵ Trubetzkaya and Nevinson, *Exodus A.D.*, 180.

¹⁸⁶ Brummett, *Apocalyptic Rhetoric*, 48.

¹⁸⁷ It has not been possible to illustrate this work. Tate do not have images available and presently refusing new photography. It has not been possible to find a reproduction in literature.

belief that evil forces were dominating the world.”¹⁸⁸ The painting was first exhibited at the NEAC in 1917 (under the title *Decoration in Oils—The Zone of Hate*); the catalogue explained it as representing “...5 Forces, Hate, Life, Death, Destiny, the World Sorrow. The two figures on the left and right completing arabesque symbolize (1) The Mother of the Race, (2) The Earth covering the dead.” Mary Chamot suggested in 1931 “that in tackling such a theme she would be somewhat in the position of a Fra Angelico trying to represent Hell”.¹⁸⁹ The force of “the World Sorrow” evokes 2 Corinthians 7:10, where “the sorrow of the world worketh death”. This sorrow arising from earthly desires inspires death in the widest sense, from murder to the loss of eternal life. The German Romantic writer Jean Paul’s term of *Weltschmerz* (literally ‘world pain’) encapsulates a sense that physical reality frustrates us in comparison to an ideal state.¹⁹⁰ It has been defined as “a mood of weariness or sadness about life arising from the acute awareness of evil and suffering” within the world.¹⁹¹ Speaking in Paris in 1911, the Leader of the Bahá’í faith `Abdu'l-Bahá, likewise made a distinction between the world of sorrow and the ideal state of the spiritual Kingdom.¹⁹² When exhibited in 1936 the associated paraphernalia reframed Walker’s painting in almost prophetic language:

Miss Walker started the first [i.e. “The Zone of Hate”] within a week of the outbreak of war in 1914. At a time when most people thought the war would be a matter of a few weeks, she was inspired by a foreboding that it would last for years. All the figures in the painting are entirely allegorical, but the war mentality was so strong at the time that people complained because she had not included the figure of the Kaiser.¹⁹³

Walker completed a companion painting titled *Zone of Love: Decoration* between 1930–2 depicting an idyllic golden age that stands in contrast to *Zone of Hate*’s “powerful expression of jarring elements”.¹⁹⁴ The title’s contiguity of decoration and hate is particularly incongruous, suggesting an aestheticised normalisation of violence and conflict. Yet Walker’s ‘decorative’ paintings depict Platonic ideals—*Zone of Hate* realises the true nature of belligerence, malevolence, and its impact upon humankind.¹⁹⁵ The two present the dualism of apocalyptic destruction and millenarian paradise, with the former pressing in 1914.

Looking back on Armageddon: the British Culture of Remembrance

The memory of the Great War in Britain would owe much to painters; the British memorialisation of the War commenced while the fighting was ongoing. The official War Artist

¹⁸⁸ Grace English, Autograph document, notes on Dame Ethel Walker. nd, Tate archive, TGA 716/81.

¹⁸⁹ Chamot, “Ethel Walker,” 308.

¹⁹⁰ Paul, *Selina*, 132.

¹⁹¹ Beiser, *Weltschmerz*, 1.

¹⁹² `Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, 109-112.

¹⁹³ Chamot, Farr and Butlin, *Modern British Paintings*, II:756.

¹⁹⁴ Chamot, “Ethel Walker,” 308.

¹⁹⁵ Grace English, Autograph document, notes on philosophy and art by Ethel Walker. nd, Tate archive, TGA 716/83.

scheme had begun in 1916. Artists were sent to the various fronts and produced images that wrestled with the powerfulness of their subject; the most successful images would come to define the conflict for many. These wartime paintings of vast ruinous landscapes and extraordinary technological feats hold appeal in terms of Edmund Burke's model of the sublime, and the addendum of the 'technological sublime'.¹⁹⁶ For Burke the sublime was triggered by darkness, obscurity, privation, magnificence, loudness, suddenness or vastness, however only from a safe distance.¹⁹⁷ The artworks depict destruction that even today remains awesome; the War and the Western Front resulted in a novel form of the Battlefield Sublime.¹⁹⁸ Mile upon mile of farmland and cities in ruin indicate human fragility and violence that transcends the individual. The literature scholar Morton D. Paley has identified a preceding trend in eighteenth and nineteenth century English painting translating apocalyptic subjects into sublime experiences.¹⁹⁹ As we will see in this section of the chapter, this mode of the 'apocalyptic sublime' and its precedent offered another dimension to the appeal of terrible scenes in British painting from the Great War, and would be particularly apparent in the British Hall of Remembrance scheme.

In 1918 a British Hall of Remembrance scheme was proposed; It was to culminate the War Artist scheme with contributions from known artists—many having already received Official War Art commissions—and in total record and memorialise the warfronts on land, at sea, in the air and at home while celebrating the propagandist ideals of heroism and sacrifice. It was never built; the completed paintings were exhibited in 1919.²⁰⁰ Artists were commissioned according to one of three sets of conditions.²⁰¹ Scheme One was largely for eminent artists to produce just one painting at one of three sizes with a fixed rate. The scheme specified the painting sizes and forced artists to work within art historical precedents of military painting. The largest were scaled according to Velasquez' *The Surrender of Breda* (120 x 144"); the intermediate sizes paintings were according to Uccello's *Battle of San Romano* (72 x 125"); the smallest were 72 x 86". Scheme Two was for riskier propositions, typically artists who were younger, or experimental, with the British War Memorials Committee receiving the artist's complete output (including a picture at memorial dimensions) for a specified period. Scheme Three provided artists with workspace alone; the Committee had first refusal on all works.

¹⁹⁶ Technological Sublime: Meaning the overpowering and sense of awe and disorientation that we experience in the presence of some large structure or immensely powerful machine. As technology has developed, the sublimity once found in nature can be discovered in technology as a manufactured sublime. Technology has usurped nature. Miller, *Life of the Mind*; Marx, *Machine in the Garden*; Nye, *Technological Sublime*.

¹⁹⁷ Burke, *Sublime and Beautiful*, II.I-XXII.

¹⁹⁸ Gough, "Painting the Landscape," 8.

¹⁹⁹ Paley, *Apocalyptic Sublime*, 1.

²⁰⁰ "The Nation's War Paintings and Other Records Exhibition," Royal Academy Of Arts, Dec. 1919-Feb. 1920.

²⁰¹ Harries and Harries, *War Artists*, 92-3.

Muirhead Bone, the first commission official British War Artist, was one of the leading advisors to the British War Memorials Committee and a staunch advocate of the Hall of Remembrance. He recommended Charles Holden as architect and envisioned a series of galleries ending in an Oratory with a single decoration that represented the millenarian hope of “the coming brotherhood of man’, for which we all pray”.²⁰² While the scheme remained unresolved this detail proves important. Bone envisioned the paintings situated within a Christian apocalyptic context, and thereby insinuating that the War was an eschatological struggle within a progressive movement towards the millennium.

Paul Nash received a Scheme Two commission from the Ministry of Information in April 1918. His work was to the dimensions of Uccello’s painting, and titled *The Menin Road* (1919) (fig. 144). Nash enlisted for home service with the Artists’ Rifles in 1914, later receiving officer training thanks to his elite public-school education at St. Paul’s. Mosse suggests that the British educated elite recognised the War as “primarily a literary experience that brought to mind analogies from English or classical writers.”²⁰³ Nash began work as a War Artist on 23 October 1917 and was in the region of Flanders following the Battle of Passchendaele. A letter to Margaret recorded his experience returning from Zonnebeke:

I have seen the most frightful nightmare of a country more conceived by Dante or Poe than by nature... Evil and the incarnate fiend alone can be master of this war, and no glimmer of God's hand is seen anywhere... only the black rain out of the bruised and swollen clouds all through the bitter black night is fit atmosphere in such a land... It is unspeakable, godless, hopeless.²⁰⁴

An ‘Old Pauline’, Nash uses sublime literary precedents of Dante and Poe over visual references. These articulate the phenomenology of a war otherwise framed with reference to religion and the analogy of biblical destruction. His reference to Poe evokes the author’s gothic tone and macabre aesthetic over any specific work; indeed, Poe’s literary work makes use of the apocalyptic sublime.²⁰⁵ Nash’s reference to Dante suggests *The Divine Comedy*, which chronicles the author’s journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise: *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*. *Inferno* identifies nine concentric circles of Hell, each designated for the punishment of a specific group of sinners, with the innermost reserved for punishment of the most terrible sins. Dante’s Cantos adapt to suit the War experience. The Fifth Circle, Wrath, involves crossing the river Styx. On the murky water surface the actively wrathful futilely struggle; lurking beneath are the passively wrathful. The Seventh Circle incorporates the Phlegethon, a river of flames and boiling blood in which warmongers are submersed. Such imagery would resonate during the War. The Third Battle of Ypres—otherwise

²⁰² Muirhead Bone to IWM Art Sub-Committee, 29 Jan 1919, quoted in Harries and Harries, *War Artists*, 94.

²⁰³ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 59.

²⁰⁴ Cork, *Bitter Truth*, 198.

²⁰⁵ Cook, “Poe and the Apocalyptic Sublime,” 4.

known as Passchendaele—was a Dantean swamp where drowning in mud complemented the established fate of bleeding out an anonymous death in no-man’s land. The Seventh Circle’s Second Ring is a wood where each tree entombs suicides. Nash’s iconography of trees representing people was significant in his War Artist role. He recurrently painted the flayed headless tress of Passchendaele; they are human beings caught up in collective suicide. The reference to visually rich literary material rather than visual art itself affords one the opportunity to identify the referent with the circumstances of their own experience. This produces an imaginative engagement with—rather than attempt to affix meaning to—the intertext.

Nash described the essentially rural War landscape as having “no glimmer of God’s hand”; either God was not architect, or divinity is absent there. It is “godless”. This metaphysical emptiness was articulated in the title of his 1918 exhibition ‘Void of War’. William Orpen painted Zonnebeke in corresponding terms (fig. 145). He described the Western Front vividly;

The whole country is obliterated... miles and miles of shell holes, bodies, rifles, steel helmets, gas helmets, and all kinds of battered clothes... one feels the horrors the water in the shell holes is covering—and not a living soul anywhere near, a truly terrible peace in the new and terribly modern desert....²⁰⁶

Orpen’s painting was described recently as “an eerily silent and stylised version of hell on Earth”.²⁰⁷ A glimmer of light reflects in a pool framed by a dead tree and dead (German) soldier. The land is concealed in gloom. An ominous black hollow anticipates our stare. The *Burlington Magazine* noted, “Orpen has a piquant sense of the grotesque-romantic, which never deepens into real tragedy, but has a curious and quite personal turn.”²⁰⁸ Orpen vividly depicts desolation-in-process and turns towards Romantic precedents and sublime images of secular or religious apocalyptic destruction. Both young and established artists were acquainted with Blake, Turner, Ruskin and Milton. Though not necessarily directly cited, they were among the most evident cultural references for visualising and interpreting this new and very real wasteland. In official war paintings one is frequently cast as an apocalyptic ‘last man’ since all other human life is omitted. Yet our knowledge of the conflict creates dramatic tension; an enemy is inferred in the darkness. Consequently, the viewer’s privileged position would be at risk of getting shot. This constructed spectacle-spectator dynamic neuters the inferred risk and casts us as the last one alive. *The Times* reported on the Somme:

It was very horrible, very wonderful, to stand there in the grey of the dawn, amid a clamour and fury as if the world was truly coming to an end and all around you the graves had already given up their dead...²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Orpen, *An Onlooker: Critical Edition*, 21.

²⁰⁷ Tate, “Sir William Orpen, Zonnebeke 1918”.

²⁰⁸ R. S. “Paintings and Drawings,” 35.

²⁰⁹ “A Shattering Blow,” 9-10.

Artworks became intermediaries between preceding artistic constructions and the apocalyptic metaphors describing the lived experience of war.

Walter Bayes's *The Underworld* (1918) (fig. 146) depicts civilians taking shelter in Elephant and Castle Underground Station during an air raid; the title suggests the world of the dead. The heterotopic station platform is the waiting place during a German air raid. An editorial in the *Connoisseur* criticised Bayes's prioritising of "pictorial effects" over the "crowded mass of humanity" that would take shelter.²¹⁰ Bayes instead encourages comparisons to a chthonic Dantean—or purgatorial—place where civilians precariously wait.²¹¹ D. H. Lawrence evoked the sublime in a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell describing the German Zeppelin air raids with reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost*;

...we saw the Zeppelin above us, just ahead, amid a gleaming of clouds; high up, like a bright golden finger, quite small among a fragile incandescence of clouds. And underneath it were splashes of fire as the shells fired from earth burst... It was like Milton—then there was a war in heaven. But it was not angels. It was that small golden Zeppelin, like a long oval world up high. Then the small, long ovate luminary, the new world in the heavens disappeared again.²¹²

Bayes identified C. R. W. Nevinson—the most prominent artist of the British War—with the home front's visual culture; posters for Nevinson's exhibition cover the platform wall. Nevinson's Hall of Remembrance painting *Harvest of Battle* (1918) (fig. 147) depicted the Western Front as a smouldering landscape. The *Daily Express* identified it with precedents of the apocalyptic sublime, as "a combination of the Deluge, the Last Day, Dante's Inferno, and the 'Sea Giving up its Dead'".²¹³ The soldiers "look like 'shades' wearily 'plugging' through purgatory."²¹⁴ In Revelation 20:13 the dead are evicted from the seas, Death, and Hades to receive divine judgment. The article's author was perhaps thinking of the most notable recent visual interpretation of the passage—Frederick Leighton's *And the Sea Gave Up the Dead Which Were in It* (fig. 148) from 1891–2. Both Leighton and Nevinson situate the figures in an austere watery landscape. Both compositions divide horizontally across the centre; above is the region of the living while below are the dead. Meanwhile the biblical Deluge, with the implication of a corrupted world, was frequently used to describe the War in literature, the arts, and politics.²¹⁵

The flood narrative encompasses sin and punishment, wickedness and salvation, and God's divine judgment and obliteration of life upon the world. It signifies the end of an era and change in

²¹⁰ Grundy, "' Beer Chronical'," 204.

²¹¹ Hwang, *London's Underground*, 109.

²¹² D. H. Lawrence to Lady Ottoline Morrell, September 9, 1915, in *Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, vol. 2, 390.

²¹³ "Mystery of a War Picture," 5.

²¹⁴ *ibid.*

²¹⁵ Llewellyn, "*The Deluge*, 1920," 122.

covenant. A typological reading places the Genesis flood in correspondence with the Apocalypse's "flood of fire".²¹⁶ As the Second Letter of Peter makes clear:

...the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.²¹⁷

The Deluge is a divine act that cleanses the world of moral degradation and makes it ready for the righteous and pure to inherit. The War assumed this redemptive purpose for many in the warring nations; figures as diverse as Hilaire Belloc and Filippo Marinetti had advocated a necessary purge prior to 1914.²¹⁸ Many religious leaders, intellectuals, and politicians recognised the Great War as a purifying rite of passage leading to national regeneration; it was the cure for the degenerative, eugenic anxieties of late nineteenth century Britain. The English theologian William Sanday identified that "cleansing fires" would burn away the decadent "morbid products of long peace and material prosperity" and inspire a renewal of Christian virtues.²¹⁹ Accordingly the Scottish Presbyterian John Adams argued that the war generation would "bear all the marks of having passed through a solemn purification by fire."²²⁰ The War was to be a catastrophic watershed between two morally distinct eras. Jacob Isaacs's preface to a 1927 edition of *The Chester Play of the Deluge* illustrated by David Jones emphasised the Deluge as a transitory break that allows history to be divided into distinct periods, suggesting that the Chester Play "is the only Noah play... that gives a satisfactory contact between the Noah group and the world they are leaving"²²¹ Jones's last illustrations (fig. 149) accordingly depict the ark grounded with the floodwaters receding, and Noah and his family in prayer; Noah spreads his arms evoking both the priest in mass and Christ upon the cross, following in the typology of Patristic writers.²²² It is tainted by the melancholy of loss. The biblical narrative concludes with the promise of a renewed covenant with God and a better world after devastation; an idea that had offered some sense of solace in the post-war period.

References to the Deluge followed the ecclesiastical and secular wartime rhetoric of apocalypse. The Dean of Canterbury's sermon on 2 Corinthians 4:16, Easter 1915, proclaimed that "we seem to have gone back... to the days before the flood".²²³ The world is therefore corrupted, and a new Deluge awaits. The radical liberal MP, and then Minister of Munitions David Lloyd George would go further, describing the War as *the* Deluge in a speech to Clydeside munitions workers on Christmas morning 1915:

²¹⁶ Cohn, *Genesis Story*, 23.

²¹⁷ 2 Peter 3:6-7.

²¹⁸ Wilkinson, *Church of England* 188; Stromberg, *Redemption by War*, 180; Marinetti, "Founding and Manifesto," 51.

²¹⁹ Sanday, *Meaning of the War*, 10-11.

²²⁰ Adams, *Great Sacrifice*, 2.

²²¹ Isaacs, Preface, iv.

²²² Dilworth, "Jones's 'The Deluge'," 24; Chrysostom, "Sixth Sermon," 113.

²²³ Wace, "Things Seen," 30.

I wonder how many people realise the magnitude of the war... it is not a passing shower—it is the deluge, it is a convulsion of Nature... bringing unheard-of changes in the social and industrial fabric... It is an earthquake which is upheaving the very rocks of European life. It is one of those seismic disturbances in which nations leap forward or fall backward generations in a single bound.²²⁴

A Campbellite Baptist, Lloyd George understood his analogy. It persisted; Leonard Woolf's social and political history *After the Deluge: A Study of Communal Psychology* (volume one published in 1931) used the analogy to stress how the conflict “destroyed much of the past”.²²⁵ The Conservative politician Sir Edward Cadogan concurred, titling his memoirs between 1880 and 1914 *Before The Flood* (1961). Later historians perpetuated it in titles including Arthur Marwick's *The Deluge, British Society and the First World War* (1965), and Adam Tooze's recent Americentric *The Deluge, The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916–1931* (2014). The Deluge is secularised into an event or occurrence that heralds an identifiably fundamental and destructive change in the world. In January 1917 C. R. W. Nevinson exhibited a lithograph of his painting *The Wave* (fig. 150). It was among a small number of bleak seascapes painted at the time that, unusually, were not direct references to war. *The Wave* suggests the influence of Hokusai, yet it is also “an oblique reflection on the engulfing destructive power of the war”.²²⁶ Nevinson eschewed established modes of military history painting; the tremendous and all-consuming devastation of tsunami flood waters is translated to the Great War, providing a novel interpretation of a war that many artists had struggled with representing directly.

Significantly, the competitive 1920 British School in Rome Scholarship Award for Decorative Painting set the theme of the biblical flood. The prizes were suspended during the War, and reinstated for 1920. Four finalists competed; Leon Underwood, James Willkie (fig. 151), Arthur Outlaw (fig. 152), and the prestigious award's winner Winifred Knights (fig. 153). As Clare Willsdon identified, “mural painting of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was seen by its exponents as a pinnacle of artistic achievement.”²²⁷ The British School unapologetically publicised the award as “the highest distinction of its kind in Empire”.²²⁸ By choosing the Deluge, the organising committee encouraged comparisons to the recent conflict and the post-war's new hope.

Each artist painted different events and themes from the narrative; coincidentally the story's main beats are told across the four paintings. Sequentially first is Outlaw's now lost depiction of building the Ark atop a hill.²²⁹ Winifred Knights's painting follows, visualising the “hopeless struggle for survival” of those denied salvation as the occupied Ark rises on the flood waters.²³⁰ Willkie's lost

²²⁴ “The Workmen's War Task,” 3.

²²⁵ Woolf, *After the Flood*, 23.

²²⁶ Yale Center for British Art, *The Wave*, 2018.

²²⁷ Willsdon, *Mural Painting*, vii.

²²⁸ Press communication to the *Daily Mail*, September 21 1920, quoted in Llewellyn, “*The Deluge, 1920*,” 120.

²²⁹ Genesis 6:8-22.

²³⁰ Eckersley, “Study,” 26.

painting corresponds, depicting Noah, his family, and the animals within the Ark.²³¹ Underwood's painting of the ark landing on Ararat concludes the narrative. Animals descend the gangway; an emaciated Noah stands in the foreground with his arms echoing Christ upon the cross. The new covenant is symbolised by an arc of light evoking the rainbow.²³²

Knights's receptiveness to avant-garde styles was indicated in *The Deluge's* reception; the flattened colour and geometric forms was unflatteringly described in the *Studio* as "an attempt to apply *cubism* to realistic painting. This sort of cubism, being a large sin, covers a multitude of small ones."²³³ In 1924 C. Lewis Hind favourably called it "an ingenious and surprising adaptation of *Cubism*".²³⁴ Knights innovated elsewhere too. Knights's composition relegates the ark—as in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling—to emphasise the floodwaters and the narrative's marginal people to stress human suffering.²³⁵ The other competing paintings focus upon the symbolically righteous Noah and his family and avoid the narrative's horrific side. In the historical context, the emphasis and identification with Noah meanwhile has a certain degree of triumphalism whether acknowledged or not—with the War compared to the Deluge, then the victors identify with the flood's survivors. Knights contemporises the narrative to offer "a compassionate depiction of desperate and anxious people in the present tense" while omitting any depiction of sinfulness or God's Judgment.²³⁶ They can only be identified as sinners via the biblical intext. Knights acknowledges those who are to be obliterated in the cataclysm; their futile struggle reveals their humanity and our empathy

Knights appeared to have no religious beliefs; the narrative is painted as a tense drama rather than out of religious fervour.²³⁷ This unflinching depiction of mortal terror taps into the post-war culture of mourning, whereby bereavement was omnipresent yet established late-Victorian practices were proving inadequate. David Cannadine argued, "inter war Britain was probably more obsessed with death than any other period in modern history".²³⁸ The deaths of friends and loved ones was obscured and abstracted as a notification of death telegram, a name on a memorial, or, at best, manifest as a grave; Knights remembers those erased by the flood.

Knights painted herself, her family and her friends in the crowd "navigating the dangers and shifts in terrain that characterised modern Britain as light broke in through the thick clouds brought by the Great War."²³⁹ Rosanna Eckersley proposes that Knight's painting relates to the Great War

²³¹ Genesis 7.

²³² Genesis 8.

²³³ Galerien, "Renaissance of the Tate," 190.

²³⁴ Hind, *Landscape Painting*, 2:307.

²³⁵ Lepine, "After the Deluge."

²³⁶ Dawn, "New Theology of Suffering."

²³⁷ Lepine, "The Painting."

²³⁸ Cannadine, "War and Death," 189. 217.

²³⁹ Lepine, "The Painting."

and its aftermath, while Sacha Llewellyn suggests that it is an “analogy of her own emotional response to the war.”²⁴⁰ Lepine concurs, claiming “Knights’ treatment of the suffering of apparently innocent people and the pale, distant hulk of the disinterested ark in the painting’s background arguably constitute a war manifesto”.²⁴¹ Knights was a Slade student between 1915 and 1920. She interrupted her studies and relocated to Worcestershire between 1917–8 citing a fear of Zeppelin air raids; “I have got to this state that I can’t let an aeroplane pass over my head without feeling terribly ill and shaky”.²⁴² Knights’ witnessing of the Silvertown munitions factory explosion on 19 January 1917 was a decisive factor.²⁴³ Knights was over five miles away onboard public transport on Blackfriars Bridge when 50 tons of TNT ignited. It remains the largest explosion to have occurred in London; the shockwave was reportedly felt across Essex and audible over one hundred miles away.²⁴⁴ After Silvertown, Knights could identify with a sudden horrific, devastating change that one is powerless to avoid—something that arguably manifested in *The Deluge*. On Knights’s return to London the War experience filtered into her art; the memory of Silvertown would have likely been resonating, consciously or unconsciously, when she painted *Leaving the Munitions Works* (fig. 154) in 1919.

Parallels have been drawn between Knights’s painting and those exhibited at the Hall of Remembrance exhibition.²⁴⁵ Eckersley suggests Nevinson’s *Harvest of Battle* as a source for depicting war trauma on a large scale.²⁴⁶ The connection to the exhibition can be developed further. The newspaper article identifying *Harvest of Battle* as akin to “the deluge” complements Eckersley’s association between the two paintings, and points towards the concept of refugees-of-the-Deluge that would be developed in Knights’s painting. The reception of Nevinson’s painting, in which figures wander through the devastated landscape seeking refuge, emphasises not just a sodden landscape, but people in a situation that is far beyond their capabilities and subject to destructive forces that they are powerless to resist. At the same exhibition was George Clausen’s *In the Gun Factory at Woolwich Arsenal, 1918* (fig. 155). The painting’s theme would have likely resonated with Knights; the Arsenal is opposite Silvertown across the Thames. Woolwich Arsenal was Britain’s largest munitions factory; by late 1917 it employed nearly 74,000 workers across a 1,300-acre site complete with its own railway system. This cathedral of war evokes sublime qualities as both remarkable and fearful; individuality is subordinated in the presence of something greater, while the skeletal monolith of the radial crane is totemic of the “new machine age.”²⁴⁷ Light takes heightened

²⁴⁰ Eckersley, “Study,” 85; Llewellyn, “*The Deluge*, 1920,” 122.

²⁴¹ Lepine, “Women, War and Social Change.”

²⁴² Llewellyn, *Winifred Knights*, 37.

²⁴³ *ibid.*

²⁴⁴ “Munition Disaster,” 5.

²⁴⁵ Llewellyn, “*The Deluge*, 1920,” 126; Lepine, “Women, War and Social Change.”; Eckersley, “Study,” 96.

²⁴⁶ Eckersley, “Study,” 96.

²⁴⁷ McConkey, *Clausen*, 90.

symbolism; crepuscular rays fall across the great hall and silhouettes the workers “obscured in shadow”.²⁴⁸ Clausen was influenced by French Impressionism and preoccupied with light and its depiction throughout his mature career. He intended the contrast to express the “mysterious” setting thus evoking the sublime quality of obfuscation.²⁴⁹ Geometric shafts of diagonal light and a largely muted pallet where a vibrant dash of red is the only colour offsetting the “gun-metal grey aesthetic” of Knights’s depiction had already been established in Clausen’s painting.²⁵⁰

The contrast between Knights’s interpretation and those of the other finalists was further emphasised by the artist’s preparatory designs for the composition. Knights had early on envisioned a scene of Noah and his family boarding the ark using a more vibrant palette (fig. 156). Noah’s wife looks back over her shoulder in an echo of the later painting. In the middle ground is the ark, while people have sought refuge on the hill tops that appear from the rising water, juxtaposing God’s chosen and the doomed. Another study (fig. 157) uses a muted palette to exclusively focus upon people fleeing towards higher ground; the ark—and thus deliverance—is absent. This depicts refugees fleeing their home in a crisis; I argue that this is an important dimension to Knights’s painting. The War was the impetus for a massive population displacement. Approximately 10 million refugees in Europe—of which 5.5 million were in Russia—were forced to flee.²⁵¹ A War Refugees Committee was formed in August 1914 to address Belgian refugees arriving in Britain, with at least 1,400 local committees reportedly having been formed by January 1915.²⁵² Further refugee migration resulting from the Russian Civil War and the Ottoman displacement and deportation of Armenians were ongoing in 1919-20. The refugee crises were widely reported throughout the British newspapers; governments and relief agencies struggled to cope. In 1921 the League of Nations established the Commission for Refugees following an appeal from the President of International Red Cross Committee, who identified the League as “the only supernational political authority capable of solving a problem which is beyond the power of exclusively humanitarian organizations.”²⁵³ Other Genesis figures such as Lot’s wife and Eve are also refugees who both look back over their shoulders to their abandoned homeland. The self-portrait at the centre of the painting continues this precedent, while the historical context reframes the subject of Knights painting: it is an image which explores the fear of total devastation and of being forced to run from one’s home and livelihood, with no certainty of what awaits. The viewer is however aware of the horrifying fate that awaits in the biblical text.

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*

²⁴⁹ George Clausen, sketchbook dated 1918, E.1930-1946, V & A Museum.

²⁵⁰ Lepine, “Women, War and Social Change.”

²⁵¹ Amara, *Des Belges à l’épreuve de l’exil*, 12.

²⁵² “Belgian Refugees,” 8.

²⁵³ Holborn, “Refugee Problem,” 124.

The award for Decorative Painting is rarely mentioned alongside the other scholarships awarded in 1920. The architecture award set the potent theme of Courts of Justice, although it had originally been set in 1914 before the competitions was interrupted.²⁵⁴ The use of the theme was germane in post-war Europe. The sculpture competition, awarded to Alfred Frank Hardiman, set the similarly pertinent theme of two figures symbolising 'Sacrifice'. The three finalists' sculptures—the other two being Alexander Styles and Charles Dyson-Smith—were reproduced with the paintings in the *Illustrated London News* (fig. 151). Their iconography draws on classical and renaissance precedents—especially Michelangelo's *Pietà* (fig. 158)—to construct allusive artworks that validate and give meaning and status to death. Distinctly emaciated male figures—suggesting a moral dimension to denying earthly needs—are held in the arms of a raised feminine figure. Dyson-Smith's male slumps into the female's lap. He no longer supports his own head which rolls back—perhaps in his dying moments he looked towards the sky, underlining the profundity of his sacrifice. The empty up-turned palms suggest he has surrendered material possessions. Styles and Hardiman meanwhile make more overt references to Christian sacrifice, with their male figures' outstretched arms alluding to Crucifixion. As already discussed, the idealised concept of sacrifice had particular resonance with the Great War. The Rome scholarship competition brought the concept into proximity with the narrative of the Deluge; the allusion to Christian sacrifice is indicative of human being's alienation from the divine being, while that very alienation corresponds as the reason for the Deluge. Thus, death brings particular and national redemption which elevates the community towards God. As I will show in the next section of the chapter, the national identification with divine powers was widespread throughout the Great War and its memorialisation.

Saint Michael and Divine Conflict

Irrespective of personal beliefs, soldiers travelled to the front lines with the support of national Churches. In Britain the Anglican Church had given unwavering support for the War, with clerics incongruously encouraging enlistment from the pulpits. The literature historian Lionel Adey has argued that the hymn collections used in Edwardian schools gave precedent to the conflation of national identity with the Kingdom of God. The martial imagery of famous Victorian and Edwardian military hymns such as "Onward Christian soldiers" and "Land of Hope and Glory" can "readily be transposed into a crusade against a rival faith or empire, identified with the powers of evil".²⁵⁵ Therefore it was possible for a generation of young educated men go to war believing that they

²⁵⁴ The 1921 prize was set another pertinent theme—a national pantheon erected in a lake and approached by a causeway. Budden, "Rome Scholarships Exhibition," 204.

²⁵⁵ Adey, *The English Hymn*, 206.

were fighting with God on their side.²⁵⁶ By early 1915 the Church of England was offering prayers for the dead, with the Catholic practice adopted for pastoral reasons of condolence. The rhetoric of Holy War was promoted in English hymns, and sermons such as those of the Dean of Norwich who declared “it is indeed Armageddon. Ranged against us are the Dragon and the False Prophet.”²⁵⁷

In Germany the War’s sacralization was even more explicit. Divine purpose had inspired the phrase “Gott Mit Uns” (“God with us”), that was embossed on every Prussian infantryman’s belt buckle. The *Aufruf deutscher Kirchenmänner und Professoren: An die evangelischen Christen im Ausland* appeared on 4 September 1914 with signatures from twenty-nine church leaders and theology professors. The letter justified the War on missionary grounds and within German Imperialist ambitions.²⁵⁸ German theologians including Adolf von Harnack, Wilhelm Hermann, and Adolf Deissmann along with those of other German intellectuals put their names to the notorious ‘Manifesto of the Ninety-Three’, which expressed solidarity with the German military in violating Belgian neutrality. The framing did not look on the conflict as between two warring alliances, Empires, or political entities, but instead as between powers caught up in a perpetual and transcendent struggle, justifying the national cause and depreciating the enemy. The crusading metaphors had diminished but not ceased by the armistice. Indeed, the German offensive of 1918 took the name Operation Michael in reference to the Archangel and Leader of the Heavenly Host in the overthrow of the Rebellious Angels when Satan was cast out of Heaven. Saint Michael serves as the angelic prototype of the Christian soldier-saints of the early Christian church, while the Catholic Church invokes Saint Michael’s protection in the context of spiritual warfare. The significance was not incidental to the frequent use of the iconography in British and German war memorials.²⁵⁹

Glyn Philpot exhibited the painting *Saint Michael* (fig. 159) in October 1929, taking the subject of Saint Michael’s defeat of the beast from Revelation 7:7-9. The viewpoint looks up towards Saint Michael. He stands in the centrally, legs apart, and weighted on his right foot. His youthful face is calm yet stoic with eyes are lowered; his delicate features recall Philpot’s Jesus in *Resurgam*. The name Michael translates from Hebrew as the rhetorical question “*who is like unto God?*” The physical likeness thus has a theological basis—Michael is physically like the Son.²⁶⁰ A flame rises from his forehead, while tight blond curls adorn his head. He wears a suit of armour that is richly coloured in red and silver, with accents of gold. Battleship-grey wings rise above either collar, while a sash falls across his body from his left shoulder. His left arm is raised across his body from the elbow. Perhaps he has been injured—around his forearm is a cloth that is bound underneath, while the two

²⁵⁶ *ibid*, 177-8, 181-182, 186-94, 197.

²⁵⁷ Goebel, *Medieval Memory*, 93.

²⁵⁸ Congdon, *Mission of Demythologizing*, 243.

²⁵⁹ Goebel, *Medieval Memory*, 93.

²⁶⁰ The notion is not without precedent, for example Jehovah Witnesses teach that Michael *is* Jesus.

tails of fabric fall down. The armour piece is missing. The position of his left hand, with first and second fingers outstretched, and third and fourth fingers flexed inwards, suggests the iconography of the *Benedictio Latina*, albeit with the opposite hand. His right arm is to his side with his sword in hand pointing towards the beast on the floor. It is a chimera—part man with a human face with a heavy-set brow, and apparently part bat, with prominent ears, dark spiky hair, and large black wings composed of the beast's own skin. Its body recedes towards two tails flailing in distress. The conflict has occurred in the clouds, with the world silhouetted beneath. Around the sides and top of the composition is a painted stone frame. At the composition's base is the Latin inscription "PRINCEPS GLORIOSISSIME MICHAEL ARCHANGELE ESTO MEMOR NOSTRI" ("Most glorious Prince, Michael the Archangel, be mindful of us"), taken from the Divine Office for Michaelmas. Across his sash is written "ARCHANGELE MICHAEL CONSTITUI TE PRINCIPEM SUPER OMNES ANIMAS SUSCIPIENDAS" ("Archangel Michael, I have set you as Prince over all the souls who are presented to me"). The second quotation is from the Roman Breviary, third antiphon for Lauds on Michaelmas. The quotations ask in turn for the succour and defence of Saint Michael against evil and identify his task in bringing souls to judgment.

Although the Great War is not overt referenced, Philpot's painting was made in a context where Saint Michael was still closely associated with it. A popular wartime rumour claimed that on 23 August 1914 the British Expeditionary Force held out against, and successfully retreated from a superior number of German soldiers near Mons, Belgium thanks to the intervention of Angelic beings. The story's source had been a short item titled "The Bowmen" in the *London Evening News* on Michaelmas 1914 by the Welsh author and mystic Arthur Machen. The item was not identified as fiction, and described Saint George summoning the Bowmen of Agincourt to save the British forces. Like the myth of "Debout Les Morts!" it caught the collective imagination; the British artist William Henry Margetson depicted the story in his painting *The Angels of Mons*, which was subsequently disseminated as a postcard published by A. Vivian Mansell & Co. The story was repeated elsewhere, with aspects of Saint George conflating with Saint Michael. National identity therefore merged with divine identity and righteousness in Holy Warfare.

The shared characteristics of the Saints George and Michael were recognised in places of memory. Christopher Whall designed a two light memorial window (c.1914) (fig. 160) for All Saints Church, Glasbury, Powys. The personal memorial window portrays Saint George and Saint Michael defeating their respective dragon in medieval armour, while an angel rescues a child from a river in the tracery light. A line of text above the two Saints quotes from John 16:22: "I will see you again. And your heart shall rejoice." Whall's design combines elements of national identity, the battle against evil and divine protection with the promise of eschatological resurrection. Whall combined

Michael and George in memorial windows produced throughout Great Britain (fig. 161-2), and exhibited a design with both Saints at the Victoria and Albert Museum's War Memorials Exhibition in 1919; his former student Mabel Esplin exhibited a stained glass window of Saint Michael.²⁶¹ Peter Cormack suggested that in Whall's memorial windows "the positive virtues of Sacrifice and Courage take precedence over any jingoistic triumphalism".²⁶² The iconography however functions in terms that justify and sanctify the deaths and memory of the deceased with reference to nationhood.

Saint Michael was present on both local and national memorials. In Shrewsbury a Portland stone rotunda with a bronze figure of Saint Michael (fig. 163-4) was erected in 1922. The Archangel is framed by feathered wings and wears Gothic plate armour. In his left hand he holds a pennanted lance. Behind his head is a solar cross halo while his right hand is held out in benediction. The deceased soldiers' cause is identified as "For God, King and country" in one of six plaques. James Roll, Lord Mayor of London unveiled a memorial by Richard Goulden depicting the victorious Archangel standing with wings upstretched and a flaming sword held aloft (fig. 165), at the Church of Saint Michael's, Cornhill, on 1st November 1920. A report in *The Times* identified Saint Michael "repelling Strife in the form of two beasts tearing one another as they perish, and leading in Brotherhood and Love in the form of a group of children."²⁶³ The *Builder* noted that "St Michael with the flaming sword stands steadfast above the quarrelling beasts which typify 'war,' and are sliding slowly, but surely, from their previous paramount position. Life, in the shape of young children, rises with increasing confidence under the protection of the champion of right."²⁶⁴ A bronze tablet affixed to the front of the memorial associates Saint Michael's assignment with the British effort fighting for "the freedom of the world". This notion of the British Empire as a liberating force would continue to resonate, albeit at a more provincial level. A remembrance service address thirteen years later by Rev. Frederick George Eyres at Saint Matthew's Church Blackmoor and Whitehill, Hampshire, concurred proposing that England had been a divine instrument in a righteous war for liberty.²⁶⁵

The archangel is also the patron saint of the German people; therefore, patriotic Germans sought out his significance as the leader of God's army and victor over evil. The aforementioned major German military offensive code-named Operation Michael had been planned by Erich Ludendorff and Paul Von Hindenburg and launched on the Western Front on 21 March 1918; it was followed by Ludendorff's Operation George in April. Saint George was favoured in Germany as a patron saint with warrior credentials. In Germany, as in Britain, Saints Michael and George represented military strength, national identity, divine cause and protection. The corresponding

²⁶¹ *War Memorials Exhibition*, 28, 52.

²⁶² Cormack, *Christopher Whall 1849-1924*, 51.

²⁶³ "Flaming Sword of St. Michael," 9.

²⁶⁴ "War Memorials," 539.

²⁶⁵ "God Used England," 9.

iconography of the medieval knight fighting the Dragon found expression in war memorials. Medievalism as a mode of war commemoration connected the War dead with the romantic knights of history. Thus, it provided a sense of continuity irrespective of the actuality. Michael and George in the imagery of the defeated nation were subject to different emphases. On the one hand they signified consolation and divine protection for the dead, side-stepping the traumatic realisation of military defeat. On the other their meaning was co-optable by nationalists as seen in the Nazi cult of the dead. Ludendorff, who had found such resonance in the Saints, joined Hitler in the 1923 Munich putsch.

In Britain the identification of Saint Michael with the national cause was realised on a national scale in the shrine room at the Scottish National War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle, which incorporates a shrine with an eleven-foot oak figure of Michael slaying the dragon (fig. 166) designed by Alice Meredith-Williams. The sculpture is the heroic centre point in the shrine's iconography.²⁶⁶ The Scottish stained-glass artist Douglas Strachan had suggested Saint Michael, describing him as

a Symbol of Righteousness overcoming Wrong in the perpetual antagonism between the Spirit of Good and the Spirit of Evil. He is the Captain of the Heavenly Hosts, and Conqueror of the Powers of Hell: but he is also Captain of all Earthly hosts fighting in a just cause and conductor and guardian of the spirits of the dead.²⁶⁷

Ian Hay's guide to the memorial likewise identified Michael in terms of just cause.²⁶⁸ Publicly and privately Saint Michael is converged with national cause in the Great War. The figure is suspended above the interior shrine casket, protecting the Roll of Honour inscribed with the names of the deceased within it.

Strachan's seven windows illuminate the room (fig. 167). The 1928 guidebook recognises that Saint Michael and the windows suggest "the feelings and forces deep in human nature which make first for War and then for the triumph of Peace."²⁶⁹ The left two depict the "Birth of War", and address narratives from the Hebrew Bible.²⁷⁰ The Creation of the World takes place in the upper register, with Angels holding six orbs symbolising the six days of Creation and evoke Edward Burne-Jones's *Days of Creation* (fig. 168). In the central register is the story of Cain and Abel, while the story of Abraham and Isaac is depicted in the lower order. The right two windows correspond with the eschatological millenarian theme of the "Overthrow of Tyranny", where the lower order depicts strife and oppression.²⁷¹ Above Angels pour the "vials of wrath".²⁷² In the sky the Apocalypse's Four

²⁶⁶ MacMillan, *Scotland's Shrine*, 135.

²⁶⁷ *ibid.*

²⁶⁸ Hay, *Their Name Liveth*, 133.

²⁶⁹ Deas, *Scottish National War Memorial*, 19.

²⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 23.

²⁷¹ *ibid.*

²⁷² Revelation 16:1.

Horsemen ride behind Christ as the Rider on the White Horse from Revelation 19:11. The design culminates with multiple references to Christ in the central three windows. The innermost window depicts “The Spirit Triumphant” with the enthroned Christ combined with a dove above his head and Agnes Dei at his feet. Beneath this is an image of the Crucifixion. Here Christ appears to hover away from the cross; “no longer does its posture represent Suffering and Death, but Resurrection and Ascension.”²⁷³ At the base of the Cross a pelican symbolises Christ’s sacrifice. In the lowest register the allegorical figure of Peace holds in her arms the dying personification of War.²⁷⁴ A soldier at their feet lies facing upwards towards the redemptive Christ. In the left and right windows—known as “Praise” and “Peace” respectively—soldiers in late medieval armour stand on ceremony, while in the upper register the Elders of Revelation flank the throne.

The Edinburgh memorial’s apocalyptic references signify an eschatological climax that will relegate war to history. There remains a tension between triumphalism and the triumph over war in these representations; although they intended for the Archangel Michael to symbolise mankind’s triumph over the evil of war, he also symbolises the just cause. Therefore, the association theologically sanctions the allied war effort as a righteous—holy—war.²⁷⁵ The deceased are accordingly memorialised as God’s army. Propaganda and the Treaty of Versailles had attributed blame for the War to German militarism; therefore, the underlying concept—war’s conquest—contentiously echoes triumph over Germany.

Saint Michael and the Holy War concept recognises a moral dualism of good and evil. The War had inspired sober reflection on theodicy, and the cause, nature, and manifestation of evil. Charles Gore offered a prayer for Germany: “Drive away the evil passions of hatred, suspicion, and the fever of war, among them as among us.”²⁷⁶ Gore does not absolve all British responses; he was one of many religious leaders who identified evil flourishing in a void of true Christian belief on both sides. A pamphlet anonymously published in the *Papers for War Time* series stressed “Good and evil have become more sharply opposed and can be seen with unwonted clearness.”²⁷⁷ The Scottish theologian Peter T. Forsyth authored a tract on theodicy and the War, arguing that

War makes at least one contribution to human salvation—it is sin’s apocalypse. It reveals the greatness and the awfulness of evil, and corrects that light and easy conception of it which had come to mark culture and belittle redemption. This war’s revelation of human wickedness may perhaps do something to relieve us of a comely and aesthetic type of religion.²⁷⁸

²⁷³ Hay, *Their Name Liveth*, 138.

²⁷⁴ *ibid.*

²⁷⁵ Goebel, *Medieval Memory*, 93.

²⁷⁶ Gore, *War and The Church*, 39.

²⁷⁷ X, *Witness of The Church*, 4.

²⁷⁸ Forsyth, *Justification of God*, 12.

Forsyth continues, “The present state of things is a revelation (such as never came home to the genial pieties of peace) of this superhuman wickedness of the world”.²⁷⁹ While God is good and God is love, “It is a bold thing to believe in love amidst such a world... with the wretched experience in us and round us of the tough, invincible, recurrent power of evil. It is a bold thing in the face of the proud, progressive, aggressive, warlike, Satanic world.”²⁸⁰ The theologian Douglas Clyde Macintosh asserted in 1918 that “The war has given new weight to the problem of evil” in the world.²⁸¹

A fascinating example of the Holy War iconography was unveiled in a ceremony on July 5 1925 for a memorial tablet at Church of the Holy Trinity in Knightsbridge depicting Saint Michael and designed by Cecil G. Hare (fig. 169), with a dedication also taking place for the tablet and a recently installed memorial window (fig. 170) designed and executed by Harry Grylles. The window depicts Christ as the Rider on the White Horse surrounded by medieval knights on horseback riding beneath Saint George’s Cross, while atop a hill on the horizon behind radiates a spectral New Jerusalem. Scrolls across the bottom of the composition quote Revelation 19:11 “He was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” The lower lights had not been installed at the time of the dedication; they were however described in the service paper as symbolising “the summons to war and response as applied to the Motherland and her daughters”. Six biblical figures, Deborah and five Hebrew Bible warriors of Joshua, David, Jonathan, Judas Maccabaeus, and Gideon are depicted in the four centre lights. They are depicted alongside the Arms of Imperial Dominions, while in the outer lights is “the English protomartyr” Saint Alban, and Saint Martin, who is identified in his role as patron saint of foot soldiers.²⁸² Further scrolls quote Deborah’s song and emphasise the willing sacrifice; “My heart is toward the governors of Israel that offered themselves willingly among the people”; another, attributed to Judas Maccabaeus, stresses a glorious death; “Let us die manfully for our brethren’s sake, and not leave a cause of reproach against our glory”.²⁸³ The service’s two lessons used the apocryphal apocalyptic text of 2 Esdras 2:42-47, in which Esdras views the Son of God amongst a multitude of people standing upon Mount Zion, and Revelation 19:11-16 describing Christ riding forth from Heaven to defeat the beast. Hymns included “Souls of the Righteous”, and “The Supreme Sacrifice”. National—and Imperial—identity is conflated with moral Christian warfare. The Arms of Imperial Dominions and Holy Jerusalem in the same window is provocative; Christ rides out for the eschatological Holy War beneath the flag of England, while Empire is identified with this righteous cause, and is therefore granted divine status. It is a

²⁷⁹ *ibid*, 25.

²⁸⁰ *ibid*, 232.

²⁸¹ Macintosh, *God in a World at War*, 30.

²⁸² *Dedication Service Paper*, 7.

²⁸³ Judges 5:9; 1 Maccabees 9:10.

realisation of the Christian mission and identified within terms of the Kingdom of God and the Christian millennium.

Acts of commemoration reveal the impetus of their own time and place: these religious memorials appeal to apocalyptic hope and belief, without which the consolation they offer is essentially null and void. The formally similar iconography was consistently used before the Great War. Winged Angels representing peace or victory had been applied to Boer War memorials (fig. 171). Though typically used less frequently, Saint Michael was also an important figure in memorial iconography. The *Boer War Memorial Window*, Saint Leonard's Church in Rochdale (fig. 172), designed by George F. Bodley and Burlison & Grylls, foreshadows the British memorial windows to the 1914–18 war, and similarly places Saints George and Michael (along with Gideon) in the upper lights. Meanwhile in Leipzig, Germany, a twelve-metre-tall figure of the triumphant warrior Saint Michael stands at the front of the *Monument to the Battle of the Nations* (fig. 173-4), completed in 1913; it contributed to the growing importance of Germanic national identity and cause after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1.

The misused lexicon of evil and apocalypse that circulated during the War stoked the animosity and demonization of the other. After 1918 the Holy War rhetoric did not disappear; it morphed and continued in iconographies that justified the British war effort with a morally unambiguous dichotomy of 'good' and 'evil' and with reference to the eschatological battle against Satan. With national and Christian identities conflating, the British Empire inevitably adopted and maintained the mantle of the Kingdom of God upon Earth. The iconography of Saint Michael in the post-war period was indicative of the broader apocalyptic hope. The War styled as Armageddon had been passed through; the post-war came with the optimistic projection that a new and better world could be fashioned. The Apocalypse was in this sense a retrospective mode, looking back on recent events. Yet the failures of the League of Nations, the Wall Street crash of 1929 and economic depression, and the rise of belligerent authoritarian political regimes all contributed to increased anxiety in the 1930s as society shifted from one war context into another, and with it a new phase of apocalyptic fear. The hoped-for new world proved a false dawn, and the apocalyptic allusion shifted into a prospective mode.

Word and Image: Illustrating the Apocalypse

The late 1920s and early 1930s had witnessed a momentary flourishing of illustrated editions of the Apocalypse, suggesting the heightened state of the apocalyptic awareness in the interwar period. In 1927 M. R. James emphasised the relationship between the word and visual experience in his survey on the Apocalypse in art. Indeed, "the living fire of John's Apocalypse has

never lost its power”.²⁸⁴ Revelation continued to inspire paratextual images accordingly. The convergence of word and image—as is recognised in an illustrated book—is an example of what Gérard Genette has termed ‘paratext’, or details that surround the text proper such as “the author’s name, a title, a preface, [or] illustrations”. These are by their nature considered peripheral, yet “this fringe, [is] always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author”.²⁸⁵ As such, the paratext contributes to our relationship with the text, and influences the conception of the written component itself; they provide exegesis. The interwar was “a veritable golden age of the illustrated book”.²⁸⁶ The renewed interest in the illustrating the Apocalypse was in part due to D. H. Lawrence; Frederick Carter, Blair Hughes-Stanton and John Buckland Wright all took up the task with influence from Lawrence.

Frederick Carter’s interest in the Apocalypse developed independently of Lawrence. In December 1922 Carter initiated written correspondence with Lawrence regarding an astrological and alchemical reading of Revelation.²⁸⁷ Carter sent a manuscript analysis of astrology and Revelation titled *Dragon of Revelation*, along with several of his wood engravings to Lawrence in 1923. Although Lawrence found it a difficult read and thought Carter’s arguments poorly established, it was deeply inspiring.²⁸⁸ The manuscript was reduced, revised, and published as *The Dragon of the Alchemists: a book of Drawings by Frederick Carter* in 1926, comprising an essay and a series of thirty-eight etchings by Carter, with an introduction by Arthur Machen. Carter attempted to situate the Apocalypse within a wider mythological and astrological tradition; the prints share this complex matrix of comparative mythology. A small number of the thirty-eight published images explicitly signify Judeo-Christian apocalyptic narratives. *The Seven Candles* (fig. 175) depicts Christ’s Crucifixion in the midst of the seven candles that reference Revelation 1:20. The image invites speculation—“the one who is like the son of man” is Christ on the cross, while the seven candles are depicted with typological reference to the Jewish menorah. Some gain an apocalyptic dimension in light of Carter’s comparative study; *The Wine Press* (fig. 176) corresponds to the Harvest of the Earth, and the imagery of the wine press in Revelation 14:19-20. A print in Aberdeen Art Gallery of *The Dragon* (fig. 177) is inscribed by Carter with a different title—*The Red Dragon*—alluding to Revelation 12:3. Carter’s iconography is far from descriptive or didactic; he innovates the iconography of the Apocalypse thanks to his ambition to situate it intertextuality and within a mythological tradition. Carter made further images during this period with an even more explicit use

²⁸⁴ James, *Apocalypse*, 26.

²⁸⁵ Genette, *Paratexts*, 1-2.

²⁸⁶ Martin, “Illustrated Books,” 35.

²⁸⁷ A history of the relationship is in Kalnins, Introduction, 3-31.

²⁸⁸ *Letters*, Vol.4, 459-60.

of apocalyptic motifs. It was perhaps because of this specificity that they were unused in the publication, although a number were later published in a 1937 folio (fig. 178-83).²⁸⁹

Carter agreed to return to *The Dragon of the Alchemists* in 1929 at Lawrence's behest; they agreed a more collaborative relationship going forward.²⁹⁰ A new manuscript was being prepared and was published as *Dragon of Revelation* (1931), later revised and republished as *Symbols of Revelation* (1934). Carter's images were absent from both. Lawrence died on 2 March 1930; his last book, *Apocalypse*, published posthumously in 1931, began as an introduction to Carter's *Dragon of Revelation*. Carter had been contemporaneously illustrating Revelation directly for the Mandrake press; it was never published.²⁹¹ Research at the Harry Ransom Center has uncovered sketchbooks recording Carter's exploration of the iconography for this illustrated version (fig. 184). His design for the opening page depicts a foreshortened woman's legs apart. Apocalypse and sex, as indicated for example in the Whore of Babylon, is foregrounded in Carter's interpretation of the text. Carter's ambition was never realised; only provocative fragments remain.

In 1932, Hughes-Stanton's illustrated Apocalypse was published by the Gregynog Press, with Lawrence having suggested he illustrate the text. It was published as an entirely premium version limited to 250 copies. The tendency for limited editions was pragmatic; as Lawrence told Hughes-Stanton; "work for the limited-edition people now—it's the only way to make money".²⁹² The title page establishes the book's aesthetic, with Hughes-Stanton's interlinked typography denoting the strong element of design endowed on the book and the esoteric, cosmic phantasmagoria of the text (fig. 185). Images are interwoven with the text of the Apocalypse, drawing attention to different passages and ideas as a process of visual exegesis (fig. 186). Further, as Christopher Rowland identified in the depiction of the white horse (fig. 187), Hughes-Stanton "invites self-involvement on the part of the viewer as a reaction to the text, rather than mere observation."²⁹³ The effect is that one cannot be anything other than a participant in the events of the Apocalypse. As an event that is meant to be total, anything less in the visual representation would diminish the apocalyptic totality.

Shortly after moving to Paris, John Buckland Wright was inspired by Lawrence's *Apocalypse* to produce woodcut illustrations to Revelation for the Halcyon Press in 1931.²⁹⁴ He was still at work on the eleven images in 1934.²⁹⁵ Only four of the engravings were completed (I, III, IV, V).²⁹⁶ A fifth had reached a near final state. The compositions follow the narrative. The first depicts Saint John receiving the Revelation of 1:12-16 (fig. 188). Six rays of light diagonally cross the print towards the

²⁸⁹ The folio was selected by a collector of Carter's work, the poet Terence Ian Fytton Armstrong under his pen-name John Gawsworth.

²⁹⁰ Kalnins, Introduction, 12.

²⁹¹ *ibid.*

²⁹² *Letters*, Vol. 7., 457.

²⁹³ Rowland, "Images of Apocalypse," 168.

²⁹⁴ Fordham, "Notes," 120.

²⁹⁵ "Wood Engravings," 124.

²⁹⁶ Buckland Wright, "Catalogue," 158.

Saint John who is before the haloed Christ in Majesty surrounded by a mandorla and seven Lamps. In Christ's right hand are seven stars, while in his left is a book. By the second image Saint John is kneeling upon a cloud (fig. 189), apparently having been lifted into the Heavens.²⁹⁷ The shrouded figure is the unknowable face of God.²⁹⁸ Seven torches burn along the upper arc of the mandorla, while winged manifestations of the four evangelists are either side of Christological lamb who stands "as though slain". Directly below is a disc of the "sea of glass like unto crystal", while zodiacal signs mark the lower region of the mandorla in a convex arc.²⁹⁹ The third depicts the Four Horsemen charging across the sky (fig. 190); dead pile up on the Earth as others are physically lifted from the Earth in a rare depiction of midtribulationist Rapture. The fourth image (fig. 191) depicts Revelation 9:1, and the sounding of the fifth trumpet. Four angelic trumpeters carry out their deed while a star falls from the sky. The fifth image (fig. 192) depicts the events after the sixth trumpet in Revelation 9:13-16, when four angels slay a third of mankind. Either side of the mighty figures is a concession to contemporary warfare, with aircraft storming forth from the clouds suggesting that the four angels are playing some role in stirring up a large-scale conflict.

The five images develop the iconography established with Dürer's *Apocalypse* with contemporary imagery. The resultant hybrid is both loyal to scripture and tradition, yet also conscious of modernism. It is unclear why John Buckland Wright failed to complete the project, though it was something of unusual work in his career, which increasingly became orientated towards eroticised nudes. In 1933 he helped Stanley William Hayter in founding the Parisian print studio Atelier 17. Hayter had been producing his own portfolio of six surreal modernist apocalyptic images (fig. 193-8) contemporaneously to Buckland Wright. Hayter had identified in himself a certain "apocalyptic preoccupation" around the early 1930s.³⁰⁰ It resulted in the plates collectively titled *L'Apocalypse* (1930-31) with an accompanying apocalyptic poem by the writer and critic Georges Hugnet. The engravings were not illustrations to Hugnet's text; rather, the text is an elliptical running commentary upon the images.³⁰¹ All six are without individual titles, nor is there sequential order.

The first plate is a superimposed image that hints at two figures that share a heart; one is a string construction overlaid on the shadowy surface of the second behind which diagonal lines recede in the pictorial space. An apparently eclipsed sun hints at the Apocalypse's celestial phenomena. The second plate has been described as a "Powerful conjuration of total disintegration... [with] houses opening like packs of cards and the rain of broken busts".³⁰² The

²⁹⁷ Revelation 4:2-10.

²⁹⁸ Exodus 33:20-23.

²⁹⁹ Revelation 4:6.

³⁰⁰ Carey, "Apocalyptic Imagination," 308.

³⁰¹ Reynolds, *Engravings* 308.

³⁰² *ibid.*, 5.

retrospective exhibition of Hayter at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, gave the plate the title *Un Bruit De Cataclysmes* in reference to Hugnet's text, therefore prioritising the word over the image.³⁰³ The third plate interprets the four horsemen as rider-less horses in a constellation of stars. As in Lawrence, Carter, and Buckland Wright, Hayter recognises the Apocalypse in reference to astrological signs. Plate four is an almost cubist construction in lines of a partially naked woman. In Revelation nakedness is a sign of depravity and spiritual inadequacy, while Hugnet's text suggests something like the Whore of Babylon: "Derrière elle venait un homme avec une femme si belle que l'oubli ne pouvait déruire la femme, ni le souvenir. Et l'homme tenait à elle comme on tient à l'absence." The fifth plate depicts five figures via sinuous lines being lifted upwards—evoking the Rapture—from an ominous black sphere. The Ashmolean retrospective provided the final plate with the title *Quand La Main Se Retira*, again in reference to Hugnet's text.³⁰⁴ Graham Reynolds described the plate;

It represents the mould which is left when a clasped hand clutches some plastic substance, such as clay. This illustrates the favourite thesis of the artist that our method of conceiving three-dimensional space is to some extent ambiguous... the poet has written that when the hand withdraws nothing is left but this monument erected to its memory and to the void which has become a statue.³⁰⁵

A single, sinuous crisp line defines the hand that is making the fist and is produced by engraving. The interior void is concretised as the totem and depicted using dry-point. Hayter inverts the hand and space, reversing presence and absence. He returned to it some years later, making a sculpture of squeezed clay (fig. 199). *L'Apocalypse* proved commercially unsuccessful.

Hayter started work on *Combat* (fig. 200), based upon an earlier unconscious drawing from March 1936 in which he saw the tensions in Spain that resulted in the outbreak of Civil War in July that year.³⁰⁶ Hayter described the print in 1941 as a violent encounter of armed combatants in a valley, identifying the forms of crosses and a horse struggling to the left of the image. He identified the examples of Italian Quattrocento art, acknowledging "Ucello's influence in horses", as seen for example in *The Battle of San Romano* (c.1438–40) (fig. 201), while also citing Antonio Pollaiuolo's *Battle of Naked Men* (c.1465) (fig. 202); thus Hayter situated his print in a long tradition of military history paintings.³⁰⁷ In 1937 Hayter was invited by the Republican government to travel in Spain—and Picasso painted *Guernica* (fig. 203). Hayter and Picasso met in 1934 and were in frequent contact until 1939 when Hayter left for New York. They exchanged works, while Hayter provided the Spaniard with technical assistance. Picasso amassed a large collection of Hayter's work including a

³⁰³ "Catalogue," *Renaissance of Gravure*, 100.

³⁰⁴ *ibid.*

³⁰⁵ Reynolds, *Engravings*, 5.

³⁰⁶ Black and Moorhead, "Hayter's Method," 48.

³⁰⁷ Hayter, "Letter to Robert Lewis Isaacson." Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983.1143.2(2)

copy of *Combat*.³⁰⁸ The composition's cacophonous intensity was reprised in a print titled *L'Apocalypse* (1938) (fig. 204) that was included in the 1937 reissue of *L'Apocalypse*. The reissue made Georges Hugnet's contribution paramount while Hayter's was subordinate; the title page reads, "avec une eau-forte de S. W. Hayter" in reference to the recent print *L'Apocalypse*. The print is derivative of the six earlier prints, combining them into a single image; the preceding works are omitted. The visual dimension to the project had been side-lined to the extent that it was only present as a single condensed image. The visuality of the biblical text had influenced a surrealist, secular reading, which accordingly inspired a literary work that superseded the visual; the image gave way to the word.

Illustrated books and prints commodified the apocalyptic imagery and indicate the cultural currency of the Apocalypse and related ideas; the consumer became a participant in the exchange and dissemination of the notion of apocalyptic decline. A sense of Western Civilisation's decay and collapse was to some degree legitimised by the texts, which serve to remind us that all things must and will pass, for better or worse. Exegetically they present Revelation as theological vital and valid today; indeed, attempts to contemporise it suggest that the end is indeed nigh. In the next section of the chapter I will address how an expected collapse of Western Civilisation coloured the practice and outlook of one artist in particular during the interwar.

Cecil Collins: "Light of the Apocalypse"

Cecil Collins possessed an apocalyptic orientation in the 1930s that was articulated throughout his own words and images, prophesying a forthcoming period of death and decay before regeneration. In 1944 the poet Stephen Spender published an article on Collins. Spender had received assistance from the artist, who had provided Spender with an explanation of his outlook; the article ends with Collins's assertion, "The sky of our generation has been lit by from the beginning of childhood by the light of the apocalypse, always before our eyes have ridden the four horsemen. Such a light is therefore the light of my pictures."³⁰⁹ Collins was 35 years old at publication.³¹⁰ He was born in 1908; by 12 he had already lived through the events of the War and the Spanish influenza pandemic. Collins was raised a Methodist; however, he went through a phase of belligerent atheism, painting a water colour titled *There Is No God* (fig. 205) for a competition while studying at the Royal College between 1927–31.³¹¹ His tutors included Gilbert Spencer. In *God has Flown from this World* (1930) (fig. 206) he addressed God's apparent absence. It is inscribed:

god has flown from this world, Ho! Ho! Ho! What a flight!
you cannot dissociate war and Disease
from that universal reprobate—God (Antoni Valois)

³⁰⁸ *ibid.*

³⁰⁹ Spender, "Work and Opinion," 119.

³¹⁰ *ibid.*, 115.

³¹¹ Loverance, *Christian Art*, 82-3.

—My God, my god, why hast thou forsaken me
Christ's own words upon the cross Matthew Chp. 25, verse 46
You may be sure of the worm
(perhaps it is out of my Sickniss [*sic*] that I make a god) (Pascal)

The inscription encapsulates the sense of abandonment and repulsion that describes and elaborates the image. This atheist attitude is articulated in a visionary aesthetic and justified via a nihilistic reading of Matthew 25:46, interpreting Jesus' exclamation from the cross as a continuation of the struggle of Gethsemane and an abandoned son's lament. This contrasts with other interpretations of the passage as a quotation of Psalm 22:1, which prophesies this fate for the messiah. The inscription reveals that Collins's reading included Antoni Valois, and the mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal. By the end of Collins's studies he was reading religious philosophy in the works of John Milton, romantic literature, and the metaphysical poets Henry Vaughan and Thomas Traherne; artistically he had started to experiment with biomorphic shapes.³¹² Soon Collins had started making images that explored the struggle between good and evil. By 1933 he was establishing his nascent style and iconography; the cynicism was reduced, and a spiritual earnestness started accompanying the Blakean aesthetic.

The drawing *Angel Images and Negative Spectres in Conflict* (1933) (fig. 207) depicts a series of biomorphic shapes in a landscape. The sun radiates above; to the left is an arborescent form with four branches. The tallest has a single eye, while four trumpets emerge from the furthest to the right. A second structure is located to the right topped off with three chimneys or exhausts. Four abstract forms stand beside it, while another is constrained by a network of taut strings. The strings and biomorphic forms would later be seen in Barbara Hepworth's sculpture (fig. 208). To the right is a third structure with antennae. Below four tapered figures are attached to an underground system of tunnels or roots. Collins painted a more explicit representation of divine conflict in 1933 titled *The Fall of Lucifer* (fig. 209), also known as *The Holy War*. The two works have been recognised as corresponding images of celestial conflict between absolute good and evil.³¹³ Collins apparently encouraged comparisons by exhibiting the artworks side by side in his 1937 Dartington exhibition (fig. 210).³¹⁴ The former is closer to the battle of the abstract concepts, while the latter is the War of the armies that literally embody the concepts.

The diametrically opposed forces in *The Fall of Lucifer* identify with Revelation's War in Heaven.³¹⁵ The composition is tiered into three registers suggesting the iconographic precedent of the Last Judgment. Figures rise to the left according to the iconography of the resurrected who traditionally rise to Christ's right. They stand with a lamb that alludes to Christ. Angelic trumpeters in

³¹² Anderson, *Quest for Happiness*, 30-31.

³¹³ Gale, "Angel Images."

³¹⁴ *ibid.*

³¹⁵ Revelation 12:7-10.

the upper region suggest the trumpeters heralding the Last Judgment. Collins's iconography relates to the two titles—*The Fall of Lucifer* occurs in the upper portion, while *The Holy War* is fought in the lower region.³¹⁶ The titles situate the work in a very particular religious context; *The Fall of Lucifer* was used at Collins's 1935 solo exhibition at the Bloomsbury Gallery, London, and references the casting out of the rebel Angels commanded by Lucifer from Heaven.³¹⁷ *The Holy War* is a specific reference to the War in Heaven. Collins's former title shifts the emphasis away from the conflict itself onto the condition of fallenness imposed upon the Angels.

The imagery of the Angel rejected from paradise and falling to the world below recurs in *Souls Singing in the Evening* (c.1933) (fig. 211). An evening sun emits rays of light in the upper register, as two Angels plunge downwards billowing smoke. Seven naked figures gather within a walled enclosure and appear to be the title's singing souls. To the right are two tombstones suggesting that these souls are apart from their bodies. In Job 38:4-7 God asks "Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?... When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" The passage has been used to establish that the fall of Angels occurred before the creation of man. It was important to Collins's interest in fallen Angels, and to the painting.³¹⁸ "All the sons"—humans and Angels—apparently rejoice; however, the Angels in the sky are a looming threat. The biblical intertext anticipates the threat; the "morning stars" alludes to Lucifer, which translates as "bright morning star". The intertext is a dialogue between God and Job; the dynamic is reciprocated in the human and celestial being in the foreground of the watercolour. This pair of figures stand with their backs towards the viewer. One on the left is naked with its arm around the figure to the right with golden hair and who wears a mottled suit of golden armour.

Two lost works from this period include *Resurrection* (exhibited in 1935) and *The Transformation of Hell* (exhibited in 1937). The titles alone suggest the soul's journey following death. The latter was produced "close in time to *The Fall of Lucifer*... having a black grid through which flames were visible and above which the souls of the dead rose."³¹⁹ The concept of resurrection was addressed in *Virgin Images in the Magical Processes of Time* (1935) (fig. 212). Four large forms float in an endless ocean, with a concentric sun in the blue sky above. A figure is located on each of the two right hand forms; one stands naked, the other only has its head visible, while the body tapers. A quintessential motif of surrealism—a broken classical column—stands on the smallest form. A larger biomorphic form to the composition's left is inscribed "Resurrection" eleven times. Four bursts of rays are emitted from its three highest regions.

³¹⁶ Gale, "Fall of Lucifer."

³¹⁷ Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:16; Revelation 12:7-9.

³¹⁸ Collins, *Retrospective*, 12.

³¹⁹ *ibid*, 13.

As Collins recognised, the Four Horsemen of Revelation 6:1-8 proved a suitable metaphor for the historical context. The riders are among the Apocalypse's most recognisable subjects and are released by the Lamb of God on opening the first four seals; each seal corresponded to a rider. The first, 'Conquest' or 'Pestilence', rides a white horse with a crown and bow and was associated with the world-wide influenza epidemic. The second, 'War', rides a red horse, and takes peace from the Earth; it was manifest in global wars. The following, 'Famine', carries a pair of scales on the back of black horse and appears in poverty and economic hardship. Collins had known the short supply of common goods and foodstuffs during the Great War and the introduction of rationing in 1918. The British economy immediately boomed following the War, however economic depression hit between 1921 and 1924, and stagnation followed. UK unemployment in industry rose to 17% in 1921 and peaked at over 23% in 1933.³²⁰ It remained high until the Second World War. The global reverberations of the 1929 Wall street crash and the Great Depression resulted in high levels of poverty worldwide; the subsequent collapse of international trade exacerbated the crisis. In the USA poverty was combined with failed harvests and the dust bowl effect, while the heavily indebted Weimar Germany collapsed into a Nazi dictatorship in 1933. The Soviet Union, largely outside international trade, was relatively unaffected, however multiple famines occurred throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The largely impoverished proletariat inherited from Tsarist rule remained. Influenza, war, and poverty and famine result in the fourth rider on a pale horse; the horseman is unambiguously identified as Death.

Spender proposes that Collins has more in common with the poets Henry Treece and J. F. Hendry than with neo-romantic modern artists such as Henry Moore, John Piper, and Graham Sutherland.³²¹ This association was to do with the tension resulting from the need to "express and control ideas which were inevitably terrifying".³²² In 1936 Collins published his first poetry in *The New English Weekly* journal.³²³ The untitled work combines the surrealist techniques of automatism and *découpé* with romantic subjects; death, sex, and religion. Hendry and Treece were members of the British Apocalyptic Movement of poets—an offshoot of British surrealism that had slowly been coalescing in the late 1920s and early 1930s—and had adopted the term to designate a philosophy of social collapse. Hendry recognised their use of Revelation's vision of the world's end as a metaphor for social collapse.³²⁴ They secularised the biblical prophecy, seeing in it a symbolic manifestation as opposed to a literal, prophetic transcription of events. Yet even in this altered state

³²⁰ Eichengreen and Hatton, *Interwar Unemployment*, 7.

³²¹ Spender, "Work and Opinion," 115-6.

³²² *ibid*, 116.

³²³ Collins, "Poetry," 370.

³²⁴ Salmon, *Poets of the Apocalypse*, 26.

he adopts an apocalyptic tone and maintains an apocalyptic critique of the contemporary context by heralding the end is at hand.

Herbert Read was a key player in both surrealism and the Apocalypse movements. In 1936 he included Collins's *Angel Images and Negative Spectres in Conflict* in his first book on surrealism and included it—along with *Virgin Images in the Magical Processes of Time*—in the 1936 International Surrealist exhibition in London. In the catalogue Read described surrealism as “the desperate act of men too profoundly convinced of the rottenness of our civilisation to want to save a shred of its respectability.”³²⁵ Read recognised the movement's romantic heritage, believing that surrealism could be derived from Coleridge and the English Romantics; Collins likewise recognised the Romantic movement's last remnants within surrealism.³²⁶ Yet Collins believed that surrealism lacked sincerity, and it's adherence to Marxism was politically naïve; both Breton and Read had pledged the surrealists to communism. Meanwhile, the surrealists suspected Collins of introducing *religious* meaning with *Virgin Images in the Magical Processes of Time*; the differences were unreconcilable, and Collins ceased exhibiting with the surrealists.

Spender suggested that Collins “passed over the threshold of surrealism into his own world of poetic imagery”.³²⁷ The 1936 exhibition had been a revelation.³²⁸ According to Collins “Surrealism is an expression of The Age of Death, a psychic sunset of man, it is the inevitable phenomenon of the decline of the old order of man.”³²⁹ It diagnoses a condition, “bring[ing] out the evil into the light”, however it offers no solution.³³⁰ It is the product of an art that has “become bitter revengeful and negative and reveals itself as destroyer.”³³¹ A sketch book in the Tate archive dating from 1936–7 makes clear an apocalyptic orientation in Collins's thinking. His writing contrasts lyrical prose with aphoristic brevity and draws upon an idiosyncratic lexicon of ideas. Collins identifies the approaching end of the contemporary world and era, which he suggests has been defined by materialism; “The exploitation of gods instrument by man for man is the sin of our time and from that arises the disease of war”.³³² The condition is identified with industrialisation; “with the growth of industrial civilisation the Nature man rose up again... It brought about a civilisation which began to collapse in that phenomenon of Nature Fate, the Great War.”³³³ Nature Fate is an ideology that “is strongly prepared to resist the New ideas and images of the Spirit of Life. This resistance and war is Hell, and Satan is Nature Fate”.³³⁴ Another consequence of this condition is the rising up of Communism and

³²⁵ Read, Introduction, 13.

³²⁶ Read, *Surrealism*, 22; Collins, “Theatre of the Soul,” 139.

³²⁷ Spender, “Work and Opinion,” 116.

³²⁸ Anderson, *Quest for Happiness*, 42.

³²⁹ Derwent scrapbook, Tate archive, TGA 923/1/1/6, 14.

³³⁰ *ibid.*, 2.

³³¹ *ibid.*, 3.

³³² *ibid.*, 12.

³³³ *ibid.*, 4.

³³⁴ *ibid.*, 14.

Fascism, while “Surrealism is a movement in the power of Nature Fate, and only freedom from that Fate can bring a new Art and New Civilisation.”³³⁵ Collins identifies that paradise is within human agency, and that humans are approaching a moment of reckoning where they have to decide: is it “an expression of God, or Nature Fate? This is the issue that will be decided in the coming age of our world.”³³⁶

This materialistic world will be replaced by a better world of Super-rational art and humanity; “The civilisation that is to come will be built by the spiritual man and will be a super rational civilisation unified by super rational ideas for it is Religion that creates civilisations, and it is Nature fate that destroys them... The old type of Art like the old type of man must and will pass”.³³⁷ He warns “art will probably be stamped out... and for a time may vanish but I know it will come back, for its day and the day of all life is yet to come.”³³⁸ Collins’ rhetoric adopts the mode of the Apocalypticist in the dichotomy of a world that “will pass” and one that is “to come”. Collins’s alludes to biblical phraseology to reinforce the prophetic ‘visionary’ quality of his own text.

New creation is contrasted with the materialistic art as exemplified by the Royal Academy. Collins reassures that there are “the seeds and indications of a new epoch of art”.³³⁹ He indicates hope amidst darkness;

the seeds of new life are planted in dark places, and the Soul of Life has re-entered the Fate of Nature in our Time, The Age of Death and the Age of Birth. Soon in the immediate future I think Art will be for a time divided into the expression of these two things, an Art expressing the Age of Death, an Art expressing the Age of Birth...³⁴⁰

Death followed by new birth suggests a type of resurrection, however death also denotes forthcoming eschatological interruption.

It is easy to speak of the future but not so easy to speak of the immediate terrible era through which we shall pass, when in the words of the scriptures “the Limbs of man shall quake”, his flesh shall creep. We artists now are the hermits offering prayer to God before we bury our heads in the dust while the horizons of the world are full of fire.³⁴¹

The quotation comes from Bahá’u’lláh’s writing on the necessary, unfolding apocalypse. Once this cataclysm has transpired, then the “Divine Standard be unfurled, and the Nightingale of Paradise warble its melody.”³⁴² The Bahá’í faith follows a form of dispensationalist teaching on the unity and truth of all faiths. Accordingly, Collins addresses the prophets from different religious traditions, mentioning both Buddha and Mohammed along with Bahá’u’lláh.³⁴³ There is a

³³⁵ *ibid*, 4.

³³⁶ *ibid*, 12.

³³⁷ *ibid*, 2-3.

³³⁸ *ibid*, 20.

³³⁹ *ibid*, 4.

³⁴⁰ *ibid*, 14.

³⁴¹ *ibid*, 2-3.

³⁴² Bahá’u’lláh, *Writings*, 118-119.

³⁴³ Derwent scrapbook, 5.

predominantly Bahá'i-Christian orientation in Collins's essay however, with Christ singled out with the status of "The Divine Fool" who was crucified by the Fate of Nature.³⁴⁴

The role and identification of the Fool was far from derogatory; rather as Anthony Bertram identified "our unhappy 'civilisation' ... needs the fool to redeem it".³⁴⁵ In a Christian context, the Fool derives from the writings of St. Paul.³⁴⁶ It refers to the those who subvert or renounce worldly possessions or conventions and thereby conveys a higher truth or purpose. From 1939 the Fool became an important motif in his work; the more specific interest was inspired by a drawing by his spouse Elisabeth. Collins elaborated on the Fool in two later essays; in 1942 he started writing the essay *The Vision of the Fool* (1947), while he contributed the 1945 essay "Anatomy of the Fool" to *Transformation Three*.³⁴⁷ The Fool has therefore been identified with the War and post-1945; however, it was already present in these unpublished writings. Collins's Fool represents innocent, pure consciousness and the poetic imagination which stands in contrast to the scientific ideals of Western society. The scientist is, according to Collins "the absolute representative of modern society's view of life."³⁴⁸ In a society where everything needs to be functional, the "poetic man imagination in man is an anachronism".³⁴⁹ Collins proposes that the organised religion of the Church has become "the corpse of Christianity",³⁵⁰ citing the hypocritical rhetoric during the Great War that advocated "war in war-time and peace in peace-time."³⁵¹ Collins continues, asserting that the Church is not representative of Christ and elaborates that Christ was crucified by "the commercial Pharisees, by the authority of the respectable, and by the mediocre official culture of the philistines."³⁵² For Collins it is these same people who today stifle the poetic imagination. From this state of "complete disillusionment there can only come two things; final decay and death, or the birth of a faith."³⁵³ The Fool, the Saint, the artist, and the poet are the deliverers of civilisation from the modern scientific mode.

Ten months before the International Surrealism exhibition Collins had a solo exhibition in which he offered the earliest commentary for his nascent vision. The short manifesto-style piece of rhetoric established the seeds of many ideas that he would explore throughout his career. An indictment of the modern age is established; Collins rejects the scientific world view, political agendas and allegiances, and the tyranny of crowd behaviour. He contrasts his art as "visual music of the kingdoms of the imagination" and projects a future in which art will "feed the interior life of

³⁴⁴ *ibid*, 16.

³⁴⁵ Bertram, "Cecil Collins," 21.

³⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 4:10.

³⁴⁷ Collins "Anatomy," 25-28.

³⁴⁸ Collins, "Vision," 94.

³⁴⁹ *ibid*, 95.

³⁵⁰ *ibid*.

³⁵¹ *ibid*.

³⁵² *ibid*, 96.

³⁵³ *ibid*, 98.

individuals and will not be dominated by any theory: political, philosophical, religious”.³⁵⁴ Finally there is a call to action; “Be something: an individual: a personal entity... There must be in the world a spiritual revolution NOW.”³⁵⁵ Collins’s ideas were given further shape in two contemporaneous volumes of aphoristic writing with the surrealistic titles “The Sceptred [*sic*] Bone and Flower”. Each volume opens with an epigraph; the first declares, “Begun in the Age of Death when the hard seeds cry out for the light.”³⁵⁶ The second continues, “The psychology of the Conquest of Hell, and the birth of Heaven.”³⁵⁷ The former discerns the fallen or corrupt state of present age, while the latter advises on achieving a new world. Collins accepts that everyone must make a choice; “We are free to leave or enter Paradise, and most of us leave.”³⁵⁸ The Fall meanwhile offers hope; “Because we fell from Paradise, Paradise exists.”³⁵⁹ Collins writes conclusively elsewhere,

God is a state of being... a state of pure devotion to life where one no longer seeks to explain life, but is a state in which is life... the recovery of this state of being called pure poetry, Grace, The Kingdom of Heaven is the real aim of life and we can obtain this state of creative innocence only by difficult inner work... For the Fall of Man is true³⁶⁰

In these essays Collins shifts between an apocalyptic tone, metaphor, and belief while establishing two worlds; the fallen world where materialistic concerns triumph, and the transcendental Paradise. Collins recognises that the contemporary context is the fallen state that necessitates the pursuit of paradise. Fallenness, and the implicit concepts of corruption and degradation are therefore always on the peripheries of even his most idealised imagery. Anxiety pervades Collins’s thoughts on contemporary society, though there is not a sense of resignation, nor does Collins surrender to supernatural forces—rather he emphasises human agency in achieving this new world, while accepting that tribulation will precede it. This apocalyptic mode gives shape and order to the present time, explaining the condition of humanity as a phase in a larger narrative of history in which good will ultimately triumph. A religious or spiritual awakening, both personal and collective, would be key to society’s salvation. As we will see in the following section of the chapter, apocalypticism that was stripped of the spiritual dimension was even more prevalent in the pre-war 1930s.

³⁵⁴ Collins, “Foreword,” 29.

³⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 29-30.

³⁵⁶ Collins, “Bone & Flower: One,” 36.

³⁵⁷ Collins, “Bone & Flower: Two,” 43.

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 46.

³⁵⁹ *ibid.*

³⁶⁰ Collins, “Eternal Presence,” 88-9.

(Another) War on Earth

Richard was dead. Dead like the rest of the world was dead. Gassed, blown to pieces, buried alive or dead under some fallen building—suffocated or burned, probably not even a fragment of his dear body remained.³⁶¹

The salvation of human civilisation had coloured C. R. W. Nevinson's outlook from the early 1930s. Central to this would be an interrogation of the concept of progress and the possibility of averting another war. The *Studio* printed three original lithographs in April 1933 to celebrate the publication's fortieth year; one each by Frank Brangwyn, Laura Knight, and C. R. W. Nevinson. The last's contribution, titled *The Spirit of Progress* (fig. 213), is intertextually rich, assembling different, sometimes dissonant, elements from throughout his career, thereby alluding to his artistic development (fig. 214-20).³⁶² At the centre of the image is an artist's easel on which a canvas leans forth, with brushes and palette to the side. The artwork within the artwork depicts a nude with a combination of fragmented lines that suggest Nevinson's early futurist artworks. Howitzers and Bayonets are joined by massed revolutionary crowds dwarfed by the apparent model: a monolithic female torso, without limbs or head that was previously included in the still life *Asters* (c.1927) (fig. 221). Nevinson also presents a narrative of recent history while the ironic title interrogates the European myth of progress. It is a prototype of the problem paintings produced from around 1932 to 1935.³⁶³ In these he addressed the state of the world and revealed his secularised apocalyptic fears of a pending war.

Secular apocalypses, apocalypticism and apocalyptic fiction appropriate themes of religious apocalypses, though obviously minus God or transcendent reference.³⁶⁴ The literary critic and theorist Northrop Frye argues, "The biblical Apocalypse is our grammar of apocalypse."³⁶⁵ Secular apocalyptic fiction likewise bares (and *bears*) trace of the Christian apocalypse.³⁶⁶ The sociologist David Bromley states that apocalypticism, "as a theoretical concept is... a borrowed term" and is thus "constrained as a result of... the Judeo-Christian tradition". Bromley distinguishes between apocalypticism generically, "as a radical form of social organisation" and *religious* apocalypticism, as "a type of radical religious organisation."³⁶⁷ The idea of discontinuity and violent change is central to the secular apocalypse. Without the supernatural element secular apocalypses contemporise evil,

³⁶¹ Trubetzkaya and Nevinson, *Exodus A.D.*, 238.

³⁶² Black, *Complete Prints*, 107.

³⁶³ Walsh, *Hanging a Rebel*, 246.

³⁶⁴ Oswald, "Apocalyptic," 376.

³⁶⁵ Frye, "Theory of Myths," 141.

³⁶⁶ Wagar, *Terminal Visions*, 60-61.

³⁶⁷ Bromley, "Constructing Apocalypticism," 32.

and the source of destruction is made familiar. Occurrences such as warfare or revolution threaten the present order.

The rhetorical purpose of apocalypse indicates the alleged urgency of the message; this was true of Nevinson's problem paintings. Nevinson exhibited *Ave Homo Sapiens* (fig. 222) in November 1933; at his next solo exhibition in 1934 he showed *Sacrifice* and other provocatively titled works. A year on his final problem painting was exhibited; the work, *The Twentieth Century* was allegedly started in 1932. Thus, its gestation predates *The Spirit of Progress* and was contemporaneously painted with the other problem pictures. A subtitle described the work; "A cartoon for a mural decoration of a public building or seat of learning, suggested by the clash between thought, mechanical invention, race idolatry and the regimentation of Youth." Frank Rutter, writing in the *Sunday Times*, suggested "The verbal explanation is unnecessary. The composition explains itself." Nevertheless, Rutter believed that it "is a painting that should make people think, not only now, but at all times."³⁶⁸ Nevinson informed the *Daily Mirror* that "municipal authorities prefer groups and figures which are really awful things. They consider that women in cheese cloths are very artistic." He continued, hinting at its didactic purpose, "I do detest that form of mural decoration for public buildings. The whole idea is appalling in its triviality... [Man] is merely an animal using mechanical means and he is now frightened of his own inventions."³⁶⁹ Nevinson subverts murals—the then 'highest' art—to identify the problems within the society that has elevated the form.

The composition applies a similar formula as *The Spirit of Progress*, with a monolithic central figure surrounded by bayonets and howitzers, steamships and planes, with a cityscape rising above, tying it to an irrefutable political commentary. The crowds carry the flags of Nazism and Socialism; the heavy figure reworks Rodin's *The Thinker* into an anguished figure weighed down by his thoughts. His creative struggle has decayed into despair; it is the twentieth century condition. *The Thinker* was designed for Rodin's *The Gates of Hell* (1880–c.1890) (fig. 223), based on Dante's *Inferno*, which is a vision based on the Apocalypse and offers a glimpse into the reality of the afterlife. Nevinson's appropriation of the figure contextualises it in a new and very modern Hellscape.

The painting was the exhibition's sensation. A short article in the *Daily Telegraph* published ahead of the private view alleged that,

As a painter with a purpose Mr. Nevinson has found a good moment to make our flesh creep. He is... a pessimist of long standing... Optimists may perhaps argue that the thinker gazing unsubdued at the bayonets and heavy artillery indicates a prophetic belief in the ultimate triumph of reason, but I would hesitate to draw this conclusion.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ Rutter, "Galleries," 15.

³⁶⁹ "Women in Cheese Cloths," 9.

³⁷⁰ "London Day by Day," 14.

T. W. Earp described it as a “fine painting with a living purpose”.³⁷¹ According to H. J. Simon, the painting was “undoubtedly... a striking impression of modern contemporary history.”³⁷² The *Sketch*'s reporter observed that at the private view, “The first thing I noticed was that people made for the big Nevinson picture, ‘The Twentieth Century’, and animated clashes arose.”³⁷³ The *Sketch* reproduced the work claiming “...In view of the present world situation, it is interesting to note that the artist started this picture about 1932—obviously in a somewhat prophetic mood!”³⁷⁴ James Stanley Little differed in his opinion, arguing “This crudity goes beyond anything I can remember... in its flat defiance of every cannon which a decorative painting should properly observe”.³⁷⁵ In the *Christian Science Monitor* Rutter wrote an article asking whether a painter should “use his art for the expression of his opinions on Peace, Disarmament and International Politics?” In answering affirmatively, he asserted that Nevinson’s painting addressed “world tendencies at this critical moment of history, and is calculated to make all who see it pause and reflect. In the legitimate terms of mural decoration, it puts to the spectator that pregnant question, Quo Vadis?”³⁷⁶

Malvern dismissed Nevinson’s problem paintings as cynically designed to supply newspaper copy.³⁷⁷ However his mental health struggles suggest a more complex picture; he had never truly recovered from the Great War.³⁷⁸ At first Nevinson had denied any vulnerability; in 1915 it had been suggested that Nevinson had returned from the Western Front because his “nerves gave way, his health broke down”.³⁷⁹ Nevinson objected, claiming he was never better.³⁸⁰ Yet in 1917, Nevinson suffered a nervous breakdown. When he was offered an honorary commission as 2nd Lieutenant on being appointed for the Hall of Remembrance scheme he refused it, fearing a return to the trenches.³⁸¹ The extent of Nevinson’s trauma became apparent following the War. He reflected in 1919;

I can date the whole war by reference to my emotions... It was only after my third breakdown that I became an official artist... Much of my work was done under the most awful mental tension. It was the nastiest sort of job. It broke my health.³⁸²

That same year he had come close to suicide. Looking back in the 1930s he candidly revealed “I now know... I was too vain to show much fear.”³⁸³ He had come close to another breakdown in 1932;

³⁷¹ Earp, “Royal Institute,” 17.

³⁷² Simon, “Kensington Artists,” 5.

³⁷³ Mariegold, “What Every Woman Wants to Know,” 121.

³⁷⁴ “Twentieth Century,” 109.

³⁷⁵ Little, “Royal Institute,” 7.

³⁷⁶ Rutter, “Artist Considers Militarism,” Nevinson Album of Press Cuttings, Tate Archive.

³⁷⁷ Malvern, “Nevinson's modernisms,” 184.

³⁷⁸ Black, “Broken Warriors, Tortured Souls,” 24.

³⁷⁹ Wilenski, “Futurists Views,” 6.

³⁸⁰ Black, “Broken Warriors, Tortured Souls,” 20.

³⁸¹ Harries and Harries, *War Artists*, 104.

³⁸² “Painting War as a Soldier Sees It,” 83.

³⁸³ Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice*, 100.

I was suffering from abdominal shock and I had swallowed lots of belladonna and other pain-killing drugs, and as a result my pictures of this period have a weird quality. I became obsessed by suicidal tendencies. For some months I would keep looking at the beam in my studio and arrange the drop for hanging myself, and I would go off absent-mindedly and sniff the gas, morbidly wondering what it would feel like... I was overwhelmed by the stupidity of Europe... preparing for another slaughter.³⁸⁴

Nevinson had avidly read Otto Spengler's profoundly pessimistic metahistorical text *The Decline of the West* (trans. 1927) and was familiar with Freud's works including *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and *Civilisation and Its Discontents* (1923).³⁸⁵ Both Spengler and Freud provided intellectual credibility to popular fears over the deteriorating international context and another war.

G. K. Chesterton recognised a tension between how Nevinson positioned himself towards his artworks, and the artworks themselves. Chesterton acknowledged Nevinson's own prophetic interpretation of his work, writing,

...that a number of his own pictures were quite certainly prophetic, and that this prophetic power had generally come to him in dreams. He even says that he has painted and exhibited pictures which he himself dislikes; in obedience to the direction of dreams, and because he finds they have some superhuman or supernormal quality, to attract or repel, which can only come out the power which directs his dreams.³⁸⁶

Chesterton understood that this aesthetic judgment refers to "not pleasing the normal taste, not merely of the public, but even of the poet or the painter."³⁸⁷ The traumatic outlook in Nevinson's painting was interpreted in 1934 as his "morality urge".³⁸⁸ The secularised apocalyptic artworks developed in exchange with Nevinson's negative world-view and mental health; he was not a purveyor of aestheticised horror or disaster. Rather Nevinson's secular apocalypticism is the belief in a coming cataclysm that will reshape the world; the paintings are therefore primarily didactic rather than aesthetic.

The monumental seated central figure recurs in *Ave Homo Sapiens*, and evokes ancient statuary gone awry. Disproportionately large hands fall over its knees, while an undersized head is suffocated by a gas mask and paired with a muscular body suggesting the triumph of brawn over brains. The sky rains blood through which planes fly in formation. The phallic Artillery, bayonets, and a rider on horseback are shared with *Sacrifice*. Dark and light crosses mark the background in an irregular configuration; behind the figure's right shoulder three black crosses allude to Calvary. The Latin title can be translated as "hail mankind" and shares the ironic tone with *The Spirit of Progress*. A reporter described it as "one of the most blood curdling indictments of modern warfare one could imagine."³⁸⁹ Herbert Furst meanwhile declared in *Apollo* that it "is a bitter allegory of the incredible

³⁸⁴ *ibid*, 266.

³⁸⁵ Walsh, *Hanging a Rebel*, 231.

³⁸⁶ Chesterton, "Our Notebook," Feb 4, 1933. 142.

³⁸⁷ *ibid*.

³⁸⁸ "Our London Correspondent," Oct 22, 1934, 8.

³⁸⁹ "Does Labour Want Fascism?" 6.

degeneracy of the civilised world with its bestial reliance on tooth and claw, albeit mechanized out of recognition by science”.³⁹⁰ The *Nottingham Guardian’s* correspondent bluntly identified Nevinson’s sense of purpose, writing that he “takes himself far too seriously and imagines at times that he has a mission to preach to the world.”³⁹¹

Nevinson’s monolithic figures of this period “do not inspire confidence”.³⁹² They are oppressive elements that dominate the compositions. Their faces are obscured while limbs are exaggerated or omitted. Both the figures in *Ave Homo Sapiens* and *The Twentieth Century* sit hunched with a closed posture. Malvern suggests that *The Twentieth Century’s* central figure is a “badly drawn version of Rodin’s antihero... reworked from the gas-masked colossus in *Ave Homo Sapiens*.”³⁹³ I suggest that this is not giving enough credit to Nevinson. The two figures are similar in their obvious monolithic stature, nakedness, and distorted features; Rodin exaggerated features for expressive and dramatic effect, resulting in the gently enlarged hands of *The Thinker* in its large-scale form. Nevinson has pushed these experiments in scale to provoke a negative response. The *Thinker’s* hands have transformed into paws. They lack finesse; thus, the figure no longer inspires the will to action but resignation and lethargy. The emphasis shifts from laboured contemplation to melancholic grief. Nevinson’s distortions stop short of caricature, although the expressionistic distortion intensifies the already horrific concepts underpinning the imagery. By never quite resolving into the grotesque they remain outside easily relatable genres, and thus are all the more unsettling. P. G. Konody and others had previously been identified his wartime work with Goya.³⁹⁴ Nevinson was in his own words “obsessed” with Goya.³⁹⁵ *Ave Homo Sapiens* likewise finds a precedent in the Spanish artist’s work, which also featured gigantic figures amidst deeply unsettling imagery of panic and fury. In *Saturn Devouring his Son* (c.1819–1823) (fig. 224) the titan tears the left arm from the already decapitated figure in a wild-eyed frenzy. Both Nevinson and Goya unflinchingly address the death of generations.

A World in Need of Redemption

Nevinson’s critiques of contemporary society were not unique. At the 1933–4 Royal Society of British Artists exhibition, where *Ave Homo Sapiens* was shown, the “equally pretentious” William Otway McCannell exhibited *The World and the Three Wise Men* (fig. 225).³⁹⁶ It was identified with

³⁹⁰ Furst, “Notes of the Month,” 51.

³⁹¹ “Society of Artists,” 6.

³⁹² Malvern, “Nevinson’s Modernisms,” 184, 187.

³⁹³ *ibid.*, 182–188.

³⁹⁴ Konody, *Modern War Paintings*, 11; Crawford Fritch, *Great War: Fourth Year*, 17.

³⁹⁵ Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice*, 50.

³⁹⁶ “Society of Artists,” 6.

Nevinson's work as evidence of the problem picture's return to favour.³⁹⁷ McCannell's modern Magi were identified as literary figures; George Bernard Shaw, G. K. Chesterton, and H. G. Wells, while in *Apollo* Herbert Furst interpreted that their "offering is to save the infant Future".³⁹⁸ McCannell sets up the world as in need of intervention from a privileged elite—in this case intellectual rather than divine. His ominous prognosis had first been expressed prior to the Great War in a criticism on the concept of progress. According to McCannell—again citing the literary figures George Bernard Shaw and Alfred Russel Wallace—the "mess of the modern world" was inhibiting the "higher qualities of human nature". He argues that one needs to be conscious of regression, since the "evolutionary myth" of teleological progress had enabled apathy in society; "progress has never been... achieved apart from personal effort and striving."³⁹⁹ The Great War erupted less than eight months later.

McCannell painted of a number of socially conscious satires and allegories in the interwar that were often displayed in high profile exhibitions, including eleven works across eight different Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. He was also a frequent commenter on contemporary issues in the press. McCannell's work has been overlooked; only a small number of works are in public collections, while many others are lost. He submitted a satire on modern warfare entitled *The Devil's Chessboard* (fig. 226) for the Summer Exhibition of 1924. It became the year's problem picture, depicting two elderly white statesmen playing a grotesque game of chess. McCannell was quoted describing his work;

The Devil's Chessboard is meant to be a perfectly fearless satire upon modern war. It was not intended to be sensational or to present any 'problem.' None of the figures is personal, but all are intended to be typical. Two statesman-diplomats—who also stand for the comfortable patriarchs who sacrificed the youth of Europe—are playing a game of chess, with young men for pawns. Looking on are a cleric, typifying the Christian Church, which preached the beauty of sacrifice and exploited the symbolism of the Cross; a young woman typifying Society; the Spectre of Evil (a skeleton), highly gratified by the proceedings; a widow and a nurse in the background. In the foreground a child is playing with a pistol. The decoration behind shows war as it really is—a thing of blood and entrails.⁴⁰⁰

Secular and religious apocalyptic allusions are used extensively. There is no win status in McCannell's game of chess; the conflict is a game that everyone focuses upon. The only exception is a child who normalises warfare through play. The political classes and high society are diagnosed as fundamentally broken, while the cleric, a figure of absolute moral standing is revealed to be as fallible as those around him. Indeed, he represents the most belligerent rhetoric from the church in the Great War, when clergymen abused their position preaching Christian militarism and sending people to war with apocalyptic promises. The skeleton identified as the "Spectre of Evil" is also the

³⁹⁷ "Echoes of the Town," 9; "Problem pictures at Art Show," 16.

³⁹⁸ Furst, "Notes of the Month", 51.

³⁹⁹ McCannell, "Progress?" 257.

⁴⁰⁰ "Picture Satirising War," 28.

figure of Death, the fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse. McCannell engages with the iconography of the Triumph of Death in order to constitute a moralistic warning. Death is indifferent to the status, power, and authority of those around him; his presence as the gleeful malevolent spectre behind proceedings recognises the loss of individual human agency to suprahuman forces. Modern war now appears beyond human control. The allegory of the Devil's Chessboard, whereby any movement potentially heralds dire consequences, encapsulates the sense of futility in the War's stalemate, where the best tactic only resulted in further casualties. Neither of the statesmen are the devil though, leading us to speculate that the devil is something within us.

McCannell's description repeatedly emphasises the concept of sacrifice, lamenting the "sacrificed... youth of Europe" and decrying the "beauty of sacrifice" as preached by the church. The former indicates some nobility and special status for the dead; the latter identifies the church's abuse of this status. However, McCannell intimates that the concept of sacrifice in the context is flawed, as war equates to blood and entrails. The men have died for the patriarchs, and it is therefore the patriarchs who have "sacrificed" the men, indicating how this system of values is relative. Sacrifice is transactional, requiring one to give up something valued for other considerations. In this case it is evaluated by a system of ideals promoted by the patriarchs. McCannell interrogates the integrity of the language used to commemorate the dead, which in its ostensible purpose to comfort also condones the status quo. G. K. Chesterton responded to McCannell's description of the painting as a satire in an article titled "Satirizing the Great War" published in the *London Illustrated News*.⁴⁰¹ Chesterton asserts that satirising, denouncing, or defending war is a logical fallacy, since "War is not a proposal; it is the refusal of all proposals... It is not the problem of two men and how they shall act together; it is the problem of one man when the other man will not act with him. They do not agree to have war".⁴⁰² McCannell's allegation regarding the rhetoric of priests on the beauty of sacrifice and symbolism of the cross is also defended by Chesterton as the language of consolation motivated by a sincere belief they were "defending the weak against injustice".⁴⁰³ The War was, in Chesterton's eyes, a justified and moral cause.

McCannell disdained organised religion. His allegations turn Christian teachings against the church. The sin of hypocrisy—as identified in Acts 4:36-5:11—and its enacted within the church has often been associated with the apocalyptic narrative and the fourth Horsemen of the Apocalypse.⁴⁰⁴ At the 1928 Royal Society of British Artists exhibition McCannell offered a further criticism of the church titled *Faith, Hope, and Charity* (fig. 227), depicting churchmen arguing the revision of Book of

⁴⁰¹ Chesterton, "Our Notebook," May 17, 1924, 8.

⁴⁰² *ibid.*

⁴⁰³ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ Anselm, *Anticimenon*, 1:10; Emerson, "Apocalypse in Medieval Culture," 306.

Common Prayer.⁴⁰⁵ A new edition had required consent from Parliament, however anti-Catholic prejudices were stirred by staunch Protestant MPs. For a learned churchman, the pretence would likely evoke Luke 16:15; “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” McCannell identifies the churchmen’s sectarian divisions as at odds with the Christian values they preach.

McCannell’s satires proved too close for comfort for the Royal Society of British Artists, when in April 1939, they rejected from exhibition McCannell’s new painting *Modern Allegory* (fig. 228). It was exhibited at the Cooling Galleries, London, as the “BANNED PICTURE”.⁴⁰⁶ It depicted the Devil holding weighing scales that are balanced with the heads of Hitler and Mussolini. Death looms dressed in a cowl and with scythe in hand; behind him are President Roosevelt, and Lloyd George. Neville Chamberlain looks on confounded; the Munich agreement that been signed less than twelve months earlier has been unable to quell Hitler’s territorial ambitions. To Chamberlain’s right figures include the Emperor of Abyssinia Haile Selassie, who was then in exile following the Italian invasion of 1935. The doomed roof of St. Paul’s cathedral looms in the background, while to the right of the canvas is the silhouette of the Houses of Parliament’s clock tower. Both are engulfed in flames. In the foreground crosses suggest the Great War’s cemeteries, while also warning against further conflict. The painting conspires to present a world-wide crisis after which things can never be the same again. The exhibition committee rejected it with typical British understatement as “a little too political to show in the circumstances”.⁴⁰⁷ McCannell made no attempt to hide his disappointment; “It is a satire and it has no other meaning than to emphasise the gravity of the international situation... I know the committee are rather nervous of upsetting feelings.” The Nazi occupations of Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938, and Chamberlain’s last desperate attempt to prevent war with the Munich Agreement thus impacted on exhibition policy, resulting in censorship; before the month’s end Germany had rescinded the non-aggression pact that was signed with Poland in 1934. McCannell continued “I think things are so grave that I don’t feel I can go on painting as if there was no gravity”.⁴⁰⁸ As events moved towards war, art was increasingly looked to for denial and escapism. McCannell pointed out that “It is purely the abnormal times in which we are living... I regret it very keenly, because why should not paintings as well as writing express the gravity of things?”⁴⁰⁹

Unlike *The Devil’s Chessboard’s* retrospective orientation, *Modern Allegory* is a response to a political crisis in the present context with a prospective view towards another war. Secular and mythic imagery, the destruction of great cities, didacticism, and the visionary future tense of the

⁴⁰⁵ Konody, “Royal Society,” 14; Furst. “Art News and Notes,” (1929): 68.

⁴⁰⁶ “Art Exhibitions,” 12.

⁴⁰⁷ “Modern Allegory Withdrawn,” 14.

⁴⁰⁸ “Dictator Allegory Barred,” 9.

⁴⁰⁹ “Modern Allegory Withdrawn,” 14.

imagery place the painting in correspondence with Nevinson's allegories. Yet McCannell was more hopeful than Nevinson. The sculptor Roy Rasmussen reflected in 1992, "McCannell effused belief in a better world with such genuine good will and charm that his didacticism never offended. A modernist as an artist he was nevertheless very much an idealist of a past generation."⁴¹⁰

The Menace from Above

Three years before Nevinson exhibited his painting *Ave Homo Sapiens*, the Irish artist (John) Seán Keating exhibited a painting titled *Homo Sapiens: An Allegory of Democracy* (fig. 229) at the 1930 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Keating had been a student of William Orpen and worked as Orpen's assistant until 1916 when Keating left London for Dublin to avoid conscription. The Irish context proved fundamental to his own paintings, taking subjects "in the life and events of his own time and place."⁴¹¹ A clergyman wears a metal Brodie-style helmet and is in the process of putting on a gas mask as he perches above the skyline of New York, suggesting the city's centrality to world affairs after the Wall Street Crash the year before. Three bi-planes fly over the city. The figure appears to have been rendered speechless, with mouth agape and eyes wide open—their rotundity emphasised by his glasses round lenses and thin frames. He is not a fighting man. A strong light source envelops the left-hand side of his face. He is accompanied by items indicating state apparatuses; a bishop's mitre, a judge's wig, and an unidentified black and gold emergency service helmet. Keating described the meaning of work:

In all ages and cultures, dress, particularly the hat, has played an important part as a means of arousing emotion, enthusiasm, and fear. So that today an inherited instinct enables us subconsciously to classify men according to their hats. *Homo Sapiens* revolves around the repulsive gas mask, and the idiotic tin hat. The picture might be described as a criticism of the soundness of man's claim to sapience, expressed in terms of hats, or it might be called a portrait of the hat-fearing animal.⁴¹²

It was described in the *Spectator* as having "cynical aspersions on the true value of progress".⁴¹³ For all the of civilisation, now there was nothing left to do than reach for the newest hat; a gas mask. Keating exhibited the painting repeatedly in the early 1930s, however he failed to sell the painting during his lifetime.

It is unclear whether Nevinson was aware of Keating's work, or if it the shared motifs and themes are coincidental. Either way, they indicate contemporary sensitivities and fears. Francis Clayton painted the modern city on the verge of disaster in *Seven Angels of the Apocalypse* (1926) (fig. 230). From left to right across the composition's upper region seven Angels empty the vials that

⁴¹⁰ Rasmussen, "Free Painters and Sculptors."

⁴¹¹ Ryan, Foreword, unpaginated.

⁴¹² O'Connor, *Seán Keating*, 144-45, nn 60,61.

⁴¹³ Fincham, "Second Impressions," 11.

hold the last plagues of Revelation 16:1-20, while below the cataclysms roughly corresponding to each vial transpire sequentially. Clayton had studied early Italian renaissance painters at the Royal College of Art, specialising in tempera and mural painting with the influence evident in the simplified line, form and shallow pictorial space. The technical features of the painting reveals the historical legacy of the Apocalypse, and places it in dialogue with the iconography of the Apocalypse as seen, for example, in Giotto's *Last Judgment* (fig. 231) while the exegetical relocation to a modern context—evident in the buildings torn apart in the lower region—denotes the Apocalypse's continued, dramatic relevance. Clayton reprised the composition in an illustrated Apocalypse published in 1931 with the King James Version text in a limited run of 1000 numbered copies signed by the artist. Titled "The Book of Revelations [*sic*]" on the illustrated cover and spine, the title page identified the biblical text accurately as "The Revelation of Saint John the Divine". Twelve illustrations (along with the cover art of an angel with book, and Saint John with an angel are on the front and rear respectively) use an almost faux-naïf simplicity of style to depict the events of the Apocalypse (fig. 232-43). Clayton had married Welsh Neo-Romantic artist Ceri Richards in 1929, taking his surname, although the book retains her maiden name. Letters between the two from the late 1920s make use of the angel iconography as seen in her illustrations to Revelation (fig. 244-5). The book is a commodity, sold on both the content of the literary text and basis that it is fundamentally a desirable object to have with illustrations produced by an emerging artist. Inevitably there is some view towards the artists reputation, and belief that their reputation is in the ascendancy, however the biblical text—signifying education, culture, and resonant in the historic context—ensured an appeal to a broader demographic. Clayton's images are largely ancillary to the text, both as a means of biblical exegesis and in terms of value as commodity, yet images of the city on the verge of ruin would resonate throughout the 1930s, when corresponding imagery was widely employed.

A Labour Party poster from the mid 1930s titled *Stop War!* (fig. 246) played to fears of a gas attack and juxtaposes a conventionally idyllic blond-haired baby with a gas mask that covers the child's face. Children are perceived to be both helpless and blameless, leading them to be identified as the ideal victim to inspire empathy and protective instincts.⁴¹⁴ The poster proposes that exercising one's choice to vote for an alternative will kill real children; there is therefore no real choice but to vote Labour. The scare-mongering rhetoric is designed for short term payoff; the unintended consequence is to amplify fear with the fatalistic message that perversely makes war increasingly likely. In 1937 Jean M. Hammond recognised the dramatic potential of the gas mask motif in her gouache painting *Mirrior Españā December* (fig. 247). A series of gas masked people intersect the

⁴¹⁴ Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue*, 107.

composition of the almost monochromatic painting horizontally; their arms erect in a Fascist salute. A band performs before them while three formally attired men sit around a table writing and discarding sheets of paper. A sculptor in the foreground taps away while a priest eulogises on a platform. A white cross emerges from within smoky clouds; six bi-planes ominously approach. The sense of forthcoming disaster is palpable. The German émigré Walter Nessler arrived in the London in 1937 having used a holiday permit to escape the Nazi regime.⁴¹⁵ Later that year he painted *Premonition* (fig. 248). Nessler had been painting works “with bombs falling” while still in Germany, however these appear to have been lost, left in Dresden, or destroyed during the Second World War.⁴¹⁶ In London his attention turned towards the city and what the consequences of a war would be here. Like Keating and Nevinson, Nessler emphasised the fear of aerial gas attacks, elevating a colossal gas mask (with eyes behind the glass) atop a ruined building in the composition’s centre. Nessler uses the Dome of St. Pauls as a signifier of the London skyline while traffic is disordered in the streets. Lurid complementary colours and the red lighting emphasises the nightmarish quality of the ‘premonition’. The same light falls in George Grosz’s chaotic city scene *The Funeral*, from 1917–8 (fig. 249). Nessler had followed the innovative developments in German art before the suppression under the Nazis forced avant-garde practitioners underground. When Nessler started to show the work, he later recalled that people “thought I was raving mad”, however as he had witnessed the military parades in German, he “knew a war would come sooner or later”.⁴¹⁷ Nessler had closely followed news of the Spanish War, maintaining a scrapbook of press cuttings, and seen Picasso’s painting of *Guernica* at the International Exhibition in Paris in 1937. He admitted that at this time he was “sensitive to what’s in the air”;⁴¹⁸ the increasing fear of a future aerial attack and the use of gas upon civilian populations.

Ave Homo Sapiens was used on the 1934 book jacket of the novel *Exodus A.D.: A Warning to Civilians*. Nevinson co-authored the novel with Princess Paul Troubetzkoy, a popular novelist married to the Russian sculptor Paul Troubetzkoy. The unflinchingly bleak narrative is set over the course of several days and revolves around a central love triangle composed of a journalist Richard Harden, a socialite and gossip columnist Rosalind Mercey, and civil servant Grant Oliphant. The latter works for Sir Thomas Grange, a politician who—like Winston Churchill in the 1930s—is in his ‘wilderness years’, having advocated an intricate network of defences against aerial bombardment to the consternation of his peers. The plot follows the death of the armaments dealer Werner Barsdorf which upsets the careful balance of the international arms trade that Britain has monopolised (“We

⁴¹⁵ Nessler, “Reel 1.”

⁴¹⁶ Nessler, “Reel 2.”

⁴¹⁷ *ibid.*

⁴¹⁸ *ibid.*

keep an extraordinary form of peace by inspiring a race for armaments”⁴¹⁹). A swift and opportune aerial attack on London by an unknown enemy using chemical and biological weapons follows. The desperate panicked bid of the populace to flee the city results in stampedes that are a “danger greater than the menace of the air”.⁴²⁰ Meanwhile the government relinquishes control to an equally ill-equipped emergency Military Dictatorship. Society quickly collapses into savagery and self-interest where even familiar bonds fracture. By the end of the novel little hope remains as the three protagonists desperately cling to life. Unlike a Christian apocalyptic narrative there is no conciliation, no resurrection, and no hope of renewal.

Nevinson had already tried to convey his prophetic warnings via art. The novel was a change in his approach that underlines his own perception of his message’s gravity. The compound title evokes his problem paintings. The exodus-event is capitalised within the text of the novel, thus alludes to second book of the Hebrew Bible, Exodus, denoting the mass departure of people. The initialism of *Anno Domini* temporally identifies this new exodus event as occurring after the incarnation, and in contrast to the flight from Egypt narrative (i.e. Exodus B.C.). The subtitle, with a similar didactic purpose to Nevinson’s paintings, provides a literal explanation—the novel’s purpose is to warn against a new war.

The threat is established early on in the narrative and teased for dramatic effect; Richard anticipates the apocalyptic horror of the next war, prophesying that it would herald a break with past conventions.⁴²¹ Lord Ragner, the proprietor of the newspaper that employs Richard, attempts to stop him reporting the death of Barsdorf. Richard remarks on the resulting commotion that it was “as if the world was coming to an end.”⁴²² Ragner asserts that a warning needs to be issued instead for he alone understands the gravity of the situation; “It’s the end of everything. That’s what it means... I’m trying to save the rest of you.”⁴²³ The warning goes in vain; Ragner is debilitated. The editor of the paper, reviewing Ragner’s supposed hysteria and believing the situation to be normal remarks “For a moment I really thought the world was coming to an end!”⁴²⁴ The rhetoric of the end of the world builds the dramatic tension before defusing it. O’Leary identifies apocalyptic rhetoric as a “tragic discourse that announces radical discontinuity” that often leads to a “comic reaffirmation of continuity”.⁴²⁵ It an apparent twist, the imminent eschatological event suddenly appears to the characters to have been nothing more than panic, and life continues. This signifies the character’s ignorance—without the apocalyptic seer they are rendered helpless. The authors’ flirt with the

⁴¹⁹ Trubetzkaya, and Nevinson, *Exodus A.D.*, 34.

⁴²⁰ *ibid*, 197.

⁴²¹ *ibid*, 30.

⁴²² *ibid*, 60.

⁴²³ *ibid*, 66, 68.

⁴²⁴ *ibid*, 69.

⁴²⁵ O’Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 90.

apocalyptic tradition of promising an ending that never comes to dramatic effect when the end really does transpire. As war subsequently breaks it is greeted enthusiastically with the rhetorical question “isn’t it exciting?”⁴²⁶ Oliphant meanwhile is assured that there is “no real danger” even as the “cyclonic deluge” of the attack begins.⁴²⁷ In contrast to Oliphant’s confidence, Richard warns Rosalind “I’m in for it—so is the world... Close your windows and pray.”⁴²⁸ His warning of the world’s end is paired with a refuge in religion.

The novel combines secular and religious apocalyptic motifs extensively. The cause of destruction is made familiar as warfare resulting from political failures propagated by Nationalistic Governments and unscrupulous arms dealers. Nevinson had long condemned war profiteers. His 1918 painting *He Gained a Fortune but He Gave a Son* (fig. 250) is both a war painting and a painting of pathos and affluence. An ornate picture frame on a fireplace mantel signifies wealth; the picture within is of his son. The man averts his face yet forces a smile. No fortune can compensate for his dead son. As the character Richard notes “There’s a great deal more power held by the armaments manufacturers than is ever realised”.⁴²⁹ Nevinson had informed a reporter visiting his studio while he was painting *Ave Homo Sapiens* that he was “dedicating it to the armament manufacturers!”⁴³⁰

Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century end of the world literature, from William Hope Hodgson’s *The Night Land* (1912), and its entropic Sun, to H. G. Wells’s *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), and its prophecy of World War, found creative potential in contemporary apprehension. The themes and ideas explored, including the last man, Jeremiad, end of an age, the fall of civilisation, and the construction of a New Earth, frequently had roots in, or appropriated religious thought.⁴³¹ *Exodus A.D.* utilises the Last Man motif of romantic literature. Rosalind witnesses the gas attacks from her flat; lacking any external communication, she begins speculating on being the last person alive who has witnessed the extinction of human life and the fading of nature.⁴³² There is no opportunity to rejoice when Rosalind learns that others have survived: she can merely watch as the panicked crowds symptomatic of societal breakdown flee through the streets, colliding with an indistinguishable cloud of chemical weaponry.⁴³³ Extinction is merely delayed. As Sir Thomas Grange declares earlier in the novel, “this new method of warfare... heralds an abrupt end to civilisation as we know it.”⁴³⁴

⁴²⁶ Trubetzkaya, and Nevinson, *Exodus A.D.*, 87.

⁴²⁷ *ibid*, 92.

⁴²⁸ *ibid*, 99.

⁴²⁹ *ibid*, 33.

⁴³⁰ “Does Labour Want Fascism?” 6.

⁴³¹ Carpenter and Landow, “Ambiguous Revelations,” 299.

⁴³² Trubetzkaya and Nevinson, *Exodus A.D.*, 213.

⁴³³ *ibid*, 219-20.

⁴³⁴ *ibid*, 177.

David Cohen identifies in Nevinson's artwork and the novel the "tragic, doomed sense of civilization in which the city exists on the brink of disaster".⁴³⁵ James Boswell's eight lithographs for an unpublished book *The Fall of London* in 1933 similarly identified the condemned city (fig. 251-54). Boswell had joined the Communist Party, and he was a founding member of Artists' International Association in 1933. The revolutionary air is palpable throughout the series, as revolutionary flags are erected as seen in *Through the City* and *The Colosseum*. The secular revolution comes with an apocalypse as London landmarks are destroyed, and civilisation is thrown into disarray in a series of nocturnal scenes. The destruction of the city is a vivid and integral image in the Apocalypse, with Revelation contrasting the Heavenly city and Babylon. The latter is a transnational "great city" which will be judged and destroyed accordingly.⁴³⁶ The novel portrays London as an internationally dominant location achieved by a war economy and dubious arms trades at the expense of foreign powers. The result is manifest overconfidence: "look how prosperous we are. We don't need to fight anyone."⁴³⁷ While the cause and method of destruction is clear, the attacker's identity is obscured.⁴³⁸ One only knows that the aircraft approached the coast of Essex on their way towards London, leading the reader free to speculate on the enemies identity.⁴³⁹ The ambiguity avoids confusing the novel's didactic warning with a threat from a specific nation.

The fictitious Richard has been recognised as remarkably similar to his real-world namesake.⁴⁴⁰ Both are Londoners who are aware of how this situation has been nurtured over time.⁴⁴¹ They recognise how the armament industry and repeated failures in diplomacy have made war inevitable. The fictitious Richard is also in receipt of a nightmarish hallucination or vision:

...[Richard] had a curious impression he was dead. Dead and standing by the Throne of God. God seemed to have a strange aspect. He sat crouched upon a heaped pile of cloud which dripped a slow, red rain, which stained it, dirtied it, as it dried, until the cloud grew to resemble the heaped sods of a graveside.

God, to Richard's surprise, did not wear flowing vestments nor a beard. He peered through wicked slits of a mask-like covering which protruded in a snout, hiding, to Richard's imagination, intolerable hideousness. He was almost naked, with great knotted arms hanging limply at His sides, and His hands were cast, giant-like, with clawing curved talons.

From His curiously small head His body swelled vastly into hideous strength, dwarfing His surroundings, and He leaned downward as if unwilling to miss an infinitesimal detail of what interested Him.⁴⁴²

Exodus A.D. presents a demented vengeful God as a malign authority guiding events and turning on his own creation. The novel is not therefore an entirely secularised apocalyptic narrative and offers a

⁴³⁵ Cohen, "Rising City," 39.

⁴³⁶ Rev. 18:10; 16:19.

⁴³⁷ Trubetzkaya and Nevinson, *Exodus A.D.*, 25-27, 31.

⁴³⁸ *ibid*, 66.

⁴³⁹ *ibid*, 88.

⁴⁴⁰ Walsh, *Hanging a Rebel*, 252.

⁴⁴¹ *ibid*.

⁴⁴² Trubetzkaya and Nevinson, *Exodus A.D.*, 145.

nightmarish conception of the Divine intervening in earthly affairs. The description corresponds to the cover, which had in part inspired the novel.⁴⁴³ Nevinson's problem paintings were inspired by his own hallucinatory visions and, like his fictional namesake, found it difficult to identify between "my waking and sleeping conditions".⁴⁴⁴ He continued; "reality veers on hallucination, and my hallucinations upon reality... when I am concentrating hard upon my painting I fall into a condition in which I seem guided... often completing a picture I had no original intention of painting."⁴⁴⁵ The apparition seen by Nevinson was initially represented as a painting and translated to a novel in which a character—the artists namesake—has a vision of it; both have received a vision of God as seen in *Ave Homo Sapiens*. Curiously Nevinson's press-cutting collection includes a clipping from the *Yorkshire Telegraph and Star* of a letter by J. Robinson in 1933; the correspondent pre-empted the painting's description in the novel, writing, "The huge hands are a monstrosity, and the trunk, with the mask stuck on top of it, a libel on God's humanity."⁴⁴⁶ The letter was coincidentally published alongside an image of gas mask manufacturing (fig. 255).

Nevinson had speculated on the future for a number of years, while his father Henry W. Nevinson had warned for a new policy concerning architecture and war as early as 1926.⁴⁴⁷ In the same article Nevinson senior foreshadowed the novel, warning of potential panic; "The first instinct of the population would be to run... As at a Last Judgment, they would attempt to flee into the country" where they would starve instead.⁴⁴⁸ The *Daily Express* labelled him "Great Britain's answer to H. G. Wells" in 1931 with an article in which Nevinson challenged Wells pessimistic economic outlook.⁴⁴⁹ Nevinson's outlook darkened; the bomb shelters proposed by the fictitious Thomas Grange was considered by one reviewer as a serious contribution to the question of aerial defenses.⁴⁵⁰ Nevinson continued advocating a new functional architecture designed to negate military attack, and proposed the movement of integral Imperial infrastructure to Canada in a 1936 article "What Next? No. V. Art in a Bellicose World".⁴⁵¹ It was imperative to act because "it is obvious that there is no hope for European peace." Yet Nevinson also appeared resigned to accepting that his apocalyptic jeremiads would go unheard, writing "I have no hope". Disaster seemed like it could no longer be averted as the Spanish Civil War erupted; Nevinson's anguish gave way to serenity and the calm of fatalism. Events were outside his control and he was proved a Cassandra.⁴⁵² He suffered

⁴⁴³ "Review, Exodus A.D.," 13.

⁴⁴⁴ "Remarkable Dreams," 149-150.

⁴⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ Robinson, "Criticism of Modern Art," 4.

⁴⁴⁷ Nevinson, "Next War," 99-100; Nevinson, "Next War: II," 133.

⁴⁴⁸ Nevinson, "Next War," 100.

⁴⁴⁹ Nevinson, "Great Britain's Answer," 10.

⁴⁵⁰ Lane, "Underground Cities," 3.

⁴⁵¹ Nevinson, "Art in a Bellicose World," 12.

⁴⁵² Walsh, *Hanging a Rebel*, 266.

another nervous breakdown at the outbreak of the Second World War, falling into depression and again contemplated suicide.

The fear of aerial attack resonated throughout the 1930s. Stanley Baldwin warned in a 1932 speech that “no power on earth that can protect him [the ordinary civilian] from being bombed... the bomber will always get through”.⁴⁵³ In 1933 H. G. Wells, a Nevinson family friend, published *The Shape of Things to Come*. The novel is a speculative future history from 1933 to 2106. Wells’s novel addresses the concept of aerial bombardment previously appreciated in his *The War in the Air* (1908), and shares the contemporary anxiety over future warfare with *Exodus A.D.* The plot follows an economic crisis leading to the outbreak of total war in January 1940 in which civilian populations are targeted indiscriminately. A ten-year war—of which the majority is entropic stalemate—ensues, before a plague outbreak of kills millions more. Wells allows a vision of optimism however, as a pan-world (benevolent) dictatorship in the air is established, before a utopian world emerges following a pacific coup. Naomi Royde-Smith’s review made parallels with Arthur Eustace Ware’s apocalyptic sermon interpreting Christian prophecy titled *The Immediate Prospects of Mankind* (1933). Royde-Smith alleged the “gift of prophecy has fallen abundantly on the second and third decades of the twentieth century”:

Historians and economists, like Maynard Keynes and Harold Nicolson; journalists and pamphleteers, like Beverley Nichols and the contributors to *What the Next War will be like*, who start from Versailles; earnest interpreters of the book of Daniel and the Revelation of St. John the Divine who start from the Destruction of Jerusalem, all reach the same conclusion. There is going to be another war; whether it be called the World War in the Air, or Armageddon, it is the same war and it is due round about the year 1940.⁴⁵⁴

Wells adapted the novel into the screenplay for the 1936 film *Things to Come* directed by William Cameron Menzies. The production featured special effects sequences contributed by the German émigré Laszlo Moholy-Nagy who had fled the Nazis in 1933, while the British artist John Armstrong designed a small number of costumes. The apocalyptic aesthetic of the ruined city would preoccupy Armstrong as the socio-political context moved increasingly towards war.

The Spanish Civil War

In December 1938 a solo exhibition of paintings by Armstrong opened at the Lefevre Gallery, London. His recent work indicated a turn towards surrealism. T. W. Earp identified entropy as the prominent theme in the foreword to the exhibition catalogue, while the *Guardian* described “a world dreaming itself into decay and dilapidation”.⁴⁵⁵ Armstrong had, like many artists, been galvanised by the Spanish Civil War. Earlier that year Otway McCannell’s teenage daughter Ursula

⁴⁵³ Baldwin, “Fear for the Future.”

⁴⁵⁴ Royde-Smith, “Selected Fiction,” 506.

⁴⁵⁵ Earp, Foreword; “Armstrong Goes Surrealist,” 10.

McCannell had emerged as an artist at the age of 15 with a solo exhibition at the Redfern Gallery. Ursula McCannell was sensitive to the human pathos in the Spanish Civil War, inspiring works including *Family Fleeing* (1940) (fig. 256). Fear of aerial bombardment became more pronounced throughout British culture. The strategic targeting of civilians occurred in the Great War and developed tactically in Abyssinia and China by the Italian and Japanese militaries respectively, however Spain “had the greatest effect on British Culture and fear”.⁴⁵⁶ It established the tactic in European Warfare and on ethnically white civilians: for the British public it was made globally local and ethnically indiscriminate.

The conflict’s politics and the collision of ideals and values constructed false politicised dichotomies of absolute right and wrong. As in the Great War, there were concerted efforts to sanctify the cause using religion or popular political substitutes. The Catholic Church found itself at the heart of the struggle, with Nationalists allegedly fighting for the traditional link of church and state. Franco’s supporters frequently attempted to gain support by portraying the cause as a Holy War in the model of the fifteenth-century *Reconquista*, when the Moors were purged from Spain.⁴⁵⁷ Contingents of secularised Republicans meanwhile attacked Catholicism as a symbol of the right. In contrast the tiny protestant community was largely left alone, and even identified with the left.⁴⁵⁸ It was into this context that British artists and intellectuals intervened with their own crusading mentality, often imposing a simplified narrative on the conflict informed by their own biases and witnessed from afar. A British pamphlet supporting the Republicans published in June 1937 set up challenge; “It is clear to many of us throughout the whole world that now, as certainly never before, we are determined or compelled, to take sides... Are you for, or against, Franco and Fascism? For it is impossible any longer to take no side.”⁴⁵⁹ Meanwhile Stephen Spender, a communist party member, argued that the Civil War was revelatory, pushing ambiguity aside in the greater and eternal conflict of right and wrong.⁴⁶⁰

John Armstrong was the third son of the Anglican Reverend William Alexander Armstrong. He was “not unnaturally, soaked in religion and practically brought up in Church”.⁴⁶¹ Religion remained a presence and reoccurred as a theme in his artwork.⁴⁶² *Revelations* (1938) (fig. 257) suggests both the devastation heralded in the biblical text—the title using a frequent misquotation of Revelation—and a more generalised process of uncovering. The building’s interior has been revealed; exterior walls have collapsed, and wallpaper peels away. The Mediterranean palette, and

⁴⁵⁶ Martin, *Conscience and Conflict*, 112.

⁴⁵⁷ See, for example, Dávila, *Frente a Madrid*, 8; Sánchez, *Spanish Civil War*, 145; Edwards, *God on Our Side*, 1, 25-26.

⁴⁵⁸ Payne, *Spanish Civil War*, 113.

⁴⁵⁹ “Authors Take Sides,” 51.

⁴⁶⁰ Spender, “Introduction to *Poems for Spain*,” 78.

⁴⁶¹ Glazebrook, *John Armstrong*, 7.

⁴⁶² Lambirth, *John Armstrong*, 12, 100-1.

perfect blue sky is dissonant with the ruin. The apocalyptic destruction has climaxed; everything is destroyed; everything is gone. Religion did not influence Armstrong's pacifist convictions into taking sides in the Spanish Civil War—his was instead motivated by an abhorrence at the atrocities.

The paintings' political content extended beyond the Spanish context. *Pro Patria* (1938) (fig. 258) uses the Italian Fascist slogan, pairing it with a scene of ruination and destruction. He was shocked by the ubiquitous Fascist propaganda when visiting Rome in 1937. Andrew Lambirth demonstrated that the painting reworks the composition and formal strategies of Piero Della Francesca's *The Baptism of Christ* (fig. 259).⁴⁶³ The small figure disrobing quotes Piero's work, and is perhaps an optimistic note, suggesting that all is not lost and one can start again.⁴⁶⁴ Yet Armstrong relocated the figure to a murky puddle subverting the concept of baptism. Peeling from the walls across from one another are two posters of people—screaming or orating—suggesting destruction, decay, and conflict. Beneath the right poster is the fragmentary text "PRO PATRIA", while beneath the left "MORI" in reference to Fascist reverence of dying for the fatherland.

Armstrong's almost impossible architectural ruins amongst arid landscapes is identifiably surreal; he did not however identify with Surrealism. He considered his works as "mental images built up of subconsciously [*sic*] remembered things which... have been mis-called surrealist."⁴⁶⁵ Armstrong shared Collins's distancing from the movement after the 1936 exhibition. Afterwards he realised "I didn't belong there".⁴⁶⁶ Stephen Spender had recognised an apocalyptic dimension in the surreal aesthetic before 1939, writing in 1943 that

For years before the war, European cities were unreal, with the unreality of a landscape sunlit and unspeakably silent before a storm. Some artists expressed this violent sense of disorder in surrealism; others by withdrawing into the search for an abstract and integrating symbol. The war is the fulfilment of prophetic visions of art, and in a sense it means a return to reality by artists who found the peace too unreal to be accepted at its face value.⁴⁶⁷

Spender's perspective was inevitably shaped by events after the declaration of war on Germany in 1939, and by 1945 Spender argued that the surreal had ceased to be fantasy and had become reality, as the "immense resources of all governments of the world are now being devoted to producing surrealist effects... The youngest and newest school of English poets signified this occasion by calling themselves 'Apocalyptic'. Instead of being prophets, they were now witnesses in a world which had been overtaken by prophecies."⁴⁶⁸ Spender's text highlights a contradiction in apocalyptic belief. On the one hand it is a future event, apparently near but always delayed; this is the prophecy. On the other, it is only after the events have started to transpire that the course of the apocalyptic

⁴⁶³ *ibid*, 66.

⁴⁶⁴ Ferguson, *War and The Creative Arts*, 372.

⁴⁶⁵ Armstrong, "Paintings and their Frames," 144.

⁴⁶⁶ Lambirth, *John Armstrong*, 56.

⁴⁶⁷ Spender, Introduction, 6.

⁴⁶⁸ Spender, "Contemporary Literature," 176.

history can be understood to any degree; this is prophecy *fulfilled*. In this latter scenario speculation and prophecy become almost indistinguishable.

The aesthetic ruination in Frank Runacres's 1939 untitled painting (fig. 260) is a jumble of architectural fragments painted when Europe was in a heightened state of readiness for war. A ruin both signifies the past and the disappearance of that past; the cultural significance is bound up with the implicit discontinuity of history. A melancholic woman sits beneath fragments of Tuscan order architecture, a caryatid in underwear, and a winged torso jumbled with geometric forms. A horse with a raised foreleg evokes the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius (fig. 261), whilst to the right are a pair of segmental arches. Behind these in the pictorial space is a street that could be taken from any European city. A fissure separates the debris from the viewer. Runacres creatively exploited the trend identified by T. S. Eliot as "the mythical method" as a new period of military chaos approached.⁴⁶⁹ Yet here Runacres adopted nineteenth century precedents whereby the debris and decadence of classicism was depicted to symbolise the fall of empires and convey a break with an entire period of history (fig. 262-3).

The hispanophile Edward Burra had associated with John Armstrong in Unit One and was also loosely associated with the British surrealists. Burra did not clearly take a side in the brutally simplistic dichotomy of Republicans and Nationalists. Burra's response was articulated in paintings combining Christian and esoteric imagery with the conflict; his nightmarish visions of absolute evil, death, and destruction indulge in the cataclysmic aesthetic of apocalyptic imagery.⁴⁷⁰ His art had addressing these themes for some time; the 1932 painting *John Deth* (fig. 264) is a fiesta of hedonism and debauchery in the shadow of death. The painting referenced Conrad Aiken's poem "John Deth"—an allegory of life and death that ends with no hope of anything after—and the medieval allegory of the *Danse Macabre*—the Dance of Death. The iconography is a secular counterpart to the Last Judgment, however it places greater emphasis upon the viewer's actions in the present world.⁴⁷¹ Burra indicates the grotesque forms of Otto Dix and George Grosz, who had also drawn upon the theme.⁴⁷² The Dance of Death had developed in medieval Europe against the backdrop of famine, plague, and war. Burra, Dix, and Grosz produced their own images (fig. 249, 265) in response to contemporary Britain or Germany, and the Great War. Grosz's *The Funeral* alludes to the Dance of Death—a funeral procession in a city populated by grotesques travels past a club with the sign "Dance Tonight". Here Burra, Dix, and Grosz critique modern hedonism in the

⁴⁶⁹ Eliot, "Order, and Myth," 483.

⁴⁷⁰ Aiken, "Memoir," 53.

⁴⁷¹ Pascale, *Death and Resurrection*, 232.

⁴⁷² Martin, "Danse Macabre," 82.

tradition of the *Danse Macabre*—death will get to everyone—updating the iconography with the post-war preoccupation with death.

Burra's interest in Spanish and Mexican culture predated the Civil War's outbreak by several years. The Mexican Day of the Dead was suggested in *Dancing Skeletons* (fig. 266). While humorous in tone, it also interacts with the eschatological matters of death and fate. John Rothenstein identified that the "Spanish Civil War had an immediate and radical effect upon Burra's art."⁴⁷³ Burra suggested that "*Everything looks menacing; I'm always expecting something calamitous to happen.*"⁴⁷⁴ Between 1936 and 1939 the latent menace and humour in Burra's paintings turned to unflinching threat and violence.⁴⁷⁵ *Beelzebub* (1937–8) (fig. 267) depicts violent confrontation in a ruined church. The crimson figure of Beelzebub gleefully stands to the right of the composition with the debris from the building at his feet. In Catholic Demonology Beelzebub is one of the seven princes of Hell; in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* Beelzebub is apparently second in rank to Satan.⁴⁷⁶ In Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* Beelzebub is "the enemy of our Lord", while the name is just one of several including Satan and the Devil for the Antagonist.⁴⁷⁷ Burra's depiction suggests communism both via colour and his stance opposing Christianity. The 'red devil' as a metaphorical projection of evil by anti-communists would become a trope after 1945, however, there a real perceived threat from 'reds' in Western democracies in the interwar. Church burnings by Republicans made Burra "feel sick".⁴⁷⁸ The Catholic Church was complicit in fascist atrocities; in John Banting's *Absolution: Spanish Civil War* (1937) (fig. 268) a skull headed priest with rifle in hand and bearing Fascist insignia gives absolution to dead. Rothenstein later tried to make sense of Burra's views on the Civil War—perhaps with consideration of subsequent atrocities by far-right political movements—suggesting Burra had

given little indication of partisanship. To him the all-pervasive tragedy seems to preclude it: he was overwhelmed by the cruelty, destruction, hatred and death. It was a tragedy in which all concerned, however culpable, were in the last analysis victims. I say little rather than none at all because horror at the burning of churches inclined him to identify the Franco party with civic stability, but I never heard him express even the most oblique approval of fascist ideas.⁴⁷⁹

Burra's response was symptomatic of a general apprehension; "It was terrifying: constant strikes, churches on fire, and pent-up hatred everywhere. Everybody knew that something appalling was about to happen."⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷³ Rothenstein, *Burra* (1945), 15.

⁴⁷⁴ Rothenstein, *Burra* (1975), 35.

⁴⁷⁵ Martin, *Conscience and Conflict*, 64.

⁴⁷⁶ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 2, lines 299-300.

⁴⁷⁷ Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 1:6, lines 122.

⁴⁷⁸ Rothenstein, *Burra* (1945), 15.

⁴⁷⁹ Rothenstein, *Burra* (1975), 23.

⁴⁸⁰ *ibid.*

Wyndham Lewis posited in the preface to his 1937 exhibition at the Leicester Galleries that “what we experience in life is not at all pleasant, and the most terrible experience, even, is often the most compelling, the result is a tragic picture... many of these pictures belong to tragic art”.⁴⁸¹ Among the fifty-four paintings and drawings exhibited was *Inferno* (1937) (fig. 269). *Inferno* is a prospective painting; a “Dante-esque vision of impending doom.”⁴⁸² The title alludes to the first part of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*—*Inferno*—which translates from Italian as Hell. The intertext situates the work in correspondence with the Christian eschatological state of suffering and torment that follows the general resurrection and Last Judgment. Lewis’s Hell is however earthly and is rendered fearful through secular means. The geometric composition locates all detail in an inverted T shape where figures writhe and wrestle. The painting’s upper region is divided using contrasting colours, placing scarlets and maroons between two tonally flat plains of turquoise green. Arcing lines suggest the flames and smoke of a terrific inferno. Bodies lie horizontally in the lower region in an orgy of greyed flesh: their circular heads marked with sunken eyes. Lewis asserted in 1937 that a role of an artist is to respond to the society from whence it originates, offering a forecast and critique for better or worse. Lewis felt he was in a way “playing the social prophet.”⁴⁸³ The power of the work owes much to subsequent history; *Inferno* has been repeatedly identified as an eerie premonition of the atrocities in the Second World War.⁴⁸⁴

The painting was one of several that addressed “the seemingly inevitable cycle of war in Europe”.⁴⁸⁵ Lewis had also exhibited images of imagined scenes of conflict in European history including *The Surrender of Barcelona* (with the title *Siege of Barcelona*) (fig. 270). Lewis, like Nevinson, had anticipated another terrible conflict, with the Spanish Civil War merely the forerunner. His autobiography *Blasting and Bombardiering*, published in October 1937, warned that “we have to marshal in our minds all that nexus of disastrous events, of which the Great War was the first, and of which the Great War No. 2, now in preparation, will be the next.”⁴⁸⁶ *The Surrender of Barcelona* has two allusions—one the siege of 1472, and the other the contemporary conflict. Paul Edwards identified that Lewis’s “recourse to the historical unconscious was a critical act... They identify a type of history that Europe is still living, but which it should have outgrown.”⁴⁸⁷ Lewis had sympathised with the nationalists; however, his allegiance had changed by 1939, and the title was amended from *Siege* to *Surrender* following the fall of Barcelona in January 1939. Lewis identified

⁴⁸¹ Michel, *Wyndham Lewis*, 440.

⁴⁸² Benson, “Blasted Visions,” 73.

⁴⁸³ Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, 262.

⁴⁸⁴ Brack, “Inferno,” 14.

⁴⁸⁵ Benson, “Blasted Visions,” 73.

⁴⁸⁶ Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, 260.

⁴⁸⁷ Edwards, “Historical Unconscious,” 125, 146.

that what had happened before in Europe and in Spain is once again occurring.⁴⁸⁸ History recurs but with variation: the end of the world as we know it would be stuck on repeat.

Apocalypse Interrupted

As Britain and the Empire declared war upon Germany in 1939, Stephen Gooden was producing a series of copperplate engravings for an edition of Revelation. The project had started in 1937, and first suggested in 1927.⁴⁸⁹ Gooden thought it “a marvellous subject, and will take me a couple of years at least, or so I should imagine.”⁴⁹⁰ Writing in 1939, E.M. Forster identified “the 1939 state”, referring both to the political state, and the individual state of mind.⁴⁹¹ He identified the latter as a type of anxious cognitive dissonance, where one is perpetually “half-frightened and half thinking about something else at the same time”.⁴⁹² This period of anticipation prior to the outbreak of the Second World War had, according to Gooden, compromised his efforts: “I seem to have got little done for a long time—largely owing to Adolph—but I am still engaged on the Apocalypse and since the war started it has been going rather better than when we were in that miserable state of suspense.”⁴⁹³ The artist’s attention had turned towards the Apocalypse with looming war; by February 1940 the book was postponed. Later that year his publisher announced, “In view of present conditions it is unlikely that the project will be carried further. We have therefore been requested by Stephen Gooden to issue the three engravings.”⁴⁹⁴ (fig. 271-73) The issued engravings were the only completed images from project; *St. John in Patmos* (1938–9), depicts the Saint receiving the divine revelation, while the Four Horsemen were portrayed over the two prints *The Three Horsemen* (1939) and *The Rider on the Pale Horse* (1939). The project intended to set the prints to the King James text (fig. 274) indicating the grand ambitions. The folio prints were published alone however, thus the visual component came to serve as an end in itself. The folio represents a fragment of what Gooden had prepared. A fourth *The Destroying Angels* (1939) (fig. 275) representing the Angels and the seven headed Beast, and fifth *The Angel Appearing To St. John* (1939) (fig. 276) were nearing completion, while in the region of one-hundred sketches have been located in the Andrew Duncan Collection, Yale University. These often specify certain passages, demonstrating his interpretation’s scriptural emphasis (fig. 277-8). Gooden also contemporised the iconography established by Dürer (fig. 279); sketches for the fourth horsemen (fig. 280) show him facing a city in flaming ruins, while a

⁴⁸⁸ *ibid.* 150.

⁴⁸⁹ Stephen Gooden to Fowler, February 20, 1937. Box 7, AOB 107, Andrew Duncan Collection; Stephen Gooden to Sidney C Cockerell, September 4 1927. Box 6, AOB 107, Andrew Duncan Collection.

⁴⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁴⁹¹ Forster, “1939 State,” 889.

⁴⁹² *ibid.* 888.

⁴⁹³ Stephen Gooden to Sidney C. Cockerell, October 10 1939. Box 8, AOB 107, Andrew Duncan Collection.

⁴⁹⁴ Printed insert from Harrap accompanying the set of three engravings, 1940.

deceased person's foot protrudes in the composition's lower right, inviting one to question their mortality. The issued image was altered to evoke the Great War battlefields that Gooden had endured. A screw picket that would have held the barbed wire defences in no man's land stands alone in the desolate landscape, while upon the horizon—where the rider is focused—modern searchlights cross the sky. Ironically, total warfare ended Gooden's Apocalypse. It was never resumed.

In summary: between the two World Wars a significant proportion of the imagery of the world's demise was characterised by the foregrounding of the human subject—it is *your* life and lifestyle that has been interrupted. Rarely was there an image of the literal end of the world, however the absolute disaster placed a human drama at its core and involved a search for the human cause for the ending of things as they had been known. Where the divine is present it is often represented as dejected or troubled. Humanity has let it down. Saint Michael's presence in the memorial iconography of the Great War is in order to elevate a particular human cause, and therefore denigrate opposing human forces who are identified as an enemy to the divine. Human beings are agents of our own demise. We are able to affect change and yet are gripped by the fear of this prophesised fate. Wyndham Lewis later described the interwar as the "moronic inferno of insipidity and decay".⁴⁹⁵ It was in this context that polarised political movements—"Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum" type figures in Lewis's own imagination during the late 1930s—established themselves as eschatological forms of organising human society, lamenting the world as it is and promising radical change whereby the old broken order would be swept away.⁴⁹⁶ Fascism and Nazism, socialism and communism had each participated and proved integral to the conflict in Spain, and each promised their supporters a secularised vision of the millennium. The Apocalypse ends in the creation of a new and better world; as we will see in the next chapter, the interwar years were buoyant which such promises following the apocalyptic Great War.

⁴⁹⁵ Lewis, *Rude Assignment*, 169.

⁴⁹⁶ Edwards, "Historical Unconscious," 149.

Chapter Five
Visions of the Kingdom:
Millennium, Paradise, and the New Jerusalem

To attempt to realise earthly paradise is to live.¹

In 1934 the Golden Cockerel press published *Sermons by Artists* in a limited run of 300 copies. The book was announced in 1932, and is composed of ten short essays by ten practicing modern British artists.² Each used holy scripture as the starting point for a sermon that was “expressive of their attitude to life” and challenged the view that artists are “impractical dreamers”.³ By no means were all the artists Christian, however their defence was articulated in relation to Christianity. The premise was conceived by Robert Gibbings, owner of the press 1924–1933, following a 1925 exhibition by the Society of Parson Painters in Bond Street, London. Gibbings thought it obvious that artists should accordingly try their hand at preaching. The sermons use scripture to largely advocate a better world that will banish contemporary woes to the past. These essays have largely been neglected in both the Golden Cockerel’s history and the respective authors’ careers, yet the views articulated were indicative of broader interwar concerns.

This chapter addresses the concept of eschatological paradise, and how Judeo-Christian ideas of the Kingdom of God and *millennium* informed both religious and secular hopes—divinely ordained, or socially constructed—for a better world following a catastrophic and fundamental restructuring event. I will first identify how Victorian narratives of progress were reasserted and perpetuated through the popular iconography of William Holman Hunt’s *The Light of the World*. I then discuss how the Great War was given a sense of purpose by popular calls—whether religious or secular—for a new and improved world; I address examples whereby art and visual culture frequently interacted with and legitimised these calls, with a focus on the League of Nations and the British Mandate in Palestine, the British Empire, and British political parties, which all closely approximated these hopes. I then turn attention to the millenarian theology in the artworks of Mark Lancelot Symons and Stanley Spencer, who both argued that the Kingdom is already here in the world if we can only see it. This idea of an already enchanted world is addressed in the final section of the

¹ Underwood, “Genesis 2:25,” 70–71.

² Paul Nash, David Low, Robert Gibbings, Eric Kennington, Leon Underwood, Stanley Spencer, Edmund J. Sullivan, Roger Fry, Will Dyson, and Percy Smith. Other artists had been approached including William Orpen, C. R. W. Nevinson, Jacob Epstein, Wyndham Lewis, Augustus John, and Sir William Rothenstein. Papers related to the commissioning and publication are in the Golden Cockerel Press Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas.

³ Foreword to *Sermons by Artists*, unpaginated.

chapter on Neo-Romantic art in Britain, where I address the tension between hope, nostalgia, and disappointment that is central to millenarian dreams.

The religious Apocalypse promises a final resolution whereby the new creation replaces the old world; it is “a cataclysm with meaning, one that has as its final purpose not destruction but creation.”⁴ Apocalypse ends in paradise—perfect and timeless. This approaching Kingdom is paramount to Christian belief; the familiarity of *The Lord’s Prayer* can lead one to overlook its eschatological tone citing the Kingdom to come. The assurance makes apocalyptic belief ultimately optimistic; everything is going to get worse before a new order triumphs. With the Great War as cataclysm, numerous religious leaders, politicians, and cultural figures all readily provided interpretations of events with a view towards the millennium.

In 1930–2 Ethel Walker painted *Zone of Love* (fig. 281), completing the apocalyptic dualism of destruction and paradise started with *Zone of Hate*. Walker had conceived the idea for *Zone of Love* at around the same time, however she did not feel ready to paint it for another fifteen years.⁵ Grace English described the composition: “the soul is represented as a young girl just awakening into the celestial sphere. Her guardian angel attends her, and another angel is holding out her heavenly raiment.”⁶ In Walker’s paradise people awake into a new golden age and creation. The notion of a golden age is temporal; it identifies the present as a fallen condition relative to a historical better time. It is a restorative ethos that seeks to return to a lost innocence or state of purity. This mode is nostalgic and retrospective, looking back to a different time in a rejection of the present; it is also prospective in the hope that it will be returned to in the future. Indeed, the state is already familiar to us. The millennium, and the creation of a new Kingdom of God upon Earth is therefore already nostalgic.

The concept of the Kingdom is inherited from Judaism. It is central to Jesus’ preaching; Jesus speaks of the Kingdom as both a present and future occurrence.⁷ There are accordingly differing perspectives on what it entails and how it will be realised; eschatological expectations divide into the anticipation of an *earthly* or a *heavenly* Kingdom and messiah. These hopes intersect in the eschatological stances in Paul’s letters and Revelation, where it is summarised in the concept of the millennial Kingdom. The thousand-year period is closely associated with the Parousia, yet the sequential relationship of corresponding events as detailed in Revelation 20:1-10—where it is prophesied that the Second Coming is approaching, and a thousand-year Kingdom on Earth will be established—is notoriously open to interpretation. Millennialism parallels apocalypticism; both

⁴ Bromley, “Constructing Apocalypticism,” 34.

⁵ Chamot, Farr and Butlin, *Modern British Paintings*, II:755.

⁶ English, notes on Dame Ethel Walker. TGA 716/81.

⁷ Matt. 11:12; Luke 10:9; Matt. 6:10; Luke 13:9.

envision the absolute transformation of the current social order. However, millennialism broadly identifies a forthcoming transition and collective salvation, whereas apocalypticism identifies with a catastrophic interruption in life as we know it. According to Norman Cohn, Christian millennialists anticipate a salvation that is collective, terrestrial, imminent, total, and supernaturally accomplished.⁸ Catherine Wessinger advances Cohn's definition, observing that millenarian belief variously identifies that it can be achieved through catastrophic or progressive means.⁹ It has been adopted as a cross-cultural and secular term due to the shared patterns with non-Christian beliefs.¹⁰ Christian millenarian discourse divides into three distinct forms: Premillennial, Postmillennial, and Amillennialism. Premillennialism anticipates imminent cataclysmic events that will transpire before the Parousia initiates the millennium. Postmillennialism expects the Parousia after the millennium. Amillennialism interprets the Church representing the millennium symbolically; therefore, human agency is often emphasised in realising the Kingdom on Earth.¹¹ Both Catholics and Anglicans traditionally recognise the Kingdom of God in the age of the church.

The Light of the World

In the early twentieth-century one of the most recognised artworks in the Anglophone Protestant world was irrefutably William Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* (fig. 282).¹² The depiction of Christ takes Revelation 3:20 as intertext. He wears both a crown of thorns and the crown of a monarch. His hands bear the marks of Crucifixion; Christ's right hand is raised to knock upon the closed door representing "the obstinately shut mind".¹³ The lack of an exterior handle denotes that it can only be opened from within.¹⁴ The artwork's title references the sayings of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels of John and of Matthew.¹⁵ In his left hand a seven-sided lamp—the only source of light—alludes to the seven churches of Revelation 1:11 and perhaps indicates a true catholic church.¹⁶ It has been acknowledged that for Hunt, Christianity "alone could redeem the world."¹⁷ Hunt indicated a missional dimension when ascribing responsibility for the composition to God: "I painted the picture with what I thought, unworthy though I was, to be by Divine command, and not simply as a good subject."¹⁸

⁸ Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, 15.

⁹ Wessinger, "Millennial Glossary," 718, 721.

¹⁰ Wessinger, Introduction, 10-21.

¹¹ Wessinger, "Millennial Glossary," 717-723.

¹² Three versions were made: two between 1851–53, the third 1900-1904.

¹³ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, 1:350.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ John 8:12, 9:5; Matt. 5:14.

¹⁶ Glover, *Allegorical Picture*, 14-15.

¹⁷ Maas, *Holman Hunt*, 16.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 15.

The scriptural context of Revelation 3:20 is Christ's letter to the church at Laodicea, one of the seven churches. According to Revelation 3:15, the church was mired in apathy. His presence at this door indicates the apocalypticist's sense of imminence—now, as always, is the time to repent. Six of the seven letters refer to the Parousia; only Smyrna receives no message of his imminent coming. The following chapter, Revelation 3:21, introduces the enthroned Christ in Majesty: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Thus, both Parousia and divine judgment are signified.

The work had initially proved controversial for its supposed Catholic allegiance; however, John Ruskin's defence contributed to its immense popularity over the coming decades. From the mid nineteenth century it was reproduced in photographs, popular prints and adapted for stained glass designs while Hunt himself made three versions. The Scottish Baptist Rev. Alexander MacLaren was among the many religious leaders who acknowledged the painting's status, writing in his multi-volume Bible commentary: "Many of us are familiar, I dare say, with the devoutly imaginative rendering of the first part of these wonderful words [Revelation 3:20], which we owe to the genius of a living painter."¹⁹

Hunt's third version was purchased by a British businessman, philanthropist and writer on social issues Charles Booth. Lady Loch, widow of the Governor of the Cape and High Commission in South Africa, suggested to Booth that he should exhibit the work throughout the empire.²⁰ He agreed "in true imperial spirit".²¹ His spouse Mary described him following "its course with the keenest interest, often speaking of his desire that our fellow-subjects in those distant regions should have better opportunities of seeing great art".²² Booth donated the painting to St. Paul's Cathedral, London, afterwards. Ruskin's defence was integral to the artwork's reception and marketing during the tour.²³ The remarkable success—an estimated seven million viewed it—has been attributed to a "convergence of entertainment with art, imperialism and religion".²⁴ Many agendas were in operation—Hunt for one hoped it would heal animosity in South Africa following the Second Boer War.²⁵ The painting toured only ethnically white-settler dominions of the British Empire, largely serving to re-assert Imperial, Christian authority. It exported the culture of the Imperial mother country and was missional both in Christian and Imperial terms—the Kingly Christ touring British dominions draws parallels between Christendom and Empire. The British Empire was 'the empire on which the sun never sets'; the combined symbolism of light and the sun—suggesting optimism and

¹⁹ MacLaren, *MacLaren's Commentary*, 302.

²⁰ Maas, *Holman Hunt*, 118.

²¹ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, II:417.

²² Booth, *Memoir*, 28.

²³ Troughton, "End of the World," 60, 63-4, 68; Maas, *Holman Hunt*, 154-5.

²⁴ Troughton, "End of the World," 55.

²⁵ Maas, *Holman Hunt*, 192.

righteous cause—conveyed religious associations to Empire, rather than convert non-Christian indigenous populations.

The painting serves as an evangelistic call and summons into the Christian missional community; the implication is the realised Kingdom of God. Hunt's painting dresses Christ as Priest and King.²⁶ The latter, Christ's Kingly office is particularly noteworthy, denoting both his abstract spiritual Kingship and Christ's visible reign announced by the seventh trumpet.²⁷ This underlines the Adventist theology of Hunt's painting.²⁸ According to Ruskin, with whom Hunt shared a non-conformist background, the painter had depicted "Christ as a living presence among us now".²⁹ The Calvinist-born scholar thus alludes to the evangelical belief in the imminence of the Second Advent. In 1938 a sermon by C. W. Budden referenced the painting and developed on Ruskin's Adventist reading: "We often hear people speaking of the Second Coming of Christ. But I want you to realize that Christ is always coming, and the question is whether there is room for Him in your heart."³⁰

The design remained potent into the interwar. Shortly after the Great War's end the American businessman William Wolcott Seymour commissioned Ursula Wood to produce a copy (fig. 283-4) of Hunt's painting.³¹ Wood used a step ladder to study the third version in St. Paul's, while the visiting public blessed the artist and her painting.³² The *Light of the World* continued to be a popular design for stained glass windows throughout the Protestant world, with most companies counting a matching design in their catalogues (fig. 285-7). The continued reproduction and re-interpretation of the composition, with its missional tone and Adventist content, signifies the continued relevance of the underlying spiritual message for Protestant communities during the interwar. From the late nineteenth century Watson & Co. produced several adaptations. A four-light window at Saint John the Evangelist, Creagh (1928) (fig. 288) depicts sequentially the parable of the Prodigal Son, Light of the World, Christ as Good Shepherd, and the Good Samaritan. The second light places Hunt's composition—with altered cruciform aureole halo—above the Lamb of God. Beneath the first and fourth light is the reference to his title in Revelation 1:8, Alpha and Omega. An Arts & Crafts style Great War Memorial window at Capel Heol Awst, an Independent Welsh chapel in Carmarthen, was installed in 1922. Titled *Atgyfodir dy Frawd Drachefn (Your Brother Will Rise Again)* (fig. 289), it draws upon the conversation with Martha on eschatological resurrection.³³ It forms a pair on either side of the pulpit with *Goleuni y Byd (The Light of the World)* (fig. 290) which was

²⁶ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, 1:350-1.

²⁷ Revelation 11:15.

²⁸ Mason, *Christina Rossetti*, 73; Wheeler, *Ruskin's God*, 98, 111.

²⁹ Ruskin, "Modern Painters vol. III," 86.

³⁰ Budden, "Christ Shut Out," 124.

³¹ Wood trained at St. John's Wood Art School and the Royal Academy Schools. The painting was presented in 1927 to the College of Puget Sound, a United Methodist affiliated institute in Tacoma, Washington, USA.

³² Thompson, "Gail Day Memorial Chapel."

³³ John 11:23.

simultaneously installed and used Holman Hunt's composition as a memorial. Hunt's iconography is situated in an ecclesiastical context, giving the Adventist theology institutional endorsement, and often used alongside other imagery from the life and times of Jesus. Thus, Christ's two advents are unified; Christian history begins and ends with his presence.

Requests were made throughout the white Imperial context. Morris & Co. produced an example (fig. 291) for Unley Park Baptist Church, Adelaide, Australia (1930–1), with the firm's chief designer for windows, John Henry Dearle, redesigning the Christ (fig. 292).³⁴ Its use as a memorial window design representing a tender kingly Christ emphasises apocalyptic hope. Irrespective of the interests at play in commissioning the later reproductions, the iconography's allusions to salvation, millennial imminence and the future promise of the Christian faith remain vital. It reasserted Victorian and Edwardian culture, providing a sense of historical continuity, and rebuffed the notion that the War had to be a historical epochal change. A progress-orientated humanist concept of the Kingdom of God was reaffirmed while Protestant and Imperial British identity was also asserted; the composition embodied Imperial values which further conferred its status and sense of timelessness.

The Kingdom and the Great War

The hope of the Kingdom was vital during the Great War; progressive Amillennialist calls for spiritual renewal and a new world order had responded to the conflict. As Michael Ramsey propounded, most Anglican teachers recognised it "as a bitter and sorrowful delay in the march of that progress which is indeed the Kingdom of God".³⁵ The apparent need to reform civilisation gave purpose to many caught up in the conflict. Llewellyn Gwynne, deputy Chaplain General of the British army in France 1915–1919, suggested that the chaplains in service had gained "dreams and visions of a great spiritual fighting machine, which, if realised, may... allow the Kingdom of God to operate upon earth."³⁶ Gwynne paired the concept of purification with the progressive ambition of a new world;

Let us watch and pray that out of the fire of this great war we may emerge cleansed and purified of the dross, to start afresh with bigger ideas and larger hopes, not content with any lesser objective than that aimed at and prayed for by the Unseen but Ever-present Commander of our forces, the extension of the Rule and Kingdom of God on earth. 'Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.'³⁷

For some the War became an opportunity and a call to action. Senior Chaplain to the Forces, Philip C. T. Crick hoped that it marked "the dawn of a new day in the history of our country" where men who had fought "caught the vision of an even nobler cause, and learnt the abiding lesson that

³⁴ Sewter, *Morris and His Circle*, 75.

³⁵ Ramsey, *Gore to Temple*, 130.

³⁶ Gwynne, Preface, xx.

³⁷ *ibid.* xxi.

the greatest of all battles that can be fought is for Christ and the Kingdom of God.”³⁸ According to the anonymous author of *The Witness of the Church in the Present Crisis*:

if out of our shame and sorrow is born the resolve to strive by the grace of God in an altogether new way to realize on earth a Holy Catholic Church which, seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and confessing in all its practice that those who are in Christ are brethren, can claim to speak with moral authority, the beginning must be made now. The goal is far distant.³⁹

Spiritual regeneration was apparently a matter of urgency; “The future of the Church of Christ is a matter of deeper concern to the world than the future of the British Empire”.⁴⁰ If the Church could provide an ideal with the same strength of purpose as warfare, then “the Kingdom of God would then become in an altogether new sense a living reality in the actual world.”⁴¹ H. G. Wells concurred; “no other idea is great enough or commanding enough but only the world kingdom of God... nothing else can satisfy his manifest need”.⁴² Wells conflated civilisation with the Kingdom of God, writing, “French and Italian people I talked to said they were fighting for ‘Civilisation.’ That is one name for the kingdom of God, and I have heard English people use it too.”⁴³ Wells demonstrated a concern for millenarian ideals; his notion of *the war to end war* alludes to the reign of peace during the millennium as foretold in Isaiah 2:4

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Wells’s views cannot be dismissed as simply propaganda; in 1917 he authored a theological tract, declaring “The kingdom of God on earth is not a metaphor, not a mere spiritual state, not a dream, not an uncertain project; it is the thing before us, it is the close and inevitable destiny of mankind.”⁴⁴ Appeals for regeneration and renewal continued after 1918. The moral philosopher W. R. Sorley offered a lay sermon arguing that “elements of St. Paul’s teaching made their way into men’s minds, and they became aware of a spiritual force that might regenerate the world and establish on earth the kingdom of heaven.”⁴⁵ At times of comfort millenarian hopes lay dormant, however at the “midnight of their misery, men of all nations turn their eyes the brighter hope... In our own country the air is full of the expectation of the new world which is to succeed the present turmoil, and of preparation for it... Reconstruction is on all men’s lips.”⁴⁶

³⁸ Crick, “Soldier’s Religion”, 371.

³⁹ X, *Witness of The Church*, 4.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 3, 12, 15.

⁴¹ *ibid*, 14.

⁴² *ibid*, 254.

⁴³ Wells, *War and the Future*, 251.

⁴⁴ Wells, *Invisible King*, 111.

⁴⁵ Sorley, *Renewal of Life*, 10.

⁴⁶ *ibid*, 11

The Healing of the Nations

The ultimate events of Revelation promise a world without war, pain and suffering.⁴⁷ Edenic existence is restored while leaves from the tree of life are used for the “healing of the nations”.⁴⁸ Discerning the situation in the early 1930s, Roger Fry addressed the contemporary issues of Nationalism and Internationalism in his essay for *Sermons by Artists*, writing “It is the arrogance, born of the collective pride, of one nation towards another and of one race to another, that is the source of patriotism and all its attendant ills.”⁴⁹ Revelation’s words suggesting equality and fraternity following tribulation had been cited in reference to the Great War; Edward Carpenter’s *Healing of the Nations and the Hidden Sources of Their Strife* (1915), for example, alluded to Revelation to promote post-war recovery.

The League of Nations was established with ambitions for reconciliation and healing between the belligerent nations, and the ambition of a new world order with lasting peace amongst nations. Charles Gore took the League of Nations as a source for spiritual renewal in the post-war situation, arguing it was necessary to seek “great repentance” following the “narrow patriotism” in which the church acquiesced, warning that otherwise the same errors will be repeated. The Archbishop of Canterbury identified the League with divine purpose in a sermon at the opening of the third League of Nations Assembly in 1922, where he claimed: “If we consider what the League of Nations is for, what its covenant covers, what are its aims, its possibilities, its resolves, here, as the very kernel of Jesus Christ’s teaching, it lies compact—‘The Kingdom of God and His righteousness,’ It is nothing less than that.” Religious leaders did not universally support the League; it was criticised as a political expression of the Kingdom of God. In 1919—before the League’s covenant was published—Joseph F. Rutherford denounced the League of Nations as a counterfeit of God’s Kingdom to an audience of the Bible Students movement and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Harry Morley’s *Lighting the Lamp of Peace* (1922) (fig. 293) resonates with the contemporary hope for everlasting peace. A female figure holds the Lamp of Peace that the male figure opposite lights with fire from the smouldering Corpus Delicti. Three male figures denoting youth, maturity and old age, indicate the intergenerational prudence of pursuing peace. Putti in the upper corners of the canvas hold scrolls quoting the opening words of Psalm 133 in Latin, “Ecce quam bonum”. The Psalm addresses the theme of unity and promotes the ideal union of the faithful and the hope that there will one day be the spiritual unity of all God’s people. The satirist David Low sustained this desire for a peaceful accord for humanity and the consignment of war to history in *Sermons by Artists*:

⁴⁷ Revelation 21:4.

⁴⁸ Revelation 22:2-9.

⁴⁹ Fry, “Proverbs 16:18,” 41.

It is now possible to dream with some prospect of ultimate realization of a world in which all peoples will live together in peace, contentment and pride... it is dawning on humanity that patriotic sentiment need no more be exclusively confined to the nation than to the village, but may embrace the whole world.⁵⁰

Eric Kennington concurred on the “new kingdom of the future” in his sermon on Isaiah 2:4:

No more will man fight man with material weapons nor bodily gain and selfish aims. He will be a warrior in a greater battler, against greater powers, for a far greater attainment. He will make himself in the image of God.⁵¹

The adopted Amillennial tone identifies a progress-orientated internationalist vision of the Kingdom in reference to the League. Charles Gore warned, “if the rivalry of nations is to go on unchecked... there is no hope for our civilisation.”⁵² Gore looked to “imaginative artists” who depicted the fall of empires with “horrible verisimilitude.”⁵³ The subject had proved popular to nineteenth century artists such as Thomas Cole, John Martin, and Samuel Colman (fig. 294-6); thus their art found new didactic purpose for Gore. He heralded the League, asserting its foundational ideals “of a fellowship of humanity, supreme in its interests over all separate national claims, a fellowship based on justice and the rights of weaker as well as stronger nations... mainly had its origin in Christian thought or imagination”⁵⁴ A. C. Dixon stressed that, with Christian foundations, the League would be “good preparation for The Coming of the King.”⁵⁵ Meanwhile German church leaders were wary of identifying a human programme with the Kingdom of God following Germany’s treatment at Versailles. The German Delegation at the 1925 Stockholm Conference asserted that it could not “identify any state of temporal welfare with the Kingdom of God... [nor] believe in the near coming of peace as long as the blessings of peace are denied to our nation.”⁵⁶ The objection raised the issue of “hijacking the kingdom of God by a particular political program”, and confusing internationalism with the Kingdom of God.⁵⁷

Britain, Zion, and the End-Time

The League of Nations appointed Britain as the mandatory authority for Palestine In April 1920, following the British administration of the region during the War’s latter period. Jerusalem was surrendered to General Edmund Allenby’s British forces on 9 December 1917. The following September Allenby masterminded an innovative coordinated attack in the battle of Megiddo—the Palestinian campaign’s climactic confrontation that brought the Islamic Ottoman Empire to sue for peace in October 1918—fought on the plains around Tel Megiddo, the prophesied location for the

⁵⁰ Low, “Matthew 14:27 & 31,” 20.

⁵¹ Kennington, “Matthew 6:28-9,” 31, 32.

⁵² Gore, *Dominant Ideas*, 10-11.

⁵³ Gore, *League of Nations*, 6.

⁵⁴ *ibid*, 18.

⁵⁵ Dixon, “League of Nations,” 444.

⁵⁶ *Stockholm Conference*, 451.

⁵⁷ Robert, “First Globalization?,” 100.

eschatological battle of Armageddon.⁵⁸ Allenby was subsequently conferred a Peerage, becoming Viscount Allenby, of Megiddo and of Felixstowe in the County of Suffolk. Allenby remarked: "I don't think I can do better than Allenby of Megiddo. Megiddo was the crucial point of last year's campaign; and is the base of the name Armageddon, which means 'place of Megiddo'."⁵⁹ According to the sequence of events in Revelation, Armageddon occurs before the opening of seventh seal establishes the period of millennial tranquillity, rendering Allenby's justification somewhat disingenuous and his title unsubtle in the context.

Jerusalem's occupation by British forces was received rapturously and often associated with Christian eschatological narratives in the British press. An article in the *Guardian* recognised the Holy Land's cultural profundity, suggesting, "Even the least imaginative of us must have paused to for a moment to-night at the conjunction of names in the British report from Palestine—'Our cavalry, traversing the field of Armageddon, have occupied Nazareth.'"⁶⁰ The *Observer* declared,

The deliverance of Jerusalem carries the most literal of us, in his own despite, into the world of dreams. For it is above all others the dream-city of humanity... it is the vision in whose strength the stumbling generations have yearned towards something nobler than the life they knew... We need an earthly Jerusalem to point us to the heavenly.⁶¹

Christian publications similarly proclaimed the event, often with reference to an idealised reformulation of civilisation. The American publication *Biblical World* observed sardonically "We shall have many pronouncements as to the end of the now that Jerusalem has fallen. Indeed, we already have them—strange utterances for men of sanity." Nevertheless, it concluded, "The surrender of Jerusalem... foretells, not the death, but the new birth, of civilization."⁶² In the *Christian Herald and the Signs our Times*, W. Percy Hicks declared the "working of the Divine plan" in the British Government's position of creating a Jewish homeland. He continued, "the clearing out of the Turk from Jerusalem is the most striking and definite fulfilment of Bible prophecy the war has yet produced."⁶³ The Holy City's capture was framed with reference to the Jewish return to Zion; Zion is a synonym for the city as well as the indefinite geography of the biblical Land of Israel, the promised national home. Its restoration is a key event for Judeo-Christian apocalyptic eschatological prophecy.⁶⁴ Thus, issues regarding the Jewish diaspora are profoundly eschatological, while for evangelical Christian Zionists the Jewish return to Israel is integral to the biblically prophesied end-times.

⁵⁸ Revelation 16:16.

⁵⁹ Gardner, *Allenby of Arabia*, 224.

⁶⁰ "Editorial Article 1," 4.

⁶¹ "Jerusalem" *Observer*, 6.

⁶² "Jerusalem," *Biblical World*, 2.

⁶³ Hicks, "One More Year," 20.

⁶⁴ Kayserling, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 5:209.

The capture of Jerusalem followed the infamous Balfour Declaration, 1917, which stated the British commitment to establish and promote the Jewish National Home in Palestine. The Conservative statesman Arthur Balfour was committed to the Zionist programme out of theological conviction, having been raised with evangelical Christianity and, like British Prime Minister and fellow Zionist David Lloyd George, was sympathetic to Dispensationalism.⁶⁵ Dispensationalist teaching sees biblical history as series of periods—dispensations—that have been progressively revealed to humanity via divine covenants. The Protestant emphasis on a literal reading of scripture identified the Jews as the children of the biblical Israelites and were therefore heirs to God’s covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-7.⁶⁶ The return was an integral stage before the final dispensation, the millennium. Balfour and the President of the English Zionist Federation (and subsequently first President of Israel) Dr Chaim Weizmann regularly discussed the Zionist ambition; Weizmann welcomed the taking of Jerusalem as “an achievement which will rank high in moral as in military history” that “redeemed” the city from Ottoman rule.⁶⁷

Donald Maxwell had followed the admiralty to the Middle East in late 1918. He authored and illustrated two books on his experiences, emphasising the region’s biblical heritage; *A Dweller in Mesopotamia, being the Adventures of an Official Artist in the Garden of Eden* (1920), and *The Last Crusade* (1921).⁶⁸ The titles identify the region through Christian scripture and history, while the latter denotes British triumphalism in occupying the Holy Land. Maxwell’s Christian faith was apparent in his topographic imagery that also framed his experiences using Christianity and myth; the landscape is thus mythologised while British policy is endorsed. Titles such as *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen* (fig. 297), which references Revelation 18:2, are not necessarily literal commentaries; they do however complement the contemporary religious narratives. Maxwell was conscious of the War’s apocalyptic allusions, observing, “If there have been two words more abused by Fleet Street... they are in peace time Pageant and in war time Armageddon.”⁶⁹ He continues by acknowledging the popular apocalyptic rhetoric alongside a painting of Megiddo (fig. 298), stating:

St. John in the Revelation (ch. xvi.) pictures unclean spirits "like frogs" coming out of the mouth of the dragon and of the beast and of the false prophet. (Popular current interpretation no doubt fixes on the beast as the Kaiser, if not on Mahomet as the false prophet.)⁷⁰

Maxwell uses apocalyptic imagery and quotations to address the battle of Megiddo, contextualising *The Feast* (fig. 299) with an excerpt from Revelation 19:18:

To all the fowls that fly in the midst of Heaven:

⁶⁵ Wagner, *Land of Promise*, 99-100; Wagner, “Evangelicals and Israel,” 1020-1026.

⁶⁶ Ariel, “Unexpected Alliance,” 75.

⁶⁷ “Jerusalem In British Hands,” 5.

⁶⁸ A third title, *With Bible and Brush in Palestine*, appears to have never been published.

⁶⁹ Maxwell, *Last Crusade*, 123.

⁷⁰ *ibid*, 124.

Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper
of the great God;
that ye may eat the flesh of Kings, and the flesh of
captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh
of horses.

Maxwell commended Allenby for his “brilliant strategy”.⁷¹ Maxwell’s framing uses the apocalyptic reference as a poetic device; however, this rhetoric suggests events were prophesied, while his crusading analogy promotes the British involvement as towards the Kingdom of God upon Earth.

In March 1920 Richard and Sydney Carline opened a War paintings exhibition at the Goupil Gallery. The brothers had been Official War Artists involved in recording the aerial conflict over the Western and Italian fronts, and the Holy Land where they used aeroplanes to provide novel scenes of Palestine (fig. 300), and thus extended the imagery of aerial warfare previously established by Nevinson (fig. 301). Antoine Capet suggests their paintings made the Palestinian issue better known to the British public and electorate, “projecting a favourable picture of British intervention... [while] the future of Palestine and Mesopotamia was being debated.”⁷² The paintings combined details of the machinery encroaching from the composition’s peripheries with the “eternal landmarks of the Holy Land”.⁷³ Otherwise Richard and Sydney Carline’s paintings often rendered the actual human presence almost unintelligible or invisible (fig. 302), thus anchoring them in the tradition of Holy Land landscapes.⁷⁴ Indeed, their 1921 exhibition at Manchester Art Gallery shifted emphasis away from the War with the title ‘Lands of the Bible’. The unification of past and present concertinas history, reinforcing the wartime framing of Christian cause and prophetic fulfilment.

The Mandate came into effect in September 1923. That year the Zionist Palestine Foundation Fund, a branch of the Zionist Organisation, commissioned David Bomberg to document Jewish pioneering and settlements in Palestine. Although Bomberg was indifferent to the Zionist cause and ideology, his acceptance of the commission that was negotiated with the assistance of Muirhead Bone and made the Jewish artist an active participant in the political Zion movement. Bomberg travelled to Jerusalem in April 1923. His most propagandist work was in apparently unused designs for Palestine Restoration Fund posters (fig. 303-4); however, Bomberg had little interest in painting the ideologically determined, heroic images of modern Jewish Palestine that had been anticipated by his Zionist sponsors. The relationship inevitably strained. It has been contended that his *Quarrying* series (1923–25) has little propaganda value.⁷⁵ The immigrant Jewish pioneers are

⁷¹ *ibid*, 127.

⁷² Capet, “Views of Palestine,” 91.

⁷³ *ibid*, 89.

⁷⁴ *ibid*, 90.

⁷⁵ Capet, “Views of Palestine,” 96; Rachum, “Bomberg: Views,” 23.

largely absent or relegated in paintings such as *The Crushing Machine* (fig. 305); the quarry and machinery is the subject, while the people are an adjunct. It can be contended that Bomberg signals towards Jewish eschatology, which foregrounds the destiny of the Jewish nation above the Jewish individual.⁷⁶ Bomberg's attention is literally to the earth—the nation—itsself.

Bomberg was released from his employment after Edward Marsh introduced him to Sir Ronald Storrs, military governor of Jerusalem (1917–1921), and Civil Governor of Jerusalem and Judea under the British Mandate. Storrs self-identified “as a convinced Zionist”; however he did not consider the Balfour declaration “the beatific vision of a new Heaven and a new Earth”.⁷⁷ Storrs's Governorship set out to preserve and renovate the historic Jerusalem and prevent developments that would diminish the historic identity of Jerusalem; he sought a visual record of the ‘authentic’ ancient city of Judeo-Christian heritage.⁷⁸ Bomberg relinquished his other employment to paint the Holy City for the British authorities. Storrs's interpretation of the historic city was nostalgic; authenticity was conflated with the biblical and early Islamic city. He described his preserving influence on Jerusalem by citing Psalm 48:12-13; “Walk about Zion and go round her: and tell the towers thereof: mark well her bulwarks, set up her houses.”⁷⁹ In acknowledging the necessary repairs and restoration, Storrs alluded to the impervious Jerusalem of scripture which, although threatened, will never be defeated thanks to God's protection.

Bomberg's Palestine is largely without people, reinforcing the importance of place; Jerusalem is not defined by its people. It is therefore also abstracted from the human issues of Arab-Jewish relations.⁸⁰ By removing the contemporary context, the city becomes timeless. Bomberg's interpretation of the city under the Mandate is idealised as a location of peace; the Holy City has calmed and recovered from conflict (fig. 306). Even without the direct Zionist patronage, Bomberg's painting promotes a positive image of the British involvement, Judaism, and Jerusalem. Storrs praised Bomberg's paintings as “at least as likely to attract the world to Palestine as the mechanised sower going forth sowing, or groups of merry immigrants dancing round Old Testament maypoles”.⁸¹ Therefore cultural heritage becomes a form of cultural propaganda. The symbolic city is foregrounded as a prestigious territory of Imperial power.

Capet acknowledges that it is difficult to situate Bomberg between his arrival in 1923 and leaving 1927 in the “highly complicated game” of Palestine under the Mandate; however, he suggests that Bomberg contributed to the British public's interest in Palestine, cultivated the British governing elites attachment to the Holy Land, and worked in the tradition of J. M. W. Turner, David

⁷⁶ Kayserling, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 5:209.

⁷⁷ Ovendale, *Origins*, 45.

⁷⁸ Cork, *Bomberg*, 151.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Capet, “Views of Palestine,” 98.

⁸¹ Storrs, *Orientalisms*, 446.

Roberts, and William Holman Hunt.⁸² Although the initial commission was largely unsuccessful, by mere association Bomberg's involvement endorsed of both religious and secular manifestations of Zionism, advancing and legitimising the British Mandate and the Jewish presence in Palestine.

Brangwyn's Paradise

The Palestinian campaign and British Mandate were distinguished in Frank Brangwyn's *Entry of the Welsh Troops into Jerusalem* (1920–1931) (fig. 307) commissioned by the Welsh War Memorial Committee. They requested a painting with a specifically Welsh theme, and favoured Brangwyn's painting of Jerusalem over alternative paintings of *A Tank in Action* and *A Heavy Gun in Action* (fig. 308-9).⁸³ Brangwyn's work exemplifies the Welsh experience as the capture of Jerusalem. James McBey, the Official War Artist who accompanied Allenby's army in Palestine had already recorded the subject for memorial purposes. McBey painted Allenby's entrance through the Jaffa Gate in several works (fig. 310), with a variation for the Hall of Remembrance scheme (fig. 311). Lacking McBey's direct experience, Brangwyn's composition closely follows contemporary newsreels of Allenby's entry (fig. 312). It is however more than reportage; Welsh identity often interacts with Jewish culture and identity.⁸⁴ Grahame Davies observed that the Welsh affinity for the Jewish people has "certainly been sustained... [and] deepened by the huge influence the Bible has had in Welsh society".⁸⁵ Welsh identity is often expressed with empathy towards with the status of the Jewish people as an historically persecuted small nation that also lives with a sense of divine calling.⁸⁶ There was particular pride in Wales when Jerusalem was captured under a Welsh Prime Minister—David Lloyd George later stressed the Welsh affinity for the Jews was a key factor in his advocacy of Zionism—and with the contributions of the 53rd (Welsh) Division under Major General Motte. Brangwyn's painting of the 53rd apparently lead by General Allenby entering Jerusalem therefore engages with these closely associated national identities and resonates with the wider Welsh Protestant empathy with Zionism.

Brangwyn was concurrently working towards the House of Lords' war memorial that was intended to complete the artistic decorations in the Palace of Westminster's Royal Gallery. Lord Iveagh (at his own expense) selected Brangwyn for the task; however, Brangwyn's initial panels—the aforementioned *A Tank in Action* and *A Heavy Gun in Action*—were rejected by Lord Iveagh and Brangwyn, with both agreeing that the paintings should not recreate the misery of the War.⁸⁷ The

⁸² Capet, "Views of Palestine," 97.

⁸³ Rowan, *Art in Wales*, 57.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Jones, *Wales and Israel*; Davies, *Chosen People*.

⁸⁵ Davies, *Chosen People*, 19-20.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Rutter, *British Empire Panels*, 21.

scheme was radically revised to instead celebrate the British Empire's diversity and the causes that the Empire had fought for. Yet this scheme was also soon interrupted, as Lord Iveagh and the Marquis of Lincolnshire—Brangwyn's main supporters—died in 1927 and 1928 respectively; the Royal Fine Art Commission subsequently ruled the design unsuitable, and the nascent project was ceased. The artist nevertheless completed the scheme with the support of the trustees of the late Lord Iveagh, and donated it to the newly built Guildhall, Swansea.

Brangwyn's Empire Panels celebrate the flora, fauna, and ethnography of the British Empire (fig. 313-4). Frank Rutter suggested that it was the unity—rather than the diversity—of the *constituents* of Empire that was most important to Brangwyn; thus “East and West are indissolubly fused.”⁸⁸ Enora Le Pocreau identified that the scheme orientates around the “central idea of a lost paradise”, while the Empire is represented without beginning or end.⁸⁹ Throughout its history the British Empire had been associated with the Kingdom of God, and fostered a close linkage between God and monarchy, Britishness with Christianity and Empire; it was construed as a civilising empire spreading Christian culture. Sir Hubert Parry had set to William Blake's 1804 poem “And Did Those Feet in Ancient Time” to music in 1916 to inspire British patriotism during the War. The result, “Jerusalem”, identifies the English as God's new chosen people and is a progressive Amillennial call for England to become the New Jerusalem. Lionel Curtis, the son of an evangelical Anglican rector, argued that the British Empire should develop into a World Government and manifest the Kingdom of God on Earth. According to Curtis, the Kingdom was “an organisation of human society ordered in accordance with the laws of God”.⁹⁰ These conceptions secularised into a popular utopian ideology. As the historian Duncan Bell has argued, a number of Victorian writers and thinkers developed a profoundly positive idea of the Empire and settler colonies as a means by which global peace and order could be achieved.⁹¹ Brangwyn's imagery builds upon the nineteenth century association of the Kingdom and the British Empire; its celebration in the place of a memorial conceals the Great War behind an Edenic Imperial cornucopia.⁹² New life is celebrated rather than lost life mourned, and harmony resonates across the canvases. A benevolent natural world, and a universal paradisaical state are manifest; the Empire is rendered utopian. Rutter described the scheme in complementary terms with allusion to Isaiah 2:4:

[it forecasts] the era peace upon earth when the sword will have become a sickle and the ponderous and ugly engines designed for man's destruction will be remembered only as records of a curiously persisting savage strain in an highly civilised age.⁹³

⁸⁸ *ibid*, 18.

⁸⁹ Le Pocreau, “Panels.”

⁹⁰ Curtis, *Civitas Dei*, Book II, 862.

⁹¹ Bell, *Greater Britain*, 92.

⁹² Le Pocreau, “Panels.”

⁹³ Rutter, *British Empire Panels* 9.

Brangwyn's scheme followed a period of renewed interest in Imperial visual propaganda advocating a utopian concept of Empire. A promotional poster for the 1924 British Empire Exhibition (fig. 315) identified the Empire as a "model for the mighty world". In 1926 the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) was established to promote intra-empire trade. From 1927 until 1933 the EMB published around 800 posters endorsing and consolidating an imperialist ideology in British popular culture.⁹⁴ The first poster, *Highways of Empire* (fig. 316), used cartography to indicate the global Empire's modern unified trade. This inter-dependency was in sympathy with the Balfour Declaration of 1926 that declared that Great Britain and the Dominions were "equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another".⁹⁵ Thus the Empire was ostensibly being restructured as a political organisation with idealistic objectives of "peace, security and progress".⁹⁶ The Canadian painter James Kerr-Lawson designed a pentalogy—captioned using Isaiah 2:4—titled *The Empire Stands for Peace* (fig. 317) ahead of Armistice Day 1929. Kerr-Lawson ties the Empire with scriptural prophecy regarding an eschatological kingdom of peace. In the fifth panel (fig. 317c) an ambiguous disc of light surrounds the shrouded figure who leads a pair of horses—and the composition's entire orientation from left to right. The light suggests the astronomical and denotes sanctity as a halo; is this Christ leading the Empire? Across the EMB posters the Empire is presented fraternally and idealised as an honest, hard-working paradise (fig. 318). As in Brangwyn's scheme, Empire is defended as a positive realisation of international co-operation.

Man's Ultimate Destiny

Human agency in achieving the Kingdom of God was reiterated in Brangwyn's four painting scheme *Man in Search for Eternal Truth* (fig. 319-22) made in the early 1930s for the Rockefeller Center development in midtown Manhattan that was being funded singlehandedly by John D. Rockefeller Jr. Appropriate artists were sought for the Center's unifying "decorative program".⁹⁷ In due course Brangwyn received his commission.

In March 1932 a decorative theme of 'New Frontiers' was implemented at the development.⁹⁸ The artworks had the profound goal "to make people pause and think and to turn their minds inward and upward... we hope, they may stimulate not only a material but above all a spiritual awakening."⁹⁹ The agreed theme would

⁹⁴ Constantine, "Empire Marketing Board," 223-4.

⁹⁵ Inter-Imperial Relations Committee, *Imperial Conference 1926*, 2.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Press Release, October 10 1932. RCA.

⁹⁸ "A Decorative Scheme for Rockefeller Center," March 1932, RAC; "Theme: Re Painting in Great Hall of No. 1 Building Rockefeller Center," draft memorandum 1, September 30, 1932. 1. RCA.

⁹⁹ "Theme: Re Painting in Great Hall of No. 1 Building Rockefeller Center," draft memorandum 1, September 30, 1932. 1. RCA.

interpret our American Civilisation of the moment, its manifestations, its meanings, its promises. We are considering... where we have arrived and what we are going through as a people, physically, mentally and spiritually—as well as what we are about to go through... The development of civilisation is no longer lateral; it is inward and upward. It is the cultivation of man's own soul and mind, the broadening and deepening of his relations with his fellowmen, the coming in to a fuller comprehension of the meaning and mystery of life and of the eternal forces back of it [sic].¹⁰⁰

This theme was a novel extension of the American frontier; it was intended to represent a new social model for welfare and happiness in work and prove an “answer to the Bolshevik challenge.”¹⁰¹ Integral to this platform was modernity and the realisation of a new historical age; “We live actually in the hour of as radical a transformation of human thought as has ever affected men's destinies.”¹⁰² While the overall theme emphasised “American Civilisation”, the concerns were international in scope with Rockefeller eager to avoid Americentrism.¹⁰³ Another theme, ‘The Progress of America’, was rejected for “leaning rather toward self-glorification and national isolation.”¹⁰⁴

American and international artists were recommended for buildings throughout the Center; Nelson Rockefeller suggested Stanley Spencer—still basking in the success of his Burghclere scheme—alongside Augustus John for the British Empire building.¹⁰⁵ In 1932 a five person committee comprising men from American schools and institutes was established to advise on the murals for the development's centrepiece, the 266 metre tall tower at 30 Rockefeller Plaza (otherwise known as the RCA building).¹⁰⁶ Among the artists initially favoured were Picasso (who could not be contacted, having “gone away on a motortrip vacation”¹⁰⁷), and Matisse, who declined the project on the basis that it was an adverse space and the prescribed time frame was too short.¹⁰⁸ Brangwyn was approached in due course.

In January 1932 a telegram was sent to the 64 year-old artist enquiring whether he was interested in composing sketches for a “competitive” scheme.¹⁰⁹ Brangwyn agreed to make drawings, but refused any competition.¹¹⁰ By 17 September 1932 the commissioning process was nearing conclusion; the development's general manager John R. Todd anticipated that the

¹⁰⁰ “Frontiers Old and New: New Frontiers,” annotated typed document, undated. 1. RAC.

¹⁰¹ “Rockefeller Center: Thematic Synopsis,” undated, 3-4. RAC.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰³ John D. Rockefeller Jr. to George Vincent, May 5 1932. RAC.

¹⁰⁴ George Vincent, “A Decorative Scheme for Rockefeller,” March 1932. RAC.

¹⁰⁵ Nelson Rockefeller to Arthur Hale Woods, July 5 1932. RAC.

¹⁰⁶ The committee: Paul J. Sachs (Fogg Art Museum), Fiske Kimball (Pennsylvania Museum of Art), Dean Everett V. Meeks (Yale School of Art), Prof. Edward W. Forbes (Fogg Art Museum), and Herbert E. Winlock (Metropolitan Museum of Art). Nelson Rockefeller to Frank Crownshield, February 26 1932. Rockefeller Archive Center; John D. Rockefeller Jr. to Paul J. Sachs, February 25 1932. RAC.

¹⁰⁷ John R. Todd to John D. Rockefeller Jr., September 17 1932. RAC. Todd, Robertson, and Todd Engineering Company was appointed developers in October 1929. John R. Todd was executive director of the company.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Edward Trumbull to Frank Brangwyn, telegram, January 25, 1925, RCA

¹¹⁰ Edward Trumbull to Todd & Brown Inc., telegram, January 26, 1925, RCA

combination of Rivera, Spaniard José Maria Sert, and Brangwyn would “have a very beautiful result.”¹¹¹ By 7 October Todd’s business associate confirmed the design:

as you come in the main entrance Rivera’s decorations face you, the only decoration in this part of the hall. As you go down the side halls to the elevators, on the north side will be Sert’s four decorations and on the south side Brangwyn’s.

John D. Rockefeller Jr. responded, “For advertising purposes I had felt that Matisse and Picasso had the greatest drawing value... I hope the artistic public will not regard Sert and Brangwyn as on a lower level”.¹¹² They were announced in a press release of 10 October 1932.¹¹³ Specific criteria was recommended for the artists to follow with their compositions. The works were to be *en grisaille* while it was recommended that the compositions should only cover as much canvas “as will produce the best effect, probably between sixty and seventy-five percent.” Further every canvas was “to be signed by the artist with his name and date”.¹¹⁴ The artists were set the deadline of April 1933 for the completion of their respective schemes. Sert and Brangwyn were to paint their works in Europe before the works’ adhesion to the building’s walls, whilst Rivera intended a buon fresco.

Brangwyn’s four murals were for the central elevators’ southern bank. His ‘New Frontier’ was ‘Man’s New Relation to Man’, and would “express man’s new relationship to society and his fellowman: (1) His Family Relationships; (2) His Relationships as a Worker; (3) His Relationships as a part of Government; and (4) His Ethical or Religious Relationships.”¹¹⁵ The fourth panel, revealing “the real meaning of the Sermon on the Mount”, was “the dominating and controlling factor, without which the first three can only fail”.¹¹⁶ It was reputedly suggested by Todd.¹¹⁷ Likewise Sert’s fourth panel—“Genius”—was paramount.¹¹⁸ Brangwyn commenced work on a modified programme provided by Todd, with four images describing:

1. Primitive man
2. Early civilization
3. Industrial civilization
4. The triumph of the spirit¹¹⁹

They were delivered in November 1933, with Brangwyn’s “intimate friend”, the British author and fellow Catholic Philip Macer-Wright providing inscriptions for each.¹²⁰ These provide the titles for the paintings; *Man Labouring*, *Man the Creator*, *Man the Master*, and *Man’s Ultimate Destiny*.

¹¹¹ Todd to Rockefeller. September 17 1932. RCA.

¹¹² John D. Rockefeller Jr. to Hood, October 12 1932. RCA.

¹¹³ Rockefeller Center Press Release, October 10 1932. RCA.

¹¹⁴ “Theme,” draft memorandum 2, 30 September 1932, 3. RCA.

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, 2.

¹¹⁶ *ibid*.

¹¹⁷ Macer-Wright, *Frank Brangwyn*, 223.

¹¹⁸ “Theme,” 30 September 1932, 2. RCA.

¹¹⁹ Fiske Kimball to Webster B. Todd, May 23, 1933. RCA.

¹²⁰ Frank Brangwyn to H. Mc. A. Schley, August 2, 1934. RCA.

The first composition frames a central mother and child in a hunter-gatherer community that is ethnically ambiguous owing to the painting's lack of colour. Basic tools denote the primitive culture, and their hand-to-mouth existence. It is inscribed:

Man labouring painfully with his own hands; living precariously and adventurously, with courage, fortitude and the indomitable will to survive.

Brangwyn sought models from his local area, and apparently struggled with models for the central female who embodies the "huntress and the eternal mother".¹²¹ The *Daily Mail* assumed the issue, quoting Brangwyn's desire for "a woman symbolic of her sex, as Eve must have been."¹²² Brangwyn alludes to the Judeo-Christian context of Genesis and Eden. Meanwhile C. R. W. Nevinson concurred, "He is absolutely right. There is a craze for deformation to-day that is worse than degrading... The whole cause of the trouble is the cinema."¹²³

The second, *Man the Creator*, reveals increasingly sophisticated technologies and material wealth as is evident in baskets, buildings, and clothing. Bountiful harvests indicate new methods of husbandry. It is inscribed:

Man the creator and master of the Tool, strengthening the foundations and multiplying the comforts of his abiding place and adding thereto beauty and graciousness.

An earlier inscription was taken from Ecclesiastes 2:4-5 (fig. 323). The former describes processes in the Neolithic revolution; the latter links these with Christianity. The scriptural context is humankind's search for existential meaning; the specific verses addresses meaning in accomplishments, while the chapter concludes that all is insubstantial without God.

In the third panel men labour amongst steam and smoke. Towering above are monumental machines of modern industry. The figures working the forge are recycled from a proposed mural for the SS Queen Mary (fig. 324). The inscription speaks to the complex relationship between human and machine in the industrial age, and Brangwyn's Arts and Crafts background:

Man the master—and servant—of the Machine, harnessing to his will the forces of the material world, mechanizing labour and adding thereto the promise of leisure.

The tool empowers, yet modernity denigrates the worker. Brangwyn had been apprenticed to William Morris and was imbued with Arts and Crafts' principles; related ideas on technology and industry permeate panels two and three. Pre-industrial tools in panel two produce a bounty of food. Their crafted clothes suit their needs. They work, in Morris's words, "for livelihood and pleasure and not for 'profit'."¹²⁴ The third panel shares Morris's critique of the dehumanising modern factory. The panel's title presents an optimistic assessment by decontextualising the inscription's opening three

¹²¹ "Artist's Baby Model," *Star*, Nov 1, 1932. RCA.

¹²² Hunt, "Perfect Woman," 10.

¹²³ "Modern Woman Criticised," 9.

¹²⁴ Morris, "Factories Might Be," 15.

words; the complete inscription suggests mistrust in the machine. Industry is associated with earthly existence; there is no room for the spiritual. Figures in the composition can be attributed with the “master” and “servant” roles: the former are the scientists, the latter the working man. The inscription is not a continuous block of text; the last six words that tell of the “promise of leisure” are positioned around the panel’s corner. The detached placement indicates that liberation from hard toil remains unfulfilled.

The first three panels condense human history, romanticising a lost age while explaining the modernity’s promises remain unfulfilled. Brangwyn’s Rockefeller commission was realised in a period when popular metanarratives of history and civilisational decline such as those of Toynbee and Spengler had gained significant influence and traction. Brangwyn thus offered a remedy for the renewal of Western Civilisation; the fourth panel clarifies that humankind—hitherto defined by technology—needs redefinition through scripture. This depiction makes a purposeful anachronism, situating people in modern dress in Palestine nineteen hundred years earlier. The ethnic diversity is redolent of Brangwyn’s Empire Panels; here this diversity represents the global reach of Christianity and the limitless reach of the Christian message. The all-encompassing message is apparent in the representations of both the young and old, the impoverished and affluent. A physically disabled man is in the central foreground; to the inscription’s left stands soldiers from the Great War. The inscription reads:

Man’s ultimate destiny depends not on whether he can learn new lessons or make new discoveries and conquests, but on his acceptance of the lesson taught him upon two thousand years ago.

With Brangwyn’s appointment the Center assembled a biographical document promoting a particular interpretation of the artist and contextualised his art with the modernist avant-garde. “Elements of cubism” are identified in Brangwyn’s wartime etchings, while Futurism “has not been entirely ignored.” These credentials present Brangwyn as an artist bridging modernism and tradition and were likely asserted in order to atone for missing out on Picasso and Matisse. His politics are noted as “that of a creative Socialist.”¹²⁵ The document quoted the *American Magazine of Art’s* translation of Théophile Alexandre Steinlein’s 1923 description of Brangwyn: “All mankind may find communion in the art of such a man; exalted, by the beauty of his labor, to a conception of the solidarity of countries and of men; relating and joining east and west, south and north—with a hymn—a cantation to the reconciliation of the world.”¹²⁶ The document uses this end-focus to emphasise Brangwyn as a transnational, unifying and reparative figure. Influences from outside the Western canon are acknowledged, while Brangwyn’s political disposition was an olive-branch to left-

¹²⁵ Biographical Document, c. 1932, RAC.

¹²⁶ Defries, “Frank Brangwyn, R.A.,” 565; Steinlein, “L’Art de Frank Brangwyn,” 13.

wing political ideologies.¹²⁷ At a moment of divisive historical events, Brangwyn's employment is politically opportune and framed as a rejection of insularity and national self-interest.¹²⁸

Left-wing politics were soon an issue in the artworks commissioned at 30 Rockefeller Plaza. The infamous controversy, whereby Rivera's mural included Lenin's likeness (fig. 325), erupted in May 1933, and resulted in the covering up and eventual destruction of the artwork. Rivera's mural was intended to link Brangwyn's and Sert's schemes, depicting "man at the cross-roads seeking a course leading to a new and better future."¹²⁹ Rivera identified his design as the culmination of the "Ethical relations of Mankind" depicted in Brangwyn's scheme.¹³⁰ It would similarly conclude Sert's series.¹³¹ Rivera continued, "the Man of Science presents the scale of Natural Evolution, the understandings of which replaces the superstitions of the past. This is the Frontier of the Ethical Evolution." He concluded by appealing for a new socially constructed era; "Man... looks with uncertainty but with hope toward... a New, more Humane and Logical Order."¹³² Rivera's and Brangwyn's designs concern humanity's ultimate state of existence; yet Rivera asserts that Brangwyn's will be usurped by his own panel's content and his communist politics.

The advisory committee—with the Rivera controversy still fresh in mind—raised concerns over Brangwyn's last panel when reviewing his work in progress. Fiske Kimball suggested that Christ be substituted for a "glory of light".¹³³ Meeks thought Christ's presence was inappropriate for a commercial building. He advocated a symbolic rendering instead, warning that Christ's depiction could be construed as propaganda.¹³⁴ H. E. Winlock concurred, adding,

It is likely to raise one of two thoughts in the beholder's mind: Either you are taking the stand that Christianity is a thing of the past, or you are calling to mind a certain smug type which hides behind religion to cover up business. I am not a religious person myself, but I have an idea that when Christ kicked the money-changers out of the Temple he didn't intend to follow them into their offices.¹³⁵

The situation was unresolved when John R. Todd issued a press statement in September 1933 following reports that Brangwyn was apprehensive about omitting the figure of Christ.¹³⁶ Todd countered by claiming there was no communication for several months and "no thought of portraying the Sermon on the Mount without Christ. The only question was, what was the best way

¹²⁷ Tim Barringer has noted that relatively little is known of Brangwyn's politics, making the document's claim more notable. "Heroic Labour," 227.

¹²⁸ For example, the Great War, American isolationism, the rise of National Socialism in Germany, and the failings of the League of Nations with the almost contemporaneous Japanese invasion of Manchuria.

¹²⁹ "Sr. Rivera's Mural," May 1933. 2. RCA.

¹³⁰ Diego Rivera, "Subject Matter of the Proposed Mural Decorations by Diego Rivera for the Radio Corporation of America Building in the Rockefeller Centre, New York City" typed translation, 5 Nov. 1932. RCA.

¹³¹ Rockefeller Center Press Release 10 Oct. 1933. RCA.

¹³² Rivera, "Proposed Mural."

¹³³ Fiske Kimball to Webster B. Todd, 23 May 1933. RCA.

¹³⁴ Everett V. Meeks to Webster B. Todd, 23 May 1933. RCA.

¹³⁵ H. E. Winlock to Webster B. Todd, 19 May 1933. RCA.

¹³⁶ John R. Todd, "Statement of Mr. John R. Todd," 14 September 1933. RCA.

to represent Christ... After consideration it was mutually decided to use a Great Light shining".¹³⁷

Philip Macer-Wright quoted Brangwyn's position;

Certain Beatitudes were uttered in that Sermon—were they not?—and I heartily agree with that view that they were spoken by a figure in human form, not by a bright white light.

That America is inclined to subscribe to that view gives me the greater satisfaction... I realise more clearly than I did how essential Christ's figure is to the composition of the picture.

The more you think about it the more absurd becomes the absence of that figure.¹³⁸

Moreover, Brangwyn suggested

The bother began when the Mexican artist Rivera... introduced into his panel the figure of Lenin... [and] rejected on the ground that it was a piece of political propaganda. I need scarcely tell you that I consider it absurd to regard the Sermon on the Mount as political propaganda... To compare Christ's teaching with that of Lenin would be merely childish.¹³⁹

Nevinson again defended Brangwyn, striking a pro-Christian tone: "The sooner a picture of the saviour is exhibited in a commercial building in America the sooner America is likely to get out of its despond."¹⁴⁰ The *Catholic Herald* declared the controversy "a grim reflection on the moral condition" of the United States.¹⁴¹ Rockefeller was a devout Baptist who sought a progressive realisation of the Kingdom of God through his philanthropic work.¹⁴² His opinion is notable by its absence. Inevitably Rivera's opinion was sought on the new disagreement. He alleged, "it was a manifestation of certain laws of history that in 1933, the nineteenth hundredth anniversary of the expulsion of the money changes from the Temple by Jesus of Nazareth, the money changer should now be taking a belated revenge by expelling Jesus from their own Temple."¹⁴³ He continued;

If the owners of the building don't want in it the figure of their Christ because it is a commercial building, this means that business is contrary even to the Christian commandments...

The proprietors by forbidding a Christian painter to paint Christ and a Communist painter to paint Lenin prove that when they hire a painter, they think that they are buying him body and soul... They are mistaken.¹⁴⁴

Rivera's biographer Bertram Wolfe wryly observed how it amounted to a request that Christ should "turn His back—oh, ironic symbol!—upon the temple of the money-changers."¹⁴⁵ The criticism of Brangwyn's composition following Rivera's own inadvertently associated Lenin and Christ as political figures. It establishes each as messianic figures in their respective ideologies of Communism and Christianity, with the former striving for an eternal secular utopia on Earth, while the latter offers an everlasting Kingdom of God.

¹³⁷ *ibid.*

¹³⁸ Macer-Wright, "Artists Cable," 2.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ "Americans Sympathise," 14.

¹⁴¹ "Insult to God," 5.

¹⁴² Schenkel, *Rich Man*, 67-70.

¹⁴³ Rivera, *Portrait*, 30.

¹⁴⁴ Wolfe, *Life and Times*, 370.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

Brangwyn asserted his “firm conviction that I have adopted the only satisfactory way of representing Christ within the terms of the commission”, and was “assisted by the clear statement... that the proposal to eliminate the figure of Christ ‘was a suggestion, not an order’”.¹⁴⁶ Brangwyn sent the paintings in November with a letter to Rockefeller describing the works.

The panels... show the three great dynamic periods in man’s conquest of the physical world and to suggest the nature of is yet more tremendous destiny—that of cultivating the garden of his soul and attuning himself to the Christ-infused spirit of Brotherhood, by which alone he may hope—in spirit and in truth—to inhabit the earth.¹⁴⁷

Upon receipt in New York, Todd wrote a letter to Rockefeller assuring him that “Mr. Brangwyn has modified the figure... The Press this morning is quiet... his work makes excellent decoration”.¹⁴⁸

The inscription to the fourth panel alludes to Saint Thomas Aquinas’s theological concept of man’s eschatological destiny in *Summa Theologica* (1265-74). Aquinas posits that humankind yearns for perfection and happiness; on earth this is through the fullest development of all man’s powers and potentialities. However, this remains a shadow of the higher form—the ultimate destiny fathomable with the Beatific Vision. The inscription indicates that the Sermon’s lessons, which express the ethical standard for the Christian era and the present and future Kingdom of God, are the key to this; it is “perfectae christianae vitae”.¹⁴⁹ Brangwyn instructs the viewer to follow the lessons so that humankind might achieve the standards for this utopian presence upon Earth.

Approximating the Kingdom of God

Brangwyn’s series presents a teleological narrative of human history; a new era could be achieved by adopting the high ethical standards of the Sermon on the Mount. As Rivera’s scheme suggested, a millennial mode, or themes, and rhetoric were present in progressive, ostensibly secular politic movements and revolutionary groups. John Mee argued “the possibility of a millennium where in the world would be reformed into the perfect society had permeated deep within the thought patterns of Christian Europe over many centuries. Its presence persists even in the most secular of the utopian projections that were essential to the eighteenth century’s interest in progress.”¹⁵⁰ Such ideas informed subsequent interwar political movements; Communism, Fascism, and the League of Nations flourished as eschatological utopian visions.

The realisation of Communism in the 1917 Russian Revolution was depicted in David Jagger’s *The Bolshevik* (1918) (fig. 326) at the 1918 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. A fervent, wild-eyed revolutionary froths surrounded by armed insurgents all beneath a Communist banner; its Cyrillic

¹⁴⁶ Frank Brangwyn to John D. Rockefeller Jr., c.November 1933. RAC.

¹⁴⁷ Frank Brangwyn to John D. Rockefeller Jr., 19 November 1933. RAC.

¹⁴⁸ John R. Todd to John D. Rockefeller Jr., 5 December 1933. RAC.

¹⁴⁹ Augustine, *Sermon on the Mount*, 1:1.

¹⁵⁰ Mee, “Millenarian Visions,” 536.

lettering translates as the partial French Revolutionary slogan, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”. Jagger depicted a fanatical movement bound by ideology, stoking contemporary fears of Red Russia. Marx was a relatively obscure figure until 1917. His theory of history, culminating in a ultimate utopian stage, closely paralleled the Christian millennium; the return to an original (communist) state of bliss appropriated the return to Eden.¹⁵¹ Marx’s socialism was “designed to both complete and replace Christianity... in which the exploited were given a sacred vocation and certainty about the future.”¹⁵² The overlap was apparent in the radical left-wing satirist Will Dyson’s contribution to *Sermons by Artists* on Matthew 6:28-9; Dyson emphasised human agency, industriousness, and creativity in achieving the earthly paradise:

No dream of man is unrealizable; dreams are prophetic visions of unembodied realities, and consciously or unconsciously we move towards their embodiment. The conscious pleading of the saint and the unconscious urging of the practical man are all towards the kingdom of God upon earth.¹⁵³

Dyson alluded to Revelation 21:4, arguing that modern society was on the threshold of ending want. As material objects become commodities, greed—the arch enemy of Communism—also loses its “only justification—the urgent fear of scarcity”.¹⁵⁴

National Socialism in Germany promoted a literal 1000-year kingdom in the Third Reich. A *Guardian* article from 1936 alleged “Bolshevism and National Socialism... are both of them attempts to establish the kingdom of heaven upon on earth, they both belong to the arrogance of modern man.”¹⁵⁵ The synthesis of political extremism and religious millenarianism was addressed at length in the German political philosopher Eric Voegelin’s *Die Politischen Religionen* (1938). Voegelin subsequently described political attempts to realised eschatological forms of governance as attempts to ‘immanentize the eschaton’.¹⁵⁶ The secularisation of Christian prophecy and the advance of sacralised forms of secular programmes approximating the Kingdom of God was condemned by the Catholic Church. Pope Pius XI attacked secular messianism in the anti-communist encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (1937) and the anti-Nazi encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge* (1937).¹⁵⁷

Jagger’s painting represented the prevalent feeling towards Communism following the Russian Revolution; Quentin Bell’s *May Day Procession with Banners* (1937) (fig. 327) and Clive Branson’s *Demonstration in Battersea* (1939) (fig. 328) indicate the increased dissemination and presence of utopian politics by the late 1930s. Communism is depicted as organised and nonviolent; any overt revolutionary dimension is diminished or obfuscated. Branson was an International Labour

¹⁵¹ Revelation 22:1-5.

¹⁵² Jones, “Origins of Socialism,”

¹⁵³ Dyson, “Matthew 6:28—9,” 57.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.* 55-6.

¹⁵⁵ “Cross and Swastika,” 8.

¹⁵⁶ Voegelin, *New Science of Politics*, 160-1.

¹⁵⁷ *Catechism*, 676; Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, 8, 57; Pius XI, *Mit Brennender Sorge*, 17.

Party member before joining the Communist Party in 1932. He was heavily involved in anti-fascist activity. *Demonstration in Battersea* depicts a cross-section of working-class society, emphasizing an exclusively left-wing worldview. Red flags and banners reading “Communist Party of Great Britain Battersea Branch” are held aloft. The road is marked “AID SPAIN”—perhaps a reference to the Aid Spain committee established in 1936 by Branson and his spouse in Battersea. The working classes’ political consciousness is indicated by women holding the *Co-Operative News*, while the newsstands advertise the *Daily Worker*. Around this time Branson self-consciously rejected his academic training at the Slade, instead favouring the untrained approach of the Ashington Art Group (or the ‘Pitmen Painters’), a group of Northumberland miners who recorded their own experiences in artworks during the 1930s. Their perceived ‘authentic’ approach to painting was considered more appropriate to the communist ideology that Branson was actively aiming to promote.¹⁵⁸

The Seven Pillars of Fire (1936), a collection of essays by authors from a variety of fields addressed competing visions for human society. The foreword establishes that the “present era is very strange and paradoxical one... The Absolutism of the Victorians has given way to a kaleidoscopic world of contradictory standards and shifting values.”¹⁵⁹ The anonymous author continues, antedating Orwell’s *1984* (1948), “Two and two no longer make four, right and wrong are regarded merely as relative terms, and Truth, instead of being a matter of precise definition, is a cloudy abstraction”.¹⁶⁰ They warn, “We are wandering aimlessly in a Wilderness of our own making, and how to reach the Promised Land which Man’s mastery over Nature has made possible, is a problem which we seem unable to solve.”¹⁶¹ Each essay identifies a malady and proposes a cure. The Orientalist and Linguist Edward Denison Ross declared “In these modern days of shifting dogmas and rapidly changing political theories it has become almost a popular recreation to suggest what is wrong with the world and to propose means of correcting its faults.”¹⁶² He continued “Utopias, perhaps, serve a useful purpose and show that men are pushing their way towards better things through the hard crust of human error and frustration”.¹⁶³ Although utopias vary according to ideology, they are all designed forms of idealised human society. Thus, as a near-perfect place, they are intended to be final forms for civilisation.

The unflinching certainty of dogmatic ideology was satirised in Nevinson’s painting “*They all Know the Way*”: *A Symbolic Satire on Fascists, Socialists, Capitalists, Hedonists, Ascetics, Intellectuals, and Priests* (1934). Seven figures of the categories identified in the title circle clockwise chained to one another around a superimposed face. Each professes to have some unique gnosis for

¹⁵⁸ Birchall, “Selling the ‘Daily Worker’.”

¹⁵⁹ Foreword to *Seven Pillars*, v.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, v-vi.

¹⁶² Ross, “Utopia While You Wait,” 277.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*

reorganising human society; however, Nevinson indicates they all conform to the same model personified as the face. Nevinson lamented the fanaticism of contemporary politics in an essay for *The Seven Pillars of Fire*, recalling that as a “young man, it was my lot to listen occasionally to Lenin positively foaming at the mouth in a Montparnasse café. He was in those days much addicted to prophecy.”¹⁶⁴ Nevinson specified “The youth of Europe is becoming increasingly under the domination of a socialistic ideal of State or race worship”.¹⁶⁵ He continued, reflecting that in 1921 “it was imagined that another war was inconceivable... I realized that nation-worship was only in its infancy, and the creed of State and nothing but the State would be the next European phase.”¹⁶⁶

The title of Nevinson’s painting indicates that moderate utopian politics also indulged in the hyperbolic rhetoric. Indeed, it was employed across the political spectrum. Millennial socialism in the British Labour Party has received much attention.¹⁶⁷ The Labour Party’s founder James Keir Hardie was inspired by his devout evangelical Christianity, and aspired to make the Kingdom of God upon Earth a reality.¹⁶⁸ The visual culture of political movements in the interwar frequently alluded to millenarian themes to denote their progressive aspirations and rejection of the status quo. Labour often campaigned in the 1920s with posters sharing Hardie’s progressive millennial vision. *Tomorrow—When Labour Rules* (1923) (fig. 329) and A. S. Merrit’s *Greet The Dawn: Give Labour It’s Chance [sic]* (1923) (fig. 330) promote a realised socialist millennium that is as imminent as the sunrise. Gerald Spencer Pryse had produced a comparable design, “*Forward! The Day is Breaking!*” (fig. 331), for the 1910 election and was reprinted during the 1920s. Pryse’s *Labour Stands for All Who Work* (1929) (fig. 332) moderates the heroism, depicting a community unified, proud and strong.¹⁶⁹ The posters promote the party’s socialist politics prospectively, proposing triumph over hardship and a new and better age. This wholly positive attitude was not ubiquitous, nor could it be sustained indefinitely. Pacifist movements, although advocating a new world of peace, were known to campaign using fear tactics and images of apocalyptic destruction. *Harvester of Death* (1924) (fig. 333), depicts a city enveloped by war and smoke beneath Death’s colossal figure. The Northern Friends’ Peace Board combined Christian and secular references in a poster titled *Protest Now Against Air Armaments* (c. early 1930s) (fig. 334), where air combat is juxtaposed with Psalm 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of god”. The ironic quotation conveys the message that aerial warfare is an abomination.

The World Disarmament Conference collapsed in 1934; peace and disarmament remained a major issue going into the 1935 general election. The National Government campaigned with

¹⁶⁴ Nevinson, “Bellicose Civilisation,” 186.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*, 211.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*, 217.

¹⁶⁷ Crossley, *Harnessing Chaos*, 323.

¹⁶⁸ “Hardie’s Claim for Socialism,” 9.

¹⁶⁹ This is the central image to a triptych of posters, with left and right panels depicting women and men working respectively.

resolute support for the League of Nations with *Our Word Is Our Bond* (fig. 335), surprisingly depicting pacifism with a clenched fist slamming on the “Covenant of the League of Nations”. Labour campaigned using fear tactics and calls for absolute pacifism. *Smoke from Chimneys not from Guns!* (fig. 336) evokes Nevinson’s recurrent motif of elevated armaments and sets up the election as a choice between employment and warfare. Richard Overy observed, “a strong element of religiosity, or religious analogy, running through the language and values of the pacifist cause.”¹⁷⁰ A second poster from the election, *Election Crosses Not Wooden Crosses* (fig. 337), suggests the crosses that marked graves during the Great War and Jesus’ sacrifice by alluding to the iconographic tradition of Calvary with a larger cross flanked by two small crosses upon the hill. The cross is a reminder of tragedy and call to reform. The Northern Friends’ Peace Board issued a poster with a quotation attributed to the Quaker MP Thomas Edmund Harvey; “*If we go on turning ploughshares into swords how can we expect a harvest of peace?*” (1938) (fig. 338). The quotation uses an inversion of Isaiah 2:4, implying that peaceful, beneficial tools are being sacrificed for the destructive tools of warfare—mankind will reap what it sows. A contrast is established between the escalating contemporary context, and a lost pastoral life in communion with nature.

H. R. L. ‘Dick’ Sheppard, Canon of St. Paul’s, founded the Peace Pledge Union in 1934. The illustrator Arthur Wragg joined the organisation the following year; he made an image for the peace demonstration programme cover at the Royal Albert Hall in 1935 (fig. 339). A soldier’s bust is atop the Cenotaph, Whitehall, which replaces the majority of his body. His hands protrude either side of the wreath, revealing his open palms while four drops of blood fall down the façade. The inscription “The Glorious Dead” takes a bitterly ironic tone, while the biblical passage “Weep not for me but for yourselves” is appropriated from the eighth Station of the Cross and subverted to become a message from the dead to the living. Wragg had illustrated the Psalms with contemporary concerns, from venereal disease (fig. 340) and abortion (fig. 341) to patriotism (fig. 342) and war (fig. 343) in 1933.¹⁷¹ Sheppard described these as possessing the ability to “pierce the soul like bullets.”¹⁷² He continued with a prophetic air, “All I wanted to know was... Has he seen a vision and had a dream (which in these dire days) *must* include a nightmare?”¹⁷³ Wragg’s critiques continued as the decade slipped towards war, publishing three further books from 1935–39 that used Christian concepts and iconography to articulate indictments of modern life: *Jesus Wept: a commentary in black-and-white on ourselves and the world to-day* (1935), *Seven words* (1938), and *Thy Kingdom Come: A Prayer in Black and White for Ourselves and the World Today* (1939). Wragg showed “a drunken world

¹⁷⁰ Overy, *Morbid Age*, 240.

¹⁷¹ Lusty, *Bound to be Read*, 60. Titled *Psalms for Modern Life* (1934).

¹⁷² Sheppard, Introduction, unpaginated.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*

spinning to destruction” (fig. 354-7).¹⁷⁴ Wragg’s images are apocalyptic in their discernment and criticism, their function as pseudo-prophetic warning, their heralding of the imminent end of an age, and their utopian ambition of a new and better world revitalised through Christianity.

Mark Lancelot Symons and Stanley Spencer: Visions of an Earthly Paradise

In the early 1930s Mark Lancelot Symons produced several paintings that share in this orientation towards Millenarian belief while also offering a critique of contemporary society. In 1931 the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition hanging committee rejected Symons’s *My Lord I Meet in Every London Lane and Street* (fig. 348). It was one of Symons’ many works that placed Christ in a contemporary context and can be identified as an allusion to the Parousia. Through works such as this Symons was establishing a reputation as a “sensation-monger,” that continued until his death in 1935.¹⁷⁵ The negative reception followed the controversy caused by the accusingly titled modern-dress Crucifixion scene *Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?* (fig. 349), which was exhibited there in 1930 and identified with Keating’s *Homo Sapiens* as that year’s notable problem picture. Although the ostensible subject is the Crucifixion, Symons’s interpretation fundamentally differs to the images of the Crucifixion addressed in preceding chapters. As will become clear in the following discussion, Symons’s paintings were vehicles for his explicit Millenarian beliefs, and as such, these Crucifixion paintings have a particular character that goes far beyond the superficial subject.

The *Guardian*’s critic called it a “tumultuous” interpretation of the Crucifixion.¹⁷⁶ Symons’s biographer acknowledged the composition’s restlessness, bewildering tangle of figures, and shallow pictorial space, as “deliberately following the Pre-Raphaelite intention”.¹⁷⁷ Elsewhere critics called the subject “pure sensationalism”, suggesting the

...twentieth-century mob of soldiers and operatives, curious or incurious according to their personality, has for its spiritual ancestry the Elder Breughel’s preoccupation with crowds, and some of the bitter character drawing of Hieronymus Bosch¹⁷⁸

Symons justified the contemporary setting: “The crucifixion was Christ’s sacrifice for men of all Ages. Secondly, I had no idea what the Jewish crowd of 2000 years ago was like, so I painted a crowd that might be found in London. Every face in the portrait is some one I know or have seen in streets and ’buses.”¹⁷⁹ A writer in *Liturgical Arts* alleged the figures “run the gamut of human emotions from the brutal, bestial delight at the spectacle, through cynical interest, indifference, fear

¹⁷⁴ Wragg, Introduction, unpaginated.

¹⁷⁵ Brocklehurst, “Mark Symons,” 473.

¹⁷⁶ J. B. “Royal Academy,” 11.

¹⁷⁷ Wines, *Symons*, 35.

¹⁷⁸ Fincham, “Second Impressions,” 11.

¹⁷⁹ “Royal Academy,” 45.

and doubt, to an outright realization of its significance".¹⁸⁰ Distorted physical features are more familiar to contemporary German Expressionism; they were interpreted as depicting "in spirit everybody is present at the Crucifixion."¹⁸¹ The *Daily Herald* captioned a reproduction with the question, "Do we not crucify Christ every day with our blatant disregard for His teaching?"¹⁸² Iris Conlay identified that this was the real controversy; Symons emphasised that "Christ was not killed by others in the past but by themselves in their own home-town, today."¹⁸³ The modern dress therefore identifies the terrifying prospect of our complicity in forever crucifying Christ. The title is a quotation of the American plantation hymn *Were You There (When They Crucified My Lord)*. The British soldier at the base of cross evokes war memorial iconography; Symons's brother James Antony was killed during the Great War.

In 1928 Thomas Saunders Nash exhibited *Crucifixion* (c.1928) (fig. 350), which employed similar formal strategies to Symons's work. It was described as an image that "will arrest attention and provoke discussion" when it was exhibited in 1928.¹⁸⁴ Above the crowds Christ is highlighted by a single intense light located off the upper region of the canvas. As in *Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?* the viewer joins other figures looking from the outside towards the centre of the canvas, turning their heads away from the viewer in order to peer over a red brick wall towards the execution. The dark clouds are similarly ominous, while Nash's use of *chiaroscuro* creates a charged, theatrical atmosphere that is also present in Symon's canvases. Nash's "clamorous Crucifixion" is underpinned by early Italian Renaissance painting.¹⁸⁵ He also contemporises the scene; to the composition's left is an anachronistic church. Both artists have relocated the event to contemporary, rural Berkshire, where both lived, while Nash was also a devoted Christian and a contemporary of Stanley Spencer at the Slade. A year later a critic described the canvas as "powerful but gratuitously ugly".¹⁸⁶ It was however also identified with other works "as outstanding examples of a type which, when deprived of exaggeration, may have wholesome influence on contemporary art."¹⁸⁷ Symons's approach to depicting the Crucifixion was anticipated in Nash's work from the year earlier. Indeed, Symons's composition elaborates on the imagery with a social critique.

Symons's aforementioned *My Lord I Meet in Every London Lane and Street* depicts Jesus, albeit in historical dress, in the city circa 1930. He is a physical—rather than exclusively spiritual—presence in the contemporary context, suggesting the Second Advent. Christ stands centrally, his right arm is raised while a halo of rays surrounds his head. On either side stand Saint Peter and Saint

¹⁸⁰ "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?" 83.

¹⁸¹ Farrell, "Yorkshire," 5.

¹⁸² Lansbury, "Practical Christianity," 8.

¹⁸³ Conlay, "Pictures in Church," 3.

¹⁸⁴ "Our London Letter," 8.

¹⁸⁵ "Conflict in Art," 7.

¹⁸⁶ H. T. "Bradford Exhibition," 8.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*

John, while to his left the Pharisees hold Bibles and argue. A man to Christ's right asks how to receive eternal life; he apparently receives the response "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am", enraging the Pharisees.¹⁸⁸ A multiplicity of people receive Christ. Many have interrupted an activity. A small girl can't help but take notice of Christ; she sits before him with her skipping rope lain sinuously beneath her legs and removes her shoes symbolising her following Christ. The painting's raised viewpoint is level with men upon scaffolding who have all stopped to take notice of Christ. Towards the rear of the crowd surrounding Christ is a line of smartly dressed men who stand nonchalantly, with hands in their pockets or on their hips. To the left of the composition is a self-portrait in a cap manoeuvring one of his children in a pushchair. Symons's spouse Constance stands beside him; she has turned towards Christ. Other figures in the crowd were portraits of friends.¹⁸⁹ The depiction has a further biographical note. Symons had worked for the Catholic Evidence Guild between 1918 and 1924 and had himself frequently addressed people at Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park, London. The hand of the creator (*Manus Dei*) points down in an enclosed halo around which the clouds part in the sky. In an unusual turn Symons depicted the left hand with an erect index finger and thumb running parallel. It is situated between the Greek letters Alpha and Omega that reference Christ's title in Revelation.¹⁹⁰

This 1931 painting is ostensibly quite different, and yet the controversial discernment of the prior Crucifixion is repeated, albeit more covertly. The title is a quotation from Richard Le Gallienne's widely disseminated 1893 poem "The Second Crucifixion".¹⁹¹ The poem addresses Christ's presence to the faithful author, while mankind's continued sins repeat the Crucifixion; should the Parousia occur then Christ would receive the same contempt and fate. The painting had the early title *I Will Send My Son*.¹⁹² This quotation from the parable of the Wicked Tenants is Christological, echoing Christ's own death. God has sent his son to do his bidding, however as in the parable, it is up to the people to decide whether they will heed the moment. The street has been identified as Broad Street, Reading, and not a location in London.¹⁹³ The Bull Hotel, located to the painting's left is still clearly recognisable. It leads to the conclusion that the actual location is unimportant; sin is universal.

The urban theme was continued in with *In the Street of the Great City (Rev. XI)* (fig. 351) exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1932. The work reprises the modern-day Crucifixion in an even more claustrophobic composition, while the title again places attention on the complicity and guilt of modern society. The scene is illuminated by a single light source that calls attention to Jesus

¹⁸⁸ "Modern Street," 1.

¹⁸⁹ Wines, *Symons*, 38.

¹⁹⁰ Revelation 1:8, 21:6, 22:13.

¹⁹¹ Wines, *Symons*, 37.

¹⁹² "Modern Street," 1.

¹⁹³ "Preston to see Rejected Painting," 11; "R.A. Surprise Picture," 9.

hanging upon a cross that is being erected. Taught ropes cut diagonally across the canvas and pull against the patibulum. The two thieves face Christ; the penitent thief to Jesus' right; the impenitent thief to Jesus' left. The viewpoint looks down radically foreshortened ladders against Gestas's cross, provoking a sense of verticality and encourages our identification with Gestas's upon the cross. The strong diagonals contribute to the tension and the ominous, nightmarish tone of the painting. The crowd is assembled from across society, however the *Yorkshire Observer* emphasised the middle classes, calling it a "Crucifixion with top hats and frocks."¹⁹⁴ The work was identified as a sensation in 1933 with exhibition in Bradford, not out of merit "but simply that it is unusual, daring, and painted in a spirit which defies the conventions."¹⁹⁵

The title references Revelation 11:8; "Their dead bodies will lie on the street of the great city that is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified." The scriptural passage initially suggests that the Great City is Jerusalem—the city where Jesus was crucified—while the wider context indicates that it is more diffuse, instead referring to a location that has rejected God, his teachings, and his people in a cruel and wicked manner. More generally this can indicate anywhere, as scripture specifies that everyone shares responsibility for Christ's death.¹⁹⁶

Symons had provided his own critique of contemporary society when discussing the artwork, alleging that society is morally bankrupt, and accordingly crucifies Christ again:

There is a veil a refinement over modern civilisation, a quantity even of kindness, but below an immense amount of positive rebellion against God... spiritually Our Lord is crucified to-day. In places like Russia and Mexico, in the person of His followers He is crucified in the flesh in that they suffer violent persecution...

It is the desire of men to get the happiness which life may afford without obeying God. 'This is the heir, let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours.'¹⁹⁷

Symons's critique is international in perspective; the Cristero War in Mexico of 1926–1929 saw an armed uprising of Catholic backed rebels against the anti-clerical policies of the Mexican government. In Russia the Bolshevik Revolution endorsed anti-clerical activities; the Red Army persecuted Catholics initially during the War having identified them with the Nationalist Whites. Symons finally decontextualises a quotation the Parable of the Wicked Tenants.¹⁹⁸ He takes these at their literal meaning to recognise the mercenary and murderous greed of modern humanity.

The titulus above Christ divergences from the initialism I.N.R.I that designates him as "king of the Jews"; instead it reads "Christ-King." The difference is small, yet there is a gulf between the two kingly statuses. The former is only used by the Gentiles in scripture, while the latter title of

¹⁹⁴ "Wide Variety," 11.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:3

¹⁹⁷ Wines, *Symons*, 40.

¹⁹⁸ Mark 12:7.

“king” alone was rejected by Pontius Pilate as it denoted a monarchical power that challenged Rome’s authority. Symons prefers this title of king, which also evokes the universal kingship of Jesus as recognised in the Kingdom of God. Notably for Catholics Pope Pius XI had instituted the Feast of Christ the king in 1925; Symons’s titulus is a novel extension of Crucifixion iconography that signifies the millennium.

The sensationalist reputation that resulted from these paintings suggests some disingenuousness to the artist. It is an unfair accusation. Indeed, he was a model candidate for Nevinson’s criticism of ascetism, having rejected earthly want to such a degree that he made himself ill. Symons and his immediate family were staunchly Catholic. One brother, Phillip, became a Benedictine monk, while their father, the decorative designer and painter William Christian Symons, was a devout convert to Roman Catholicism. The paternal grandfather Mark Symons was in contrast a Wesleyan minister; their uncle, the poet Arthur Symons found religion a distinct force in his later years. Mark Symons had sought a religious calling after studying at the Slade; his studies coincided for a period with the time that fellow devout visionary and painter of contemporary religious subjects Stanley Spencer was there. He was apparently “a quiet and forceful mystic and thought of the growth of the Church in terms of a chart showing the number of converts an hour.”¹⁹⁹

In 1925 Symons exhibited *The Crucifixion* (fig. 352) at the Academy. The flat pictorial space, and simplified composition of four figures with the traditional titulus I.N.R.I. is purposefully anachronistic, evoking the iconographic precedents of the renaissance. It contrasts with the formal qualities shared in the later paintings; they are restless compositions with an elevated viewpoint and panoramic design. The 1930 Crucifixion places Christ directly opposite the viewpoint, while in the 1932 painting we look down at the radically foreshortened figures that serves to emphasise their grotesque features. The unrepentant thief leers upwards, while the repentant thief—with comedically large ears—is dejection embodied. The faces in the crowds are almost archetypal caricatures. Wines indicates that these are physical manifestations of their fallen condition and moral character, describing Symons’s “grief that men, heedless of their magnificent past... went after mean and ugly things. He painted a picture of a row of hideous old people being resurrected into the glorious bodies of children. It hurt him to see people... with old and twisted faces, marred by harsh thoughts, discontent or worldly cares.”²⁰⁰ His depictions are of people from different walks of life—physical labourers to Judges, children and parents, women in bonnets to men in top hats—suggesting both collective guilt, and the missionary hope of collective salvation.

¹⁹⁹ Brocklehurst, “Mark Symons,” 473.

²⁰⁰ Wines, *Symons*, 57.

In 1933 the Academy rejected Symons's *Last Supper* (fig. 353), a painting he described as "symbolic of the battle between Christ and antichrist."²⁰¹ The disciples wear lounge suits, while Judas was a self-portrait. The modern dress was intended to make the content relevant: "true religion is always up to date, but our realisation of it is not."²⁰² Symons locates the struggle between good and sin—Christ and antichrist—in the present; the Johannine epistles declare the antichrist's presence in the world, heralding the last hour.²⁰³ The true antichrist reigns in the days before the millennium; its realisation signifies that the antichrist has been bound, while at the conclusion of the millennium will be its final defeat.²⁰⁴

According to Wines, in later years "he was very much occupied with the idea of an earthly Paradise and the Millennium."²⁰⁵ It was "no mere phantasy... [and] all round us, but one must be absolutely pure in heart to behold it."²⁰⁶ His didactic critiques of the modern context correlate with the purification required to witness the already present. Wines records, "it was not man's feet, he said, which had been driven from Eden, but his heart, and if the heart's sight had not been deformed by sin he would behold this lovely world."²⁰⁷ In these modern-dress paintings Symons uses the Crucifixion and Jesus' presence to diagnose the problems of contemporary society. He hints at Jesus' fate if the Parousia were to occur now; the result is a damning condemnation of the modern world that is failing to adhere to Christian teachings. The modern Crucifixions in particular are a plea for reformation so that the millennium can be collectively realised.

The Earthly Paradise (1927-1934) (fig. 354) made explicit the paradisaical state. It was exhibited with Spencer's *Parents Resurrecting* at the 1934 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition; the two works together proved the "sensations of the show".²⁰⁸ The complex and intricate composition divulges Symons's religious philosophy of life and his belief in the millennium; it is a "very significant... revelation of his thought."²⁰⁹ The title alludes to Genesis 3, and the lost Edenic state. Symons understood that the Fall had resulted in spiritual—not physical—displacement.²¹⁰ This paradise "was no fairy tale, but the true and realisable native land for all mankind".²¹¹ The *Illustrated London News* reproduced the painting with Symons's explanation:

Historic Christianity... teaches that the Earthly Paradise is not a dream but a fact. We did originate there, by sin lost it, and will end there (see Revelation). My picture in an allegorical manner illustrates this fact, with the complementary idea, 'Blessed are the little Children, for of

²⁰¹ "Living People," 3.

²⁰² "Lighter Side," 4.

²⁰³ 1 John 2:18; 1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 1:7.

²⁰⁴ Revelation 20:7-9.

²⁰⁵ Wines, *Symons*, 53.

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 55.

²⁰⁸ "Model Dominates Again," 5.

²⁰⁹ Wines, *Symons*, 53.

²¹⁰ *ibid.*, 55.

²¹¹ *ibid.*, 58-9.

such is the Kingdom of Heaven.’ Hence, too, Christ is there, as a child. One procession is of children, another of grown people. Angels are present in shining white garments. The newcomers, outside among the ruins of ‘men’s Babylons,’ are ordinary sinful men and women. At the top is a quotation from that wonderful book, ‘The Satin Slipper,’ by Paul Claudel.²¹²

The painting divides into contiguous yet distinct inner and outer spaces. The inner tondo-shaped region corresponds to paradise. Here life flourishes; trees are heavy with foliage, while wildflowers carpet the rolling landscape populated with vivacious children. Symons’s elucidation paraphrases Matthew 19:14, while Wines identified that Symons’s philosophy stemmed from Matthew 18:3; “Except ye become as little children ye shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven.”²¹³ For Symons, the innocence of children allows them to see paradise; adults must therefore become as a child, and be “born again out of their crabbed and ugly experience.”²¹⁴

Although Symons was a Catholic, he quotes from the King James Bible on the ribbons flowing among the figures, likely in consideration of the predominately Anglophone Protestant British context. Around the central Virgin and Christ-child are three scriptural quotations from Revelation 21. Two are taken from Revelation 21:4 and declare “No sorrow anymore” and “The Lord shall wipe away all tears”; the third, from Revelation 21:5, is a quotation of Jesus’ from his throne, “Behold I make all things new”. The verb “Come” repeats four times across an arc of angelic children to the composition’s centre right, evoking the evangelical herald of Revelation 22:17. Figures directly below clothed in white and gold and with crowns upon their heads cites Revelation 4:4. A ribbon around their bodies quotes Revelation 5:10, “Thou has made us priests and Kings”. The text heralds the composition’s peripheral region; this depicts the fallen world in shadows. The drab fauna wilts. In the lower right a naked man climbs over the threshold into paradise. Two angels greet and dress him in white robes. Other figures huddled nearby bear the weathering and strain of adulthood, sin, and earthly concerns, recalling the crowds in Symons’s modern Crucifixion paintings. A fallen tree extends across the lower region from right to left; beneath is a tablet inscribed with an extract from the Genesis narrative of the Tower of Babel: “Let us build a tower that shall reach to heaven”.²¹⁵ The inscription is paired with a ruined fluted column, indicating the vanity of secular ambitions and earthly attempts at greatness; the passing old world is the world of secular adulthood while the Kingdom that replaces it is an earthly paradise in perpetual springtime, where all who enter are made new again.

Symons called attention to the uppermost quotation, from the French Catholic dramatist Paul Claudel’s play *Le Soulier de Satin* (1929). It was translated as *The Satin Slipper, or the Worst is*

²¹² “Allegory and Actuality,” 692-3.

²¹³ Wines, *Symons*, 57.

²¹⁴ *ibid.*, 58.

²¹⁵ Gen. 11:4

Not the Surest in 1931 and published with a frontispiece by David Jones (fig. 355). The quotation reads:

There is our native land, ah, how great is our mischance to have left Thee, from thence every year gives back the sunshine and the spring!

There blooms the rose, thither, thither my heart is making with delight unutterable, over there it listens with untold longing, when the nightingale and the cuckoo sing!

Ah, there would I live, that is where my heart is bound!²¹⁶

Claudel's narrative follows lovers in the Spanish golden age; however, it deals with profound issues such as sin, salvation and the pain of separation. The passage is particularly pertinent to Symons's ideas; the character Saint Adlibitum is mourning his fall and the loss of his homeland, having been exiled in a parallel of the Genesis narrative.

Symons's artistic practice presents his Catholic millenarianism. The religious artworks have evangelical purpose, advocating his Christian message and the recovery of a lost paradise through human agency. Writing in *Sermons by Artists*, Edmund J. Sullivan alleged, "...Revelation, in the ways of Creation, is actually taking place at the present time before our eyes..."²¹⁷ His posthumously published sermon denounces Bible literalism in the face of scientific knowledge, yet he concludes "The beatific vision is at hand if only we could see it... We catch gleams that fade, but some day, priest, scientist, and artist by converging paths may see it together, to know, to love, and to enjoy."²¹⁸ Sullivan's sermon sets up an amillennial secular realised eschatology; the millennium can be initiated by our own agency. The church, for Sullivan, should leave "truth" to science, and be "led to specialise in their approach to the Absolute by way of Goodness alone".²¹⁹ Although their beliefs are profoundly different, Symons and Sullivan advocate human agency in building the Kingdom of God upon Earth.

Stanley Spencer shared this outlook; it came to the fore in his practice from the 1930s following his return to Cookham after the Burghclere scheme. Spencer was already anticipating further architectonic sequences, declaring himself a "muralist".²²⁰ The lack of a patron did not hinder him from developing the nascent idea of a Church House (rather than gallery) where his schemes of thought could be unified in specific rooms. Spencer never composed a definitive plan (later adding rooms—chapels—of *Apotheosis* dedicated to Hilda and Patricia) yet he settled on three main sequences: *The Pentecost* (depicting saints and angels in Cookham, started 1933), *The Marriage at*

²¹⁶ Claudel, *Satin Slipper*, 141.

²¹⁷ Sullivan, "Ecclesiastes 7:23," 38.

²¹⁸ *ibid*, 40

²¹⁹ *ibid*, 38.

²²⁰ MacCarthy, *English Vision*, 13.

Cana (started 1935), and *The Baptism of Christ*. These were loosely collected under the title ‘the Last Day’.²²¹

According to John Rothenstein, Spencer uncovered a personal “kind of earthly paradise” after graduating from the Slade, but the War shattered this Edenic condition.²²² Like Symons, Spencer gradually came to realise that an earthly paradise was already present in the world and that it could be achieved through human agency. As Maurice Collis identified when writing about Spencer’s Second World War Official War Artist commission; “It was his belief that the golden age was just around the corner... We could enter upon the millennium tomorrow if we put away hatred, fear, suspicion, cruelty, lust for power, pride and especially the feeling of otherness.”²²³ This outlook developed concurrently with the Last Day scheme in the early 1930s, which was centred on “love in its boundless, eschatological future,” and “imagined as a public-love making, pivoted on Cookham War Memorial.”²²⁴ In Spencer’s own words: “The Last Day is in my treatment of it, a record of all that to me I love”.²²⁵

The New Testament emphasises that the “Last Days” are an already present yet indefinite period.²²⁶ Spencer’s is the Last *Day*, that is, the absolute finale of the divine plan; the dead resurrect and receive general judgment after which the New Jerusalem will be established. His rejection of judgment revises the event as resurrection into paradise. Accordingly, this “Last Day” is anachronic, with disparate events from history, scripture and modern-day Cookham conflating and condensing time into a single atemporal location; time is no more. Spencer’s *Sarah Tubb and the Heavenly Visitors* (1933) (fig. 356) (also known as *Sarah Tubb and the Angels*²²⁷) portrays a Cookham local huddled in terror of Halley’s Comet in 1910, believing that it heralded the end of the world. Although Sarah Tubb is in the Heavenly realm and liberated from divine judgment, she is still consumed by this fear of apocalyptic destruction; the celestial beings remove her fear by comforting her with “all the things that she loved”.²²⁸ She does not know she is in paradise; it is revealed by the supernatural forces and through the emotional resonance of possessions.

Spencer pertinaciously distorted figures, although his concept significantly differed to Symons. Spencer’s distortion arose from an attempt to see something in a way that will enabled him to love it.²²⁹ It was most evident in images of sexual desire—in *The Dustmen (or The Lovers)* (fig. 357), the man and woman caress as additional women queue up, while *Love Among The Nations*,

²²¹ Bell, Spencer R.A., 122.

²²² Rothenstein, *Modern Painters II*, 95, 105.

²²³ Collis, *Spencer*, 198.

²²⁴ Hyman, “Angels and Dirt,” 31; Hyman, “Church of Me,” 180.

²²⁵ Leder, *Astor Collection*, 24.

²²⁶ 2 Timothy 3; Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2; 2 Peter 3:3-4.

²²⁷ Tooth’s Stock Consignment, 65. Arthur Tooth & Sons stock inventories and accounts, 1871-1959. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

²²⁸ Robinson, Spencer, 61.

²²⁹ Spencer, “I John 4:8,” 50.

(fig. 358) originally titled *Humanity*, expressed Spencer's "new belief in liberated sexuality".²³⁰ It realises his wartime concept of "love without boundaries".²³¹ The ultimate divisive force—war—is superseded by an international happening of sexual love in the ultimate act of union. The scheme portrayed Cookham as a village in Heaven, yet it was a *transnational* Cookham in *Love Among The Nations*, and *The Turkish Window* (fig. 359), which were designed to go side-by-side in the Church House.²³² *The Turkish Window* depicts love making, with young men embracing veiled 'eastern' women through an iron grille over a window. Spencer's are naïve depictions of different cultures, however his sentiment in *Love Among The Nations* had particular significance in the increasingly dire international context of 1935–36.²³³ The World Disarmament Conference's recent failure, German and Japanese withdrawals from the League of Nations, and the Abyssinian crisis threatened internationalist ambitions. Spencer's painting clings to a historic, internationalist millennium after the apparent apocalyptic devastation of war.²³⁴ As with Brangwyn, Spencer's longed-for Paradise is not geographically limited and rather points to a transfigured tomorrow and the infinite Kingdom of God. The possibility of humankind without war, pain and suffering is the ultimate promise of the Apocalypse.²³⁵

The Neo-Romantic Paradise

The notion of returning to an idealised past after the Great War was amplified in the mid and late 1930s, giving rise to British Neo-Romanticism; arguably, their vision was most lucidly expressed in landscapes. The art critic and writer Raymond Mortimer coined 'Neo-Romantic' in 1942.²³⁶ He defined it as an "expression of an identification with nature" common to British artists of the 1930s and early '40s.²³⁷ It gestated from the immediate post-war, when young British artists began to re-discover William Blake, Samuel Palmer, and other Romantic predecessors. Among them were John and Paul Nash. As they both worked towards Hall of Remembrance commissions in the immediate aftermath of the War, they returned to painting the landscape near their home with the solemnity of war veterans.

Paul Nash acknowledged his disorientation as "a war artist without a war".²³⁸ He suffered a severe breakdown in 1921 and retreated to Dymchurch. In works such as *The Wall*, *Dymchurch* (c.1923) (fig. 360) he painted the sea and the angular geometric lines of the coastal

²³⁰ Jenkins, "The Turkish Window," 187.

²³¹ Bell, Spencer R.A., 131.

²³² Bell, *Stanley Spencer*, 433.

²³³ Pople, *Spencer*, 344.

²³⁴ A 1934 diary entry by Spencer described reading Robert Brown's 'Races of Mankind' as "horrid... not a good word to say for anyone black" (Tate Archive, 733.4.4).

²³⁵ Revelation 21:4.

²³⁶ Mellor, *Paradise Lost*, 11.

²³⁷ Mortimer, "Painting and Humanism," 208.

²³⁸ Nash, *Outline*, 180.

defences, converting the holiday destination into a largely empty repetition of shape. John Nash's *The Cornfield* (1918), and *The Moat, Grange Farm, Kimble* (1922) (fig. 361-2) share in the melancholia. Human life is absent. The image of harvest is compromised by long shadows heralding the passing light and coming darkness. *The Moat* is equally foreboding; branches hang from gaunt trees, while dark colours and evening light impose despondency.

Many artists who were identified with the Neo-Romantics sought an idealised landscape into which they could withdraw, often in opposition to the present and the appalling consequences of the Great War. Graham Sutherland and Paul Drury were too young to serve; they were among the students at Goldsmiths who rediscovered nineteenth century artists such as Blake, Palmer, and the Ancients for themselves. Drury and Sutherland relocated Romantic sensibilities to the modern world, rejecting social realism for an anachronistic provincial, essentially English rural ideal. Sutherland's *May Green* (1927) (fig. 363), and Drury's *After Work* (1926) (fig. 364) display Palmer's influence with rays of light on the cusp and a romanticised labourer returning home. Slowly they stepped out from under their influences. What emerges are imperfect landscapes, desolate and scarred, while human industry and civilisation victimises nature. The landscape critiques the society that gave rise to the War and no longer feels a connection to the natural world it consumes and destroys.

British Neo-Romanticism was "a cross fertilisation of indigenous and international traditions" and reconciled modernism with British tradition.²³⁹ It went back to British art of the early nineteenth century, and across to French cubist and post-cubist artists such as Picasso, André Masson, and Pavel Tchelitchew, and German expressionists Max Ernst and Otto Dix.²⁴⁰ Paul Nash's *Winter Sea* (1925–1937) (fig. 365) reveals this meeting, with the bleakness indicating his interest in a surreal visual language. A psychological disposition is suggested; things are not as they should be. The waves repeat into infinity, while the arc of a baleful sun is glimpsed in the sky. Eric Ravilious's *The Vale of the White Horse* (c.1939) (fig. 366) depicts the chalk White Horse at Uffington; the image points back to an ancient Britain, however the low viewpoint, acutely angled hillside, and raking rain make it unsettling. A mystic and mysterious sense of nature is restored to the British landscape, yet there is something uncanny about these interpretations. They are recognisable, yes, but also threatening.

In November 1939 the Ministry of Information established the War Artists Advisory Committee (WAAC), with Sir Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery, heading up the new, official war art programme. He was a strong supporter of Neo-Romanticism, and commissioned

²³⁹ Wakelin, "Against the Heart," 7.

²⁴⁰ *ibid* 7-8.

leading artists such as Paul Nash, Sutherland, Ravilious and John Piper with the responsibility of recording the conflict for propaganda and posterity. The sombre tone and ominous portents in the quintessential British landscapes and figures of Neo-Romantic art had foreshadowed the existential threat to the nation in the Second World War. It was now left largely up to these artists, already versed in melancholia, to record the destruction of the new conflict.

Neo-Romanticism was never a unified movement but was instead a deeply spiritual way of seeing the world. There are unifying key characteristics however, including the rejection of the false dichotomy of nature and society, and a concern for *genius loci*. The turn towards a nostalgic landscape in order to escape the present time and place is indicative of the erroneous romantic notion that a golden age once existed. The romantic pursuit of this unattainable ideal is accordingly specious; yet the idea of ‘the quest’, or the search for a lost Eden or Arcadia, is itself important to the Neo-Romantic sensibility.²⁴¹ In Blake’s and Palmer’s visionary landscapes there is the sense that the divine is always just over the hill—paradise is imminent, God is immanent. Meanwhile for the Neo-Romantics this enchantment is absent; they paint the same landscape, yet god has withdrawn from the earth. At the Neo-Romantic heart—and in millenarian belief more broadly—is the search for the paradisaic state it simultaneously mourns.

In summary: the concept and the desire for the millennium, renewal, and potentially an eschatological paradise at the end of time were important points of reference in interwar British art. These dreams of the future were couched in dissatisfaction, with ideology—likely political or religious—often at the heart of it. All art invites us to see the world differently, however, through offering a vision of a renewed and redeemed world, we are also presented with political and philosophical indictments of the current way of things. The Kingdom was not a deferred prospect; rather, these artists, who were well aware of the horrors of their time, conceived of Heaven on Earth in the here and now. Its imminence was under human agency. Through these artworks we are asked to imagine radical scenarios of our collective futures. What is apparent is that, by and large, for artists working in the British context, modernity was not identified with this end goal. Even in the paintings of Branson and Bell—both of which are steeped in socialist ideology—modernity is not triumphant; rather it is a mechanism for repression and control. Feeling never quite at home in the world in which they now lived, many turned towards a romantic sense of place, while the future they advocated would look much like the past.

²⁴¹ Mellor, *Paradise Lost*, 7.

Conclusion: The Passing of All Things

As I noted in my introduction, religion and its role in modern art in Britain has often been neglected, or even viewed negatively, by art historians who have largely subscribed to the secularization thesis. In this thesis I have demonstrated that the religious concepts of the Apocalypse, millennium, and corresponding subject matter received acute attention in British art and visual culture during the years from 1918 to 1939. This was variably as metaphors, secular addendums, and images of crisis analogous to the Apocalypse and millennium, or through explicit references to scripture itself. In the cultural milieu of the British interwar it was often tied into the recent war experience or contemporary civilisational discourse. Yet at the same time, such was the familiarity and cultural currency of the subject that Inglis Sheldon Williams, best known as a horse painter, would depict the Four Horsemen as a “legendary and historical” subject (fig. 367).¹ This thesis has opened up a new field of study in modern British art. It has demonstrated that this attentiveness towards the Apocalypse was, rather ironically, part of a continuum, straddling the more religious orientated ideas of the nineteenth century through to the increasingly secular and existential concept of apocalypse after 1945. Artistic, religious, philosophical, and cultural continuities have been explored; thus, the Apocalypse in interwar British art can be situated into a wider context of early twentieth-century culture. Further it is clear that this British trend did not exist in a vacuum, and it was in constant dialogue with wider European, Imperial, and anglophone contexts. Between the 1920s and 1930s the retrospective apocalypse, dominated by the Great War, shifted into a prospective apocalypse, overshadowed by the feeling that a generation was on the eve of total war once again.

Challenging the established conception, I demonstrated in the opening two chapters how the Crucifixion—widely recognised as an image of sacrifice and redemption—can also serve as an apocalyptic image and argued that a significant reason the subject proved so popular during the interwar period was down to this very reason. I assert that a reference to the Crucifixion to signify catastrophic change in the world makes use of the apocalyptic implications that are always at the peripheries of the biblical narrative; these are largely overlooked in less turbulent times, when ideas of an apocalypse fall from vogue. During the interwar, the Crucifixion provided a vital method to mediate upon apocalyptic and eschatological themes such as death, redemptive sacrifice, the cruelty of humans, epochal transition, and the need for a radical change in the powers that rule the world. The Crucifixion also connotes renewal and resurrection; in chapter three I addressed how resurrection was used as a means to explore and extend the possibilities of human existence, and

¹ “Epstein As A Painter,” 14.

even offer liberation from corrupt worldly authorities. Resurrection and the eschatological journey proved a vital scaffold for coping with the Great War, and giving a sense of purpose to death, while judgment was reimagined conceptually and visually; it was adjusted as a sentimental—and belligerent—popular theology arose suggesting that death in warfare cleansed the soul, and thereby granted entry to Heaven. Yet this was not universally accepted as I demonstrated in the case of Charles Sims; his visionary interpretation rejects the popular theology and the simple moral binaries of judgment, and instead explores the turbulent journey of the soul in a purgatorial place. His series suggests that the moral complexities of life will be resolved in death.

Change as well as destruction compels our interest in apocalypse; indeed, apocalypse signifies change. Interwar visual culture widely engaged with the idea of a catastrophic historical break, or the end of the world as we know it. The Great War activated apocalyptic ideas in British art; it was recognised retrospectively as the end of one era of human existence, while its legacy informed the prospective fears of a Second Great War. Apocalyptic thought tells us that something must come after this event, and chapter five addressed the hopes of a transfigured tomorrow. As we have seen, there was a concerted effort to establish a New Jerusalem across art and society; it was stimulated both by modern possibilities and knowledge, and by a wistful turn towards tradition. Many artists willingly associated with political programmes secularising the biblical ideal; the subsequent history of the twentieth century owed much to people's desire to build their own heaven on earth.

Given the range of material uncovered in this study, one does question why this area of research has not been identified previously; it seems especially odd when Stanley Spencer's *Resurrection, Cookham* is among the most famous paintings in twentieth century art in Britain. Of course, a possible answer can be inferred when so few other apocalyptic images from the context have been remembered quite as well. All history is a process of forgetting. The future of British modern art scholarship depends not on focusing in on a secular, modernist narrative, but looking towards what has been omitted from the prior attempts to do so. As has been demonstrated in this thesis, the understanding of religion, artists, and artworks in the British context can all benefit.

By taking a thematic approach, this thesis has brought aesthetically dissimilar and lesser known artworks into dialogue with familiar works by widely recognised artists; as a result, commonalities are emphasised. Previously there has been a tendency to identify prominent artists such as Stanley Spencer as an anomaly due to the character of his work; he has been both stood apart from the avant-garde or unsuccessfully attempted to be shackled into it, while conceptually parallel artists such as Mark Lancelot Symons and Thomas Saunders Nash have been omitted from the canonical narrative. Yet as we have seen in this thesis, there were commonalities in areas that

have not been previously addressed. Further, the tendency to chart contemporary art according to the relative strengths and weaknesses of distinct groups and movements has impacted upon artists who do not neatly fit; this has certainly impacted on Ethel Walker's reputation. As with many female practitioners of the twentieth-century, male chauvinism no doubt also played its part. John Rothenstein identified her as one of the few female artists in his *Modern English Painters*; he observed she was the "best known woman artist" and yet he also acknowledged there had been few attempts to appraise her art or her personality.² Meanwhile the recognition of C. R. W. Nevinson owes much to his early association with the avant-garde; yet his later problem paintings were at the crest of a wave of artists, including Arthur Wragg and William Otway McCannell, engaging with the pressing social and political issues of the day.

Throughout this thesis I have argued for the recognition of theological ideas in modern art, and the reconciliation of religious and secular art and subject matter; the morphing of ideas from a religious into a secular sphere (and vice versa) subtly informed and were informed by artists' responses. By recognising the complex inter-relationships between individuals, visual culture, and other factors such as religion, culture, and society, I have challenged the secularization thesis as manifest in the two art historical focusses that I outlined in my introductory chapter: firstly the secular canon of modern British art, and secondly the neglect of religion in existing art-historical literature addressing this context. In challenging these positions, I have foregrounded the importance of theology, which has been, at best, a peripheral concern to art historians who have favoured a secularising, anthropocentric interpretation of art and visual culture. An artist who works with religious subjects is creating an example of visual theology irrespective of their intention; accordingly, their image enters into a complex network of semiotic interactions that will draw upon the religious content. With scrutiny of the theological potential of the imagery, a richer and nuanced understanding may develop. Meanwhile, the controversial nature of apocalyptic and eschatological concepts—which even today in the age of an imminent climate catastrophe are frequently dismissed as the purview of hysterical or adolescent fantasists—has seen it sidestepped in scholarship on modern art, meanwhile the narrative of progress and the secularization thesis have helped to dismiss apocalyptic concepts as long obsolescent, and a relic of a more ignorant age. Such sweeping generalisations are, of course, inaccurate. The interwar period is a fascinating crux in apocalyptic thought, when both religious and secular ideas were readily expressed in confronting the significant and troubling issues of the day. For artists in Britain, the Apocalypse and apocalyptic eschatology—although a traditional frame of reference—could nevertheless register both the hopes and tribulations of modernity. With this in mind, it is particularly interesting to note how closely the

² Rothenstein, *Modern Painters I*, 61-2.

preeminent British modernist group—the vorticists—approximated an apocalyptic world view. The movement has remained very much at the peripheries of this thesis; however, this is a topic for further research, and one that I believe will add further nuance to our understanding of the importance of apocalyptic and eschatological modes in early twentieth-century art and visual culture.

I will conclude by briefly observing the legacy of apocalyptic ideas and apocalyptic eschatology in the Second World War. When the Second World War erupted, many of the apocalyptic themes and concerns did not disappear from British art; in many regards, they became more pressing. The prospect of universal peace had died and the possibility of a British capitulation to Nazism brought an authentic existential threat. In 1943 John Buckland Wright contributed a new cockerel device (fig. 368) for the Golden Cockerel Press. The gas-masked poultry is partly a humorous response to war and death, yet it is also a casually shocking image of the normalised war circumstance. The fear of an imminent gas attack or nightly bombing raids by the Luftwaffe was a reality for many. It was up to the new Official War Artists to record the experience. According to Kenneth Clark, “Bomb damage is in itself picturesque.”³ For many of the artists, such as John Piper, the ruins would be the ostensible subject of their commissions. Yet these images of wartime desolation and British architecture in ruins also proved a metaphor for the emotional turmoil of the nation. It was not just the people, but the history and memory of the nation that was at threat. Among the artists from the earlier generation who had depicted the Great War was C. R. W. Nevinson who, although not in receipt of a specific commission, painted the new conflict. In 1940 he painted *March of Civilisation* (fig. 369), reprising his *Column on the March* (fig. 370) from 1915. The earlier work’s title is descriptive; the latter, however, identifies the new conflict against Nazism as epochal. It is not just a struggle between belligerent nations, but the fulcrum on which civilisation can either live or die. This secular apocalypticism spoke to the real threat to liberal democracies, and the increasingly secular nature of society. The apocalyptic iconography of the interwar was developed further in the new war, with Stanley Spencer for one reprising his resurrection theme for his Official War commission on the Clyde during the conflict. The Second World War did not receive the same hyperbolic rhetoric of Holy War but it would however be more easily identified and remembered as a righteous cause for Britain and the Empire. Secular echoes of the Apocalypse came in moral binaries and narratives of existential threat, while after 1945 the prospect of mutually assured destruction by the atomic bomb made the end of the world a real and imminent possibility.

British culture would however make most use of the theme of Crucifixion from early on in the Second World War, finding within it a suitable commentary on the rise of fascism, the human

³ Woodward, *In Ruins*, 212.

capacity for cruelty, and the sense of contemporary crisis. Spencer had initially suggested to the War Artists' Advisory Committee an allegorical image of the Crucifixion in which the suffering Christ would be paired with scenes drawn from the new war.⁴ His idea ostensibly appears to be a throwback to thematically similar paintings from the Great War, however, the subject had been galvanised anew; the use of the subject by both vehement atheists and devout Christians was, as Martin Hammer observed, "symptomatic of the prevalence of the theme".⁵ It was not redemption but the horror, tragedy, and personal suffering—symptoms of the fallen condition—that coloured these responses, while a condemnation of the powers that govern the world is inferred. A Christological aspect remained vital even in secular interpretations; this tragic suffering is at the "hands of the lawless".⁶ However, the popularity of the Crucifixion was also because it was a suitable method of conveying a contemporary sense of crisis, radical disruption, and turmoil; as we have seen throughout this thesis, these are attributes of apocalyptic thought. Thus, the Crucifixion—that is an image already connoting apocalyptic transition—became a common way of expressing and inspiring—and therefore symptomatic of—the apocalyptic worldview that was resulting from the present war.

In 1944 Francis Bacon painted his *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (fig. 371). The triptych suggests an altarpiece format, yet there is little suggestion of traditional religious iconography. According to Bacon in 1959, they were envisioned "as the base of a large Crucifixion".⁷ A Crucifixion was never painted; its presence is implied to the viewer by the title. Bacon's horrific three images of vaguely anthropomorphic creatures writhing in anguish and agony was first exhibited in April 1945, coinciding with the last months of the Second World War. On exhibition, Raymond Mortimer associated the paintings with "the atrocious world into which we have survived".⁸ That same month the Allies had entered the extermination camps across central Europe. For Mortimer, Bacon's image heralds the descent into a darker condition of human existence; life after the cataclysm—life *after* an apocalypse—has revealed the brutality of human towards human.

Francis Bacon had become a friend of the Neo-Romantic artist Graham Sutherland following a letter dated 8 February 1943 in which Bacon commended some recent works that Sutherland had painted in his role as an official War Artist. Sutherland was employed by the War Artists' Advisory Committee between 1940 and 1945. In this role he documented the Blitz in London and Pembrokeshire as a single body of work titled *Devastation*.⁹ At the time of Bacon's correspondence, Sutherland was also interested in the potential of crucifixion imagery, albeit underpinned by his own

⁴ Bell, *Spencer: Complete Catalogue*, 476.

⁵ Hammer, *Bacon and Sutherland*, 110.

⁶ Acts 2:23.

⁷ Alley and Rothenstein, *Bacon*, 35.

⁸ Mortimer 1945, 239.

⁹ Stephens, "Devastation, 1940."

Catholic faith. Sutherland had previously avoided explicitly Christian imagery; however, he had been associating with the English poet David Gascoyne, who had meditated on the contemporary resonance of the Crucifixion in his poem "Ecce Homo" (arguably the most powerful of several poems inspired by the Crucifixion that were published in Gascoyne's 1943 collection *Poems 1937-42*, illustrated by Sutherland), and was excited by John Rothenstein's appeals for a post-war revival of ecclesiastical authorities as patrons of the arts.¹⁰ By 1944 Sutherland was intending a crucifixion painting, however his ambition would sooner manifest in a series of thorn paintings. He was, in his own words, "preoccupied with the idea of thorns (the crown of thorns) and wounds made by thorns".¹¹ Roger Marvell evoked an apocalyptic sense of the Crucifixion, remarking that "these jagged forms are the flora appropriate to a crucified world in which atrocity has become endemic."¹²

Sutherland's intended painting would become manifest in 1946, when he was commissioned to paint *The Crucifixion* (fig. 372) for St. Matthew's, Northampton. The painting looked to both Western artistic precedent (in particular Grünewald's *Crucifixion* from the Isenheim altarpiece) and recent history with the victims of the concentration and extermination camps of Nazism. He recalled that after seeing the photos, "the whole idea of the depiction of Christ crucified became much more real to me ... and it seemed to be possible to do this subject again".¹³ The painting is profoundly an image of human, and particularly Jewish, suffering. Sutherland's strong lines and angular forms indicate the emaciated Christ, yet also evoke the starved and tortured victims of the Holocaust. His figure is emphasised by the colour value contrast between the greyish white cadaver and the background. Sutherland recorded how he "would have liked to paint the Crucifixion against a blue sky... [because] in benign circumstances... are, in a sense, more powerfully horrifying."¹⁴ He recognised that the purplish blue he used instead was "traditionally a death colour".¹⁵ Sutherland emphasises that this is what human sin has done and continues to do. Moreover, this is the human condition in the immediate post-war.

Sutherland's most dramatic reconciliation of the melancholic ruins of wartime with Christian iconography would not come for more than a decade after the end of the Second World War; it would be seen in his monumental *Christ in Glory in the Tetramorph* (1962) (fig. 373) tapestry for Coventry Cathedral. The architect, Basil Spence, conceived his design for the new Cathedral built beside the ruined Cathedral theologically and in reference to apocalyptic hope; "I saw the old Cathedral as standing clearly for the Sacrifice, one side of the Christian faith and I knew my task was

¹⁰ Hammer, *Bacon and Sutherland*, 117-8.

¹¹ Sutherland in Hammer, *Sutherland*, 156.

¹² Marvell, "New Pictures," 119.

¹³ Sutherland in Tassi, *Sutherland: Wartime Drawings*, 153.

¹⁴ Sutherland, *Correspondences*, 73.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

to design a new one which should stand for the Triumph of the Resurrection.”¹⁶ Sutherland’s altarpiece image of Christ in Majesty from Revelation 2:4-7, surrounded by the symbols of the four evangelists, portrays the Second Coming and Christ’s rule over the world. Beneath Christ’s feet is a serpent in a chalice representing the defeat of Satan by the blood of the lamb (Rev. 12:11), while at the level of the altar is an image of the Crucifixion. Sutherland’s composition attempts to rise triumphantly from the horror and despair through the Apocalypse; his Christ was intended to “look vital; non sentimental, non-ecclesiastical; of the moment: yet for all time.”¹⁷ Sutherland’s apocalyptic imagery is of resurrection, redemption, and renewal. For others, the horror resulted in spiritual emptiness; the Scottish artist Robert Henderson Blyth painted *In the Image of Man* (1947) (fig. 374) depicting a ruined landscape with a devastated cross in the foreground echoing Charles Sims’s composition in *Sacrifice*. Yet the title of this later image “parodies the Judeo-Christian teaching of man made in the image of God and presents a world left to man’s own devices.”¹⁸ The result shows Western Civilisation “in ruins: its symbols of comfort and power are destroyed and scattered, and its spiritual vision is broken and empty.”¹⁹ The existential interrogation of Western Civilisation and the horror it had produced would have a profound impact upon the apocalyptic imagination, in Britain and further afield.

As we have seen, the exploration of the Apocalypse during periods of profound difficulty discloses the need to find a sense of meaning in order to cope with negative experiences and restore a sense of purpose to history. Yet as Jay Winter observed, the “process of breathing life into the symbolic language of romantic, classical, and religious reference, so visible after 1914, was much more problematic after 1945.”²⁰ In the aftermath of the Second World War the apocalyptic outlook, and the Apocalypse in visual culture, shifted to an increasingly secular mode that has since permeated all culture. Certainly, the Apocalypse and apocalyptic themes and motifs continued to resonate in art and culture in Britain as the country sought to rebuild a sense of purpose and recover from the Second World War. Post-1945, references to religious apocalyptic ideas and narratives continued to be drawn into close proximity with secular programmes, meanwhile the horrors of total warfare and totalitarianism fed the secular apocalyptic imagination; perhaps the most important realisation was that humans are more than capable of being the architects of our own hell. I will end with two quotations that reveal the changing mindset:

I recalled that David Low had said to me that something of its former satiric bite had gone out of his caricature, and that the cause was clear, namely that the world had become so horrific a

¹⁶ Spence, *Phoenix at Coventry*, 6.

¹⁷ Hayes, *Art of Graham Sutherland*, 47.

¹⁸ Imperial War Museum, “Image of Man, 1947.”

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 228.

place that much was beyond the reach of satire. 'What,' he had asked me, 'can a satirist do with Auschwitz?' 'I agree entirely with Low,' Burra said, 'so many appalling things happen that eventually one's response diminishes. I didn't *feel*, physically, for instance, the shock of Kennedy's assassination as I would have done before the war.'²¹

You see our new towns, you see our smiling country-side. I am proud of our achievement. There is an immense amount more to do. Remember that we are a great crusading body, armed with a fervent spirit for the reign of righteous-ness on earth. Let us go forward in this fight in the spirit of William Blake:

I will not cease from mental strife,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.²²

²¹ Rothenstein, *Burra* (1975), 32.

²² Attlee, "Leader's speech."

Appendices

Appendix 1.

I mention Mantegna, and *The Crucifixion* specifically as a development of Paul Hills's speculation. Hills suggested that Mantegna was likely an early influence on Jones from his time in Camberwell School of Art, where he studied from 1909. John Rothenstein also indirectly suggested this, by emphasising the influence of his Camberwell teachers Reginald Savage, Herbert Cole, and especially A.S. Hartrick.¹ Hartrick identified Mantegna as a favourite artist in his biography, where he declared that Mantegna's *Madonna and Child* (c.1470–74) in the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo, as the work he would most liked to have owned or painted.² Jones appreciated a debt of gratitude to A.S. Hartrick, for counteracting then current conventions of art schools, and to Savage for introducing him to nineteenth century illustration, and the work of the Pre-Raphaelites.³ Hills also has noted how the Camberwell prospectuses of 1909 to 1915 emphasised the use of London Galleries (specifically the Victoria & Albert, British Museum and National Gallery) as a creative resource—Jones recalled visiting the National Gallery and looking at one or two paintings at a time.⁴ The Slade, like Camberwell, encouraged the use of the Galleries as an educational resource. William Rothenstein recalled how some years earlier Slade students under the tutelage of Alphonse Legros were encouraged to visit and copy works from the National Gallery and the Prints and Drawings Room at the British Museum.⁵ In 1858, the British Museum's collection of drawings and prints included both a photograph of a sketch after Mantegna of *The Crucifixion*, (Photographed by Roger Fenton, now at the V & A Museum Number: 40832) and a "curious unfinished proof."⁶ A sketch after Mantegna of *The Crucifixion* (British Museum registration number 1865,1209.852) was acquired in 1865, while an anonymous print of Italian Master paintings (including Mantegna's *The Crucifixion*) located in the Louvre was acquired in 1880 (British Museum registration number 1880,0710.718). By the time Jones came to make his own sketch titled *The Crucifixion*, he had received numerous opportunities to encounter Mantegna's work through a number of proxies.

Derek Shiel and Jonathan Miles meanwhile suggest that this sketch indicates influences from his studies at Westminster, and propose that Jones's sketch was likely made for the class 'Figure Composition and Decorative and Narrative Design' run by Walter Bayes and Mervyn Lawrence.⁷ Shiel and Miles complement Hills speculation, and point out the Renaissance influences

¹ Hills, "Pierced Hermaphrodite", 426; Rothenstein, *Modern Painters II*, 212.

² Hartrick, *Painter's Pilgrimage*, 245.

³ Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 20.

⁴ Hills, "Jones's Historical Imagination."

⁵ Rothenstein, *Men and Memories, Volume 1*, 22–25. The British Museum's Prints and Drawings Room, where Laurence Binyon would work from 1895, would subsequently become a significant meeting place for Rothenstein and his circle in the mid to late 1890s. Shaw, "Rembrandt and Reality."

⁶ *Guide to The King's Library*, 19, 31.

⁷ Miles and Shiel, *Maker Unmade*, 34.

in how Bayes had argued for perspective as “the inevitable basis of Western Drawing.”⁸ Meanwhile, Bernard Meninsky is identified as the most pronounced stylistic influence on Jones while at Westminster, while Jones later echoed Meninsky’s principles in later writings. They shared “in the tradition of Fry and Bell... a lifelong devotion to Italian painters of the early Renaissance such as Masaccio and Piero della Francesca with an interest in Cézanne, Derain and Picasso.”⁹ I believe it is useful to also consider that Jones took an interest in Bloomsbury aesthetic theory as expressed in Clive Bell and Roger Fry’s writings on Significant Form whilst at Westminster. Fry had of course also offered a number of criticisms on Renaissance artists including Mantegna. It would be a surprise if Jones *were not* aware of these from his reading. It was during Jones’s studies at Westminster that he started to appreciate how post-Impressionist theory could be reconciled with the Catholic teaching on Mass, in that both were acts of sign-making.¹⁰ Jones’s made later references to Mantegna’s work in *Illustration to the Arthurian Legend: Guenever* (1938–40). Jones identified “The figure on the extreme left foreground, with a gloved right hand half raised in blessing is again composite in idea: partly a suggestion of feudal warrior-bishops (cf. Turpin of Rheims) and partly one of the wounded knights—partly secular, partly sacred—his fore-shortened legs and the soles of his feet being taken in part from Mantegna's dead Christ.”¹¹ To suggest Jones was *not* familiar with Mantegna’s *Crucifixion* is possibly more far-fetched than suggesting he was. This evidence suggests some familiarity with the composition of Mantegna.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Miles and Shiel, *Maker Unmade*, 35.

¹⁰ Jones, *Dai Greatcoat*, 28.

¹¹ Chamot, Farr and Butlin, *Modern British Paintings*, 1:344.

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Illustrations

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Figure 7: War Memorial window, c.1920s. Stained glass. Church of St. Gwynog, St. Twynnells, Pembrokeshire. From: https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/300006018-st-twynnells-church-stackpole/photos/118952#.XKY3Zi2ZM_U

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